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The Role of Mindful Disposition in Exploring Teacher Effectiveness in an Arts Integrated School: An Embedded Mixed Method Design

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THE ROLE OF MINDFUL DISPOSITION IN EXPLORING TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS IN AN ARTS INTEGRATED SCHOOL: AN EMBEDDED MIXED METHOD DESIGN

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the Morgridge College of Education
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Amy T. Turino
August 2014
Advisor: Dr. P. Bruce Uhrmacher
Abstract

Currently there is high pressure on teachers to demonstrate effectiveness through student outcome scores and observational criteria in classrooms (CO SB 10-191, 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2012). What is missing from the teacher effectiveness evaluation process is a voice of the teacher as a professional about their practice. One of the emerging research fields discussing the effects of the pressures on teachers (and students) is mindfulness (Albrecht et al., 2012; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). This study serves to bring these two fields of research: teacher effectiveness evaluation and mindfulness in education together.

Three research questions guided this embedded mixed methods design study: 1) How do students respond on a standardized measure in a classroom instructed by a teacher with a mindful attention awareness disposition? 2) What forms of instruction are dominant in a classroom taught by a teacher who demonstrates a mindful attention awareness disposition? 3) What is the experience of teaching like for a teacher with a mindful attention awareness disposition? To respond to the questions the qualitative research method of Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship developed by Elliot Eisner (1998) was used. Educational criticism is comprised of four dimensions: description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics. To also respond to question one a quantitative analysis of a 2x(2) mixed-design ANOVA to explore the differences in
secondary student outcome data provided by the district was conducted looking at level of mindfulness of the teacher and scores over time.

The findings suggest that the seven attitudinal factors of mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2005) are operationalized in the classrooms of teachers with high mindful attention awareness disposition. However, the teacher's level of mindfulness had no significant effect on standardized student outcome data and there was no statistically significant interaction between teacher disposition and time. This suggests that the current model of standardization in measuring teacher effectiveness is not completely informing what we want to understand as in relationship to effective teaching in the classroom.

Mindfulness has been studied to show positive effects with teachers and students (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Harris et al., 2013; Weinstein, Brown & Ryan, 2009). This study introduces language to describe what mindful disposition looks like when operationalized in the classroom. This language can now be used in future research to support studies that look at the impact of mindfulness programs as well as utilized as reflective language for practitioners who are interested in mindfulness disposition and adding their voice to the discussion of teacher effectiveness evaluation.

Keywords: mindful disposition, teacher effectiveness
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Chapter One: Introduction and Overview

Statement of the Problem

Today there are 19 states that have teacher evaluation systems significantly informed by student learning data (Mead, 2012). Colorado is one of these states (CO SB 10-191, 2010; Mead, 2012). In the 2014-2015 school year it will be mandatory for all Colorado educators to have at least 50% of their evaluation scores rely on their student's performance data on measures that are yet to be determined (CO SB 10-191, 2010; Poppen, 2012). From a constructivist and progressive point of view, the teacher and student should work in concert to maximize learning in the classroom (Dewey, 1922; Erickson, 2001). Twenty-first century learning goals strive for students to understand practices and skills needed to find and consume information not just memorize facts that are provided (CDE, 2009; P21.org, 2011). This is ever more important in our current information age where educators are preparing students for jobs that do not yet exist (Fisch, 2009).

Currently there is pressure for standardized tests to summarize all that students and schools can do (Eisner, 2003; Koretz, 2008). Koretz (2008) argues that a system with only test scores is too simple, and more information is needed in order to determine directions for improvement within the system. Eisner (1976) summarized the effect of standardization has uniformity as an aspiration, a means of achieving the same ends (p. 139). That was over three decades ago and those in education know that uniformity is far
from the norm when assessing teachers and the classroom learning environments they create for students. Yet the current educational reform movement pushed by policymakers and business professionals only aspire for education to produce a uniform product (Eisner, 2003; Gardner, 1983; NCLB, 2001).

Darling-Hammond (2007) cautions policymakers not to confuse the difference between teacher quality and teaching quality (p. 2). These two constructs work in connection with each other, but are different. Teacher qualities are the embodied traits and dispositions that a teacher brings to the profession. Teaching quality is the result of action and can be affected by the conditions teachers have to teach in which depend on administrative and policy systems outside of the individual teacher’s control (Darling-Hammond, 2007, p. 4). It is this understanding that I have from my own experience in the classroom that has led me on a quest to understand how we can inform the teacher effectiveness evaluation movement to recognize and acknowledge the ineffable and intangible aspects of teaching that consistently are heralded in qualitative research (Eisner, 1998; Intrator, 2003; Liston, 2004; Palmer, 1998) but are not used to inform the overall policy and procedures of public education in America today.
Over the last decade, research in the field of mindfulness has been on the rise.

Through my research and personal experience with mindfulness, there is a connection that can potentially inform the teacher effectiveness evaluation debate by understanding the subtle nuances of teacher quality and teaching quality that I see getting entangled under the current evaluation system. In the district that is the focus of this proposed study, an evaluation framework is being piloted that encompasses the teacher behaviors that are expected to be seen in the classroom (LEAP, 2011). This framework defines the expectations of the classroom and is meant to support professional development and growth of the teacher through the evaluation process. What I see missing is an understanding of who each individual teacher is and a language or lens for how to adapt behavior if deficiencies are observed in performance.

With the impending addition of student outcome data as another weight to the classroom observation data score (CO SB 10-191, 2010; Mead, 2012), which Koretz (2008) cautions the use of, I am propelled to explore what information can be gleaned
from understanding the role of disposition on teacher quality in the classroom. A teacher's disposition is not explicitly explored or captured on the current evaluation tool. This is an area that needs to be explored.

Measures of mindfulness have been developed and validated that delineate difference in mindful disposition through self-report. These measures have been shown to be reliable in the absence of previous mindfulness practice or training (Brown & Ryan, 2003; MacKillop & Anderson, 2007). However, there is a need to understand and communicate clearly what is going on in a classroom that works, without watering down performance to a uniform behavior that fits in a box. Mindfulness is paying attention in a particular way, on purpose in the moment and non-judgmentally (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). It seems ironic to consider a practice for evaluation that centers on the judgment and analysis of behavior with a thought process and disposition that encompasses an attitudinal factor of non-judgment. However, this is where I think the discourse and language for understanding effective behavior based on teacher quality in the classroom can emerge. The non-judgment is an act of acceptance of what is going on in the present moment without automatically categorizing, defining and marking distinction of good or bad, right or wrong. It is simply capturing what is. The process of observation and evaluation is laden with the values and judgments every individual brings to the table, however, without stopping and taking the time to observe what is without judgment one can lose sight of what is happening if it doesn't fit within a predetermined vision.

**Purpose of the Study**

The current mode of standardizing student performance and teacher effectiveness, neglects the “significant personalization of teaching and learning” (Eisner, 1976, p. 139).
Effective teachers exist in a variety of classrooms and contexts across the country. Not all of these classrooms look the same, nor should they. Eisner (1976) reminds us that teaching is not a science like a recipe, but rather an art that is influenced by the individual and the context of the classroom. The connoisseur has “an awareness and understanding of what one experiences” (Eisner, 1976, p. 140). If teachers can have an awareness of experience, then possibly they might have insight into what creates effective teaching and learning in their classroom. Darling-Hammond (2007) reminds us that teacher quality encompasses disposition. Is it possible that the disposition of mindfulness that encompasses awareness can give a lens and language to who are effective teachers and what is effective teaching? The connection of Eisner’s claim that a connoisseur has an awareness of experience makes me wonder: Are teachers with a mindful disposition connoisseurs of their teaching practice?

This study will serve to add to the literature an understanding of the impact a teacher's mindful disposition has on the created learning environment and student outcome data. The current evaluation system gives markers for expected teacher performance, but it does not provide insight or support for how to perform in such a manner or capture the essence of who the teacher is that can effectively demonstrate such behaviors. It is the hope of this study to provide more insight and language to the how of effective teaching and also analyze in the process effects, if any, of teacher disposition on student outcome data.

Research Questions

- How do students respond on a standardized measure in a classroom instructed by a teacher with a mindful attention awareness disposition?
• Are there differences in student outcome data for teachers categorized as high, medium and low mindful attention awareness at the beginning of the year (BOY); are there differences for these teachers at the middle of the year (MOY) assessment?

• What forms of instruction are dominant in a classroom taught by a teacher who demonstrates a mindful attention awareness disposition?

• What is the experience of teaching like for a teacher with a mindful attention awareness disposition?

**Definition of Terms**

**disposition:** “a person's inherent qualities of mind and character” (Oxford, 2013)

**learning environment:** the physical, the relationships, the structures and expectations, and the language and communication operationalized by the teacher in developing the classroom for students (Woolner, 2007)

**mindful attention awareness disposition:** “the presence or absence of attention to, and awareness of, what is occurring in the present moment” (Brown and Ryan, 2003, p. 824)

**teacher quality:** “the bundle of personal traits, skills, and understandings an individual brings to teaching, including dispositions to behave in certain ways” (Darling-Hammond, 2007, p. 2)

**teaching quality:** “strong instruction that enables a wide range of students to learn” (Darling-Hammond, 2007, p. 4)

**value added models:** attempt to measure a teacher's impact on student achievement—that is, the value he or she adds—apart from other factors that
affect achievement, such as individual ability, family environment, past schooling, and the influence of peers (RAND, 2013)
Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

This study serves to bring together fields of thinking that have not been researched in conjunction before: teacher effectiveness and mindfulness. This literature review serves to explore research to this point in both fields respectively. This chapter summarizes what is currently understood in teacher evaluation and is understood as best practice as well as what mindfulness is and what has been learned through research about disposition and uses in education thus far.

Mindfulness in Education

Networks and research institutions like the Mindfulness in Education Network (MiEN) (Brady, 2001) and the Garrison Institute (2005) have been instrumental in raising awareness of the need to nurture the development and well-being of the whole child in schooling. Much of the research on mindfulness in education centers on teaching mindfulness to students and teachers (Albrecht et al., 2012).

In their literature review, Albrecht et al. (2012) explore the nature of research on mindfulness in relation to education. They suggest that the catalyst for this research is “stress in the school system” (p. 1). There are two positions that are taken when considering mindfulness in education. The first is the secular practice brought to the west by Kabat-Zinn (2005) through the medical field in 1979 and a published program for stress reduction in life with Full Catastrophe Living, 1990. The basis for Kabat-Zinn's secular work is rooted in Buddhist teaching and philosophy, but centers on the idea of
paying attention in a particular way: “on purpose in the moment and non-judgmentally” (p. 4). The other position is the definition of mindfulness as posited by Langer (1998), who focuses on the external stimuli around oneself to engage the mind and respond in a mindful rather than mindless way. As interesting as Langer's assertions are around mindfulness they are not the focus of this study or of interest to this researcher.

Langer (1998) offers behavior and performance shifts that can stimulate novelty and work to reinvigorate one's self. It is the interest of this researcher to understand how individuals respond to experience and forge ahead in the current state of what is, versus having to change perception of what is in order to be motivated. There is an assumption of judgment in Langer's work of what is mindful versus mindless life experience and work that is counter-intuitive to the work on mindfulness that stems from a position of paying attention in the present to simply understand what is, rather than working to change the present.

Figure 2: Underneath the Surface, Documentary on Mindfulness, (Oakley, 2011) [http://youtu.be/SmpOvO6u52a](http://youtu.be/SmpOvO6u52a)

Albrecht et al. (2012) caution that sometimes the two positions of mindfulness, mindful practice (Kabat-Zinn, 2005) and response to external stimuli - novelty (Langer,
1998) are not excluded from each other in research fields (Reid & Miller, 2009). This is important to understand and gives reason to why researchers must clearly define what they mean when constructing arguments using terms of subjectivity. The mindfulness tradition that has roots in Buddhist philosophy that Kabat-Zinn posits brings about attitudinal factors that are of interest to education and teacher effectiveness: observing moment to moment internal and external stimuli without categorization or judgment, remaining unattached to outcomes, developing a basic trust in your experience, and feeling at peace (Compton & Hoffman, 2012). These attitudinal factors are of interest to this researcher as they often lead to behavior change, while Langer's construct does not require altered behavior in the participant.

The base of research on mindfulness in education focuses on two dimensions 1) response to programming and 2) quantitative analysis of self-report (Albrecht et al., 2012; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). This narrow window is limited by the heavy research being conducted by researchers and clinicians in the field of psychology. The psychological perspective on mindfulness is relevant as we are looking at a skill set of behavioral practice and the disposition of mindfulness, however the expectation of such research is well rooted in quantitative analysis. The field of education is more accustomed to exploring social science inquiry through a qualitative lens to reveal the nuances and idiosyncrasies that emerge amongst human subjects. As a practitioner in the field of education there is much more interest in the lived experience of educators in response to their disposition. Currently, there are only a few case studies of individuals that address mindfulness in k-12 education (Davies, 2008; Falkenberg, 2012). Most of
the research is rooted in evaluation of programming for mindfulness either to teachers (Abenavoli, Jennings, Greenberg, et al., 2013; Harris et al., 2013; Jennings, Snowberg, Coccia, & Greenberg, 2011; Roeser et al., 2013) or to students (Black, Milam, & Sussman, 2009; Burke, 2010; Garrison Institute Report, 2005; Rempel, 2012). In Higher Education there has been some exploration of how contemplative studies can influence the academy (Duerr, Zajonc, & Dana, 2003; Sanders, 2011; Shapiro, Brown, & Astin, 2011; Soloway, 2011).

The base of research that conducts quantitative analysis on the effects of mindfulness suggest that there is a buffer to limit burnout and to promote desired classroom climates for students (Abenavoli et al., 2013; Rempel, 2012). However all the research is correlational and speculative of the purposed effects as reported by teacher self-report. As explored later, teacher self-report cannot be avoided when trying to understand internal processes related to mindfulness. However, the purpose of this study is to determine if the classrooms taught by teachers who do self-report a high mindful attention awareness disposition are actually better learning environments for students. Does the learning environment created by mindful educators for students demonstrate effective teaching? In a hopes of understanding what about the teacher's mindful disposition enables such a learning environment to be created.

To try and capture the learning environments created by high mindful disposition teachers three axioms of mindfulness as explored under the definition of Kabat-Zinn are used: intention, attention, and attitude (Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, & Freedman, 2006). Intention is an individual's vision, an aim or a plan. Attention is awareness or paying
attention to one's internal and external experience with suspended judgment. Attitude is the nature of one's attention. For a mindful person, their intention, attention, and attitude are often described as fostering compassion, open-hardheartedness, and peace (Shapiro et al., 2006). These three axioms resonate with the current literature that exists to describe effective teaching. Intentions are of interest to education critics and connoisseurs as they give a lens into what is valued by the individual (Eisner, 1998). The attention and attitude that a teacher brings to the classroom can inform the nature of teacher quality and disposition. This leads into the question then, how do we measure such a subjective notion?

**Measuring Mindfulness.** Currently there are a dozen measures of mindfulness that exist in the literature (Black, 2013). These measures vary on the goal and definition of interest in what is mindfulness. Measures of mindfulness focus on compassion (Kraus & Sears, 2009; Neff, 2003) level of practice and skill (Buchheld, Grossman, & Walach, 2001; Cardaciotto, Herbert, Forman et al., 2008; Chawla, Collins, Bowen, et al., 2010; Feldman, Hayes, Kumar et al., 2007; Soloway & Fischer, 2007) and self-report of attitudinal mindfulness (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, et al., 2006; Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Lau, Bishop, Segal, et al., 2006). Following the initiation of this study another measure of mindfulness related to teaching has emerged that would be of interest in future research as described in Chapter Five (Frank, Jennings, Greenberg, & Broderick, 2013).

Currently, all these measures, independent of intended focus, are self-report measures. There is caution in utilizing self-report measures exclusively in quantitative
research due to validity concerns. However, because a part of measuring mindfulness includes understanding of one's internal experience, only the individual can give insight and description to this information, thus a self-report measure is necessary.

The Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) (Baer, et al., 2006) is a 39-item self-report measure that was validated under a more narrow focus of the attitudinal differences between meditators and non-meditators (Baer, Samuel, & Lykins, 2011; Baer, Smith, Lykins, et al., 2008; Van Dam, Earleywine, & Danoff-Burg, 2009). This measure shows difference between participants who have exposure and those who don't of mindfulness practice and does not fit the purpose of this study.

The Toronto Mindfulness Scale (TMS) (Lau, et al., 2006) is a 13-item self-report measure that was reviewed psychometrically on the initial creation of the scale and underwent further development of the trait scale in 2009 (Davis, Lau, & Cairns, 2009). This scale does not provide a sufficiently wide base of research validity to be considered in this exploratory study. The construct of the response choices are similar to the MAAS which has a more reliable research base among various populations.

The Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (KIMS) (Baer, et al., 2004) is a 40-item self-report measure that includes a Mindfulness Practice History Questionnaire. It is the addition of this questionnaire that makes the measure undesirable in this study as it requires the participant to have some previous exposure to formal mindfulness practice which is not the intent of trying to assess teachers for their mindful disposition. The measure has been sufficiently validated (Berry, Daughtery, & Wieder, 2010; Dekeyser, Raes, Leijssen, Leysen, & Dewulf, 2008) and used with various populations (Hansen,
Lundh, Homman, et al., 2009; Nicastro, Jermann, Bondolfi, et al., 2010) but veers away from the intention of this study.

The final attitudinal measure of mindfulness noted here is the Mindful Awareness Attention Scale (MAAS) (Brown & Ryan, 2003) which is a 15-item self-report measure that has been validated with various populations (Carlson & Brown, 2005; Cordon & Finney, 2008) including international groups (Black, Sussman, Johnson, & Milam, 2011; Christopher, Charoensuk, Gilbert, Neary, & Pearce, 2009; Hansen, et al., 2009; Jermann, et al., 2009) in assessing the disposition of mindfulness independent of participants previous exposure to mindfulness practice or meditation (MacKillop & Anderson, 2007). The ability to have a valid assessment of an individual's disposition of mindfulness regardless of previous exposure to formal mindfulness practice was crucial to this researcher.

The MAAS is the appropriate measure to use in this study because it does not rely on a participants previous awareness or understanding of mindfulness. In evaluating the items of each of the self-report measures cited here, the MAAS was the only measure that posed statements to participants that did not include specific reference to mindful practice or skill sets that are utilized in mindful programming. This is important as it is a tacit theory of this researcher that mindfulness disposition will give a lens to what is effective teaching, but in selecting participants for observation, there is a desire to not skew or change their performance as a result of the research. The other self-report instruments could cause participants to consider their knowledge or understanding of meditation,
yoga, or qi-gong as important or vital to their effectiveness as a teacher and this effect is not the intent of this study.

Mindfulness has been shown to reduce stress (Abenavoli et al., 2013; Kabat-Zinn, 2005; Shapiro et al., 2006). Teaching in today's high-stakes evaluation and student assessment focused reform movement can be very stressful. Research shows that mindfulness relates to enhanced capacity to adapt and cope with challenging situations (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Weinstein, Brown, & Ryan, 2009) and suggests that looking at teachers who have a disposition of mindfulness may elucidate intentional and operational curriculum that can add to the literature about teacher effectiveness in the classroom.

**Teacher Effectiveness through a Qualitative Lens**

Intrator (2003) weaves in evidence of mindfulness within his three common-sense propositions in his examination of the anatomy of teaching: 1) most of life whips past us with no impact on our consciousness, 2) inspired moments are triumphs of potent teaching, and 3) these moments are not ephemeral flashes but leave enduring presence in a learner's life (pg. 5). Intrator spent a year within a high school observing and taking witness of what makes great teaching. This ability to see, experience and participate alongside the teacher and students is a window that is not open to the standard teacher evaluator who must observe and assess every teacher within the school during the course of the school year. How then does an evaluator hope to catch the ephemeral flash of experience that has such lasting effects on the individual learner?
Ogden’s (2012) multiple case study of teacher personal learning opportunities revealed that the “most profound learning experiences were not preplanned or intentional in nature, but arose as a result of life” (p. ii). If we can qualitatively describe and capture that quality teaching and learning is not the result of scripted pacing guides and instruction, why are current evaluation models developed to assess teacher effectiveness concerned with such a strict lens of what should be present in a classroom for optimal learning? I argue that it is the policy demand that one evaluator holds the key to determining effectiveness of all teachers in a school for the given year. This task is only humanly feasible when filling out a checklist. Eisner (2003) posits flawed assumptions in schooling, one of which addresses this push toward competition:

School reform is most effective when competition among schools is promoted and when supervisors can mandate goals, manage teachers, monitor students, and measure outcomes. (p. 654)

This assumption is based on the belief that “what is good for business is good for schools.” However, business is focused on efficiency and productivity. Education should be focused on learning and meaning making. These two processes are neither efficient nor productive when restricted to a time table.

Potent teaching – teaching that energizes and inspires students eludes easy characterization (Intrator & Kurzman, 2007). Teachers who make a difference employ various methods of teaching: their capacity to teach well is linked to a set of ineffable, hard to codify qualities that become characterized as heart, passion and connectedness (Cuban, 1991; Intrator & Kurzman, 2007). It is this connectedness that I feel resonates with mindfulness – being present in the moment. It is my tacit theory that looking at
teachers through a lens of mindfulness may give us a language that can help to codify the ineffable.

Intrator and Kurzman (2007) reference William Kahn (1992) as being “fully there” as an act that allows someone to embody their actions with a sense of self (p. 17). Being tuned-in is purposeful in vocational vitality. By looking at teachers who participated in “Courage to Teach Retreat Program,” Intrator and Kurzman (2007) remind us of a basic principal of teacher renewal: “we teach who we are.” This idea of teaching who we are, gives credence to not instructing teachers on mindfulness, but identifying those with mindful disposition to see what is operationalized in their classroom and attempting to understand their intentions.

Intrator and Kurzman (2006) look at engaging the teacher’s soul in order to cultivate a teacher’s ability to teach with greater consciousness (p. 39). I take the meaning of consciousness as the awareness of the present – mindfulness. Marcel Proust, a famous French Novelist has been quoted as saying, “The real art of discovery consists not in finding new lands, but in seeing with new eyes.” This is the reality of what I am hoping to discover in this study. The current research on teacher disposition and the role it plays in the k-12 classroom is heavily centered on teacher education and the proper training for pre-service educators (Frederiksen, 2010; Hampton, 2010; Soloway, 2011; Taylor, 2010; Williams, 2009), but there is not much research from the field about dispositions actualized in the k-12 classroom by seasoned teachers (Conrad, 2011; Jahns, 2009). In addition, two of the ten studies that were found discussing teacher disposition in response to learning environment were focused specifically on culturally responsive
dispositions (Caballero, 2010; Conrad, 2011) which is an entirely different construct and literature landscape that is not explored in this study.

Dewey (1922) says that “education is a process of living and not a preparation for future living” (Flinders, p. 36). This idea of process of living being the present warrants looking at teachers who demonstrate a disposition of awareness and attention to the present. Liston (2004) says the measure of authenticity comes from understanding if the invitation to learn is real when conveyed by the teacher and felt by the student (p. 473).

It is my tacit theory that the mindful teacher would be aware of the invitation being presented to the student in hopes of luring them into learning. This relates back to Dewey (1938) who said that the teacher is responsible for creating learning opportunities. It is this researcher's tacit theory that the mindful attention aware teacher will recognize and understand the importance of the present moment, capitalizing on the teachable moment (Intrator, 1999), the lightning in the bottle (Ladson-Billings, 1990), and the shining moment (Wigginton, 1986) that are the intangibles that have qualitatively been experienced in the classroom yet cannot be planned for and explained in a pre-observation conference, witnessed in action at a prescribed time and followed up upon during a post-observation conference which is the current model for teacher evaluation. Intrator's (1999) research goal was “to understand those moments when classrooms hum with energy and the people in them become roused to life and imbued with a special luminous quality” (p. xii).
Intrator argues that educators must attend to creating rich, stimulating, energized classroom environments. However he does not state how. “Teachers can forge a classroom where meaningful, enduring work will be done.” (Intrator, 1999, p. 262).

To Langer (1998) mindful learning is more than just paying attention, it is making a conscious effort to be “in the moment” So for evaluating teachers we don't want students all sitting still. Paying attention is not sitting still and being immobile, however it is being aware of the moment.

Value-added modeling as a means for Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness. The use of value-added modeling (VAM) in attempts to evaluate teacher effectiveness has proven useful in assessing the impact of certain populations of teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2007). However, as continued research tries to utilize value added models in the context of the single individual teacher to evaluate teacher effectiveness there are flaws that emerge in the assumptions. VAMs require scaled tests of student performance as the assessment measure and most states are not using these, teachers' ratings are affected by differences in students who are assigned to them, VAM models do not produce stable ratings, and most subject areas do not have a relevant test to assess teachers and/or students in that content area (Darling-Hammond, Amerin-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstien, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2007). To use a VAM model to determine teacher effectiveness there is an expectation that the teacher alone has the greatest impact on the student's performance, however, VAMs were initially used to account for the various attributes that could affect student growth beyond the classroom (Braun, 2005; Darling-Hammond, et al., 2012; McCaffrey, Lockwood, Koretz, &
Hamilton, 2005). There are many factors that influence student achievement beyond the teacher: class-size, peer culture, and the test administered to name a few.

Darling-Hammond (2012) does not argue against teacher evaluation but suggests different methods for how the process should be undertaken. In a white paper published for SCOPE (Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education), Darling-Hammond suggests that a systematic approach to supporting effective teaching is to start with standards, create performance based assessments, build standards based local evaluation, create structures that support fair and high quality effective evaluation, and align professional development supports to this process (Darling-Hammond, 2012). This is not a standardized, uniform approach, but a system that allows for differences to be considered and held up to standards that are deemed of merit in a local context.

Mihaly, McCaffery, Staiger, and Lockwood (2013) work to explore ways that policymakers can combine student outcome indicators into usable scores that can help reach goals in the area of effective teaching using a data set from the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The MET project focused on reliability and validity in human observations and discussed ways to ensure inter-rater reliability. The VAM of student achievement data was simply accepted as being supportive to the work of the overall MET project. Darling-Hammond, et al., (2012) state that class-size is one of the variables that can affect teacher effectiveness and for the assessment of the MET project, Mihaly et al., (2013) assumed a teacher:student ratio in middle school of 1:20. Here in Colorado, we don't have such a low ratio in kindergarten let alone middle school. This gives cause to question the
proponents of VAM in teacher effectiveness research. As a result there is a need for more exploration into this topic to try and capture what is effective teaching in the classroom.

The Center for Education Compensation Reform (CECR) acknowledges the growing change across the nation to adopt different evaluation systems for teachers and principals (Burnett, Cushing, & Bivona, 2012). They argue that principals need extensive training in order to comply with these new initiatives and that the value added model of student performance data is useful but not sufficient to build the entire picture of an effective teacher (Burnett et al., 2012). If we go with Colorado’s adopted model which aims to explain teacher effectiveness with 50% of the score based on student achievement data, there is still a need to understand how we can successfully support the evaluation and feedback of teachers with the other 50% of their score. The MET study showed that principals and peer evaluators rarely used the highest and lowest scale marks on the evaluation tool (Ho & Kane, 2013). If evaluators have new tools for evaluation but teachers still get lumped in the middle of the score categories, where is the advantage of having a new evaluation system? Possibly what is missing is a comprehensive language that fits to describe and capture what is going on in an effective classroom.

**Summary**

The purpose of this study is to bring together two fields of research: *mindfulness in education* and *teacher effectiveness evaluation*. Through a mixed-method design that will allow analysis of numbers as well as stories, the goal is to explore what can be learned about effective teaching through a lens of mindfulness disposition. In looking at
observed classroom performance and analyzing secondary student outcome data there is a goal of identifying language that can be used in the process of evaluating teacher effectiveness. By empowering teachers themselves as professionals to add to the data being compiled about their classrooms, educators as professionals can use the identified language to add to the discourse on what is effective teaching in their own context.
Chapter Three: Methodology

This study uses an embedded mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) in answering the research questions.

Selected participants self-report using the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) survey to assess mindful disposition level. Teacher's reporting the highest level of mindful attention awareness were chosen for observation and interview in answering the research questions. Question one is informed by observation and interview, in addition to the quantitative analysis of secondary student outcome data using a 2x(2) mixed-design ANOVA.

Study Design

Using an embedded mixed methods research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) qualitative exploration through Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship (Eisner, 1998) is supported by a causal comparative 2x(2) mixed-design ANOVA. With the direct intention of including multiple ways of knowing and valuing the complex social phenomena (Greene, 2007) that is effective teaching in an elementary classroom.
**Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship.** Elliot Eisner (1998, 1985, and 1976) asserts that much of educational evaluation lies in the making public of one's appreciation of the situation. An *educational connoisseur*, is one who is attuned to witnessing and appreciating the nuances of a topic due to his/her deep interest and passion that provides a lens of comparison (Eisner, 1998). Making one's observation and understanding public is the art of *educational criticism*. Together the expert of the topic can understand the intricate details of a situation in order to pass judgment or critique, however this is not evaluation until the critique is made public. This art of understanding is the qualitative research method that is employed in this embedded mixed method study.

As an *educational connoisseur* of the elementary classroom, I have an awareness of the characteristics and qualities of K-5 elementary school settings from my experience in two states and five schools—extensive experience with the systems, politics, and structure that influence, guide and sometimes hinder a teacher's autonomy for what is best for students. Using my perceptual lens, I can appreciate the complexity that is in play every day as a teacher tries to navigate all the influences that exist around him/her to create and impart an optimal learning environment for students.

Eisner said, “[Educational Criticism] aim[s] to lift the veils that keep the eyes from seeing by providing the bridge needed by others to experience the qualities and relationships within some arena of activity” (1985, p. 105). It is the perception and understanding of what quality teaching is that I want to bring to the forefront of the teacher effectiveness evaluation discussion. For those in the profession of education,
there is a natural intangible that exists when you walk in a room that is a home to quality
experience and learning for students. It is my tacit theory that by selecting teachers with
a high mindful attention awareness disposition I will be given access to these classrooms.

Using the protocols in Appendix B and C, I went into the classrooms looking for
evidence of seven attitudinal factors of mindfulness: non-judging, patience, beginner's
mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go. I also evaluated the structural
dimension of the school day based on factors that the teacher could control and those that
the teacher had to accept and work within. These lens gave light to the language that this
study intended to identify to explain what effective teaching looks like in a classroom
with a teacher who has a mindful disposition.

The goal of *Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship* as a method of research
is to reveal the complexity, ambiguity and richness of the events taking place in schools
and classrooms (Eisner, 1994). The components of Educational Criticism include:
description – the actual portrayal of what the connoisseur saw or heard; interpretation –
the researcher's analysis of what he/she observed; evaluation – educational criticism's aim
to improve education; and thematics – themes that emerge from the data.

It is through *description, interpretation* and *evaluation* that the story of the
mindful attention aware teachers are shared in Chapter Four. In looking across all three
teacher stories, themes will be drawn about the implications of the understanding that
emerges from observation and interview in Chapter Five. Eisner reminds us that this
story told through description, interpretation and evaluation has relevance for the
classroom in which it belongs, but the theme that is embedded among these classrooms
extends beyond the situation itself (1998, p. 103). It is these embedded themes, that will be explored in Chapter Five, that will be the lens to the language that might help to elucidate the intangible, felt effect of an effective teacher.

**Qualitative Credibility.** Credibility of the method is addressed by three components according to Eisner (1998) *structural corroboration, consensus,* and *referential adequacy.* Structural corroboration is an inductive process much like that of triangulation. The reader is allowed to make their own inferences from the description provided and come to their own conclusions, even if that differs from the researcher. In this study, I looked at classroom observations, artifacts and formal and informal interviews to corroborate the data presented. Consensus is much like member checking, Eisner (1998) posits that consensus doesn't represent assertion of the truth as much as discrepancy doesn't ascertain an untruth. I shared the descriptions expressed in Chapter Four with the participants as a process of consensus. Referential adequacy is the ability for the research to reveal new information. What veil has been lifted by using this new perspective? I argue that my credentials as a connoisseur of the elementary classroom, mindfulness practice and teacher development together serve to support the notion that I can offer the reader the opportunity to see what they might not have been otherwise able to see in this study resulting in the codified language presented in Chapter Five. Along with an understanding of what mindfulness disposition looks like when operationalized in the classroom.

“Human beings, unlike atoms and molecules, talk back. They think, they live in a world where “things” have symbolic rather than fixed meanings, and they are capable of
reflecting on their world (including the “findings” of social scientists) and altering their behavior as a result” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 85). The possibility of changed behavior was at the forefront of my awareness as I embarked on this study. In reaching out to the teachers for this study I had to be very careful not to lead, reveal, or skew the self-report MAAS data. While at the same time the level of transparency needed to gain access to the school through the district was as equally important. Eisner (1998) advises researchers on the issue of access, gaining and maintaining, but it was more daunting a task than expected.

**Mixed-design ANOVA.** Utilizing the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), teachers can be assigned to one of three disposition levels – Low Mindful Attention, Medium Mindful Attention, and High Mindful Attention. The measure calculates a scale score by creating a mean of the answers selected. The possible mean scale scores range from 1 – 6. Teachers scale scores were assigned to levels evenly distributing the sample of participants into two groups of mindful disposition level (Low & High). Due to participant numbers of 8 of the 12 possible classroom teachers, two groups were more robust than forcing a third level of mindfulness. The cutoff for high mindfulness was set at a mean of 4. The lowest mean score was a 3.13, this represents mindful disposition of medium and high, but as there are only two groups of mindful disposition used, for the sake of quantitative clarity the descriptors of high and low mindful disposition are referenced here on.
These levels of mindfulness were kept confidential from the participants and were used to stratify the secondary student outcome data provided by the district. With a 135 student scores available, power for finding significant differences by category of mindful attention is estimated as .999 given a .40 effect size (Figure 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Beginning of Year Means</th>
<th>End of the Year Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Mindful Attention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1....S66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Mindful Attention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S67....S135</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: 2x(2) Mixed-design ANOVA

The assigned disposition level based on the self-report on the MAAS is the independent variable. This disposition embodied by the teacher is a fixed factor of interest in the

Figure 4: Gpower analysis of achieved power with 135 independent student outcome scores
ANOVA analysis. Are there differences amongst student outcome data for high and low mindful attention awareness disposition teachers at the beginning of the year (BOY) and at the middle of the year (MOY) assessment?

The between-subjects variable is the disposition of teachers into high and low MAAS. The within-subjects variable is the time/date of assessment, the beginning of year (BOY) and the middle of year (MOY) STAR literacy scores. Main effects for disposition and time and the interaction between disposition and time are of interest in this study.

**Measure Validity and Reliability.** The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) (Brown & Ryan, 2003) is a 15 item self-report measure that has a response scale of 1- *almost always*, 2- *very frequently*, 3- *somewhat frequently*, 4- *somewhat infrequently*, 5- *very infrequently*, and 6- *almost never*. The measure has been validated with college, community and cancer patient samples. The MAAS has been shown reliable in determining unique qualities of consciousness that relate to a variety of self-regulation and well-being constructs. The measure asks participants to consider their behavior in certain settings, for example, forgetting someone's name the moment that they are introduced to you.

MacKillop and Anderson (2007) conducted further psychometric validation of the MAAS. They found no significant difference between gender. Internal reliability was high for subsamples of women (α=.89) and men (α=.87). Participants also responded to a meditation questionnaire to assess the relationship of MAAS scores to previous experience. Ten percent of the sample had previous experience with meditation and no
significant differences were identified between participants with meditation experience and those without, F (1,707), α = .05, p > 0.80. Thus as a measure of mindfulness the MAAS has proved to be valid and reliable across gender types and independent of previous exposure to mindfulness and meditation practices.

**Participant identification and access.** With the approval of university IRB and district level RRB, access was granted to administer the MAAS survey instrument to the K-5 teachers at Purple Mountain k-12 Academy in August 2013. At the start of the 2013-2014 school year, I met with the elementary classroom teachers of Purple Mountain k-12 Academy to discuss the purpose of my research as it related to the quantitative analysis of student outcome data across teacher type. Not wanting to influence the data, all references to mindfulness were stripped from the MAAS survey and two levels of informed consent were obtained (See Appendices A & D). The first informed consent gave permission to collect the MAAS survey data and use it to stratify the secondary student outcome data that the Rocky Mountain School District was providing me directly. The teachers did not need to know or do anything beyond providing the self-report data about disposition using the MAAS. It was explained that they may be contacted further if observation or interview were of interest to the study.

After scoring the survey data and assigning teachers who participated into groups of high and low mindful attention awareness disposition for the ANOVA analysis, teachers in the high mindful group were contacted for the second informed consent meeting individually to discuss observation and interview. At this stage the teachers still were not informed of the mindfulness aspect of the research nor were they told why they
were selected for observation and interview. Upon obtaining informed consent, schedules were worked out to observe in each teacher's classroom for an entire week near the end of the first trimester of the school year. The late fall was selected for observation because teachers had had a chance to establish rituals and routines with the current students as well as there was limited focus on test preparation that becomes more central to the classroom environment in the late winter and early spring of schools today.

**About the Researcher**

Mindfulness instructors and research indicate a level of embodiment on the part of the teacher before one can feel comfortable teaching mindfulness in the classroom and thus should practice mindfulness in their personal life (Albrecht et al., 2012). I am not intending to teach mindfulness to teachers as a process of this dissertation or as an end result of the research, however, when stumbling upon the construct of mindfulness as a conceptual framework for my research, I recognized the need to embark on my own journey. In the fall of 2011, I began researching the construct of mindfulness. I found many references to programs that were promoting an 8-week, mindfulness based stress reduction program.

As a novice into the field, I was under the perception that an 8-week course would be the intervention of interest for dissertation research. After struggling to connect with mindful practitioners and teachers of these 8-week courses, I began to simply investigate what the meaning of mindfulness meant. This led me on a journey to discover Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005) and his work on utilizing mindfulness based practices in the health field for the last 30 years. This is where I started to get a sense of the need to embody
mindfulness and establish a practice. In talking with a teacher colleague who had completed a Master's Thesis on the social-emotional supports we need to have for gifted learners, I was shocked to find out that Kabat-Zinn was the underpinning for the conceptual model he used in his own writing. This created my first access to practitioners of mindfulness outside of a researcher role.

In talking with this colleague about my new found interest in mindfulness and wanting to establish my own path and journey, he connected me with my mindfulness coach. I have been seeing my mindfulness coach for two years now. We met weekly at first and then evolved the relationship to meet monthly and then almost quarterly. I have to say that when I began the journey, I was very skeptical. I did not know what mindfulness embodiment would result in.

Through refining my mindfulness practice and reflecting on my journey, I am now aware of the impact mindfulness can have on the individual. Mindfulness did not change who I am as a person or researcher. I have not lost my ability to think critically or critique research, which I was apprehensive of when I learned of the mindful attitudinal factor of non-judging. I simply am more me. I have a clear sense of my goals and aspirations. I can see how each day leads to the next. I am not so overly concerned with attaining my goals that I miss out on the journey. I am content and happy with taking each day as it comes. This level of awareness has only strengthened my tacit theories and led me to embark on this dissertation study to see what can be understood about the role of mindful disposition in the elementary classroom.
Currently, I am not in the classroom teaching. I hold a position as Director of Education for a non-profit that supports educators on creating hands-on learning experiences for students. This work is where I find my passion. I have a strong understanding and belief in the power of the experiences teachers create for student learning. It is not about being the bearer of knowledge that gets imparted to students, but it is the journey of discovery through a well-constructed experience intended to support students in the meaning making process of learning (Hawkins, 2007).

When I was in the classroom, I can remember not understanding why so many teachers were quick to blame the student, the parents, and society for issues experienced in the classroom. Continually throughout my teaching day and most every day for long hours after a day teaching in the classroom, I found myself reflecting, refining and discussing my teaching craft with like-minded colleagues. This was not work that every teacher I have met in my career participated in, however, it was my opinion that teachers who did participate in such action were doing what was best for students.

It was not always easy to spend an 8-hour day meeting the needs of 30 students and then continuing the analysis over work samples and lesson plans. However, there was immense pay-off when the moment arrived when something intangible took place and the room was abuzz with energy and flow and the learning that was taking place couldn't have even been thought of let alone pre-planned in a lesson book. These days and moments where joy and laughter permeated the walls and ears of the classroom are the gems that I carry with me daily.
It is through my journey with mindfulness, my doctoral studies and my career as a teacher that keeps me passionate about keeping the professionalism of teaching at the table. I can respect the current educational reform movement for wanting to support what research says is so vital to student learning: an effective teacher. But, I cannot idly stand by and not try to add to the discourse on the situation when so many of the decisions about what makes effective teachers are informed by policymakers, educational philanthropists and those far removed from the actual experience in the classroom. It is my hope that this study will bridge fields of thought (mindfulness & teacher effectiveness research) and provide a language that can build understanding about what are the intangible and ineffable traits and experiences of an effective teacher.
Chapter Four: Description, Interpretation and Evaluation of the Participants

Introduction

As described in the Methodology chapter, at the start of the 2013-2014 school year, I met with the elementary classroom teachers of Purple Mountain K-12 Academy, an urban arts-integrated school in the western United States. At this meeting, I gave the Mindful Attention Awareness Survey (MAAS) to those interested in participating. Eight teachers out of twelve agreed to take the survey and were the pool of participants that were used to select classrooms to observe. Upon scoring the MAAS from the participants there was a clear delineation of scores - high and medium. The participants with a mean score over 4 were placed in the high group and those with a mean score at 4 or below were placed in the medium group (referred to as low for the purpose of the quantitative ANOVA analysis).

From the group of high mindful attention awareness scoring teachers, I selected three teachers to observe and interview for this study. I spent a week in each classroom and formally interviewed each teacher at the conclusion of the week spent in their class. As a participant-observer in the room, many informal conversations took place during the week of observation which were noted in my field journal as well.

Using Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship (Eisner, 1998) as the research method for evaluating these teachers in their classrooms there was great focus put on the intentional dimension of teaching through a mindfulness lens of the seven attitudinal
factors of mindfulness: *non-judging, patience, beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go* as described by Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005). Particular attention was also paid to the structural dimension of the school day and how the teachers interacted with elements within and outside of their control. These two dimensions shed light on the operations of the classroom which are the ultimate focus of this research to see how the intentions and beliefs of these teachers influence the learning environment for their students and how that can inform the literature about effective teaching in the k-12 classroom.

Coming to understand the intention, attention and attitude of these teachers gives insight to how these mindful teachers are creating learning environments for their students and what impact that has on the overall field of education when discussing teacher effectiveness. In the following descriptions the reader will discover

*Who is the teacher being observed?*

*What is the learning environment that is created?*

*Including the physical, relationships, structures, expectations, language and communications that influence the learning process.*

This chapter focuses on introducing the reader to the participants through thick description while being guided by my interpretation and evaluation so as to bring meaning to the events that were witnessed in the observation and interviews of these three elementary school teachers. *Thematics* are be discussed in Chapter Five as further exploration into the meaning and implications of this research are explored.
Table 2: Qualitative Coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Codes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intention</td>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>Becoming a Teacher</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Mentor Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guiding Principles</td>
<td>Intentions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention</td>
<td>What gets operationalized in</td>
<td>Past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the classroom?</td>
<td>Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where is focus?</td>
<td>Future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>How does the teacher accomplish tasks?</td>
<td>Letting Go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the experience of being in her presence?</td>
<td>Beginner's Mind</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Patience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Domains selected from Shapiro et. al. (2006) axioms of mindfulness*

**Purple Mountain k-12 Academy**

Purple Mountain k-12 Academy is a low to average performing public k-12 school in the Rocky Mountain School District in Colorado. Rocky Mountain is a large school district with over 200 schools. Purple Mountain k-12 Academy is the only arts integrated school serving students k-12 in the same building within the district. The school serves culturally and linguistically diverse students from the region of the district in which the school is physically located. Only 25% of students outside the schools' neighborhood are eligible to apply and attend through school choice.

The current student body is comprised of 939 students k-12, for this research the focus was centered on the elementary core of the school which hosts 342 students. For data reporting purposes, the school reports their data as an elementary, a middle, and a high school, so extrapolating data was not necessary. The elementary core of Purple
Mountain K-12 is comprised of 81.3% students on free or reduced lunch, 77.2% Hispanic, 12.9% White, 2.9% African American, 2.3% Asian American, 1.2% American Indian, and 3.5% Mixed Race students. There are 38% of elementary students being served by English Language Acquisition (ELA) services and 6.7% being served by Special Education (SPED) services.

The teachers in the elementary school have a range of experience and background. Of the twenty teachers who work with the elementary students exclusively only 25% represent a racial minority. The range of teaching experience of the 20 teachers (formal classroom teachers and support specialists) working with elementary students is 1 – 20 years of experience. This group of educators meets bi-weekly to discuss issues relevant to the elementary students and data points supporting the school improvement plan. Outside of these meetings interactions between the elementary staff is restricted to who teaches on the same floor and/or who works with the same students.

Up and down the corridors of the elementary halls of the school there are installations of art work that connect with larger understandings – rainbow weavings of multiplication squares, colored pencil drawings of state birds and symbols, illustrations of poems read and experienced in class, pastel rubbings of leaves to mark the coming of fall. The integration of art into learning is evident by what decorates the school halls. The focus on being responsible STAR students is also reinforced with graphic organizers and examples of STAR student behavior acknowledgments. All of these adornments send a message by their physical presence, but not once during the three weeks I was observing at the school did the installations receive interaction from the teachers or the students.
In the main corridor of the upper floor where the cafeteria, drama, music and dance teachers are there is a constant shift of art on display. In this open common space the teachers and the students continually interact with or respond to the new displays and postings unlike the adornments in the grade level hallways.

During the observation period from late October until Thanksgiving, I was able to witness classrooms where community, ritual and routines had been established and relationships had been formed. Being a full-time participant-observer in the classrooms of the three teachers described below, allowed for me to witness the consistent underpinnings that are the essence of their classrooms while coming to witness the structural elements of the school day or commitments placed on teacher's time that impact the choices these teachers make in guiding the learning experience for their students on a daily basis.
Rachel Jenkins

This is Ms. Jenkins second year teaching at Purple Mountain K-12 Academy. Her previous teaching experience was at a charter school in a neighboring school district that was more affluent. Ms. Jenkins' first career was in the business world as an IT professional. Her background and her interest in technology has afforded her the opportunity to work on a grant in the district piloting one-to-one computing in the classroom. Ms. Jenkins is soft spoken and greets her students with a gentle smile. She has a natural rapport with the other teachers in the school and is constantly exchanging hellos and smiles as she passes others in the hallway (teachers who were observed ignoring other colleagues in the hallway would make an effort to respond and engage with Ms. Jenkins).

To be a student. Being in 4th grade at Purple Mountain k-12 Academy is a very safe place to be. Your classroom is in the same hall where you first stepped foot into the intermediate grades and visiting with previous third grade teachers is part of the morning bustle. In addition, you share the hallway with 5th grade so you see and know what the coming school year is going to be like as well.

The intermediate hallway is on the garden level of the Purple Mountain school building. The inner hallway feels like a basement and does not have windows, however, as you enter Ms. Jenkins classroom you see the morning sun cascading in from the east immediately livening the feeling of the space. The classroom is not your typical fourth grade classroom with rows of desks and chairs, but a very collaborative group space. The floor has two surfaces which serve as a natural divider, tile-laminate and carpet. On the
laminate there is an area rug and the space is mainly open until you get to the windows where you have three tables configured to be Ms. Jenkins' desk and a work space for small groups with up to six chairs. Beyond the laminate on the carpet there are tables with the adjustable legs removed so that they rest about a foot off the ground. They are configured into eight pods with a total of 10 tables.

![Figure #5: Student workspace on carpet and Morning meeting area on tile with area rug.](image)

The hallway is lined with lockers as the building was a former middle school. As the students enter in the morning off the playground they go to their lockers to put away jackets and backpacks and grab materials that they will need for the day. There is an easel whiteboard outside the classroom door greeting the students with directions for which materials to make sure they have from their lockers and a prompt to think about for morning meeting. The students are expected to read this independently and the teacher stands at the door offering a hello and a welcome to students, checking in with how they are feeling and assessing moods and behaviors based on body language.

Inside the room, most students put their stuff on a spot that is “theirs” at the tables and then seat themselves in a circle on the laminate tile around the area rug. A few others
are hard to focus and are not really settling into the space. At the start of the school day, Ms. Jenkins enters the room and gives a verbal reminder to the prompt on the whiteboard to help direct students to their task. The students are comfortable and look interested in sharing ideas and stories related to the prompt provided.

Ms. Jenkins is at the computer and asks the students to count, it is instantly evident that the students aren't randomly counting but they know their “number” on the attendance list so as the students count off, there is no #5, Ms. Jenkins confirms that student is absent and the count continues. It is an effective and quick morning activity to take care of logistics that arise in the elementary classroom. Upon finishing attendance the morning song is brought up on the screen, the students seem excited for this task, there is a bit of troubleshooting that must go on as Ms. Jenkins asks a student to check the Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) to make sure that the power is on. Once that is fixed, there is still no sound, and another student adjusts the volume knob. As the song plays, a student says “I love this song.” The class starts to harmonize along with the soundtrack. Ms. Jenkins lowers the computer volume and the room fills with the joyous sound of 4th graders singing in key and on time to “I'm not lost, I'm exploring,” by Jana Stanfield.

Figure #6: Classroom Chart for Class song “I'm Not Lost, I'm Exploring”
It is magical to witness. Ms. Jenkins has now joined the circle on the floor and is singing with the students. As they are nearing the end, Ms. Jenkins strikes a pose which prompts the students for an end of the song choreographed arm movement that expresses the joy and sentiment of the song.

This song has settled all the students into the fact that they are at school and the day is about to start. The students had been sharing with each other responses to the board prompt as they waited for everyone to arrive, now it is time for the class to share as a group in the circle. The interest in the group share is very typical of a fourth grade classroom, some students offer a word or phrase to quickly pass their turn to the next person, some students use the opportunity to seek attention from the group and add extraneous details, and yet a few students just don't know how to choose one idea, so they rattle off a list until Ms. Jenkins prompts them to move on.

Following the share aloud, the morning meeting continues with a zero day countdown. It is intended to be opposite of the 100 day celebration that many primary elementary classrooms celebrate. The students are working with money and subtracting the numbers of days they have been in school, until they reach 0. In helping a student with his subtraction Ms. Jenkins models the ones and the tens place backwards with her hands, this was my first interaction with such an activity, so I at first assumed that the backward representation on one's hands was just how the activity was done. However, the teacher catches her mistake and asks the students why they didn't correct her. She tries to fix her mistake and worries that she has just confused the class. As we look at this through a mindful lens it is evident that Ms. Jenkins can demonstrate a beginner's
mind and is non-judging of herself. She has accepted the mistake and is letting go rather than letting the mistake cloud the learning, but she is also aware that the mistake was on content that the students didn't recognize as wrong and weren't able to direct her to fix her error, so she has taken note of that to work on during math (acceptance).

Blended learning. The students in Room 9 are part of a grant within the school district to use chromebooks in the classroom to support blended learning. This added technology seems to be an engagement booster for the students but has not lowered the expectation of work productivity in the classroom. Each of the students has a chromebook that is theirs during the school day. They log-on and access their documents through the google portal which Ms. Jenkins can monitor, comment on, and grade in real-time. Using the IWB, Ms. Jenkins can easily redirect and prompt students to the appropriate task and assignment that is the focus of the lesson or activity. This week the students are writing manifestos. The students' first task is to find other manifestos that people have written to collect a source of mentor texts to guide their own writing and inspire them as to the content they find relevant for including in their personal manifestos. Ms. Jenkins has the Holstee Manifesto as a permanent poster displayed in the corner of the room that is her desk/work area.
Working on this writing project with the assistance of the chromebooks allows for Ms. Jenkins to give real-time feedback so that students who are moving quickly can receive edits and inspiration to keep making their work better while those students who aren't as motivated receive reminders from the teacher that she is aware of their progress or lack thereof. In my past experience, a writing project like this would have consumed a month's worth of time to insure that students were meeting with the teacher for conference time and getting the final piece ready to publish. Watching this work unfold at the differentiated pace while achieving an end product within a week was a testament to the added value technology can bring to a classroom.

Looking with a mindful lens there is a level of trust established with the students. The students in Ms. Jenkins' class feel independent in their learning and Ms. Jenkins respects that: “Remember to ask yourself, ‘am I on task?’ ‘am I learning math that is making me grow?’ If the answer is no, then make a new choice for yourself.” At the
same time there are processes Ms. Jenkins can use to check in on students’ progress as they work independently on their chromebooks. This progress check comes in three forms, 1) a shout out to the class to look at the work of other classmates that the teacher can display for everyone to see on the IWB, 2) a private conversation through text comments in the document shared by the teacher and the student or 3) a personal conversation where Ms. Jenkins is able to physically join a student in front of their chromebook by sitting down at their level and have a conversation about process and product and help the student determine their next steps. This variability of teacher-student interaction allows for Ms. Jenkins to trust in the work that the students are completing while making herself available to assist those students in the moment that need the most support.

Ms. Jenkins worked in the IT profession before becoming a teacher, so technology is not a new lens that she uses for looking at the classroom, she sees it as an integral part of society and makes learning in her classroom tied to real-world learning and experiences. She does have some questions about the amount of screen-time the students do experience in her classroom, but she expresses her observations that students have not given up traditional texts and students still enjoy grabbing a book and curling up in the reading corner for quiet reading time. This notion of time spent in front of a screen is a reflective process Ms. Jenkins is partaking in to make sure that she is not skewing the learning experience her students are having. In reflecting about screen time, she sees the technology as a tool that is also helping her students collaborate, “they problem-solve with each other, I am not the expert in the room, they learn new things or ask each other
first, so I have seen it as a relationship builder as well as a learning tool.” This exemplifies Ms. Jenkins' disposition of mindfulness as related to *letting go*. She is not concerned with the chromebook as a replacement for her role as teacher, but sees it as a resource – a replacement to a textbook but not as a replacement to the role of a teacher in facilitating learning environments for students.

**Teacher effectiveness evaluation.** During the week of observation, Ms. Jenkins was also visited by her peer observer as part of the Rocky Mountain school district's teacher effectiveness evaluation system. This was a coincidence of timing as the peer observer contacts the teacher the week of the observation to schedule a time for observation and follow up. Being in the class the entire week, I had come to know and understand the relationships that exist between the students and Ms. Jenkins. It was interesting to then watch the 45 minute window that the peer observer would use as the only reference point for what occurs in the classroom. This is what transpired:

Ms. Jenkins introduces the new social studies lesson with the content learning objective: *Today, I will explain the purposes of maps by looking at examples with my group, charting what we notice, and sharing with the class.* The students have access to teacher selected maps on their google drive. The groups are allowed to self-select the maps that they are going to chart and discuss based on interest. The five groups wind up being just the right size as 10 students were unexpectedly pulled for a gifted pull-out book club. As the students work, I wonder how this lesson would have unfolded or worked differently with the entire class present of 28 students, but with the current occupancy of 18 there are 5 groups of 3-4 students actively working on evaluating the
maps in the google drive. There is more chaos in the classroom during this time than there has been so far this week. The students are calling out and discussing events that are off topic more than has been witnessed during my time in the room thus far. Near the close of the lesson, the pull-out group returns and there is not a plan for what they are going to do. The abrupt change in schedule made Ms. Jenkins adapt at the start of the lesson when the students got pulled. However, she did not preemptively think about the students return during the same block of time. The peer observer is actively typing during the entire lesson and it is unclear of her perception of what is transpiring in the classroom.

The lesson itself, has the students looking at the maps and charting what can be learned from each type. The students actively chart their thoughts on large chart paper with markers as they peruse the map their group selected off of a computer screen. There is no conclusion to the lesson, as time has caught up with them and they must now leave for specials. The peer observer leaves without interacting with the teacher.

By the morning Ms. Jenkins has received her feedback review and is scheduled to have her debrief meeting with the peer observer the next day. Ms. Jenkins is not pleased with her feedback as the emphasis was criticism on lack of differentiation with the students. Ms. Jenkins voices her philosophy that choice for her students helps support engagement and whether students are reading at grade level or not they will be exposed to grade level content on end of year tests and high-stakes standardized assessments, so she is doing her students no favors to always keep them in groups where they only have access to text at their instructional reading level.
Differentiation has a different meaning based on the context and what population of students you are working with. The work on differentiation by Carol Tomlinson (1999) would support Ms. Jenkins point of view that students need to be exposed to on grade level content even if they are instructionally below that level. Ms. Jenkins’s focus on choice to keep her students engaged further enforces this notion.

Meeting with the peer observer at the follow up meeting, this is not the operational definition that Rocky Mountain school district is operating from. The peer observer had a handout for Ms. Jenkins that describes differentiation. The focus is on low level performers and English language learners (ELLs). The document read more like a best practice for scaffolding and working with ELLs however it was being defined as differentiation. The peer observer described her desire to have explicitly scaffolded groups looking at the maps instead of by choice or interest. So for example the lowest language kids would have gotten the more animated picture map rather than one that required more interpretation of textual data.

Upon being introduced to me at the follow up debrief meeting for Ms. Jenkins, the peer observer has nothing but great things to say of Ms. Jenkins. “She is an excellent teacher, you are lucky to be observing in her room.” This sends me mixed messages as the report they are busy reviewing just gave Ms. Jenkins 4 out 7 points which is approaching the standard. However, descriptively in conversation she is an excellent teacher.

In debriefing with Ms. Jenkins during the post observation interview here is her perspective on the peer observer-teacher evaluation process in her district:
I waver back and forth and I try to ignore [the expectations and demands] and I pretend like they don't exist sometimes and I do what I know is best for kids and I shut my door and I just try really hard to not worry about those things and then there seems to be certain weeks where it is just all being bombarded down upon me and so then I stop and I say oh my gosh I am a horrible teacher I don't know anything at all what am I doing here? I don't belong here, and then I try really hard to scramble and do what it is that someone is telling me to do and then I come back to this place of wait that is not what is best for kids I am not going to sacrifice my kids for that and then I go back to ignoring.

This demonstration of non-striving as a disposition of mindfulness is key to building language for empowering teachers in the teacher effectiveness discourse about what is effective teaching. Ms. Jenkins has displayed the dissonance that exists with trying to balance the best practice of student-centered instruction with the demands of the high-stakes evaluation system that she has to work within.

In follow up to her description, I asked Ms. Jenkins if she feels like there is a place in the system to allow her voice to be heard. She responded:

I think that it depends on your situation, I think just purely as a classroom teacher I don't have that opportunity. I think that being involved in blended learning and a grant and there being money attached to something and accountability for that money that has opened up a lot of other avenues for me to get my voice heard and those are the times when I feel that my voice is valued. So now I have worked really, really hard to get my face and my name in front of
people who will listen to me and who want to know what it really is like in the classroom. The feedback is valuable and I think that part of the problem is that the system is not catering to the needs of a variety of different teachers and a variety of different kids it is a one size fits all system.

**Becoming a teacher.** In probing Ms. Jenkins' philosophy further, I inquired about how she became a teacher and what the influencing factors upon her were. Ms. Jenkins did not complete a traditional teacher preparation program as she chose education as a second career. Ms. Jenkins participated in the Stanley British Primary teacher certification program which focuses on the practical aspects of teaching and learning as much as exploring theory. Student interns are placed in classrooms for an entire school year while participating in seminars and studies with other interns to discuss and reflect upon best practices.

During Ms. Jenkins' internship process, she came to meet a mentor that she still keeps in contact with and is a guide point on her educational journey. It was while working with this mentor teacher that Ms. Jenkins came to understand how to put into action with students the ideas and things like Kolhberg's (1981) *Stages of Moral Development* in a way that the students could own it and become a fabric of their classroom.

Ms. Jenkins also benefited from another mentor who was not formally assigned to her, her mother. As an educator, her mother empowered Ms. Jenkins to be self-sufficient and aware of how her actions affect other people. Ms. Jenkins described how her mother caught grief for using big words with her daughter all the time and making her get her
own coat and socks. Her mother's response was that she was not always going to be around to help her and if she continued to use big words Rachel would come to understand.

Ms. Jenkins went on to describe what she feels is missing in the status quo of teaching “I think that it has to do with teachers being trusted and being confident in their abilities, and I think that a lot of teachers aren’t confident in their abilities because nobody is empowering them to be.” Having a mindful disposition, Ms. Jenkins can reflect on the dissonance within the field and can come to understand that trust is central to being an effective teacher but currently the system is not supportive of empowering teachers to trust in themselves or support them with trust as professionals.

**Structural dimension.** Ms. Jenkins demonstrated during the week that I spent with her that she empowers herself to do what is best for her students. This sometimes meant not getting a break when a student was having troubles focusing on school because of at-home issues and a one-on-one conference was needed during the time the rest of the class was at specials. In addition, some breaks are assigned to building meetings and discussion of larger school issues, so planning for what the students would be working on or doing was completed for hours before and after school. So I asked Ms. Jenkins what are her intentions with the morning meetings and afternoon meetings that frame each day in her classroom?

A lot of my kids come from really unfortunate situations at home and they don't have stability and they don't have somebody who is even saying 'I love you, have a great day.' Sometimes they have been to three different places before they show
up at school. Sometimes they haven't eaten, in the winter they are probably cold because nobody has given them a jacket to wear. And so, there are so many different things going on. I have found that on days that we don't have time to do a morning meeting the entire day is completely ruined because [the students] don't have that time to focus and center themselves. For my morning meeting one of my biggest purposes is that it brings us together as a community it gets everybody kind of aligned with what it is that we are going to be doing. Our kids have a hard time code switching so it is really a good time for them to remember, 'ok, I am at school now, I am safe, this is a place where I can have happiness, I am going to be focused and have intention about what I am doing today,' like all of those things. At the end of the day when we do our praises and apologies, because a lot of our kids don't know how to make things right with each other or with themselves, it gives them that opportunity to leave school feeling like they accomplished something, they did what they needed to do for that day, and feeling good about coming back the next day too.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Ecology of the School</th>
<th>Choice of the Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08:35</td>
<td>Morning Bell</td>
<td>Students are to enter the building from the playground</td>
<td>Greets students at the door, has a welcome board with instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:40</td>
<td>Students expected to be settled in to class</td>
<td>Tardy time</td>
<td>Morning Meeting, attendance, daily tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 – 10:45</td>
<td>Morning Session</td>
<td></td>
<td>Math Block, project time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45 – 11:30</td>
<td>Student – Lunch/Recess</td>
<td>All Elementary students eat lunch and have recess at this</td>
<td>*Wish – to not be in meetings and could meet with students or</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teachers meet bi-weekly to discuss school initiatives, evaluate data points in the library as a whole group. Teachers are assigned individual meetings with their evaluator at this time as well. Offer reward time in the classroom with the teacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11:30 – 12:25</td>
<td>After Lunch Session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes transition time from lunch/recess and to the following special</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science/Social Studies Block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:25 – 1:10</td>
<td>Specials - Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Specials rotate on a trimester basis (music, drama, dance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This is considered the teachers' actual lunch time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eats lunch and plans and manages materials and lessons for the upcoming days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:10 – 2:40</td>
<td>Afternoon Session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read Aloud and Literacy Block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:40 – 3:30</td>
<td>Specials – Art/Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alternates daily between these two specials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The teacher meets with grade level colleague to discuss lessons, students,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>blended learning grant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 – 4:00</td>
<td>End of Day Routine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students are lined up and ready for dismissal on the playground by 4pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Closing Meeting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ms. Jenkins is able to carefully navigate the schedule provided to her for the school year. There are two large blocks of uninterrupted time in the morning and afternoon as her more small chunks of time are less disruptive as they are connected to the lunch/recess block and the small time in the day prior to dismissal. The students
seem to stay engaged in the content and have ample time to work with ideas and do not have to abruptly transition in and out of their learning process throughout the day.

**Summary.** Through Ms. Jenkins' ritual and routine of framing the day she is living the attitudinal factors of mindfulness with her students without ever giving that language. The opportunity to center oneself for the daily tasks through the morning meeting allows students to *let go* of their out of school burdens, even if it is only for a couple of hours. It teaches *acceptance, patience, and trust* in one another. The opportunity to be one community of learners helps to dilute the need to strive and compete but work together even if everyone is on a different path in their learning. Even though the time is short the end of day closing meeting also allows for students to find closure and transition to whatever awaits them after school. Each day serves to be *accepted* as just that – a completed day at school and there is no over extension of blame or distrust between Ms. Jenkins or the students that a bad choice made on Tuesday will influence my learning goals on Friday.
Marisela Acosta

This is Ms. Acosta's third year at Purple Mountain k-12 Academy. This is her first full time teaching position after spending many years as a paraprofessional in the school district and returning to school herself to finish her degree and get her teaching license. Ms. Acosta came to an urban arts integrated school based on the opportunity available at the time and also from her own experience of raising her son in a Rocky Mountain school district neighborhood school. “I knew the kids, I knew their stories, I knew what it was like to be in their classroom.” A mentor teacher also told Ms. Acosta: “those children deserve you, they need someone who is passionate and who sees the best in what they do and they need someone who is not going into their lives feeling bad for them or expecting less of them because of their situation, but someone who goes in expecting more of them despite their situation.” This description encapsulates the nurtured feeling one gets as being part of Ms. Acosta's classroom.

The student experience. Ms. Acosta's classroom is the first classroom on the west side of the hallway as the intermediate students enter the Purple Mountain k-12 Academy building in the morning from the playground. Ms. Acosta is able to greet her students who actively put their jackets and backpacks away in the hallway lockers while reconnecting and checking in with former students who are now in 4th and 5th grade but have to pass her room to get to their new classrooms. There is a joy in the connections that Ms. Acosta makes with students that has students greeting and checking in with her even if they were never students in her class. Every student that is currently in Ms. Acosta's class is personally greeted by her with the phrase “Ohayou Gozaimasu” (Good
Morning in Japanese - they are studying Asia and are currently looking at the culture and country of Japan). The greeting is accompanied by a hand bump or a hand shake that is exchanged with both the teacher and the student making eye contact. It is a very personal touch that reminds each student that they matter and that their teacher is looking forward to their day together.

Upon entering Ms. Acosta's room you are not confronted with rows of tables and chairs. A division of tile-laminate flooring and carpet exists as in all the other classrooms in the hall. All the students are huddling onto the tile-laminate area and are either sitting on the floor or have scooted over a chair or stool. There are a few students who have selected to sit on the desk tops of the few desks in the room. The room feels like it is in the basement as the morning sun is not shining through the windows that face west.

There is some soft light that does come through the windows but it creates the feeling of a calming hug rather than a good morning wake me up.

The desks are modular and are in a trapezoid shape so that six of them together form a circle. There are chairs to the side of the room that have not been unstacked at the start of the day. The back corner of the room has a leather recliner and a wooden chair that is set up in front of an open space of carpet to be used as a reading area.

The students are all facing the whiteboard and squeezing into any space they can find on the tile. There was no morning greeting sign in the hall and there are no directions awaiting the students in the room, however after being greeted by Ms. Acosta, everyone seems to know their expectation that they are to congregate at the front of the room to get the day started. When Ms. Acosta enters at the start of the day, the students
are busy chatting with a neighbor and she starts the task of taking attendance. This is not the most efficient use of time, but the students do not seem bored with the process and have even come to enjoy the same answer that one student always gives “Chocolate.” Ms. Acosta asks the class “What is your Favorite Dessert?” on Monday, “What is your Favorite Movie?” on Tuesday, “What is your Favorite Sport? on Wednesday, etc. The students expect this ritual and so it is a routine of the day even if it is not the most academic use of time.

Living arts integration. Ms. Acosta proceeds to prepare for the morning song. The students sing the same song every morning for a month. Being the first full week of November, the students have only been working with the song “California Dreamin'” for a couple of days. Ms. Acosta has decided to bring in her flute to play the interlude live for the students as they sing. The students are following along with the song and singing but become completely captivated by their teacher as she plays the flute during the interlude. There is spontaneous applause when she finishes.

Following the morning song, the students are going to transition to the back corner of the room to the carpet in front of the chairs. Ms. Acosta uses physical descriptions to release the students to manage the chaos of all 29 students moving at once. “If you have stripes on you can meet me in the back.” The students are allowed to grab their sketchbook as they reposition themselves to the back of the room. The students are continuing their read aloud with the teacher. During this time, students are allowed to sketch what it is they are hearing in the story. The teacher honors the
illustrative process as a tool for comprehension as much as oral or written words would be expected in a 3rd grade classroom.

Figure #8: Visualization expectations and examples

About half the class has decided to use their sketchbook during read aloud time. Others are content to listen and make eye contact with the teacher while still a few are on the periphery of the group. One student displays very high kinesthetic needs as he stays at the back of the group during read aloud he is able to be a part of the group and listen without distracting other students with his body movements that seem to settle and focus him. A couple of students are not wanting to be on task, Ms. Acosta lets them make their first choice and then separates them when they demonstrate that they cannot keep focus sitting next to each other.
There is a constant dialog in the classroom, seldom a quiet moment. This keeps Ms. Acosta connected to her students. The sense of honoring each other is not just a wish but a lived reality: “listen to my words and honor them.” “I can honor that choice.” The work groups are very fluid in the classroom. As there are no desks marked with ownership, the students navigate to workspaces based on need and task. Some students stand all day without sitting down, while others migrate to different seats based on who is around. These seats include working on the floor sprawled out, huddling underneath desks, sitting in a chair next to a table or desk or standing. Every student seems to understand their personal needs for learning and as Ms. Acosta continually guides the content or expectation of the time period the students work to complete assignments while staying socially engaged with each other. At times there is a spontaneous chorus of song that was inspired by a comment from Ms. Acosta or a connection made by the students. “I'm glad that I rub off on you, that you think of singing when I say phrases.”

This love of music infuses the classroom, from the start of the day with the morning song to the rhythmic harmony that keeps the class moving from task to task all day long. Listening to Ms. Acosta talk to children, there is a definite clarity in her feedback to children. No praise is false or shallow, every interaction is purposeful and has meaning for engaging the student in their own learning process. “I see where you wanted to use a better word, but on this Daily Oral Language task, I was assessing you on 4 things.” “You got full points but we can always grow as learners and this is where I want you to grow.”
Teaching and learning. The pace of students working and completing work in the classroom is varied. However, the expectation is to get the teacher's approval that work is complete, so many students who work quickly spend their time waiting in line for teacher feedback. Often this feedback leads to revision or more work, so these students are growing. For a handful of students they never complete their work or get in line for the teacher's feedback, so the period ends and they put their work in the pile. The day is broken into many chunks of 45 minutes, I asked Ms. Acosta how this affects her planning and processing of activities. She expressed a desire to not be carting kids off from place to place all day. By the time we get settled and engaged in a task it is time to clean up and move on. The restriction is being a k-12 school that shares the specials staff with the entire school, their schedules are based off of periods and that works for them.

I would like, I mean if I am totally self serving and that it is my own world, I would like to have art that is at a time that is conducive to our learning, like I would be able to at least say like today can I have the art time at 1:15? Everyone would be able to sign up for times that makes the arts integration piece more seamless for students and their learning.

Structural dimension.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Choice of the Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08:35</td>
<td>Morning Bell</td>
<td>Student are to enter the building from the playground</td>
<td>Greets students at the door with eye contact and a handshake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:40</td>
<td>Students expected to be settled into classrooms</td>
<td>Tardy Time</td>
<td>Singing of the Monthly Song, attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 –</td>
<td>Morning Session</td>
<td></td>
<td>Literacy and Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45</td>
<td>Student – Lunch/Recess</td>
<td>All Elementary students eat lunch and have recess at this time; Teachers meet bi-weekly to discuss school initiatives, evaluate data points in the library as a whole group, Teachers are assigned individual meetings with their evaluator at this time as well.</td>
<td>alternate in connection with the larger conceptual lens connection of the year-long study of Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45 – 11:30</td>
<td>After Lunch Session</td>
<td>Includes transition time from lunch/recess and to the following special.</td>
<td>Author Study (observed Allan Say in connection with the cultural study of Japan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30 – 12:25</td>
<td>Specials – Drama</td>
<td>Specials rotate on a trimester basis between drama, music and dance. Is considered the Teacher's actual lunch period</td>
<td>Often left campus to get food for lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:25 – 1:10</td>
<td>Afternoon Session 1</td>
<td>Electricity was the unit of study while I was observing; District Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:10 – 1:50</td>
<td>Library/Art Specials</td>
<td>Teacher used this time to continue eating lunch, plan lessons and ready materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:50 – 2:40</td>
<td>Afternoon Session 2 &amp; End of Day</td>
<td>Library and Art alternate daily throughout the school year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:40 – 4:00</td>
<td></td>
<td>Students are expected to be lined up and ready for dismissal on the playground by</td>
<td>Conclusion of lessons, tasks of the day, clean up and closure to learning as sometimes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even with the time constraints placed on the class by the schedule, Ms. Acosta has infused the learning process with arts-integration. Spending the week with Ms. Acosta arts-integration was the backbone of all the experiences the students had from illustrating their reading response, to making yarn faces after drawing their self-portraits in a mirror to go with their “I am” poems. The students use art and understand the process as a demonstration of their learning and not just as a craft experience.

I did not get to observe the process but the finished products of earlier arts-integration units were observed with the students’ pinch pots for their tea tour as they study Asia for the year, they made props that supported the ABC books they wrote for their buddy kindergarten class, related to a theme they have a passion for. To the students of Ms. Acosta's class, art is a natural form of expression that demonstrates learning. In observing their actions over the week, not a single student shied away from participating in a project or from sharing their work with the class. In a third grade class this is very uncommon.

**Becoming a teacher.** Following the week of observation, I interviewed Ms. Acosta to delve deeper into how she became the teacher that she is. She credited many mentors that she had working at the school where she was a paraprofessional and the

| 4:00pm | work is left out and in progress as transition from room to room is a staple of the day following the lunch/recess break for kids |

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innate trust they had in her (even though she did not have it in herself) that she was a natural teacher that needed her own classroom.

The first teacher I worked with [as a para] was Mr. Bakken, he said you really need your own classroom and I was like, giggle, yeah right that is funny, no one is going to let me be in charge of children.

But through her second placement with teachers at the school half-time in 1st grade and half-time in 3rd grade a “beautiful world” was opened for her. The encouragement of those teachers and the principal sent her back to school in the Para-to-Teach program, where she could stay working with students during the day and then complete her bachelor's degree in elementary education and literacy in the afternoons and evenings. Through this process Ms. Acosta was completing a more traditional teacher education program but had access to practitioners in the school that took me under their wings and really helped me to see what it takes to be a great teacher and showed me more than just instruction they showed me organization, love of learning and how to meet kids where they are and push them into greater things. The community of the entire school was really a supportive group of parents, students, teachers and the principal really pushed me forward to getting my certification. It was during that time that I decided that teaching is what I needed to do and it spoke to my heart and made me happy and I never felt like I had to go to work and I never griped about getting up and going to work in the morning whereas I did with other things.
Working in this supportive setting while getting her degree, Ms. Acosta was treated like an equal and a peer. The first grade teacher became a teaching team that really collaborated to support the students in the classroom. Ms. Acosta was given entire groups of students to work with and was treated like a “co-teacher in the classroom and his trust in me, we relied on each other a lot in that classroom and I think that I couldn’t have done this without him and I honestly think there were times when he couldn’t have done it without me.” That relationship and trust built up Ms. Acosta’s confidence in working with students and coming to understand her own strengths and talents as an educator. The first grade teacher was not the only mentor that supported Ms. Acosta’s growth. There was a fourth grade teacher who wasn’t taking interns anymore, but “saw something” in Ms. Acosta and welcomed her into her room for her formal internship teaching experience. By that time Ms. Acosta “felt secure in [her] own educational beliefs to take really from the fourth grade teacher what she was brilliant at and leave behind those things that were lacking or stuck too much in tradition.” This level of support through mentorship but also empowerment in one’s own abilities is a theme to be further explored in Chapter Five.

Seeing Ms. Acosta construct learning experiences for her students with arts-integration so fluidly, I asked her to explain why she feels that other colleagues feel the process is more “like rocket science.” She started with commenting on the state of education:

the way education is headed now with seeing children as data points instead of seeing children as humans, we are in a subjective area. So when you take
something like arts and give it to people who are looking to plot things it is hard to plot, so I can plot a reading score, it is hard to plot the creativity that comes out of yarn faces. What am I expecting from a yarn face? I just want you to show me how you see yourself and use yarn to help you do that, it's not a hidden message, I am not trying to aha you, I just want to see what you do, where does your patience level go? Where is your skill level? What do you value in yourself? As well, it is very interesting to see art as an expression of who they are.

Some children do not read well but they are amazing artists, some children are not great mathematicians but they are amazing artists so where in all of this does arts happen? Arts in my mind, happens every single day there is an opportunity for art in every single lesson, even some of those really retched boring math lessons, even in the science that we do, even in especially social studies, in my mind goes without saying but again um for me its been ingrained in me that is how children learn and that is how they can express themselves and that is how they can demonstrate learning but it is harder to quantify and give it a score and a singular value as a demonstration of learning. Where as if you fill out a form on this paper, that shows me exactly what you know versus having a conversation with a student who can explain in very great detail exactly what his illustration is demonstrating from this point in history.

This intention about arts-integration on the part of Ms. Acosta was operationalized every day I observed in her classroom. Conversation was the vehicle for learning whether students were in small groups or one-on-one conversing with the
teacher. The descriptive nature of being able to describe learning was enhanced by the students’ ability to demonstrate their understanding in a multitude of ways. Everything was not art, but there were multiple forms of representation that students experienced to understand that learning didn't just have to evolve in a single process or pattern.

To understand Ms. Acosta further, I asked “what does teaching mean to you?” She reiterated this fact that “teaching is not about a data point.”

children come to me every single day with buckets of worry and buckets of woe that they carry from home and sometimes its not eating breakfast and sometimes its their not getting their social and emotional needs met and sometimes their grandpa is in jail and sometimes they are just happy to be in a safe place and some kids are just there ready to learn. They don't come to me just ready to learn they come to me with I didn't eat breakfast and I need to learn, they come to me with I have ADD and I can't sit still long enough to learn, and they come to me with my dad beats me up every weekend about having been help back in first grade and I'm ready to learn. So to me, teaching is about creating love and safety for children, they have to feel loved and they have to feel safe. And if they don't feel loved or safe, they can't learn no matter what you do. No matter how you talk to them, and no matter how you treat them, if they don't feel loved and they don't feel safe, they cannot learn.

They don't have a desire to want to learn and that is what my job is to teach them how to want to learn and to make mistakes and that being wrong is even better and to learn from your failures and to grow every chance you get
because we can all grow in so many different ways, even if you get 100% correct on a test there are still ways for you to grow. That doesn't stop you, you just demonstrated knowledge here it doesn't mean you know everything. And so its love and safety and then working hard in order to grow, that's what [teaching] is.

**Summary.** This viewpoint of teaching embodies the seven attitudinal factors of mindfulness. Ms. Acosta starts from a place of *acceptance* of what her students bring to the classroom and that every one of them is there to learn and grow. Her process for instilling a love of learning embodies a *beginner's mind* and allows for *trust* and *patience* in the process. These are certainly not elements that can be turned into data points but they are elements that make coming to her classroom daily a desired event and the want to learn and come to school is a pleasure and a passion not another worry in the bucket.

Ms. Acosta shared with me anecdotes that she has received from parents thanking her for what she does. Their students had not wanted to come to school, it was always a chore to get them up and ready and now the students are hassling the parents to make sure they are not late or tardy. This community that is built within the classroom walls of room 4 with Ms. Acosta is contagious.

Parker Palmer (1998) reminds us that we teach who we are. By witnessing Ms. Acosta's actions and listening to Ms. Acosta's words that serve to create a learning environment built on *trust, patience, acceptance, beginner's mind, letting go* and *non-striving*, Ms. Acosta embodies the disposition of mindfulness. This embodiment helped to identify language discussed in Chapter Five that can be used to describe what is effective teaching.
Lindsay Newton

This is Ms. Newton's third year teaching at Purple Mountain k-12 Academy. This is her first full time teaching position after graduating her degree program in education. Not always sure education was her career path, Ms. Newton has developed a love and bond with kindergarten that strengthened during her student teaching experience with an inspirational mentor who is well-known and respected in the Rocky Mountain school district and local community.

The primary floor is above the intermediate floor and the entrance flows directly from the playground. In the morning all the primary grades line up near the portico outside on the playground and await their teacher. Ms. Newton greets her class with smiles and discusses with parents issues or topics that they feel relevant to bring to her attention. There is no system for the lines to go inside, when the teacher considers her class ready, they simply join the stream of classes walking inside into the primary hallway. The primary hallway is much more chaotic then the intermediate hallway as all seven classes enter at once to put their jackets and backpacks into the cubbies. The lockers that used to reside in the hallway from when the school was a middle school, have been removed and have been replaced with low cubby holes that the k-2 students can easily reach and access. Teachers work with the paraprofessionals in the hall to help facilitate the arduous task of getting 5 – 8 year olds quickly out of their jackets. The second graders show the most independence and are settled into their classrooms the quickest.
The discovery of kindergarten. Upon entering Ms. Newton's classroom one is instantly greeted with the morning sun through an entire wall of east facing windows that line the length of the classroom that feels twice as long as the classrooms downstairs in the intermediate wing. The floor is completely tile-laminate across the whole space and nooks and work areas are divided up with furniture and area rugs.

As the students enter the room, they all self-select tasks of interest. The students choose to work at the four computers in the back, reading books at the front carpet area, or using art supplies and drawing in the art area. The students seem very comfortable with each other and with the expectations in the classroom. No one is left wondering or confused about what to do. The students are all smiling and laughing and getting to task on things that interest them most. As the week progressed, there were a handful of students that always selected the same task in the morning but for the most part, the students vary their tasks and engage in a variety of interesting activities to get their day started.
To transition out of this choice time, Ms. Newton announces “5 minute warning” in a song type lilt. The class chorally responds “5 minute warning.” This notification doesn't immediately start a cleanup process by the students, but as the week progressed it is evident that this warning does help students get to a place where transition to another task is not so jarring. After the 5 minutes has passed the expectation is to clean up and get oneself to the front carpet area. Some kids are more attentive than others. Some kids would clean all day, while others leave their mess for friends to pick up. Very typical kindergarten behavior.

![Carpet Area](image)

**Figure # 10: Carpet Area**

Upon arriving to the carpet, Ms. Newton introduces me to the class as a safe adult that will be with the class all week. The kids offer smiles and hellos. Then it is off to task. When the students initially come to the carpet they are sitting in rows, each student selecting a square printed on the carpet to sit on. As they review homework that students brought in, the students look at the wall to see what is projected by the document camera.
This allows for all the students to see what is being shared without disruption from the students that they can't see or don't know what is being shared. This would have been a much needed tool to facilitate easy visibility of student products when I was in my own classroom.

Following the share and comparison of two students family homework projects the teacher does a kinesthetic brain break with the students and has them re-sit on the carpet in a rectangle around the perimeter. The call and response is so integral to the classroom that all the students understand the meaning and move to the next task. There is no adult guidance going further than the initiating signal.

For a class of kindergärtners, Ms. Newton puts her focus on discovery and play. However, there are more and more academic demands that are being placed upon the kindergarten classroom by the administration and the district. Ms. Newton balances the expectations well by utilizing the interest and discovery of her students to make connections to broader concepts. During the week the students had been using tissue paper in an art project and these long scraps started to be an inspiration for dramatic play as well. Ms. Newton took advantage of this interest and introduced a fan as a tool to use to discover and inquire about this material. The students started carrying out investigations about the materials by using the fan. Discovering that the tissue paper would fly far and fast across the carpet area. Then the students wanted to try other materials so they removed the tulle bandannas that had been hanging in the window. This investigation demonstrates Ms. Newton’s embodiment of beginner’s mind, as she is able to enter into the learning through discovery and play with the children rather than
relying on a preset lesson to explore the science concepts being introduced through the materials and tools available to students.

![Figure # 11: Window with tulle squares of color](image)

They discovered that this fabric would catch the wind and would float to the ground softly. The students then started to change the tissue paper, by crumpling it into balls to make it denser. All of this discovery supports 21st century and science inquiry thinking but it does not emerge from a planned activity. It was a spontaneous exploration that evolved out of student interest and a responsive teacher who reacted to her students in the moment.

To Ms. Newton teaching is:

with kindergarten teaching means their exploration, them making discoveries – like [one girl], I have a perfect like a sequence of pictures, [the students] took out the paint. It was the first time of the year that we took out the paint and honestly it was probably like the second week of school because the faster I teach them how to do it, then the more independent the class becomes. [The student] started to paint her hands and then she was doing like the colored strips and then she put her hand down on the paper and then her face is like glowing in this picture and it is just those opportunities for children to learn.
The week I observed was a lens into discovery learning for students. Through large chunks of time that were not afforded the schedule of the intermediate classes observed, the kindergarteners were able to engage in activities of interest and were directed by the teacher when the teacher saw a teachable moment to guide the discovery. Otherwise, the students’ interaction with the environment and materials available to them served to be the guiding forces that lead to learning opportunities and conversations between students.

**Becoming a facilitator of wonder.** In the follow up interview to the week of observation I inquired about how Ms. Newton came to her educational philosophy and intentions about how her classroom is set up. She gave all the credit to her mentor from her student teacher experience. Ms. Teresa Martinez (pseudonym) is a well-known and respected kindergarten teacher in the Rocky Mountain school district.

I student taught with Ms. Martinez and she is everything that I believed in [with education]. She pushes boundaries. I don’t feel guilty about not being extremely academic because [the students] are still learning. A lot of the child-centered, if they are engaging in a choice and making a learning opportunity on their own then what can you do?

I get in a little trouble with first grade because at the end of the year, I have to pull the students back in, because they are not given as many choice opportunities once they continue on. My goal for these kids is to be confident and not be afraid to ask questions and not be afraid to make mistakes, because mistakes are the windows to discovery. To never be afraid to ask questions and to
take charge of what they want to find out and then also if you don't care about learning about ladybugs, speak up. Because there is always another option.

Ms. Newton's philosophy is very similar to Ms. Acosta and Ms. Jenkins in that students are on a journey of learning and mistakes are opportunities to explore. Being in Ms. Newton's kindergarten class felt very authentic and how five year olds should be able to experience and make meaning of their world. However through conversation and observation it was evident that there were pressures pushing on Ms. Newton to infuse more academics and rigid structure onto her day so we discussed this in the interview.

I feel that administration really truly love to walk in and see the students and to hear what we are doing, but they are being pushed from higher than they are to do the data and they feel that that is what the district wants and they need to make sure that is what is happening. I mean data is important if you use it in a meaningful way, but I think because they are being pushed on minutes for this and minutes for that and following through with this so I can give it to my boss that is where I think mixed messages come from. We are told, that [the admin] care about the arts and I don't want this to just be data, but as teachers we feel that ok well I have to do all of this data so how am I going to have time to do the arts?

The contrast observed in how Ms. Newton's classroom operated and what was occurring in the other kindergarten classroom next door, gave some insight into the academic demands that are being placed on the kindergarten teachers but that Ms.
Newton doesn’t always comply with. In the neighboring kindergarten classroom, students were constantly working in small groups to complete assignments or tasks that captured their thinking on Thinking Maps that are used k-12 in the school as graphic organizers for learning. Ms. Newton had representations of learning through this process on display in her room but they were mainly teacher made charts that represented one lesson or task. In the opposing kindergarten classroom students were expected to display their learning in a formal systematic way much like an intermediate student would be expected to. Ms. Newton demonstrated confidence in herself that documentation through observation, photography and anecdotes served to capture the learning of her students in her classroom.

**Structural dimension.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Ecology of the School</th>
<th>Choice of the Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08:35</td>
<td>Greet students lined up on the playground</td>
<td>All primary students line up by class near the portico on the playground</td>
<td>Talks with parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:40</td>
<td>Enter the school building</td>
<td>All of primary has entered the hallway at once to place jackets and backpacks in cubbies before going into the classroom</td>
<td>Collects homework and monitors behavior but expects independence of her kindergartners to put away their belongings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:45 – 9:00</td>
<td>Choice Start to the day</td>
<td>Used to be ArtStart – (which is one of the reasons the school was selected). This school year ArtStart is not supported by the administration being replaced with the goal of starting</td>
<td>The teacher has kept the element of choice from ArtStart and has students pick from centers: computers, reading corner, art table, and writing on the dry erase board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 – 10:00</td>
<td>Morning Session</td>
<td>Morning Meeting, songs, sharing of homework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 – 10:45</td>
<td>Art/Library</td>
<td>Alternates daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 10:45 – 11:30 | Student – lunch/recess  
Teacher – meeting time | All Elementary students eat lunch and have recess at this time; Teachers meet bi-weekly to discuss school initiatives, evaluate data points in the library as a whole group, Teachers are assigned individual meetings with their evaluator at this time as well. |
| 11:30 – 1:55  | Afternoon Session                             | Teacher kept saying that this week she wasn’t overly academic – not sure how this time would have been used differently in a more academic sense. What was observed was open exploration and discovery with materials in the room guided by questions and provocations of new materials by the teacher |
| 1:55 – 2:40   | Specials - Music                              | Alternates by trimester between music, dance and drama               |
| 2:40 – 4:00   | Explore time block and Dismissal             | The lining up outside seemed less of a                               |
|              |                                               | During this explore time the students are                         |
pressure for the primary grades as their access to the playground from their hallway was so short. In addition, the students who ride the bus, leave with the para before the rest of the class, so the students who go outside to wait for pick up are a smaller number.

encouraged to take the role of teacher and are allowed to have other students sign up for their “session” to learn how to do something that the student wants to share or teach to others.

Ms. Newton kept explaining that she could be more academic if I needed her to be. I told her I was just here to observe what it is she does. The witnessed experience of discovery and exploration connects directly to what this researcher expects to see in a kindergarten classroom. Ms. Newton spoke to her influences from her mentor teacher about her philosophy around kindergarten instruction. The pressures that Ms. Newton feels to be more academic in her instruction would be interesting to witness and compare, however, knowing that her passion is to provide the experience witnessed and described here serve to provide commentary on the impact of standardization on schools and programming.

During the week with Ms. Newton I was informed of the directive that ArtStart was not permitted to be part of the primary school day at Purple Mountain k-12 Academy this year as the focus was shifting to more academics and time to collect data points. At the time of selecting Purple Mountain in the spring of 2013 and working to gain RRB approval with the district one of the highlighted opportunities in getting to observe at
Purple Mountain was the strong sense of arts integration and the dedication to this mission through ArtStart. ArtStart was used as a means to expose students to various mediums and forms of representation outside of content or product driven situations so that students could explore themselves in relation to the art medium or process and come to form an identity with it.

As pressure from the Rocky Mountain school district continued to mount over the summer, the fall of 2013 turned out to be a time of turmoil and unrest within the Purple Mountain school building as the focus was shifting to data analysis and tracking students since the annual student growth objectives for the school had not miraculously changed over the five years the school had been operating. Adding to the landscape again that standardization of student outcomes and teacher effectiveness evaluation and not providing the entire picture of what is quality teaching in the k-12 classroom.

Summary. Ms. Newton operates from a state of beginner's mind as she explores materials for meaning with the students as exemplified with the tissue paper and the fan. She is not trying to frame the learning and put students in a box but she is patient and listens to what are the passions and interests of the students and she follows them on that exploration. This trust in learning that is driven by the students is becoming more rare as students are being exposed to more and more forced learning environments that aim at getting results on standardized assessments and have teachers evaluated by success at performing to tasks and expectations in a box. Ms. Newton spoke of and demonstrated her trust in the learning process and the notion that if students are engaged and excited about the content and process of their learning that they will make meaningful
connections which is the purpose of kindergarten. This mindful lens of *beginner’s mind, patience, and trust* are all aspects that Ms. Newton could be empowered to bring to the table of teacher effectiveness evaluation discussions with the codified language discussed in Chapter Five.

**Quantitative mixed-design ANOVA Analysis**

This is an embedded mixed method design, while being a participant-observer in the classroom of three high mindful attention awareness disposition teachers, I also obtained from the school district beginning of the year (BOY) and middle of the year (MOY) reading test scores to see what differences could be found across groups of teachers with similar mindful attention awareness disposition. The current process for evaluating teacher effectiveness includes a quantitative data lens. By just presenting the qualitative data related to these mindful aware teachers, the *thematics* presented in Chapter Five might not serve to add to the teacher effectiveness dialog because the picture would not be complete. The analysis of secondary student outcome data serves to explore what we know before we experience the classrooms of these mindful teachers.

In collecting the mindful attention awareness survey data at the start of the school year, there were only two levels of mindful disposition that emerged. Teachers were either high in disposition (mean score over 4) or low (mean score between 3 and 4). This led to a modification of the analysis to a 2x(2) mixed-design ANOVA from an anticipated 3x(2) mixed-design ANOVA at the proposal stage of research.

The null hypotheses was that there would be no statistically significant main effect of teacher level of mindful attention awareness and time on student test scores due
to the literature about flaws that emerge in the assumptions when using value-added models (VAM) to measure teacher effectiveness (Koretz, 2008). VAMs were initially used to account for the various attributes that could affect student growth beyond the classroom (Braun, 2005; Darling-Hammond et al., 2012; McCaffrey et al., 2005). In Rocky Mountain school district student growth outcomes are being used as a portion of evaluating teacher effectiveness and this is what will become 50% of a teacher's performance rating in the 2014-2015 school year under Colorado SB 10-191 (2010).

As far as interaction, it was unknown if there would be a statistically significant interaction between teacher level of mindful attention awareness and time on student test score and thus is further reason for this embedded mixed method study. Table 3 provides 2x(2) mixed-design ANOVA Analysis.

Table 3. Analysis of Variance Summary Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial eta-squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group--Mindful</td>
<td>218467.68</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>218467.68</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>0.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (Group Mindful)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Score</td>
<td>44105.11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>44105.11</td>
<td>5.85</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>0.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Score x Group Mindful</td>
<td>2509.19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2509.19</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.565</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (Reading Score)</td>
<td>1003203.89</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>7542.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group/Mindful</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Mindful Attention of Teacher</td>
<td>447.74</td>
<td>177.655</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Mindful Attention</td>
<td>Low Mindful Attention</td>
<td>WinterScore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of Teacher</td>
<td>384.74</td>
<td>467.21</td>
<td>336.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>163.086</td>
<td>215.400</td>
<td>161.086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>415.54</td>
<td>441.24</td>
<td>378.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>172.644</td>
<td>204.473</td>
<td>162.165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assumptions were tested and met. Independence is assumed as students take the test individually on computer and the data was accessed through the district and not directly through the classroom teacher. Normality was met with skewness values between -.5 and +.5. Two outliers were identified and removed from analyses. Homogeneity of Variance was met using Levene’s test. Sphericity is assumed because this is a 2x(2) design and corrections are only calculated for three or more levels in a repeated measure. Thus the F-ratio calculated can be trusted and interpreted.

A 2x(2) repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of teacher mindful attention awareness disposition on secondary student outcome data. There was no statistically significant effect of teacher disposition on student outcome, $F_{1, 133} = .33, p = .565$, and there was no statistically significant interaction between teacher disposition and time $F_{1, 133} = 3.47, p = .065$. There was significant change over time, $F_{1, 133} = 5.85, p = .017$.

This would suggest that teacher disposition has no significant effect on standardized student outcome data as the pattern of change over time did not differ significantly between teachers in the low and high mindful attention awareness groups.
Summary

These three teachers all demonstrated a reflective piece to their teaching practice where they constantly analyze what they know to be best practice for their students while navigating the structural and procedural elements of the school that they have to work within. Each of the three classrooms tell a different story. The experience is not a cookie cutter template that mirrors the others, but shows the diversity that is classroom teaching. Guided by their own experience, support from mentors, and a disposition of mindfulness these teachers demonstrate effective teaching in that their first objective is always to know and understand the student who is there to learn.

All three teachers value data and use it meaningfully to inform their instruction and practice with students, but they also validate who their students are. In being present in the moment, they take their lessons where they need to go to meet students at their level and work to operate their classrooms in a non-striving manner. This practice is not easily captured on a teacher effectiveness rubric that is concerned with checking off evidence of objectives, paced lessons and procedural elements. Those things are important, but what is missing is the voice of the educator in the process as a valued professional. Two of the three teachers spoke to the lack of empowerment that teachers are provided in the current push for discussing students as data points and with limited time focused on discussing optimal learning experiences for students. The third teacher did not speak to the lack of empowerment but gave a lens to the mixed messages that are being given by administration as to whether arts-integration or data point collection is the focus of the school learning environment.
Taking the descriptions of these three teachers learning environments, the informal and formal interviews, the observations and artifacts observed an exploration into the themes that emerged will be explored in Chapter Five. What is it that can be identified from these experiences that can add to the literature about what it means to be an effective teacher? Using the lens of mindful disposition, these teachers have exemplified behaviors that are essential to consider when evaluating learning environments for students in an age of accountability.
Chapter Five: Thematics and Implications of This Study

Overview of the Study

As teachers in Colorado prepare to start the 2014-2015 school year when S.B. 10-191 (2010) will be fully implemented, there is a lot of stress on how teacher effectiveness frameworks and scores will affect teachers’ jobs and the roles that they play with students. The bill is written to have fifty percent of teacher effectiveness be determined by student outcome scores, while the other fifty percent determined by observational data collected by supervisors and peer observers. In setting out to do this study, what was missing from the framework of teacher effectiveness in Colorado was a place for the teacher's voice to be heard respecting them as a professional in their own field. This study served to explore through mixed method embedded design, what do student outcome scores reveal about the teachers and what occurs in classrooms of teachers with a high mindful disposition that might help to identify language or a lens for adding teacher voice and empowerment to the process of evaluating teacher effectiveness. The data collected in this study were mainly presented in Chapter Four, here in Chapter Five some quotes are included in order to help facilitate the narrative as well.

In the Rocky Mountain school district, a pilot of a teacher effectiveness framework has been taking place for the last three years. This school district was selected in this study because they have systems in place ahead of the coming school year that would help to shed light on what is working and where are the possible gaps in
empowering teacher voice in the framework for evaluating teacher effectiveness. The evaluation tool used in Rocky Mountain school district evaluates teachers on two domains: Learning Environment and Instruction (LEAP, 2013). Within the domains the expectation focuses on: Positive Classroom Culture and Climate, Effective Classroom Management, Masterful Content Delivery and High-Impact Instructional Moves. These domains and expectations are great descriptors of effective teaching and are a framework that is to be respected. However, there is no room for voice in the framework as the tool is developed as a checklist that is utilized during small 45 minute observation windows four times a year.

As a former elementary classroom teacher, it is well understood that all best laid plans are great when you get to implement them exactly to plan but there are many variables at play in the classroom: 1) who are the students, 2) how prepared for learning are they on any given day, 3) school calendar and structure of alternate events or calendars, and 4) what are the interests and connections that students make to the learning, just to name a few. In reading over the evaluation framework in the district there is an obvious lack of teachers’ voice to describe and inform observers about the educational choices made in planning and practice based on student need and other factors that go in to a teacher’s decision making process. The need for teacher’s to bring their own voice to the discussion is also coupled with a need for language that can be respected and found useful in an accountability system that is based on standardization.

This study served to observe and understand three teachers who were selected based on having a high mindful attention awareness disposition to see what choices they
make in planning and instruction when all of these variables are in play to see what themes emerged that could offer a language or a lens to empower teachers to add their voice to the discussion of effective teaching and speak to why they do what they do in the classroom. In the current literature surrounding mindfulness in education, positive reports are emerging about the benefits to teacher and student well-being when practicing mindfulness (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Harris et al., 2013; Weinstein, Brown, & Ryan, 2009) but nothing is addressing how mindful disposition gets operationalized in the classroom. This study serves to add to the base of literature a language that can be used to describe and understand how mindfulness is experienced in the context of classrooms of teachers with mindful attention awareness disposition. In Chapter Four, you were introduced to these teachers through descriptions of their classrooms. Here in Chapter Five, analysis of their classrooms and discussion of themes are going to be presented to answer the research questions.

**Discussion of Themes and Response to Research Questions**

Looking at mindfulness as a disposition serves to empower educators to be reflective in their practice. The goal of this research is to elucidate language that teachers can use to add to the conversation of teacher effectiveness as educational critics as it is seen that teachers with mindful dispositions are connoisseurs of their practice but don't necessarily have the audience or the language to make that public.

In the literature, there is a strong support for mindfulness-based interventions reducing stress and anxiety making access to learning more effective for low socioeconomic groups of children (Klatt, Harpster, Browne, et al., 2013). However,
limited research has been done on mindful disposition (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009) and of the studies explored none have gone into classrooms to see what is actualized by teachers with such dispositions. Mindful disposition relates to a practitioner's skill set as an internal regulation, yet the role of a teacher is to create a learning environment to conducively work with thirty individual students toward successful results. Burnout cascade is becoming a more common phenomenon as teachers struggle to deal with the pressures and stress on them to produce near perfect results with students (Abenavoli et al., 2013). The result is quality teachers who leave the field or cynical teachers who stay and create rigid classrooms that go against best practice.

In the current move toward teacher effectiveness evaluation for CO SB 10-191 (2010), the system itself is creating a move away from best practice by instituting an expectation for rigid classrooms and ones that are predictable in nature. The teachers observed in this study display mindful disposition and do not allow the rigid and paced expectations to enter their classroom. However, what is the price? Without a means of adding their voice to the dialog they are at risk of burnout cascade as well from factors outside their four walls?

**How do students respond on a standardized measure in a classroom instructed by a teacher with a mindful attention awareness disposition?**

*Are there statistically significant main effects of teacher level mindful attention awareness (low, high) and time (beginning of the year, middle of the year) on student test scores?*
Is there a statistically significant interaction between teacher level of mindful attention awareness and time on student test scores?

Are there differences in student outcome data for teachers categorized as high or low mindful attention awareness at the beginning of the year; are there differences for these teachers at the middle of the year assessment?

Quantitatively there was no significant difference between student outcomes based on teacher disposition. The research in the literature states and it was reiterated here that data points are not representative of students’ overall learning or response to learning. Eisner (2003) offers another questionable assumption: “The real outcomes of schooling can be measured by tests employed within the school” (p. 651). All three teachers spoke to the role that data can play in education and that when used in a meaningful way it can inform instruction. The current use of standardized measures to mark effectiveness of teachers in the classroom is not capturing the entire picture. There is more that can be learned or desired in knowing a teacher is effective than whether or not her performance can fit in a box on a checklist. The premise of this research and the sentiment of the participants was not to make assessment go away but to balance the dialog of what is the purpose of learning.

By utilizing choice and listening to students, the participants in this study kept a focus on making learning relevant and meaningful to their students. This meant that learning was not synonymous for all the students in the classroom. In Ms. Newton’s class students moved amongst materials and resources. They worked with different students. There was no lock step process to who learned what and when with whom. In
Ms. Jenkins’ class students could select work groups based on interest and not be locked in to a learning group based on previous performance. In Ms. Acosta’s class students were trusted to make selections in their learning needs after being centered on the goal or focus for the learning block. This meant that some students tried to get the teacher to do their work for them and Ms. Acosta would carefully craft the expectation and belief that the student could accomplish the task independently. While at the same time framing the need for some students to work with the teacher as a time of receiving extra love:

I hate grouping children, I don't like to group children, because I remember being in a group from when I was in school and a lot of children hold on to that. I was always in this group just because of my precociousness probably, but I saw I had friends that were in those groups who were really sad that they were not in 'the smart group'. Or 'I'm in the kids who like to talk group.' But I see their little hearts get crushed if I call them for a group. So what I do, the way that I do my groups is if you need love come see me, I am happy to help I am going to be right here, come flock to me children.

There are children who know that they need it and they come, they typically come, there are a few who do not like to come see me. So sometimes I will also alleviate that pressure by saying I need you to come see me and and I know that there is relief in [this one student's] heart that he gets to come see me but he won't self select. There are a few like [student] who she's not confident in math, its not that she can't do it, she just lacks confidence so [she] would hate it when I would ask her to come see me and she would go home and say
'Ms. Acosta had me in her group today'
and her mom was like 'but why?'
and she would say 'because I needed to work on my math.'
'so she was helping you?'
And she was like 'yeah'
'well you know what she was really giving you was extra love.'
So the next day she came back and she was like I sat with Ms Acosta today and she gave me extra love and now look what I can do! So it has taken the stigma away of these are the kids that have to work with me vs these are the kids who choose to work with me and look at how they are growing and are so at peace with the fact that they just need a little extra love and it is not that they are dumb and its not that they don't get it, its just they need more time.

This openness to having students learn at their own pace and in their own way is something that all three teachers spoke about having reservations about when it comes to the end of the school year. As they prepare to transition students to the next grade level they all three had similar sentiments of worry and of actual stories where students were not as successful once they left their classroom because the students were forced to sit still in their seat, or learn at the pace and/or content driven by the teacher.

None of the teachers fault their colleagues for the differences in teaching style, they operate from a place of acceptance. However they do question if what they are doing for their students is best practice. With students who have come to find their voice in the classroom and advocate for their own learning they can see instances where that is
not necessarily appreciated in classrooms where students are just supposed to come in and complete the task provided. All three teachers expressed a view of having to pull back on kids at the end of the school year to prepare them for leaving their classroom. As a teacher I had this same feeling as well, why if we are creating open and effective learning environments are we feeling we have to harden our students for rigid paper passing classrooms so that they don't get in trouble behaviorally with teachers who want students to sit down and be quiet?

Ms. Newton elaborated on the difficulties some of the students can have in continuing on to new learning environments:

My problem has been the GT kids, once they go to first grade. I was actually crying the other week because [former student] is always in trouble now. And his parents came in to vent to me. They were just really upset about their first grade experience and I was left wondering, am I setting up these kids for failure because I give them a lot of choice and whereas they don't have that in 1st grade? They have the time here in my classroom where they can take a minute and make another choice and decompress and they are not forced to manage through tasks that are not responsive to their needs. We do everything in cooperative learning groups and so that is where at the end of the year I have to focus. I mean the students are extremely independent with using materials and navigating the classroom space, but working by themselves to accomplish tasks quietly and independently not so much to the standards expected across the hall.
Ms. Newton has trust in the learning journey that will unfold as students discover and follow their passions. However, it is also the openness and trust established with families that allows the dialog to continue after students are no longer officially in Ms. Newton’s class. This level of trust and patience displayed by the teachers observed in this study goes on to support the professional knowledge that mindful disposition teachers bring to the relationships built between students and families. All three of these teachers had meaningful relationships with the families and not just the students. This open line of communication allowed for the student to continually be the focus of the conversation related to learning in the classroom.

During my decade in various schools and classrooms, teachers did not always value the resource that can emerge when a relationship is established with the family as well as the student. The process for this takes patience, trust, and acceptance. However, the payoff is evident in that the students understand that there is a complete support system looking after their growth during the school year. This also supports the comfort level seen in students to take ownership of their learning. This does not mean to elude that the students in these three classrooms were always on task or making the best choices, but it does mean to say that when the teacher approached the student to discuss choices and to redirect toward learning, the students were quick to recognize their role in the learning process and took ownership of making a new learning choice rather than being defiant or refusing to provide any effort.

This gives a new lens to classroom management. It is not just that students listen and do what is expected, but what we should be looking for is shared ownership in the
classroom. No matter what the content or the age, students have demonstrated that they can recognize that they have a role in the learning process and this display of shared ownership in the journey is a mark of an effective classroom not currently valued on the checklist system for teacher effectiveness evaluation or with quantitative analysis of student outcome scores.

**What forms of instruction are dominant in a classroom taught by a teacher who demonstrates a mindful attention awareness disposition?** In all three classrooms observed, the element of choice was a key instructional strategy employed. Observing across grade levels kindergarten through fourth grade the implementation of choice based instruction differed but the elements of student-centered, engaged activities by interest was apparent. In kindergarten choice led to discovery and making meaning of one's world, whereas in third and fourth grade choice was often an element of process or product in the learning of similar content that was the focus of the entire class study.

Mini-lessons to focus the whole class on a content or topic were the starting point or structure of the lessons and then small group collaboration or independent work was undertaken by the students. The teacher served more as a facilitator and guide in the classroom constantly moving to check-in on students and keep everyone moving forward toward the learning goal. For introduction into new units of study, content language objectives were presented and discussed but these were not vehicles that drove the learning day in and day out as the teacher effectiveness framework rubric is written for them to be in this district. By not utilizing the content language objective daily in the classroom, the learning goals and objectives were placed collectively between the
teachers and the students. The mindful teacher worked as a professional facilitator to know what objective and goal was the desired outcome while listening to the interest and need of the present students to guide the learning experience in a meaningful way in which 95% of students were engaged at all times.

This shared ownership in learning embraces a beginner's mind. The mindful teacher is open to the learning being made by students and is working as a facilitator and not a “sage on the stage” to create learning opportunities where students are empowered to make meaning of the world around them. There was no evidence of turning textbooks page by page, no routine filling out of worksheets to demonstrate evidence of learning. All three classrooms produced different products but the lived experience of joint ownership in learning rose to the top as a necessary element of effective teaching.

Ownership in learning is language that embraces diversity of students, classrooms and content. However this word does not support the current push for scalable, standardized processes that can be implemented carte blanche. The current push in education is to discover the magic bullet that can be used to transform education. Both Eisner (2003) and Darling-Hammond (2012) warn against this systematizing of education. Yet without teacher voice at the table of evaluation for effective classrooms what you are left with is an assessment that states if the teacher performed or displayed the scaled activities or tasks that are expected on the checklist. Without a dialog about why events took place in a classroom or the ability to share the value in the shared ownership of learning, then teachers are stripped of their professionalism and are made to
just jump through hoops to show that they can create a task related to a content objective and that students can remain on task to produce a uniform product.

By listening to students, teachers in this study display a *patience* that is open to the discovery of who the student is as a learner and pushes them as professionals to create experiences that will connect the interest and passions of their students to the standards and expectations that they are trying to teach to. This does not boil down to everyone learning the same thing on the same day. Ms. Acosta spoke to this beautifully when discussing the need to teach to the child's schedule and not a convenient adult schedule because the student is the one that is required to learn the content after all.

Striving for 100% is where the current educational accountability movement is pushing for, however, mindful attention awareness disposition embraces the reality of *acceptance* and *non-striving*. These teachers are not striving to fit their students in a box and meet a 100%, they are actively learning with their students day-to-day and embracing a *beginner's mind*. Which models for the students a love of learning and an interest and motivation in wanting to learn. Many of the students in the Purple Mountain k-12 Academy, come from home environments where a love for learning is considered a luxury, so it isn't always easy to stay engaged with your teacher and classmates. Through the use of shared community and clear rituals and routines most students are able to code switch and enjoy their time at the school building with a love for learning, in the classrooms I observed.

In Eisner's (2003) “Questionable Assumptions about Schooling”, 11 out of the 12 assumptions that Eisner explores are assumptions that the mindful teachers observed in
this study are fighting against to create effective learning environments for their students. Eisner (2003) speaks to the fact that there are two models of reform: *systematic* and *incremental*. It is the view of this researcher that the systematic reform of teacher effectiveness evaluation is not going to go away. However, the incremental reform of empowering teachers to include their voice as professionals as part of the systematic reform could lead to an open dialog that can create a better vision of what our schools might become.

The first questionable assumption that Eisner (2003) brings to the table is “the aim of schooling is to get all students to the same place at about the same time” (p. 650). Eisner states that schools “ought to be...increasing the variance in student performance while escalating the mean.” It is a great notion, but what does that look like in the classroom? Ms. Acosta demonstrated and then elaborated with students just such an idea through her instructional practice:

so there is a lot that is in the way of that perfect classroom. People think that kids should learn at the same time at the same place every day and that is just not reasonable. I mean when you think about it and I tell the kids this all the time, during our electricity unit here is a light bulb, a wire and a battery, make the battery make the light bulb light up. Kids are virtually in tears, some of them. Why?

'They already got theirs,' they will say.

'I don't care, did you get yours to light up?’
Well that is what I am worried about. What do you do to make it light up? Keep trying. In that frustration I tell the children is learning. That happy [feeling] that is knowing. So learning [that frustration] is what you have to push through until you get it, and you are going to get it. I'm not just going to leave you out here floundering for the birds to come start picking at you. I am going to help you but I want you to try it first. I want to know, do you give up when it gets hard or do you push through things to keep trying? What do you do? That is who you are, that is your character. Then by the end of the lesson every group has gotten their light bulbs to light up.

'Did they all light up at the same time?' I ask.

'No, they didn't, [student] got it first.'

I say that is the same thing with learning, [a student] is going to learn something first sometimes, and sometimes [another student] will. [The second student] might actually already know it, how's that for crazy? But [student A] is going to know something first sometimes and [student B] is not and it is not about whose light bulb lights up first its about do our light bulbs light up? And the kids are like, I get it but it has to be super concrete because they are 3rd graders.

But maybe that super concrete example of learning is what is needed to help explain the diversity and timing of learning within the classroom to policymakers and administrators that keep trying to implement pacing guides and rigid lessons that hold fidelity to the curriculum? As children mature their interests, abilities and perspectives become increasingly different (Eisner, 2003). This being said why are we continually
trying to reform education into a standardized uniform model? The three teachers observed in this study are all models of effective teaching. They do not however all fit the checklist being used to observe them. Ms. Jenkins was even evaluated with the checklist tool during this study and was scored a 4 out of 7.

If a systematized data point is not going to inform the public about the actual experience of the classroom for students, then why can't the teacher's voice be added to the discussion of effectiveness? Schools are being run like businesses, but even in a business performance review, the employee has a chance to describe their view on their own performance. In the current model of teacher effectiveness evaluation the entire process is happening to the teacher rather than including the teacher's voice at the table.

**What is the experience of teaching like for a teacher with a mindful attention awareness disposition?** The dissonance that exists between being respected as a 'teacher of record' for the academic year of a student's learning but allowed to add description and detail to one's own evaluation is a struggle for teachers with mindful attention awareness disposition. They can appreciate the present moment and let the situation pass as being disconnected from what is best for children. Go into their classroom, close their door and focus on best practice. Having spent three weeks at the school and also participating in 12 meetings held in the school to focus on data, performance objectives or school initiatives. It is evident that teachers who were placed in the low mindful attention awareness group appeared to become overwhelmed by the stress of the demands and dissonance between what was best for students and what they were asked to do. The discourse overheard but not collected as sharable research data under IRB, did not center
on what is best for students but continually maligned the process that data was taking away from their ability to teach and do what they wanted with their students.

Teachers with a mindful attention awareness disposition are present in the moment and are able to take in information without automatically jumping to judgment as discussed in Chapter Four. This allows them time to be reflective and make choices that are responsive and not reactive to the situation. Because of this, all three teachers observed in this study specifically spoke of having to always balance between what they know to be right for students in setting up the learning environment and complying with directives received by superiors that impact their performance marks on evaluation. It is a constant tug of war within themselves that is only manageable through the building of a smaller community of like-minded educators. Two of the three teachers constantly were utilizing time available in the day to check in with other colleagues to debrief, *let go* and reassure each other about choices they were making in the classroom as being best for students. All three teachers let their gut checks rest on the answer to “is this best for my students?” All three teachers took ownership of the students in their classroom as ‘theirs.’ All three spoke of the students in the entire school as ‘ours.’ The ability to stay connected with students beyond the year where they were the official teacher of record. This connection to relationship beyond formal teacher-learner, is significant in the perspective that the mindful attention awareness disposition teachers have with students. The relationship built in the classroom is not just about data points and day to day lessons. But is a bigger piece in the puzzle to helping shape these students as life-long learners.
Part of the missing picture in the teacher effectiveness evaluation process that is not being captured in the current standardized data.

None of the three teachers were able to say that day in and day out that they have their ideal teaching day. Ms. Newton in kindergarten is able to grab moments here and there since discovery learning is the premise of what she desires for her students. So when she is not bombarded by academic demands or data collection she is able to actively enjoy and immerse herself in the discovery learning of her students. In comparison, Ms. Acosta and Ms. Jenkins spoke of their ideal teaching days as far off dreams:

My ideal teaching day, shut the f*** up, like ideally, it would be personalized learning, all around the board with access to things that children need that is really what I want. I don’t want to be a sage that the children come to, to find their education. I want them to be able to seek it out for themselves. So my perfect day teaching would be resources, endless amounts of resources, with children learning what they want to learn, when they want to learn it, how they want to learn it, and me helping them figure out the best way for them to learn it. That is what I want to do.

‘You want to hear me read a story?’ I’ll read a story.

‘You want to learn how to multiply?’ Let’s sit down and talk about what that looks like.

‘You want to learn how to do division?’ Ok, how can we learn that, what are the steps you need?
I want you to tell me what you want to learn about. I love that!

‘I want you to ask your friend to teach you how to play the Empire Strikes Back theme song on the guitar. I want you to sit down with him, put the guitar in your hands and learn how to do that. Because that is going to lead to greater things.’

I want you to ask, I want the children to ask so many questions and find the answers themselves with me being there for the cops if somebody asked who is responsible for these children? I am. Making sure that nobody is leaving, nobody is hitting each other and that [boy student] who needs to run around and be outside he can go outside and be outside. And it doesn’t look like 29 f***ing kids in a classroom, I’ll tell you that much. – Ms. Acosta

Ahh, I don’t know if I have ever had one of those yet. (giggle) My ideal day teaching would have time built in both for reflection and for planning so that I could really feel like I was prepared when kids walked through the door. It would have the students feeling really excited about what we are doing and it would be them coming up with great questions and just them sharing their excitement with each other and doing something that is fun where the energy, you can just feel it in the room, there is an energy and a buzz and it is not loud and chaotic, but it is not quiet and focused either, it is kind of just this hum of kids working and kids doing what they need for themselves and them just kind of owning their learning. But I think it is hard to try and orchestrate those things without the time to be
prepared for that because everything can be thrown off when you didn’t print that paper or you didn’t quite get the science supplies organized the way you needed to. – Ms. Jenkins

Ms. Acosta ends her description with one of Eisner’s (2003) questionable assumptions: “a teacher should work with 30 youngsters…” Aside from the fact that Eisner goes on to reason the year to year switch of teachers and the lack of consistency with relationship that emerges from such a process is also a faulty assumption. The idea that a teacher can in nine months’ time build a rapport with a group of 30 youngsters and then move them all academically forward is a difficult task. Teachers do it year in and year out. It is those teachers that can develop a relationship and create a learning environment that is conducive to learning that makes it happen. The Rocky Mountain school district's focus on classroom management as one of the aims of the evaluation process is not misplaced as this is the area in which relationship between students and teachers can be explored. However, it must be understood as well what structural elements of the school day are in place to help or hinder quality relationship building between teacher and student.

In probing further to find out what has kept these teachers from having their ideal teaching day two things emerged as obstacles. The number of meetings that are scheduled and arranged that subtract from time for teachers to plan and be reflective about their students, and secondly, the pacing of when kids are expected to learn something and the constant data mining of how students are preforming. Ms. Acosta
summarized this obstacle perfectly when associating the electricity unit her third graders are studying to the process of being able to complete a task:

By the end of the lesson every group has gotten their light bulbs to light up, did they all light up at the same time? No they didn't. It is not about whose light bulb lights up first it is about do our light bulbs light up? And the kids are like, I get it, but it has to be super concrete because they are 3rd graders. But that super concrete did everybody's light bulb light up at the same time?

No, do I expect you all to understand multiplication at the exact same time because it is 9:45 in the morning? No, I don't. So shut up and stop making me teach something at a specific time because it fits well within your adult schedule and not with the child's who is actually, I don't know, required to learn it!

So the experience of teaching for a teacher with mindful attention awareness disposition is always a balancing act. An awareness of what is expected and who are the students in front of her at all times. However, with a beginner's mind and a non-striving attitude there is often a lack of adherence to the overall policy and procedures being enforced. The student comes first. This can be a difficult place to navigate in a school building especially in elementary education which has a traditional history of very compliant teachers who just follow the rules. With the rules changing and becoming less student focused there is a debate being staged within a teacher’s own mind to decide where to spend their energy. For these teachers, the students’ needs continually come first.
Ms. Jenkins spoke to the lack of ability to build positive reinforcements into the school day because the time that students are at lunch/recess, which is a common time that teachers can offer lunch in the classroom, chats with the teacher for fun or just getting to know you outside of academics, the teachers are assigned to meetings and discussion groups weekly that restrict a proactive use of that time to reconnect with the students who are the focus of such meetings.

The teachers in this study embodied acceptance as we look to understand what teaching is like for them. They consistently work to navigate a balance between what is being delivered as top-down expectation of their practice with time to know and understand their students so that they can create safe and loving learning environments for students. This sense of balance is achieved through personal reflection and assessment of what are the aims and goals of the learning with students and choice interests of students. By implementing their professional role as teachers, they can artfully craft connections between student interest to keep relevance high and standards and aims that are needed to be learned through the curriculum put forth by the district and the state.

Top – down directives are another questionable assumption of schooling posited by Eisner (2003) “School reform is most effective when competition among schools is promoted and when supervisors can mandate goals, manage teachers, monitor students, and measure outcomes” (p. 654). This competition had already infiltrated the doors of Purple Mountain k-12 Academy by the time I came to observe in late October of 2013. The school that in the spring of 2013 was so excited to open its doors and have a research
project go on that was going to capture the learning experiences of an arts-integrated school, felt and functioned like any of the schools I had been in over the last decade.

Meetings about data, questions about assessments, movement of students across trajectories of scores. The arts were not alive in the meetings and discourse of the teachers and administrators. The school is still touted as an arts-integrated school, but the messaging from the district through the administration was all about student scores not measuring up to other schools in the district. The competition to see data points equal to or better than other models of schools across the district became the focus and push. At the final weekly meeting I observed between the elementary teachers there was an awakening that was witnessed. The administrator was not present because he was at a conference with two of the teachers. The meeting started out very somber, the teachers did not know how to have a dialog with each other. As some of the teachers started to navigate to find their voice a desire for discussion centered on the arts started to emerge. The sentiment in the room was how all the focus on data was not organized or supportive, just more. There was consensus that the new norm was meetings, meetings about other meetings and that the students were not the focus of the process. “I want to get back to the arts!” One teacher brought out a backward design document that had been created the first year the school was open. The format of the document forced arts to be a part of the planning process. Everyone in the room commented on how they had to fill out that form to get an interview to work at the school, but neither in the interview or after being hired had the form been discussed or used. The sharing teacher spoke of how the form was created and used during the inaugural years of the school's operation. All the teachers
present spoke about that process being why they had wanted to come teach at the school. They could recognize that the arts lens would provide an opportunity for something different. However, the closing sentiment was that the arts were not what was any longer a focus of the day to day operations at the school.

If these teachers felt that they had a voice in the construct of their school or programming they could influence change and get the school set back on a path toward arts-integration. However as witnessed in the 11 previous meetings up to this one, there was not a feeling of safety amongst the staff. So the teachers sat through the meetings sharing the approved opinions and language and then return to their classrooms either depleted of interest and energy or as displayed by the three teachers observed in this study with a need to let go of what was being passed top-down and a return to student-centered instruction. By adding voice to the discussion, teachers could more readily see themselves as professionals in the process and top-down directives would not have to be the continual assumption.

**Codification of Language Identified in this Study**

**Table 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudinal Factor of Mindfulness</th>
<th>Actualized behaviors</th>
<th>What does this mean for educator effectiveness?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-judging</td>
<td>reflective responsive openness</td>
<td>Giving teachers time to reflect on their practice. Added voice to the process of teacher evaluation, openness to the professionalism that teachers themselves bring to the table.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>listening choice</td>
<td>Time for teachers to listen and understand students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>relationships</td>
<td>Allowing students to make choice in their learning process. Taking time to build relationships with students to feel safe and loved so that they are able to learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginner's Mind</td>
<td>shared ownership learning alongside students student-centered</td>
<td>Having trust in the students interest and motivation to learn. Respect for the teacher to bring an open mind to the situation to make connections between paths of learning and standards and expectations of the curriculum that guide the process. Teacher as facilitator to 30 diverse students leads to diverse lessons and learning environments across schools and grade levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>listening choice relationships ownership of learning journey family connections openness</td>
<td>Being open minded about all the ways learning can take place and be represented. Giving choice and honoring the learner on the journey to make meaning. Building a relationship not just with the student, but also the family so that there is mutual trust amongst all parties interested in the learning process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-striving</td>
<td>student-centered balance</td>
<td>Awareness of standards and curriculum expectations but a space to match the learning goals to the students present in the classroom rather than running on automatic pilot to complete a pacing guide handed down from the district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>balance relationships differences among learners and educators</td>
<td>There are things that have to be learned that are not fun and there are things that aren't scripted to be learned that can be very meaningful and useful in life. Striking a balance between these by listening and being responsive to students. Understanding that learning is not uniform and neither are effective learning environments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Letting Go | debrief student-centered | Time to reflect and understand what is being asked of you in the present moment. Who are the students that are there to be instructed and having the time to respond in the moment. Reflective practice and time to discuss and debrief is most effective but without a sense of an empowered voice it can seem that you are just meant to be a cog in the system.

The seven attitudinal factors of mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2005) are present in the research looking at dispositions of mindfulness. What was missing from the literature was an understanding of how these factors are operationalized in the context of a classroom. A teacher is not solely navigating their internal processes, which practices of mindfulness focus on, but an effective teacher also navigates the interpersonal relationships with students as she facilitates learning. This special context of looking at a disposition that originates from understanding one's internal process to understanding the role it has on the outward interpersonal processes between teacher-student, teacher-teacher, teacher-parent, and teacher-administrator was central to this study.

The identified language above serves to give language to what operationalized mindfulness attention awareness disposition looks like in the elementary classroom. This language can be used in future research to support studies that look at the impact of mindfulness programs as well as reflective language for those practitioners who are interested in mindfulness disposition and adding their voice to the discussion of teacher effectiveness evaluation.
Significance of the Study

This study set out to connect fields of research that have not come together previously: *mindfulness in education* and *teacher effectiveness research*. In the fields of research there is discussion about transforming education through the teacher education programs and building up mindful practice with new teachers to help thwart the negative effects of burnout cascade (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). However, without understanding the structural dimensions that are at play in the schools currently, we are not ever going to see radical change as teachers are placed into schools that still operate under assumptions that prove to be detrimental to change (Eisner, 2003).

Darling-Hammond (2007) reminds us about the difference of *teacher quality* and *teaching quality*. *Teaching quality* is most greatly influenced by the structure and systems of the school and is easily encapsulated on the checklist system for teacher evaluation. *Teacher quality* encompasses disposition and the understanding of who the teacher is is lost when trying to fit into a scalable uniform evaluation model. The language identified here can serve to empower teachers to bring their voice to the table of teacher evaluation as connoisseurs of their practice. To discuss *teacher quality* which is their embodied disposition and become critics of their practice and be a part of the evaluation process.

By going into a school and looking at teachers who are actively working in the system to see what that lived experience is like, there is now dialog that can be started about where change should come from. These teachers were selected without having had previous mindfulness training or awareness but demonstrated high mindful attention.
awareness based on self-report MAAS data. This notion of connecting a mindset that has been shown to be influential to classroom learning environments (Albrecht et al., 2012; Klatt et al., 2013) to a description of operationalized behavior to understand what actually transpires in learning environments facilitated by mindful attention aware teachers can inform the assessment of what is effective teaching that is not being captured through standardized measures.

Through the identification of what it means to display or embody the seven attitudinal factors of mindfulness: non-judging, patience, beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go a language has been created that can empower teachers to describe in their own words the decisions and expectations they create for students in their classrooms that make for effective learning environments. For those teachers who read the language identified and are not sure of how it connects to what they do in their classroom, the first step of developing a reflective practice will ultimately improve their practice as they start to think about what it is they do and why, rather than go into their classroom just to cover content. As explored in the three teachers observed in this study, effective learning environments are different. The same should exist as an expectation of teacher practice, all teachers are different and are on a continuum. There is an assumption that teachers don't want to improve or change their performance. As discovered here with these teachers as well as in my own experience, effective teachers are always reflecting, second guessing and wanting to improve the learning experience for students. There are teachers who are content with their practice and students are expected to just sink or swim, but I would argue that those classrooms are not centers of
effective teaching. In adopting the identified language presented here in this study to discuss effective teaching it is the opinion of this researcher that a lens to multiple effective classroom learning models could be identified by allowing teachers as professionals to also describe their practice not just a scored in a checkbox.

Standards based assessment is not going away. How can we elevate teachers through empowerment to have a voice at the table as to what is effective teaching in their context? Connectedness and relationships are a joint effort. Evaluation is not something that should be done to teachers. In order to make headway in incremental reform (Eisner, 2003) of education, the addition of the identified language presented here by looking with a mindful lens can help promote the idea that teachers can come to the table of effectiveness evaluation with a critical lens and discuss their practice and identify what works and where areas of improvement exist to keep always moving forward. It is important that in thinking big, but starting small, we don’t just stop with an idea.

Future Research

This mixed-method exploratory study never expected to answer all the questions related to teacher effectiveness and/or the role of mindfulness in education. However, the goal was to start a dialog about how the two fields could inform each other. After the start of this study, a new measure has emerged that brings to the table of measuring mindfulness the context of teaching in the classroom. Use of this measure in identifying teachers to work with in future research is of interest. Bridging teachers who show a high mindful disposition using the Interpersonal Mindfulness in Teaching Scale (Frank et al., 2013) and then having those teachers use the language identified in this study to see if it
resonates with their experience of what they consider effective teaching would be a great next step.

This study was limited to an arts-integrated urban elementary school because when selecting a site for evaluation it was determined by this researcher that there would be opportunity to see how teachers were effectively teaching without adhering to the strict pacing guides expected by the district. However, upon starting my observations, I was made aware that pressures to resume to such teaching methods were being felt top-down because of a lack of response on student growth outcomes. This discrepancy for looking at a specialized teaching environment and curriculum would now warrant a larger sample size across many urban schools in the district to see what rises to the surface about effective teaching from any teacher who demonstrates a high mindful attention awareness disposition on the MAAS regardless of school setting.

No matter the setting and measurement tool for establishing knowledge of mindfulness disposition within a teacher, having teachers create reflective statements to define their classroom practice in pre/post observational interviews to see the effect on overall teacher effectiveness evaluations when using the identified language would be most needed in advancing the research in the teacher effectiveness evaluation research itself.

In lieu of future research, teachers themselves can read this and be reminded of their professional role in effective teaching and empower themselves to bring their voice to the table of evaluation.


Ho, A. D. & Kane, T. J. (2013). The reliability of classroom observations by school personnel. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.


Jahns, A. J. (2009). *I can, we can, and you can: An examination of how teacher agency develops learner agency.* Fond du lac, WI: Marian University, doctoral dissertation.


Appendix A

*All language relevant to mindfulness attention awareness scale was removed to limit influence on participants change in response due to previous association with mindfulness as a term.

![Day-to-Day Experiences](image)
Appendix B


Intentional Dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aims and goals as operationalized in the classroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudinal Factors of Mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2005)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-judging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginner’s Mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-striving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letting Go</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Structural Dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How is the school day organized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School day schedules imposed on the teacher (those things that must occur that the teacher can not control, e.g. start bell, lunch, specials)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| | | |
| | | |

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Curricular Dimension
Quality of content and activities employed to engage students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content and goals and activities observed</th>
<th>Y/N taught from a pacing guide or text book</th>
<th>Attitudinal factors witnessed in the facilitation of observed curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Y or N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Y or N</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Y or N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pedagogical Dimension
Context in which teaching occurs and the aims the teacher embraces

Describe the physical space, the demeanor of the teacher, annotate the experience of being a learner in the classroom.

Field Notes:

Evaluative Dimension
Evaluation process of students (practices embodied in tests, etc)

List the types of products and demonstrations students are expected to participate in to demonstrate learning.
Appendix C

Interview Guide

What is the experience of teaching like for a teacher with mindful attention awareness disposition?

1) How did you become a teacher?
2) What brought you to an urban school with arts integration as the mission?
3) What does teaching mean to you?
4) Describe your ideal/typical teaching day.
5) What does being mindful mean to you?
6) How does this inform your teaching?
Appendix D

Informed Consent for Survey

INFORMED CONSENT FORM A

Exploring Teacher Effectiveness in an Arts-Integrated School: An Embedded Mixed Method Design

You are invited to participate in a study that will explore the role of dispositional characteristics on teacher effectiveness of educators at an arts integrated elementary school. In addition, this study is being conducted to fulfill the requirements of a doctoral dissertation. The study is conducted by Amy Turino. Results will be used to analyze student literacy data and differences among student scores at the beginning of the year and middle of the year. This data analysis is in response to impending requirement of SB 10-191, in having student data determine 50% of teacher effectiveness beginning in the 2014-2015 school year. To help broaden the understanding of experience for students at an Arts-Integrated school, you may be randomly selected for observation and/or interview in addition to today's survey. If selected for observation and interview you will be asked to complete a separate informed consent. Amy can be reached at amy.turino@du.edu; 303-547-6808. This project is supervised by dissertation advisor, Dr. Bruce Uhrmacher, Morgridge College of Education, University of Denver, Denver, CO 80208, buhrmach@du.edu. Participation in this study should take about 15 minutes of your time. Participation will involve responding to 15 questions about your state of being during day to day activities. 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 you are otherwise entitled. Participation in this survey does not automatically commit you to participate in the observation and interview portion of this study. Participants randomly selected for observation and interview will complete a separate informed consent for that time commitment. Your responses to this survey will be identified by code number only 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 Paul Olk, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at 303-871-4531, or you may email du-irb@du.edu, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs or call 303-871-4050 or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121. You may keep this page for your records. Please sign the 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 have.

I have read and understood the foregoing descriptions of the study called Exploring Teacher Effectiveness in an Arts-Integrated School: An Embedded Mixed Method Design. 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 would like a summary of the results of this study to be mailed to me at the following postal or e-mail address:
The Role of Mindful Disposition on Exploring Teacher Effectiveness in an Art-Integrated School: An Embedded Mixed Method Design. You are invited to participate in a study that will explore the role that mindful disposition has on teacher effectiveness in creating classroom environment for students. In addition, this study is being conducted to fulfill the requirements of a doctoral dissertation. The study is conducted by Amy Turino. Results will be used to explain the intention, structural, curricular, pedagogical, and evaluative dimensions of classrooms of mindful teachers at an arts-integrated school. Amy can be reached at amy.turino@du.edu; 303-547-6808. This project is supervised by the dissertation advisor, Dr. Bruce Uhrmacher, Morgridge College of Education, University of Denver, Denver, CO 80208, buhrmach@du.edu. Participation in this study should take about one school week of your time for observation and 90 minutes for an interview. Participation will involve having Amy observe your classroom from 8am – 4pm, Monday – Friday for one week in October 2013. Following the week-long observation, the interview will be scheduled for 90 minutes to be in your classroom or at a location of your choosing. Participation in this project is strictly voluntary. The risks associated with this project are minimal. If, however, you experience discomfort you may discontinue the observation and/or 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 you are otherwise entitled. Your responses will be identified by pseudonym only 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 pseudonyms 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 Paul Olk, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at 303-871-4531, or you may email du-irb@du.edu, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs or call 303-871-4050 or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121. You may keep this page for your records. Please sign the 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 have.

I have read and understood the foregoing descriptions of the study called The Role of Mindful Disposition on Exploring Teacher Effectiveness in an Arts-Integrated School: A Mixed Method Design. 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.
___ I agree to be videotaped.
___ I do not agree to videotaped.

Signature ___________________________________________________________ Date __________________

__________ I would like a summary of the results of this study to be mailed to me at the following postal or e-mail address:
Appendix E

Research Time line

April 2013 – Dissertation proposal Defense

May 2013 – IRB and RRB submission and approval

August 2013 – Survey Administration (MAAS), stratify teachers, make plan for teachers identified for observation and interviews

September 2013 – BOY student outcome data collection, build database of student outcomes based on teacher survey response.

October 2013 – Observations, two week observations per teacher selected from survey data

November 2013 – Interviews, individual interviews with teachers observed

January 2014 – MOY student outcome data collection, run 3x2 mixed-design ANOVA analysis

February – May 2014 - final analysis and conclusion writing of dissertation findings

June 2014 – Defend Dissertation

August 2014 – Graduate