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Adding Students' Voices to the Discourse on Effective Teaching

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Adding Students’ Voices to the Discourse on Effective Teaching

By

Jennie H. Yi

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York
2014
This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
There is tremendous pressure at the national, state, and locals level to improve schools and close the achievement gap of education. In an attempt to solve these education questions, policymakers and education administrators are focusing on quality control of what they consider an essential element in education: teachers. Teachers across the nation are put on the defensive as each state tries to somehow measure and assess teacher effectiveness to ensure their schools have teachers that can yield the highest growth among their students.

What has been missing in this inquiry and process, however, are the students’ voices. Despite that they are truly the major stakeholders of public education, the students’ input and perceptions have not been studied in depth. While some current research includes student surveys, such as studies by the Gates Foundation and the MET (Measurement of Effective Teaching), there is a greater need to focus school and teacher effectiveness studies on student input.

This research sought to conduct an inquiry into students’ perceptions of education, schooling, and qualities of effective teachers. We conducted our participatory action study with student researchers at a successful suburban high school. A survey targeting 11th grade class of 306 students was administered (N=249). The survey consisted of a self-identified demographic profile, open- and closed-ended responses. The survey was supplemented
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with 10 personal interviews. The interviews revealed a clear understanding on the part of students between school quality/teacher effectiveness and economic variables.

The students at this site school have a clear understanding that their families reside in this community for the purpose of their children receiving a high quality education. School and education are instrumental to a common goal: getting into the best college possible and gaining economic benefits, such as high status and or high paying jobs. Academic achievement for students at Eastland High School is quantitative. Scores on local, state, and national exams are a clear measure of academic growth and achievements. The relationship the students perceive between the school and themselves is that of a consumer and producer.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My sincere thanks to my committee members Dr. Anthony Picciano and Dr. Stephan Brumberg, for the learning opportunities and support you have given me. A special thanks to my adviser and Committee Chair, Dr. Nicholas Michelli. I would not have been able to complete this research without your support, encouragement, and confidence. I learned so much from your classes and from your guidance. To me, you are the model of that highly effective teacher.

My thanks to the administration and staff of the site school for allowing me to bring this research into their school. Sincere thanks to my friends and colleagues who supported me—and especially to American History teachers who generously allowed us to survey their classes. Thank you Michelle Sorise for all your help in every step of this research process.

My PAR students—Jamie, Chris, Michael, Isabel, and Eddy, and Sarah—thank you for taking time from your high school journey to commit yourselves to this study. It goes without saying; this research would not have been possible without you guys. It was a pleasure and an honor to work with you and watch you mature into awesome young adults.

My husband Jason D Yi(DJ) who does not understand my passion for learning but loves me enough to encourage and support me to pursue my studies, sacrificing vacation days and sanity to take care of us so that I can attend classes and do my research. To my children, Brian and Julia, who have been so patient with me over the years. I thank you for accepting so many compromises along this journey without a single complaint. I love you all.
And finally, I want to thank my parents. My father, late Mr. In Sik Yi and my mother, Mrs. Kukui Yi for their courage to move to the United States so that we can live in peace and freedom. I thank you for raising me in a society where people are free to dream and pursue their goals and interests.
PREFACE:

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE A GOOD TEACHER?
I wanted to find out from former students how they would describe effective teachers. I reached out to former students via email and online social networks. The following are some of the responses I received from graduates of the research site school.

- A good teacher is one who teaches not solely for grades, they teach because they enjoy the profession and they want to see the students grow both socially and academically. A good teacher takes into consideration the fact that students should have their own rights. (Katrina W., class of 2011)

- A good teacher can help his/her students be successful and get good grades, but without ‘babying’ and ‘spoon-feeding’ his/her students. (Alexis M., class of 2011)

- A good teacher should be knowledgeable, and enthusiastic. They should have many of the same qualities that a good leader should have. They should care about their students and have a passion for helping their students. (Amy W., class of 2011)

- A good teacher is described as down to earth, helpful and enjoys teaching. When a student needs help with a problem, they offer to help them even though the student may have asked 50 times. The teacher should also be very thoughtful but not too thoughtful to be a pushover teacher. Those teachers who enjoy teaching not only make their teaching experience fun but our experience of learning worthwhile. (Hannah K., class of 2011)

- I think an effective teacher can be any of the following: 1) promotes self-motivated learning 2) teaches students how to think about problems and challenges students 3) great communicator 4) caring (DJ, class of 2007)

- A good teacher is someone who is intelligent and also passionate about the subject they teach so that their enthusiasm can help engage students. More than anything, however, they must know how to talk students in a way they would understand. (AT., class of 2012)

- I would describe a good teacher as one who is devoted to his or her students in a way that does not solely include teaching the course's necessary curriculum. (Alexander S., class of 2012)
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Chapter 1
Introduction

How one teacher treats or teaches a child has rippling effects that permeate and continue throughout the individual’s educational journey. (Wang, et.al. 2007)
***Introduction***

In 2008, The United States elected its first African American President. We also confronted a record-breaking financial crisis that required the federal government to step in with trillion-dollar bail out plans. During this desperate time, candidate Barak Obama ran his campaign with the slogan “change we can believe in.” Since then, many changes have taken place in both domestic and international arenas. The past five years have been characterized by not only a rise in unemployment and poverty but also a series of tragedies that affected us as a nation. We are desperately trying to recover from tragic events and economic downturns in order to restore our optimism for the future our children will inherit. We are at a time when we need to reflect on the path we will take to ensure a better tomorrow. Perhaps now, it is even more important than ever to revisit education policies since there is no greater or more powerful vehicle for progress and the future than education.

Changes have taken place in schools and classrooms throughout the country as each state tried to implement policies to ensure quality control of their schools. High-stakes testing and teacher accountabilities were implemented and reformed in response to first No Child Left Behind Legislation (2001) followed by the Race to the Top (2009) and the current movement to implement Common Core State Standards Initiative curriculum (http://www.triumphlearning.com/). Student test score gain is accepted as the primary measure in determining teacher effectiveness. In New York State, for example, all teachers in public schools except in NY City public schools are subjected to Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) review in which 40% of the student evaluation rating is based on student test performance. In order to move forward, it is essential that we slow down and...
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re-evaluate the meaning of learning and education. We need to define the qualities and properties of a good educator. We need to focus on what set of knowledge and values we want our children to learn and represent as they prepare to step up as tomorrow’s leaders.

**Policies: standardization and reforming curriculum.** Schools across the nation are implementing education policies, primarily in the areas of administrator and teacher assessment, based on test score gains. Many states are reforming teacher certification to meet rigorous standards to ensure certified teachers in their states are highly qualified. According to the National Council of Teacher Quality 2013 State Teacher Policy Yearbook (nctq.org), many policies have been implemented to widen the pool of high quality teachers and teacher candidates:

- 22 states require teachers to complete a master’s degree in order to earn professional teaching certification
- 19 states require a minimum GPA from candidates entering into teacher preparation programs.
- 42 states and the District of Columbia school district require teacher preparation candidates to take an academic proficiency test before or during the course of their prep program.

In addition to these changes, 47 states plus the District of Columbia requires teacher candidates to pass a national exam, such as the Praxis for Reading and Math, or Subject and/or General Knowledge Exam (NASDTEC Knowledgebase, 2010). More recently, five states, Washington, New York, Hawaii, Tennessee, and Wisconsin have edTPA policy in place and
five more states are taking steps to implement the policy that claims to be aligned with common core instruction (edtpa.aacte.org). State governments, education departments, and local school districts across the nation are also implementing what they consider an effective teacher evaluation system to maintain quality control of current teachers.

The image of an effective teacher is determined and shaped by policymakers and is currently emerging at all levels to produce an army of cookie-cutter models of what they consider effective teachers. In order to standardize education and provide a way to measure achievement across all schools regardless of the socioeconomic status (SES) of students, resource disparities in schools, and hundreds of other factors that make one school different from another, many states have put in place mandated exams. Each state has its own standardized exams for various subjects and grade levels. However, there is a great movement to have uniform standards under Common Core curriculum initiated by 47 states (http://www.commoncore.org). The Common Core focuses on language arts and math curricula for elementary and secondary grades, and as of March 2013, 46 states have adopted the standards. Texas and Alaska, non-members of Common Core Initiative, and Virginia and Nebraska opted to not adopt the initiative. The results from student test scores based on common curriculum standards are to be used as a basis for teacher evaluation, tenure, and job retention. Throughout these sweeping changes under first the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and Race to the Top (RTT), and now the Common Core Initiative, student input was overlooked. The students have a large stake in education policy because these reforms affect them directly. However, all of these changes led to putting even more emphasis on tests and subsequently, more pressure to teach to the tests. As an educator, a parent, and a student advocate, I firmly believe there is a need to involve students in the decision and
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Policymaking processes that currently enforce the hegemonic social hierarchy that exists in our society.

As schools push for the expanded use of mandated testing, the teacher’s role has been reduced to what Freire (1993) described as a technician, who will deposit a set of knowledge in students, which they are then required to reproduce on exams in order to prove their academic achievement. Testing students based on standards is now a significant facet in measuring learning and consequently, in evaluating teacher effectiveness. The unique quality that each teacher brings to class to create a positive learning environment is often overlooked or presumed to be reflected in student grades. The individual qualities and creativity of teachers provide a unique and personal view of the world. Students learn not only the subject matter, but they also learn in other ways that may not be measurable by traditional methods used for teacher performance evaluation. Social justice, personal growth and maturity, and civic activism and enthusiasm for learning are some examples of non-content/subject learning that may be imparted from the environment a teacher may provide to his or her students. In order to evaluate the true effects of teachers, we must involve students in assessing the impact teachers have on them. It is time to directly ask students what they believe are the qualities in teachers that enable education.

The purpose of education should not be limited to student learning that can be measured by standardized exams. The goals of education or, simply, the answer to why we educate, should include providing greater life opportunities and enabling our students to become active participants in a democratic society as well as providing access to knowledge and promoting higher learning in a given discipline (Michelli, 2004; Srikantaiah, 2009). Teachers not only affect what students learn but they also influence how students view and
approach life situations. Teacher effects range from grades, choice of majors and universities by students, worldviews, and the life choices these children will make as adults. Bourdieu (1991) argued that school is the most common place in which we reproduce the social values and practices of our society and reflect the hierarchical relationships that are in place in society. In order to build a stronger and more diverse democratic society to promote equitable democratic practices, we must give voice to all involved in American schools.

In order to impart knowledge to promote critical learning and enable active participation in a democratic society, it is essential to implement practices that allow for the production of referent ideas. Providing students with high quality teachers, who are not only experts in their subjects, but also in other areas of knowledge, allows for a greater discourse within a classroom. Bruner (1996) describes the process of the learner’s mind in the following way:

The agentive mind is not only active in nature, but it seeks out dialogue and discourse with other active minds. In addition, it is through this dialogic, discursive process that we come to know the Other and his points of views, histories. We learn an enormous amount not only about the world but about ourselves by discourse with Others. (p. 93)

In communities where students are provided with an environment in which they are active participants, they will learn a lesson that is not limited to the subject at hand but also about the world in which they live. Interaction with adults and experiences in instructional settings such as schools play a great role in shaping how individuals view society and find their places in it. It is from interaction with others that children shape their information, knowledge and values (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1996). How educators approach teaching,
present knowledge, and interact with our students helps to shape the future of society.

Teacher effectiveness in opening up students’ world views, planting a seed of interest in a particular subject, or fostering a sense of civic responsibility are not immediate, tangible, or measurable by traditional exams. These impacts may not be visible or immediate; however, these impacts are real and can be evaluated. A former student returning to his alma mater years after graduating to visit a teacher, to share old memories or relate how the teacher had influenced their decisions or added to their later experiences is not quantified in the teacher effectiveness formula. There is a need to ask students to reflect on the lessons they have learned and what they believe are the best qualities of their teachers. Therefore, the elements that go into defining an effective teacher should include the student voice.

**Problem.** Schools are positioned in society to be powerful vehicles in which to prepare the next generation of citizens to become leaders of a better future (Bourdieu, 1991). As educators, we can choose to enforce injustice and reproduce the type of society that will continue to perpetuate the unequal circumstances ascribed to certain groups (Freire, 1993) or we can take steps to break this tradition. We have an obligation to present all arguments and justifications regarding education policy to our students and allow them to enter into a dialogue that creates policies and legislation that affect them. Students have a real stake in education policy since these policies directly affect them. In the discourse of learning, students should have the option to explore and learn to become truly active participants in society, capable of identifying injustices, and emboldened to question the status quo in order to improve society.

Student input has consistently been absent in the process of policymaking. The changes that took place under two federal legislations: No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (U.S.
Department of Education, 2001) and Race to the Top (RTT) (U.S. Department of Education, 2009) excluded the voice of students and teachers, even though these individuals make up the largest groups in the educational system and are the most affected by these policies. These policies are a true reflection of the social hierarchy and an example of how the power structure is enforcing its values. Neither student nor teacher input was valued in the decision and policymaking process. A second implication is that because of NCLB, Race to the Top, and currently, the Common Core, we are seeing a trend in school communities across the nation in which teacher effectiveness is measured mainly by student test scores for continued employment of teachers, and is the basis for funding for schools.

Although teachers are also a marginalized group in this discourse, their interests are somewhat represented and protected by the teacher unions. Through organizations such as the United Federation of Teachers (http://www.uft.org) for New York City public school teachers, state unions such as the New York State Union of Teachers (http://www.nysut.org), and the national American Federation of Teachers (http://www.aft.org), teachers have some agency in this dialogue. The teachers’ unions have been active in fighting against the teacher evaluation policies and challenging school districts to put less emphasis on test scores and test score gains (http://www.nysut.org, uft.org). The students, however, do not have an organization representing their interests. The marginalized voices of our students can be heard in student cafeterias or in the halls when they wonder why there are so many tests and why the class does not spend more time studying subjects that are more fun. Students are a truly invisible entity. In suburban middle class school districts, the parents association is a prominent entity, representing their interests on behalf of their children. Many urban school
systems, however, do not have a strong representation consisting of parents or community members advocating the interests of the home, community, or the students.

Despite the various studies using empirical data or the scientific method to determine those qualities that enable teachers to be effective, researchers have yet to agree on a set list of the qualities of effective teachers (Hanushek, 1986; Wayne and Youngs, 2003). For policymakers, researchers, and interest groups, the very definition of what it means to be effective is reduced to teachers’ performance largely as it relates to gains in student test scores. However, many education researchers and administrators admit there is a limitation to such an approach (Corcoran, 2010).

*Constructivist Lens.* Looking through a critical constructivist lens, I argue that teacher effectiveness and teacher quality need to be redefined to include the broader impact teachers have on students. Learning and knowledge acquisition are products of experiences and insights of participants in classrooms and in life. Learning is more than just rote memorization and repetition of assessments. Teacher characteristics and qualities impact how students are motivated, understand content, and develop a critical outlook on the subject at hand as well as about the world they live in. Students are able to form a sense of which teacher qualities motivated them and enabled them to learn better, and likewise, students are able to give better insights into what an effective teacher should be. The student voice needs to be added to the conversation defining what it means to be an effective teacher and what qualities he/she must have in order to be an effective teacher. In identifying effective teachers, qualities such as teachers’ general knowledge, content specialty, wider world views and tolerance, the ability to communicate effectively, and the ability to model for
students how to become active and responsible members of society need to be included. I will argue that the current trend of defining effective teaching based mainly on student test score results provides no real means of accountability for the actual learning that takes place within classrooms.

Teacher impact and effectiveness go beyond test results and beyond the superficial student engagement as measured by cursory classroom observations. The qualities of teachers that affect student learning and growth are worth exploring in order to understand the broad spectrum of teacher impact. The measurement of teacher effectiveness and the standards of teacher quality are established and assessed by policymakers and school administrators. It seems we have experts to assess and manage all aspects of our schools and education system. However, we rarely ask those involved in the day-to-day events what happens in the classroom. In order to explore and better understand the qualities, circumstances, and events that have a positive impact on students, we need to ask the students themselves these pivotal questions.

**Purpose of research.** The purpose of this mixed method participatory action research is to include student voices in the discourse defining teacher effectiveness. Further, it will provide space to student researchers to explore and identify the valuable learning experiences and, subsequently, the teacher characteristics they value and identify as defining good teaching. This project intends to create a dialogue among students at a site school about the purpose of education; namely, their education, education policies and goals, and effective teacher qualities.

The research questions are:
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1. How do students define the purposes of education?

2. How do students define effective teachers?

3. How do students’ views on purpose of education and effective teacher differ from those of policymakers?

The research questions that will guide this research are based on the assumptions that (1) there are broader goals of education than performance on tests; (2) there are teacher impacts that are not measured by traditional tests; and (3) there are certain qualities teachers bring to the classroom that encourage student interest and achievement. Communication skills, compassion, and a broader worldview are examples of those qualities.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

…we need to remind ourselves that the function of schools is broader and deeper and that what really counts is what people do with their lives when they choose to do what they want to do. In fact, I would argue that the major aim of schooling is to enable students to become the architects of their own education so that they can invent themselves in the course of their lives. (Eisner, 2003 p. 652)
“Forty minutes…when does this period end?” For many students, school and learning do not go readily hand-in-hand in a neat, pleasant package. Surviving the class until the next period, passing or acing class exams and, finally, doing well on the test—be it the SAT, the ACT, a Regents exam or other state-mandated exam—seem to be the main goals of school. Somewhere along the way, learning, school, and education have forked into separate paths. The measure of learning and academic achievements is now limited to a set of numbers, be it tests scores, student ranking, average, or GPA. In the decade after No Child Left Behind (2001) and later reinforced by the requirements of Race to the Top, teaching can be perceived as becoming what Freire (1993) describes as the banking method. The school curriculum is increasingly determined at the state level by the policymakers and it has become the teachers’ job to teach to the test in order to ensure their students perform well on the tests created by the state policymakers to meet the Common Core standards across the nation.

Testing is one measure of student learning. A standardized test can help measure student achievements across the nation. Education researcher Cochran-Smith (2006) asserts using test scores and student test score gains is one effective tool in teacher evaluation; however, she raised concerns that it may become the only measure of teacher effectiveness. Curriculum has taken on the auspices of uniformity, not only across state, but also at national levels. The push for Common Core standards in language arts and math has met with encouragement. As of 2013, 46 states plus Washington DC out of 50 states has accepted the Common Core of instructional goals. Common Core goals will expand to other academic
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subjects in the future. School districts are moving towards having uniform lessons by providing scripted lesson plans to the teachers, leaving little room for the individuality of teachers and learners that may lead to the new discoveries open discourses can bring. There is a need to break away from a teaching model where the teachers are disseminating and delivering a set of knowledge that society’s power structure deems valuable. Learning and obtaining knowledge is an intimate and dynamic practice of give-and-take between teachers and students that cannot be produced or reproduced as an outcome of uniform lessons or set curriculum by individuals who have never set foot in that classroom.

The current trend in school communities across the nation is accountability. Discussions revolve around how to assure and maintain quality education. In measuring quality of education, student performance on high-stakes tests has become the basis for teacher evaluations and personnel decisions. In many ways, student test performance has social and economic implications for teachers, administrators, communities, and states. For states and districts, the outcome can determine funding, while for administrators and teachers, it could determine their livelihood. While the qualities and requirements vary by state, as of 2013, 28 states require annual teacher evaluation. Further, 37 states require multiple observations of teachers, and 40 states plus the District of Columbia require student growth as measured by tests as part of teacher evaluation (ntqc.org). Eighteen states consider teacher performance based on these evaluations as the basis for teacher layoffs rather than seniority and tenure. Twenty-nine states including New York and its neighboring states such as Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts, articulate that ineffectiveness is grounds for dismissal (ntqc.org). In New York State, for example, two consecutive years of
ineffective ratings can be the grounds for firing a teacher regardless of tenure.\textsuperscript{1} Offering economic incentives and merit based pay, and firing low rating teachers are actions taken to ensure quality control of teachers. These elements are the basis for economic arguments. Product-focused business model evaluations have become prominent in both public and private sectors of our society (Hanushek, 1986).

Teaching challenging new subjects, preparing students for the future, and teaching our children to explore and be free thinkers in a democracy are not the focus in our schools as we march forward into the age of globalization. These ends are not easily or immediately quantifiable; however, longitudinal studies following students after they leave high school, as well as exit interviews and or surveys may show the lasting benefits these qualities can bring. Based on my observations and through informal conversations with other teachers over the past 20 years of teaching, I argue that students who return years after they graduate from high school to visit a particular teacher can be evidence of that teacher’s effectiveness. While gathering such anecdotal evidence can pose a great challenge and introduce a highly subjective bias, learning and human experiences are necessarily subjective. Student perception and reflection through interviews and surveys can be a valuable collection of data. Teaching, just like learning, is a process. Each teacher plays a short-term but significant role in the process of development of an individual. Enforcing the provisions and accountability processes set forth by federal and state governments to ensure quality control of our future labor force and consumers takes precedence in the academic arena.

The MET organization (gatesfoundation.org), a subdivision of The Gates Foundation, began a large-scale student survey inquiry as part of measuring effective teaching in 2010.

\textsuperscript{1} As of School year 2013, there is no appeal process or protocol if a teacher receives an ineffective rating from his/ her school.
Currently, student surveys and input have become a bigger part of teacher assessments. However, prior to the MET involvement, students in K-12 grades traditionally have not been asked how they perceive effective teaching or what qualities they find essential in effective teachers (Wang, Gibson, & Slate, 2007; Watcher, Onwuegbuzie, & Minor, 2001) despite the fact that the students are the people most impacted by education policy. Although there have been studies on student perception of teacher qualities, Wang et.al. (2007) have summarized the limitations of these studies. The studies often surveyed college students about college professors or pre-service teachers’ perceptions of K-12 teachers. In these studies, the survey participants were college students and most such studies were limited to either qualitative or quantitative analyses. Researchers (Wang, Gibson, & Slate, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) now call for mixed method studies as the best method for studying high school student perceptions of K-12 teachers. The ways in which teachers affect student learning and development are not measured by traditional assessments; things such as providing positive role models, challenging students intellectually, and providing a framework to embrace life’s opportunities. These need to be examined and given weight in policy development that defines effective teaching and the goals of education for all children.

Linda Darling-Hammond, in the opening statement of her book *Preparing Teachers for a Changing World* (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005), compares the teacher in a classroom to the conductor of an orchestra. The various instruments have to come together to make perfect harmony and it is the conductor who must be aware of what each instrument is capable of doing and must bring them all together. The final product, a beautiful symphony that is pleasant and seemingly easy to the ears of listeners, is the result of years of practice and the master artist’s ability to make something that is multilayered and intricate seem
simple and coherent. Darling-Hammond describes the work and function of a teacher as being just as complex and dynamic as that of a master conductor. Darling-Hammond’s view and esteem of teachers as highly skilled professionals, unfortunately, is not echoed in the world of education and educational policy. In the decade after NCLB, the race for funding for a share of the $4.35 billion dollars allotted for qualifying states in Race to the Top, and now the adoption of Common Core Initiatives, teachers are measured by their students’ performance on high-stake exams. Every day in the life of a teacher is a performance. A teacher must prepare lessons, be ready to impart new information, challenge learners, and keep them interested, all the while integrating different learning styles and being aware that each student is an individual who may be having either a tough or glorious day. No two children are the same and no two lessons can ever be the same. Under this tremendous responsibility, the call at federal, state and local levels to reduce the achievement gap and raise standards of education has placed accountability for academic achievement on the teachers.

**History and background of public education.** Public schools in the United States have gone through tremendous changes in the past100 years. The metamorphosis of public schooling, which began as rural community-based schools with strong ties between community and school, transformed into a highly centralized bureaucratic system that has come to rely on experts and professionals to make the decisions that affect our children (Tyack, 1974; Kober, 2007). At the start of the twentieth century, as our society moved from locally controlled agrarian relatively homogenous communities to an industrialized
heterogeneous urban society and presently to being a leader of the global information age, the control of schools has left the hands of families and communities.

Education has become less community based as the pressure to compete globally has increased. In the current age of information and globalization, education is more standardized, punctuated with international standardized exams initiated by international organizations such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to promote the human capital model of education (Spring, 2009, http://www.oecd.org). Today, we face urban public schools that are controlled by city mayors, lawyers, businessmen, and media moguls. Management experts and politicians are gaining control of urban schools systems. New York City Schools are an example where the former Mayor Michael Bloomberg, a billionaire media entrepreneur, focused greatly on numbers, test scores and graduation rates, applied the business model in running one of the largest school systems in the country that educate over a million students. Affluent or middle class suburban schools are the exception where the parents still have an active role in the decision making process. However, the suburban schools are also required to conform to the statewide standards and teacher evaluations. Tenured teachers in successful schools as well as new teachers in failing schools are subject to multi-tiered annual evaluations in which their livelihoods are linked to these assessments. The schools are all now expected to evaluate teacher effectiveness annually and have an accountability system based on student test score gain, and as a result, schools can find themselves teaching to tests (http://usny.nysed.gov).

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2 As of 2013, there are 10 cities throughout the United States where the Mayor has considerable control over city Board of Education. In NYC the former chancellor, Joel Klein was an anti-trust attorney who left the NYC Dept. of Ed. to work for News Corp., responsible for selling education software to public schools.
Tyack’s *One Best System* (1974) is one of the best historic accounts of the movement from rural, community schools, created and controlled by the residents, to urban schools controlled by politicians and many so-called education experts. As cities developed, the schools also transformed in the name of progress. The urban school had some advantages, such as extending education to many more students, but it also took the control of curriculum and policy out of the hands of the community. Public education in the twentieth century reflected the social, economic and political conditions of our nation, and set the goals and curriculum focus for education (Wang et al., 2007; Kliebard, 1994). The early twentieth century was about socializing children of immigrants to conform to American social life in response to the influx of immigrants from non-English speaking and non-western European nations. After World War II and during the Cold War, educational goals shifted toward making American youth more competitive in math and science fields against the youth in the former U.S.S.R. (Kliebard, 1994). Much has changed since the establishment of the first public schools, and yet little has changed. The political nature of schools, the goal of promoting certain knowledge and cultural values, and inequality in education are still prevalent today (Bruner, 1996).

Curriculum war by interest groups is nothing new or unique to the twenty-first century (Kliebard, 1994). The public outcry over poorly qualified teachers and low performing students made headlines in the 1980s, motivating educational policy makers and politicians to call for raising the standards of schools and teachers (The New York Times, 1987; Hanushek, 1986). Research on teacher quality and effectiveness, based on an economic model, became the accepted practice by the 1980s. Teacher quality, disparity of resources, and the student achievement gap have been at the forefront of criticism against public schools
for some time. Business people, attorneys, and entrepreneurs have taken on greater roles as education experts in the industrial and post-industrial age, while educators and members of the community have been pushed back and marginalized. Children have not been asked at any point what they believe to be the purpose of education or how they would design an ideal learning community. The multimedia corporations, publishers, and shadow academic institutions have become major stakeholders who have been active in helping to shape educational policy (Spring, 2009). Policy decisions should take into consideration all ideas and opinions of the school community, parents, students, and the education experts in developing an evolving definition of the purpose of education and the means to employing, including defining what is meant by the term “highly effective teacher,” and look to measure both short- and long-term teacher impact.

The call for education reform is not a new phenomenon. The NCLB legislation, however, is unique in that it is a call by the federal government to all states to reduce the achievement gap in schools. The achievement gap is the disparity between the middle class suburban school students and working class and poor urban school students’ performances based on graduation and dropout rates, college admissions and entrance, and on standardized exams such as the SAT, ACT and AP course exams. Although NCLB promised funding to meet the cost of various reforms, the actual funds for states were nominal and, at times, confusing. In the wake of the national financial crisis in the fall of 2008, which signaled the beginning of a long recession, states are now in greater need for financial aid, whether from the federal government or private organizations, in order to sustain schools. As of 2010, forty-two of the fifty states (including Washington, D.C.) had applied for a share of $4.35
billion in Race to the Top funding, made available to states that have shown commitment and
made reforms to ensure equal education and school accountability (USDOE RTT, 2009).

Private organizations also have become prominent in the public school arena. The Bill
and Melinda Gates Foundation donated over $373 million to U.S. education programs in
2009 (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2010a). The Gates Foundation, in partnership with
NBC Education Nation, has brought the so-called problems of public schools to light. These
two organizations are currently on a mission to improve teacher quality and effectiveness
through research. One such project is Measurement of Effective Teaching (MET), a Gates
Foundation program whose stated goal is “to build measures of effective teaching to find out
how evaluation methods could best be used to tell teachers more about the skills that make
them most effective,” (http://www.metproject.org/) headed by Harvard economist Thomas
Kane (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2010b). Meeting graduation requirements,
preparing for college, and meeting uniform standards in all schools are the abbreviated
agreed upon education goals by the politicians, policy makers, and school administrators.
Factors such as socioeconomic status of students, parents’ education level, professions of
parents, race/ethnicity, location of schools, as well as unobservable qualities of students, such
as motivation and interests, contribute to the wide degree of academic success/failure.
However, in many cases, accountability is reduced to holding teachers accountable for their
student’s test scores.

Current trends. Many of the stakeholders and policymakers that have affected
schools and millions of children across the nation for the past 12 years are not educators;
rather, they are entrepreneurs and politicians. Current U.S. Secretary of Education Arne
Adding Students' Voices to the Discourse on Effective Teaching

Duncan, former Washington D.C. school chancellor Michelle Rhee 2007-2010, and former New York City Department of Education chancellor Joel Klein are perhaps the most prominent figures in public education who also happen to have little or no teaching experience. These individuals made decisions that affected millions of students and tens of thousands of teachers. Of these three individuals, Michelle Rhee is the only one with any teaching background. As a Teach for America\(^3\) candidate, she taught in an underserved district elementary school in Maryland for three years where her success and impact as a teacher is unclear. Since her three-year tenure as a TFA teacher, Michelle Rhee ran organizations as education consultant from 1997 to the present with a three-year break to serve as Washington DC superintendent. Joel Klein, former chancellor of New York City Public schools, was an anti-trust attorney. However, Klein was appointed by NYC Mayor Bloomberg in 2002 and served as chancellor until December 2010. Since mid-2011, Klein has been hired by media mogul Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp, which has been a major supplier of education software products purchased by NYC and other public schools. Klein, along with other NYC Board of Education executives hired by News Corp, are the leading figures in the education division of that company. These individuals are highly educated and powerful figures, they do not have the experience of working the school year inside a classroom daily to really understand and know the demands and challenges of teachers or the demands and challenges of the students for that matter. These top education executives lack firsthand experience in understanding what a child learns in a day, over a year, and in the course of years from teachers.

\(^3\) Teach for America is an alternative pathway to teaching where graduates from top universities with no education background or coursework are selected and placed in high needs school for a three-year commitment. [http://www.teachforamerica.org/]
Education as an institution is necessarily political and is a powerful tool that influences future generations. The set of values, knowledge and language we pass on to our children encompasses and ensures the continuity of our culture and identity (Bourdieu, 1991). Inequities in education quality, high dropout rates in urban schools, demand for global economic competitiveness, and the exorbitant price tag for education place our schools and, in particular, our teachers, under great scrutiny. Put simply, our nation’s schools have become a hot political and economic topic in recent decades. In an attempt to close the achievement gap between suburban and urban schools, the federal government has called for action.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 set goals for all teachers in core academic subjects to be highly qualified by the 2005-06 school year. While the goal itself is not problematic, the design and administration process somehow left the definition of teacher effectiveness and academic achievements with a limited scope. The federal government’s definition of a highly qualified teacher under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is the teacher who has completed a bachelor’s degree, holds full state certification, and has passed rigorous subject content and pedagogy tests to demonstrate competence in his or her assigned subject. Middle and high school teachers may demonstrate competence in their assigned subject(s) by holding a degree major in the assigned subject (or equivalent course work) or, for current teachers only, the state may propose another method of evaluating and reporting the competence of teachers in their assigned subject(s) (NCLB, Section 1111(h)).

The results of such a call has led to the establishment of high-stakes testing for both teachers and students across the nation. Various reforms were put in place in teacher
certification and evaluation at both state and district levels. Administrating uniform tests to
students was the states’ attempt to bring equity to education in terms of curriculum, content,
and standards. High schools in New York City with consistent low passing rates on State
Regents Exams and low graduation rates were considered failing schools and were forced to
close. In forty states, a teacher’s annual evaluation relies greatly on student performance on
tests. States also reformed their initial teacher certification requirements to ensure the quality
of their teachers by making state requirements more rigorous in terms of academics and tests
the candidates must complete (National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education
and Certification, 2010). However, in order to deal with the teacher shortages in high needs
areas, such as poor urban schools with high failing rates, states have developed alternative
pathways to place teachers in classrooms. The goals of raising standards for teacher
preparation, certification, and meeting the need for enough certified teachers proved to be
conflicting. As of 2010, 48 of 50 states and the District of Columbia have alternative
pathways to teacher certification such as Teach for America, Troops to Teachers, and the
Teaching Fellows Program (http://www.teach-now.org).

The irony of states’ attempts to meet both goals—in increasing teacher licensure
requirements and filling classrooms with highly qualified teachers—was that, on the one
hand, it made teacher qualification more challenging and time consuming for teacher
candidates already in or interested in enrolling in an education preparation program. On the
other hand, teaching opportunities opened for many who were not in the field of education.
Subtle but powerful messages can be inferred from this movement: (1) current teacher
education candidates are academically weak and need to confirm their quality through
rigorous exams and higher requirements; and (2) anyone can become a teacher with very
little or no education background. These two contradictory messages are, at best, confusing and, at worst, undermine the teaching profession as a whole.

Concerns regarding the quality of schools, competitiveness of our students in the global community, and the declining level of our children’s skills are recurring topics in education policy. Teacher quality has been an ever-present issue in education reform. Empirical studies using value-added measures of teacher quality were popularized in the early 1970s (Hanushek, 1971; Wayne and Youngs, 2003; NY Times, 1987). The debate about whether it is accurate to measure teacher ability and quality based on standardized test scores was at the forefront of the discussion on education and teacher quality. Teacher quality and effectiveness and student achievement have been the topics of policymakers and education reformers for the past four decades. The very definition of terms such as ‘effective teacher’ or ‘ideal teacher’ has changed overtime. Observable qualities such as teacher experience, coursework and major field of study, institution where teachers completed their undergraduate studies, merit pay, and class size were compared to student test score gains to determine which, if any, of those variables have a significant correlation to student growth. Earlier analysis by Hanushek (1971) as well as more recent studies (Wayne and Youngs, 2003) found variables, such as experience in teaching and merit pay, to have little impact in determining effective teachers. Similar empirical studies were prevalent throughout the 1980s and 1990s that impacted changes in teacher licensure policies (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2007; Goldhaber & Brewer, 1996).

In 2001, thirty-four states required some form of standardized testing for teacher candidates in order to meet certification requirements (Wayne and Youngs, 2003). However, as of 2009, all states require several tests in basic knowledge, professional knowledge, and
subject content. Nearly half currently require three to four examinations for initial certification. Many states have revamped their certification requirements to include basic, professional, and/or content tests, completion of a master’s degree and/or increased professional development hours to qualify as a highly qualified teacher (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2010; National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), 2007).

There has been forty years’ worth of studies on teacher quality, premised on the assumption that teachers make a great impact on student achievement. However, as mentioned above, the very definition of the effective teacher has changed over time to reflect the values of the society at the time. Cruickshank and Haefele (2001) noted effective teachers were described in the 1950s as “ideal” teachers; in the 1960s, as analytic; in the 1970s, as effective, dutiful, and competent; in the 1980s, as expert and reflective; and in the 1990s, as diversity responsive. In the 2000s and beyond ‘effective teacher’ is a term we hear often but there is a need to define the term with a more comprehensive definition that includes student input.

There have been very few studies in which K-12 students were surveyed or interviewed for their perceptions of the teacher qualities they value.

The review of a few states by Srikantiaiah (2009) for the Center for Education Policy (CEP) shows that in response to NCLB, states have established curriculum standards, but often have state exams for the students that are not aligned to the state standards. In the CEP study, four common responses to NCLB were found in school districts throughout three states (Illinois, Rhode Island, and Washington):

1. Alignment of curriculum and standards
2. Focus on test preparation in classroom instruction
3. Diminished time for other subjects and activities to devote time to test preparation in language arts and math

4. School administration reliance on state test results to make policy decisions

These changes have resulted in reducing time in the curriculum for all subjects, hindering opportunities to develop critical thinking and in-depth knowledge of any one subject. Classroom lessons focus on test preparation rather than individual learning and achievement. Other programs and activities that encourage wider learning about the arts, science, civics, and community through field trips, recess, and story time are lost in the school culture across the nation.

A closer look at certification reforms in large states: New York and California. Education has been historically a local matter in the United States. The United States Constitution does not delegate the powers of education to the federal government. Rather, education falls under the power reserved to the states under the Tenth Amendment. Consequently, schooling in the United States has been a decentralized system based on state and local needs. In the movement for standardization, uniformity and, to some extent, equity, states have been reforming their education models. New York and California received comparable and unflattering ratings by the National Council on Teacher Quality (2007). Despite similar ratings by NCTQ, California and New York took different approaches in teacher certification reforms.

New York State no longer issues Provisional and Permanent Teacher Certificates; teachers now earn Initial and Professional Certificates. At the Initial Certificate level, teacher candidates are required to complete a teacher preparation program or a certain number of
credits in education and, in subject specific certificates, substantial study in the subject matter. Initial Certificate candidates must pass three exams testing general knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences, teaching skills and pedagogic knowledge, and content mastery (New York State Education Department, n.d.). New York is in the process of changing teacher licensure requirements at this time. The New York State Education Department implemented the edTPA policy, effective as of May 2014. All teacher candidates applying for certification on or after May 2014 will be required to complete a video lesson and assessments that implements common core learning standard objectives as well as others that will be evaluated by the evaluators from Pearson Publishing Company (edtpa.com).

The New York State Education Department and local school districts have taken measures they believe will ensure teacher quality. Some school districts have taken other measures to ensure teacher quality, such as contracting outside agencies to measure individual student growth correlated to their teachers. Other schools have implemented a portfolio assessment for teachers as part of their tenure review practice. Despite having one of the most rigorous licensure requirements in the nation (NCTQ, 2007), New York State has not integrated student input in shaping coursework or professional development requirements.

California is another state going through many changes and challenges regarding teacher policy, licensure, and evaluation. California initiated portfolio assessment as part of its teacher certification requirements. Performance Assessment for California Teachers

\[\text{\textsuperscript{4}}\text{ Student growth measurement based on pre-and post-testing is used by various school districts.}\]
http://www.nwea.org/

\[\text{\textsuperscript{5}}\text{ In New York State, all school districts except NYC Dept. of Education accepted the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) evaluation measure. APPR score is made up from 60 points based on classroom observation and the remaining 40 points student performance on state tests. NYC Dept. of Ed has an evaluation system in place as of Fall 2013.}\]
ADDING STUDENTS’ VOICES TO THE DISCOURSE ON EFFECTIVE TEACHING

(PACT) is a consortium of thirty-plus universities that joined together to develop a teacher performance assessment, stemming from the 1998 establishment of the Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs) teaching standards for California elementary education student teachers. The consortium is not yet applicable at middle and high school levels. The teaching performance assessment consists of the Teaching Event and Embedded Signature Assessments (ESAs). Multiple subject (elementary) candidates must complete three additional Teaching Event tasks, assessments in each of the core content areas—literacy, mathematics, history-social science, and science—taught in elementary schools. The Teaching Event measures the Teaching Performance Expectations. The customized ESAs, which measure selected Teaching Performance Expectations, are developed by each program (Figure 2.1). Embedded Signature Assessments form the local component of the PACT assessment system alongside the Teaching Event, which is standardized across programs. ESAs offer programs and opportunities that reflect their local program emphases and values. Programs have the option to develop ESAs or to use the Teaching Event as their Teaching Performance Assessment (Performance Assessment for California Teachers, n.d.). The PACT program is one of the bases for Pearson’s edTPA program, which claims to prepare teachers in alignment with the Common Core Initiative that is being implemented in 47 states. California, along with four other states, is in the process of adopting edTPA policy statewide (edtrpa.aacte.org) which will replace PACT and ESA.
California and New York have attempted to address teacher quality and K-12 education policy to ensure success. California, under PACT assessment, has focused on working co-operatively with universities to develop a teacher licensure path while New York State relies heavily on standardized testing of teacher candidates to produce cohesive and high quality teachers at initial licensure. Practices and policies continue to evolve in both states, which are promising; however, in both states, assessment of student performance on standardized state exams is still considered the main measure of learning and is the basis for determining teacher effectiveness. The classroom can become a place of tracking and ranking rather than a place for learning and exploring. Another danger in focusing on test scores is that the schools across the nation will teach to the test. From the building administration and staff perspective, this test score based evaluation can lead to an inequitable distribution of the
burden among teachers. As I have personally witnessed in some public schools, teachers who are considered weak are hidden away to teach gifted students or classes that do not require state tests. Likewise, teachers that are in good personal standing with the administration are given many or all elective courses to teach in which they are no longer pressured to teach to the test and can piggyback on the results of their colleagues’ test scores. If teachers’ livelihoods are at stake based on student performance on tests, teachers may compete to teach the honors level or gifted students, leaving the weak students and students who need the most effective teachers with less experienced teachers, as we have seen occur in poor urban schools, which have been plagued with teacher shortages over the years.

New York State has expanded charter schools and computerized the tracking of student records and exam scores along with teacher information to track growth and ensure accountability at school and teacher levels. Most states have mandated that all students take state issued standardized exams throughout most of their K-12 education. In states such as New York, high school graduation requires all students passing five State Regents examinations in various subjects to ensure that students across the state meet the same standards. Testing has been a priority in New York and other states. The Race to the Top (RTT) policy and technology will allow schools to easily track and monitor not only the students’ progress in grades K-12, but also their respective teachers’ progression in student test score gains. The teachers who teach non-test subjects are also subject to accountability through district-wide standardized tests and assessments.

States that are able to demonstrate that their reforms are progressive and promising in setting standards as defined by the United States Department of Education to ensure high quality teachers and academic achievement for students (which means passing exams) were
granted hundreds of millions of dollars. New York is one of the states that received such a
grant in the second round of funding, along with Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Massachusetts,
Maryland, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Washington, D.C. Through its
commitment to creating more charter schools and its plans to monitor test results in order to
hold teachers and school administrators accountable, New York was able to secure its share
of RTT funding.

Washington, D.C. public schools also received RTT funding. Chancellor Rhee’s
leadership from 2007 to 2010 epitomized the view of hard-line policymakers who identified
effective teachers by pass rates of their students on exams. The D.C. public school district
eliminated the teacher tenure system in 2006, and as a result, teachers are subject to annual
reviews that can result in easy dismissal. In July 2010, Chancellor Rhee fired 241 teachers in
D.C.’s public schools because their students performed poorly on their exams (Turque,
2010). Rhee has been the champion of the movement to repeal teacher tenure policy, first as
chancellor of Washington D.C., and currently as the founder of Students First Foundation
(www.studentsfirst.org). Many school districts and states have followed suit in repealing
teacher tenure policy to ensure that teachers are doing their job. Even in schools and districts
where there still is tenure, tenure has come to mean less as teachers who were evaluated as
being ineffective are subject to dismissal from their posts. Since DC incident, there have
been other conflicts between teacher union and the schools.

Washington D.C. is not the only area that took a hard line in defining academic
success and effective teaching. Rhode Island’s Central Falls High School fired its entire
teaching staff in February 2010 because of the poor performance of their students (Kay,

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6 In schools across Nassau County, New York, two unsatisfactory building level APPR reviews can lead to
dismissal. There is currently no appeal protocol or policy in the event of unsatisfactory APPR evaluation.
The district ended up rehiring many of the same teachers over the summer. However, in this war of teacher accountability and policymaking, students were not included in the process of deciding how to deal with the test scores and school climate. In September 2012, Chicago city schoolteachers went on strike because of negotiations with the school that could have resulted in the firing of nearly 30% of teachers due to low-test results (Pearson, 2012).

Current studies on teacher effectiveness and teacher evaluation. Value-added research has become a common practice in education research as a way to explain why some teachers are more effective. Value-added research looks at teachers’ observable qualities, such as years of teaching experience, pathway to licensure, the college/university attended, coursework completed, and scores on exams such as the SAT or ACT as well as teacher examinations, such as the PRAXIS. Student performance and results on tests are correlated and measured against those mentioned observable qualities of their respective teachers. The research seeks to find variables that have a strong correlation to student achievement. Each teacher’s student gains on examinations are measured using these variables to determine which variables show significant positive correlation as indicators of quality of teacher effectiveness. The individual student’s variables, such as age, location, ethnicity, and/or SES account greatly for their individual achievements. Student’s prior year scores are used as a base to measure the effect the teacher had on that student academic growth. Other factors, such as administration and peer support, mentorship, and school climate are looked at in some studies (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2007; Harris & Sass, 2006; Wayne and Youngs, 2003).

Value-added methods of evaluation of teacher effectiveness utilize the business or product focus model. Hanushek (1971, 1986), Sanders and Rivers (1996), Nye et al., (2004), and
Wayne and Youngs (2003) are just a few of the quantitative researchers who have used value-added or product focused models to determine input quality. The value-added model is built on several assumptions: (1) the desired output or product is determinable—measuring individual student test score gains is the most effective foundation for teacher evaluation; (2) other qualities or variables, such as student background and school climate, can be held constant or accounted for under the economic concept of *ceteris paribus*; and (3) there are measurable observable qualities of teachers, or variable inputs, that can explain the variances in teacher effectiveness. Because they used student test outcomes, or the product, as the basis to identify related teacher qualities, the research has resulted in mixed outcomes with little consistency (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2007; Harris & Sass, 2006; Wayne and Youngs, 2003).

There are many fallacies in the assumptions of the business model. This model assumes that the outcome or the product can be determined when outcomes in school are not guaranteed (Hanushek, 1986). It also assumes that individual achievement gains, as measured by test scores, are the only desired outcome of education. The goals of education and schools should be reevaluated and expanded (Michelli, 2004). Proponents of the business model also acknowledge that test score gains do not and cannot encompass the total learning and growth of students (Rockoff, 2004). Despite the tremendous amount of attention given to such value-added studies, the results of these studies have often been inconclusive in establishing teacher qualities that directly contribute to teaching effectiveness (Goe, 2007).

The Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) (Sanders and Rivers, 1996) is an exceptional example involving assessment of effective teachers based on student achievement on standardized tests. This study quantified student achievement, from the beginning to the end of the school year, based on reading and other test scores, in order to
measure the gains made by students in particular teachers’ classes to determine teaching effectiveness. Education and the concept of academic achievement are necessarily a social construct based on personal experiences and local knowledge (Bentley, 2003). However, the measurement of gains on standardized exams provides empirical, albeit single faceted, data. Test score gains measure how students perform on a specific test on a specific day. This data, while useful, gives us a number, a glimpse, of student capability and learning as performed by this student in a two-hour period in a day or over a three-day period. Broader and more diverse factors, such as communication skills, critical thinking, social and emotional maturity, and empathy must be evaluated over a longer period to measure the growth.

There are many debates about the fairness and the reliability of such data in determining teacher effectiveness. However, as Cochran-Smith (2006) has pointed out concerning the federal top-down mandates under NCLB, it is not necessarily “all evil.” Standardized exams are not the only way to measure teacher effectiveness, but they are definitely a way to open a dialogue on the quality of teachers and teacher education (Gates Foundation, 2010b; Hanushek, 1986). However, NCLB’s goal of making all students proficient by 2014 was grounded on the idea that the low performing schools need to have highly effective teachers in order to get all students college and career ready. The Obama administration introduced the waiver program to states that are committed to prioritizing college readiness and setting guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and holding schools and districts accountable (Cramer, 2012). Kane’s current work in measuring effective teaching (Gates Foundation, 2010b) is involved in a Tripod Approach in which content knowledge, relationship building, and pedagogic skills will be included in measuring teaching effectiveness and teacher evaluation. This approach of teacher evaluation includes
other measures and inputs in addition to student test scores. This research is a promising step forward in including student input. Ferguson’s (2011) emphasis on student perception of teacher and classroom quality and its correlation to student academic success may be a significant step in creating a more complete education research model.

Hanushek’s 1986 study using the econometrics of resource and teacher salary input found that merit pay is not a significant incentive for teacher effectiveness, and that these factors did not raise the test scores of their students. Policymakers and education researchers agree that using student test scores as a measure for teacher effectiveness and school accountability is one, but not the only, measure to account for learning or teacher quality. The questions of how much weight this one factor should be given and what other factors should be measured are hotly debated. The NCLB legislation and policymakers’ definition of effective teaching should be the starting point for further discourse and research, in order to improve teacher education courses and ensure highly qualified teaching candidates (Cochran-Smith, 2006; Corcoran, 2010). Studies by Darling-Hammond and Berry (1999) further support the idea that teacher preparation in pedagogy and classroom management are important in increasing positive teacher impact. Many education researchers argue that teachers have great impact, and that teaching as a profession requires many skills in order to foster a learning community that encourages individual learning.

While there are variances and differences among the education researchers in terms of teacher qualities studies, there are teacher qualities that most education researchers agree are important and which they must focus on. These observable qualities are teachers’ years of experience and subsequently, pay scale; college/university attended; courses taken (subject or education); scores on college admissions or certification tests; and pathway to teacher
certification. There is little agreement, however, among research findings and the most prevalent conclusion from all the research is that there is no significant or set variable that is directly correlated to student achievement (Rockoff, 2004; Hanushek, 1986; Wayne and Youngs, 2003). Further, these variables exhibit conflicting correlations in different studies. Rockoff’s study (2004), for example, shows a solid correlation between performance-based pay and student achievement, while Hanushek (1971) found merit pay to be an insignificant factor in raising student achievement. The effect of class size on student achievement varied (Goldhaber and Berry, 1996). Small class size was found to be more effective in subjects such as language arts and not effective, rendering a negative correlation, in subjects such as math (Goldhaber and Berry, 1996). In Wayne and Youngs’ (2003) data review, secondary level math teachers with a bachelor’s or master’s degree in Math were more effective than teachers with education majors who were math certified. Studies by Boyd et al. (2005), Wayne and Youngs (2003), and Goldhaber and Berry (1996) concluded teacher effectiveness increased in the first three years of teaching but most research found that after the first three years, the improvement in effectiveness as measured by student achievement on test scores was not significant. Hanushek’s earlier empirical study (1971) found that how recent a teacher had taken a course is a significant factor in teacher effectiveness. The discipline or coursework itself or the institute where the course was taken is not as significant as how recently the teacher took the course.

The Kane et al. (2008) study on observable qualities of teachers found that there are only small differences among teachers who take different pathways to certification. However, large differences in ability exist among individual teachers. Teachers vary considerably in the extent to which they promote student learning. Kane’s study did not distinguish the
pathways of teacher certification as a variable determining their effectiveness. Other academic credentials, such as selectivity of their undergraduate institution or grade-point average also proved to be poor predictors of a teacher’s classroom impact. Sass’s quantitative data review study (2011), based on four alternative pathways to teaching in Florida for elementary and secondary teachers. Sass’s study found that the alternative pathway teachers had higher rates of passing general and content knowledge certification exams in their initial higher student gain in the first two years of teaching. Likewise, Boyd et.al. (2005) pathway studies in New York City also concluded that Teaching Fellows and Teach for America candidates who had graduated from colleges that are more competitive had higher passing rates of required certification tests and stronger content background. Boyd’s study looked at teacher pathways and student gain as a value added measure. The student growth, as measured by student test scores, shows larger gain among students of teachers in alternative pathways in the first two years of teaching (Boyd et.al. 2005). Pathway’s study findings challenges Darling-Hammond’s argument that teacher education courses are necessary in order to improve teacher effectiveness. Alternative pathway studies such as Teach for America accept graduates from top universities; thus, TFA candidates may have a stronger academic background than most of their peers. There is a need for further studies and longitudinal studies to look at the continued growth and impact of these teachers as well as their retention rates to further determine which pathways to teaching produce effective teachers who will remain in teaching and continue to become effective.

The ongoing dialogue among the educators and policy makers and the policies that result from these scientific studies reveal little regarding the processes that relate to learning. For educators, the process of learning and development are the foci of the school community
ADDING STUDENTS’ VOICES TO THE DISCOURSE ON EFFECTIVE TEACHING

(Wang et al., 2007). In this approach, student learning is not solely assessed by test score gains; rather, it is a process of community forming and knowledge making (Bruner, 1996; Wang, et al., 2007). In the process focus model (Figure 2.2) students and teachers bring certain characteristics and experiences to school communities and classrooms to create a responsive and ongoing dialogue to develop a learning community in which learning consists of not just knowledge but also development and growth. The characteristics and qualities, such as pedagogic and content knowledge and world views skills, are what teachers bring in this model that is essential. The students need to bring their readiness to learn, which is derived from previous years of learning at school, home, and in the community. The school community should allow a classroom climate that encourages the free flow of ideas for broader goals in learning than just test performance. Researchers agree that in order to support this model, there is the need for a broader definition of learning and achievement (Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2008; Stronge, 2002). Ferguson’s Tripod Approach (2010, 2011), which I discuss later in this chapter, and which uses various measures, including student perception, is becoming a basis for teacher evaluation across the country. However, up until very recently, there was very little research done in which K-12 students were asked to evaluate teacher quality (Wang et al., 2007). Currently, only seven states require student surveys as part of teacher evaluation, another nine states allow but do not require student surveys, while 35 states do not permit student surveys to be used in teacher evaluation (ntqc.org). Student surveys and student perception research for effective teaching were conducted mostly at college level, evaluating professors or surveying pre-service teachers. Careful studies involving student surveys of K-12 teachers have been sparse.
Studies are scarce in which students were asked to evaluate their instructors for effectiveness and the qualities effective teachers possess. Studies at the college level, involving students’ evaluation of teachers on qualities such as immediacy—for instance, eye contact, calling students by their name or verbal caring-complimenting, acknowledging student’s strengths—were viewed as characteristics that students value and identify with competent instructors (Epting, Zinn, & Buskist, 2004; Benson, Cohen, & Buskist, 2005). Epting et al. (2004), Benson et al. (2005), and Teven & Hanson (2004) conducted studies in
different colleges through surveys and interviews regarding the qualities of effective college professors. The Epting et.al. (2004) study surveyed nearly 200 communications students in public colleges. Epting’s work results show that students, in general, seek or value certain qualities in faculty, such as accessibility of teachers outside of classroom, compassion, and strong content knowledge. These qualities are those that facilitate interest and engagement in the course and the subject. In all of these studies, the professor’s rapport—consisting of making eye contact, addressing students by name, and making themselves available after class hours—are qualities that encourage students to be more interested in the class, seek out help, and make students less likely to drop the class. The students in such cases were more likely to take another course in the same subject and/or with the same professor. These student perception studies at college level are relevant to assessing teachers at grades K-12 since they provide a framework for further studies. These studies show that student perception of instructors is not a popularity contest. Further, the study findings identify qualities students value in a good educator. Lastly, we learn from these that both qualitative and quantitative studies can be designed to study student perception.

Teven and Hanson’s (2004) study, based on student surveys and interviews at the college level, correlated the students’ perceived trustworthiness of their instructor with student’s performance in class. There is a strong correlation between student perceived qualities of their instructor and students’ academic interest and performance. Tuckman (1995) concluded that students are good evaluators of teachers for various reasons. Students observe and see teachers over a long period of time, regardless of the highs and lows each side may feel. Students, Tuckman asserts, are the clients of teachers. These studies were conducted in two- and four-year colleges, surveying communications and education
students. There are no studies done across any university campuses in various disciplines to compare whether different students value different qualities in their instructor depending on the majors or subjects of the students.

McCabe’s (1995) qualitative research involved administering and analyzing open-ended surveys given to twelve (n=12) 11th grade students in a high performing and highly competitive high school in Chicago suburb. Student responses show that students have a very comprehensive set of qualities they value in high quality teachers. Students considered an effective teacher someone who is “human” yet “professional” and both “subject centered as well as student centered” (p.125). Students in this study view the teacher’s role as 1) Preparing students for life; and 2) helping them to get into college. The top qualities students sought in effective teachers were: sense of humor, respect and care for students, enthusiasm, and knowledge of subject. While McCabe’s study provided descriptive data, the study did not measure or rank the qualities as being most to least important.

In recent years, promising research, using the Tripod Approach (see Figure 2.3) (Gates Foundation, 2010b, Ferguson, 2011), has made headlines as a better basis for evaluating teacher effectiveness. The Gates Foundation, in an effort to promote effective teaching, funded a wide study under Measure of Effective Teaching (MET) to survey not only value-added empirical studies, but also student perception of teachers as a way to form broader teacher evaluation methods (Gates Foundation, 2010b). The large-scale study, which is being implemented in many states across the nation currently, published its preliminary findings on student perception in the fall of 2010. “MET is based on the foundation that there are multiple measures of effectiveness and a call for accurate teacher evaluation” (p.1). In an attempt to define teacher effectiveness, the MET used value-added measures to identify
effective teachers through student performance based on test score gains, and surveyed students to determine those qualities most valued by elementary and secondary students in urban schools throughout the nation. The MET project is based on two simple premises: first, a teacher’s evaluation should depend, to a significant extent, on his/her students’ achievement gains; and second, any additional components of the evaluation (e.g., classroom observations) should be valid predictors of student achievement as well.

Figure 2.3 Ferguson’s Tripod Approach

Figure 2.3 Ferguson’s Tripod Approach

MET’s preliminary study, conducted in 2009-2010, involved more than 300 teachers in six urban school districts in Dallas, Memphis, and New York City. Researchers found student perception of teachers to coincide with measured effectiveness of teachers based on their students’ test score gains (Sawchuk, 2010). The study looked at five measures using mixed methods, which included 1) gathering empirical data from student gains on tests, 2)
teacher perception of working conditions, 3) teacher perception of professional support, 4) as
classroom evaluations and 5) student surveys. Measure 5 asks students to complete a survey
regarding their teacher. The Tripod survey instrument, developed by Harvard researcher Ron
Ferguson and administered by Cambridge Education, assessed the extent to which students
experience the classroom environment as engaging, demanding, and supportive of their
intellectual growth. The survey consisted of a Likert scale survey as well as open-ended
questions based on the 7 C’s of classroom perception (Figure 2.4). In this preliminary study,
the findings are that:

Student perceptions of a given teacher’s strengths and weaknesses are
consistent across the different groups of students they teach. Moreover,
students seem to know effective teaching when they experience it: student
perceptions in one class are related to the achievement gains in other classes
taught by the same teacher. Most important are students’ perception of a
teacher’s ability to control a classroom and to challenge students with rigorous
work. (p.9)

The major limitation of this research is that this new method of evaluating teacher
effectiveness is grounded only on the student assessment gains. Another limitation of this
study is that the surveys were administered to fourth graders and eighth graders. High school
students’ input is excluded while high school students have more years of experience in
classrooms and can offer more mature and broader insights into qualities of teacher
effectiveness.
Despite MET’s groundbreaking studies and the recent findings based on student perceptions, this research, like many other studies focusing on teacher effectiveness, uses student test scores gains as a key measure for research, teacher evaluation, and policy recommendations. Important conclusions of this study include the following: (1) student observations of individual teachers in different classrooms have a strong correlation that supports the validity of student perception; (2) there is a need to reevaluate the definition of teacher effectiveness; and (3) researchers need to include student perception in evaluating teacher effectiveness (www.gatesfoundation.org). Still, the limitations of this wide study are significant. The first limitation is that only the fourth and eighth graders were surveyed.
because these two grade levels focus a great deal on testing. The second limitation, as mentioned earlier, is that this study did not survey high school students who may be able to provide more in-depth and mature reflections because they are older and have had more experience learning from different teachers. As it stands, there are very few studies where high school students were asked to reflect on teacher quality or learning. Studies on student input or perception of effective teachers is greatly needed. While policymakers, politicians, and interest groups are on the path to save our youth from failing schools and ineffective teachers, there is much need for a partnership in discussing what learning and teaching should mean to our learners.

Study findings by MET and Ferguson’s Tripod Approach have confirmed that student responses are consistent with findings based on empirical data, such as teachers’ students’ test score gains, affirming that students are competent observers of effective teaching. Students know what they are talking about when assessing teachers. Using this finding as a basis, education research should focus on surveying and interviewing high school students. There should be a movement to include high school students in this dialogue. For this purpose, my study was conducted with high school students as my co-researchers. Their discussions and perceptions on teacher qualities they feel are most important in effective teaching was the starting point in pursuing our inquiry on student perception of teacher qualities. Our study aims to find out what students identify as the goals of teachers and what qualities the students consider important for effective teachers. We created a 41-question survey that included both open-and closed-ended questions which were administered to all 11th grade students at the site high school. Student researchers also interviewed students for
rich narratives as well as for consistencies and contradictions when comparing survey results.

Despite the seeming disagreement in what constitutes effective teaching or how to measure teacher effectiveness, and the studies conducted using different models (product model, process model, and student perception model), education researchers have come up with a general consensus in regard to teacher impact, education, and assessments. Figure 2.4 is an amalgam of different studies and illustrates the main ideas all of the research supports. Most education researchers and policy makers agree on several tenets:

1. Teachers have a huge impact on students
2. Test score gains should be one, but not the only, factor in measuring teacher effectiveness
3. Increases in initial teacher pay (financial incentive) would help increase the pool of talented teacher candidates

Using these elements as a foundation for building a model for effective teacher evaluations, it would be essential to also have student input. Determining what students value most would provide an important element in the evaluation of teacher effectiveness. It is important to include student input because students are the biggest benefactors of effective teaching. Students are most affected by the quality of teachers they have.
The debate about what qualifies as teacher effectiveness continues. From all perspectives, the product focused model of education focuses on student score gains on
exams, timely graduation of students, and preparing students for college. Accountability means holding schools and teachers responsible for meeting these goals. School climate, culture, and a curriculum that is challenging and relevant rarely enter the policymaking discussions that affect our schools. Teachers’ awareness of different types of learners, the ability to challenge students with scholarship, teaching in culturally diverse schools, or building community are factors not included in the effective teacher model. The actual classrooms affected by all policies and reforms have rarely been sites for research and data collection. Although the discourse and establishment of policy to ensure improvement in education through effective teaching has existed for decades, few serious studies have focused on the children. The current approach to policy making disenfranchises the students and creates schools in which tests become the curriculum.

There is very little research in which students are asked what they believe the goals of education ought to be, how they would identify effective teaching, or the qualities they consider most important in their teachers. Although students’ beliefs about what the goals of education ought to be are based on self-interest and value, it is important to look at what goals the students have for their education. In attempts to expand education to create equitable and efficient schools, the very individuals upon whose interests we are focusing were overlooked. It is high time for student advocates, educators, and policymakers to bring questions concerning education and teacher qualities to those most affected. Students should be involved in future research not only as a source of information but as agents for framing the set of questions that best represents the interests and perceptions of students. The most ideal and democratic practices include a wide range of groups within a society. Therefore,
school reforms and policies should take into account all stakeholders and interest groups, as illustrated in Figure 2.5.

Figure 2.6. Democratic Practice in Education Policy Making

Source: Compiled by J. Yi 2012
Chapter 3

Research Design

Perhaps the best definition of social justice and accountability in education should be the golden rule-social justice is when you want for other people’s children what you want for your own. (Poplin and Sole-Hinman p. 44)
Mixed Method Participatory Action Research

This study looks at the perspectives of 11th grade students from one high school on the qualities they consider important in effective teachers as well as the student perception of the purpose of education and school. This research required multiple data sources and both analytic and descriptive analyses of data. The survey and interviews as well as various formal and informal meetings and dialogues were the sources for both closed- and open-ended data.

Research on education necessitates that students be involved in all aspects of the inquiry. Studying human phenomena and understanding the dynamics of education makes it a qualitative study focusing on the local knowledge of students based on those students’ experiences. Data collected from insights of Participatory Action Research (PAR) co-researchers, survey responses, and interviews provide comprehensive student perspectives from the site school. The findings cannot be generalized to represent or reflect the responses that may be given in other schools. The fact that we are seeking student perceptions based on their personal experiences in school makes the truths we uncover local. The method of allowing student voices to be heard and hearing about their knowledge, based on their experiences, emphasizes and inherently respects the social consciousness and democratic citizenship of the study’s participants, which is the grounded framework for constructivist theory for qualitative analysis (Bentley, 2003).

Education research, however, no longer needs to follow just qualitative or quantitative data. Quantitative analysis of data can also be used to confirm our findings. Although research on human action, social science and education can never be completely bias free or neutral, education research does not need to take sides (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The
third paradigm, to which Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) have referred, is mixed method research, and can enhance research and data analysis by drawing strength from both methods. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie have outlined the many common approaches and goals of both methods to illustrate that using a mixed method is not a contradiction in research approach; rather, it is complimentary. Figure 3.1 is a compilation of Johnson and Onwuegbuzie’s (2004) main points on the similar goals, approaches, and methods used by both camps.

Figure 3.1 Mixed Method Research: Quantitative and Qualitative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative</th>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Qualitative</th>
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| social observation as being scientific; detached; free of bias; emotionally detached; empirical justification | • Use of empirical observation to address research questions  
• Describe data and specific outcome  
• Prepare explanatory argument why the results are such  
• Construct safeguards to minimize bias | Multiple constructed realities; time/context free generalization is not possible or desirable; research is value bound |

Source: Compiled by J. Yi 2013

From a constructivist theorist lens, mixed method participatory action research (PAR) is necessary for the studied group—high school students—to help shape the research and analyze the responses. Constructivism is based on the tenet that the said group has their own set of knowledge and basis for knowledge forming (Bentley, 2003). This study utilized a mixed method Participatory Action Research (PAR) using both quantitative and qualitative
data analysis in order to ensure student presence in research, data collection, and analysis. Employing PAR students as co-researchers enabled students to help design and actively participate in the inquiry, analysis, and the interpretation of data. While we cannot assume that student researchers can speak for the entire student body of their school, including student input in the research design and data analysis is a step towards creating a more equitable dialogue. Despite limitations, there is a need for starting such studies and gathering information of small groups. Due to the multilayered processes and methods used for this study, our time frame for the entire research ended up being nearly 32 months (see appendix C).

Creswell (2003) frames participatory action as a practice “with” and not “on” or “to” the population we are studying that allows for discussion and debate for a change in current policies and practices. The students as co-researchers idea is a step toward adding student voices to the discourse about teacher effectiveness. Education policies impact the students most directly. Students have the right to know how their world is affected by policies and be allowed agency to create a community of inquiry to voice their perceptions. In order to give agency to the students, it is essential to invite the students to be an integral part of the research team. This measure is a progress toward remedying the lack of study around high school student perceptions and the lack of student input in education policy making.

Participatory action research, where students take on the role of co-researchers, provides many opportunities. First, it involves the student-centered inquiry into education that is currently lacking in our discourse. The existing studies on education and teacher quality have addressed teacher quality and effectiveness from an economic perspective and its political implications. The value added model and the product or outcome models
emphasize that schools and education have a fixed or universal set of goals. The goal of learning or growth is translated into gains of test scores. However, learning and education should emphasize process, since the goals vary at individual levels. To decide or assume that all students must get to the same destination in education at about the same time is a false belief that we must re-examine (Eisner, 2003). The students are individual learners who react differently to the same event because they perceive such events differently based on their prior experiences, referent knowledge, and backgrounds. However, student voices and perceptions of these experiences and processes, as I have noted earlier, are clearly absent.

Students have always been a marginalized group about education policies despite the fact that their everyday lives are most affected by these policies. PAR was developed as a way to encourage social justice and to allow the groups that have traditionally been ignored to have agency, to be heard, and to help make changes (Fine & Torre, 2004). PAR research gives students agency to speak for themselves rather than have others speaking for them. Creswell (2003) notes that “this research [PAR] also assumes that the inquirer will proceed collaboratively so as to not further marginalize the participants as a result of the inquiry” (p.10).

In any research involving groups, particularly vulnerable groups, the research and the researchers must weigh the risks as well as the benefits involved for the groups studied (Tobin, 2006; Maxwell, 2005). The possible detrimental impact on those on whose behalf researchers speak can be greatly reduced by allowing the students to speak for themselves. It provides an educational opportunity in the practice of self-advocacy and social justice. I believe learning and education go beyond classrooms and schools. Lessons we teach our students are not always immediately reflective or reflexive; rather, it may be something the
students need to reflect on over time. A teacher, as a mentor, provides valuable life lessons about the world, work, ethics, and choices that may not be obvious to the students at the time of the lesson. Learning encompasses valuable experiences that help shape ideas and positive actions. By having students involved in the research, it can contribute to building a community based on common goals and inquiry. Student involvement in this research raised awareness of the policies and dialogues taking place outside their school community that impact their lives. Students learn more about the world outside the school grounds and take the first steps toward entering into public discourse as active participants.

I worked with my co-researchers to explore students’ perceptions in regards to the purpose of school and education, and the qualities they value in good teachers. This information was explored through discussions and mapping. Student researchers, with help from the principal investigator, designed and administered surveys, containing both closed-ended and open-ended questions, to 11th grade students at Eastland High School. Students in this school were asked to be interviewed on a voluntary basis in order to assure open and rich narratives. The student co-researchers used the network method of gathering interview participants; seeking students they knew to be interviewed therefore there may have been a bias in the composition of our interview sample. In order to reduce bias, the co-researchers conducted interviews as a team of two or three interviewers and ensured that the students they interviewed were not their friends.

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7 Not the actual name of the site high school.
As the principal investigator, I selected student researchers based on established relationships and teacher and guidance counselors’ recommendations. Student co-researchers were selected from 10th, 11th, and 12th grades, ensuring that they are not my current students, and thus preventing any conflicts of interest that could arise. In order to ensure that students of all skills, abilities, and interests would have an opportunity to participate, I contacted the school guidance department for help in identifying possible candidates. I also spoke with many teachers throughout the school for their recommendations. The candidates for student researchers were those individuals who are able to commit to two [2] hours after school every two weeks. I did not want students who were very active in many extracurricular activities, since the meetings and time requirements may add stress to students with many other commitments. I reached out to the guidance counselors (see Appendix A) because I was seeking to create a cohort of researchers with diverse interests, achievements, and abilities so that the research would not be a product or interpretation of any one clique among the student population. The six student researchers were diverse in their academic level and extracurricular engagements. I felt fairly comfortable that this small group represented varied interest groups of the students at the site school.

I was seeking to create a community of inquiry with students who have different interests and belong to different groups. In this pursuit, I was successful. The student researchers did not know of each other socially prior to the research and had different groups of friends and interests. It was truly a first for this cohort in coming together to create a community. Student researchers are minors and to ensure that their interests were protected,

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8 I wanted to avoid having a research team that represented just one clique within high school such as the “jocks,” the “nerds,” etc., because that would yield data interpretation of only that one group. Each member came from vastly different groups of the school.
the parents and guardians were contacted and signed informed parental consent forms (see Appendix B). Students’ real identities were coded and pseudonyms were used to protect the minors. Their participation was voluntary and under the condition, that all individuals are free to drop out of the research at any time and have any data that relates to them excluded from the project. It was also understood that all data and findings would be shared and analyzed with the co-researchers. Twelve students were selected to participate as PAR researchers; however, due to schedule conflicts, six students dropped out in the early stages of our research and six remained to complete the research.

Survey participants. Student researchers and the principal investigator decided to survey the 11th grade students at Eastland High School. The principal investigator met with the site school Institutional Review Board (IRB) and obtained verbal and written approval to go ahead with involving not only Eastland High School, but her sister high school as well in the event that the research expanded and there was a need to cross compare the two schools. Further, the principal investigator met with the school district superintendent and the school building principal and obtained their consent to conduct this research as well.

Student researchers were responsible for creating and administering the actual survey. The reasons for student researchers administering the survey are two-fold. The first reason is that by having student researchers administer the survey, the student responders will be aware that fellow schoolmates and peers are involved in the investigation and will be assured that their responses are properly represented. The second reason for active co-researcher participation is to enforce the co-researchers’ leadership role and advocacy. The student

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9 Completed forms, identifiable information, and coding for real identity are kept in a locked file in the principal investigator’s home office.
10 Not the real name of the site school.
researchers will inform the students that completing the survey is voluntary and anonymous.

We decided to survey the 11th graders because we felt the 11th graders had more years of experience in school and as a result, may have a wider frame of reference for assessing teacher quality. As Tuckman (1995) and Wang et.al. (2007) stated in their articles, high school students have different perceptions of effective teaching qualities regarding their K-12 teachers. Although researchers acknowledge the valuable resource we have in looking at the high school students’ perceptions, there are limited studies conducted involving this population. Twelfth grade students, also referred to as “seniors,” were not included in this survey because they had about a month left of their compulsory education at the time the survey was administered. The student researchers and I concluded that many seniors might not care to complete the survey or take the survey seriously enough to provide thoughtful responses. As much as secondary educators wish to eliminate the concept the “senioritis,” it is an inevitable part of the American high school culture. The reason the social studies classes were selected for the administration of survey is that only English and social studies classes are designated by grade level at Eastland High School, while other disciplines, such as math, science, music, art, and shop are based on skills and interests, and not by grade level.

**Interviewees selection.** Eighteen students were selected for interviews. Two approaches were used in the selection of students for interviews. Our initial approach was to

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11 “Senioritis” is a commonly used term in high school, referring to second semester seniors who stop putting in effort with their school work because they believe they are already effectively done with high school.

12 New York State Education Department requires all NY high school students to complete four years of English and social studies starting in the ninth grade. These two subjects, therefore, are necessarily grade based in almost all New York State Public High School and cannot be accelerated, while high school level math and science can be tracked during the middle school grades. (NYSED.gov)
issue separate questionnaire forms at the time the survey was administered, asking students whether they were interested in being interviewed. The request for an interview was separate from the survey, to ensure anonymity of the survey responses. Twelve students initially volunteered to interview. A network approach was also utilized to recruit additional interviewees. Friends of student researchers expressed interest in participating in interviews and approached the researchers to inquire about participating in interviews. Likewise, student researchers expressed interest in interviewing specific peers and school mates in order to gain those individuals’ insights. In the second approach, the co-researchers discussed and selected six interviewees. The principal investigator did not participate in the discussion or the selection these interviewees and only established schedules for interviews. The principal investigator did not contribute opinions or suggestions to the student researchers’ choice of interview candidates. The principal investigator did not approach any of the interview candidates regarding the interviews or research as that may cause conflicts of interest. The principal investigator was excused from this process in order to ensure that the interviewees felt neither pressured nor privileged as a result of participating in this process. The student researchers arranged to collect signed consent and assent forms from the interviewees and arranged the time and place that interviews took place. Each interview was conducted and attended by at least two student researchers. Due to schedule conflicts, only 10 of 18 students were interviewed (Ni=10). The interview questions were created by the student researchers and the principal investigator to be asked in all interviews (see Appendix C). The purpose of

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13 Some of the interviewees were former students of the principal investigator. The research team was concerned that the students may feel pressured to complete the interview if they knew it was my research.

14 The student interviewees may have assumed their grades or future academic recommendations by the principal investigator were contingent on their participation and responses during the interviews.
Training process for PAR student researchers. Student researchers have an active role and responsibility in creating and administering the survey, interviewing, as well as in data collection and analysis. In order to learn how to conduct research and step into this leadership role, the student researchers participated in various training sessions to prepare for the research. Preparing student researchers for their role in this research took place in three parts:

1. Learning seminars on how to conduct research, design survey, data collection and analysis, and how to code for Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS)
2. Online Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training and certification
3. Reading and discussing existing studies and policies.

Learning how to conduct research. There were four sessions in which student researchers learned how to do research. Student researchers met with the site school Institutional Review Board (IRB) member and research teacher to learn how to design surveys, develop interview skills, and how to collect and code data. This phase of training took place after school. The research teacher at the site school, M. Savannah,\textsuperscript{15} conducted four one-hour classes over the course of 5 weeks. The first class covered the basics of doing research, writing research questions, and the different data that could be collected in research. The second and third lessons covered how to create surveys, write interview questions, and...
how to administer surveys and conduct interviews. The last session covered coding, entering survey responses, and understanding the difference between descriptive and quantitative data analysis. In addition, the student researchers were provided a tutorial session on how to code and enter data into SPSS. Student researchers used two meeting sessions to review and practice setting up SPSS variables and entering coded information.

*CITI certification.* Student researchers completed online CITI training for research with human subjects.\(^{16}\) Student researchers set up their CITI training accounts at school and walked through the site during the meeting after school. Most of the student researchers completed the CITI online training at home and brought a copy of the certification of completion to be filed with the principal investigator.

*Reading and discussion on existing studies and policies.* Student researchers met in groups to read and discuss some of the key topics that focused on teacher effectiveness and school policies. Student researchers studied Ferguson’s survey and the Cambridge project as well as the MET research to familiarize themselves with the current trends and issues.

*PAR roles and responsibilities in research.* The student researchers were partners with the principal investigator. The co-researchers were expected to have an active role in every aspect of the research. The research team was responsible for creating and administering the survey. The researchers also discussed the responses, created coding, and entered it into SPSS to analyze data. The student researchers were involved in every step of the research and the product it created. Each member of the research group, including the principal

\(^{16}\) Certificate of training completion of each member of PAR are on file with principal investigator’s school IRB as well as on file in principal investigator’s office
investigator, had a say and a vote in the decision making process and each opinion and suggestion was respected, considered, and weighed before making final decisions. Each member was expected to actively participate in all phases of research.

Community building and teamwork. The most important aspect of this research is to involve students in order for them to have a voice in formulating the template for determining a highly effective teacher. Having student research partners who are active with every stage of the research allows for student researchers to initiate and engage in this dialogue with their peers about the policies and changes that are taking place in all schools across the nation. The inquiry into these students’ answers leads us to understand this group’s perception. The truth, according to the constructivist view, is local, and knowledge is based on the group. At the social level, this research group allows for community building among the researchers. This group of students, who were highly unlikely to come together as a social group, was provided an opportunity to learn and work together and form a bond that can go beyond their high school days. The members of this research team not only became friends, they became each other’s advocates and support in various areas of social and academic life. Lastly, the student researchers are not labeled honor students, “jocks,” or popular; they do not belong to any clique in the school. For the researchers, this research project provided them an opportunity to “be a part of something good.” Throughout the research, various students peeked in and asked to sit in at our meetings. We welcomed them

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17 The student researchers developed a friendship that was akin to that of siblings, looking out for each other in many ways. Throughout the research, students expressed a level of concern and pride for each other that went beyond our research projects. A case in point is when Jane wanted to go to the prom but did not have a date, Matt offered to go with her. See memoir section at the end of the text.

18 One of the student researchers, Matt, commented in passing that he felt good coming to the meetings because he felt he was part of “something good,” meaning this research group.
to join for snacks and the student researchers were able to share with theses visitors what we were doing and what our research was about.

Data collection. Maxwell (2005) reminds us that data need not be limited in qualitative studies and “can include virtually anything that you see, hear, or that is otherwise communicated to you while conducting your study” (p.79). Data collection consists of several events in this mixed method inquiry (Table 3.1). Data collection is both formal and informal. Informal data consists of, but is not limited to, notes and observations of student research group meetings and casual conversations and observations during the research. Existing studies and findings, as well as educational statistics, can be used to support or contrast my findings. Formal data collections consisted of the survey and interviews. The survey consisted of both open- and closed-ended responses that were coded and entered into IBM SPSS\textsuperscript{19} (Statistical Product and Service Solutions) by all co-researchers.

\textsuperscript{19} Trademark product of IBM corporation for statistical and analytical research provided via CUNY remote learning.
Table 3.1 Summary of Data Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPES OF DATA</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>The student researchers and I created a 41-question survey comprised of both open- and closed-ended questions. The survey was administered in 11 sections of social studies classes</td>
<td>To gain a broad understanding of teacher qualities, what students value in effective teachers, and to understand student perception of the purpose of school and education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Co-researchers arranged to interview 10 students from the site school.</td>
<td>To gain an in-depth narrative and understanding of how individual students perceive their school community, the purpose of education, qualities of good teachers, and personal narratives about the influence of effective teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>Co-researchers and I met to discuss our research topic, wherein the co-researchers shared their input and perceptions. I took notes on their comments as well as comments from casual conversations I had with various students and teachers at the site school over the course of two years, 2011-2013.</td>
<td>To gain a better understanding of the perceptions and assumptions of co-researchers as well as the perceptions of teachers and students at the site school related to “effective teacher” and “purpose of education”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from the survey contained both quantitative and qualitative measures. All 11th grade students attending Eastland High School were asked to complete the survey but were not mandated or coerced in any way. The participation in completing the survey was voluntary. The survey responses were anonymous, as there were no questions and no coding involved in its administration that can trace response to its respondent. The survey looked for the teacher qualities that students consider most important. The Likert scale was used to measure the importance of certain teacher qualities, and open-ended responses were used to identify the key terms and concepts that are most prevalent in the student survey responses.
In order to create a survey that would help answer our questions, we looked over several existing surveys. Owens and Gentry’s (2004) survey of Student Perception of Classroom Quality (SPOCQ) was one of the template surveys we studied. Another survey that influenced us was the survey created by Ferguson for Gates Foundation MET (2010b). We found Fergusons’ 7 C’s measures valuable; however, we felt the survey by Ferguson was aimed at the lower grade students; therefore, we agreed to create our own survey that would target the high school students. However, we did integrate Ferguson’s 7 C’s concepts (see Figure 2.3) in designing our survey.

The survey (see Appendix B) included 41 open- and closed-ended questions. The first part, Q 1-10, asks for self-reported personal information such as sex, self-reported GPA, best/favorite subject, and race/ethnicity. These self-reporting variables may be significant factors in how students respond to the questions and in order to test that, we would need to cross reference these variables to analyze a trend. The second part, questions 11 and 12, are open-ended questions asking students to list qualities least and most desirable in teachers in order to see consistency in their open responses. To ensure we did not limit or guide the responses of survey participants, there were no prompts or word boxes.

Questions 11 and 12 ask responders to list the five most and least desirable traits; however, we only coded and entered the first choice listed for SPSS analysis. The responders were asked to identify most and least desirable characteristics of good teachers. We coded and entered their responses for analysis. The open-ended questions were our way of looking
at student responses when they are initially brainstorming for characteristics to compare to the rest of the survey. Our coding is explained in greater detail in Chapter 5. Generally, our designation was for words with similar meanings. For example, “smart,” “knowledgeable,” and “know their stuff” were designated as code 1 while “caring” “kind” and “nice” were allotted to code 2. Complete tables with characteristics and coding are in Data Analysis chapter Tables 5.4 and 5.5. This system of coding was applied and entered into SPSS for analysis. The last part, Questions 13 to 41, is comprised of closed-ended questions, using a 5-point Likert scale, asking students’ opinions regarding the purpose of education, academic achievements, teacher qualities, and responsibilities. The closed-ended questions asked for student input regarding teachers’ fairness, care, content and general knowledge, as well as the purpose of schools.

Student researchers administered the survey over a four-day period. Eleven sections of U.S. History classes participated in the survey. We chose social studies classes to administer the survey because students are placed in social studies by grade level while students are placed into other subjects by skills, aptitude and interests, resulting in mixed grades of students. Two hundred and sixty-eight surveys were returned and, of them, 249 were complete (n= 249).

Interviews.

Data from interviews were audio taped and transcribed into written transcripts. The identity of students who volunteered to be interviewed was coded and, like the student researchers, parents and guardians were informed, and their consent, along with the
completed student assent forms, were obtained before the interviews took place. Student researchers conducted these interviews. Interviewers took notes on the responses as well as audio taped the interviews. The interviews were then transcribed into texts and each interview text and audio recording listened to by all researchers in order to seek key words/concepts and analyze patterns and content.

Ten students were interviewed; five male students and five female students in grades 11 and 12. The student researchers selected the interviewees from a list of volunteers and arranged to obtain completed student assent and parent consent forms and set up times for the interviews. Two student researchers were present for all interviews. The student researchers used the same set of interview questions (see Appendix C). The interviews provided individual insight and experiences. We were looking for unique individual narratives as well as common patterns and similarities among interviews.

Data analysis. In order to answer the research questions, data from various sources (Table 3.1 and Table 3.4) were analyzed using mixed methods. Once the data was collected, both quantitative and qualitative analyses were utilized to determine answers, consistency, and patterns.
Table 3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do students define the purposes of education?</td>
<td>• Descriptive memos from co-researcher meetings</td>
<td>• Transcribed texts of descriptive memos reviewed for key terms and frequency and consistency of these terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do their perceptions of the purposes of education and those of school differ?</td>
<td>• Survey—5-point Likert scale and open-ended questions</td>
<td>• Measure student response regarding purpose of school and achievements. Use of multiple variables for cross-tabulations to look for patterns, consistency, and contradiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do students define academic achievements and how do they see academic achievement fit into the purposes of education?</td>
<td>• Interviews</td>
<td>• Audio taped interview and transcribed texts. Search for individual narratives of teacher impact and learning. Coding and search for key concepts and terms to compare with other interviews for patterns, consistency, and contradiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do students define effective teachers?</td>
<td>• Descriptive memos from co-researcher meetings</td>
<td>• Notes from meetings with student researchers reviewed for key terms and frequency and consistency of these terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What do they mean by “effective teacher?”</td>
<td>• Survey—5-point Likert scale and open-ended questions</td>
<td>• Measure rating of teacher qualities and characteristics. Coding of key concepts and terms. Use of multiple variables for cross-tabulations to look for patterns, consistency, and contradiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How does effective teaching relate to the purposes of education they have put forth?</td>
<td>• Interviews</td>
<td>• Audio taped interview and transcribed texts. Search for individual narratives of teacher impact and learning. Coding and search for key concepts and terms to compare with other interviews for patterns, consistency, and contradiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Is a &quot;good&quot; teacher the same as an &quot;effective&quot; teacher?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do you measure the effectiveness of a teacher?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do students’ views on purpose of education and effective teacher differ from those of policymakers?</td>
<td>• Descriptive memo of meeting with co-researchers</td>
<td>• Compile data collected from memos, survey, and interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Results of surveys</td>
<td>• Compare with results from existing studies and policy standards for consistency and contradiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Results of interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Site school Education Philosophy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Qualitative analysis: student researcher meetings and informal conversations.** Rich data was obtained through descriptive notes and memos taken by researchers during the researchers’ meetings. The co-researchers and I reviewed the notes from our own discussions about the student researchers’ perceptions of school hierarchy and policy making to determine the accuracy of the data and looked for general ideas, consistency, and patterns of responses regarding the purposes of education and school as well as effective teachers and their qualities. In these meetings, researchers created various mind maps and illustrations in order to summarize the main ideas and create a hierarchy as the basis for discussions.

Co-researchers meetings took place biweekly after school. At earlier meetings, student researchers discussed what qualities/characteristics they feel are important in effective teachers. We spent the beginning of our research meetings discussing and exploring student researchers’ perspectives on the purpose of education, schools, and what qualities an effective teacher possess. The student researchers’ views were “privileged” or given voice, as their perception guided research design and survey. Short writing and discussion exercises, individual and group mind maps and illustrations were part of the exercises we did during these meetings. As the research progressed, the discussions on the student researchers’ views and any changes they had had were also reflected, explored, and discussed at our meetings.

**Descriptive analysis of survey.** The survey responses were coded and entered into SPSS. The qualities and characteristics were cross-tabulated with sex, race/ethnicity, and self-reported grades to look for consistencies and differences among various groups.

**Descriptive analysis of interviews.** Individual in-depth interviews provided additional data, which was audio taped and transcribed. The co-researchers and I reviewed these texts to
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look for rich narratives and case-by-case examples of teacher impact. We also looked at responses for key concepts and terms regarding teacher quality, learning, and teacher effects throughout the interviews, in order to identify patterns and consistencies and to compare with survey findings.

Quantitative analysis: survey responses to closed-ended questions. Survey responses to closed-ended questions were coded to SPSS to look for patterns, frequency, and consistency in the student responses regarding teacher qualities. Key terms and concepts were coded. Teacher qualities may include, but were not limited to, being caring, funny, smart (in content and general knowledge), and having effective communication skills. Concepts, such as preparing for college, getting good grades on Regents exams, and preparing for life as the purpose of school and education is included in the analysis. Multiple variables, such as self-identified racial/ethnic group, gender, and grade point average are cross-tabulated to determine patterns, consistencies, and contradictions among students based on self-identifying characteristics.

Open-ended questions are used to search for coded key words and concepts regarding the qualities of effective teachers. For example, phrases such as “knows a lot about the subject” is coded as content knowledge and is used with other content knowledge questions to calculate Cronbach’s alpha for consistency and validity. Multivariate cross-tabulations for descriptive analysis is used based on frequency, patterns, and contradiction.

Validity. In qualitative research, two threats to validity are bias and reactivity. Data are subject to descriptive interpretation and, therefore, as a researcher, I need to be aware of these
threats. The first threat, bias, occurs when the researcher designs research and collects data that will fit, or lead to, the researcher’s existing assumptions (Maxwell, 2005). The second threat to validity is reactivity, which Maxwell describes as a “powerful and inescapable influence, what the informant says is always influenced by the interviewer and the interview situation” (p. 109). As a researcher collecting data based on human involvement and interactions, I can take measures such as the use of respondent validation and quasi-statistics to address these validity threats and increase the credibility of my research (Maxwell, 2005). Response frequency, pattern, and consistency were considered and measured to ensure data is not presented based on my personal bias. Analysis and interpretation of data was a group effort based on group discussion.

*Validity test.* Validity test (1): One validity threat is the possibility of projecting my own assumptions, resulting in a research design that enforces these assumptions. To keep my research open for patterns and possible conflicting information, student researchers played a key role in designing the survey and interview questions based on their own dialogues during their meetings. I kept memos of all meetings and conversations that take place to review with co-researchers to check for meanings. All interviews (“rich data”) will be audio taped and transcribed so that my co-researchers and I can review and analyze them to ensure I am representing students’ views correctly. All data will be available to the student researchers as well as to the school community. Transparency of the work and data are essential. When there are incidences of discrepancy or unclear meaning, I will seek clarification from the student researchers.
Validity test (2): The student researchers are students of the site school and minors, and can feel afraid to speak up or take an active role in the research. They may look to me, the principal investigator, to lead and shape the research and interpretation of data.

In an effort to ensure that student researchers will feel comfortable in expressing their views and ideas, I must ensure a democratic practice in selecting the student researchers. The student researchers cannot be my current or prospective students since that may result in conflicts of interest. I asked the school guidance counselors to recommend students who were able to commit to up to hour-and-a-half-long meetings that are held once every two weeks and were interested in participating in community-making opportunities. I also asked the guidance counselors to refer a diverse pool of students based on their grades, interests, race, and coursework. Seeking a wide array of students with different skills and interests ensured that the input and insight would be as varied as possible from students of all abilities.

Once we formed a group, I reminded the student researchers that they were partners in this research. All suggestions and input by student researchers was shared and discussed among the research group. Decisions were made together and each person’s suggestions and input was respected and taken into consideration. I also sat with student researchers as a fellow learner in class lessons on conducting research and SPSS input in order to share in the process of becoming researchers as a team.

In order to ensure that my own assumptions did not cloud my research design or data analysis, I implemented a policy of checking data findings with my co-researchers and using surveys in order to create a quasi-statistical means to get data that will show patterns or contradictions for analysis.
Chapter 4
Research Site And
Student Research Partners

The inquiry process described here asks teachers to become actively involved in understanding and justifying their own practices, to consider directions in which they might change, and to talk about their practices with their colleagues. This requires the development of a highly trusting atmosphere, in which the participants acknowledge their own expertise and are willing to risk experimenting with new ideas and practices.
(Virginia Richardson, Teacher Inquiry as Professional Staff Development, NSSE#93, Pt. 1, 195)
Research Relation and Site Selection

The site where we conducted this research is Eastland High School, located in Nassau County, New York. This school is one of two high schools in this suburban community public school district. It is near the Queens-Nassau border, approximately four miles from Benjamin N. Cardozo High School, the nearest New York City public high school. This district is categorized as a large suburban school by NCES. There were 6,578 students enrolled in the district as of 2010 with approximately 7-9% qualifying for free or reduced price lunch. The student population at Eastland High School is 1,342 as of school year 2010-2011 (see Figure 4.1). This school is a unique place for such research because it is a highly successful school with nearly 100% of its students graduating in four years, and with almost all students enrolling in post-high school educational institutes. According to the class of 2011 class profile, 96.5% of its graduates enrolled in higher education institutions; 89.3% in four-year colleges; and 7.2% in two-year colleges (SHS profile 2012). There has been a significant change in the student demographics at this particular school over the past 10 years. The school newspaper reported this shift in population as front page news in the fall 2013 issue. Most notably, the Asian student population has increased from 26% of total school population in 2004 to 45% of total student body in 2013 (The Southerner, 2013). Such a drastic change in the demographic composition of the student body can be one of the reasons for a school’s success or decline. It is a trend that New York City public schools had

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20 Not the real name of the actual school.
experienced in the late 1980s and 1990s when there was a huge increase in the Asian population in local school districts that were highly regarded.\textsuperscript{21}

Figure 4.1 Eastland High Demographic as of 2010-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enrollment by Grade:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 10 11 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>325 320 350 347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AmerInd/Alaskan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 562 32 87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enrollment by Gender:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>712 630</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Free lunch eligible: 54 Reduced-price lunch eligible: 45

Source: http://nces.ed.gov

Eastland High School seems like an ideal high school, with impressive numbers in regard to AP scores, average student GPA, and national level school ranking. Despite being named in the top one hundred high schools in the nation (U.S. News and World Report, 2009), it is not without its problems. Eastland is a high performing and highly competitive community school that faces many of the same challenges its inner city counterparts confront, including recent changes in leadership at the building and district levels,\textsuperscript{22} rapid increases in student population including newly immigrated TESL students interrupted education learners, drugs, family problems, domestic violence and poverty. As a result of Eastland High School having a reputation as being an excellent school, it has experienced a steady increase in the general student population, as more families seeking better education

\textsuperscript{21} For example, in NYC, Queens School District 26 was considered a good school district and there was an influx of Asian families moving into the Bayside, Douglaston, and Little Neck areas in order for their children to attend the local schools in recent decades. Similarly, there was a large increase in population and high demand for housing in the community, keeping real estate value consistently high at the site school neighborhood.

\textsuperscript{22} The building principal was hired in 2008, the District superintendent was hired in 2009, and the three assistant superintendents were all hired between the years 2010 and 2011.
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for their children have moved into the district. There has also been a steady increase in the
number of English Language Learners (ELL) coming mainly from China and Korea in recent
years.

As student enrollment increased over the years, the district re-zoned the schools
within the district in order to decrease the number of students enrolling in Eastland High
School and increase the number of students enrolling in its sister high school, Westland High
School. The concern that students may be entering the district using false residential
addresses is another reality with which the administrators have to contend but they are
currently at a loss in addressing these concerns. In the past two years, however, the biggest
concern and main topic of faculty meetings had been about the APPR. The district has a
very concerned teaching staff that fear and resent the development and implementation of
APPR—a teacher evaluation system based on student test scores and subjective classroom
observations—as one of their growing issues, just as do many school districts across the
nation.

The school district consists of a high-middle-income community, a small area of
housing projects, and a significant affluent community. The working class or lower income
population is mainly African American or Latino and represents almost 10% of the school
population (NCES). The overall population in this community has steadily increased since
2000. 2010 Census data shows an increase of 5% in general population in this community as

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23 There are two high schools in the district. No real names of the schools are used.
24 APPR—Annual Professional Performance Review is a program implemented in Nassau Schools to
evaluate teacher effectiveness based on classroom observations (60%), district test score (20%), and individual
teacher’s student test score gains (20%). Two consecutive years of not meeting expectations can be grounds
for dismissal without any appeal process.
compared to the 2.12% increase in population in New York State (census.gov). The households in this community are generally financially better off than their counterparts throughout New York State with reported household median income at $78,937 in 2011 whereas the New York State median income was $54,659 for the same year. Median house/condo price in this community was $759,074 while the median home price for New York State was $306,000. Approximately 76% of the families own their homes in this community while 24% are reported to rent (census.gov).

The student demographic in this school shows two prominent ethnic groups: Asian/Asian American and white, non-Hispanic populations. Nearly 35% of the residents in this community was registered as foreign born and 42% of households reported that they speak a language other than English in the homes in 2010 U.S. census (census.org). The populations in this community have also reported a higher level of education attainment as compared to the rest of New York State. 2010 U.S. Census reported that 54.5% of residents over the age of 25 in this community have earned a bachelor’s degree as compared to 32.5% in New York State, and 29% of the residents have graduate and/ or professional degrees.

From casual observations and conversations with students and staff over a five-year period, it is conclusive that the parents, community, teaching staff, and school administration value education and the opportunity to move on to higher education as the most desirable outcome upon completing high school. Many families specifically move into this community as renters or have bought homes here because the school district is recognized as one of the best in the nation. The high demand for housing in this area is reflected in the consistent and relatively high home prices and home rental fees (zillow.com; Trulia.com).
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The students in this district come from home environments where children’s’ education is a top priority, as can be seen by the active PTA, parent-school conferences, and frequent communication between home and school. If we were to view schools as a business model based on a market economy with buyers and sellers, the students and their parents in this school would be considered highly informed consumers buying/ paying for what they consider a high quality service: education in this school district.

The experiences and worldviews of these students seem to be very different from their urban school counterparts. The students at Eastland have benefited from tight-knit community setting schools with resources and a culture that emphasizes academic achievements and excellence. The students attend classes with fewer students than their urban counterparts. The schools have library and computing centers where students are free to come and go during their free time, lunch periods, and before and after school to utilize these resources. The students are provided with a school environment and climate conducive to learning and high achievements. It is safe to conclude that these students have been exposed to highly effective teachers and effective teaching for most of their years in this school district. This is evident in their success rates, as measured by the high scores in all NYS Regents and other mandated examinations, high AP Scores, nearly a 100% four-year graduation rate, and college admissions to competitive colleges and universities.

25 Higher education attained by parents, greater extracurricular activities, and vacation travel are integral parts of the lives of the students with whom I have spoken, while inner city working class students may not have the benefit of such experiences.
26 The cap for maximum number of students per class at Eastland High School is 28 students per subject/ class, while New York City high schools cap at 34 students, as of 2012-2013 contract.
27 In this particular school, there is no such thing as a physical hall pass, which students must carry in the hallways, as is the practice in many NYC Schools. Students are not stopped and checked where they are supposed to be and there is no policy to clear the halls at all times. The students at Eastland enjoy the physical freedom to come and go throughout the building. There are benches and tables in the main hall of the building and in the courtyards where students can socialize and study.
The students, whose input and voices this study sought to include, are high school students from a privileged suburban school. The assumptions of the principal investigator are that:

1. the responses of these students on effective teachers will be different from what we may receive as responses from inner city students, and
2. these students are very result-driven and therefore will value high-test scores and view high grades as measures of learning and academic achievement.

In taking the first assumption further, I believe that these students will provide a more informed view of what it means to be an effective teacher than their inner city counterparts’ possible responses. Academic achievement, the importance of education, and practices to attain these goals are integral parts of these students everyday language at home and in the community; consequently, the students are already aware of those qualities that a teacher needs in order to help them achieve their goals.

The reasons I have selected this site to conduct my research include the following:

1. As a teacher of this school, I have already established relationships with the students, staff, and community.
2. As a member of this community, I am familiar with the school culture and have the advantage of being an insider.
3. As a school that is known as a successful suburban school, it is unlikely that another researcher will do similar research at this site or similar community setting.
4. It is my belief that every community, whether privileged or marginalized, has challenges, concerns, and issues that its members must confront.
5. Looking through a critical constructive lens, it is this researcher’s belief that all groups deserve to have their voices heard. We should not therefore overlook or ignore the middle class values and views in pursuit of what we may consider social justice that only focuses on the underprivileged. Students at this school may offer greater insights and information that can be used to help teachers reflect and improve on their practices.

**School permission to research and IRB protocols.** As a member of this community, I was able to contact the school administration much more quickly and more easily than an outsider could have done. In order to conduct research at the site school, I needed to first obtain permission from the site school and the school board before I could apply for clearance with the CUNY IRB. I emailed a request for an appointment with the site school building IRB committee in November 2010 to present my research proposal. The IRB board at the site school consisted of three members, two of whom are the school research teachers and one who works in an administrative/pupil personnel capacity. Once I presented my research proposal, time line, and relevant information, I was able to secure verbal and written approval by the site school IRB committee. The next step required me to contact the building principal and inform her of my research and intentions. The building principal arranged for a meeting with my department chair, the principal, and the assistant superintendent and a member of the site school IRB committee to present my research topic and hold a question-and-answer session in Jan 2011. At the close of our session, I was given a verbal go ahead by the assistant superintendent to proceed with the research once the CUNY IRB approved my research proposal. The district superintendent, at the recommendation of the assistant
superintendent, presented my proposal to the board members and granted me permission to conduct this research.

The second stage of getting clearance for research at the site school required approval from CUNY IRB. The written permission to proceed with research from the site school was sufficient for the CUNY IRB. However, the nature of PAR research, where vulnerable populations such as minors are involved, requires a multiple step approach in IRB protocol. The initial step in this process was to apply and secure permission to research from the CUNY IRB. Once the approval from CUNY IRB was secured, I needed to recruit student researchers for the PAR component of my research including all documents for recruitment and proof of approval from site school. The second phase of approval required the PAR participants, once selected, to complete and submit parental consent and minor assent forms along with completed CITI training certification in order for the student researchers to have permission to conduct research. All the required forms and application for modification were then submitted as attachments to the original research application and approved by the CUNY IRB.

*Participatory action research—research partners.* PAR student researchers were selected through guidance counselor recommendations. Originally, there were ten students, but two students decided not to join the research group and two additional students had to drop out of the research at the very early stage of research due to schedule conflict. The remaining student researchers did not know each other very well when they first met as the PAR group. Table 4.1 breaks down PAR participants by sex, race/ethnicity, and personal information. These six members represent different sections of the school population and brought to the research group a very unique perspective and personalities.
Table 4.1 Demographic Profile of PAR Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME 28</th>
<th>GRADE 29</th>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>RACE/ETHNICITY 30</th>
<th>AP/HONOR 31</th>
<th>INTERESTS/PERSONAL PROFILE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>South Asian</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Played on the girl’s field hockey team for over three years; participated in the BOCES 32 program. Academics are not her strong suit. Jane plans to study nursing in college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White non-Hispanic</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Animal lover. Plans to study veterinary medicine. Participates in various summer programs that focus on environment, animal rights, and health issues. Youngest and a valuable member of the PAR who kept us all in check to make sure work was progressing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>A bit of an introvert with few close friends; overall reserved. Enjoys math and science. Self-motivated student who took on challenging classes &amp; participated in various internship programs. Evan is not sure what he wants to study in college, but said he is leaning toward business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Active participant in the school Asian Culture Club. Interests include music, playing several instruments, and martial arts. Has many friends across the racial and academic spectrum. Plans to study business in college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bella</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caribbean American</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Academically, one of the top students in her class. Took a series of accelerated classes in humanities, math, and science. Varsity fencer. Member of the school theater group. Has a diverse set of friends to reflect her diverse interests. Interned and volunteered at various medical related fields. Planning on going to med. school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Played tennis on school team for most of high school tenure, took honors or accelerated classes for most of K-12, when available. Not sure what she wants to be when she grows up, seriously considering going in to medicine.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28 Not real names.
29 Grade of students at the start of research in May 2012.
30 All PAR student researchers are first generation Americans born to foreign born parents and raised in homes where another language was spoken.
31 Have or currently taking any Collegeboard approved advanced placement courses or building level honor classes.
32 BOCES Barry Tech program provides Vocational training for students (www.nassauboces.org).
The participatory action student researcher team that stayed from the beginning to the end of the research was comprised of the following six students:

Jane, female, an 11\textsuperscript{th} grader at the start of the research, is a first-generation Indian American, born to parents who were born and educated in southern India. Jane is a well-liked student who is able to easily navigate between American and Indian American culture. Jane struggles with trying to meet the high academic expectations of Asian immigrant parents. Jane is not an academically strong student and she receives student support. Jane has not participated in any accelerated or honors courses. Jane played on the girl’s field hockey team for over three years and is good in various sports. She also participated in the BOCES\textsuperscript{33} program. She graduated from Eastland in June 2013 and enrolled in a four-year college with plans to study nursing.

Matt was the youngest member of the research group. Matt was a 10\textsuperscript{th} grader at the start of the research. Matt is a white, non-Hispanic male student whose father is an American born professional and whose mother is of Brazilian descent. Matt is an animal lover. He is a student who receives student support, has a very strong work ethic, and is academically competitive. Matt is very grade and achievement conscious. He has matured socially and personally throughout the research and has ventured to take on an honors level course during 11\textsuperscript{th} grade. Matt is currently in his senior year at Eastland. Matt’s plans include studying veterinary medicine. He participates in various summer programs that focus on the environment, animal rights, and health issues. The youngest and a valuable member of the PAR team, who kept us all in check to make sure work was progressing. Of all the researchers, Matt had grown most notably over the course of our research. Often times, he

\textsuperscript{33} BOCES Barry Tech program provides vocational training for students (http://www.nassauboces.org/domain/147).
was the liaison among the researchers and the leader who prompted the rest of us to focus and keep pace with the research.

Evan is a Korean American male student with foreign-born parents who immigrated to the United States in their 30s. Evan was an 11th grader at the start of the research. He is a bit of an introvert with few close friends and is overall reserved. Evan had a reputation for being immature and for his antics during his first year but has since matured into a polite and serious young man. Evan is a good student with “A” to “B” grades in most of his classes. Evan’s favorite subjects are math and science. Evan is a self-motivated student who took on challenging classes and participated in various internship programs during high school. Evan graduated in June 2013 and will be attending the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in the fall. Evan is not sure what he wants to study in college but said he is leaning towards business.

Charles is a first generation Korean American male from a traditional Korean family. Charles’s background and home life are intertwined with the Korean American community and the Korean Church. Charles’s social circle is mainly comprised of Korean American youths in and outside of school. Charles is an active participant in the school Asian Culture Club as well as other school sponsored culture clubs. Charles is a high achieving student who did well in all of his classes. Charles took non-honors and honors/ accelerated classes during his years at Eastland. Charles has diverse interests that include music and martial arts. Charles has many friends across the racial and academic spectrum. Charles, like Jane and Evan, graduated in June 2013. He is currently attending the City University of New York at Baruch College. Charles is planning on studying business or accounting in college.
Bella is a first generation Caribbean American born to Haitian parents. Bella’s parents are medical doctors. Academic excellence and achievements are apparent in their home life. Bella was a 12th grader at the start of the research. She has a reputation as one of the top students in her class. Bella took a series of accelerated/ gifted classes in all subjects throughout high school. Bella is a versatile student who was also a varsity fencer and an active member of the school theater group. Bella has a diverse set of friends to reflect her diverse interests. She has earned respect from her peers and from faculty for her intelligence and dedication. Bella graduated from Eastland in June 2012. She is in her second year at Brown University in Rhode Island, where she is majoring in Pre-Med. Aside from attending college, Bella interned and volunteered at various medical related fields during school breaks.

Sue was a 12th grader at the start of research. I first met Sue during her sophomore year. Sue is an American born Chinese American student born to Chinese American Parents who were raised and educated in the United States. Sue comes from a family background that is a blend of Chinese and American. Sue is quiet, fun, and a serious student. Sue, like Bella, has been tracked to gifted classes throughout grade school, middle school, and high school. She is a member of the top academic group. Sue is also an excellent athlete. Sue played varsity tennis on the school team for most of her high school tenure, and has taken honors or accelerated classes for most of K-12 when available. Sue graduated from Eastland in June 2012 and is currently attending Georgetown University. We were at our PAR meeting when Sue received a call informing her she was accepted to Georgetown. Sue is not sure what she wants to be when she grows up but is seriously considering going into medicine.
The 12th grade researchers, Sue and Bella, were in many classes together over the years. They shared common friends and acquaintances; however, they did not socialize in the same circles. A similar situation applies to Evan, Charles, and Jane, who were all 11th graders at the beginning of research. The PAR researchers were distant acquaintances who shared the same space over the years without really knowing one another.

I met with the group to discuss the goals and purposes of the research as a brief orientation in our first meeting. We had a question-and-answer session and I welcomed their parents to call me with any questions and concerns. At the time of our first meeting, I gave out student assent and parent consent forms to be completed and returned to the principal investigator. Once the minor assent and parent consent forms were signed and obtained, the student researchers and I met regularly to prepare for research.

There were three stages in preparing the co-researchers to be research ready (see previous Chapter 3). The PAR students met over the course of 16 months. The student researchers and I met every other week after school, from April 2012 to June 2012. During the 2012 summer vacation, we met twice in July and once in August. In the fall of 2012, we met every other week after school from Sept. 2012 to Dec. 2012. During the fall 2012 meetings, Bella and Sue were unable to attend most of the meetings because they were away at college but were included in the development of our studies through discussion via phone calls, texts, and emails. We tried to include Bella and Sue as much as we could in our progress. We met four times during July and August 2013 to complete our analysis of data. We also communicated via email and phone calls to discuss our research.

The student researchers created the survey and a uniform set of interview questions. The student researchers had an active role in creating and administering the survey,
interviewing, and data collection and analysis. Active student participation in this research allowed them agency as to how the surveys, interviews and data collection were determined by the student researchers and the principal investigator. It also provided assurance to student survey responders and interviewees that their responses were accurately represented by their peers. Participation was on a voluntary basis in order to ensure the most honest responses rather than responses given under coercion or the feeling that their grades would be affected. Students participating in the surveys and interviews were assured of anonymity and the freedom to drop out of research at any time and have any data they had provided excluded from the research.
There are kids that need you, no matter how tough the school year goes, just remember if this is what you love to do, find a way to be happy in the place you are. And remember there are a bunch of bratty kids that still look up to you. Even years after graduating. You are still an inspiration. (Sheena J., Former student)
### Research Questions Revisited

Table 5.1 Data Collection and Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do students define the purposes of education?</td>
<td>- Descriptive memos from co-researcher meetings</td>
<td>• Transcribed texts of descriptive memos reviewed for key terms and frequency and consistency of these terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do their perceptions of the purposes of education and those of school differ?</td>
<td>• Survey—5-point Likert scale and open-ended questions</td>
<td>• Measure student response regarding purpose of school and achievements. Use of multiple variables for cross-tabulations to look for patterns, consistency, and contradiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do students define academic achievements and how do they see academic achievement fit into the purposes of education?</td>
<td>• Interviews</td>
<td>• Audio taped interviews and transcribed texts. Search for individual narratives of teacher impact and learning. Coding and search for key concepts and terms to compare with other interviews for patterns, consistency, and contradiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do students define effective teachers?</td>
<td>- Descriptive memos from co-researcher meetings</td>
<td>• Notes from meetings with student researchers reviewed for key terms and frequency and consistency of these terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What do they mean by effective teacher?</td>
<td>• Survey—5-point Likert scale and open-ended questions</td>
<td>• Measure rating of teacher qualities and characteristics. Coding of key concepts and terms. Use of multiple variables for cross-tabulations to look for patterns, consistency, and contradiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How does effective teaching relate to the purposes of education they have put forth?</td>
<td>• Interviews</td>
<td>• Audio taped interviews and transcribed texts. Search for individual narratives of teacher impact and learning. Coding and search for key concepts and terms to compare with other interviews for patterns, consistency, and contradiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Is a &quot;good&quot; teacher the same as an &quot;effective&quot; teacher?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do you measure the effectiveness of a teacher?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do students’ view of education and effective teacher differ from those of policymakers?</td>
<td>- Descriptive memo of meeting with co-researchers</td>
<td>• Compile data collected from memos, survey, and interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Results of surveys</td>
<td>• Compare with results from existing studies and policy standards for consistency and contradiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Results of interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Literature and existing studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ADDING STUDENTS’ VOICES TO THE DISCOURSE ON EFFECTIVE TEACHING

In order to analyze data, we need to revisit the research questions, data sources, and the method of analysis (see Table5.1). All data are from Eastland High School students’ perceptions and their responses to the survey questions and interviews. In order to establish the policymakers’ view on the purpose and goals of education, Eastland High School’s mission statement was used to compare with our data. The responses and results may not be generalizable to all high schools or even to all of the site school population. Its results are limited to the participating students of this site school. However, the research design and process are generalizable and duplicated to be used in different schools to involve the student voice in teacher evaluations. Looking from a constructivist’s lens, the qualities of effective teachers are local and based on the information and experiences of the students who participated in the survey and interviews. The responses are subjective and specific to these students’ perceptions at the time the survey was completed. However, it is my conclusion that while their knowledge and insights are local and necessarily subjective, student perceptions are an accurate assessment of their teachers. The Tripod studies, mixed method study by Wang et.al (2007) and Tuckman (1995) support the view that students are a reliable source for information and insights into effective teacher qualities.

Data source. Data was collected and analyzed from three different sources for the purpose of this inquiry. The first source of data was from the student researchers’ discussions. Illustrations, mind maps, and summaries as well as notes we had taken served as the basis for our own assumptions and guide for the research. The second source is from the survey (N=249), which constitutes the largest portion of data for this research. The third set of data is from the interviews conducted by the student researchers. The data from interviews were used to contrast and compare to the survey results and to look for rich personal narratives that
a survey cannot provide. While the nature and the structure of the research in looking at
student perception lends itself to constructivist and qualitative research, the data collected
can be analyzed quantitatively, allowing for stronger consistencies and correlations. From
these three sources, students’ perception regarding the purposes of education, school, the
definition of academic achievements, and the characteristics of an effective teacher were
studied. In the three data sources, there were clear patterns and consistencies in our findings
regarding the students at Eastland High School. The students at Eastland High School have a
very clear product focused view on schooling and education, and an acceptance of the
reliability of testing as a measure of academic achievement. Students identified fairness and
caring as qualities that enable students to actively learn and achieve within classrooms.

School District Policy on Purpose of Education and School

Eastland High School establishes the school goals and their vision of education in the
Educational Philosophy. The Education Philosophy is a statement that overall promises to
nurture and encourage the growth and strengthening of each student in order for them to
grow academically, physically, and emotionally to become active members of a democracy.
The statement further promises that the students will be provided classrooms which allow
multiple forms of assessments for such growth as well as many opportunities in sports and
clubs to support the growth of the students to prepare to be responsible members of society
(SHS Profile 2013).

The expressed goals and purposes stated in their Educational Philosophy are reflected
in the opportunities and activities available at Eastland High School. As of the 2013-2014
school year, Eastland High School had 30 varsity sport teams, 18 girls’ and 12 boys’, and 14
Senior Varsity Teams. Eastland also has a total of 65 clubs that range from philanthropy, such as Midnight Run and Global Village; and professional and interest clubs, such as Future Educators Club, Knitting Club, and Video Gaming Club. It is the policy of this school that if ten interested students are able to find a faculty willing to be their advisor, they are allowed to write up a charter requesting a club. The club creating process is a very simple and student-centered event. As a result, it is quite common to find new clubs being established.

**Preliminary discussions by student researchers.** Student researchers discussed and explored their answers to our research questions. When we first began meeting for our research, the student researchers discussed the hierarchy within the school district bureaucracy, identifying who is most influential in decision-making. In later and subsequent meetings, our discussions centered on what qualities the student researchers look for in effective teachers. For students at Eastland, the initial response was that a good teacher is synonymous with an effective teacher. Figure 5.1 is an illustration of PAR researchers’ view of how school hierarchy is stratified. This hierarchy was created in the beginning of our research in May 2012. In this illustration, the student researchers discussed and placed the students at the bottom of this pyramid. The student researchers view students as having the least power or the least say in school-related decisions. It is quite telling that the students feel powerless or invisible in this process. Parents and teachers, respectively, are also near the bottom of the pyramid, illustrating students’ understanding that the key decisions and policy are coming from outside of the classroom and family-based community. The very top of the pyramid, labeled “president of the Board of Ed” and “superintendent,” is an indication that students

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34 This conclusion is from student interviews and from PAR discussions; students repeatedly stated that a good teacher is an effective teacher.
believe that few individuals exist in the decision making process. The student researchers acknowledged that decisions made regarding school take place outside of the classroom and possibly, outside of their school building. The student researchers’ hierarchy shows that PAR students are unaware of any influence that is coming from outside of the district with regard to education policies and decisions (Figure 5.1). There is no representation or presence of policymakers or outside interest groups in the student researchers’ view of school.

Figure 5.1 PAR Student Researchers’ Perception of Education Hierarchy
The student researchers created a list of desirable teacher qualities in one of the meetings in the earlier stages of research (Figure 5.2). Researchers initially created individual lists, however, after group discussions, they agreed to create a single list where the ability to communicate was considered the most important quality of a good teacher. Jane stated, “…I mean, a teacher can know a whole lot but if he can’t teach [or] explain himself, I’m not going to get it!” The ability to explain was determined to be the most important characteristic of an effective teacher. Student researchers concluded that teachers with great general knowledge about various topics and subjects are more important than a teacher who had mastered single subject content.
Student researchers consider a teacher’s main responsibility to be to prepare students for life (Figure 5.3). Similarly, student researchers viewed the purpose of education as preparing students for life. This idea of preparing for life went beyond teaching students academic subjects. For the student researchers, a teacher is a role model whose job includes guiding students in social life beyond high school. When I asked the student researchers for clarification about this aspect of the teacher’s responsibility, Charles added, “You know, teach us about life.” Matt’s response was “how to make friends;” Jane responded, “what to do in different situations.” Bella furthered this idea with “how to handle different situations life throws at you.” The student researchers’ perception of a teacher’s role involves not only their academic but social life that goes beyond the classroom and school building.

The PAR researchers identified the purpose of education as getting ready for the future, getting into a good college and preparing for a (lucrative) career. Student researchers view education as all that they need to know to prepare for life, extending beyond learning in school. Education includes home and social life outside of school, family, and friends.
Education, for my research partners, is a comprehensive set of knowledge and skills. For student researchers, school is a physical, academic, and social place where students are taught to prepare for the world. Students view their relationship with school as fundamentally an economic one, where costs and benefits clearly exist. Success in school yields economic gains in the form of social and/or economic status.

*PAR student researchers’ perception of education and of effective teachers.* Over the course of our research, the student researchers and I have discussed various studies on teacher qualities and current events regarding education policies. We also created a survey that we administered, coded, and entered for analysis. We noticed that the student researchers’ views and perceptions about effective teacher qualities began to change over time, as the student researchers began discussing this topic and observing their own teachers and student responses. During our earlier meetings, the student researchers reminisced about some of their teachers from earlier grades. In reflecting on their teachers, past and present, student researchers referred to the individual teachers first, and later, they identified the qualities that they remember about those teachers. As the student researchers spoke about teachers they believed were good teachers, they initially used terms and phrases such as “fun,” “not too old so he can relate,” “she’s so nice,” and “he’s funny.”

As our research progressed, our meeting discussion also began to transform. The student researchers emphasized different sets of qualities. The later discussions on teacher qualities often opened with qualities. The researchers no longer began their observations with references to specific teachers; rather, they identified characteristics and practices in their discussion. Charles stated that “knowing your boundaries” is a characteristic that is
important ineffective teachers. As we explored Charles’s statement, Charles shared that he noticed that there are some teachers who are very popular with students, but he said some of these teachers did not know their boundaries and joked too much. Charles noticed that the students, including him, did not learn as much in such classes. The student researchers’ discussions reflected that an effective teacher should be “professional,” know his boundaries, be fair, good listeners, and know his/her subject. We did not, however, stratify the most important quality in our meetings, as the student researchers found it impossible to create a cohesive ranking of these qualities. In short, they agreed to disagree. Different qualities can become more important in one instance than in other instances. Every day is different, and every person is different. The student researchers were very aware of the transient nature of classroom dynamics. From observing student researchers’ discussions, it became obvious that when students are given a chance to be involved in a dialogue they are able to focus and observe qualities of teaching effectiveness that is separate from the teacher popularity contest.

We had more discussions regarding these changes in their views. Throughout the course of our research, the student researchers began observing their current teachers to look at their qualities and traits and determine what qualities they, as students, benefit the most from. Charles admitted that when he reflected on the qualities of effective teaching, he tried to view his teachers to see the qualities that made him work harder or want to do better in class. Charles found it was the structure and professionalism of his teachers that he felt made them effective teachers. The fun teachers and the cool teachers are fine, but for Charles he felt he learned less about the subject in classes where the teacher did not always act like the teacher because “he [the teacher] was trying to be cool.” As mentioned, Charles found he
Jane concluded that evaluating teachers as being a good teacher is “really hard.” Jane further mentioned how some teachers have a reputation for being a good teacher because he/she is popular with the popular kids and not because he/she necessarily teaches well or really takes time to know the students. According to Jane “kids’ grades in a class don’t reflect how good the teacher is [rather, how good the teacher is should be based on] how much the teacher helped your growth as a person. Unfortunately, [it] literally takes years, so you may not be aware until much later how much the teacher affected you.” Jane mentioned a particularly popular teacher who is reputed to be an excellent teacher at Eastland. Jane took a required selective\textsuperscript{35} class taught by this teacher because so many of her friends were taking the course because of this teacher. She admits the teacher is very good and explains materials very well, but she felt the teacher either did not like her or did not notice her. Jane mentioned several times throughout the school semester how she felt invisible in this class. Jane observed that the teacher was particularly nice to the smart or popular kids but for someone like her,\textsuperscript{36} he never looked her way or spoke to her. Jane used words and phrases to describe him, such as “not nice,” “phony,” and “all just an act.” Consequently, Jane was happy to have excuses to miss his class and she admitted she was not doing very well in that class. She admitted she was not trying to do well in the class. Jane lost all interest in the class and felt this class was a waste of her time. For Jane, a level of genuineness or sincerity that

\textsuperscript{35} Students are required to take four years of English and four years of social studies, however, in the 12\textsuperscript{th} grade, students are allowed to choose from a diverse offering of classes. While English and social studies are required, there are selections of classes they can opt for.

\textsuperscript{36} Jane describes herself as a good kid, but not very school smart.
she felt she needed to work harder, do better in class, and enjoy the class was missing from this teacher.

In exploring how student perception of effective teachers and how the administrators and policymakers define effective teachers, Bella stated “that’s simple, we think an effective teacher is a teacher who gets us, really knows us and gets through [to us], while for administration, a good teacher is someone who makes them [the administration] and the school look good.” Other student researchers nodded in agreement while Sue chimed in “like if a teacher gets her students to do well on AP Exams.”

The student researchers have shown growth and community building throughout their research. Through discussions and observations, both formal and informal, they were able to answer the research questions. The following table illustrates an overall summary of PAR student researchers’ responses to the research questions. In the following pages in this chapter, findings from the survey and interviews were added in new columns to compare the responses from the different sources.
ADDING STUDENTS’ VOICES TO THE DISCOURSE ON EFFECTIVE TEACHING

Figure 5.4 PAR Student Researchers Summer 2012
Table 5.2 Summary of Student Researchers’ Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>PAR Student Researchers’ Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do students define the purposes of education?</td>
<td>• Learning things you need for life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• School is part of the education process; not all Education is more- include things that need to be learned at home and outside of classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Academic achievement is doing well on tests and getting good grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do their perceptions of the purposes of education and those of school differ?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do students define academic achievements and how do they see academic achievement fitting into the purposes of education?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do students define effective teachers?</td>
<td>• Teachers act professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teachers as mentors and role models who help prepare for life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A good teacher can be a nice teacher but an effective teacher is one that makes you learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cannot measure effectiveness; need years to determine personal growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What do they mean by “effective teacher”?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How does effective teaching relate to the purposes of education they have put forth?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Is a &quot;good&quot; teacher the same as an &quot;effective&quot; teacher?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do you measure the effectiveness of a teacher?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do students’ views on purpose of education and effective teacher differ from those of policymakers?</td>
<td>• Student researchers think policy makers consider teachers whose students score high on regents and AP tests as being effective teachers. In contrast, the District maintains an effective teacher measures growth in multiple ways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students look at the impact teachers had on them—it could take years. Similarly, the District states learning to be a lifelong process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student researchers and District sees purpose of education as something bigger than just academic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Survey analysis.**

**Section I. Demographics of survey population and self-reported information.** The survey was administered to all 11th grade students in May 2012. Eleven sections of United
States History classes—regular Regents level, Advanced Placement level, self-contained special education classes, TESL Social Studies, and Inclusion Classes—were surveyed over a four-day period. The student researchers administered the surveys in these classes. The 11th grade student register totaled 306 students in May 2012. Of the 306 students, 268 surveys were returned. A total of 249 (N=249) surveys were accepted as complete. Nineteen surveys were incomplete and therefore were not included in our analysis. All surveys were coded and entered into the SPSS program.

The first part of the survey questions #1 to #10 consisted of self-reported demographic information. Self-reported demographic information shows the population make-up of the survey participants. The demographic information can help to determine whether the survey population reflect the overall school population. In analyzing the student response, students’ racial/ethnic background and sex can also be factors in how they respond to the questions on the survey. In our analysis, we looked at student responses by racial/ethnic background as well as by student participation in honor/AP classes to determine whether the answers varied, based on such categories. Table 5.3 breaks down the survey participants by sex and self-reported race/ethnicity.

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37 TESL social studies classes are social studies classes for students from other countries who are not proficient in English.
Table 5.3 Demographic Profile of Survey Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage of N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/ Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage of N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>45.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biracial</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The racial/ethnic demographic of the survey responders (Table 5.3) is comparable to the characteristics of this site school. The 45.4% white, non-Hispanic and 42.2% Asian, less than 1.2% of blacks and 7.2% Hispanic survey responding population are reflective of the general school population as of 2011. The Eastland High School demographic was 49% white, 42% Asian, 6% Hispanic, 2% black (https://reportcards.nysed.gov/). 72%, or 190, students who completed the survey claim to have taken one or more AP or honors level course.
The large number of students taking AP classes is comparable to the school-wide trend, since the school offers 26 AP classes and has open AP course enrollments as well as selective AP enrollment classes. Students actively seek out their teachers to secure seats in honors and AP classes for the following school year. Eastland is a highly competitive school. A high rate of student enrollment in Advanced Placement and/or honors Level courses reflects this culture of academic competitiveness. Eastland High School is a comprehensive community public school that provides special education to students with disabilities. Thirty-six out of 249, or 14%, of the survey responders answered they have or had received some form of student support, such as special education, resource rooms, or skills classes. This percentage may be comparable to the general population distribution of the school; however, more accurate information about the actual number of students receiving support at Eastland was not readily available to the general population.

Section II. Analysis of open-ended responses. The second part of the survey consisted of two open-ended questions asking students to identify qualities most desired and least desired in good teachers. #11-#12 were coded and entered to look for frequency for each question and consistency between the two questions. Coding for the open-ended questions was done by category. For example, the response “nice,” “kind,” “patient,” and “understanding,” were allotted to code 1 because all these terms conveyed the general

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38 AP courses refer to College board approved Advanced Placement classes that allow students to earn college credits.
39 Open enrollment courses are courses that do not require prerequisite classes or teacher recommendation and any upper class students who choose to take the class are enrolled on first come basis. Selective enrollment classes require students to complete prerequisite courses and or earn subject teacher recommendation based on academic merit.
meaning under the label “care.” There were eight such categories for most desirable qualities and eight for least desirable qualities (see Table 5.4 & Table 5.5).

Table 5.4 Open-Ended Response Coding for Most Desired Qualities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Included responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kind</td>
<td>Kind, caring, nice, understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Knowledge, have knowledge, know their stuff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Professional, like their job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair, open to ideas, open-minded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Class management</td>
<td>Class management, know how to control class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Explains well</td>
<td>Explains well, can understand, communication skills, can teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Humor</td>
<td>Humor, fun, funny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Hygiene, dresses nice, attractive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.5 Open-Ended Response Coding for Least Desired Qualities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Included responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Mean,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dumb</td>
<td>Dumb, not smart, does not know anything, stupid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Unprofessional</td>
<td>Unprofessional, does not do their job, does not act like an adult, late to class, unprepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Unfair</td>
<td>Unfair, too much work, does not listen to others, play favorites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>No class management</td>
<td>No class management, cannot control kids, class out of control, no structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cannot explain</td>
<td>Cannot explain, cannot teach, bad communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Boring</td>
<td>Boring, not fun, monotone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Lazy, bad hygiene, ugly, dresses bad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to maintain consistency and coherency, codes 1-7 for the most and least desired qualities in effective teachers were antonyms. For example, code 1 for most desired were qualities linked to being “kind” such as “caring,” “nice” and “understanding,” while code 1 for least desired qualities were linked to being “mean.” In order to establish consistency of students’ responses for the open-ended questions, there should be a strong inverse correlation between these two responses.

The “Other” in item #8 in the least desirable qualities list consists of various answers that did not fit into existing categories. It is noteworthy to mention that a large number of Asian students wrote in this “Other” answer. Of the 32 “Other” responses by Asian students, 23 of the answers were “lazy.” Not knowing which students may have written in “lazy,” I
casually asked several students and conferred with the student researchers in order to understand what “lazy” may mean to these Asian students at this school. The simple answers from students, who happened to be in the social studies office, were: “oh, they, like, don’t do their job” “yeah, they say they will do something but don’t follow up.”

During our researchers meeting, I brought up this term “lazy” as a topic for discussion. I related to the student researchers that of the Asian student survey responders, 23 students wrote in lazy as the least desired quality of an effective teacher. Charles, one of the student researchers had an “AH-HAH!!!!” and concluded, “Oh, I think they mean when the teacher takes too long to grade tests, you know they are not doing their job.” Other student researchers agreed that lazy refers to when the teacher takes too long in returning tests and papers. Evan mentioned, a few days after the meeting that his casual inquiries among his friends led to general response, that “lazy” in teachers meant they took too long to return tests and papers. In addition, other responses from students regarding the meaning behind “lazy” were that the teachers are not available in the office during office hours or the teachers who do not give feedback about their work. The term “lazy,” in this case, would entail students’ perception that teacher is not doing his or her job.
Table 5.6 Qualities Most Desired in Effective Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualities</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kind, caring, nice</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explains well</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>46.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smart</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>59.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional, likes job</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>70.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>humor, fun</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>80.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>89.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fair, open to ideas</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>96.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classroom management</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The breakdown of response frequency by race showed that in the two major racial/ethnic groups within the student population at Eastland, the white students and the Asian/Asian American students had the same results. “Kindness” was chosen, as the quality most desired followed by “good communication skills,” and “content knowledge.” For the third most desired quality, Asian students chose “professionalism” while the white students chose “smart” and “strong content knowledge.” This discrepancy in the preference of qualities may be attributed to the groups’ difference in their views of the student relationship with teachers. It is my own speculation that for many Asian students with foreign-born parents, there may be home life influences based on Eastern culture that spill over to their expectations about their teachers. White students may view the teacher-student interaction as more of a give-and-take within a learning environment while the Asian students view classrooms to have innate hierarchy and believe that the roles of teachers and students are, or should be, clearly defined.
Dissimilarity existed in determining the least desired qualities based on these two main racial/ethnic groups. For white students, “meanness” of a teacher was the most frequent response for least desired quality, while for the Asian students, the least desired quality was “Other”—of the 32 responses, 23 were “lazy.” As discussed earlier, the concept of “lazy” conveys the perception of teachers not doing their job, such as preparing lessons, grading and returning tests on time, and being available outside of class hours to help students. When the researchers broke down the meaning behind “lazy,” we concurred that these qualities lend themselves to being “unprofessional.” Asian students, in our analysis, find the least desirable quality of teachers to be “unprofessional” and again, we concurred that the role of teachers and the idea of structure for Asian students was more prevalent than it was for their white counterparts. For the black and Hispanic students, the survey sample is...
too small to lend a generalized discussion based on their responses. However, the researchers found it interesting that all three of the Hispanic students’ response in “Other” category was “racist.” Five of the 17 Hispanic students’ response was “unfair” as their least desired qualities. The student researchers and I discussed the possible reason for this particular response. The student researchers concurred, after our discussion, that the Hispanic students may experience marginalization within the classroom and school community and may perceive discrimination or unfair treatment in their school experiences.

Survey analysis. Section III—analysis of closed-ended responses. The third section of the survey consisted of 29 open-ended questions (13-41), which were administered with a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). In this section, we were looking for student responses regarding the purpose of school, teacher responsibilities, and qualities of good teachers. Open responses indicate “caring” and “kindness” as the most desirable qualities of a good teacher, but in closed-ended questions, student responses showed “fairness” and “honesty” as the most important qualities of good teachers.

In order to assure internal consistency and reliability, there were questions that were similar to ensure the responses were consistent in relevant statements. Cronbach’s Alpha for consistency resulted in $\alpha = .786$. Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha$) was then applied to relevant questions to determine reliability, probability, and generalizability in their scaled responses. The

\[40\] The black or African-American student population makes up less than 2% of the school student population. It is not possible to get enough responses to apply to the population.

\[41\] Hispanic students make up about 7-8% of total population but they are not represented in honor/AP level courses. This group, as a whole, struggles academically within an otherwise high achieving school. I recommend further research on this group and on underachieving minorities in successful schools in Chapter 6.
statements #39, “honesty in teachers is important,” and #40, “Teachers should admit when they make mistakes,” for example, have Cronbach’s Alpha of .759, which indicates that, the statements are relevant and their respective scaled means are 4.44 and 4.1. Another consistency test was in measuring open-mindedness and fairness as qualities of teachers. The statements “teacher should respect student ideas” (#41), “teacher should be open-minded” (#27), “a good teacher should be willing to learn from students” (#29), and “teacher should allow students to have a say in class” (#28) have Cronbach’s alpha of .726. In this survey, “honesty” was the most important quality of a good teacher. Following honesty, “content knowledge” and “fairness” came in second and third. A teacher’s performance as a student, the college he/she attended, or how much they know about other subjects were among the lowest valued qualities among the teacher characteristics we studied.
Table 5.8  Survey Highest to Lowest Means on Likert Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>respect student ideas</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>.563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>care about students</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>.626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>open minded</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>.648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>admit to mistakes</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>.716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make learning fun</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>.742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school should teach good values</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>willing to learn from students</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>.694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>schools should challenge us to</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>.812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learn new things</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>.953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>honesty in teachers</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>.819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take time to know students</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert knowledge</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pay attention to students</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>.752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allow students to have say</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>.825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>schools main goals it prepare for college</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>.939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sense of humor</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>.917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher's job to help w test</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>1.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher should know a lot about the world</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>.903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high expectation of students</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>.874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allow students work at own pace</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>.920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>move around the classroom</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>.933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-disclose</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge of many subjects</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>.860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>content knowledge</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>schools goal to help graduate</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge of pop culture</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>.995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher makes all decisions</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>.919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it matters that my teacher was a good student</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>.952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>does not have to make learning fun</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>1.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it matters what college my teacher attended</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>.956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (list wise)</td>
<td>249</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The 29 closed-ended statements were grouped into nine factors based on the inter-correlation of student responses reflecting the main areas that concern different respondents. These categories were broken down to the following characteristics and responsibilities of teacher and school:

- **Honesty and open-mindedness.** “Do I trust my teacher?” These questions reflected how important it was to students that their teachers admit to mistakes and be honest (Q27, Q39, Q40, Q41).

- A teacher’s main responsibility is to prepare students for college and life beyond high school. “Is my teacher preparing me well?” These included student thoughts on the role of education, such as how important it was that the teacher/school helps students graduate, succeed on standardized tests, or prepare for college. Also strongly correlated to this category were student feelings on whether teachers should make all the important decisions in the classroom (Q13, Q16, Q17, and Q18).

- **Fairness.** “Does my teacher respect my ideas and input?” This category reflected how concerned students were that their teacher lets them have their say, learns from them, and self-disclose about themselves (Q15, Q28, Q29, Q30, Q32).

- **Care and Rapport.** “Does my teacher know me?” These questions focused on the importance of how engaged students felt, such as if their teachers move around the
classroom, pay attention to their students, or get to know more about them (Q35, Q36, Q37).

- General knowledge. “Is my teacher generally knowledgeable?” This category reflected the weight students put on how familiar their teacher was with pop culture, a diverse set of subjects, and the world in general (Q25, Q26, and Q38).

- Teaching values and challenging new knowledge. “Am I growing as a person?” These questions were related to students’ feelings that school should teach good values and challenge students to learn new things (Q19, Q20).

- Teacher’s academic history as a student. “Was my teacher a good student?” This category focused on student concern that their teacher attended a reputable college or was successful in school (Q21, Q22).

- Content Knowledge. “How well does my teacher know the subject?” These questions reflected how important students felt it was that their teacher knows their content area.

Interestingly, this factor also correlated inversely with the importance that a teacher care about their students (Q14, Q23, and Q24).
• Flexibility. “Is my teacher lenient?” This category showed how much weight students put on whether their teacher let them work at their own pace and if their teacher did not have high expectations (Q31, Q34).

A relative weight for each factor was assigned by calculating the mean of the sum of student responses to each item on the survey, and when the question was phrased negatively, the scale was inverted, and divided by the maximum value possible (e.g., 20 if the factor consisted of four questions), giving a scale from zero to one, where one would be every student giving a five to every survey question in the set. Using this model, the importance of each factor can be ranked as follows:

1) Honesty and open-mindedness (0.886)
2) Preparing students for college and life beyond high school (0.837)\(^{42}\)
3) Content knowledge (0.797)
4) Fairness (0.790)
5) Care and rapport (0.771)
6) Teaching value as a role of school (0.683)\(^{43}\)
7) General knowledge (0.660)
8) Flexibility (0.590)
9) Teacher as a good student (0.459)

\(^{42}\) This is a subtopic of the survey questions, and not teacher qualities.
\(^{43}\) This is a subtopic of the survey questions, and not teacher qualities.
Comparisons between Groups were completed using the means of student z-scores for each factor. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) of means differences between males and females on the above factors yielded significant differences for several areas of teacher effectiveness. In particular, females were more concerned about category two, “Is my teacher preparing me well?” \( (F = 6.152, p < .01) \). Further analysis reveals that this difference is strongly reflected in the survey question #18, “School’s main goal is to prepare us for college” \( (95\% \text{ CI}: 4.10 \pm .15 \text{ female}, 3.72 \pm .17 \text{ male}, F = 10.562, p < .001) \). No significant results between ethnic/racial groups were found by ANOVA. However, significant differences were seen between students in AP/honors classes and those in Regents classes on the relative importance of category one, honesty \( (F = 7.729, p < .01) \), with AP/honors students placing on it higher importance, and category two, “Is my teacher preparing me well?” \( (F = 16.764, p < .001) \), with non-honors/AP students placing on it higher importance. In particular, non-honors/AP students preferred that the teacher makes all decisions in the classroom \( (95\% \text{ CI}: 3.17 \pm .22 \text{ non-honors/AP}, 2.82 \pm .17 \text{ honors/AP}, F = 7.751, p < .01) \) [Q #16] and were more likely to believe that the school’s goal is to help students graduate \( (95\% \text{ CI}: 3.67 \pm .25 \text{ non-honors/AP}, 3.08 \pm .16 \text{ honors/AP}, F = 14.809, p < .001) \) [Q #17], while honors/AP students were more likely to desire honesty in their teachers \( (95\% \text{ CI}: 3.78 \pm .28 \text{ non-honors/AP}, 4.23 \pm .12 \text{ honors/AP}, F = 11.335, p = .001) \) [Q #39]. Similar results were found using grade point average as the independent variable. Students who had received academic support were less likely to stress the importance of instructors’ knowledge of their academic subject \( (F = 4.785, p < .01) \). Students whose native language is not English valued their teachers’ perceived academic success more than native English
speakers \((F = 5.397, \ p < .05)\). No significant results were found by ANOVA based on favorite subjects.

*Multivariate analysis*

Statistical interaction was found between gender and academic placement in how students viewed the importance of their teacher preparing them for the future. In particular, in response to Q #13 (“The main job of teachers is to prepare you to do well on tests such as the Regents Exam”), though females in AP/honors classes put significantly more weight on this area than did their male counterparts, this trend was reversed in the student population in Regents classes \((F = 4.486, \ p < .05)\).

Certain broad trends can be identified in the data, especially in terms of the relative importance of certain areas of perceived teacher effectiveness: for example, it can be reasonably concluded that the teacher’s knowledge of his/her subject area is seen as more important than his/her general knowledge, and that a student’s feeling of personal growth is deemed more important than the perceived lenience of the teacher. Some of the more nuanced differences between these areas, as well as some of the analyses of group means, may be less telling than others, and given the sheer number of comparisons, they should be taken with a grain of salt if they do not meet a particularly rigorous level of statistical significance. However, they do help to paint a better picture and may be relevant, especially if they are backed up by findings from the qualitative part of this study.
Student responses regarding the purpose of school show that for the students at Eastland, school is a social and academic place to prepare them for the future. Education, to the students, is to prepare them for life. The purpose of school is to teach new and challenging ideas and values. Getting accepted into college or helping with tests are not highly rated as a teacher’s responsibility in this survey. However, a school’s responsibility to help students graduate, getting accepted into college, and helping to do well on tests were rated higher among students who have never taken an Advanced Placement or honors level class. Given this indication, the students who are considered weaker, or students who take less risks academically, have a different view of school and teachers, which shows a greater dependency for their achievement than students who are enrolled in or have taken more challenging classes. It is more important for the students at Eastland to aim to get into better colleges and perform better on exams. The students at Eastland High School bought into the idea that tests are an important indicator of achievements, merit, and learning. However, they do not see this as the sole responsibility of teachers. This idea of partnership among the school, teachers, and students clearly exists at Eastland High School.

**Student perception of education and school.** In regard to the definition of education and the role of schools, it was illustrated that student perception was of school as a space for learning necessary knowledge. There is difference in response between students who have taken AP/honor classes and students who have never taken AP/honor classes. It is consistent with the assumptions that the students who have taken AP/honor classes are more willing and able to take on rigorous and challenging courses and are less reliant than non-AP/honor
students on schools and teachers to help them do well on tests, graduate from high school, prepare for college or provide a broader social guidance in and out of school.

Table 5.9 Student Perception of Role of Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teacher’s job to help do well on tests</th>
<th>Schools main goal is to help students graduate</th>
<th>School should teach good values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taken AP or honor classes</strong></td>
<td>Mean 3.47</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N 180</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Deviat 1.043</td>
<td>1.072</td>
<td>0.934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Never taken AP or honor classes</strong></td>
<td>Mean 3.94</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N 69</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Deviat 0.906</td>
<td>1.066</td>
<td>0.947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>Mean 3.6</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N 249</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Deviat 1.029</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.939</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students who have never taken Advanced Placement or honors level classes hold the opinion that the school’s main goal is to help students graduate. These students also see the teacher’s role of helping them to do well on tests as being more important than do students who have taken advanced level classes. Students taking honor or AP classes, who are more willing or able to take on more challenging classes, view teacher-student dynamics as more personal, and see the relationship as a give-and-take within class. Students who have taken AP or honor level classes responded more positively to teachers who have a sense of humor, self-disclose, or share knowledge of pop culture. The expectation of teacher-student
dynamics is different between these two sub-groups of students. This may be more indicative of how city school students may respond as opposed to students in the suburbs. A clear-cut hierarchy or stratum may exist in city schools where the students may not feel they had a choice in the school they attend. It would be interesting to do similar study in city school to see the students responses to similar questions.
## Table 5.10 Summary of Responses by PAR and Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>PAR Student Researchers’ Responses</th>
<th>Survey Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. How do students define the purposes of education?  
  - Do their perceptions of the purposes of education and those of school differ?  
  - How do students define academic achievements and how do they see academic achievement fitting into the purposes of education? | • Learning things you need for life  
• School is part of the education process; not all Education is more- include things that need to be learned at home and outside of classroom  
• Academic achievement is doing well on tests and getting good grades | • Prepare for life  
• School is a big part of education and learning Doing well on tests, getting good grades, going to (a good) college |
| 2. How do students define effective teachers?  
  - What do they mean by “effective teacher”?  
  - How does effective teaching relate to the purposes of education they have put forth?  
  - Is a “good” teacher the same as an “effective” teacher?  
  - How do you measure the effectiveness of a teacher? | • Teachers act professional  
• Teachers as mentors and role models who help prepare for life  
• A good teacher can be a nice teacher but an effective teacher is one that makes you learn.  
• Cannot measure effectiveness; need years to determine personal growth | • Qualities of effective teacher  
  - Honest  
  - Content  
  - Respect students  
• Teachers create learning environment |
| 3. How do students’ views on purpose of education and effective teacher differ from those of policymakers? | • Student researchers think policymakers consider teachers whose students score high on regents and AP tests as being effective teachers. In contrast, the District maintains an effective teacher measures growth in multiple ways.  
• Students look at the impact teachers had on them—it could take years. Similarly, the District states learning to be a lifelong process.  
• Student researchers and District sees purpose of education as something bigger than just academic. | • Similar on effective teachers Students view honest teachers with strong content as effective. District sees a flexible teacher able to challenge students academically  
• Purpose of education for both students and for school- challenge academically, help students learn |
**Interviews.** Student researchers completed 10 interviews with the students who volunteered for the interviews. Unlike the survey, interviews were open to all grades. Ironically, the volunteers for the interviews were predominantly white students despite the fact that nearly half of the student population at Eastland is Asian and Asian Americans. These interviews took place on different days, times, and locations. The 10 interviews took about three months to complete due to scheduling issues by both the interviewees and the student researchers.

Table 5.11 Interviewees’ Demographic Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Erin</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nina</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jae</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The interviewees were unaware of the identities of the other students who were interviewed. As far as we are aware, interviewed students did not belong to the same social groups. The interview responses were nearly identical to one another despite the fact that the students were from different social groups. The interviewees were asked the same questions (Appendix C) and when the interviewers needed greater clarification, they were asked to explain more. There were lists of the themes and the number of interviewees that mentioned them during the interviews (Table 5.12).
Table 5.12 Common Themes and Terms Present in Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms/ concepts mentioned</th>
<th>Number of interviews where the term/concept was present</th>
<th>Topic of Question Asked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help/ Helpful</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Quality of Effective Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available, after class, outside</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Quality of Effective Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastland is a good school</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Quality of Effective Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective teacher is a good teacher</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Quality of Effective Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher knows kids</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Quality of Effective Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She/her</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Quality of Effective Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Quality of Effective Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Really know his/ her subject/content</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Quality of Effective Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Push us/encourage us</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Quality of Effective Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement is doing well on tests, good grades</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Academic Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to a good college</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Purpose of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High status/ high paying job</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Purpose of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare for life</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Purpose of Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview responses on whether Eastland High School is a good school were a unanimous yes. When asked why they believed Eastland was a good school, students had similar responses. According to Adam, “there are many different clubs and activities that allow students to choose and develop their interests.” Thomas stated, “Great teachers, smart students.” In addition, Erin’s response was, “I don’t know, everyone is so serious about schoolwork and want to try to work hard.” Anna’s answer was “…there’s a lot in this school…” when asked to explain her response, Anna stated, “there is so much going on in this school, but everyone is so helpful. Like there is something for everyone here.” All students agreed that Eastland High School is a good school because of all the programs, and academic and extracurricular activities it offers. Students notice how serious and achievement oriented their peers are, and this lends to a school culture based on academic excellence and competitiveness.

For these students, academic achievement is defined as getting good grades in class, on tests, getting awards and recognition at local and national levels, and ultimately being accepted into good colleges. All interviewed students emphasized the importance of getting good grades in their classes. The interviewees fell into one of two groups: students currently taking AP courses and students working/hoping to take AP courses next year. The survey responses and interview responses were consistent in their definition of academic achievement and purpose of education. Education is viewed as learning things to prepare for life. All interviewed students commented that school is a social space as much as a place of learning. Mitchell describes school as a “place that gets you ready for your place in the world. Purpose of education is to help you achieve high place in society.” Anna views school as a place where students are supposed to figure themselves out as well as their place.
“A good teacher and an effective teacher are one and the same” according to Adam, who described how one teacher made learning fun and challenging. Adam stated that he looked forward to this class because of the teacher. Jae and Nina stated that the quality of an effective teacher is someone who will challenge them and help them to do well in class. All interviewees identified “helpful” as the most important quality in the teachers they consider effective. Teachers who helped students to learn and achieve or teachers who let kids know they are there to help were the teachers the students remembered as being good. Other qualities of good teachers were teacher accessibility outside of classroom, willingness to help students, and the ability to create an environment that fostered learning. As the students answered the interview questions, they mentioned teachers from their past who fit the description of a good teacher. The students reminisced and ended their statements saying that they missed that teacher. Adam commented, “there is no fixed formula for teaching. An effective teacher encouraged my interest in the subject.”
### Table 5.13 Summary and Comparison of Responses by Three Data Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>PAR Student Researchers’ Responses</th>
<th>Survey Responses</th>
<th>Interview Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do students define the purposes of education?</td>
<td>- Learning things you need for life</td>
<td>• Prepare for life</td>
<td>• Help prepare for college/ foundation for life as adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do their perceptions of the purposes of education and those of school differ?</td>
<td>- School is part of the education process; not all Education is more- include things that need to be learned at home and outside of classroom</td>
<td>• School is a big part of education and learning</td>
<td>• Set of knowledge you need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do students define academic achievements and how do they see academic achievement fitting into the purposes of education?</td>
<td>- Academic achievement is doing well on tests and getting good grades</td>
<td>• Doing well on tests, getting good grades, going to (a good) college</td>
<td>• School is a place where students figure out what they enjoy, a social place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Tests, grades, and awards measure academic achievements that help them get ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do students define effective teachers?</td>
<td>• Teachers act professional</td>
<td>• Qualities of effective teacher</td>
<td>• Effective teacher = good teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What do they mean by “effective teacher”?</td>
<td>• Teachers as mentors and role models who help prepare for life</td>
<td>- Honest</td>
<td>• Encourage students interest in various subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How does effective teaching relate to the purposes of education they have put forth?</td>
<td>• A good teacher can be a nice teacher but an effective teacher is one that makes you learn.</td>
<td>- Content</td>
<td>• Help students succeed and do well in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Is a “good” teacher the same as an “effective” teacher?</td>
<td>• Cannot measure effectiveness; need years to determine personal growth</td>
<td>- Respect students</td>
<td>• Determined by how well students do on tests and in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do you measure the effectiveness of a teacher?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers create learning environment</td>
<td>• How useful what they learned in class is later in life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do students’ views on purpose of education and effective teacher differ from those of policymakers?</td>
<td>• Student researchers think policy makers consider teachers whose students score high on regents and AP tests as being effective teachers. In contrast, the District maintains an effective teacher measures growth in multiple ways.</td>
<td>• Similar on effective teachers Students view honest teachers with strong content as effective. District sees a flexible teacher able to challenge students academically.</td>
<td>• Teach a certain set of knowledge that will be useful in society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students look at the impact teachers had on them—it could take years. Similarly, the District states learning to be a lifelong process.</td>
<td>• Purpose of education for both students and for school- challenge academically, help students learn</td>
<td>• An effective teacher is a teacher who can get their kids to do well in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student researchers and District sees purpose of education as something bigger than just academic.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Student’s views similar to the policymakers, but students also put emphasis on personal impact—that a teacher affected their outlook</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary. In reviewing the responses by the three sources of data, there are distinct patterns and consistencies in responses that lend to a set of conclusions about Eastland High School students’ perceptions of education, the role of school, academic achievements, and the qualities of effective teachers. Some of the common answers across the three data sources are:

- School is a social and physical space to help prepare for college and life
- Tests and grades are measures of academic achievement
- Teachers are seen as facilitators of learning
- Professionalism, fairness, and honesty are qualities of effective teachers.
- Families clearly chose this community for its successful schools. There is a clear economic model of education where the students and families have set ideas about school, and the purposes and goals of schooling.
Chapter 6
Conclusion and Discussion

Honestly, everything is changing; things are getting harder but if you ever need reasons to stay teaching, just let me know. I will tell you why students like me stay in touch with a selective few teachers of their past. Your hard work and dedication to your students in not going to waste, I promise. (S.J.)

44 Text message from a former student March 2, 2013.
Eastland Students’ Perception of Schooling and Education

Students at Eastland High School represent the ambitious youth of our society. These young adults are raised in a society with endless information and communication through technology that has tied global culture and commerce, as we have never imagined. As the government and corporate world is shaping our education system to produce a productive labor force for the global economy, these students seem to have accepted that education is a vehicle towards economic and social ends. Going to a good college and preparing for a prestigious profession are the two resonant goals of the students at Eastland. Interestingly, Eastland High School is known for the various fund raising and community awareness projects that many of the students participate in. Global Village holds auctions to raise funds to help children in underprivileged communities both internationally and within the US. Two to four Midnight Run events are held every year in which the students prepare meals and create care packages and clothes to bring to the homeless in New York City. Food and book drives are a regular sight throughout the school to donate to shelters and local food pantries. Despite so many learning opportunities about the world outside of their sheltered community, the students, in general, seem to remain grade driven.

Eastland High School students have a clear agenda and view high school as a vehicle, or a steppingstone, for college preparation. College education, for many students at Eastland, is a tool for mobility and sustenance for social and economic status. Throughout this research, many students related that their parents had expressed, on numerous occasions, that their main reason for living in this community is its school. A good school is clearly seen as a negotiable service that can be purchased. A quality education is something these parents had
researched before settling in this community. The families’ approach to research before making their decisions was similar to how one decides when making a large purchase. The product that these parents were purchasing was good education that can best prepare their children for good colleges in order for the children to succeed in life by obtaining high position, prestigious careers. This school district is an anomaly when compared to the millions of students throughout the United States whose families do not have the resources to choose to live in communities based on its schools.

The students, in turn, have a clear expectation of what their parents want from this school. The students have also bought into this view about their relationship with their school. There is a clear consumer-producer dynamic at the school that may not be present in city schools. The students see school and education as two separate entities; however, there is no clear definition of each that helps to easily differentiate one from the other. Students at Eastland view education as being something bigger than just school subjects; however, students clearly envision school as the main institution that passes along much of this education. Education encompasses knowledge that one will need, which is both academic and non-academic. Education comes from school, home, and just about everywhere. Schooling is viewed as something more limited to specific subjects, tasks, and skills that make up a set of knowledge that can be labeled as a means to an end. Suburban school students view teacher-student relations and school-student relationships as partnerships between producers and consumers with shared common goals—academic achievements, preparation for college, and entrance into good colleges. While Eastland is a performance driven school, the students expect their school to provide education to help prepare them to participate in society. Eastland students’ view of education in agreement with LaRochelle’s
claim that education and knowledge should center on how people “develop narratives and explanations which enable them not only to operate viably in their everyday lives, but also to participate in the habits and customs of the group they are members in” (as cited in Bentley, 2003, p.4). Students at Eastland have a greater worldview that includes global competition for jobs and economic gains. In response, the students are driven to excel academically and find their place in high status jobs.

**Student perception of effective teacher qualities at Eastland.**

Tuckman (1995) asserts teacher evaluation is a performance-based evaluation that requires concentration and time. However, school administrators’ observation focus on behaviors for the specific time. Students, Tuckman reminds us, judge and evaluate teachers over time, rendering their perception more global, since they are able to judge not just behavior but effects. Cahill (2007) emphasized how relationship building and involving the studied population—students—in research over time provides valuable and accurate data.

Students at Eastland High identified “honesty” and “fairness” as qualities most desired in their teachers. This finding re-confirms Stronge’s (2002) earlier findings. “Care,” “honesty,” “fairness,” and “strong content knowledge” can all be translated into professional characteristics that enable students to trust their teachers and build a relationship that is beneficial to them.

Students are able to separate popularity from quality of effective teachers. This finding is not groundbreaking. Nevertheless, it enforces the existing statement that students are in fact a valuable and reliable source of information regarding teacher quality and
effectiveness that can be integrated in teacher education, policy, and professional
development to improve teaching practices.

**Policymakers’ definition of effective teachers**

The PAR student researchers clearly stated that for policymakers and school
administrators, an effective teacher is someone who will make the schools look good.
Teachers with students who perform well on state mandated Regents examinations or AP
Exams or who will help their students win nationally recognized awards are the ones that the
policymakers will consider as being effective. Student researchers and interviewees alike
stated effective teachers as being good teachers. Their definition of effective teachers
encompasses a teacher who is available to help students do well in school but also as
someone who will leave a lasting impact. Despite the fact that the students at Eastland High
School were not very direct in stating the purpose of education as providing broader
worldviews or opening their minds to social justice and personal growth, the PAR student
researchers statement that teacher impact is not immediate and it is difficult to really
measure teacher effectiveness conveys that life lessons learned from teachers can have a
lasting impact that may not show up immediately in the developmental progression of our
students. Jane’s comment that it can take a “long time” is a clear indication of the
overarching impact teachers have on his/her students. A reflection and an account of teacher
impact of former students is definitely something we need to take a closer look at.

**Recommendations for future research.** It would be worthwhile for future mixed
methods studies to research other high performing middle class suburban schools as well as
in inner city working class community schools. Multiple studies looking to student
perceptions on effective teacher quality will provide reliable and relevant responses to
determine differences and similarities in suburban and urban schools. Student input in
anything related to education, teacher qualities, policies, and curriculum is a valuable source
of information that needs to be sought, recorded, and implemented in any policies and
changes made in our education. Consumer expectation along with all the trappings of
professional upper middle class socioeconomic status (SES) can be key differences in student
perception of what constitutes an effective teacher, academic achievement and
comprehensive education, which may vary between urban, suburban, and rural school
students.

The income level, education level of parents, and the school environment influence
how students will respond at a given school. The effective teacher qualities students value
depend on the respective students’ personal experiences and perceptions. It would be
interesting to see what qualities are similar and different among affluent suburban school
students and working class, inner city school students. These wide findings may provide
valuable information that can be used in teacher education, hiring, and professional
development.

*Longitudinal studies of students throughout college years.* There are no longitudinal
studies conducted where students from urban schools and suburban schools are tracked from
college entry to workforce to determine the difference in their rate of college graduation and
earnings records. It would be an interesting study that could allow researchers to study the
Matthew Effect on achievement, learning gains, and income (Wahlberg and Tsai, 1983)
among the students from suburban, middle class communities and urban, working class communities throughout their college years. Many policies are grounded on improving education, raising the standard of education for all students, and closing the achievement gap of students. I agree with Eisner (2003) that rather than making sweeping policies for teacher evaluation and reforms at the building levels, we should study the long-term effects of teachers and effective teaching to broaden the definition and goals of education as well as to redefine academic achievements.

*Study on graduates of Eastland five years after they graduate.* It would be very interesting to conduct a follow up study with the students at Eastland High School after a period of five years. A social network site can help contact students from this school to conduct an online survey asking former students to answer similar questions based on their reflections and the experiences they have encountered over the years. The study can also ask these graduates if any teacher has affected or shaped their choices in college or in their careers and if or how their views about the purpose of education has changed over the years. Determining whether there are any differences in their responses over time will prove valuable and can be used to shape our education system. Graduates’ insights and input on which courses and content they found valuable in college and in society can help create courses that address those topics.

*Differences between minority and majority student perception.* Another interesting topic to study was raised as a result of another finding during this research. Eastland has a Latino population that makes up about 7% of the student body. This population is visible; however, is not well represented in the honors or AP classes. There is, however,
disproportionately greater representation in Special Education and resource rooms. Unlike the African American students who make up less than 2% of the student population, Latinos are a visible ethnic group that under-performs academically and are not a regular part of many mainstream activities, such as school theater productions, sports, or student government. We noted during our research that most Latino students listed “racism” and “unfair treatment” by teachers as one of the top two least desirable qualities of teachers. We found it interesting that no other ethnic groups wrote in racism as least desirable. The student researchers and I wondered whether that is how the Latino students perceive treatment from some or most of their teachers. Hochschild (2003) pointed out nested inequalities and the lack of resources and effective teachers in inner city failing schools when compared to affluent suburban schools. The suburban schools have many advantages over these inner-city schools. However, there seems to be an under-achieving group that is divided by race and SES. Smerdon (2002) argues that student achievement can be linked to student perception of membership in the school community. Informal discussions with co-researchers centered on whether this student group’s perceived racism from their teachers played a significant role in their academic struggles. We were left with more questions than answers and we recommend research focusing on minority student perception of racism in otherwise successful schools and whether such perception has an impact on or if there are a correlation to the academic achievements of the group.

Policy implications. Public education in the United States is a multi-billion dollar per year venture that require millions of faculty and staff members that service tens of millions of students. Approximately 50.1 million students were enrolled in public schools grades K-12 during the 2013-2014 school year. Public schools hire a total of 3.3 million full-time teachers
expending total of about $591 billion dollars for school expenditures (nces.ed.gov). Annual 
expenditure for public schools in the United States is greater than the 2012 reported GDP of 
204 countries around the world (CIA.gov). In ensuring that this large sum is spent well to 
prepare our youth to become active participants in a democratic society and this global 
community, we need to include input from all stakeholders in the education world in order to 
shape a better education policy and actions.

The education specialists, policymakers, politicians, and communities need to come 
together to reevaluate various factors before implementing policies:

1) We need to revisit education goals—why do we educate? Eisner (2003) challenges 
education reformers to re-evaluate the assumption that education for all students should have 
the same goals and they must meet them all at the same time. The education policy should 
reflect and allow for a shifting of goals and the education lens. We need to broaden goals of 
education to suit the learners and allow more room for flexibility and individual growth.

2) Challenge the status quo of global market based education where the goal is to 
produce future workers. Social justice, individualism, and innovativeness are factors that 
enabled the development of great technologies and advancements to be created in recent 
times. Life changing medical aids, the internet, and smart phones are just few examples of 
world changing inventions created by individuals who are product of the American education 
system and American society. Despite the repeated mediocre performance at the 
Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Program for International 
Student Assessment (OECD PISA) exams, the United States is still the top in producing 
innovators and entrepreneurs who move the global population forward. The American school
system works and is working quite successfully as part of the global competitive market economy. We need to look at what the schools are doing well and help to preserve and promote that while improving and changing other areas to meet the changes in our society.

3) Foster partnership in education policy. Include all stakeholders in the policy shaping process. Parent, community, student, and teacher input should be included in shaping goals, curriculum, and guidelines. Listen to what different levels and regions consider important and include that in dialogues to make it relevant. Students have something to say and contribute in schooling and teacher effectiveness.

4) Reforms and improvement of professional development. Professional development sponsored by school districts and so-called experts should integrate a discussion on student perception of teacher qualities. This dialogue, or set of dialogues, can be a valuable tool for reflection on practices and to improve teaching. Furthermore, students should have an active and permanent part in the teacher hiring process as a committee representing the student interests. The student committee can offer additional insights and students will be an entity in shaping their school community.

*Teacher education reforms.* Teacher education and pathways to teacher licensure vary by State. This non-centralized education system has been in place throughout U.S. History. Schooling was a grassroots, small, community movement (Tyack, 1974) that has become a larger institution that has taken on greater role in society and assumed more responsibilities as the U.S. has become more urbanized, populated, and diverse. Although licensure and requirements are established by individual states, there are similar pathways to becoming teachers across the nation. The traditional pathway is undergraduate college coursework or
approved graduate programs in education that meet state level initial license. There are also career change pathways for people who choose to leave their professions to enter teaching in many states as well as Teach for America and teaching fellowships for non-traditional education majors to teach in high-needs areas. As of 2007, 50 States and Washington D.C. have alternative pathways to teaching (Barna, 2008). Regardless of pathways, there are required education courses and professional candidates must complete them in order to meet licensure requirements. It is important to integrate the teacher qualities and characteristics, such as honesty and professionalism, into education coursework.

There are characteristics that teacher educators can focus on and emphasize in teacher education programs to improve teacher practices and effectiveness. Qualities, such as honesty, fairness, and professionalism can be designed within a teacher education coursework to make those characteristics part of the teaching practice. Teacher characteristics and quality building can be integrated into existing pedagogic courses or can be created as a separate course that include workplace etiquette, professionalism, and internships. Teachers on the traditional path generally go from kindergarten to college as a student, then become a teacher with little or no other full-time workforce or “real life” experiences. Teaching is an isolated profession in which, once we are in our classrooms, we do not have co-workers or colleagues with whom to actively work with or confer. We navigate the class instructions alone and negotiate our way alone. We do not have peers to evaluate us or give feedback so that we can reflect on and improve our craft. Teachers at the high school rarely co-teach or visit colleagues’ classes to observe and learn from one another. This teaching culture can limit certain professional, personal, and social development that professionals in the “real world” are able to gain, such as networking, merit based recognition, and regular job
performance review by supervisors and peer reviews by colleagues. There are many great challenges and sacrifices teachers make in comparison to their private industry counterparts. However, professionalism and a certain level of professional maturity is something our own students recognize as a quality they would like in their teachers. All of these areas, as well as teacher qualities, are something that teachers need to hone in order to be proficient in their field. Professional training and instituting of such qualities can help raise the social esteem of teaching field as a profession.

Final thought. Before I began this research, I assumed kindness and humor were the qualities students would seek as qualities of effective teachers. Like many critics of student evaluation studies, I also thought that looking at teacher qualities and assessing effective (good) teachers would be a popularity contest where the “cool” teachers would also be deemed as the good teachers. However, the study had shown students at Eastland have a clear understanding of what a popular teacher is and what an effective teacher should be. The students like the popular and cool teachers because they are fun, but the students are also aware when those teachers do not know how to keep boundaries. Professional, accessible teachers who are honest, fair, and have strong content knowledge is the formula for effective teaching. The students at Eastland, where school is a commodity deliberately selected by their families, are aware of what they want from school and their teachers. Throughout the research, I witnessed the PAR student researchers grow and develop critical thinking and observe teacher quality. The student researchers concluded that one can like the popular teachers, but when it comes to learning and the impact teachers have in the long run, our student researchers clearly identified qualities that are separate from popularity.
As some of you may be aware, I am currently working on my dissertation research. I am conducting Participatory Action Research in which student researchers will play an active role in data collection. I have met with South High IRB Board, Michelle Sorise, Carol Hersch, and Patricia Goodman to discuss ethics and research approach. I also met with principal Susan Elliott and have spoken to the administrators at Phipps. My research has been approved by the board of education [date of meeting] and can now commence.

I am writing to the guidance counselors to request your recommendations for student researchers. To qualify, these students must be current 11th or 12th grade students who can commit to biweekly meetings of about two hours each, held after school.

I am looking for a group of 10 to 14 students. I am looking for:
1. A group that is culturally, racially, and individually diverse
2. Students who are not overly committed to academic or athletic activities that may interfere with our meetings
3. Students regardless of grade point average. As a matter of fact, I would like to have students who are not necessarily over-achieving superstars
4. Those great kids who you know who may be interested in taking part in this project

If you have great candidates in mind, please speak to those kids and encourage them to come to talk to me.

I am attaching my research proposal. If you have any questions or comments, please let me know. Thanks for your time and attention to this matter. I am looking forward to working with your kids.

-Jennie Yi
Appendix B

Student Survey on Effective Teacher Characteristics.

We would like what teacher characteristics you value in a good teacher. Read each state and show how much you agree with it by circling the choice number. There are no right or wrong answers. Your answers will be kept confidential.

1. Grade _____________

2. Sex M F

3. Race/ethnicity __________________________

4. Were you born in the United States? YES NO

5. Is English your first language? YES NO

If not, what is your first language? ______________ _______________

6. Are you currently taking or have taken any honors or AP classes? YES NO

7. Do you receive or have received resource room or study skills support? YES NO

8. Your estimated overall GPA __________________ ____________________

9. Favorite Subject ____________________________________

10. Best subject ____________________________________

11. List the most important qualities of a good teacher using 1 as the most important.

1) __________________________________

2) __________________________________

3) __________________________________

4) __________________________________

5) __________________________________

12. List the least desirable qualities of a teacher using 1 as the least desirable.

1) __________________________________

2) __________________________________

3) __________________________________

4) __________________________________

5) __________________________________
#13 -41 Circle the number you feel best express your view about the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Teacher’s main job is to prepare you to pass tests such as the Regents Exam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>The most important quality of a good teacher is having expert knowledge of their subject</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>It is important that a teacher has a great sense of humor.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>A teacher is the adult and therefore should make all important decision.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>School’s main goal is to help us graduate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>School’s main goal is to prepare us for college</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>School should challenge us to learn new things</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>My school reflects the values of our community and home.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>It matters greatly what college my teacher attended.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>It matters greatly to know that my teachers were good students.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Teachers who know a lot about their subject are good teachers.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>It is very important for a teacher to care about his or her students.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>A teacher should know a great deal about the world.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>A teacher should know a great deal about the current pop culture.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>A good teacher is open minded.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>A teacher should be willing to learn to from the students.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>A good teacher should have high expectations of all of his/her students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>A good teacher should make learning fun</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>It is not the job of a teacher to make learning fun.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Teachers should allow students to work at their own pace</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>It is important for teachers to allow students to make some of the decision regarding classroom activities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>It is important for a teacher to self-disclose (tell something about themselves outside of classroom) a little</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>A teacher should move around in the classroom during lessons</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>A teacher should pay attention to the students during class</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>A teacher should take the time to know their students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>A teacher should have a good stock of knowledge on many subjects</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>It is important for a teacher to admit when they don’t know something</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>A good teacher admits to their own mistakes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>A teacher should respect student’s ideas and suggestions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C  Interview Questions

Questions:

We are looking at student's perception and definition of good teacher and good teacher qualities. There are no right or wrong answers but we appreciate your honest answer. We do ask that you refrain from mentioning individuals since we are looking at characteristics and not a particular person.

1. Do you think South High School is a good school? Why?
2. What do you think is the purpose of school?
3. How do you define education?
4. How would you describe or define academic achievements?
5. How do you describe a good teacher?
6. What about an effective teacher?
7. Do you think there is a difference between a good teacher and an effective teacher?
8. What do you think is a teacher's main responsibility?
9. Thinking back to a class you had with a teacher you consider highly effective what memories can you recall?
10. Thinking back to a class you had with your favorite teacher, what memories can you recall?
11. Can you describe an incident when a teacher made a positive impact on your life?
12. Do you know what you want to major in college or become when you grow up? Who or what influenced your interest in that area?

Thank you for your time and for sharing your responses. Is there anything else we didn't ask that you feel you would like to share in your definition of an effective or good teacher qualities?
### Appendix D

#### TIMELINE OF RESEARCH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 2010</td>
<td>Initial contact with the site school IRB. Obtained approval to proceed with research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2010</td>
<td>Contact building Principal and the district Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2011</td>
<td>Meeting with Assistant Superintendent and the Building Principal. Received permission to conduct research and survey students at both High schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2011</td>
<td>Submitted IRB application at CUNY GC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2011</td>
<td>Dissertation proposal approved by my Dissertation committee at City University of New York Graduate Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2011- April 2012</td>
<td>CUNY GC IRB application processes. Submission, modification, resubmit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2011</td>
<td>CUNY IRB approval step 1- to start research, recruit PAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2012</td>
<td>CUNY IRB approval step 2- IRB approval of PAR members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2012 -June 2012</td>
<td>PAR student researchers’ training. Create survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2012</td>
<td>Administered Survey to Eastland High School 11th grade students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2012- July 2012</td>
<td>Code and enter survey data into SPSS by all research members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2012-December 2012</td>
<td>Student researchers conduct Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2012- June 2013</td>
<td>Discuss findings, analyze data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2013-August 2013</td>
<td>Final meetings, review data analysis, discuss results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 2013</td>
<td>Farewell meeting. Five of six members are officially high school graduates and have started college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 2014</td>
<td>Research submitted to the committee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ADDING STUDENTS’ VOICES TO THE DISCOURSE ON EFFECTIVE TEACHING

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ADDING STUDENTS’ VOICES TO THE DISCOURSE ON EFFECTIVE TEACHING


National Center for Alternative Certification http://www.teach-now.org/


NBC News Education


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