Administrators' Insights into the Preparation and Performance of New Teachers

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There are few studies that focus on the perceptions and experiences of school administrators toward new teachers; however, understanding of both are required for accreditation. Furthermore, the school administrators' perceptions of the training, as well as teachers' performance and impact on student learning during their first years of teaching is vital to determine how new teachers are performing in the classroom. This case study explored these perceptions and three main themes emerged: Indicators of New Teacher Effectiveness, Evidence of Impact on Student Learning, and Identified Areas for Growth. Insight for understanding ways to improve teacher preparation are included.
Keywords: Administration, teacher preparation, impact on student learning

Introduction

Educator effectiveness and teacher quality are current buzzwords in education (Darling-Hammond, 2014; Good, 2014; Mehta & Doctor, 2013; Tygret, 2017). National and state policies are being implemented to measure the effectiveness of teachers, and teacher education programs (TEPs) are being challenged to meet new standards to prove they are creating high quality teachers that impact student academic growth and learning (CAEP, 2013). In addition, TEPs are required to provide evidence that their graduates and their employers, specifically their administrators, are satisfied with the preparation and training they received and that the graduates are effectively implementing the theory, knowledge, and skills they gained from their preparation programs (CAEP, 2013).

There are few studies in the literature that focus on the perceptions and experiences of the administrators of new teachers. However, the administrators' perceptions of the training that new teachers receive, as well as the teachers' performance and impact on student learning during their first years of teaching, are essential to the literature. In addition, it is imperative that TEPs are aware of the impact their graduates are making in the field in order to ensure that they are

providing the best possible preparation for today's classrooms. School administrators, specifically principals and assistant principals, are in a unique position as they evaluate and observe new teachers on a regular basis. Due to their firsthand experiences with new teachers, administrators' insights provide a deeper perspective into the training and performance of new teachers. Therefore, in order to explore the perceptions and experiences of school-level administrators toward new teachers, a qualitative case study was conducted that sought to answer the following research questions:

- What are administrators' perceptions regarding the preparation and performance of new teachers?
- How do school administrators determine the impact new teachers have on student learning and development?

Interviews were conducted to discern insight and perspective on the effectiveness and impact of new teachers. Four elementary school principals, two middle school principals, two middle school assistant principals, and two high school principals were interviewed by the principal investigator, the first author. In addition, nine principals and assistant principals completed a survey regarding the performance of new teachers at their schools. All participating administrators employed recent alumni from one university-based TEP in the western United States.

Literature Review

As stated above, in order to receive accreditation and demonstrate the preparation of high-quality educators, TEPs are required to provide evidence that the employers of their graduates are satisfied with the preparation the new teachers received and that the graduates are making a positive impact on student learning. Specifically, that "employers are satisfied with the completer's preparation for their assigned responsibilities in working with P-12 students" and that "completers contribute to an expected level of student-learning growth." (CAEP, 2013, Standard 4). While CAEP allows for multiple measures to be used to prove impact on student learning, the challenge of providing evidence of teacher effectiveness and how student learning is impacted is a common theme in the literature (Heafner, McIntyre, & Spooner, 2014). As Worrell, et al. (2014) assert in the American Psychological Association's APA Task Force Report, while having data on new teachers' impact on student learning is "the most critically needed type of data" in order for TEPs to evaluate and improve their programs, it is also "unfortunately, the most difficult data to obtain" (p. 15).

Worth noting, however, are the data sources most often used to measure student learning—standardized test scores. Glazerman, Loeb, Goldhaber, Raudenbush, and Whitehurst (2010) raised questions regarding the suitability of

such data for making decisions about teachers and their performance. Cochran-Smith and Villega (2014) express expanding the notion of student learning to include not just test scores, but "ability to be critical and creative, and their development of the deliberative skills necessary for participation in democratic societies" (p. 391). Recently, many school districts have identified student learning outcomes (SLOs) as a way to measure student learning by examining academic growth from the beginning to the end of the academic year. Such measures make sense as there is a close link between teaching and how well students learn (Ysseldyke & Tardrew, 2007). Others caution this approach, which is fairly new and should be viewed as exploratory. SLOs, though, combined with additional measures, serve to support how well new teachers are impacting the learning of their students. Teachers tend to think broader, though, and measure their impact on student learning not just through test scores, but also through improved teaching and an increase in the use of effective evaluation and assessment strategies (Petty, Good, & Handler, 2016).

Reviews of measures of teaching effectiveness and student learning describe the benefits and difficulties of obtaining valid, reliable, practical, and actionable measures. For TEPs, one obvious source of data on new teachers are the schools in which teachers are employed. Districts in the state regularly gather data on teaching effectiveness, with a percentage of effectiveness tied to student growth data. Luczak, Viashnav, Horwath, Sanhani, and Hance (2016) outline their recommendations for TEPs to create "strong, bold" partnerships with school districts. They provide a roadmap that involves steps at several stages, such as, conversations with districts and administrators about vision and goals, data to be shared, careful placement of candidates with mentor teachers, and alignment of coursework and fieldwork. The close work between principals and TEPs is mutually beneficial; schools influence teacher preparation and teacher preparation is able to track the effectiveness of its alumni and the resulting impact on the students they serve (Kaka, Conley, Grant & Frye, 2017).

An often untapped source of knowledge about the preparation and effectiveness of new teachers are the ones that hire those teachers--the school administrators. Limited studies exist through this lens, but one study found that principals believed the attributes of effective teachers were demonstrating enthusiasm, respect for students, ability to problem-solve, and dedication to teamwork and collaboration (Kono, 2010). Williams (2010) found that administrators believed the teacher's ability to plan for instruction, specifically to create relevant lessons that met the objectives and diverse needs of all students was the strongest indicator of effective teaching. Additionally, administrators believed the teacher's ability to implement engaging instruction through questioning, guided practice, and developing higher order skills, and having strong classroom management and organization, were all important indicators of

effectiveness (Williams, 2010). While TEPs must provide evidence from the specific schools in which their graduates are employed, understanding these common themes from administrators in schools across the country will help TEPs overall as they engage in continuous program improvement (Tygret, 2017).

The study described in this manuscript will fill a gap in the literature by providing the insights of administrators from elementary, middle, and high schools regarding the preparation, performance, and impact of new teachers. In addition, it will articulate the ways in which administrators at all levels collect evidence that shows their teachers are positively impacting student learning and development. It will also provide guidance for other TEPs interested in collecting similar evidence.

Conceptual Framework

This qualitative case study utilizes Danielson's Framework for Teaching (2013) as a conceptual framework for identifying the skills, attributes, and behaviors of highly effective teachers. Danielson's comprehensive framework was chosen because it includes the most commonly identified behaviors and practices of highly effective teaching identified in the literature. In addition, the Danielson Framework was developed to identify the areas of teacher quality and effectiveness that have been documented by researchers as having an impact on student learning (Danielson, 2013).

As shown in Table 1, the framework includes four domains of effective teaching: Planning and Preparation; The Classroom Environment; Instruction; and Professional Responsibilities. Each domain contains specific indicators that detail highly effective teaching practices within that domain. The Planning and Preparation domain includes six indicators of effective teaching: the teacher's knowledge of content and pedagogy; the teacher's knowledge of students; the ability to set instructional outcomes; a demonstration of the knowledge of resources; the ability to design coherent instruction; and the ability to design appropriate assessments. Within the second domain, Classroom Environment, five indicators describe effective teaching: creating a respectful classroom environment; establishing a culture of learning; the ability to manage classroom procedures; the management of student behavior; and the organization of physical space (Danielson, 2013).

Table 1
Domains of Effective Planning

Domain	Examples of Danielson's Indicators
Planning and Preparation	Content Knowledge; Pedagogy; Effective Instruction and Assessments
The Classroom Environment	Classroom Management, Procedures, Organization
Instruction	Engagement, Questioning, Discussion
Professional Responsibilities	Professionalism, Collaboration, Reflection

The indicators of effective teaching within the Instruction domain include the teacher's ability to communicate with students; the use of questioning and discussion techniques; engaging students in learning; using assessments to drive instruction; and the demonstration of flexibility and responsiveness. In the fourth domain, Professional Responsibilities, the six indicators of effective teaching are reflecting on practice, maintaining records, communicating with families, participating in the professional community; commitment to professional growth and development; and demonstrating professionalism (Danielson, 2013).

Methodology

In order to explore the perceptions of principals regarding the preparation, performance, and impact of new teachers, a qualitative case study was conducted with principals and assistant principals across one western state. The benefit of conducting a case study is that it allows the researchers to explore an issue by using specific cases within a real-life setting and providing insight into their experiences through analysis of interviews, observations, and other documents (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018). The themes and patterns that emerge from data collection and analysis allow the researcher to make generalizations about the case as well as identify lessons learned from the study (Yin, 2018). For this study, the specific case was the school administrators, who were all working with new teachers that had graduated from the same TEP. Even though the new teachers had received similar preparation and training in their TEP, they were hired in different schools across the same state and were working with diverse populations and cultures. The following research questions guided this study:

- What are administrators' perceptions regarding the preparation and performance of new teachers?
- How do school administrators determine the impact new teachers have on student learning and development?

Participants

Following IRB approval, 35 administrators who employed recent graduates from the same TEP in a western state in the United States were contacted via email to participate in the study. To ensure the administrators were all working with graduates from the TEP, criterion-based sampling was conducted. The benefit of using criterion-based sampling is the assurance that all participants met a predetermined criterion of importance (Patton, 2015), which for this study were their positions as administrators of graduates of the TEP. The participation provides a deeper understanding and unique perspective to the performance of new teachers due to their roles as leaders, evaluators, and employers of graduates from the TEP.

Administrators were asked to participate in a 15-minute survey regarding their experiences with graduates from the TEP via email through Taskstream. Nine participants voluntarily responded by completing the survey. All survey responses were deidentified upon report compilation. Those same 35 administrators were later sent an email invitation to participate in an interview regarding the preparedness of new teachers. Phone interviews were conducted with ten respondents to further inform the research questions.

As seen in Table 2, nine different principals and assistant principals completed the survey regarding the performance and needs of the new teachers at their schools. Of those, eight were principals and one was an assistant principal; two were high school administrators, three were middle school administrators, and four were elementary administrators. One administrator was from a school with a free and reduced lunch rate (FRL) between 26%-49%, while four each were from schools with low FRL (0-25%) or high FRL (51-100%). One was from a rural school, three were from urban schools, and five were from suburban schools.

In addition to the survey participants, interviews were conducted with eight principals and two assistant principals. Of these ten participants, four were elementary school administrators, four were middle school administrators, and two were high school administrators. Five participants had been in administration for 11-15 years, four had been administrators for six to ten years, and one had been an administrator for less than five years. Three administrators were from schools with a FRL between 26%-49%, while three were from schools with low FRL (0-25%), and four were from schools with high FRL (51-100%). Two were from rural schools, three were from urban schools, and five were from suburban schools.

Table 2
Participant Demographics

	Survey Percent (N=9)	Interview Percent (N=10)
Role		
Principal	89% (8)	80% (8)
Assistant Principal	11% (1)	20% (2)
Level of School		
High School	22% (2)	20% (2)
Middle School	33% (3)	40% (4)
Elementary School	45% (4)	40% (4)
Administrative Experience in Years		
0-5	N/A	10% (1)
6-10	N/A	40% (4)
11-15	N/A	50% (5)
School's Urbanicity		
Urban	33% (3)	30% (3)
Suburban	56% (5)	50% (5)
Rural	11% (1)	20% (2)
School's FRL Rate		
0%-25%	44.5% (4)	30% (3)
26%-49%	11% (1)	30% (3)
50%-100%	44.5% (4)	40% (4)

Data Collection

Nine administrators of recent program graduates completed the survey, which contained both open- and closed-ended response questions. Participants had the option to skip any question they did not want to answer. Online surveys have many benefits, including that the participants can complete the survey on their own timeframe and can take as much time as they need to submit (Fink, 2015). The survey could be conducted with anonymity and confidentiality if participants chose not to provide follow-up contact information. Online surveys do have some weaknesses, though, as the potential for a low response rate and an inability to dig deeper into a response can be potentially problematic (Fink, 2015).To mitigate these potential problems, follow-up interviews were completed.

Open-ended survey responses were fully reviewed, and repeated words and initial patterns were noted to ensure that follow-up interviews were purposeful and addressed all issues regarding the preparation and performance of new teachers. Open-ended interview questions were developed based on the survey responses. Once the creation of questions was complete, semi-structured,

follow-up phone interviews were conducted with ten participants in order to triangulate and validate the survey findings. Interviews were then transcribed and all data was reviewed—both open and closed-ended survey results, as well as interview transcripts—and then the data analysis process began.

Data Analysis

Both inductive and deductive data analysis were performed (Yin, 2018), and the data was coded in cycles (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). The survey results and interview data were reviewed and initial patterns were noted prior to coding. During the first cycle of inductive coding, in vivo and evaluative codes were created from the data. Examples of in vivo codes, which use the participants' own language, include "reflective practices" and "high engagement." Evaluative codes, based on participants' evaluation of the TEP and new teachers, include "need for differentiation" and "positive student growth." In addition, memos were created throughout coding, as the researchers took notes on emerging themes and patterns (Miles et al., 2013). During the second cycle of coding, deductive analysis occurred as codes and patterns were compared with Danielson's Framework for Teaching to identify areas of effective teaching described by the participants and defined by Danielson's Framework (Yin, 2018). During the third cycle of coding, the results of the first two cycles were compared and final themes and patterns were identified through further review and memoing.

Trustworthiness & Limitations

Incorporating both interviews and surveys from administrators at different levels of education provided triangulation of data and credibility to the results (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Including rich, thick descriptions to accurately describe administrators' perceptions and experiences with new teachers allowed for potential transferability to other TEPs (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Geertz, 1973). The use of a structured data analysis plan, including coding in cycles and looking for multiple explanations in the data, helped the researchers establish dependability (Patton, 2015). In addition, the researchers used cross-case analysis to determine if the codes and themes were aligned with each participant's perceptions and responses, which strengthened the dependability of the findings (Miles et al., 2013).

All of the noted trustworthiness strategies helped to mitigate the identified limitations of this study. That said, limitations remained. One limitation included that the administrator participants all worked in or around one large city in the western United States. While they came from different schools and districts within a city that varied in terms of diversity and socio-economic demographics, having administrators from varied geographic regions may provide different

result. In addition, the participants were administrators who hired recent graduates from one TEP. This provided insight into the preparation and needs of new teachers from that particular TEP; however, including administrators of new teachers from different programs in future studies could provide a broader perspective and allow the results to be more generalizable.

Findings

There were three main themes that emerged from analysis of the interview and survey data: Indicators of New Teacher Effectiveness, Evidence of Impact on Student Learning, and Identified Areas for Growth. The three themes articulated the administrators' perceptions of the graduates' preparation and impact on student learning and development, as well as areas for growth. Table 3 aligns the indicators from Danielson's framework with examples and insights from the administrators in the study.

Table 3
Danielson Framework and Administrators' Insights

Domain	Examples of Danielson's Indicators	Administrators' Examples from Findings
Planning and Preparation	Content Knowledge; Pedagogy; Effective Instruction and Assessments	Formal and Informal Observations; Teacher Evaluations; Variety of Assessments; Student Growth Data; Standards-based Instruction **Areas for Growth – Differentiation; Meeting Needs of All Students
The Classroom Environment	Classroom Management, Procedures, Organization	**Area for Growth – Effective Classroom Management
Instruction	Engagement, Questioning, Discussion	High Engagement; Effective Instruction; Facilitating Learning **Area for Growth – Effectively Incorporating Technology
Professional Responsibilities	Professionalism, Collaboration, Reflection	Reflective Practices; Open to Feedback; Professionalism

Theme 1: Indicators of New Teacher Effectiveness

Overall, the administrators believed that the alumni from the TEP were effective educators, and therefore, they were satisfied with the preparation that the new teachers received. There were three main indicators of effectiveness the administrators identified in the new teachers from the TEP: reflective teaching and practices, positive student growth data, and solid evaluations from observations. It is important to note the administrators were from elementary, middle, and high schools, and overall, they identified the same areas of strength and effectiveness in the teachers from the TEP. According to one administrator, "The most successful [teachers] really have that willingness to be reflective and to take feedback." This statement relates directly to the Professional Responsibilities domain of Danielson's Framework, which states that reflecting on practice is one of the indicators of an effective teacher. For the administrators, the teacher's ability to reflect on their instruction, classroom management, and overall teaching is a sign of growth potential and effectiveness for new teachers. As one administrator articulated, "I know by October if a teacher is going to make it through the year and it goes back to are they [reflective] and open to feedback."

Another administrator expanded on the importance of reflection by describing a new teacher who struggled so much at the beginning of her first year of teaching that the administrator did not think she would make it through the year. However, the new teacher realized that she was struggling, reflected on her practice, and asked her teammates and other colleagues for help and support in improving her instruction. According to the administrator, "She took it upon herself to go and see how it was done and then kept tweaking, and now she's one of my most successful teachers." The new teacher's ability to not only reflect on her struggles and needs, but be proactive in addressing those areas helped her to become a more effective and successful educator.

In addition, the positive student growth on assessments, as well as the evidence of effective teaching practices through observations and evaluations, gave the administrators confidence in the new teachers from the TEP. To determine student growth, administrators consider a variety of assessments-- national and state standardized tests, classroom and school assessments, and student learning outcomes. Positive student growth is an indicator of effective teaching, as captured in Danielson's Framework and identified by school districts across the country. When administrators compared the student growth from teachers who graduated from the TEP with other teachers in their schools, they found "those teachers [from the TEP] are right in there and/or better." These comparisons gave administrators confidence that TEP completers were effective educators in their respective classrooms due to their positive impact on student growth across assessments. In the words of one administrator, "I'm very pleased with [the new teachers'] assessment results."

Administrators also relied on their formal and informal observations to determine effectiveness of the new teachers. They used the statewide teacher evaluation rubric as one tool during their formal observations, and they looked for the teachers' ability to meet the specific indicators described on the rubric: demonstration of content mastery, establishing a positive, inclusive learning environment, delivering effective instruction and facilitating learning, and demonstrating professionalism. These indicators are all captured in the four domains of Danielson's Framework as well. The new teachers' performance on the evaluation rubric provided administrators with concrete evidence regarding their performance. For the administrators, they were most impressed with the new teachers' ability to connect state academic standards to their instruction, which they credited to the TEP.

In addition, conducting informal classroom observations and keeping open communication with the new teachers were also important ways in which administrators determined effectiveness. As one administrator noted, "when I have been in classrooms with teachers from [the TEP], the engagement has been high, the quality of instruction has been high...and they approach difficult situations with a growth mindset." By observing the teachers meeting the indicators of effective teaching in their daily interactions, the administrators had a strong sense of the quality of teachers they had hired. As one administrator stated, "I have not had anyone from [the specific TEP] that I did not like." Due to their positive experiences with alumni from the TEP, the administrators perceived their preparation to lay a strong foundation for becoming effective educators.

Theme 2: Evidence of Impact on Student Learning

The administrators identified two main ways in which they determined the impact that new teachers were having on student learning: student growth data and classroom observations. While these two avenues were also the ways in which they determined the effectiveness of new teachers, they saw effectiveness and impact on student learning as closely tied together. Effective teaching practices led to an impact on student learning and they determined both effectiveness and impact through student growth and observations.

One administrator articulated that looking at data sounds like "a canned answer" when describing how he determines the impact a teacher has on student learning. However, he believed it is one of the most important indicators of student learning when a teacher and administrator know "what the data is really telling [us]." His school population is over 80% free and reduced lunch, with 30% of students receiving special education services and an ELL population that doubled in recent years. As he described, "it is tricky here because the test data doesn't show proficiencies on state tests;" however, it was most important to him that the students showed growth and teachers "keep the bar high for them."

Student growth, not proficiency, was his overall goal, and he attributed student growth to the positive impact of the teacher.

Likewise, the other administrators in the case study also identified student growth as a strong indicator of the teacher's impact on student learning. The administrators considered several different kinds of assessments as evidence of student growth. One administrator described, "we look at student performance data . . . and progress monitoring tools - state, local, and teacher-generated assessments." By using collective data from all of the different assessments, the administrators had a broader picture of student growth across several instruments. According to one administrator, "we always get phenomenal growth," referring specifically to the teachers from the TEP.

The administrators also used informal and formal observations to determine the impact that new teachers had on student learning, as seeing the teachers "in action" provided administrators with more evidence of their impact. As one administrator said, "I see evidence of student growth when I walk in their classrooms." Frequent informal "walk-through" observations gave administrators the opportunity to observe the teachers interacting with students on a regular basis and witness the teacher's classroom management and instructional techniques. One administrator described how she took time every day to walk through each classroom "to see how things are going and make sure everything is going okay." She believed "having day-to-day interactions with teachers is the best knowledge that you can have but you also have your data tools as well to measure effectiveness."

As stated above, during the formal observations that occurred a few times a year, the administrators used the state rubric to evaluate the teachers and determine impact on student learning. In addition, as one administrator described, "We have conversations with [the new teachers] when we do evaluations of them. We ask them about their lesson plans. We ask them about their standards. We see that their standards work...we look at their common assessments that they write and give, and look at the data." The administrators used student growth data as well as the teachers' use of planning, standards, and instruction in the classroom to measure their positive impact. These same indicators are detailed in the Planning and Preparation and Instruction domains of the Danielson Framework as evidence of effective teaching.

Theme 3: Identified Areas for Growth

While the administrators were satisfied with the preparation that the new teachers received, they also cited areas for program growth. One administrator articulated, "the new teachers [from the TEP] are better than the average teacher that I hire, but at the same time I think there's still room for improvement." They believed there were three main areas that the TEP needed to continue to focus on with regards to preparation of the teachers: teaching candidates how to

differentiate, additional depth with assessment and data use, and how to purposefully integrate technology in the classroom.

The administrators came from schools of varying demographics and needs; however, they all indicated new teachers needed more training in how to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of students. As one administrator said, "differentiation is the missing key. . . understanding that all your kids are going to need something different, different types of support, different types of instruction." Not only do new teachers need to understand these differences, they need to have the tools, strategies, and training in place to meet the varying needs of their students. Administrators described how classrooms include "students who are really struggling to really high, high learners," and therefore, the TEP needed to provide "additional training in meeting the needs of diverse learners."

Along with more training in how to effectively differentiate was more preparation in working with at-risk, struggling, and challenging students. According to administrators, at-risk and struggling students were those who were not performing on grade-level or meeting expectations and standards. For one administrator, 25% of her student population were on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Therefore, she identified the need for more training in how to work with students on IEPs. One of the topics connected to working with at-risk, struggling, and challenging students was effective classroom management. Not only did the teachers need to know how to differentiate for students instructionally, but they also needed to differentiate their classroom management to meet the needs of all students. As one administrator described, "classroom management is hard to teach in the abstract," however, she believed candidates from the TEP needed more hands-on training with different classroom management techniques and styles.

With the diverse population of students in classrooms across the state, each administrator identified the importance for more training in how to successfully differentiate and meet the variety of student needs. This goes hand-in-hand with the need for more training in how to effectively interpret data and know how and when to adjust instruction to meet the needs of students according to the data results. An administrator believed the TEP needed to provide more thorough training in "what is this data really telling me?" so they could effectively interpret the data and know how to adjust instruction accordingly. In addition, new teachers needed more training in how to "assess in the moment that kids are getting it" and "know they got it versus just putting answers on a paper."

Technology was another area where new teachers needed more support. While every school had different technological resources available to teachers and students, the ability to integrate technology effectively and meaningfully was a challenge. One administrator described the technology use in classrooms she observed as "shallow,": "Kids will go to a center and they will have a pretty cool

app and they'll do whatever with that app on their own but that's not using technology to enhance their learning." Administrators wanted new teachers to use technology to create, collaborate, and extend students' learning. New teachers needed more professional development in this area to understand how to integrate technology and get more ideas, techniques, and resources to implement in their classrooms. Instead of being given technology with no training, new teachers needed more guidance and training from experts who could provide that support.

All of these areas of growth are detailed in Danielson's Framework as necessary components for effective teaching. Specifically, the Planning and Preparation and Instruction domains articulate the importance of effectively planning and using assessments to drive instruction to meet the needs of all students. Therefore, in order to be more effective, new teachers need to build their skills in each of these areas. In addition to providing more training during the TEP in each of these areas, one administrator suggested building on partnerships that schools and TEPs have by working together to create support groups for new teachers that also provide professional development, addressing these areas for growth.

Discussion

This study yielded noteworthy results with regards to the research questions:

- What are administrators' perceptions regarding the preparation and performance of new teachers?
- How do school administrators determine the impact new teachers have on student learning and development?

The administrators believed the TEP prepared new teachers to be effective educators as they observed indicators of effective teaching in the graduates they hired from the TEP. These indicators included implementing reflective practices, planning for standards-based instruction, and positively impacting student growth. All of the indicators the administrators identified as evidence of effective teaching are also captured in Danielson's Framework for Teaching. It was through this evidence that the administrators credited the TEP with providing new teachers with the tools and foundation needed to be effective in the classroom. In fact, when comparing teachers from the TEP with teachers from other TEPs in their schools, the administrators believed the graduates from the TEP in this study were "better than the average teacher." Administrators noted that they specifically look for graduates from the TEP when hiring for new teaching positions at their schools, which speaks highly of their regard for the TEP.

To determine how the new teachers were positively impacting student learning and development, the administrators looked specifically for student growth. The administrators identified several measures they use to determine how

the teachers impact student growth: classroom, district, state, and national assessments, informal "walk-throughs," and formal observations. It was through all of this evidence that administrators determined how teachers impacted their students' learning, and above all, the administrators stressed the importance of *growth* over achieving a specific standardized test score. Through observations, the administrators could identify the effective teaching practices the teachers employed to meet their students' needs. By looking at the results of several different assessments, they could determine how the students were learning through the growth they achieved. To the administrators, all of this evidence carried equal weight: they needed to observe the teachers in action, as well as look at student test scores, to determine the impact the teachers were having on their students.

This is important to note as TEPs are required to collect evidence of a graduate's impact on student learning. For the administrators, there is a myriad of assessments and observations that provide that evidence; therefore, much data is needed. While test scores are part of the equation, they do not stand alone. Formal observations, which are required as part of a teacher's annual evaluation, as well as informal observations, also help paint the entire picture of a teacher's impact. The challenge for TEPs is gathering this evidence. While interviews and surveys can provide TEPs with valuable information regarding how administrators perceive new teachers' preparation and performance, the proof of impact is complex. Having access to the results of formal observations, such as the teacher's completed annual evaluation rubric, or the administrators' anecdotal evidence from informal observations may provide TEPs with more information to prove their graduates' impact.

While the administrators expressed their satisfaction with the preparation the graduates received, as well as their positive impact on student growth and development, there were still areas where they believed the new teachers needed better preparation in their TEP. For the TEP in this study, more training in effective differentiation for instruction and classroom management, use of data and assessments, and technology were the three main areas administrators identified. This information is vital for TEPs so they can engage in continuous program improvement, implementing the feedback from administrators to ensure their graduates are receiving effective instruction in areas that are lacking. The three areas identified by the administrators do not require TEPs to add extra courses to their programs; professors can intentionally weave in more instruction, hands-on opportunities, and examples of effective differentiation strategies, use of data, and technology into their current classes. In addition, ensuring students in the TEP have the opportunity to observe and practice using differentiation strategies, looking at and interpreting assessment data, and implementing

technology in their field experiences will also provide more solid preparation in these areas.

This study supports the need for strong partnerships between TEPs and local school district administrators (Kaka, Mitchell & Clayton, 2018; McFadden & Sheerer, 2006). The feedback from administrators regarding the areas for growth in new teachers has the potential to help TEPs improve their own training, by closely examining ways to integrate the areas cited above. The insights from administrators also help TEPs to know what they are doing well in preparing new teachers to be effective and impact student learning. This also creates opportunities for administrators to come into classrooms of the TEP to share information with student teachers. In addition, partnerships can provide opportunities for creating alumni networks or support groups, as suggested by one administrator in this study. If TEPs can continue to serve their graduates and the school districts in their area by providing support such as continued mentoring and training, all parties involved will benefit.

Some TEPs have put this advice into action by implementing an alumni and partner mentoring group, where the TEP hosts socials and events for alumni to connect with both school administrators as well as current education students in the program. The events often consist of free professional development (PD) presented by the TEP or district. Topics for the PD would include those identified by the different parties, potentially stemming from the areas for growth noted by administrators, with the added benefit of networking. Such groups are mutually beneficial as new teachers receive ongoing training in their areas of need while staying connected with mentors and advisors from their TEP, and administrators have the opportunity to identify areas of need for teachers and participate in the training and support. These PD and social events have the potential to result in more informal, anecdotal evidence that may drive TEP changes as well.

This continued, post-completion relationship may also enable TEPs to work with alumni and their school administrators to gather student learning data, as required for CAEP accreditation. As found in this study, administrators use a myriad of sources to determine student growth; therefore, having these strong partnerships between the TEP and administrators may allow for individual conversations about teacher growth and impact on student learning. Administrators have access to non-testing impact data on student learning and development, such as formal and informal observations.. This can be a treasure trove of data for TEPs to use as evidence that their graduates are positively impacting student learning and development. In addition, these partnerships may also ease the way for TEPs when they approach administrators about using alumni as subjects for case studies or action research when student learning data is unavailable from other sources as required by CAEP Standard 4 (CAEP, 2013).

For this study, Danielson's Framework for Teaching proved to be an effective theoretical framework. There is not a universally accepted definition of an "effective teacher," however, the indicators included in Danielson's Framework aligned with all of the evidence the administrators in this study cited as effective strategies or practices. In addition, the areas for growth the administrators noted were also indicators of effective teaching in Danielson's Framework, demonstrating that the lack of expertise in these areas lead to less effectiveness in the classroom. Therefore, more targeted training and support in the identified areas will potentially improve a new teacher's effectiveness as well.

Conclusion

Administrators provide an invaluable lens into what is occurring in diverse classrooms across the country. Their observation and evaluations of new teachers, as well as their access to student test scores provide a picture of student learning and growth that is necessary for understanding how teachers are impacting student learning. Therefore, their feedback on how well-prepared new teachers are to face the demands of today's classrooms and positively impact student learning is vital for understanding the needs and ways in which to improve teacher preparation. With the additional CAEP employer satisfaction measurement requirement, (CAEP, 2013), this study can serve as the basis for how programs may begin the process of gathering employer satisfaction data, through both interviews and surveys. It also supports the need for building strong partnerships between TEPs and school administrators, which has the potential for more avenues in gathering data on student growth and development.

Additionally, with the lack of literature on the perceptions of administrators, this study is timely and assists in filling the void. While there is a wealth of information and literature circulating on educator effectiveness, the voices of administrators need to be heard. The school administrators' perceptions of the training that the new teachers received, as well as the teachers' performance and impact on student learning during their first years of teaching is vital to determine how new teachers are performing in the classroom. These perceptions should drive change in teacher preparation, since administrators are the ones hiring and mentoring new teachers once they are in the classroom. TEPs must also be aware of whether or not they are creating effective educators that positively impact their students' learning and development in order to ensure that they are providing the best possible preparation for today's classrooms.

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