

PERCEPTIONS OF EXEMPLARY TEACHERS IN URBAN SCHOOLS

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PERCEPTIONS OF EXEMPLARY TEACHERS IN URBAN SCHOOLS

ABSTRACT

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Regardless of increased standards created by policymakers, urban schools which serve higher populations of diverse and / or at risk students have continued to achieve at lower levels than national norms. The purpose of this study was to solicit the wisdom of exemplary teachers, recognized for their success in urban settings, to assess their perceptions of what teachers should know and do in order to positively impact student achievement within urban schools. The fundamental questions which guided this study were: 1.) What do exemplary teachers perceive teachers should know and be able to do in order to provide instruction in urban elementary classrooms? And, 2.) What curricula and practices do exemplary teachers perceive teacher preparation programs should employ in order to prepare teachers for service in urban elementary classrooms?

Ten exemplary teachers, identified as recipients of prestigious teaching awards, were interviewed for the study. According to the findings, factors that are widely known to be important for good teaching are absolutely critical for effective urban teaching.

Successful urban teachers are competent in the content they teach and utilize current educational literature, especially research relating to diversity in culture and learning theory, to improve their practice. Because urban children

are more diverse in their ethnicity, race, wealth, life experiences, and other learning needs, urban teachers must be able to assess their students and differentiate instruction accordingly. Successful urban teachers possess extraordinary managerial skills because they do not solely rely on direct instruction; they have articulate procedures and routines in place so students can be working on different engaging tasks at the same time.

Successful urban teachers have the ability to seek support systems for themselves and their students. They collaborate with colleagues and ascertain community resources to form a network of support, consistency, and safety for their students.

Preparation for the complex work of serving in urban schools must begin the first year of college with candidates receiving numerous dissimilar field experiences supervised by master teachers. They must be able to reflect on their own personal values and, in turn, how to work with people who hold very different values.

Department of Leadership, Foundations, and Policy

Curry School of Education

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Charlottesville, Virginia

APPROVAL OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation, *Perceptions of Exemplary Teachers in Urban Schools*, has been approved by the Graduate Faculty of the Curry School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.



Cheryl B. Henig, Ph.D. Chair



Alfred R. Butler IV, Ed.D.



Robert W. Covert, Ph.D.

April 5, 2004 Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband, Gregory Scott Goodwin, my tech support specialist, editor, bibliographer, research assistant, courier, printer, and cheerleader, but most important, my life partner and best friend.

My degree is now complete but my love and gratitude never ending!

It also dedicated in loving memory to my grandfather, Lawrence Braswell. Yes, Granddaddy, I finally finished it and “got my lessons done” too. I’m putting away my bookbag for now, at least for a little while anyway.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB); this legislation is significant in that all U.S. K-12 schools supported by public funds will be measured every year to determine “whether every child is learning” (NCLB, 2003). The educational community has responded with heightened anxiety as consequences for those schools that do not meet this accountability standard increase. The process begins with additional aid for new curriculum and professional development opportunities but may result in punitive actions such as replacement of some or all of the faculty and staff and management of the local school by the state and/or outside management company contracted to oversee the school.

The NCLB law, a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965, changed the federal government’s role in K-12 education by requiring America’s schools to describe their success in terms of what each student accomplishes; it boldly ensures that “... every boy and every girl will learn and excel-regardless of race, family-background, or income.” The act contains the President’s four basic education reform principles: stronger accountability for results, increased flexibility and local control, expanded options

for parents, and an emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work (NCLB, 2003).

Within the fourth reform area, proven teaching methods, NCLB ensures that every child shall be taught by a “highly qualified” teacher. Herein lies the current controversy: What does highly qualified mean? Although NCLB specifies minimal teacher qualifications, many scholars and policy makers have differing opinions about the notion of highly qualified. According to Linda Darling-Hammond, director of the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF), the term well qualified denotes those who are “Fully prepared and certified teachers- those who have both a background in the subject matter they will teach and in the study of how to teach it...” (Darling-Hammond, 1999) Yet, Martin Haberman, Distinguished Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, and an authority on teacher education and urban schools, deems that...

What a “highly qualified teacher” means is a function of who says so. This should not be the case. “Highly qualified” should mean that the children of these teachers learn more. “Highly qualified” should stand for accomplishment not for promises that will never be kept. “Highly qualified” should not be a label stuck on the foreheads of 22 year old girls and boys because they have completed university based teacher education programs but will not seek employment in poverty schools or will quit or fail if they do. (Haberman, 2003)

Regardless of scholarly opinion, political bias, and other innuendo, government guidelines require that schools currently receiving Title I funds must provide highly qualified teachers as satisfied by NCLB standards. In fact, by the

year 2006, all schools must have a highly qualified teacher in each classroom. The basic requirements to be “highly qualified” are that the teacher be fully certified or licensed by the state, with no record of a waiver of the certification or license. In addition, new elementary teachers must demonstrate subject knowledge in reading, writing, math, “and other areas of the basic elementary school curriculum” on a rigorous state test. These standards were enacted the 2002/2003 school year for all newly hired teachers but all teachers teaching core academic subjects in all public schools must be highly qualified by 2005-2006. (NCLB, 2003) (McConnell, 2003)

As national legislation continues to mandate criterion for all would-be educators through NCLB, state policy makers must, in turn, comply by also imposing rigorous standards. In Virginia, “highly qualified” denotes a teacher as one who “... holds full state licensure as a teacher, including licensure through alternate routes; and teaches only in the area or areas of endorsement.” (Virginia Department of Education, 2003) One route to licensure entails completion of a state-approved college or university teacher preparation program; these programs are reviewed by the state every 5 years and seek to produce teacher candidates competent in both content and pedagogy. In addition, teacher candidates must pass the Praxis I and Praxis II Test which demonstrate proficiency in reading, math, and writing (Virginia Department of Education, 2003).

An individual entering the profession through an alternate route program may meet the definition of a highly qualified teacher if the participant in the program:

- 1.) is permitted by the state to assume functions as a regular classroom teacher;
- 2.) has a bachelor's degree;
- 3.) has demonstrated subject matter competence by passing the state professional teacher assessments (Praxis I and II); and
- 4.) is making satisfactory progress toward full licensure, as prescribed by the Board of Education.

(Virginia Department of Education, 2003)

According to Arthur E. Wise, president of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the increased standards will cause fewer candidates to meet the criteria and the "... demands for accountability are exacerbating the problem of teacher supply" (1999). Teacher shortages indeed increase the challenge of recruiting, hiring, and retaining well-qualified teachers and shortages have been, and continue to be, reported in many states, including Virginia (Elliott, 2000; Levine & Christenson, 1998).

Urban schools are not exempt from the teacher shortage; in fact, urban schools report that they are more affected by the shortage than suburban and rural schools (Crosby, 1999). According to the United States Department of Education, shortages of qualified teachers will affect communities unevenly. Some school districts will have hundreds of applicants for every job; while others, specifically in under-funded urban schools, may have none (Bradley, 1999). Urban and poor communities will have the greatest need for teachers, with more than 700,000 additional teachers needed in the next decade (Yasin, 1999).

Indeed, there are a disproportionate amount of unqualified teachers serving students in urban schools. According to The Urban Teacher Challenge Report released in January of 2000, about two-thirds (60%) of large urban districts allow non-certified teachers to teach under an emergency license and the same percentage (60%) allow for hiring of long-term substitutes. In all, 82.5% of districts allow non-credentialed teachers in the classroom .

Providing inner-city students with a competent, highly qualified teacher is a fundamental issue of equity. According to findings from the Department of Education (1998), "Teachers are the most basic educational resource that communities provide to students. All students should be afforded equal access to well-prepared, qualified teachers. Anything less denies students access to a quality education." Darling-Hammond (1988) states that "... the single greatest source of educational inequality is in the disproportionate exposure of poor and minority students – those who fill inner-city schools – to less trained and experienced teachers." Inner-city students deserve certified, experienced teachers because for "... these million children, a decent education is not merely another public service but literally a matter of life and death... they are totally dependent on schools to make it in life" (Haberman, 1994). In essence, if education is to continue to be viewed as the solution to inequality, students from poor families and neighborhoods must have skilled teachers in their classrooms.

Despite the recent initiatives for increased standards and training for teachers, many American schools, particularly those based in urban settings, continue to report low achievement levels among their students. According to

the Council of the Great City Schools (2001), approximately 43% of 4th grade students within their urban schools scored below the basic level of proficiency in reading comprehension as compared to 30% of the 4th graders nationally and "... students in districts with the highest concentrations of poverty had significantly lower reading and math scores than students in less poor districts." Crosby (1999) partially attributes this achievement gap to teacher preparation stating that "... teacher training institutions have not placed sufficient emphasis on preparing new teachers to work in schools that serve minority students." Haberman (1994) affirms this point by adding that "... traditional programs do not produce teachers who are effective in urban schools and communities. Indeed, they do not produce teachers who will even apply to work in urban schools."

There are numerous governmental regulations in both NCLB and other state codes identifying who is eligible to teach in schools, how money should be spent in schools, what curriculum is to be taught in schools, and more of the like. However, there is little evidence to suggest that teachers, those who directly instruct and daily interact with students, have had multiple opportunities to voice their notions about school improvement and what actions they perceive would positively affect student achievement. According to Odden (1995), "Teachers generally have little or no role in important decisions... too often, teachers are viewed as 'workers' who implement policy made by others not as professionals who have discretion over their actions in the workplace."

Statement of the Problem

Regardless of increased standards created by policymakers, students in urban schools continue to achieve at lower levels than national norms. It is, therefore, logical to solicit the wisdom of exemplary teachers, those who have exhibited a documented amount of success working within their diverse classrooms, in order to assess their perceptions of what teachers should know and do in order to positively impact student achievement within urban schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate exemplary teachers' perceptions of the necessary attributes and skills required for their service in urban schools. The study examines what exemplary teachers perceive current teachers should know and be able to do in order to positively impact instruction and student achievement in diverse elementary classrooms. Specifically, the study focuses on critical knowledge in pedagogy, curricula, and content as well as essential skills in creating positive learning environments, student rapport, and parental communication. Furthermore, the study examines what exemplary teachers perceive teacher preparation programs should provide in both coursework and field experiences that will prepare teacher candidates to work with diverse students within urban schools.

Rationale

The significance of teacher excellence can be resounded in numerous educational studies (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future,

1996). Ferguson's (1991) analysis of Texas school districts found that teachers' expertise, degrees, teaching knowledge, and overall experience accounted for more of the interdistrict variation in students' reading and mathematics achievement in Grades 1-11 than did the student's socioeconomic status. The effects were so strong, and variations in teacher expertise so great, that after controlling for socioeconomic status, the large disparities in achievement between Black and White students were almost entirely accounted for by differences in the qualifications of their teachers. Darling-Hammond, director of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), affirms the importance of teacher quality by noting that,

After controlling for student characteristics like poverty and language status, the strongest predictor of state-level student achievement in reading and math [on the National Assessment of Educational Progress] was each state's proportion of well-qualified teachers. A strong negative predictor of student achievement was the proportion of teachers on emergency certificates. (Lewis, 1998)

Teacher preparation is a key factor in providing highly qualified individuals for the field of teaching. In Wise's research of teacher preparation, he (1999) asserts that "over 100 studies show that qualified teachers outperform those with little or no preparation in helping students learn." Unfortunately, urban schools have a disproportionate amount of unqualified teachers and there does not appear to be a speedy resolution to the problem in the near future. Presently, 82% of major urban districts hire noncertified teachers, and 60% let teachers work under emergency permits and/or use long-term substitutes ("Urban teachers needed," 2000). In addition, many individuals who actually earn their

teaching credentials begin their work experience in urban schools but soon “migrate” to other districts after the first year or two seeking higher salaries and better working conditions (Crosby, 1999). Lastly, current schools of education continue to produce many graduates with license in elementary education, English, and the social sciences but do not produce sufficient numbers of graduates that will adequately fulfill critical shortage areas in urban divisions. In a study of the nation's major urban school districts, almost 100% have an urgent need for teachers in at least one high need subject area, such as special education (97.5%), science (97.5%), and math (95%). An acute shortage also exists for bilingual and ESL teachers and educational technology specialists (Recruiting New Teachers, 2001). Many universities with traditional teacher preparation programs are not addressing this issue taking the position that

they will do whatever they can to improve the quality of the teachers they prepare, but that solving the shortage of teachers – in general, or for urban schools in particular- is not their responsibility. (Haberman, 1987)

According to NCLB (2003), “Every state should have a well-prepared teacher in every classroom by 2005”; of course, this does not exclude urban classrooms. Highly qualified teachers, as current definitions delineate, are those who hold a degree from an accredited institution. In Virginia, teacher candidates that fulfill degree requirements to graduate from accredited universities and colleges as well as demonstrate competencies on state licensure examinations are licensed to teach in any public school system in the state, including those systems that serve diverse populations. In short, teachers may be considered

“highly qualified” according to NCLB and local standards, but may or may not be prepared to meet the unique needs of students in an urban setting.

A study that addresses the issues of preparing highly qualified teachers to serve in diverse, urban classrooms is certainly timely. In order to ascertain the essential knowledge and skills that teachers must possess to work with diverse students, it is logical to solicit the advice of those educators who have a documented success in working effectively with these students. The teachers consulted for this study are comprised of recipients of formal accolades in the field of education including the Disney American Teacher Award, the McGlothlin Award, the Milken National Educator Award, and a regional or state teacher of the year in the National Teacher of the Year program sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the state Department of Education. The educators who achieve these awards have established their effectiveness through rigorous processes including, but not limited to, providing detailed biographic sketches of their life and work experience, writing essays of personal teaching philosophy and emergent issues facing education; providing letters of commendation; and creating videotapes of classroom observations. The judges who critique the merits for these awards are also distinguished in the field of education; they are current practitioners, professors, administrators, and others who represent such professional organizations as the American Federation of Teachers, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Association of Teacher Educators, National Association of Elementary School Principals,

National Education Association, and the National Congress of Parents and Teachers.

This study is beneficial to a number of educational stakeholders in Virginia. The data should be of particular interest to state legislatures and policy makers seeking to implement guidelines and procedures that improve instruction, school climate, and teacher retention rates among urban school districts. Schools and colleges of education should apply the conclusions to the formation of coursework and field experiences that result in meaningful, beneficial programs that adequately prepare teacher candidates to work with diverse students within urban environments. Local school boards and administrators should find this study useful in influencing ideas concerning curriculum, school climate, instructional strategies, and induction programs. Finally, this research has implications for current urban elementary teachers as they seek to improve knowledge and skills necessary for exemplary teaching with diverse students.

Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

- 1.) What do exemplary teachers perceive teachers should know and be able to do in order to provide instruction in urban elementary classrooms?
- 2.) What curricula and practices do exemplary teachers perceive teacher preparation programs should employ in order to prepare teachers for service in urban elementary classrooms?

Limitations

The limitations of this study include the following:

The study is based solely on the perceptions of a single group of individuals, exemplary teachers serving in Virginia's urban schools (with the exception of the respondent from Georgia who participated in the pilot study). In addition, the responses of those participating in the study may or may not be representative of other exemplary teachers or teachers as a whole.

The study is directed to inquiry of exemplary teachers serving only in Virginia's public urban schools (with the exception of the respondent from Georgia who participated in the pilot study). Also, the term "urban" is ambiguous in nature and has multiple connotations directly related to geographical, cultural, and environmental differences.

Methodology

This study is exploratory and of a qualitative nature; it includes a purposeful sample of participants composed of exemplary elementary teachers who serve in a public school system in Virginia that possesses a population deemed as being at least 90% urban as defined by the United States Census Bureau. Participants, those deemed as exemplary teachers, were chosen on the basis of their formal recognition as denoted by the following: the Disney American Teacher Award, the McGlothlin Award, the Milken National Educator Award, or a regional or state teacher of the year in the National Teacher of the Year program sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the

State Department of Education. Ten participants, including the pilot respondent, were interviewed to inquire their notions on effective urban teaching and adequate teacher preparation programs.

Definition of Terms

Exemplary Teacher: An educator chosen on the basis of his/her formal recognition as denoted by the following: the Disney American Teacher Award, the McGlothlin Award, the Milken National Educator Award, or a regional or state teacher of the year in the National Teacher of the Year program sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the State Department of Education.

Urban School: A Virginia school located in an area specified as being at least 90 percent or more urban as defined by the United States Census Bureau. (See Appendix A)

Diversity: means the wide range of ways in which human groups and populations have observable and demonstrable physical and behavioral differences. (Virginia Department of Education, 2003)

Highly Qualified: any public elementary, middle, or secondary school teacher in the core academic subjects who holds full state licensure as a teacher, including licensure through alternate routes; and teaches only in the area or areas of endorsement. (Virginia Department of Education, 2003)

Organization of the Study

The study consists of six chapters. Chapter one, the previous chapter, presents the introductory background information, the statement of the problem, the purpose and rationale of the study, the research questions, and finally, the limitations and the defining terminology of the study.

Chapter two contains a review of the literature; it is divided into three sections. The chapter addresses the history, culture and reforms of urban schools; provides a synopsis of the state of teaching within urban schools; and closes with an exploration of preparation techniques that schools of education are currently using to train teacher candidates planning to serve in urban schools.

Chapter three describes the methodology of the study. It explains the purpose of the research and the criteria and selection process for the participants in the study. It continues with the research design including the methods for data collection and trustworthiness. It ends with a description of the “Researcher as Instrument.”

Chapter four provides the “stories” of each participant in the study. It seeks to present each respondent’s unique “voice” concerning their perceptions and experiences of teaching in urban schools. It is rich with description and attempts to provide insight by using numerous vignettes and salient quotations gleaned from the raw interview transcripts.

Chapter five presents the demographic information about the participants and the assertions gleaned from the interview protocol. The chapter provides

detailed tables that show the frequency and patterns of participant responses and also renders summaries about the data and assertions.

Chapter six is the final chapter of the study. It further discusses the assertions made in chapter five and concludes with implications for further research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter examines literature related to teaching within urban classrooms. The chapter is divided into three major sections: 1.) a review of findings about urban schools including history, culture, and reforms 2.) a synopsis of the teaching force within urban schools focusing on teacher profiles and retention and recruitment efforts, and a summary of research on effective teaching for urban students, and 3.) an exploration of the current experiences that schools of education provide teacher candidates to prepare them for work in urban schools.

Urban Schools

Historical Background

Urban schools have their origin in the desires of early religious and political leaders attempting to maintain the prevailing social order. Before the Protestant revolution, schooling was primarily confined to clergy and nobility but certain German duchies and Frederick the Great in Central Europe made urban schooling popular by its success in "... binding youth to nationalistic and religious aims of monarchical governments" (Rothstein, 1993). In these preindustrial instances, the state declared that schooling should occur as much as possible but less frequently during planting and harvesting seasons; the state also dictated it should be funded by the townspeople (Rothstein, 1993).

Lancastrian schools, with their origin in England and establishment in the US in 1806, focused on serving pauper boys through militant discipline. The students accomplished their schooling by acts of deference and compliance in enormous classrooms of 365 to 1,000 pupils per teacher. The organization was very hierarchical in nature with the teacher instructing the older boys who, in turn, were responsible for overseeing the younger boys. These charity schools began to lose their popularity after 1830 and Horace Mann's influence through the development of common schools did help to reform and democratize America's education system (Katz, 1975).

Although Mann's influence was great, the actual approval of common schools by most Americans is another question. What is known is that by the 1840's and 1850's, most states had some form of compulsory education laws. The requirement for graded schools, supervision, schedules, and attendance records was gradually imposed in America's schools and a dull uniformity was spawned coaxing Charles Francis Adams to deem American educators as "drill sergeants," saying the schools resembled cotton mills and prisons more than institutions of learning (Stanley, 1973).

Urban schools have been affected by a culture that has influenced them since the Industrial Age in the 1800's-- conformity. Although their primary objective has been to prepare students for the world of work, their definitive achievement has been to unify behavior and work patterns ultimately viewing students as objects of a larger social organization who had to be controlled and

manipulated for their own good and for the common safety of the school (Rothstein, 1993).

This culture, burdened with a hierarchal organization characterized by routine and militant regiment, is still prevalent in today's urban schools. Jonathan Kozol's extensive research of various urban school districts in the US found incredible inequalities between affluent suburban and urban schools, one of these distinctions being governance. According to Kozol, what is now encompassed by the one word "school" are two different kinds of institutions that, in function, finance and intention, serve entirely different roles. He explains that

"Both are needed for our nation's governance. But children in one set of schools are educated to be governors; children in the other set of schools are trained for being governed. The former are given the imaginative range to mobilize ideas for economic growth; the latter are provided with the discipline to do the narrow tasks the first group will prescribe."

(Kozol, 1991) p. 176

Haberman affirms this noting that the 120 largest school systems "...have become self-serving bureaucracies organized for the convenience and the maintenance of everyone who works in them – except classroom teachers and students" (Haberman, 1995b). The urban schools' dependence on regulation, discipline, and regiment is so ingrained that within many urban schools, a "highly qualified" teacher simply means one who "... can maintain order without sending too many students to the office" (Haberman, 2003). This dominant culture of order, discipline, and bureaucracy has been instilled within our urban schools from past to present; however, according to Berton H. Kaplan (1968), urban schools who practice *development* bureaucracy, rather than *efficiency-oriented*

bureaucracy can have some positive impact on school reform by having the goal of “management of change.” (see Urban Reforms section)

Context and Culture of Urban Schools

Complexity and Challenges in Urban Schools

Emeral Crosby, a scholar and principal of a Detroit school, views the American urban public schools as a type of dichotomy; he quotes the opening of *A Tale of Two Cities* citing, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness... we had everything before us, we had nothing before us...” and uses this simile to explain the complexity of urban schools and the communities they serve. People have more money than ever before, yet there is more extreme poverty in isolated rural areas and in the slums of the cities. Affluence exists side by side with deprivation. More people are graduating from high school, yet more are being classified as dropouts. Good education coexists with miseducation and while there is more security, there is more uncertainty (Crosby, 1999).

Complex organizations face significant challenges and urban schools are no exemption from this tenet. Such difficulties may include over-crowded classrooms, teacher quality and shortages, low student achievement, access to preschool, and aging facilities (Lewis, Ceperich, & Jepson, 2002). Urban schools also experience limited funds for teacher salaries and educational materials (Ascher, 1991). Other problems include scarce parent involvement,

sporadic attendance, and multiple levels of student skills (North Central Regional Educational Lab, 2003).

Teachers in urban classrooms encounter a unique set of challenges that are distinctive to the urban environment. As mentioned before, these teachers work under greater bureaucratic constraints than do suburban or rural teachers; they tend to have a higher workload and teach greater numbers of students per day; furthermore, they do so while lacking basic materials such as books, desks, blackboards, chalk, and paper (Council of the Great City Schools, 1987). Added to these difficulties, their students often bring into the classroom the social problems that plague their inner-city communities (Ascher, 1991). Of these multiple problems, a study by Harvard University's graduate school of education indicated that salaries and working conditions, not student characteristics, predicted a higher turnover rate for new teachers. Novice teachers who decided to leave their inner city positions to serve in wealthier schools said they were not seeking more affluent students; they were seeking schools where they could be successful. The respondents of the study felt the factors promoting their success included teaching assignments, adequate workloads, student behavior, the support of administration and colleagues, the availability of effective curricula and other resources, and the school's relationship with parents (Johnson & Birkeland, 2002).

Communities and Families of Children of Urban Schools

Although many texts cite various salient features of the urban context such as high densities of diversity, elevated degrees of mobility, conflicting

lifestyles in close proximity, and other unique aspects of the urban community, a scan of the literature heavily reflects a reoccurring theme, the concentration of the heavily poor within the cities. According to William Julius Wilson, Harvard professor and scholar on urban inequality,

If I had to use one term to capture the differences in the experiences of low-income families who live in inner-city areas from the experiences of those who live in other areas in the central city today, that term would be *concentration effects*. The social transformation of the inner city has resulted in a disproportionate concentration of the most disadvantaged segments of the urban black population creating a social milieu significantly different from the environment that existed in these communities several decades ago.

(Wilson, 1987) p. 58

High rates of joblessness and fiscal deterioration have decreased the stable working and middle classes, who usually serve as buffers in the midst of economic downturns. A reduction in the number of lower-skilled and blue-collar jobs, an exodus of white middle-class residents from the city, and a disappearance of the neighborhood business establishments serving those departing residents lead to a further weakening of the city economy and an exacerbation of the problems of those who are already economically deprived there (Forsyth & Tallerico, 1993). One impact that these communities have on urban students is that in "... such neighborhoods, the chances are overwhelming that children seldom interact on a sustained basis with people who are employed or with families that have a steady breadwinner" (Wilson, 1987). The net effect is that joblessness develops as a way of life and "... in such communities, teachers

become frustrated and do not teach, and children do not learn. It becomes a vicious cycle running through the family, community, and school” (Wilson, 1987).

Trends in key indicators about urban family structures reveal they are quite troubled (Forsyth & Tallerico, 1993). In the inner city, the birth rate among unmarried women has soared and there has become a disappearance of the traditional married-couple family. William Julius Wilson (1996) claims that one reason for the decline of marriage and the increase of single parent families in urban areas is the heightened amount of joblessness and worsening economic conditions. Many urban parents are not trustful of the opposite sex and are thus hesitant to make commitments they feel cannot be kept (Wilson, 1996). In Wilson’s (1996) book, *When Work Disappears, The World of the New Urban Poor*, he shares an observer’s statement that “What actually amounts to abandoning children, usually by the father, is becoming increasingly acceptable without penalty to anyone except the neglected child.”

Heightened amounts of stress can affect the normal functioning of the urban family and place a child “at risk” if there are not forces to buffer these stresses (Forsyth & Tallerico, 1993). According to Schorr and Schorr,

Both common sense and research tell us that as family stress, regardless of its source, increases the capacity for nurturing decreases, and the likelihood of abuse and neglect increases. Whether the stress stems from insufficient income, a difficult child, an impaired adult, family violence and discord, inadequate housing, chronic hunger and poor health, or surroundings of brutality, hopelessness, and despair – these are circumstances in which affection withers into hostility, discipline turns into abuse, stability dissolves into chaos, and love becomes neglect.

(Schorr & Schorr, 1988) p. 151

Lastly, problems of inner-city families are intensified when there is a disconnect between school and home. According to *cultural discontinuity theory*, “low-income disadvantaged children arrive at school with a different background in linguistic, cognitive, motivational, and social development than that of middle-class children” (Boyd, 1990). Cazden and Mehan (1989) deem that schools should not deny the significance of the language and culture of the home and recommended that both student and school adapt to each other in a mutual accommodation so that each changes behavior in order to accomplish a common goal. In addition, urban schools must recognize these language and cultural differences may result in barriers for parents of minority students excluding them from school involvement; although they want their children to succeed and would like to become more involved in helping them to succeed, these obstacles may be extremely difficult to overcome (Cummins, 1986; Wong Fillmore, 1983).

Students in Urban Schools

According to the U.S. Department of Education (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999b), the nation’s public schools serve 36% of minority students. In America’s large urban districts, this number increases to about 69% (Recruiting New Teachers Inc., 2000). The unique diversity component of students who attend urban schools accounts for a broad spectrum of differing knowledge and pre-literacy experiences for children before they even begin the actual process of schooling. Urban students have numerous amounts of variables that affect their learning including assignments to schools with limited funds that may result in inadequate physical facilities, curriculum resources, and

technology; inequitable access to more qualified and experienced teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1998b); and the provision of teachers who will acknowledge that individual learning styles are affected by culture and distinct personalities (Burke & Dunn, 2002; Stevenson & Dunn, 2001) and use this information to provide interesting, challenging and realistic lessons for students.

According to the Council for the Great City Schools, achievement of urban students "... is both encouraging and discouraging" and "some data look better than others" (Council of the Great City Schools, 2003). In CGCS's third annual report entitled "Beating the Odds III," evidence showed that urban schools are making significant gains in math and reading but overall achievement remains below national averages. It also revealed that although the rift is beginning to decrease in many urban schools, there is still a significant achievement gap that is distinguishable by race and socioeconomic factors (Council of the Great City Schools, 2003). In Virginia, this same trend follows; the following tables show the apparent differences in cultural achievement gaps for elementary students in English and Mathematics.

Table 1

Percent of Students Passing SOL Tests Spring 1998-2002, by Ethnicity,
Third Grade Scores for English and Mathematics

**Percent of Students Passing SOL Tests Spring 1998 - 2002, by
Ethnicity**

| Grade 3 | English | | | | | Mathematics | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|------|------|------|------|-------------|------|------|------|------|
| | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| State Summary | 55 | 61 | 61 | 65 | 72 | 63 | 68 | 71 | 77 | 80 |
| Am Indian/Alaskan Native | 63 | 70 | 57 | 70 | 78 | 70 | 77 | 74 | 79 | 82 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 72 | 80 | 74 | 74 | 82 | 85 | 87 | 84 | 89 | 90 |
| African American | 33 | 42 | 42 | 46 | 55 | 40 | 45 | 49 | 59 | 65 |
| Hispanic | 50 | 59 | 49 | 53 | 59 | 61 | 67 | 61 | 70 | 73 |
| Caucasian | 64 | 69 | 69 | 73 | 79 | 73 | 77 | 81 | 85 | 87 |
| Ethnicity Unknown | 45 | 64 | 61 | 67 | 77 | 56 | 69 | 73 | 77 | 83 |

Table 2

Percent of Students Passing SOL Tests Spring 1998-2002, by Ethnicity,
Fifth Grade Scores for English in Reading and Writing

**Percent of Students Passing SOL Tests Spring 1998 - 2002, by
Ethnicity**

| Grade 5 | English: Reading | | | | | English: Writing | | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|------|------|------|------|------------------|------|------|------|------|
| | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| State Summary | 68 | 69 | 68 | 73 | 78 | 65 | 81 | 81 | 84 | 84 |
| Am Indian/Alaskan Native | 68 | 71 | 64 | 73 | 75 | 63 | 76 | 80 | 87 | 79 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 81 | 83 | 76 | 82 | 87 | 82 | 94 | 90 | 92 | 91 |
| African American | 47 | 48 | 47 | 55 | 62 | 45 | 67 | 67 | 74 | 72 |
| Hispanic | 64 | 64 | 57 | 63 | 68 | 62 | 80 | 73 | 78 | 76 |
| Caucasian | 76 | 78 | 77 | 80 | 85 | 72 | 86 | 86 | 89 | 89 |
| Ethnicity Unknown | 58 | 70 | 71 | 75 | 79 | 50 | 77 | 74 | 83 | 84 |

Table 3

Percent of Students Passing SOL Tests Spring 1998-2002, by Ethnicity,
Fifth Grade Scores for Mathematics

| Grade 5 | Mathematics | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|------|------|------|------|
| | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| State Summary | 47 | 51 | 63 | 67 | 71 |
| Am Indian/Alaskan Native | 49 | 55 | 56 | 66 | 69 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 69 | 74 | 81 | 84 | 87 |
| African American | 24 | 27 | 40 | 46 | 53 |
| Hispanic | 41 | 47 | 54 | 58 | 61 |
| Caucasian | 54 | 59 | 72 | 75 | 79 |
| Ethnicity Unknown | 38 | 47 | 64 | 68 | 72 |

As clearly evident from these scores, reform measures must be continually put into place to counteract lower achievement in urban schools and among the culturally diverse. (See Reform Measures)

Perceptions of Urban Schools by Educators

Lastly, in looking at the culture and complexities of the urban school, it is pertinent to seek the perceptions of educators on these matters. In the Fifth Biennial Survey of America's Great City Schools, school board members, superintendents, and other leadership staff (notice that teachers are not participants in this survey), are asked to participate in a survey inquiring their opinions about a myriad of issues on urban education. Urban school leaders encounter a number of perplexing issues including declining tax bases, special needs of ESL students, transitory student populations, and an increasing teacher shortage. The following two tables show their responses. Table 4 shows the top

ten needs of urban schools as they have changed over the past few years.

Table 5 ranks all the needs listed by urban educators in the 2001-2002 survey.

Table 4

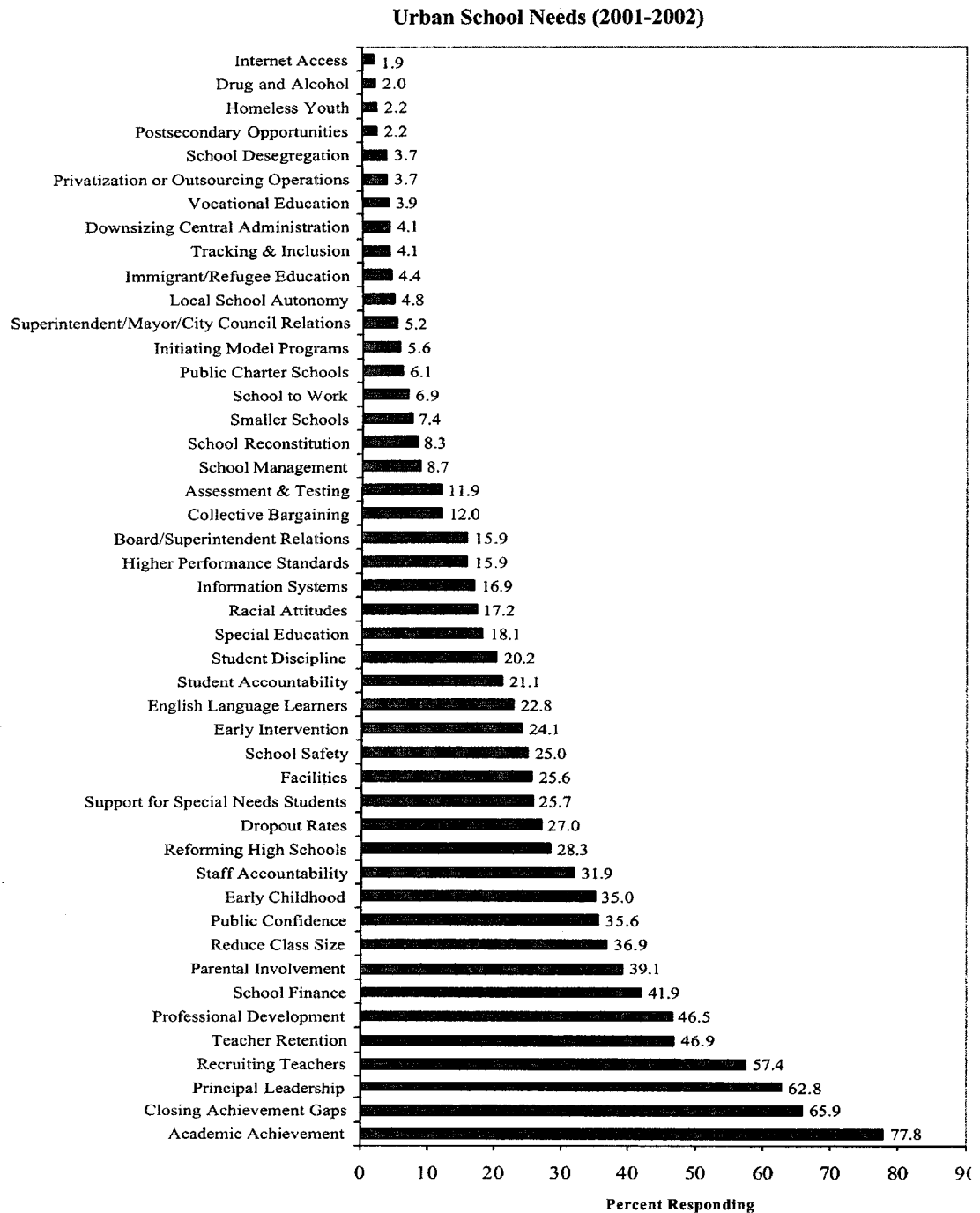
Top Ten Needs of Urban Schools

| Need | 01-02 | 99-00 | 97-98 | 95-96 | 93-94 |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Academic Achievement | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 8 |
| Closing Achievement Gaps | 2 | 5 | 9 | 7 | * |
| Principal Leadership | 3 | * | * | * | * |
| Recruiting Teachers | 4 | 2 | 9 | 14 | * |
| Teacher Retention | 5 | * | * | * | * |
| Professional Development | 6 | 3 | 3 | 6 | * |
| School Finance | 7 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 7 |
| Parental Involvement | 8 | 6.5 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Reduce Class Size | 9 | 6.5 | 6 | * | * |
| Public Confidence | 10 | 4 | 2 | 4 | * |

* Not rated in given year or presented in a different manner.

(Council of the Great City Schools, 2002) p, 5

Table 5

Urban School Needs (2001-2002)

It is quite apparent that academic achievement is shown to be the most critical concern for educators in urban schools (Council of the Great City Schools, 2002).

School Reform

In 1983, the publication of A Nation at Risk proved to be a catalyst for many reforms in public education. However, according to Hill, Guin, and Celio ,

A Nation at Risk didn't have much to say to these school districts [urban schools] and their students. Its prescriptions made sense for students whose basic preparation for school was sound and for school systems that had the capacity to respond to pressure by offering more rigorous courses. But raised expectations alone are not a remedy for the problems of children who enter school unprepared to do the work that is normally expected. Similarly, requiring that schools teach more challenging materials is not sufficient for schools that cannot provide competent instruction. Nor is the prescription to raise standards for new teachers necessarily helpful to schools and districts that are the least attractive employers.

(Hill, Guin, & Celio, 2003) p. 52

In the past few decades of increased educational expectations and standards, reform measures for urban schools that specifically address and meet their unique needs have been a very sought after prize. Various reforms have included decentralization, privatization, vouchers to encourage competition (Hill, 1994), increased in the use of technology (Geiger, 1995), and collaborations of community linked programs and partnerships (Burnett, 1994). Yet, despite these efforts, urban schools continue to achieve at lower rates than the national average.

Kaplan (1968) deems that change must take place (developmental bureaucracy) for reform and Kretovic and Nussel's work (1994), *Transforming Urban Education*, poses that efforts should 1.) aim to rebuild urban schools as less complex institutions or train clients and staff with better ways to handle them, 2.) reduce social and psychological distance between clients and the

institution by increasing abilities of students and parents to make decisions, and 3.) provide additional feedback in every aspect of the operation of the school.

The present reform demands of urban schools must now involve their compliance with standards of the NCLB act, the chief mandate among them being the necessity for achievement of every child (NCLB, 2003). Providing the resources for the achievement for every student is a difficult goal to ensure in large urban districts. The Council of the Great City Schools, an organization that serves these large districts, conducts research on best practices for urban schools and regularly communicates with its membership to gather and distribute useful information. The most recent list of reform measures for achievement in urban schools is compiled by the CGCS and represents participation from 48 major urban school systems in America. The strategies are listed below:

- 1.) Extended professional development for staff
 - 2.) Reduced class size
 - 3.) Early identification of at-risk students
 - 4.) Clear expectations for students and staff
 - 5.) Establishing and reviewing annual achievement goals
 - 6.) Increased parental involvement
 - 7.) Extended learning time: longer school day, longer school year, summer school, after-school tutorials, and Saturday enrichment opportunities
 - 8.) Increased emphasis on reading in early grades
 - 9.) Additional use of instructional and curriculum specialists
 - 10.) Increased community partnerships and minority mentoring programs
 - 11.) Disaggregating and monitoring student achievement data
 - 12.) Using multiple assessments
 - 13.) Increased extracurricular activities
 - 14.) Developing and implementing content and performance standards
 - 15.) Implementing school based improvement planning and accountability
- (Council of the Great City Schools, 1999)

To gain the specific perspective of teachers' notions about reform, Steven Reuter administered an inventory to 62 urban and 66 rural elementary teachers.

The participants were asked to describe current practices that either enhanced or prohibited success in their schools. His analysis of the data revealed that urban teachers were more positive than rural teachers about factors contributing to success in their respective schools. He noted that “Successful school practices identified by urban teachers included time and money for staff development, grade level meetings, support for professional development, use of alternative delivery systems in the classroom, site based management, and an array of parent communication” (Reuter, 1992).

Linda Darling Hammond, director of the National Commission on Teaching, states that “School reform cannot succeed unless it focuses on creating the conditions in which teachers can teach, and teach well” (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2003). The following section of the literature review will focus on teaching in urban schools.

Teachers in Urban Schools

Teacher Competency and Background

According to statistics by the NCES (1999b), the percentage of U.S. school-age students of color from diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds will continue to increase; included in this escalation is the number of students who are being categorized as having special needs (1999c). These culturally diverse and classified students are disproportionately from lower socio-economic-status (SES) households in urban environments (Karlin, 2000). Although the newer generation of students is increasingly diverse, the demographic characteristics of teachers in American schools remain fairly consistent (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999a). According to Allen and Porter (2002), the typical teacher remains "... female, heterosexual, middle-class, Christian, from a European heritage, and possessing mainstream cognitive and physical abilities." In fact, American public schools are consistently seeking to remedy the under-representation of diverse faculties within their schools but despite many efforts, the number of minority teachers continues to decline (National Education Association, 2003). A recent study entitled "The Urban Teacher Challenge: Teacher Demand and Supply in the Great City Schools" by the Urban Teacher Collaborative (2000), a coalition of the organizations Recruiting New Teachers Inc., the Council of the Great City Schools, and the Council of the Great City Colleges of Education created to "... improve the quality, diversity, and cultural sensitivity of America's urban teacher workforce"

(Council of the Great City Schools, 2000) revealed that there is an extremely high demand for minority teachers within urban schools; nearly three quarters, or 73 percent, of responding urban school districts in the survey indicated that they have an immediate need for teachers of color. Minorities make up approximately 69 percent of student enrollment compared with only 36 percent of the teaching force, the study notes. This is unfortunate because many experts feel that the academic performance of students is closely related to their role models. Dr. Witty of Norfolk State affirms this point by stating that "... if a Black child during the course of his school years has only one or two Black teachers out of say 40, you can imagine the message that child gets about academic achievement " (Whitaker, 1989).

Concerning the academic qualifications of teachers, studies by the NCES (2002a) reveal that college graduates with the lowest college entrance examination scores are more inclined to become K-12 teachers than those with the highest scores; and, among those who become teachers, those who scored in the bottom quartile were most likely to teach in 1.) elementary schools, 2.) that happen to be public, and 3.) serve 50 percent or more of children eligible for free or reduced lunch. Those scoring in the top quartile were more likely to teach in secondary schools as well as in private schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002a).

Furthermore, public schools with low minority enrollments (less than 10 percent) and schools with low percentages of students eligible for free or reduced lunch (less than 15 percent) both have higher percentages of teachers with

master's degrees than those with high minority enrollments (50 percent or more) and those with high percentages of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (30 percent or more). (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002b) Darling-Hammond states that "... in a low-income school you have less than a 50/50 chance of getting a math or science teacher who has a degree and a license in that field and is really prepared to teach it well" (Bowser, 1998); she sums up the overabundance of unqualified and inexperienced teachers in urban schools by noting that:

In the nation's poorest schools, where hiring is most lax and teacher turnover is constant, the results are disastrous. Thousands of children are taught throughout their school careers by a parade of teachers without preparation in the fields in which they teach, inexperienced beginners with little training and no mentoring, and short-term substitutes trying to cope with constant staff disruptions. It is more surprising that some of these children manage to learn than that so many fail to do so.

(Darling-Hammond, 1996) p. 195

Implications for Virginia

Virginia's condition of education appears to mirror national trends. According to a briefing by the Virginia Department of Education, the most acute teacher shortages continue to be science, special education, and mathematics. The number of minority teachers in Virginia continues to decline and females continue to dominate the teaching profession, specifically in the area of elementary education (Elliott, 2000). Moreover, Virginia teacher preparation programs are not implementing policies and strategies promptly enough to alleviate shortages or the flocking of candidates to over-subscribed programs; in

fact, the number of candidates completing teacher preparation programs in Virginia has declined from approximately 4,249 in 1996 to an estimated 3,500 in 2000 (Elliott, 2000).

Current Strategies to Prevent Shortages and Quantify the Pool of Qualified Candidates to Teach in Urban Schools

The National Commission of Teaching and America's Future provides the following recommendations to address the problems of unqualified teachers and shortages :

- 1.) Increase standards for students and teachers by establishing professional standards boards, insisting on professional accreditation for all schools of education, and licensing teachers based on demonstrated performance, including tests of subject-matter knowledge, teaching knowledge, and teaching skill [such as the licensing processing provided by National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)]
- 2.) Reinvent teacher preparation and professional development by using standards, instituting graduate-level teacher preparation programs that provide yearlong internships in a profession development school, providing mentoring programs, and ensuring funds for professional development that includes daily work and research in teacher academies, school and university partnerships, and learning networks that transcend school boundaries.
- 3.) Encourage and reward knowledge and skill by creating career continuums linked to assessments, removing incompetent teachers through peer

review programs, and reorganizing hierarchical roles by using teachers, principals, supervisors, curriculum developers, etc. to have hyphenated roles allowing for these individuals to use their talents and expertise without abandoning the core work of the profession.

- 4.) Create schools that are organized for student and teacher success by flattening hierarchies and reallocating resources to invest more in teachers and technology rather than non-teaching personnel, providing venture capital in the form of challenge grants that will promote learning linked and inspire school improvement, and selecting, preparing, and retaining principals who understand teaching and learning.

(Darling-Hammond, 1996)

Other “less theoretical” but emergent tactics to recruit urban teachers include onsite childcare for infants and toddlers of teachers (Recruiting New Teachers Inc., 2000), signing bonuses for new teachers (American Federation of Teachers, 1998), tuition reimbursement, housing allocations, aggressive advertisement campaigns including billboards, TV and radio spots, and newspaper space, and the hiring of teachers from foreign countries (Hoff, 2001). These teachers may produce a “quick fix” solution to the problem but, according to Mildred J. Hudson, the chief executive officer of RNT, “They don’t tend to stay... We don’t know how well they do, or how well the children do under them.” (Hoff, 2001)

Attrition in Urban Schools

In addition to the staffing difficulties that urban schools encounter, teacher attrition is another troubling factor in urban schools. Richard Riley, former U.S. Secretary of Education, suggests that our schools allow a “perverse sink or swim” approach wherein first year teachers are assigned to the most difficult classes and extracurricular activities that no one else wants to supervise; he adds that “... we wonder why we lose 22 percent of our new teachers in the first three years, close to 50 percent in those urban areas” (Bowser, 1998).

The factors given by Gonzales (1995) for attrition in urban schools include: “... limited classroom resources (eg. books, paper), greater bureaucratic restraints, large class sizes or caseloads, and students with significant social or behavioral problems.” Lippman, Burns, McArthur, Burton, Smith, & Kaufman (1996) add that urban teachers generally report having less influence over their curriculum than do teachers in suburban and rural schools. In addition, Crosby (1999) notes that suburban districts can certainly act as “magnets” that are able to lure urban teachers away enticing them with higher salaries and better working conditions. Haberman and Rickards (1990) have strong words about the attrition rate in urban schools:

Nationally, approximately one-half of beginning teachers leave teaching in the first six years. In urban districts this turnover occurs in five years. In a few urban districts one half of the beginners leave in a three-to-four year period. This level of turnover leads to many urban classrooms having several teachers in one school year. It also indicates a high level of waste. Since it takes approximately three years to become competent in an urban

classroom, urban schools may be losing teachers at the very point they are becoming effective professionals.

(Haberman and Rickards, p. 297)

Carol Ascher, (1991) senior research scientist at the Institute for Education and Social Policy at New York University, affirms the need for retaining good teachers in urban schools. She provides a number of measures to reduce the attrition rate such as 1.) the provision of good work conditions including strong, supportive principal leadership and increased teacher control on school decisions, curriculum, and, instruction, 2.) the improved management of existing resources, 3.) the reduction in class sizes, 4.) the installation of career ladders where master teachers are encouraged to share their expertise and break down the isolation of the classroom, 5.) the diminution of bureaucracy, and 6.) the establishment of professional development programs that help teachers function as continuous learners.

Working Conditions in Urban Schools

Urban schools are laden with bureaucracy and teachers feel isolated. Little psychic nurturing is given or let alone support in the form of supplies and teaching materials. Many teachers' talents are used unproductively; affluent schools are provided with assistants and volunteers that can monitor halls or serve on lunch duty but urban schools cannot afford these luxuries. Thus while teachers could be tutoring students, mentoring other teachers, or exchanging instructional strategies, precious time and talents are lost to menial tasks. According to Crosby (1999), seasoned teachers do not have sufficient

opportunity to pass their expertise on to others; “Their skill dies in their classrooms- and, with every teacher retirement, a vacuum is created.” He also adds that:

Urban teachers are denied professional renewal during the course of the school day. The only time they can engage in professional activities is after school- after they have already taught five classes and performed many other mentally and physically exhausting duties. At the end of the day, their minds are not fresh, their energy is low, they are fatigued, and their spirits are depleted. How much professional renewal can we expect? Such abuse of teacher talent is a crime against the profession, but its ultimate victims are the students.

(Crosby p. 302)

Perspectives of Urban School Teachers

As Montero-Sieburth (1989) noted, “Profuse explanations have been sought to address the ‘failure’ of urban schools and the poor performance of underrepresented urban students” but the perspectives of urban educators themselves, however, are often underrepresented in the literature and sometimes dismissed as “anecdotal, quaint, and unscientific.” This is rather problematic because the perspectives of urban teachers and principals often shape much of what actually occurs in urban schools. Voltz (1998) deems that: “understanding these perspectives is critical to understanding the dynamics of urban schools.” Haberman and Rickards (1990) conducted a study of urban teachers in Milwaukee to ascertain their perceptions about problems in their work. The sample involved 124 teachers who resigned, retired, or terminated their contracts between January 1988 and December 1988; 50 participants responded. Problems perceived by teachers were separated into those they

perceived before beginning to teach and those perceived at the time they resigned. Results were as follows:

Table 6

Perceived Problems of Urban Teachers in Milwaukee Before Teaching and at Time of Resignation

| Perceived Problem | Ranking at Time of Resignation | Ranking Before Teaching |
|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Discipline | 1 | 2 |
| Inadequate support from administrators and supervisors | 2 | 5 |
| Heavy load – inadequate preparation time | 3 | 9.5 |
| Lack of parental support | 4 | 3.5 |
| Underachieving students | 5 | 1 |
| Clerical burden | 6 | 9.5 |
| Dealing with students' different cultural backgrounds | 7 | 3.5 |
| Inadequate support staff | 8 | 9.5 |
| Inadequate resources and supplies | 9 | 6.5 |
| Salary | 10 | 6.5 |
| Communication with staff of different cultural backgrounds | 11 | 9.5 |
| Class size | 12 | 12 |

(Haberman & Rickards, 1990, p. 300)

A more recent study by Education Week (2003a), entitled "Quality Counts 2003: If I Can't Learn from You," examines what the 50 states and the District of Columbia are doing to attract, retain, and support well-qualified teachers for students in high-poverty, high-minority, and low-achieving schools. It also provides information gleaned from a survey of teachers in 30 large school districts about courses of action to improve teacher quality in high-needs schools

as well as an analysis of the working conditions for teachers within these schools. Overall conclusions were as follows:

Teachers in high-poverty schools were more likely than those in low-poverty ones to agree that student disrespect is a “moderate” or “serious” problem (56 percent vs. 37 percent); that students are unprepared to learn (80 percent vs. 45 percent); and that lack of parent involvement is a moderate or serious problem (75 percent vs. 36 percent). Larger percentages of teachers in such schools also stated that student and teacher absenteeism and student apathy were moderate or serious problems in their schools.

Teachers in high-poverty schools were less likely to agree that they were satisfied with their salaries (34 percent vs. 46 percent), received a great deal of support from parents (46 percent vs. 69 percent), or had the materials necessary for teaching (68 percent vs. 80 percent). They also were less likely to agree that there was a “great deal of cooperative effort among the staff members.”
(Education Week, 2003b)

Specifically, in Virginia, teachers were surveyed and table seven below represents their percentage responses:

Table 7

Virginia Teachers’ Perceptions Concerning Problems in Schools

| | State of Virginia | Low-Poverty Schools | High-Poverty Schools |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Student disrespect is a moderate or serious problem | 49% | 49% | 53% |
| Students coming to school unprepared to learn is a moderate or serious problem | 64% | 52% | 76% |
| Lack of parent involvement is a moderate or serious problem | 58% | 43% | 76% |
| Necessary materials such as texts, supplies, and copy machines are available as needed | 75% | 79% | 67% |

(Education Week, 2003a)

In addition, a study (Freeman, Brookhart, & Loadman, 1999) that targeted perceptions specific to entry-level teachers within racially diverse schools, revealed that teachers in high diversity schools, relative to their counterparts in low diversity schools, were more likely to "... a.) encounter a complex and challenging teaching environment, b.) struggle to form meaningful relations with their students, and c.) be less satisfied with their jobs."

Effective Teaching in Urban Schools

Darling Hammond upholds the notion that a teacher needs to know what to teach and how to teach it well (1998a). It is this task, teaching and teaching well, for which The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality, a regional office of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, was established. The commission "... conducts research, informs policy, and engages leadership, in order to enhance opportunities for all students to have caring, competent and qualified teachers." In a recent endeavor to recruit teachers for "hard-to-staff" schools in the Southeast, the SECTQ published a report detailing these difficult schools and what important factors will be crucial for their achievement. Of course, well qualified teachers were noted as "... the most powerful determinants of whether students are able to meet high standards" (Southeast Center for Teaching Quality, 2002). The SECTQ deems that effective teachers in hard-to-staff schools must know more about teaching reading and writing skills through content areas such as science, history, and mathematics. Effective teachers must be well-prepared to work with students whose

primary language is not English or those who are below grade level, and/or have learning disabilities. These teachers must understand how students think and behave, what they find interesting, what they already know, and how they can be motivated. Teachers in hard-to-staff schools must be able to recognize and respond to student differences in culture, language, family background, and previous educational experiences; teachers must use their understanding of these differences to adapt lessons and experiment with a variety of teaching strategies (Southeast Center for Teaching Quality, 2002).

NOTE: Most of these hard-to-staff schools are located in troubled inner cities or isolated rural areas, are plagued by high poverty in the community, contend with insufficient resources, and perform low on state performance accountability measures (Southeast Center for Teaching Quality, 2002).

The SECTQ defines a “hard-to-staff school with the following criteria:

- 1.) 50% or more of students are below grade level;
- 2.) 50% or more of students are eligible for free and reduced price lunch in elementary schools (40% for high schools);
- 3.) 15-18% annual teacher turnover rate;
- 4.) 25% or more of teachers have provisional licenses, are lateral entry (up to five years to earn full licensure), emergency or temporary, or are probationary.

(Southeast Center for Teaching Quality, 2002)

No review of effective urban teaching would be complete without reference to Martin Haberman’s life work of research in America’s urban public schools; he has interviewed and observed urban teachers all over the United States from 1959 to the present relentlessly laboring to seek “star teachers” who positively impact the life and achievement of their students. Haberman calls successful teachers in urban schools “star teachers” because: their students

score higher on standardized tests; parents and students think they are great; principals rate them highly; other teachers regard them as outstanding; central office supervisors consider them successful; cooperating universities regard them as superior; and they evaluate themselves as outstanding teachers (Haberman, 1993). Haberman has categorized some critical factors concerning behaviors of “star teachers.” He begins by listing things that star teachers do not do:

- 1.) Focus on discipline;
- 2.) Perceive themselves as instruments of punishment or are proponents of behavior modification;
- 3.) Assign homework that is traditional rote drill and practice;
- 4.) Parent bash;
- 5.) Spend large portions of time on tests and grading;
- 6.) Use direct instruction as their primary method and therefore see their role as monitoring students’ time on task;
- 7.) Secure rewards and reinforcements such as stickers, pencils, and other prizes to influence student behavior but rather seek to instill intrinsic motivation for learning and good behavior.

(Haberman, 1995b)

Haberman does observe that “star teachers” in urban schools do indeed possess the following attributes or functions below:

- 1.) Persistence, or problem solving, concerning the potential of children in poverty;
- 2.) Protection, protecting learners and learning over order in the classroom;
- 3.) Generalizations, putting ideas into practice by using learning theories and research to provide meaningful work and instructional experiences for students;
- 4.) Approaches to “At-risk” Children, not categorizing them into these labels which have the implication of little hope for success and achieving high standards;
- 5.) Professional-Personal Orientation to Students, having care and respect, but not necessarily love, for their students;
- 6.) The Care and Feeding of the Bureaucracy, understanding constraints yet managing to advocate for their students and their learning;

- 7.) Fallibility, admitting to personal mistakes and learning from them;
- 8.) Emotional and Physical Stamina;
- 9.) Organizational Ability, managing resources and children to ultimately provide active learning and meaningful experiences;
- 10.) Effort – Not Ability, valuing students' hard work and desire to try, unwillingness to penalize for mistakes, and believing in the "... immeasurable potential of all people if given sufficient encouragement and opportunity." (Haberman, 1995b);
- 11.) Teaching-Not Sorting, providing acceptance of all learners and differentiating instruction to meet their needs;
- 12.) Convincing Students, "I Need You Here";
- 13.) You and Me against the Material, a mentality establishing a rapport wherein the student knows the teacher is on his/her side and will provide an environment and experience that will enable learning of difficult content or skills;
- 14.) Gentle Teaching in a Violent Society, creating a classroom environment in which students are not threatened to achieve but rather motivated to do so;
- 15.) When Teachers Face Themselves, self analyzing their prejudices and explicating a plan to "... unlearn them, counteract them, and get beyond them." (Haberman, 1995b)

Lastly, Haberman adds that only "decent" people can be prepared to teach children in poor and urban schools. According to Haberman, (1995b), their decency is reflected by, but not limited to the following characteristics:

- 1.) They tend to be nonjudgmental; they do not decide goodness or badness of children but seek to understand events and communications.
- 2.) They are not moralistic and do not believe that preaching is teaching.
- 3.) They are not easily shocked by horrific events. They seek to help the situation, but if not, they go on with their work and their lives.
- 4.) They seek to listen, hear, and understand. They regard listening to children, parents, or anyone involved in the school community as a potential source of useful information.
- 5.) They recognize they have feelings of hate, prejudice, and bias and strive to overcome them.
- 6.) They do not see themselves as saviors who have come to save their schools. Furthermore, they do not really expect their schools to change very much.
- 7.) They do not see themselves as being alone. They network.

- 8.) They envision themselves as “winning” even though they know their total influence on their students is much less than that of the total society, neighborhood, and gang.
- 9.) They enjoy interacting with children and youth so much that they are willing to put up with irrational demands of the school system.
- 10.) They think their primary impact on their students is that they have made them more humane and less frustrated, or raised their self-esteem.
- 11.) They derive pleasure and satisfaction from teaching children or youth in poverty. They do not gain “power needs” by functioning as teachers.

(Haberman, 1995b)

One last assertion in Haberman’s work must be addressed to complete his exhaustive list of notions about “star teachers.” He alleges that “... the odds of selecting effective urban teachers for children and youth in poverty are approximately 10 times better if the candidates are over 30 rather than under 25 years of age”(Haberman, 1995a). He asserts that older teachers have a coherent vision for these unique students and, in turn, are less likely to become quitters and burnouts. Thus, “The premise of the strategy [obtaining better teachers for urban students] is simple: selection is more important than training” (Haberman, 1995a).

Despite one’s view on the relevance of teacher training, present guidelines for NCLB require a highly qualified teacher for every classroom, one who is licensed after completion of an education program approved by the state. The last section of the literature review will summarize findings on teacher education programs and their current strategies for preparing candidates to enter the teaching workforce in urban schools.

Teacher Preparation of Urban School Settings

The necessity of teacher preparation has endured longstanding criticism (Darling-Hammond, 2000) and the debate continues to the present. Regardless of one's position on the matter, NCLB requires a highly qualified teacher for every classroom and mandates specific criteria that must be further delineated by the individual states. In Virginia, a highly qualified teacher is denoted as “ any public elementary, middle, or secondary school teacher in the core academic subjects who holds full state licensure as a teacher, including licensure through alternate routes; and teaches only in the area or areas of endorsement.” (Virginia Department of Education, 2003) Licensure in Virginia is traditionally achieved through completion of a traditional 4-5 year teacher preparation program approved by the state.

Harsh critics of teacher preparation programs argue they are irrelevant for many reasons, one of them being their unwillingness to change. Freiberg and Waxman (1990) observe that

... we are confronted with a lack of significant differences in how teachers have been prepared for their profession since the 1930's. Despite change efforts, it can still be argued that there have been no fundamental or substantive changes in teacher education during the past several decades.

(p. 622)

Smylie and Kahne (1997) assert that although knowledge from research is expanding and becoming more accessible, it is increasingly evident that this knowledge is rarely incorporated into teacher education as it is generally practiced. As Goodlad (1990) observes,

Instead of scholarly productivity and knowledge codification continually fueling curriculum development, [teacher education] curricula overly reflect practice and prepare future teachers for prevailing conditions and circumstances. The resources, effort, creativity, and leadership needed to create the necessary productive tension between sound theory and sound practice and the integration of the two are prodigious. Meanwhile, teacher education muddles along with neither a clear sense of mission nor coherent programs

(Goodlad, 1990) p. 268-269

Specifically, there is escalating disapproval of pre-service preparation for work in urban schools. Weiner (1993; 2000) argues that urban teacher education suffers from both a scarcity of firm data and a lack of sustained, serious intellectual scrutiny. Crosby (1999) cites deficiencies in program configuration noting that "... teacher candidates are not offered courses designed to familiarize them with the history and culture of their potential students, much less with their learning problems and their psychology." Haberman (1994) adds that traditional teacher education does not mesh with urban needs because: 1.) the assumption of one knowledge base is nonsense; 2.) the commitment to universal licensure overstates teachers' qualifications; 3.) the emphasis on doctoral level training rather than demonstrated teaching competence for teacher educators perpetuates ignorance; 4.) selection criteria, such as GPA, for these programs are irrelevant because they are unrelated to subsequent practice and teacher success ; and 5.) teacher candidates in these schools are typically 18-25 which is "... not the most appropriate life stage for learning to teach and shape the character of children and youth" (Haberman, 1994). Haberman's simile below

captures the essence of many today who view current teacher preparation programs as antiquated and inadequate to meet the needs of future urban educators:

Completing a traditional program of teacher education as preparation for working in this emotional cauldron [urban schools] is like preparing to swim the English Channel by doing laps in the university pool. Swimming is not swimming. Having a warm shower, a clean towel, a private locker, your own lane, and a heated, guarded, chlorinated pool has nothing whatsoever to do with the grueling realities of eight-foot swells of freezing water for 22 miles without being certain of your direction... 'Teaching is not teaching' and 'kids are not kids.' Completing your first year as a fully responsible teacher in an urban school has nothing to do with having been 'successful' in a college preparation program.

(Haberman, 1995b) p. 2

Indeed, teacher preparation programs have had their numerous critics; in fact, according to Yinger and Nolen, schools of education must "... get serious about creating good examples of professional practice and preparation" because there is

... serious questioning of the need for university-based teacher education. Even five years ago, it was unthinkable that university teacher education programs would be facing serious challenges to their legitimacy and importance. Many teacher education faculty members still deny that such a threat exists, but they are wrong.

(Yinger & Nolen, 2003) p. 386

Despite the contentions and uncertainty of teacher preparation programs, many scholars contend that teacher education is still a viable and necessary task to equip teachers for the profession. Ingersoll (2001) asks why there is a continual need to prove that "... teaching is a highly complex kind of work and that it takes both ability and advanced training to do well." Darling-Hammond's (2000) review of research over the past 30 years has concluded that even with

the shortcomings of current teacher education and licensing, "... fully prepared and certified teachers are generally better rated and more successful with students than teachers without this preparation." She further contends that studies of unprepared teachers show they have greater difficulties planning curriculum, teaching, and managing the classroom. They have not been taught proper ways to diagnose children or reflect on their practices and therefore tend to blame students if their teaching is not effective. In addition, they tend to leave the profession at higher rates (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Current guidelines for teacher education usually include general education courses in content such as history, math, and science; a myriad of instructional methods class; and the preparation for national teacher competency tests such as the PRAXIS. However, most educators agree that preparation programs need to do more to equip candidates for the needs of 21st Century students. According to Holm and Horn (2003), much of the "groundwork" for providing a continuum of professional development that supplies growth for the teacher candidate to the master teacher is found in the alignment of standards by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). The alignment of these standards "... provides a blueprint for meeting the needs of diverse learners in today's classrooms" (Holm & Horn, 2003). Schools of education that incorporate the following standards into their program create a framework that will equip teachers:

- 1.) knowledge and skills that will help them know and understand who their students are and how they learn;
- 2.) knowledge and understanding of the content of the disciplines and of the instructional strategies that can be used to create powerful learning experiences;
- 3.) an understanding of the role of assessment and how to design assessments that will inform practice and guide student learning;
- 4.) habits of reflection; and
- 5.) a collaborative approach to their work with colleagues, families, and communities

(Holm & Horn, 2003) p. 377

Oakes, Franke, Quartz and Rogers (2002) add that urban teachers need more than generic teaching competencies articulated by the NBPTS. Teacher candidates "... need to understand urban cultures, urban political economy, the bureaucratic structure of urban schools, and the community and social service support networks serving urban centers." They also need to acquire skills which will enable them to develop urban youth literacies across the academic content areas and engage in joint work with other reform-minded teachers (Oakes et al., 2002).

Lastly, in response to NCLB, Townsend (2002) urges teacher educators to "Leave no teacher behind" by providing candidates with CRP, culturally responsive pedagogy. Townsend provides a rationale for candidates to be certified in CRP explaining that specialized training in multicultural education is a necessity to meet the needs of learners who are from diverse cultures. However, she cautions that culturally responsive teacher education training should not consist solely of one or two courses in multicultural education, but "... instead should be a specific program that facilitates interactions among preservice teachers across cultures" and promotes the use of urban school field

experiences with collaboration and close supervision by university faculty (Townsend, 2002).

Another critical piece in current trends for the preparation of urban teacher candidates is the emergence of the Professional Development School. PDSs originated a decade ago to provide meaningful classroom experiences for candidates while they earn their degree. PDSs have four main goals: 1.) teacher preparation, 2.) professional development and collaboration for practicing teachers, 3.) research and inquiry for best practices and disseminations of innovations, and 4.) the improvement of the students' school experience and learning. There have been many reviews of the concept both supportive and critical; this is most likely because experiences vary so widely among the many PDSs (Schwartz, 2000). One cannot deny, however, that teacher candidates deem field experiences, especially student teaching, "the most valuable and helpful component of their total preparation program" (Watts, 1987). Darling-Hammond's (1998a) plan for well-qualified teachers for the most needy students in society does include training that involves yearlong, supervised internships and intensive mentoring.

Perspectives on Teacher Preparation from Practicing Teachers

Finally, a view from the perspective of practicing urban teachers is in order to conclude realistic notions about preparation needs for effective urban teaching. Diffily and Perkins interviewed 33 teachers, all with differing levels of education and experience who served in Dallas and Fort Worth urban schools, to seek their advice in preparing candidates to work in urban schools. Participants

were noted as being “effective” and selected for the study “... based on administrative recommendations, as well as their success with students, years of teaching experience in urban settings, and extensive training” (Diffily & Perkins, 2002). Respondents in the study noted that teacher candidates “... need to gain knowledge about the ethnic cultures they may be teaching, how individuals differ within the same ethnic group, and the culture of poverty”; candidates must also be able to “... reflect on their own personal values, how they can work with people who hold very different values, and what expectations they have of students in urban schools.” Lastly, the respondents specified the necessity for preservice teachers to observe and interact with excellent teachers in several urban schools and further suggested that first year teachers not view their education about teaching as “complete” but rather seek out a good mentor and expect professional growth and continued learning (Diffily & Perkins, 2002).

Chapter Summary

The research maintains that urban schools have been plagued by various challenges such as higher levels of bureaucracy, crowded classrooms populated by elevated numbers of poor and high risk children, and a heightened rate of teacher turnover. Despite many reforms to alleviate various problems unique to the urban school environment, students in these schools continue to perform at lower levels than national norms.

Although the student bodies of many urban schools consist of nearly 70% of minority children, the teaching force in these schools is comprised of 36% or

less teachers of color with the remaining faculty usually being white females with conservative, traditional backgrounds. More importantly, the teacher applicant pool in urban school districts consists of a higher number of candidates without appropriate credentials and practice so many urban students must contend with instructors who have little or no teaching qualifications or experience.

Teachers within urban schools vie with many constraints including deteriorating physical facilities, limited school funds for materials such as texts, chalk, and paper, and are granted less autonomy in their curriculum and instructional choices. Researchers and scholars have inquired to ascertain both the type of teacher and the instructional methods that will best serve children in urban schools but more studies are needed because these children continue to strive with unequal access to educational resources and lower levels of achievement.

Finally, at present, schools of education are vying for their very existence being questioned for their unwillingness to provide teacher candidates in critical needs areas such as special education, science, and math and their incapability to produce candidates that are both knowledgeable and skilled at providing effective instruction for an increasingly diverse student population. To meet this need, many teacher preparation programs have begun to include coursework with multicultural components and create more meaningful relationships with K-12 schools such as the recent trend of the emerging PDSs (Professional Development Schools) across the country. Teacher candidates continue to reveal that their most meaningful preparation comes from work and interaction in

field placements that provide them with observation of exemplary teachers and access to hands on training with real K-12 students.

CHAPTER 3

THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodological procedures used in this exploratory study. It presents a review of the purpose of the study and the research questions. The chapter also contains information regarding the population of the study, the sampling procedures, the solicitation and preparation of the respondents, and the creation and validation of the interview protocol. The chapter concludes with the data collection and analysis methods as well as an address to the issues of trustworthiness and the “researcher as instrument.”

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate exemplary teachers’ perceptions of the necessary attributes and skills required for their service in urban schools. The study examined what exemplary teachers perceive current teachers should know and be able to do in order to positively impact instruction and student achievement in diverse elementary classrooms. Specifically, the study focused on critical knowledge in pedagogy, curricula, and content as well as essential skills in creating positive learning environments, student rapport, and parental communication. Furthermore, the study examined what exemplary teachers perceive teacher preparation programs should provide in both coursework and field experiences that will prepare teacher candidates to work with diverse students within urban schools.

Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

- 1.) What do exemplary teachers perceive teachers should know and be able to do in order to provide instruction in urban elementary classrooms?
- 2.) What curricula and practices do exemplary teachers perceive teacher preparation programs should employ in order to prepare teachers for service in urban elementary classrooms?

Population of the Study

The research questions that guided this study stipulate the inquiry of *exemplary* teachers; therefore, the participants were sought purposely on the basis of their fulfillment of the predetermined criteria. Patton (2002) deems this method as “purposeful sampling” and justifies its validity by explaining that it allows for selection of “information-rich” cases in which “.... one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research.”

For the purpose of this study, exemplary teachers were identified as those who met the two following requirements:

- 1.) The participant must have served as an elementary teacher (grades K-5) in an urban public school system in Virginia that is specified as being 90% or more “urban” by the definition of the United States Census Bureau (see Appendix A). Note: the participant that served in the pilot study taught in an urban area in Georgia.

2.) The participant must have achieved formal recognition as denoted by the following: the Disney American Teacher Award, the McGlothlin Award, the Milken National Educator Award, or a regional or state teacher of the year in the National Teacher of the Year program sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the state Department of Education. The accolade should have been awarded within the past four years.

The formal awards that denote teachers as “exemplary” necessitate documented evidence of effectiveness in the field of teaching. An overview of these awards and their requirements for attainment are as follows.

Disney’s American Teacher Award

This award is part of the Disney Learning Partnership, a philanthropic arm of the Walt Disney Company, which supports creative teaching strategies and engaging approaches to learning. The process selection is rigorous and highly competitive because there are often as many as 75,000 nominations in a year. About 11,000 actually apply and only 30 are selected as Honorees.

A nominee is a teacher identified through the public nomination process. Once notified, the nominees that complete the application and its requirements become eligible. The national selection committee chooses three applicants in each of the ten categories to be Disney’s American Teacher Awards Honorees; the categories are as follows:

- 1.) Early Childhood, Grades PreK–one,
- 2.) Primary, Grades two - three,
- 3.) Intermediate, Grades four - five or six,
- 4.) Middle School Humanities,

5.) Middle School Sciences (Science & Math), 6.) High School Humanities, 7.) High School Sciences (Science & Math), 8.) The Arts, Grades K-Twelve, 9.) Special Needs/Gifted Education, Grades K-Twelve, and 10.) Wellness and Sports, Grades K-Twelve. From this group of Honorees, ten Category Finalists are chosen, as well as the Outstanding Teacher of the Year. The Walt Disney Company awards \$25,000 to the Outstanding Teacher of the Year, with the Outstanding Teacher's school receiving \$10,000. All 30 honorees receive \$10,000 each, with their respective schools receiving \$5,000. The ten category finalists also receive an additional \$5,000 each.

The award is given to teachers who provide substantiation of the ability to engage their students by planning and implementing creative and innovative educational experiences. Certain requirements include letters of recommendation, videotaped lessons, and other evidences.

(Disney Learning Partnership, 2003)

McGlothlin Award

The McGlothlin Foundation is a result of the humanitarian efforts of the McGlothlin family from Buchanan County, Virginia. The foundation exists to support worthy causes in higher education, health care and the arts in southwest Virginia, West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, and northeast Tennessee. The McGlothlin Award for Teaching Excellence, established in March of 2000, is bestowed upon two teachers per year, one elementary and one secondary. The awards are administered by Blue Ridge Public Television.

When determining the worthiness of candidates for this award, judges seek evidences of the following criteria:

- 1.) Commitment to the teaching profession and to continuing professional development (one's own continuing learning; assisting and inspiring other educators, or young people who aspire to teach).
- 2.) Teaching for a minimum of 5 years, and plans to continue teaching.
- 3.) Concrete examples of how nominees meet the diverse needs of learners.
- 4.) The ability to inspire students, other educators, and the community with the value and excitement of learning.
- 5.) Examples of how nominees promote a high level of student achievement.
- 6.) Qualities of high intellectual, ethical/moral and social standards that inspire the nominees' students to lives of service and social responsibility.
- 7.) How the travel portion of the award could help 'bring the world to the classroom."

McGlothlin Award winners are given \$25,000.00 but \$10,000.00 of this sum is to be used, within a year, for international travel and/or study to broaden the thinking and experience of the winning teachers, further enhancing their excellence as professional educators (McGlothlin Foundation, 2003).

Milken National Educator Award

Brothers, Lowell and Michael Milken, established The Milken Family Foundation in 1982 with the mission "... to discover and advance inventive and effective ways of helping people help themselves and those around them lead productive and satisfying lives" (McGlothlin Foundation, 2003). The members of the Milken family created the Milken National Educator Award to specifically address the crisis in American education by rewarding educators' achievements, enhancing their resources, and advancing their professional interests. The first

award was presented in 1987 in California but the program has quickly grown to national stature with 46 states participating (Milken Family Foundation, 2003).

The Milken website provides the following information about the award.

Based on guidelines established by the Foundation, participating states' departments of education appoint blue ribbon committees that identify candidates for evaluation and selection. Identification and selection procedures are confidential, and the program does not include a nomination or application procedure.

(Milken Family Foundation, 2003).

The criteria for the selection of outstanding elementary and secondary school teachers, principals and other education professionals as Milken Educators include all of the following:

- 1.) Exceptional educational talent as evidenced by outstanding instructional practices in the classroom, school and profession;
- 2.) Outstanding accomplishment and strong long-range potential for professional and policy leadership; and
- 3.) Engaging and inspiring presence that motivates and impacts students, colleagues and the community.

Including those recipients announced in the fall of 2002, nearly 2,000 outstanding educators have been recognized with unrestricted individual Milken Educator Awards of \$25,000 (Milken Family Foundation, 2003).

National Teacher of the Year

The National Teacher of the Year program is sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the state Department of Education. It is the oldest, most prestigious national honors program that focuses public attention on excellence in teaching. The National Teacher of the Year meets the President and then is introduced by him to the American public. The recipient is released

from classroom duties during the year of recognition to travel nationally and internationally as a spokesperson for the teaching profession.

The national winner is selected from candidates who have already been awarded the title of State Teacher of the Year. The candidate must be "... an exceptionally dedicated, knowledgeable, and skilled teacher in any state-approved or accredited school, prekindergarten through grade twelve, who is planning to continue in an active teaching status" and the selection committee looks for evidences of the following criteria:

- 1.) Candidates must inspire students of all backgrounds and abilities to learn.
- 2.) Candidates must have the respect and admiration of students, parents, and colleagues.
- 3.) Candidates must play an active and useful role in the community as well as in the school.
- 4.) Candidates must be poised, articulate, and possess the energy to withstand a taxing schedule.

(Council of Chief State School Officers, 2003)

As acknowledged above, the candidate pool for the National Teacher of the Year (NTOY) is derived from recipients of the State Teacher of the Year Awards. In Virginia, participants in the VTOY (Virginia Teacher of the Year) program must 1.) be recognized as a local school division teacher of the year recipient, 2.) proceed to be recognized as a regional teacher of the year recipient, and then 3.) finally advance to vie for the official title of Virginia Teacher of the Year. For the purpose of this study, only VTOY participants that have reached the levels of regional and state award winners were consulted.

Note: Virginia is divided into eight regions and therefore eight regional VTOY winners are selected each year.

Evaluators of the Awards

The selection committees and judges who critique the merits for these awards are also distinguished in the field of education; they are current practitioners, professors, administrators, and others who represent such professional organizations as the American Federation of Teachers, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Association of Teacher Educators, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Education Association, and the National Congress of Parents and Teachers.

Participants

Participants for this study must have met the criteria of 1.) serving as a teacher in an urban elementary school and 2.) winning a formal teaching excellence award within the past four years. To obtain a list of all of the possible participants, the researcher consulted the official websites of the McGlothlin Award, the Milken Educator Award, and the National Teacher of the Year Award. The sites provided a comprehensive record of all individuals receiving these accolades in the past four years. The researcher found that nine individuals met the criteria specified for the study so all nine people were requested to participate in the study.

Solicitation and Preparation of Respondents

A pilot study was conducted to begin the research. The purpose of the pilot study was to ascertain the appropriateness of the interview protocol and length of the interviews. Prior to the pilot study three university professors and

the Institutional Review Board reviewed the questions for suitability and congruence to the purpose of the study.

The pilot study was directed to a specific participant, a winner of the Disney American Teacher Award. The researcher received permission to interview this participant via email correspondence.

To gain consent for the other nine participants eligible for the study, the researcher contacted the schools in which they serve and solicited their participation.

After gaining consent, the researcher mailed or faxed a packet to the participant preparing them for the interview. The packet included the following:

- 1.) an introductory letter explaining
 - a.) The background of the researcher
 - b.) The purpose of the study
 - c.) The estimated time for completion of the interview
 - d.) The manner in which data will be maintained and reported
 - e.) The rights of the respondents
- 2.) two copies of the consent form, and
- 3.) a copy of the interview protocol.

By sending the packet prior to the interview, the researcher anticipated that the respondents would be prepared to give descriptive, insightful responses that would be crafted by a comprehensive, pensive reflection on the poignant issues.

After providing sufficient time for the participant to receive the materials and reflect upon the contents, the researcher made contact again to set up the interview date and time.

Design of the Study

The design of this study was exploratory and descriptive. A naturalistic approach was applied in the collection and analysis of exemplary teachers' perceptions of serving in urban schools because: 1.) the perspectives of urban educators are often underrepresented in the literature and sometimes dismissed as "anecdotal, quaint, and unscientific" (Montero-Sieburth, 1989) and 2.) a naturalistic inquiry by means of interview allows participants to freely share their personal accounts and anecdotes which ultimately aids in "... knowing and understanding." (Siedman, 1998).

The interviewing of participants was the principle means by which data was collected. A protocol of questions (see Appendix B) guided the interview process and responses were open-ended with no predetermined categories or models so the data could consist of respondents' "... experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge" and provide "... detailed descriptions of people's activities, behaviors, actions, and the full range of interpersonal interactions and organizational processes that are a part of observable human experience" (Patton, 2002).

Data Collection

Creation and Validation of the Interview Protocol

The data collection instrument was a structured interview protocol which can be viewed by referring to Appendix B. The protocol began with a section summarizing the purpose of the study and the right of the participant to withdraw from the study at any time. The second section consisted of the actual interview

questions. The third and final section concluded the interview and allowed the respondent to add any additional comments or request clarification for any of the prior questions.

The second section of the protocol, the main body of the interview, contained nine questions that were approved for suitability and congruence to the purpose of the study by three university professors and the Internal Review Board. They were tested again through a pilot interview and further refined in preparation for the actual nine participants of the study.

Interviewing Procedures

After gaining permission to conduct the study from the Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Virginia, the researcher contacted each participant, sent out a material packet that included the interview protocol, and scheduled an interview time. After giving sufficient time for the respondent to view the contents of the material packet, the researcher called again to confirm the interview time.

The interviews were conducted using the telephone. All participants were reminded that this was a voluntary interview that would be taped and transcribed.

Data Analysis

After the interview, the researcher conducted a *content analysis* (Patton, 2002) by reviewing the transcriptions and looking for emerging categories and patterns of findings. The researcher created categories and used a category system auditor to review the data and confirm that initial categories were mutually exclusive. From the categorized (coded) data, the researcher searched

for emergent trends, patterns, and salient quotations which served as evidence of findings in a warrant search.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) claim that the basic concern in trustworthiness is the persuasion of an audience to believe that "... the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of." Trustworthiness addresses the issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

The issue of credibility denotes that the researcher took appropriate actions to certify that the data and findings are "objective" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and gathered in an ethical manner that does not taint or change the information or results of the study. To ensure credibility, the researcher used the following techniques: member checks, triangulation, and peer debriefing.

During the interview, the researcher asked for the participant's clarification and/or summary of responses. Also, each participant received a transcription of the interview to verify the accuracy of the text and add other important remarks if necessary. These techniques affirmed the method of "member checking."

"Triangulation" was accomplished by consulting multiple sources including interview transcripts, field notes, a reflexive journal, and follow up interviews. The reflexive journal allowed the researcher to use formative notions during the midst of the data collection stage to substantiate consistency in interview techniques as well as provide an emerging guide for data analysis. The follow up interviews allowed for clarifications of ambiguous responses.

Lastly, a peer debriefer was consulted to judge the accuracy and appropriateness of research methods and data collection, specifically assisting in the role as a category system auditor. She acted as a referee to maintain honesty and ethical practice in the research process as well as consultant in the various tasks of the study as a whole.

The peer debriefer in this study was chosen on the basis of her knowledge in the field of education and her personal experience with the dissertation process. She has earned degrees in regular and special education as well as a doctoral degree in Administration and Supervision from the University of Virginia. She was uniquely qualified to assist in this study due to her experience as both a principal and a teacher in classrooms that consist of many diverse types of students. She currently works as a colleague of the researcher at the same university and was readily available for assistance and guidance as needed.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the possibility, or probability, of applying the findings of a study to similar contexts. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the researcher must provide "... the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion" (p. 316). In this study, the researcher has provided detailed information concerning both the participants and the environments in which they teach; the researcher has also included a data summary chapter (see chapter 4) which attempts to give rich narration and provide a "voice" for the respondents.

The purpose of this study was to solicit the collective perceptions of exemplary teachers concerning their notions about what teachers need to be able to know and do to effectively teach urban students. The intent of this study was not to search for generalizations across all educational contexts, but rather to provide useful information to those specifically interested in teaching and preparing others for teaching in urban schools. An underlying assumption for this study is that the current sample of urban award-winning teachers is representative of other urban award-winning teachers and the findings may be applied to other urban award-winning teachers. In order to generalize beyond this level, additional studies and/or inquiry methodology is needed. It is anticipated, however, that this study will provide the reader with notable information concerning what urban teachers must know and be able to do to effectively serve in urban schools.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability refers to the issue that the researcher conducted and completed the study as outlined by the stated methods and that other examiners could “authenticate” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) the study by verifying the techniques, data, and findings. Confirmability is concerned with “... whether the findings are grounded in the data, a matter easily determined if appropriate audit trail linkages have been established” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To address the issues of dependability and confirmability, the researcher used an “audit trail.” The researcher consulted “auditors” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to oversee and assess the audit trail and therefore examine both the processes and results of

the study. The researcher consulted university professors, colleagues, and a peer debriefer to ascertain their expertise and service as auditors in this study. To achieve confirmability, the researcher kept an audit trail that includes such resources as the raw interview audiotapes, the transcribed interview text, a reflexive journal, and finally the data reduction and analysis products as well as the data reconstruction and synthesis products. The researcher also retained various forms, such as the interview protocol, the preliminary and revised schedules of the interviews, the email correspondence, and other vital resources that documented interactions and results from the participants of the study.

The Researcher as Instrument

According to Patton (2002), the researcher is the instrument in qualitative inquiry and an accurate qualitative report should include reference to "... any personal and professional information that may have affected data collection, analysis, and interpretation- either negatively or positively." (p. 472) The following paragraphs seek to provide a biographical sketch with essential information that may provide insight as to certain preset convictions or personal biases that the researcher may have brought to the study.

The researcher in this study was a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at the Curry School of Education, University of Virginia. She holds a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Virginia and a bachelor of science degree in elementary education from Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia.

She has worked as a teacher in the Virginia public school system for seven years, one year teaching in Newport News Public Schools and the other six serving in Lynchburg City Schools. In both districts, she served as a fifth grade classroom teacher and taught both regular and special education students. Currently, she holds a position teaching in Liberty University's School of Education where she teaches classes in curriculum, instruction, and reading methods and occasionally oversees student teaching placements.

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) notion of *emergent design* affirms the importance that the naturalist (researcher) does not come to the study "empty-handed" and certainly not "empty-headed" so the researcher must take care to assure that new information can "... unfold, cascade, roll, and emerge." (p. 209) Because the researcher has taught in urban environments, her life experience in approaching this study can be conveyed as both a strength and a weakness. She was familiar with the educational jargon, has a unique understanding of the rich descriptions of the urban teaching environment, and shared a sense of kindred spirit when interviewing the participants. However, in an adverse view, the researcher had some preconceived notions about urban teaching and therefore had to exhibit extreme caution so that personal biases did not affect the study and ultimately the new information could be gleaned from it.

The limitations of the study can be found by referring back to chapter one. The results of the study will follow in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

CHAPTER 4

DATA SUMMARIES

According to Patton (2002), “ Qualitative data tell a story” and these stories “... capture and communicate someone else’s experience of the world in his or her own words.” The following chapter will entail the stories of the ten participants in the study seeking to capture both their experience and expertise about the world of urban teaching. Each story will include a brief biographical sketch focusing on educational positions held but, more importantly, seek to provide responses that address the main research questions of the study. The questions are stated as follows:

- 1.) What do exemplary teachers perceive teachers should know and be able to do in order to provide instruction in urban elementary classrooms?
- 2.) What curricula and practices do exemplary teachers perceive teacher preparation programs should employ in order to prepare teachers for service in urban elementary classrooms?

The stories and summaries also provide brief vignettes and significant quotes derived from the raw interview transcripts; these notations seek to show insight drawn from direct responses to the interview protocol (see Appendix B). The participant’s names are not used in the study so pseudonyms have been assigned to ensure confidentiality. Stories are organized in alphabetical order according to pseudonym, not the chronological order of the interviews.

Story I – Justine Powell

Justine Powell was approached to participate in the study primarily to serve as a pilot in order to clarify or refine the interview protocol if necessary. The researcher corresponded with Ms. Powell in the form of text via email attachment but she provided no recommendations to changes in the protocol. She did, however, respond in detail to each question. After seeking counsel and approval from both a peer evaluator and another expert in the field of research, the primary researcher decided to include her story since she indeed was an exemplary teacher with documented success in working with diverse urban students.

Justine is a female Caucasian who has served as a middle school teacher for seventeen years. She has taught in both urban and suburban schools but currently presides as a sixth and seventh grade English teacher at a private Christian school. In addition to her teaching responsibilities, she also serves as the Director of Curriculum for the school, and has had a significant role in the creation of the school's philosophy, mission, etc. For five years, she served in a position as a full-time staff development trainer and teacher leader who helped teachers with strategies for at-risk learners.

Justine contributes her success to working in a school system that stressed meaningful staff development training. She urges the importance of keeping current on educational research and the development of teacher collaboration. She asserts that she did not feel prepared to work with diverse

students when initially entering the field but learned from “trial by fire.” Her experiences have taught her that teachers must “... find a balance between creating an environment of respect and making the children feel comfortable and safe in this environment.” She further adds that successful urban teachers must know effective behavior management strategies, how to connect with students to earn their respect, and participate in training with the most current research on brain-based learning, multiple intelligences, and learning styles. According to Justine, “Students have a greater likelihood of truly learning new material and retaining information if they are taught in ways that are creative, useful, or emotional.”

As mentioned before, Justine reiterates the need for developing a rapport with students. She asserts that teachers must have a genuine love for children because students “can tell if they are not loved, and they will respond accordingly.” She further denotes that exemplary teachers who have a strong rapport with students will care about the whole child and will seek opportunities to inquire about each child’s interests, such as sports, hobbies, or music. Teachers must celebrate students’ cultural differences and essentially the whole learning environment starts with the tone that is set by the teacher.

She also mentions the importance of gaining a rapport with parents. Justine suggests contacting parents very early in the school year before difficulties occur and establishing a parent relationship of trust, caring, and teamwork. She also uses telephone calls, monthly newsletters, postcards,

and emails to notify parents of celebrations of student success and upcoming activities that will entail parental involvement.

Lastly, Justine addresses the issue of teacher preparation and advice for novices in the field. She proposes extensive field experience in a variety of settings with candidates serving in the classrooms of master teachers. Candidates should be accountable for knowing subject-area content and must have time with K-12 students on a regular basis. First year teachers "... should be paired with a skilled mentor to help them with everything from curriculum to teaching strategies and behavior management techniques"; they "... should also have a support group of other new teachers that meets regularly. This support group should be lead by a master teacher."

Her final advice to novice teachers working with diverse students in urban schools is to "... seek out a support system if one isn't already in place." Seek strong teachers to spend time with; observe them and watch how they operate; and "... stay far, far away from the negative teachers who complain frequently. They are always easy to spot!" Her final bit of advice is as follows:

And when it comes to the kids, never give up on any of them.
The ones who are the most difficult to love are often the ones
who need love the most!

Story II – Quinton Ayers

Quinton Ayers, a male Caucasian, has been in the field of education for twenty eight years serving in many different roles. He has taught in first, second,

fourth and some multi-age classrooms; he has also served as assistant principal for two years, was head of teacher mentoring for the school division for one year, and taught four years in high-intensity language training classes. Presently, he resides as a teacher of kindergarten and has done so for seven consecutive years.

Quinton begins the interview by providing information about his teaching background but immediately the researcher gains insight into his tenacity for teaching when he tells an experience he endured one year on the first day of school early in his career. Although he was reared, schooled, and taught for two years in a rural community, he wanted a change and therefore decided to obtain a teaching position in a nearby large urban district. He remembers being assigned to teach first grade so he reported a few weeks before school and labored diligently to set up his classroom and prepare for the upcoming year. On the first day of school, he was greeting his new students and the principal came to him that morning and

she said, "Our numbers are down. You're going to be transferred to this other building. You're going today." [*Researcher: And they gave you a new set of students that day?*] Yep... at lunchtime.... Well, I survived, not comfortably. I remember very distinctly, with my load of stuff in my car, heading down to the school and thinking, "I think I'll just drive on home."

Luckily, for Quinton's future students, he did not drive home but persisted throughout the day and even went after school to the teacher supply store to purchase scissors, paper, and other basic supplies that the new classroom did not have stocked.

Quinton ultimately left this large urban school division feeling burned out and actually sought to enter another career path. He decided to move to the East to “try something different” but ended up teaching again in another large school division, in fact, the same division he still works in today. One difference that he found between the two divisions was the inequity in funding. He mentions that in the first urban school in which he worked, that district had not passed a school bond referendum for approximately fifteen years and was “working with 1960’s finances trying to run the school.” Although he loved his colleagues and students in that school, he “did without so much that it was just very, very difficult.” His present school has many more resources and he describes his present school division as having many different cultural and language backgrounds but, as a whole, “... a pretty wealthy county.” Some specific schools serve “... a less affluent population... real large immigrant populations... low socio-economic populations.... But luckily we pull from the same pool of funds.”

Although Quinton mentions that “we’re really lucky to have the financial support” he does not contribute his teaching success to wealth and school resources but the ability to have an open mind and the willingness to try new and different things. He emphasizes a reflective approach by stating “... if something doesn’t work, then I’ve always been willing to try something else. And I think that eclectic approach really helps in daily teaching.” He also attributes his success to strong mentors...

Who helped me out and who've kind of guided me making different choices, and I think that's been very very helpful to me as well. That's how I ended up going into administration, and, even though I didn't stay in it, I'm really happy that I did that because it gave me a perspective of education that I would never have gotten just staying in the classroom. Because of those mentors throughout my career, it's just broadened my perspective of what education is about.

Quinton reiterates the need for an open mind but also open ears when it comes to effectively dealing with diverse urban students. He mentions that teachers must be like sleuths finding student's strengths and building upon those strengths. He mentions that

I think a lot of times people come into an urban setting and attempt... can only identify what kids don't know, and I think that starts at the wrong level. What you've got to do is identify what they're really good at and their survival skills and what they come to you with, and respect that and build upon that.

He also adds the importance of listening to students because each group is so different and the dynamics are so unique that teachers must be careful to consistently listen to students and not prejudge their character and intent or predetermine their achievement. He supports the notion that urban teachers be "... willing to accept a wide range of abilities" but the goal is that students "... continue to be learners, and continue to make progress on the spectrum."

Along these same lines, Quinton proposes that teachers can gain rapport with diverse students by appreciating what knowledge they come to school with and not judging them as "less than" because of their experiences. He asserts... "I think realizing that we've all got stuff to learn from each other is a major thing." Quinton also seeks to make his classroom nurturing, safe, physically

comfortable, and homelike for students. He feels this type of environment is relaxing for students and inviting for parents because "... I think that the parents as well sense that and feel welcome into the educational environment, and that helps to create the partnership right away..."

Parental support is another area for which Mr. Ayers has a perspective that is most likely unconventional to other teachers. Just as he appreciates children for their experiences, he also appreciates parents and their abilities. He has had classes where "traditional" parental support was outstanding but has also experienced school years when support would be considered very little. He provides the following viewpoint:

I have gone the (whole) year without meeting parents.... You can have that wide range of experience, and I think, realizing that for... even if I didn't see the parents, that they sent their child to me, trusting that I was going to do my best for them. They sent them on time and fed and clothed, that that was their participation, and not to judge that. It is important too... Yeah, I think we tend to think, well, you know, they're supposed to be here for all the PTA meetings, they're supposed to be here to bring cupcakes... you know. For some parents that's not the reality of it. I mean, I have had a lot of immigrant parents who were working two and three jobs, and that they sent their child on time was a major, major achievement. And, you know, you have to appreciate that and value that... that they're giving what they can give...

He is quick to share his willingness to invite parents into his classroom at any given time. Quinton welcomes the parents on Back to School Night, requests a few weeks to help students adjust to the new schedule, and then announces "... that after that you are welcome to drop into the classroom whenever you want to. You don't have to call me in advance. There's an open-door policy." He maintains a casual and ongoing contact with the parents explaining "... I don't

wait for a problem to arise.” He sends student work home every day so students can share with their families the knowledge and experiences they have acquired each school day.

Mr. Ayers feels that his formal teacher training did not prepare him well for the urban classroom but does say that he thinks schools of education are heading in the right direction by providing increased opportunities for field experience. He asserts that teacher candidates should be placed in K-12 classrooms because “... being in the environment... forces you to adapt your methodology and forces you to adapt your techniques and expectations... the pain of daily existence I think is what makes you change and grow...” He suggests that the classroom practicums and field experiences for teacher candidates begin the freshman year in college. He provides the real-life experience below:

I think a good example of that was when I taught in the multi-age program, we depended on student teachers a whole lot to support the program, and so we would get regular student teachers from a university. One semester we had three student teachers, and they just weren't ready. It was like they didn't have a clue, and one of their supervisors, when we met with him, said, “Oh yeah, well we didn't think they were gonna... we didn't think they were ready for this, but we knew that they'd either make it or break it when they hit your program.” And I thought that was such a shame. You're talking about third-year students who've... I don't care if they're great or not, they've devoted three years of their life to this training and we're supposed to make 'em or break 'em? That's the kind of situation I think we need to avoid. They need to be provided with realistic experiences from the very beginning so that they can judge, “Is this right for me.” Because it definitely isn't... we want people to make that self evaluation early on.

He also mentions that schools of education need to help candidates "... understand how to connect with mentors... I think that might be one of the areas that's still neglected by most educational programs." These mentors can provide assistance when new teachers experience overwhelming "rough spots" or even help with the smallest dilemmas such as sharing or brainstorming ideas for efficiently taking attendance, a mundane yet critical daily necessity.

Mr. Ayers provides a final bit of advice for novice urban teachers:

come in with strong beliefs, but don't be afraid to change those beliefs. The reality of situations can force you to change your perception of things, and I think that's essential. Don't be so dogmatic that you think that everything has to be a certain way, because it's not going to be. I think flexibility is a major, major strength for people who would want to come into an urban environment...flexibility... and changing your methodology, and just your view of life I think. That's the most important thing. Don't be hesitant to make changes and try different things.

Story III – Samantha Bergeron

Samantha Bergeron is a female African American who has taught for ten years and has experience serving in grades Kindergarten through middle school. The major portion of her teaching expertise comes from her work in second and third grades. Ms. Bergeron won her award while she was teaching third grade.

Ms. Bergeron attributes her success as a teacher to her ability to develop meaningful relationships and building trust with her students. According to Ms. Bergeron,

Well, I don't really have a person that I would contribute my success to. What's most important is developing sound relationship with children and respecting their background and who they are. I think you can get far more with children when you

establish a positive relationship, whether you agree with their lifestyle, you just have to be willing to form a relationship. And it's got to be a genuine relationship because they can tell when you're...you know...when you're fabricating or putting on a front.... But I think that is most important because children who aren't successful with other teachers can come to me and, as long as we've got a relationship, you know, I can get them to cooperate. I mean, no kid's perfect with me, but, you know, I've been successful with some children that other teachers would just send to the office.

In order to raise the achievement of her students, Ms. Bergeron asserts that teachers must know the curriculum well, understand the different ways that children learn such as their primary modality (auditory, visual, tactile), and the belief that all children can learn. Teachers cannot simply teach "... to the middle of the spectrum of the students in the class" but must be "... willing to teach and reteach to the child who's having a difficult time." Ms. Bergeron adds that she is "not trying to copy No Child Left Behind" but she feels that teachers literally cannot leave anybody out. She mentions that she has witnessed other teachers steer away from children because they look or smell a certain way; they pity them and have a mentality that certain children cannot succeed. According to Ms. Bergeron, the avoidance and/or pitying behaviors of teachers are "... partially some of the reason why some of the children get overlooked."

As noted above, Samantha feels that developing sound relationships with students is the key to her success. She admits that professional development has been a key source is helping her to better understand her students. Ms. Bergeron participated in some training based on the work of Ruby Payne, an expert in the field of working with children from poverty. According to Ms. Bergeron, Ruby Payne

does a lot of study and a lot of work with children from poverty and at-risk children, and I think that focuses a lot on building relationships and being positive with children and reinforcing the idea that, even though this is how you behave in your home environment, street environment, that when you come to school we have another set of rules, and these are the rules that you must go by. And just constantly reiterating that and telling children that in the most positive way.

Ms. Bergeron feels that Ruby Payne's works are well worth looking into so the researcher will address her work in chapter six.

Samantha provides that insufficient communication and lack of parental involvement is one of the biggest challenges in urban schools. Once again, she refers to another piece of educational literature, a book entitled If You Don't Feed the Teachers, They Eat the Students, wherein administrators and teachers can find tips on improving parental contact and participation. According to Samantha, the book provides an idea such as luring families in to eat but inviting them to participate in a "ten-minute workshop on writing" so "... When they leave they feel like they've gotten something as well as 'Hey, we ate, had a good time, and we learned something.'" She further explains that persistence is another important attribute in improving parental communication. She adds...

I think the biggest thing that I've done is I've called, called, and called and written notes and written notes and written notes, and never stopped, until I brought closure to that communication, making sure that I have spoken with that parent and not left any doors open at all. If you do, there's a gap. Either the child thinks that it's okay, or they've gotten by...

Newsletters, monthly progress reports and student work are sent home and community awareness is heightened by a "PR committee" at the school. This committee helps to form partnerships and one certain partnership that Ms.

Bergeron shares in more detail is the “Core Essentials” program from Chick-fil-a, a fast-food restaurant corporation. This character education program provides free Chick-fil-a meals to students who display positive character traits; she mentions that this emphasis on good behavior and personal responsibility “positively affects the climate of the school, which affects the achievement level of students.” One other aspect of this program that Ms. Bergeron utilizes is the ability to give the free meal coupons to students of her choice. She prefers to give out the coupons to students at random because she attempts to “... catch the students being good” who are not typically identified as the “good kids.” She purposely seeks to find them at opportune times because they “really need to be built up so that they can be more apt to show those positive characteristics” and they need to understand what it feels like to actually be rewarded for something good that they do.

In referring to her preparation to work with urban children, she feels she did not have much experience. She explains that she grew up in a rural county, attended a college where she had little contact with urban students, and completed her student teaching placement in a rural school district. Concerning her mentoring experience, she adds, “... when I first came to [school division omitted], I had a... mentor, if you will... who gave me a stapler and a bulletin board... and that was basically it.” Thus, she admits her best preparation was learning by personal experience. She provides the following story:

...I think the best experience that I had was not my first year of teaching...my second year of teaching. Our principal took us on a bus tour, and we went through the community, and I saw how

students were living, and it brought me to tears, because... I was from a rural area, you know, middle class, and I never saw the way some of these students lived, and I just went home and counted my blessings... and the bus tour, I think, impacted me more than anything, as far as making me more sensitive to the needs of students, to just deal with them, but just to be more understanding of what they're dealing with and where they're coming from.

To help teacher candidates prepare for service in urban classrooms, Ms. Bergeron suggests that more cultural diversity courses be provided. She reiterates the fact that different cultures have different views of acceptable behavior and appropriate body language. People in different cultures have varying acceptable behaviors for eye contact, body space, tone or volume of speech, etc. and teachers must be careful not to penalize students, label them as troubled, or identify them for special education classes for the emotionally disturbed because their responses may differ from what the teacher expects them to be. She also adds the following perspective:

... if you look, more and more in the... especially elementary... you see the emotionally disturbed classes growing and growing and it doesn't take a... you know... these are our black boys. These are our African American boys, and it just becomes more and more obvious to you, and maybe you notice more if you are an African American, I don't know, but I know I've noticed...

She also provides some other ideas to help teacher candidates prepare to work with diverse students. She proposes that college and university professors continue to use research based programs and curriculums. She also proposes that candidates take some foreign language classes to help them when working with students who are ESL, participate in experiences in alternative education placements to help them see how to effectively deal with discipline problems,

and, lastly, have a course in school law so candidates know their rights and feel confident in what they can and cannot do in the classroom.

Her final advice for teachers is to find a mentor teacher that will share materials and ideas, and provide encouragement and validation for the novice teacher. She provides a final thought for new teachers

make sure they have a good mentor, and if they're not in a situation where they can have a mentor, they need to be able to spot who looks like they are doing a dynamite job, and they need to copy them, because I found that sometimes there would be really good teachers around me and some of them might not even be willing to share. But, okay, they don't have to share, but I can definitely model and just take note of. The power of observation.

From her references to scholars, programs, and publications, it is quite evident that Ms. Bergeron consults research and current literature when seeking answers to her classroom problems. She maintains that professional development is important for her growth as a teacher and challenges other colleagues to do the same.

Story IV - Ruth Eggleston

Ruth Eggleston, a female Caucasian, appears to be quite a nurturing educator. Since Ms. Eggleston is told at the beginning of the interview that she is the first respondent to participate in the study, she reassures the interviewer that she has plenty of time to talk and everything will work out fine. Throughout the interview, she seeks to quell the researcher's "first interview" nerves by maintaining a soothing voice and providing very uplifting stories about her unique childhood and powerful teaching experiences.

Ruth is French-Canadian and grew up living near the border of Canada and Maine. She is from a large family with twelve children and her father died when she was five years old. Ruth remembers watching her mother struggle and work very diligently to keep her family together; she adds that "... my mother never really went into the school. Not ever." Ms. Eggleston remembers being exposed to different cultures and starting her first day of school not realizing that she did not speak English.

Although her mother made few or no school visits, she attributes part of her success as a teacher of urban students to the values that her mother instilled in her, such as a strong work ethic and a value of education. Besides her mother, whom she describes as an "outstanding role model," she also believes that skilled teachers as well as her students have touched her heart and inspired her to succeed. She feels that her past has given her empathy, insight, and purpose and those things have also contributed to her success.

She decided to become a teacher because she was "... searching for something to meaningful to do" after her children were finished with elementary school. She thought about becoming a medical doctor, but after substitute teaching at a nearby elementary school, she decided that "teaching was really what I had a calling to do." It took her several years to gain full licensure because her husband was in the military and had to transfer multiple times. After attending five different universities, Ms. Eggleston finally accrued the correct combination and number of courses to earn state certification. After receiving

licensure, she taught first and third grade, worked at the administrative level in the teacher evaluation office, and presently serves as a reading specialist.

Ms. Eggleston provides a number of ideas and opinions concerning necessary knowledge, skills, and attributes that aid in making an urban teacher successful with diverse students. She asserts that urban teachers must have a basic understanding of the student's cultures, the curriculum and content. Teachers must have outstanding communication skills, not only with students but also with parents, colleagues, and people with different languages and cultures. They must have a knowledge and a feel for assessment, especially informal so they can find out where their students are and take them beyond that "... realizing that...um... there is a line between holding the students accountable but not pushing them over the edge."

Concerning pedagogical techniques to work with diverse students, Ms. Eggleston purports that teachers must "personalize" it first. Teachers should also have a sense of humor, lots of energy, outstanding organizational skills, and the willingness to work with and learn from colleagues. They must understand different learning styles and modify their instruction using various strategies such as cooperative learning. They must provide hands-on experience and be able to multitask doing several things at once, overlapping and integrating instruction. Teachers must understand that children learn by doing and have to be "... turned on to learning" by making it relevant to their lives. Finally, a teacher must have excellent classroom management skills because "... if they don't establish good

.... routine and procedures, then I think it's very difficult for the teacher to teach and the children to learn.”

To create a rapport and a positive learning environment for diverse urban students, Ms. Eggleston explains that a teacher has to help students feel safe and valued. The classroom must be accepting and respectful for all people. The teacher should help students feel comfortable to become risk takers and instruct them in setting personal academic, behavior, and attitude goals. To reach each student, the teacher must look at the whole child, study the cumulative history folder, visit with parents and attempt to understand that child's home situation along with possible medical or health problems. The teacher should seek out "... just what is that child bringing to the classroom and how you can help the child" by finding out specific needs and tailoring instruction to that individual student. The teacher must "... accept the challenge of helping and going beyond her own comfort zone... or his own comfort zone" to help each child achieve.

Ruth admits one of the largest challenges in her urban school is meeting the needs of the immense diverse student population, especially those children with immigrant parents. She asserts that the school and faculty must go "beyond the school setting" to help parents that are unable to provide food, appropriate clothing, or school supplies for needy children. In essence, the school must "... take over a lot of the parent responsibilities for some of the people that are so deficient in skills to survive in our culture here.”

Additionally, Ms. Eggleston feels that teachers must work to instill in urban children the benefits of a good work ethic and a value for education. Teachers

and schools must be advocates for children providing them with examples of how hard work and an education will ultimately better their lives. She specifically addresses how some of these challenges are met within her school by the utilization of community resources. Ms. Eggleston's school has a partnership with the Coast Guard wherein "... men and women that come in, in their uniforms, all spit and polished, and they're wonderful role models for the students, and they do tutoring..." She also mentions another partnership with the church next door to the school where children receive after school tutoring two nights per week. Sixty tutors from the church provide assistance to children with their homework.

Ms. Eggleston reiterates the need for teachers to work with both students and parents making them aware of the many resources available, such as Social Services and the free use of the local library. Families cannot take advantage of these opportunities if they do not know about them. Ms. Eggleston said she knew how to meet some of the challenges in her diverse school by drawing "... from my own background and my own experiences, and talking to other teachers, and the school counselor."

To communicate with parents, Ruth says a newsletter, translated into six or more different languages, is distributed to parents each month. To help with parent conferences and oral communication, a parent liaison is provided for interpreting. Coffees and social events are held frequently and each teacher is provided with a telephone in their room to be able to make contacts very promptly, not waiting "... for things to fester." Teachers readily use email but Ms.

Eggleston quickly denotes the fact that most of the at-risk students and their families do not have a computer or the parents do not know how to use them. She does say that certain teachers are holding additional computer classes to teach parents how to use available technology. Parents are also invited to come in to the school to volunteer; this is called the H.O.T. program (Help Our Teachers).

Ruth adds that her university education courses did not prepare her well enough to work with diverse students but her personal experiences, passion for teaching, and heart for children helped her to succeed. She proposes that teacher candidates gain more experience with K-12 students and that student teaching should be longer than just a few months. Ms. Eggleston says

I think the student teacher needs to be given maybe six months of independent teaching.... and if they're doing fine, they don't need that long, but I just think the amount of student teaching is just too short for the teacher who is experiencing problems.

She also advocates that teacher candidates be assigned to a mentor "... and be matched with someone, and not just for a short amount of time, but over several years even, throughout their career... academic career at the university." Within these placements and mentoring relationships, teacher candidates must spend more time learning classroom management strategies, motivation techniques, and how to inspire students to think critically. Teachers should strive for a classroom that "... reflects peace and calmness, and you have to create an oasis of excellence."

Mrs. Eggleston provides the following advice for novice teachers seeking to serve in an urban classroom:

I think that... prospective teachers have to realize that they have to teach students how to learn, and how to judge their own learning... and that they shouldn't accept inferior work. Their expectations always have to be at the highest level. I think that prospective teachers need to know that they're not just going to wear the teacher hat. They also have to be a mom and a nurse and a psychologist and a social worker... They have to be well versed and diversified. And... they need to realize that there is potential for a lesson in everything in the world, and that we have standards in everything that we do. And so, teaching extends beyond the classroom and you have to help children become lifelong learners. And you don't always have to stick to the manuals. You can be innovative.

Story V – Cathy Kidsco

According to Cathy Kidsco, teaching "... is my profession. This is always what I've wanted to do." Ms. Kidsco is a female African American who immediately went into the field of education following the completion of her college degree. She started teaching in 1984 and has been doing so ever since; she has served in third, fourth, fifth, and seventh grade classrooms but has taught third grade for the last ten years.

Ms. Kidsco contributes her success to God because He has blessed her with the talent or skill to teach. She also credits other teachers and mentors who have guided her, especially her aunt who was also an educator. She says that others can provide insight "... that you just can't see yourself."

In order for teachers to raise student achievement, Ms. Kidsco asserts that they must develop a love for teaching and a love for children. Teachers must have a "sure foundation" in the content area yet remember that they are "...

teaching students and not the subjects.” To gain rapport with urban students, Cathy reiterates that teachers must “...have a heart for students and education and develop an understanding of children.... Not trying to get rid of the student, but get rid of the problems that the child is having.”

Ms. Kidsco provides that a major challenge she has experienced in her urban classroom is that students do not work at their designated grade level. She advocates the utilization of programs that enrich the academic, emotional, and social lives of these students to help them increase their achievement in all of these areas. She specifically addresses a summer program that targeted students “... who had a lot of difficulties in school. They were the kids who did not go on school trips because of behavior problems.” She implemented this program, which stressed character education and a small student-teacher ratio (two adults to ten children), and she saw tremendous growth in these students. The program provided enrichment experiences, such as a trip to Baltimore, Maryland to see the harbor, visit the aquarium, ride the train, and stay overnight in a hotel. Ms. Kidsco feels that these unique experiences help students to develop personal responsibility and gain a broader perception of the world. She adds that some of her students have never left the city so this is a wonderful opportunity for them.

In communicating with parents, Ms. Kidsco shares that a teacher should “... try to give them first a positive reinforcement about the kids.” After the initial positive contact, other problems or difficulties can be shared through conferences, biweekly progress reports, interim reports, and report cards.

Ms. Kidsco provides that her personal experience prepared her to work with diverse children because she grew up and lived in an urban community. She also felt that her college courses and experiences helped to prepare her because she remembers a class assignment wherein she had to create a reading game and then facilitate this game with students in a neighborhood urban school. She also had other field experiences where interacting and teaching students was part of the course requirements. She feels these “real life” experiences are critical for preservice teachers in deciding whether they should pursue teaching as a career. She adds that a liaison between the university and school could be beneficial “... like a lead teacher from elementary, high school, middle school, whatever, to periodically go back to the college and speak to the students and give them some reality of a classroom setting.” She also advocates that practicum experiences need to begin earlier in a candidate’s coursework because there “have been people who have gone to student teaching and decided, ‘Hey, this is not what I want.’” She further advocates the value of good teacher preparation programs with meaningful coursework. According to Ms. Kidsco, she had a student teacher who was a “career switcher” and she was not prepared properly because “... they don’t have to spend as much time in the classroom. They don’t get the same [training] that four year students would receive.” Ms. Kidsco explained that this was “not a good experience” and definitely proposes effective preparation programs that provide numerous field experiences.

Ms. Kidsco provides the following advice to novice urban teachers:

... be confident. You know, in what you're doing, your skills, be open to learning from the students, from colleagues, from parents, and of course from teachers, even from the leaders of the community... Be open to suggestions that others may have. Sometimes you may have to spend some extra hours but don't complain about it, but just do it because this is the profession that you chose. Take extra time until you ... feel confident and... efficient. Don't give up. As soon as you.... kind of get things to a system that you want... it'll work!

Story VI – Casey Love

Ms. Love, a female Caucasian, has served in the roles of fourth and fifth grade teacher and summer school principal for grades Kindergarten through twelfth. Currently, she serves as a fourth grade teacher and is enrolled in graduate classes to earn a Master's Degree in Administration. Ms. Love contributes her success to colleagues and her personal study of literature and research on teaching strategies and classroom management techniques.

Ms. Love feels that teachers who wish to be successful with urban children must develop the ability to diagnose individual student needs and then plan experiences and implement them to improve achievement. Teachers must be willing to “dig” for strategies through reading current research, searching on the internet, and asking for advice and/or assistance from other veteran teachers and specialists. She further adds that teachers should not just use technology for their own learning and planning efficiency but also be able to use the technology in instructing students “... and incorporating it into content.”

To create a rapport with diverse students, Ms. Love feels that schools must create a climate that welcomes all cultures and makes students feel accepted. She also adds that teachers must utilize the resources in place for at

risk students, such as guidance services, Title I teachers, interpreters and translators, social workers, health providers, and others so that these children have a complete support system.

Ms. Love mentions that the biggest challenge she has encountered in working with urban children is the lack of parental involvement. To aid in better communication, she participates in many phone conferences. She also works with students after school and then takes them home; she has been advised against this practice but she "... feels like the benefits far outweigh what could happen." She is willing to do whatever it takes to help her students achieve and adds

You have to make modifications to meet the needs of your students, and sometimes it means going the extra mile. There are teachers here that walk out with students and get in their car, and they take work home, and I take work home too after staying here until five, but... I don't know... I guess that's what makes exemplary.

To further communicate with parents, she publishes a monthly newsletter and a homework calendar with resources attached so parents and students have expectations and parameters clearly defined. She provides progress reports every three weeks, and of course report cards. She also advocates the incorporation of "project-based learning activities" with students, especially during the school day. She explains that she sees flagrant inequities between the projects when they are assigned for completion at home so to "alleviate

the feeling of inadequacy that some students have when they don't have the parental assistance on these projects," she obtains resources so she can facilitate these tasks in class.

To demonstrate her perseverance in providing individualized needs for every student, Ms. Love includes a story about a student in her room who has a personalized behavior plan. She meets with him and his mother every Thursday to reflect on the past week's progress and set goals for the upcoming week. At one of these meetings, he had just returned to school from being absent and Ms. Love describes that

... I had all this makeup work stapled together, and it was the day of our conference, and he ditched it somewhere. Well, they came in to sit down for the conference and I said, "Did you give your Mom that work I sent home today?" And he said, "No, I lost it." And I said, "You lost it?" And he said, "Yeah." I said, "Where'd you lose it?" And he said, "I don't know." So I said, "I know it's somewhere and I know you know where it is, and ...you have a chance now to tell me where it is." Well he wouldn't tell me, so I went and searched every trash can in the hallway and came back and it was in the trashcan in the back of my room, and right in front of his mother I pulled that stuff out of the trash can. Oh, my gosh, she was like... "You are in so much trouble." *[Researcher: You pulled it right out of the trash can?!]* And I said, "You can do these things, and it makes life inconvenient for me when I have to go dig through the trash cans in the school, that's not real pleasant for me, but I will do it."

Ms. Love feels that she was prepared to work with the students in her school because she, too, attended school in this district. She does, however, mention that the demographics in her school have changed within the last decade. Subsidized apartments have recently been erected so more students in a lower socio economic bracket attend the school. She also denotes the

changes in family structure stating that she has had an increase in students that come from either single parent homes or homes in which both parents work. To assist students who struggle to obtain necessary materials for success in school, Ms. Love feels that a teacher must have a sense of philanthropy. She adds that

I had one teacher that said, "So and so never has a pencil." And she really got on the kid for not having a pencil. Well, I go to Sam's Club and buy packs of pencils. I give the pencils away. I'm just the pencil giver. If somebody borrows a pencil and they're in my reading group and they're going to the teacher next door, they want to give it back to me and I ask if they need the pencil for the rest of the day. And they can keep it. And they're just like, "Oh, thank you." And to me it's just another philanthropic kind of thing I do. I give to the Humane Society, I give to the Cancer Society, you know, why not help my students who are right here with me every day. So, somebody said, "Well that's not building responsibility." And I said I don't think of it that way. I think if they could bring it, they would, but some of them just can't. So, I provide paper, I provide notebooks. You know, you can kind of see the needs and you go from there.

She urges teachers to create relevant curriculum and include culturally meaningful experiences. Teachers must be able to convey to students why they are learning the content or skill and acknowledge that "... you can't just do cookie-cutter teaching, you know, where you stand up, you teach to everybody and everybody learns the same way. That's kind of out the window for every setting!" She also encourages teachers to instill a sense of self worth and school pride in their students; she mentions that her school has spirit day each Friday and the students wear their shirts with the school insignia and this weekly ritual "... helps bring... kids that are from other cultures feel more a part of the school." Her final advice to urban novice teachers is to vary their teaching strategies, get to know the students and families very well, and

also remember to recognize students when they succeed, and not just recognize those that are the straight A students, but celebrate the success of every student, because that self esteem is so important. And when kids feel like the teacher likes them, that's half the battle. And this business of don't smile until Christmas...I think that's ridiculous. I really do.

Story VII – Jennifer Morris

Ms. Jennifer Morris has been teaching for fourteen years. Before going into education, she worked in the corporate world but decided to go back to school to gain her teacher certification in her mid thirties. Ms. Morris, a female Caucasian, taught second grade for two years and first grade for twelve years. She currently teaches first grade and serves as the unit leader.

Ms. Morris provides a number of essential knowledge and instructional skills that aid teachers in being effective with urban students. She advocates that teachers must be knowledgeable in subject matter, child development, teaching practices and instructional methods, advancements in technology, and different learning styles. She also adds that teachers must have:

... an acceptance of different cultures... You know, so many times, you know, you come into this situation, everybody does, with their own prejudices, their own values, their own lifestyles, and, you know, you're gonna see it all. And, if you can't deal with people of diverse backgrounds, you are... you are not going to survive in an urban school.

In working with urban students and gaining their rapport, Ms. Morris feels that a "common thread" with diverse students is that they experience very little to no certainty or structure in their lives. Therefore, she feels that procedures and structures help to maintain a calm, safe, inviting learning environment where students "... feel comfortable and where they can succeed." She says that other

teachers call her the “structure queen” because routine is such an important part of her instructional day. She has a place and time for everything. Expectations are given for everything from sharpening pencils to heading papers and with these routines “some things just take care of themselves so that little things don’t become a big issue, and I think that’s true whether, you know, you’re a diverse population or high-risk students or not.”

She explains that many of her students come from dysfunctional families and she therefore advocates a sense of “family” within her classroom and school by telling her students that “... this is your school family and you treat people in your family a certain way and you talk to people in your school family a certain way.” All of the teachers in her first grade unit see the children as “our children” and they learn all of their names; this gives the students a “connection” and “a sense of belonging” within the classroom and school. Mrs. Morris feels that “... the more they feel a part of things and the more they buy into what you’re doing, the quicker they’re going to take ownership of everything that’s going on... and the work they’re doing.”

Finally, Ms. Morris addresses the issue of a teacher’s personal bias and how it can affect the classroom environment. She insists that teachers must “... leave their judgmental self at the door” and they

have to be accepting, and that doesn’t mean tolerating behaviors or attitudes that you find unacceptable. That’s not what I’m talking about. But, just understanding that these children, many of them, lead a very different life, and what, you know, what you value and what they value may be worlds apart. And anything we can do to make them feel more a part of things at school and make them

realize that school's a really good place, the easier the rest of it becomes.

Ms. Morris continues to share her thoughts about urban teaching by sharing her "biggest" challenge, lack of parental involvement. She helps to overcome this by making "... a point to have my first communication be positive." She calls parents or writes them a note, usually within the first week of school and shares something good about their child. Jennifer feels that this initial positive contact lays a "groundwork" for dealing with future issues so "... the next time you call the parent you don't get that dead silence on the phone." Parents must very quickly learn "... that you're not just out to 'slam dunk' their child. You know, they have a feeling that you really care..." She remembers attending a conference with a teacher of one her own children wherein the teacher did not share one beneficial thing her child had done. She shares: "You know it was devastating to me as a parent, and I thought, 'I will never do that to anybody, I don't care what the circumstances are. I don't care what the situation is. I'm going to find something good to say.'" She feels that affirming experiences with parents are very effective and build a relationship of teamwork where the parent is not expected to solve all the problems but "... you know, you make it clear that it's something you're gonna work on together, that you both want what's best for the child." Ms. Morris also invites parents to visit her room. She says that she has had many people ask her for an appointment to come observe but replies "No,

you come any time you want... It's an open door." She adds that if she cannot get the parents in to see her, she will go to them noting "... I've done many home visits in my time."

In working with both students and parents, Jennifer proposes that a sense of humor is very helpful but also a sense of knowing when to "diffuse" a situation, rather than escalate it. A teacher must know how to pick his or her "battles" wisely and know "when to let it go." She shares "I have high expectations, but you know, if you push too hard, too fast, if you're constantly picking on every little thing, you're gonna lose the war."

To communicate with parents, Ms. Morris has her students use a homework agenda or daily planner that parents must view each night. She uses conferences, phone calls, newsletters and sporting events such as little league football, baseball, cheerleading and others to make casual and ongoing contact. She finds it very effective to share experiences with her students and parents out of the traditional school setting; in fact, she mentions that "... many times that'll be the turning point."

She further asserts the idea that teachers must make students understand that they are each special, needed, and a critical factor in making the classroom function correctly, every one of them. She provides a humorous story about one of her students who was a "difficult" child with additional problems caused by chronic absences from school. One morning, when missing yet again, she went to the office and called him at home saying

“Look, you’re gonna get up out of that bed and you’re gonna put your clothes on and you’re gonna get in your Dad’s truck and you’re coming to school.” I said, “Or I’m going to come and get you.” He sat there and I said, “I’m serious. We’re all here waiting for you.” He said, “Everybody?” I said, “Yes. Everybody is here waiting for you. Now you get dressed and get to school.”

The administrative assistants in the office laughed at her for demanding that he come explaining that “Most people would be glad to get a break.” Well, within minutes of her phone call with this student, there was a fire drill and, of course, all inhabitants in the building had to exit. As everyone was waiting on the lawn to reenter the building, the father drove up in front of the school and the boy jumped out of the truck and screamed “You really were waiting for me...Everybody really was waiting for me!” She describes that as “the greatest moment ever” and cherishes it as an example of a student whom she helped to feel important.

According to Ms. Morris, her preparation to work with diverse students did not come from her college education courses but from her life experiences. She felt ready because she was older, had children of her own, worked in other fields, and had done a lot of traveling. She grew up in a very diverse environment with exposure to different cultures; her father, reared in a home that was not always accepting of others, determined that his children would value others and appreciate differences. Ms. Morris “... was just in a different place than your average college student... I can’t say there is anything in my college courses that

prepared me. It was more life experiences and the way I had been raised.”

To prepare teacher candidates to work in urban schools, Ms. Morris thinks that student teaching placements should be extended, and that mentors or staff development specialists should be assigned to make sure that positive support systems are in place for novice teachers. Veteran teachers and those in charge of teacher evaluation should be willing to teach model lessons and view candidates in a “non-judgmental” way. Candidates must be able to do a task analysis of their students ascertaining prior knowledge and building on that. They must plan well because “there is just so much to be said for over planning. You know, the worst thing in the world is to be caught without enough to do!” They must plan with

high expectations for everybody, and that means lots of time you have to set aside your own preferences or prejudices...you know, just because this child doesn't look the way you think he or she should, or act the way, or go to the same church, or live in the same neighborhood, doesn't mean they can't be highly successful.

Her advice to new teachers in urban environments includes the ability to ask for help when needed, the willingness to accept constructive criticism, and the importance of accepting other people and their different values. She also proponent the importance of providing procedures and routines: “you know, it's not to say that you have to micromanage everything” but a basic structure “... just simplifies things so much.” Lastly, she encourages teachers, even veteran ones, to “keep learning.” She asserts

Get help when you need it. Don't be afraid to ask for help and, you know, in a school where you don't have the benefit of a staff development specialist or a structured mentor program, you know, just to align yourself with somebody in your grade level... who will help you. But you've gotta be open to it, and that's hard for people. It is really hard to open up. You know, everybody likes to think they've got it all together, and that's when you're going to fall down...truly...

Story VIII – Anthony Smith

Mr. Smith, a male Caucasian, is from “Hillbilly Mountain culture” and “proud of it.” The researcher’s overall impression of Mr. Smith is that he is one of the most humble and gracious men that she has ever talked with or met. Interestingly enough, the transcriber was so enamored with listening to Mr. Smith, she wanted to meet him! Mr. Smith has been in education for thirteen years serving as a teacher in the following types of classrooms: special education, multi-age (4 through 6), multi-disciplinary third grade, and fourth and fifth grade science. Mr. Smith chose to be a teacher later in life by suggestion and then support from his wife. After seeing him so happy for many years when working with children through various volunteer opportunities, such as Little League, Big Brothers, Boys Club, and others, his wife encouraged him to go back to school in his early thirties to gain his teaching credentials. He has never regretted this advice or decision.

When asked “To what or whom do you contribute your success and why?” he responds “I suppose we could thank everybody we’ve ever met” but reiterates that much of his achievement comes from the emotional

support of his wife. He shares “I don’t see how somebody teaches that doesn’t have a spouse that supports them.” He further mentions the overwhelming impact that parents make on children; his father taught by example and “just the way he lived his life” and his mother taught through stories. He adds his mother was the best teacher he ever had; she simply told stories and her whole conversation was in narrative and anecdote form. Mr. Smith explains that is how he teaches because “hands on, stories, emotion, that type of thing... stays with us more than for Friday tests.”

Mr. Smith’s school has a unique blend of diversity drawing students from both mountain and inner city cultures. To effectively work with these students, Mr. Smith explains that you must have “constant and positive’ home contact and

Many of these parents have had bad school experiences, and we’ve got to earn their trust and meet with them where they are and accept them as they are, not wanting to change them, like we all want to do. Teaching skills are almost meaningless, I think, as a factor in reaching street-smart kids...some of these kids we get, they need somebody that accepts them just as they are, even if they fail, which some will, in spite of our best efforts. Regardless of the No Child Left Behind law, they’re going to fail, some of them, and we just gotta accept that. Do the best to keep them from it, but knowing ahead of time that’s going to happen. *[Researcher: Do you want to add anything about pedagogy skills?]* ... I think that’s totally secondary to reaching these kids. If they know we love and accept them as they are, uh...you know there’s so many ways to teach. There are as many ways to teach as there are teachers, but... in my opinion...in working with these kids there’s no certain type of teaching skill that’s going to reach them. Any teaching skill will reach them if they know we care enough about them first, including their Mom and Dad...whoever... That’s just my opinion. My experience on it I should say.

Mr. Smith encourages contact with students and parents outside the school environment. He teaches adult GED classes at the local jail and therefore maintains contact with some parents through this venue. He attends his student's Little League games, works with them at Boy's Club, and attempts to "learn their lingo." At the time of this interview, he and his wife are planning large Halloween parties on Friday and Saturday night so students can relax and play in the large fields and "haunted woods," as the students call them, behind his house. He is working with parents to coordinate a carpool so all students may attend, even those living in households with no transportation. He asks for children to bring \$5.00 to pay for food, drink, and supplies, but of course, if the students do not have it, they are still welcome to come and participate. No one is left out who wants to be there. The Halloween party is also looked at as an enrichment experience extending from research activities students have been participating in at school. He shares "We've done a lot of science lessons regarding that this week. Superstition versus science... that type of thing." He says

It doesn't do any good to say to these kids that you care. They've heard that before... But if you get involved in their lives, I think, ... that it takes a lot of effort, but it's fun effort, and... it pays off.... And you do help them... I don't mean to sound arrogant or presumptuous ... and they probably help you more than you help them. They've taught me a lot.

A challenge that Mr. Smith encounters with his students is that many of them seem to have a "self-fulfilling prophecy... to just drop out, 'cause their parents did." They have few quiet places to study at home because they live in one room

apartments and “making honor roll is actually a social stigma to them.” Mr. Smith adds that he understands why many of the students do not wish to make high grades on their assignments because they are getting ready to enter middle school where “... they’ve got to be emotionally, psychologically and socially adjusted with their peers, and they’re not going to be that if they’re a young kid in poverty making A’s and playing in the band, and Boy Scouts. They’re laughed at.” He adds that many of their reading skills are not, and may not ever be, on grade level but

they can certainly contribute to society. There’s many things they can do, and they’re inherently valuable to all of us, and...I just think we expect them to be what they’re not lots of times... All we can do is just love ‘em and show ‘em a way out, and some of them will make it and some won’t. But we’ve never failed any of them if we’ve shown them the way.

He further explains that teachers can empathize with children by “putting yourself in their place. What would you like, and you’d like to be accepted for who you are... there’s too many times when we try to, you know, try to change the culture, and that’s, that’s going to be impossible. And... we don’t want to do that.”

He refers back to the importance of contact outside school; he visits his student’s homes, visits their churches when invited, and attends family funerals.

He adds:

And we just prove that we accept them as they are. I heard it said once there’s nothing so unequal as the equal treatment of unequals. That’s what many education reforms try to do—treat everybody equal, and that’s just terrible, ‘cause we’re not.

Personal experience has also shaped Mr. Smith’s view of working with diverse children. He recalls a time back in college when he was placed in a dorm with all

athletes because he had a golf scholarship. Football, tennis, baseball players and others were “all mixed in one dorm.” He learned about many different views of life and heard “firsthand a lot of the challenges that they experienced.”

According to Mr. Smith, his roommate

was a black guy from inner city...from Roanoke...and I went home with him one time, and we became very big friends, and the culture shock...(laughter)...I mean, you can feel reverse prejudice, and then you really know what I call reverse...if I'm called a white honky hillbilly. Then he gets called an Oreo cookie for bringing me along, I mean, that opens your eyes and your heart... I guess you never understand prejudice until you've felt it.

Another experience that helps him to understand and work effectively with diverse students is his volunteer work at the local homeless mission where he gets a feel for poverty and how it affects families. He also adds that he teaches at the local jail helping the inmates get their GED and job placement upon release. Many of the inmates he has taught are parents of his students so he is able to help the children by helping the parent earn a degree, be released from their sentence, go back to their families, and obtain better employment.

According to Mr. Smith,

I enjoy doing that as much as I do teaching fourth and fifth grade, and I probably learn more from those men, because they face so much frustration and hopelessness by that time in their lives... You don't see rich people in jail. You see poverty-stricken people, because a rich person, you know, is going to be able to afford a lawyer to get them out of whatever they did. Most of the time... not always, but most of the time. And...we try to help break that cycle, and we know we can't save the world, but if you save one child you're making it a better world, so I guess in a sense you are saving it.

Mr. Smith provides final advice to novice teachers serving a diverse student population and, true to his admitted favorite teaching strategy, he shares it by telling a story about one of his former students. This student, a graduate from a college in North Carolina who now works for the government as a biologist, found out about Mr. Smith being a candidate for the McGlothlin Award and decided to write a reference letter for him. Mr. Smith shared that he taught this student his first year in the classroom and recalls that he was “an inner city kid... from a broken home”; he spent additional time with him, gave him rides to ballgames, and later helped him fill out college application forms. According to Mr. Smith, one of the judges for the McGlothlin Award discreetly told him that the letter of his former student was one of the large factors in why he won the award. Mr. Smith describes the letter below explaining that it contained

kind of a story...more of an anecdote. He [the student who wrote the letter] said most teachers find you in a hole and they shout directions from the bank about how to get out... and he said some of the best ones stand at the edge and reach down and actually help you out. And they brace themselves to not fall in with you though. And he said that I actually jumped in the hole with him and figured out how to get out with him...out of the big hole. I thought that was...if I could draw a picture of what I was trying to do as a teacher...but it's emotionally risk taking to do that. But you'll pull a lot of kids out with you, or actually you don't pull them out with you, you just get out with them. (Laughter) But you've got to jump in the hole with them. There's no other way that works so well....
[Researcher: Jump in with them huh?] And they'll be forever enriched.

Currently, Mr. Smith is in the process of establishing a non-profit organization, which will be called “Foundation for a Better World”; the foundation's primary long range will be to award scholarships to children (with “at-risk” students receiving

prime consideration) who volunteer to work during their pre-college years (starting in 5th grade) at various community, social, and environmental projects to make our world better. Additionally, Mr. Smith is working to finalize a land donation from the Wal-Mart corporation that will provide property with a cave that Mr. Smith can utilize to enhance the nature and science camps that he facilitates for children.

Story IX – Frank Vannest

Mr. Vannest is a male Caucasian who considers himself a “generalist” and believes in “...an Esperanto of Education, in other words, a body of knowledge that would be relevant to any country all over the world at a particular grade or age. That’s what I try to do, and it would include science, world history, culture, measurement, geography, vocabulary...” He feels that a good knowledge base, grounded with a well balanced vocabulary, and the ability to communicate with others will lead to a more peaceful and tolerant world.

Presently, Mr. Vannest is serving in his twenty-second year of teaching. According to Mr. Vannest, “After four years of teaching I left education for eleven years and I was in law. I returned seventeen years ago and have been happy ever since.” He describes his class as very diverse in culture, speech, religion, and other areas but does include that his class is derived from a special population, gifted and talented. According to Mr. Vannest, “... I feel like I’m teaching in the United Nations!” Mr. Vannest teaches history, science, health, spelling vocabulary, current events, and reading; his colleague teaches math and writing. Mr. Vannest further adds that he enjoys teaching Sunday School at the

Jewish Temple "... because that's a general population as opposed to my G.T. class at public school."

He attributes his success to approximately 50 people including his family, students and faculty in college, and teaching colleagues and administrators. He admits that he gets his inspiration from many places, including personalities in the newspaper and says "I don't have to know a person personally for them to impact me."

Mr. Vannest feels that teaching multiple concepts in vivid and meaningful ways is critical for children. He also adds that vocabulary is one of the main "keystones" of his teaching. His vocabulary program includes about 460 words and consists of Latin expressions, geographical locations, science terms, cultural words, and "... words that are just fun and important to know." Mr. Vannest feels so strongly about the importance of vocabulary acquisition for student achievement and success in life that he developed and "stars" in a television show for children that is devoted to teaching word and word concepts to children. It is produced by the school division, aired on a local cable channel, and has won various educational awards for its content and innovation.

Although Mr. Vannest teaches those students deemed "gifted and talented" he does mention that these children need additional motivation and positive reinforcement as do other children; he provides US stamps, coins, and other incentives. Mr. Vannest explains that these prizes, especially the stamps, are a catalyst for other lessons in history, culture, economics, and other interesting areas. He adds that "... the kids come

back year after year, and they say 'Mr. Vannest, I still have those stamps.' They don't throw them away. They keep them. They keep them forever!"

To gain rapport with his students, he teaches with strategies that the children find fun and interesting and that he feels builds cognitive skills and character development. One such strategy would be that of roleplay and riddle; Mr. Vannest acts out or provides a riddle to get students to remember important words or concepts. Another strategy that Mr. Vannest utilizes is the "overnight communication" between himself and his students. Mr. Vannest mandates that all students must write him a formal note on an index card when they make a request for classroom materials, an additional copy of lost or misplaced notes or worksheets, and other necessary resources. The student must deliver the note to Mr. Vannest so he can place it in his shirt pocket; he will attempt to respond to the request some time after school or in the evening. This management technique serves multiple purposes. It is a written reminder for Mr. Vannest so he will obtain the needed resource, it enhances negotiation and writing skills of students, and it teaches the children responsibility and patience because they do not receive instant gratification but must wait at least one night for a response. He describes this correspondence as "... better than email!"

Although Mr. Vannest believes in critical thinking, creativity, and free expression of ideas and opinions, he does make it clear that he believes students also need continuity. Since Mr. Vannest was a lawyer for several years, his wardrobe consisted of white shirts, ties, coats, suits, and other professional attire. He carried this same wardrobe over into his career as a teacher and feels that

his consistency in dress, appearance, and expectations aid in maintaining an orderly, peaceful classroom. Mr. Vannest advocates objectivity, relevance, and optimism in teaching. He proponent tolerance and balance stating that "... a fanatic for anything is no good!"

Next, Mr. Vannest mentions that because he emphasizes vocabulary, he speaks to his students "as if they were adults" and when creating the climate for his classroom he does not expound upon lists of rules; he simply asks for his students to use "common sense." The first day of school he starts with spelling vocabulary words so his students can go home and share that they are already learning in his class. He further mentions that his partner colleague is more "lovey dovey" than he so that contrast creates a good environment for the students.

To make students feel like they are active contributors in their classroom, Mr. Vannest allows students to have "class jobs." Students in the room fill out a "job application" listing their qualifying skills to do the job successfully. This enables them to practice persuasive writing, critically think about their personal strengths, and develop personal responsibility. The weekly "payroll" consists of stamps, coins, and other collectibles that students will value and research. Mr. Vannest chuckles as he estimates that "... we only have about 12% unemployment in my class!"

Mr. Vannest does not expend too much energy striving for communication with parents and the community. He tells parents that they may phone him at home if they would like to speak to him and even

mentions that he is the only teacher in his school with the “chutzpah” to proclaim his aversion to email communication. He adds “... email just opens up the floodgates. They’ll tell you anything and everything. You know this is the age of information. Everyone should be a genius by now... but we’re not geniuses. There’s too much information. You’ve got to be a little more selective.” He adds that student work is sent home each week, but, more importantly, the most communication is derived from the students themselves. According to Vannest, “... my kids talk about what we do at school, which is what the teachers... I mean the parents really want to hear... But you gotta’ be doing something exciting. Otherwise they’re not going to talk about it.”

His final bit of advice to novice urban teachers is to be

... objective. And the goal there is to make discriminating minds and find relevance, to be optimistic, to have fun with students, to appreciate humor, to stretch their smiling muscles... to inspire the students. I inspire my students by telling them stories, and by modeling, and... I’ve always been called a risk taker and ...there was someone that was very old that was interviewed recently and they said, “Is there anything that you regret?” And he said, “I didn’t take enough risks.” And, you have to encourage taking risks sometimes. It might get you in trouble, but that’s part of it...that’s part of the whole experience. Experience everything.

Story X – Vincent Vyman

Vincent Vyman has a unique way of viewing and talking about the world of education. Throughout the interview, in lieu of the word “they,” he uses the word “we.” He feels that teachers, including himself, should be active voices and shapers in current trends and issues. Mr. Vyman, a male Caucasian, comes

from a family filled with educators; he mentions that both of his parents are teachers. His brother and sister-in-law teach as well as his wife's sisters. He has been in education for ten years in various roles. He is currently teaching third grade, as he has for the past seven years but has also held positions in administration, curriculum leadership, and consultation with various educational companies, such as Leap Frog, Teachergate, and Fablevision. He is passionate about the field of teaching so he is involved in regular committee work for the state department of education. He receives constant invitations to provide professional development to different schools and districts, to serve on educational advisory boards, and numerous other opportunities but critiques each of them as a "kind of litmus test for me of what would make me a better teacher. And, if it will, then I need to consider it. If it won't, then it doesn't deserve any consideration." Mr. Vyman feels it is unfortunate but says that

... it's basically impossible to advance in the teaching profession without leaving the classroom... I mean [we] have established a system that does a really great job of prohibiting advancement... It doesn't matter how you define the term advancement. If you just want more prestige, if you want more pay, if you want more responsibility, if you want...more flexibility or independence...any of those...you have to leave the classroom.

Therefore, he has held temporary administrative positions, obtained National Board Certification, and received other various teaching awards to "... advance in the profession without leaving the classroom."

At present, Mr. Vyman is working with the state department of education to revise state certification for teachers that will, in the future, consist of a "multi-tier licensure system" so that "not everybody will earn the same teaching

certificate in Virginia anymore.” He feels that teachers who could be considered as a “teacher leader or a master teacher” should be given a unique licensure that documents the teacher’s ability and “readiness” for other responsibilities and additional compensation.

As evidenced by his background and life’s work, Mr. Vyman is passionate about teachers and their ability to succeed with children. He feels that his own success is a “combination of preparation and opportunity.” He has “done a lot of hard work” and preparation on his own but has also been given opportunities to showcase his talents and work with other colleague experts. He mentions that the experiences outside of the classroom have allowed him “... to think on a broader scale than just the twenty kids sitting in front of me.” He feels that “teachers just get trapped in their classrooms”; therefore he consistently finds opportunities to get out and “wrestle” with state and national issues concerning education. He explains that these experiences

have allowed me to overcome this system of indoctrination that we have, where the No Child Left Behind Act tells state departments what to do and they tell School Boards what to do and they tell Superintendents, and they tell principals, and they tell teachers and they tell students. It’s like... one person bosses the next around, and so you just get completely locked into your classroom, and so...the thing that’s made a big difference for me has been the chance to get past that.... And, if you take that system [*Researcher: Top down.*] and the same parties, and you think about who knows the most about what kids need. The kids know the most; the teacher probably knows the next most; the principal probably next; the superintendent next... it’s a complete reversal.

In addition to “preparation and opportunity,” Mr. Vyman also addresses the impact that educators have had on his teaching success. He mentions that he

learned how not to teach from some of his past teachers and professors.

According to Mr. Vyman, “I had some really terrible professors in college, when it came to teaching... having people that were complete experts in their field and that... couldn’t have done a worse job with communicating it.” However, he does say that “if I could narrow it down to one person that has made a big difference for me, it’s a teacher that is twenty five years older than me, that saw potential in my teaching, in my first year of teaching...” Mr. Vyman explains that this veteran teacher influenced his decision to stay involved in teaching, and he became an excellent friend and confidant. He considers this veteran teacher to be his mentor and though the mentor did not always do “everything the school mandated that he do” or “be on the right page on the right day” or “work till seven or eight at night,” the relationship was important because

it’s... that sort of relationship where he acts like I have things to offer, and he obviously has things to offer, but it’s not the system of, “Let me tell you how this is done.” I think I found out pretty early on that he really was passionate about what he was doing... and he was interested in a young teacher, and it made a world of difference for me.

Mr. Vyman feels that standards, curriculum guides, teacher editions, and other mandates and resources promote the idea that “kids need to change to fit school” but he feels that to raise student achievement, “schools should be changing to fit kids... and so this ... in my opinion... flies in the face of the new federal legislation that I see as very, very one size fits all!” He feels that colleges and schools should embrace and implement the idea that “one size fits few!” He mentions that this is difficult because “the people who are becoming teachers

now weren't taught that way and are certainly not being taught that way in their college classes. And, you know, most college classes are completely void of any differentiation. Professors might be able to tell you about learning styles, but not many of them differentiate based on them!" In addition to adopting a "one size fits few" mentality, teachers must be able to use kids' strengths to build their weaknesses; he explains that adults use their strengths to compensate for their weaknesses and that is how they usually choose a profession. He feels that teachers should have this mentality concerning children "... and there's no policy or law that says we've got to be sure kids are building their weaknesses using their strengths, but I think that maybe there should be."

He also adds that when teachers work in urban environments the diversity is "really really incredible" and the variables that these students bring to school should not be viewed as problems but as possibilities and "more things that you can connect with"

.... But I think, in the end, if you are just trying to look at kids' preferences, and the places they've been, and their learning style, and the things that they're good at...the things they enjoy, and you try to connect those to the things they need to learn, then it works a lot better...and you have to pay more attention to that when everybody is so different... I think my main idea was the differentiation is more important than it is in other settings.

When questioned about challenges that he has faced in the urban setting, his first response was "student transience" informing that "... we get these cumulative folders for kids that have been in a dozen schools by second grade, and... how can they learn anything?... I've actually asked third graders before to name their old teachers, and they can't. They've just had too many of them." He

continues to admit, however, that one of the challenges is student diversity and “... I don’t just mean black and white. We have a huge socio-economic diversity here.” Mr. Vyman describes his school as one which is located in an upper middle class neighborhood but busses in children from downtown who are generally from lower middle class and poor neighborhoods. He considers the inequity in transportation and parental support to be a challenge because the neighborhood children can walk to and from school; these students are able to get home in just a few minutes and many have a parent to greet them and get them started on homework. However, the children who live downtown spend an extra hour just getting home, must enter an empty house with no one to supervise their evening assignments, and then experience more difficulty obtaining field trip money, signatures for important papers and permission slips, etc. He sees this as “... a problem in any urban setting, not just here.”

To overcome this Mr. Vyman has utilized the P.T.A. to help provide extra resources, such as field trip scholarships and academic supplies for students who need extra support and he has also helped to form an informal partnership with the downtown YMCA to conduct parent conferences and workshops like “How to Make Homework Not a Hassle” in their building, making it easier for those families who have no transportation or little time to ride across town to school site functions and events. He adds that as a teacher must differentiate instruction for students, he must also “differentiate your outreach” to parents and families.

He further includes the importance of a positive initial contact with the family explaining that

if your first contact with a family is adversarial, then your relationship is doomed. I mean...if the first phone call that I make to the family is to tell them that their kid's in trouble, then it's over. I'm never going to get where I could have gotten with the parents or that kid, and so...I mean...this sounds silly, but at all costs I make sure my first contact is positive. It means...this is going to sound terrible...but, even if it means I meet a parent for the first time three days into school, and their kid's just been a nightmare, and they say, "How are things going?" I say, "They're going great." I mean...what I mean is...I'll spend time that first contact saying positive things... "Now, I have really noticed what a talented artist he is." I don't point out that he's been drawing while I've been trying to teach. But I have to establish what the strengths are. And remember, I said you want to build weaknesses using strengths...and your relationship with the kid's family can be a strength instead of a weakness. And so what people end up doing is, they take this thing that can be...they take this thing that could be one of their biggest strengths and they make it into a weakness. In other words, they call up the parent and they say, "I don't know what we're gonna do, but we're only a week into school and here's what happened." All of a sudden it's a huge weakness, and it's almost impossible to repair.

Mr. Vyman also addressed one other factor that he feels aided in his success as a teacher. He began teaching in a large urban school wherein each grade level had eight to nine classes per grade level and he chose to transfer to a school with a much lower student population so he could better meet the needs of the children. He shares that large urban schools are rather prohibitive in their ability to provide experiences that urban students require, including more personalized assistance, opportunities to participate in field trips, and other such necessities. He explained that he wanted to be a "master teacher" and felt "... I have so many ideas that I can't do in a setting this huge" so he sought a smaller setting where he could implement his ideas and beliefs about children and

learning. He does not feel like he “copped out” but took action to ensure success for himself and his students. Once again, Mr. Vyman goes back to his main point that one size fits few and he feels that this smaller environment has better allowed him to practice this notion.

Mr. Vyman asserts that he did not feel prepared to work in an urban school and is “not sure that you could be” but he proponent that “... You have to be willing to demolish your feelings of self worth and competency and... you have to see yourself as a learner. So you’re totally unprepared if you’re not willing to learn.”

To prepare teacher candidates to work in urban schools, he mentions that schools of education and K-12 schools should form a better relationship to provide field experiences that are diversified and meaningful, especially student teaching placements. In addressing the arrangement of practicums, he provides the following personal story

I remember in college one time...I said to my adviser...and this was...see this is what you learn...this was a terrible mistake. I said something to one of my advisers when I was assigned a practicum... I said, “I’ve already been to this school twice, and I’m wondering if I could maybe have a different school, but I don’t know how this works.” So I ended up being assigned to a school in *[school division]*, which was about a drive of an hour from *[city]*. So I learned right then, don’t...don’t ask for special treatment, because you’ll really get special treatment.

He then addresses the importance of the student teaching placement emphasizing the critical need for the placement to be supervised by a skilled teacher. He explains that in many situations principals are contacted with the number of student teachers that they must “place” within their building. Faculty

members groan when the announcement is made that student teachers will be coming to the building because the teachers view the experience as another task they must fit into a schedule that is already overburdened with too many things to do and too little time to do them. Eventually, a few teachers will volunteer to oversee the placements and, unfortunately, the candidates may or may not be in for a good experience because the selection process is based not upon merit but upon who is willing to do it. Mr. Vyman further expounds upon the difficulties of the supervising teacher and the candidate:

You're not given time to talk to them. You're not compensated for your time. You're not selected because of your expertise. You're just the person willing to take it on. So, we've got to fix this kind of thing, because we have to be sure to connect people with good teachers, so that they are observing best practice. And...I also think that when it comes to preparing these teachers of tomorrow, we have to build their weaknesses using their strengths. We can't just talk to them about differentiation; we have to differentiate for them, because they're going to learn by doing.

He feels that university teacher preparation programs must work collaboratively with K-12 schools to make sure that candidates observe and work with master teachers, known and compensated for their expertise and skill, not their willingness to "stick it out another year." The university must have some sort of tracking system in place that assures candidates have multiple experiences in numerous types of school cultures and that these experiences are supervised by expert teachers.

His final advice for novice teachers planning to work in urban schools is that...

There are some really positive changes on the way... We cannot continue business as usual.... So this is a really great time to go into teaching. I mean, it's unprecedented. It used to be that you taught for thirty years and pretty much nothing would change. Teaching in 1985 was pretty much the same as teaching was in 1955. So we know so much about how the brain works, and how kids learn, and how adults learn, and... We're in this really, really crazy time in learning... But, yeah... I'll be honest. It's sometimes hard... at the end of the day, sometimes it's hard to come up with reasons to come back the next day... But , I mean, I really think that ... we're on the verge of something in education.

Chapter Summary

The preceding chapter has presented a summary of the individual stories, vignettes, and salient quotes of the ten participants in the study in order to provide a collective extraction of their unique voices, perceptions, and experiences about teaching and learning in urban classrooms. The following chapter, chapter five, will present the six main assertions that were gleaned from the content analysis of the interview transcripts.

CHAPTER 5

ASSERTIONS FROM THE STUDY

The previous chapter, chapter four, provided a story for each participant in the study; the stories were included to give a “voice” to each respondent concerning their perceptions about teaching and preparing to teach in urban schools. Essentially, every story was a synopsis of each interview; all stories included direct quotations and vignettes which were provided to aid in revealing each individual’s experiences, ideas, and views.

Chapter five presents the overall findings from this study. Findings were made using Patton’s (2002) logical analysis framework using a cross-classification matrices. Fundamentally, chapter four sought to summarize each individual’s unique perceptions about urban teaching and chapter five seeks to compare and contrast these perceptions through the identification of “primary patterns” (Patton, 2002) from which the assertions are made.

The following topics are addressed in chapter five: a.) a synopsis of the participants’ demographic information and b.) assertions gleaned from the participants’ responses to the interview protocol.

Demographic Information of Participants

The participants in this study were chosen for being exemplary teachers who practice in urban schools of Virginia. After interviewing the respondents, it was calculated that their total amount of experience was a sum of 187 years with

the shortest span being 13 years and the longest 28 years. Six of the participants were females and four were males; eight were Caucasian and two were African American. At least four out of the ten chose to teach later in life after pursuing other careers. In addition to their teaching positions, many of them reported that they served in other educational roles such as summer school administrator, reading specialist, director of mentorship, and other critical leadership positions in division and state committees for educational reform.

Assertions Gleaned from Participant Responses to the Interview Protocol

The researcher utilized the expertise from the participants described above to formulate six assertions that will be described in the remainder of the chapter. The findings were collected from the analysis of the responses gathered from each question in the interview protocol (see Appendix B). The results have been extracted by means of Patton's (2002) logical analysis framework using a cross-classification matrices. To develop a "manageable classification" system, the researcher used content analysis which involved "identifying, coding, categorizing, classifying, and labeling" (Patton, 2002) the data. Patterns were found and findings are as follows:

Assertion 1: Successful urban teachers value education and have support systems in place for continual collaboration, professional growth, inspiration, and affirmation.

When questioned about who or what contributed to their success as teachers in urban environments, the following responses were given:

Table 8

Success Factors for Urban Teachers

| | |
|---|--------|
| Respondent mentioned professional development | x |
| Respondent mentioned keeping current with educational research | xx |
| Respondent mentioned teacher collaboration & observation | xxxxxx |
| Respondent mentioned mentors | xxxx |
| Respondent mentioned the ability to try innovative strategies to improve their practice | x |
| Respondent mentioned developing rapport with students and appreciating their background | x |
| Respondent mentioned family upbringing and values | xxxxx |
| Respondent mentioned spouse | x |
| Respondent mentioned religious beliefs | x |
| Respondent mentioned personalities in the news | x |
| Respondent mentioned teacher preparation and college experiences | xx |

The teachers in this study referred to various support systems they utilized to keep themselves grounded, replenished, and consistently growing in their profession. No matter when they entered teaching, and at least four out of the ten participants chose teaching as a career later in life after pursuing other interests, all respondents addressed their reliance on relationships and / or their ability to experiment and use research to improve their practice. One support system discussed by many of the respondents included family beliefs and upbringing and the inherited value system that education is important for self improvement and equality for others. In addition to family support, more than half of the teachers admitted they relied on colleagues and mentors for counsel and expertise. Successful urban teachers do not rely solely on themselves or their established merit; they continually rely on others for encouragement and guidance.

After questioning these exemplary teachers about their readiness to teach in urban schools, five out ten admitted they did not feel adequately prepared for service in urban schools. The following table, table 9, displays the methods that these individuals used or learned in order to adjust and then further excel in urban classrooms.

Table 9

Methods of Adjusting and Then Excelling in Urban Classrooms

| | |
|---|-------|
| Respondent mentioned the aid of a mentor or counsel of a veteran teacher | xx |
| Respondent mentioned experience and "pain of daily existence" | xxx |
| Respondent mentioned insight into background of students | x |
| Respondent already felt prepared to enter the urban classroom based on personal experiences | xxxxx |

Five teachers acknowledged that their growth in the profession came from either a mentor and / or the actual experience that comes with time and perseverance, one of the teachers terming this acquisition of skill and expertise as "... the pain of daily existence." The other five teachers quoted personal life experiences such as growing up in urban neighborhoods and developing friendships and relationships with others seemingly different from themselves as the means by which they were equipped to serve in urban schools. Most all of the teachers in this study relied heavily on professional development opportunities to improve their practice, and then, in turn, served in various roles to provide professional development for other colleagues.

Essentially, successful urban teachers are reflective practitioners. They improve their effectiveness by seeking the counsel of mentors and veteran

teachers and by pursuing professional development opportunities. They have high expectations for themselves and willingly pass on their experience and standards to novice teachers and other colleagues.

Assertion 2: Successful urban teachers assess, understand, and value the diverse learning needs of their students and accordingly differentiate their instruction to enhance achievement for each child.

NCLB continues to demand that student achievement remain top priority in the nation's schools. The teachers in this study were asked to provide the necessary means for raising achievement for diverse learners. Their responses were as follows:

Table 10

Factors Necessary in Student Achievement for Diverse Learners

| | |
|---|--------|
| Respondent mentioned forming environment of respect | x |
| Respondent mentioned forming environment that is comfortable and safe | x |
| Respondent mentioned knowing and implementing effective behavior management strategies | xx |
| Respondent mentioned knowing current research about teaching practices, brain based learning, multiple intelligences, learning styles, etc. and implementing instructional strategies that support these findings | xxxxxx |
| Respondent mentioned teaching information in ways that are creative, useful, or emotional | x |
| Respondent mentioned identifying student strengths and building on them, despite the fact that others may not perceive these abilities as strengths | xx |
| Respondent mentioned knowing the curriculum and content thoroughly | xxxx |
| Respondent mentioned teaching all children, not only those in the "middle level" | x |
| Respondent mentioned the will to teach and reteach | x |
| Respondent mentioned the ability not to pity students but to teach them | x |
| Respondent mentioned understanding the cultures of students and parents and valuing their differences, not judging them or trying to | xxx |

| | |
|---|----|
| change them | |
| Respondent mentioned good communication skills in order to interact with students, other colleagues, parents, administration, and people from different cultures. | x |
| Respondent mentioned the ability to assess students both formally and informally | xx |
| Respondent mentioned the importance of holding students accountable for their work and actions | x |
| Respondent mentioned personalizing instruction with humor and energy | x |
| Respondent mentioned the use of cooperative learning | x |
| Respondent mentioned the use of hands-on experiences | x |
| Respondent mentioned the importance of organization skills and the ability to "multi task" | x |
| Respondent mentioned the ability to utilize technology in planning, instruction, and student assignments and work | xx |
| Respondent mentioned constant positive home and family contacts | x |
| Respondent mentioned using a generalist approach to teaching | x |
| Respondent mentioned using "incentives" for motivation (eg. Stamps and prizes) | x |

All respondents in this study, at some time during the interview, addressed the issue of diversity and its impact upon his or her teaching. Findings indicated that teachers must be able to diagnose the needs in the classroom through systematic informal and formal assessment. Instead of targeting what students do not know, they focus on what they do know and provide experiences that develop those skills. They know the curriculum well and create lessons that are relevant to their student's lives and needs.

Because they understand that "one size fits few," they stay current with research that provides innovative practices in differentiation. They understand learning theories and framework concerning multiple intelligences, learning styles, hands-on activities, technology in the classroom, etc. and thus implement instruction based on those factors.

In addition, they understand that all children have different cultures and value systems so these teachers work diligently to be nonjudgmental of these differences, and, in fact, seek to celebrate these differences and incorporate them into their teaching to foster knowledge, tolerance, and respect for all members in the classroom.

Assertion 3: Successful urban teachers create classroom environments that make each student feel comfortable, valued, unique, and important. In addition, they are advocates for their students.

Urban school populations are denoted for higher numbers of culturally diverse and / or high risk students. Participants were asked about their perceptions regarding the establishment of rapport with diverse students and the creation of positive learning environments for them. Results are found in table eleven below.

Table 11

Provisions for Rapport and Positive Learning Environments for Diverse Students

| | |
|--|-------|
| Respondent mentioned the simplistic “love for children” | x |
| Respondent mentioned the absolute demand for respect for the teacher as well as the other students and visitors in the classroom/ no toleration of disrespectful behavior | xx |
| Respondent mentioned that teachers should care about the “whole” child and they should be interested in other facets of the students’ lives (eg. Sports, hobbies, music, etc.); in addition, they should use these preferences to make connections with learning | xxx |
| Respondent mentioned the acceptance and celebration of students’ cultural differences and the ability not to judge students but value them / tolerance of others | xxxxx |
| Respondent mentioned the importance of the physical classroom being comfortable, homelike, and nurturing | xx |
| Respondent mentioned valuing parent participation and input at whatever level possible | x |
| Respondent mentioned the importance of sincerity with the children | x |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Respondent mentioned training students how to conduct themselves in different types of circumstances and environments; the training must be done in a positive way, not derogatory | x |
| Respondent mentioned that students must feel valued and safe | xx |
| Respondent mentioned that students must be taught personal goal setting in both academic and behavioral goals | x |
| Respondent mentioned that the teacher must be willing to go beyond his/her comfort zone to make students feel welcome and valued | x |
| Respondent mentioned that the teacher must research the background of each student (conduct home visits, review cum folders, etc.) to know the child so rapport and understanding can be established as well as necessary services provided | xx |
| Respondent mentioned that the teacher must provide an environment of structure, certainty, and routine. | x |
| Respondent mentioned that the teacher must provide a sense of family within the classroom and the school | x |
| Respondent mentioned the necessity for the teacher to have contact with the students outside of the traditional school environment, such as football games, cheerleading competitions, church, funerals, etc. | xxx |
| Respondent mentioned that the teacher must incorporate objectivity, relevance, and optimism to reach any level of student | x |
| Respondent mentioned humor and a smile | x |

The participants in this study responded that they spent time ensuring that their classroom was “homelike” and inviting to all students and even parents. They utilized procedures and routines to establish structure and clear expectations for behavior and schoolwork. They used humor, optimism, and respect to create a safe and engaging learning environment and one teacher added that she likens her classroom to a family and requires the students to treat each other as such. Many reiterated the need for teachers to accept their students’ culture and value systems even when they differed from their own, especially when they differed from their own; however, one teacher quickly clarified that teachers “... have to be accepting, and that doesn’t mean tolerating

behaviors or attitudes that you find unacceptable.” They focused on the necessity of building a rapport with the students with one teacher explaining that... “In order to teach the kid, you’ve got to reach the kid.” The respondents explained that children “can tell when you are faking it” so relationships have to be formed that are genuine, sincere, and caring. In fact, three out of ten teachers admitted to spending time with their students outside of the classroom at little league games, church functions, family funerals, and other events to help create a bond of trust, acceptance, and compassion. Finally, the respondents were adamant about ensuring that each child in their care felt important; many of them mentioned home visits that they have conducted to inquire about excessive absences or insufficient achievement. They alluded to the need for teachers to get to know their students well enough to identify their individual interests and hobbies, differentiate instruction for them according to their learning styles and personal preferences, challenge them, and then ultimately help students to challenge themselves by teaching them the ability to set personal goals for improvement in both character and academics.

Lastly, one can infer from these participants that successful teachers are advocates for their students; they seek to understand the needs of their students and then ensure that these needs are met. If they cannot resolve the quandary themselves, they will assuredly utilize other resources such as Social Services, after school tutoring and enrichment programs, educational specialists, mentors, or other means to rectify the problem.

Assertion 4: Successful urban teachers focus on solutions, not problems.

When asked about the challenges of serving in an urban public school, all of the participants had a quick response, usually one sentence; instead of expounding upon the problem, they focused on addressing solutions. The perceived challenges may be found in table twelve below but as stated before, the participants focused on the solutions.

Table 12

Challenges Encountered in Urban Schools

| | |
|---|------|
| Respondent mentioned lack of parental involvement | xxxx |
| Respondent mentioned differences in ability, maturity, and life experiences / differences in diversity and language | xxx |
| Respondent mentioned poor motivation due to a self-fulfilling prophecy to “drop out” like their parents | x |
| Respondent mentioned high teacher turnover and student transience | x |

Four of the ten interviewees felt that insufficient parental involvement was the most difficult challenge; three felt that the diversity of students' learning levels and personal life experiences was their biggest challenge; other difficulties included language barriers, student transience, and lack of student motivation. Despite these obstacles to learning (which are addressed in other parts of this document), the teachers focused on what they could do, rather than what they could not do.

Assertion 5: Successful urban teachers communicate frequently with parents and families and they seek to construct these relationships by a concerted effort in making the initial contact a positive one.

As evident in table twelve, many of the respondents felt that parent communication and involvement is a challenge yet very essential to the achievement and overall success of students. The following chart entails how the participants in this study communicate with families and other important people outside of the classroom.

Table 13

Means of Communication with Parents and Other Important People

| | |
|---|--------|
| Respondent mentioned making a phone call to the home | xxxxxx |
| Respondent mentioned sending home a monthly newsletter | xxxxx |
| Respondent mentioned mailing home correspondence such as a postcard | x |
| Respondent mentioned using email messages | xx |
| Respondent mentioned inviting parents to visit classroom at any time and having an open door policy | x |
| Respondent mentioned sending student work daily to discuss with family members | x |
| Respondent mentioned talking during informal times such as when parents drop off students for school or pick them up each day | x |
| Respondent mentioned use of school-organized parent and teacher conference days | xxxx |
| Respondent mentioned use of bi-weekly, monthly progress reports and report cards | xxx |
| Respondent mentioned use of a PR committee at the school that goes out in the community and shares the "good news" about what is happening with the students at the school | x |
| Respondent mentioned use of "classes for parents" to help them learn to use the computer, create effective homework routines and environments, and other parenting strategies | xx |
| Respondent mentioned use of a HOT program (Helping Our Teachers) wherein parents are invited into the school to help and talk with teachers | x |
| Respondent mentioned use of guest speakers to get others interested in coming in the classroom | x |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Respondent mentioned creating a monthly study calendar with all assignments and homework so parents know expectations | x |
| Respondent mentioned “project-based learning activity” that can be completed at school, instead of home, to provide for more equity in the classroom | x |
| Respondent mentioned use of a homework agenda with students and parents (parents sign the agenda nightly and see notes and assignments written within) | x |
| Respondent mentioned attendance at functions not related to school (eg. Athletic games, church events, funerals, etc.) | xxx |
| Respondent mentioned sending home student assignments and announcement flyers in one work folder that must be signed each week | x |

Many teachers admitted use of traditional means of communication such as newsletters, postcards, grade reports, and phone calls to contact parents and families. However, some also provided their utilization of home visits, email correspondence and website posts, and informal discussions with parents at community functions such as athletic events, city festivals and celebrations, and other types of societal activities.

At least seven of the ten respondents focused on the critical importance that the first contact must be a positive one; in fact, most of the seven asserted that they would contact the parent very early in the school year, if not before the school year begins, to certify a pleasant initial contact. These teachers articulated the need for an affirming contact with parents to create a “we are in this thing together” mentality that would develop into a partnership and team approach to educating the child. The initial pleasant greeting would also prevent the formation of a combative relationship wherein the teacher or parent is overly defensive concerning interactions and dealings with the child. Moreover, many

of these teachers spoke of an “open door” policy they uphold that fosters an invitation of welcome for parents to come observe and/or participate in their child’s daily class experiences. They have nothing to “hide” and they request parents and families to be involved in the learning process.

One other significant way of thinking that was gleaned from the comparison of the transcripts of these exemplary educators was the notion that teachers must value what parents and caregivers contribute to the education of their children, rather than what they do not do. Four of the ten teachers added that although the traditional view of parental involvement is denoted by frequent contact with the teacher, help with homework and project assignments, membership and service in the PTA, attendance at school plays and functions, and other types of home and school connections, some families cannot participate at this level due to conflicting work schedules, lack of safe public transportation at night, language and cultural barriers, and other difficulties. These teachers focus on the good things that parents and caregivers do, such as feed, clothe, and send their students to school on time; the teachers value the parents’ commitment to their child’s well being and education at whatever level they are able to support them; and they seek to look at these types of situations in an optimistic manner.

Assertion 6: Preparation for teacher candidates seeking to serve in urban classrooms should include multiple and diverse field experiences with supervision by a master teacher. Practicums should be supplemented with coursework that addresses diversity and differentiation.

All teachers have differing experiences in their formal schooling, family upbringing and childhood neighborhoods, and other life practices and situations that ultimately contribute to the cultivation of their intellect, ideas, beliefs, and value systems. The exemplary urban teachers in this study were no different and it was evident that they too had many differing life experiences. However, despite their diverse backgrounds and preparation, they did have uniform ideas concerning the training of future educators to successfully work with urban students. Although half of the teachers in this study felt prepared to serve in urban classrooms and half of them did not, most all of them provided fairly homogeneous feedback about their perceptions for the training of teacher candidates planning to work in urban schools. Their advice for teacher candidates and those who prepare them may be seen in Table 14 below:

Table 14

Prescriptions for Teacher Candidates and Those Who Prepare Them

| | |
|--|--------|
| Respondent mentioned the observation and practicum placements must be with “master teachers” | xxxx |
| Respondent mentioned opportunities for multiple field experiences much earlier than student teaching, beginning as early as the freshman or “first year” | xxxxxx |
| Respondent mentioned the provision of “new teacher support groups” for beginning teachers | x |
| Respondent mentioned the provision of skilled mentors for beginning teachers / provision of a staff development specialist to aid beginning teachers | xxxxxx |
| Respondent mentioned the provision of cultural diversity courses | x |
| Respondent mentioned the provision of experiences in alternative education placements | x |
| Respondent mentioned the provision of a class in school law | x |
| Respondent mentioned the provision of additional courses in class management | x |

| | |
|---|----|
| Respondent mentioned the provision of extended student teaching experiences if the candidate is experiencing difficulty | x |
| Respondent mentioned the provision of instructional methods classes that concentrate on differentiation practices | xx |
| Respondent mentioned the need for risk-taking skills, especially emotional risk taking | xx |
| Respondent mentioned the need for sound competency in content | x |

The teachers in this study prescribed the critical necessity for candidates to observe and work in K-12 classrooms on numerous occasions before the student teaching experience, particularly specifying that these opportunities should begin the very first year of college. They further assert that these pre-teaching experiences must be supervised by skilled, master teachers who will train and mentor candidates, not those who are simply willing to “tolerate” or “house” them for a few weeks; essentially, these model teachers must be chosen because of their qualifications and expertise. In addition, it was also mentioned that these experiences must be carefully crafted so that each teacher candidate is provided with opportunities to serve in multiple schools with differing environments in culture, SES, language, and other diverse factors. Therefore, if colleges and universities have convenient partnerships with certain K-12 schools, teacher education departments must continue to provide quality practicums supervised by exemplary teachers in numerous contrasting school cultures and environments.

In addition to this one uniform theme of providing abundant dissimilar practicum experiences starting as early as the freshman or “first year” of college, the participants in this study provided a few other suggestions to enhance the

present training of teacher candidates preparing for work in urban schools. They suggested additional coursework in such topics as cultural diversity, school law, differentiation practices, and class management. Furthermore, some random, yet noteworthy propositions included mandatory observation and participation in an alternative education program for a semester; a course that highlights the many roles of an urban educator including parent, nutritionist, nurse, psychologist, social worker, etc.; and the acquisition of competency in an “Esperanto” of education, a universal body of knowledge that would be relevant in any country all over the world at a particular grade or age covering subjects such as science, world history, culture, measurement, geography, and vocabulary. Other ideas included the implementation of differentiation in the university classroom so that future teachers have already experienced this instructional approach to teaching and had it modeled for them. Lastly, it was mentioned that urban teachers must be forewarned about the emotional aspect of teaching in an urban environment; prospective teachers must know that successful urban teachers are emotional risk takers. Their commitment to their profession and their students transcends them from “a worker on the clock” to a lifeline of hope and education that provides practicality, guidance, and the skills necessary for self sufficiency-- one who “... will almost become a part of their lives to help them.”

For first year teachers, the participants advocated the provision of mentors who earn this title because of their proficiency and expertise; roundtable discussions and support groups facilitated by master teachers; the use of

observation for acquisition of basic teaching skills; and continued reliance on research based strategies and risk taking approaches to instruction.

Chapter Summary

Chapter five used Patton's (2002) content analysis to sift through the data and find patterns among the responses of the participants. The patterns led to six main findings concerning teaching and preparing to teach in urban schools. The next chapter, which is the concluding one, will provide additional discussion concerning the findings, specifically seeking to address the specific research questions of the study. It will also include implications for additional studies concerning notions about urban teaching.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The preceding chapter was an analysis of the data from the interview transcripts; it was presented in table format and provided corresponding summary paragraphs related to the findings. The analysis of the data led to six main assertions that were extracted from the participant responses.

Chapter six, the final chapter, will further discuss these assertions explicitly addressing them in the context of the initial research questions of the study which are as follows:

- 1.) What do exemplary teachers perceive teachers should know and be able to do in order to provide instruction in urban elementary classrooms?
- 2.) What curricula and practices do exemplary teachers perceive teacher preparation programs should employ in order to prepare teachers for service in urban elementary classrooms?

The discussion will link the assertions to pre-existing literature concerning teaching and preparing to teach in urban schools. The chapter will conclude with additional implications for further research resulting from this study.

Overall Findings

In viewing the data from chapter 5, it is apparent that “good teaching is good teaching;” all good teachers are competent in content, properly schooled for the field, form affirming relationships with students and families, and use current instructional strategies to meet the individual needs of children. However, these

factors that contribute to good teaching in other settings, whether suburban or rural, are in fact critical to success for teaching in urban environments. Thus, this chapter will seek to discuss the elements that are important to good teaching and elaborate on why they are fundamentally critical for successful urban teaching.

Discussion of Assertions in the Context of the Research Questions

After interviewing and compiling results from ten exemplary teachers who have documented success in working with urban students, several assertions were made; the findings will be addressed again by filtering them into categories which identify what urban teachers should a.) know and b.) be able to do. In addition, those factors will be highlighted as to why they are uniquely critical for urban teachers.

This discussion will attend to the first research question of the study.

What Urban Teachers Should Know

Two topics were gleaned from the assertions as being critical for urban teachers to know; they include content competency and current research in the field of education, especially research relating to diversity in culture and learning theory.

Content Competency

Effective teachers have a strong background in the subjects they teach. Fully prepared teachers have an in-depth knowledge of content and how it can be taught effectively so that students learn (Darling-Hammond, 1992). They are

highly qualified in that they teach in subject areas for which they are fully trained and licensed (Virginia Department of Education, 2003).

However, as the demand for teachers grows, most states are creating “emergency” licensing provisions that allow school districts to elude state standards and place unprepared personnel in the classroom. Unfortunately, urban districts hire a larger percentage of these emergency-licensed teachers to educate their children further exacerbating problems for a vulnerable population denoted as being at risk.

Teachers in urban schools must be competent in the areas they teach. The complexity of instructing a child to read, calculate math problems, and understand scientific concepts should not be a “trial and error proposition” (NCATE, 2004). It is critical that students in urban schools be taught life skills by trained professionals because for these children “... a decent education is not merely another public service but literally a matter of life and death...” (Haberman, 1994).

Current Research and Professional Literature

Many teachers in this study acknowledged their reliance on current educational research to improve their effectiveness. NBPTS, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, supports this practice asserting that teachers must use literature to systematically think about their practice in order to improve it. They must make decisions that are grounded in both literature and experience. They must engage in lifelong learning and model this worldview for their students.

The exemplary urban teachers in this study shared that they did keep abreast in current literature and educational trends and did indeed utilize the reflective practitioner approach to teaching with most of the participants deeming themselves as “risk takers;” they consistently shared that they made decisions and critically viewed the outcomes to make better choices for meeting the needs of their students. Because urban school populations are denoted for higher percentages of students with special needs, it is essential that exemplary urban teachers be able to make informed choices concerning the well being of their students in all areas—academically, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Culture and Learning Styles Theory

It was further shown that these teachers know much about student differences in culture and learning styles. Using this knowledge, they are able to achieve an “equity pedagogy” which “... exists when teachers modify their teaching in ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, ethnic, and gender groups” (Banks, 2001). A teacher’s knowledge of culture and learning theory is important in any setting but it is critical in urban environments where students are more diverse in their ethnicity, race, wealth, life experiences, and other learning needs. The ways in which they utilize this knowledge will be discussed in the next section which presents what teachers “do” to promote achievement and success for their students.

What Urban Teachers Should be Able to Do

In sifting through the findings, a number of characteristics and behaviors may be identified that exhibit what exemplary teachers must be able to do. These abilities include the following: seeking support systems when necessary; assessing needs of students and differentiating instruction where beneficial; and maintaining a disposition that exudes caring, flexibility and cooperation, optimism, and perseverance.

Support Systems

The teachers in this study relied on various support systems to help them work through the difficult challenges but also celebrate the successes too. They were able to recognize when they needed assistance and possessed the skills to obtain it. Most of the teachers reported that they relied heavily on mentor teachers when beginning their career and presently collaborate with other veteran teachers to improve their practice or seek counsel from specialists concerning unique problems of their students.

An urban teacher's ability to seek support systems is essential. Urban teachers are challenged to educate diverse learners in an increasingly complex knowledge-based, technology-oriented society and they must do so within the confines of a demanding bureaucracy that can usually provide few resources. Since well-organized induction programs are the exception rather than the rule (Weiss, 1999), urban teachers must be willing to seek counsel from other support systems to meet the multifaceted needs of their students.

In addition, it is critical that urban teachers continue their collaboration with others to provide support systems for their students. Urban teachers must be able to utilize the resources of neighborhood churches, libraries, community groups, and other organizations to form a network of support, consistency, and safety for their students (Quartz, 2003).

Assessment and Differentiation for Students

Effective teachers understand that “one size fits few” and “... you just can’t do cookie cutter teaching, you know, where you stand up, you teach to everybody and everybody learns the same way.” They know that children at the same age differ in their readiness to learn, their experiences, their interests, and their life circumstances (Tomlinson, 2000); and these contrasts are significant enough that teachers must differ instruction in content, pace, and style so that all students can make significant gains in achievement. Because good teachers know that all children learn differently, they seek to assess students through formal and informal means and then differentiate instruction accordingly.

An urban teacher’s ability to differentiate instruction is vital to overall effectiveness with students. Urban schools are denoted for elevated populations of diverse students with corresponding diverse needs. Whether it be a difference in native language, pre-literacy experience, learning disability, etc., the urban teacher must tailor instruction so each child can experience gains in achievement.

Exemplary urban teachers further understand that culture and ethnicity may affect learning. According to Nieto (2000), “There are vast differences

among learners within ethnic groups, and these differences may be due not just to culture but to social class, language spoken at home, number of years or generations in the United States, and simple individual differences.” With this knowledge, exemplary urban teachers adapt their instruction to fit the needs of the various learners in their classrooms. Nieto (2000) asserts that teachers who use straight lecture “... treat students as passive learners and receptacles of knowledge. It is also culturally inappropriate for many students” (p. 361). Urban teachers who are “multiculturally sensitive” with their diverse students help them to become active learners and encourage group work, individualized tasks, collaborative research, peer tutoring, group reflection, dialogue, and action projects in the school and community (Nieto, 2000).

In addition to differentiating instruction, exemplary teachers also modify the classroom learning environment so it is safe, respectful, and comfortable for all students as well as parents and guests. They use articulated procedures and routines (Wong, 2001) and organize the classroom and assignments in order for students to be constantly engaged in meaningful learning activities.

According to the teachers in this study, consistency and order are critical elements in urban classrooms because many students come from homes that would be considered “dysfunctional” and maintain little to no stability. According to Haberman (1995b), “star” urban teachers must possess extraordinary managerial skills because they do not rely primarily on direct instruction. They use project and discovery methods that involve children in active ways. They differentiate instruction by assigning varying tasks so there are several activities

occurring simultaneously in the same classroom or area. Differentiation, a necessity for urban teachers, requires planning and organization. All good teachers have the ability to plan and organize but these skills are critical for urban teachers who must create a safe, consistent learning environment so all students are afforded the opportunity to learn.

Exemplary urban teachers know students learn in different ways and they have the ability to differentiate instruction and modify the classroom environment to accommodate for these differences. They assign learning experiences that are active in nature and organize the classroom so such tasks can easily be accomplished.

Dispositions

Relationships with Students

As stated above, effective teachers understand that students learn in diverse ways; thus, their “disposition” and interactions with students portray a caring guide who is flexible when necessary and who will persist in finding ways to meet the needs of all students. Good teachers are advocates for their students and they will seek other counsel and support systems for them when they cannot find a solution to a problem themselves.

All good teachers display a disposition that is pleasant and approachable and all good teachers are advocates for their students. However, these attributes that are important for all teachers are absolutely essential for urban teachers. According to Martin Haberman (1995b), a well known scholar on urban teaching, “only decent people can be prepared to teach urban students.” He

provides the following data concerning “star teachers” of urban students: They never use shame or humiliation to bully children into “learning.” They admit their fallibility and seek to learn from students as well as teach them. They listen, hear, remember, and use students’ ideas. They are a source of constant encouragement by finding “good parts” of all students’ work. They tend to be nonjudgmental; as they interact with children and adults in schools, their first thought is not to decide the “goodness or badness” of things but to understand events and communications. Finally, they create an extended family in the classroom.

Relationships with Families

In addition to sustaining positive interactions with their students, good teachers also maintain positive relationships with parents and families. They know that the first contact with the family must be a positive one (Clark, 2003) and will seek to establish a relationship that forms a collaborative partnership wherein teacher and parent work together for the good of the child.

In reviewing the data from chapter five, it is apparent that communication with urban parents and families is difficult. Some of the challenges mentioned were problems in transportation, work schedules, and language barriers. Despite the additional obstacles to parent communication that urban teachers must overcome, it is clearly evident that they must possess the ability and persistence to formulate positive home relationships. Many of the exemplary urban teachers in this study shared that it was not always easy but they would be willing to do whatever needed to be done to maintain these relationships. They consistently

called home, sent notes home (sometimes three and four times until they received a response), conducted home visits, set up parenting classes in the urban neighborhoods, and other various methods to keep families involved in the learning process of their child.

World View

Lastly, exemplary teachers have an optimistic disposition. They use humor in the classroom and are able to laugh at themselves. They look for the good in others and focus on those traits. They reflect on their teaching practices and seek ways for improvement. When they make mistakes, they do not dwell on them but “learn from them and move on” (Clark, 2003).

It is critical that urban teachers maintain an optimistic outlook for their students. Many urban students are at risk because their families “lack nurturance, attention, supervision, understanding, and caring” and they have inadequate communication processes with adults in their homes (Dryfoos, 1998). It is essential that urban teachers model a positive worldview for these children, showing them warmth and affection. An urban teacher may possibly be an urban child’s only model for safe, healthy, and happy living.

The second research question in this study, “What curricula and practices do exemplary teachers perceive teacher preparation programs should employ in order to prepare teachers for service in urban elementary classrooms?” will be addressed in the following section.

The Preparation of Teacher Candidates for Urban Classrooms

Exemplary teachers are true professionals; they are committed to growth for themselves, their students, and their profession. Preparation for the complex work of serving in urban schools must begin early; candidates must spend time interacting with excellent teachers in several urban schools. Teacher candidates who wish to work in urban schools must have sustained amounts of time in real classrooms; these practical experiences should be supervised by master teachers and are ultimately critical for the candidate's role of transition from student to that of teacher.

Teacher candidates seeking to serve in urban settings must be able to reflect on their own personal values and, in turn, how to work with people who hold very different values. They need to "... gain knowledge about the ethnic cultures they may be teaching, how individuals differ within the same ethnic group, and the culture of poverty" (Diffily & Perkins, 2002). Finally, upon graduation from schools of education, beginning teachers "... must not consider their education about teaching complete" (Diffily & Perkins, 2002).

The teachers in this study presented a uniform consensus that teacher candidates who wish to serve in urban schools must have thorough training with coursework that is embedded with strategies for building relationships and meeting needs of diverse learners and a strategically planned program crafted with field experiences that begin early and represent diverse types of environments. Despite the united ideas of these exemplary urban teachers concerning teacher preparation, many policy makers, at present, are attempting

to “streamline” licensing requirements to reduce courses in pedagogy and minimize the preparation time needed to enter the classroom. If lawmakers wish to fill classrooms with highly qualified teachers that are truly highly qualified in both name and deed, they must be willing to heed the advice of those that successfully understand what teachers must know and be able to do to help all children achieve.

Final Conclusions

According to Ingersoll (2001), “... teaching is a highly complex kind of work and ... it takes both ability and advanced training to do well.” Though there is a continual need to prove this notion (Weiner, 2002), the participants in this study affirm it by the perceptions they have shared. It is important that teachers know both content and pedagogy so they can effectively teach their students. It is important that teachers know their students and differentiate instruction according to their needs. It is important that teachers form relationships with students and parents to enhance communication and share responsibilities in the learning process. However, what is important for all teachers, it absolutely critical for urban teachers.

During an interview with one of the participants of this study, the individual referred to the importance of her utilization of educational research and literature to improve her teaching practice. She asserted that the works of Ruby Payne, a scholar widely known for her work with

urban and poor students, helped her to better relate to her students and understand their worldview and needs. According to Payne (1998) "... the role of the educator or social worker or employer is not to save the individual, but rather to offer a support system, role models, and opportunities to learn, which will increase the likelihood of the person's success. Ultimately, the choice always belongs to the individual."

Implications for Further Research

In reviewing the assertions from this study, there are several notions about teaching and preparing to teach in urban schools that could be studied in more depth. They are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Teaching in urban schools is complex because these schools tend to have higher populations of students with diverse backgrounds and special needs.

According to one interview participant,

... if you are just trying to look at kids' preferences, and the places they've been, and their learning style, and the things that they're good at... the things they enjoy, and you try to connect those to the things they need to learn, then it works a lot better... and you have to pay more attention to that when everybody is so different.... And I think my main idea was that differentiation is more important [in urban environments] than it is in other settings.

Therefore, a study into the actual ways that exemplary teachers are able to differentiate instruction would be beneficial.

In reviewing the demographic information about the participants in this study, it was noted that almost half (4 out of 10) of the teachers decided to enter the field of teaching after pursuing other interests and careers. A study which

focuses on the life experiences of exemplary urban teachers would be in order to research how teachers' backgrounds affect their success in the classroom.

Most all of the teachers in this study recommended that pre-student teaching experiences should begin as early as the freshman or first year of college and these experiences should be carefully crafted and documented so that candidates have placements in all types of schools serving all types of diverse students. They also provided suggestions concerning coursework that addressed culture, differentiation practices, class management, and other critical topics essential for teaching urban students. A study that researches how teacher preparation programs are utilizing these recommendations could be beneficial to both the university community as well as the urban K-12 school system.

Many of the study's participants asserted that field placements for teacher candidates must be supervised by skilled teachers, not those simply willing to "house" them for a few weeks. Candidates must have numerous opportunities to observe and collaborate with master teachers who have both experience and superb teaching skills. Therefore, a study which researched essential indicators to successfully identify and recruit mentors and skilled teachers who can effectively oversee practicums for teacher candidates wishing to serve in urban schools would be beneficial.

Lastly, a study would be in order that researched perceptions of urban principals and their hiring practices to determine if there is a match between what

they are looking for in terms of competency, training, skills, and dispositions and what teachers are actually bringing to the urban classroom.

Chapter Summary

Chapter six is the concluding chapter of this study. It provides additional discussion concerning the data summaries in chapter four and assertions that were made in chapter five. It specifically discusses these findings in the context of the initial research questions of the study. The main topics in the chapter entail what teachers must know and be able to do to effectively serve diverse students in urban schools; it also addresses preparation experiences that are beneficial for teacher candidates planning to serve in urban schools. The chapter concludes with implications for further research.

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APPENDIX A

Populations Statistics from the United States Census Bureau

Appendix A

Urban and Rural Population by County / City Districts

*Acquired by United States Census Bureau Statistics 2000

| GEO_ID | SUMLEVEL | GEO_NAME | P002001 | P002002 | P002005 |
|----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Geography Identifier | Geographic Summary Level | Geography | Total population: Total | Total population: Urban | Total population: Rural |
| 05000US51001 | 050 | Accomack County, Virginia | 38305 | 7348 | 30957 |
| 05000US51003 | 050 | Albemarle County, Virginia | 79236 | 41014 | 38222 |
| 05000US51005 | 050 | Alleghany County, Virginia | 12926 | 3813 | 9113 |
| 05000US51007 | 050 | Amelia County, Virginia | 11400 | 0 | 11400 |
| 05000US51009 | 050 | Amherst County, Virginia | 31894 | 11791 | 20103 |
| 05000US51011 | 050 | Appomattox County, Virginia | 13705 | 0 | 13705 |
| 05000US51013 | 050 | Arlington County, Virginia | 189453 | 189453 | 0 |
| 05000US51015 | 050 | Augusta County, Virginia | 65615 | 14547 | 51068 |
| 05000US51017 | 050 | Bath County, Virginia | 5048 | 0 | 5048 |
| 05000US51019 | 050 | Bedford County, Virginia | 60371 | 8914 | 51457 |
| 05000US51021 | 050 | Bland County, Virginia | 6871 | 0 | 6871 |
| 05000US51023 | 050 | Botetourt County, Virginia | 30496 | 10214 | 20282 |
| 05000US51025 | 050 | Brunswick County, Virginia | 18419 | 4437 | 13982 |
| 05000US51027 | 050 | Buchanan County, Virginia | 26978 | 0 | 26978 |
| 05000US51029 | 050 | Buckingham County, Virginia | 15623 | 0 | 15623 |
| 05000US51031 | 050 | Campbell County, Virginia | 51078 | 19514 | 31564 |
| 05000US51033 | 050 | Caroline County, Virginia | 22121 | 0 | 22121 |
| 05000US51035 | 050 | Carroll County, Virginia | 29245 | 508 | 28737 |
| 05000US51036 | 050 | Charles City County, Virginia | 6926 | 0 | 6926 |

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-----|---------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|
| 05000US51037 | 050 | Charlotte County, Virginia | 12472 | 0 | 12472 |
| 05000US51041 | 050 | Chesterfield County, Virginia | 259903 | 232537 | 27366 |
| 05000US51043 | 050 | Clarke County, Virginia | 12652 | 2973 | 9679 |
| 05000US51045 | 050 | Craig County, Virginia | 5091 | 0 | 5091 |
| 05000US51047 | 050 | Culpeper County, Virginia | 34262 | 9530 | 24732 |
| 05000US51049 | 050 | Cumberland County, Virginia | 9017 | 354 | 8663 |
| 05000US51051 | 050 | Dickenson County, Virginia | 16395 | 0 | 16395 |
| 05000US51053 | 050 | Dinwiddie County, Virginia | 24533 | 6434 | 18099 |
| 05000US51057 | 050 | Essex County, Virginia | 9989 | 2018 | 7971 |
| 05000US51059 | 050 | Fairfax County, Virginia | 969749 | 955928 | 13821 |
| 05000US51061 | 050 | Fauquier County, Virginia | 55139 | 15135 | 40004 |
| 05000US51063 | 050 | Floyd County, Virginia | 13874 | 0 | 13874 |
| 05000US51065 | 050 | Fluvanna County, Virginia | 20047 | 6031 | 14016 |
| 05000US51067 | 050 | Franklin County, Virginia | 47286 | 4398 | 42888 |
| 05000US51069 | 050 | Frederick County, Virginia | 59209 | 29974 | 29235 |
| 05000US51071 | 050 | Giles County, Virginia | 16657 | 2807 | 13850 |
| 05000US51073 | 050 | Gloucester County, Virginia | 34780 | 9743 | 25037 |
| 05000US51075 | 050 | Goochland County, Virginia | 16863 | 1140 | 15723 |
| 05000US51077 | 050 | Grayson County, Virginia | 17917 | 97 | 17820 |
| 05000US51079 | 050 | Greene County, Virginia | 15244 | 0 | 15244 |
| 05000US51081 | 050 | Greensville County, Virginia | 11560 | 4119 | 7441 |
| 05000US51083 | 050 | Halifax County, Virginia | 37355 | 8878 | 28477 |
| 05000US51085 | 050 | Hanover County, Virginia | 86320 | 48883 | 37437 |
| 05000US51087 | 050 | Henrico County, Virginia | 262300 | 247292 | 15008 |
| 05000US51089 | 050 | Henry County, Virginia | 57930 | 20391 | 37539 |
| 05000US51091 | 050 | Highland County, Virginia | 2536 | 0 | 2536 |
| 05000US51093 | 050 | Isle of Wight County, Virginia | 29728 | 10081 | 19647 |
| 05000US51095 | 050 | James City County, Virginia | 48102 | 34279 | 13823 |
| 05000US51097 | 050 | King and Queen County, Virginia | 6630 | 0 | 6630 |

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-----|---------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|
| 05000US51099 | 050 | King George County, Virginia | 16803 | 0 | 16803 |
| 05000US51101 | 050 | King William County, Virginia | 13146 | 2567 | 10579 |
| 05000US51103 | 050 | Lancaster County, Virginia | 11567 | 0 | 11567 |
| 05000US51105 | 050 | Lee County, Virginia | 23589 | 128 | 23461 |
| 05000US51107 | 050 | Loudoun County, Virginia | 169599 | 142909 | 26690 |
| 05000US51109 | 050 | Louisa County, Virginia | 25627 | 0 | 25627 |
| 05000US51111 | 050 | Lunenburg County, Virginia | 13146 | 0 | 13146 |
| 05000US51113 | 050 | Madison County, Virginia | 12520 | 0 | 12520 |
| 05000US51115 | 050 | Mathews County, Virginia | 9207 | 0 | 9207 |
| 05000US51117 | 050 | Mecklenburg County, Virginia | 32380 | 7081 | 25299 |
| 05000US51119 | 050 | Middlesex County, Virginia | 9932 | 0 | 9932 |
| 05000US51121 | 050 | Montgomery County, Virginia | 83629 | 57915 | 25714 |
| 05000US51125 | 050 | Nelson County, Virginia | 14445 | 0 | 14445 |
| 05000US51127 | 050 | New Kent County, Virginia | 13462 | 0 | 13462 |
| 05000US51131 | 050 | Northampton County, Virginia | 13093 | 0 | 13093 |
| 05000US51133 | 050 | Northumberland County, Virginia | 12259 | 0 | 12259 |
| 05000US51135 | 050 | Nottoway County, Virginia | 15725 | 7363 | 8362 |
| 05000US51137 | 050 | Orange County, Virginia | 25881 | 8575 | 17306 |
| 05000US51139 | 050 | Page County, Virginia | 23177 | 4760 | 18417 |
| 05000US51141 | 050 | Patrick County, Virginia | 19407 | 0 | 19407 |
| 05000US51143 | 050 | Pittsylvania County, Virginia | 61745 | 6539 | 55206 |
| 05000US51145 | 050 | Powhatan County, Virginia | 22377 | 1972 | 20405 |
| 05000US51147 | 050 | Prince Edward County, Virginia | 19720 | 5675 | 14045 |
| 05000US51149 | 050 | Prince George County, Virginia | 33047 | 13391 | 19656 |
| 05000US51153 | 050 | Prince William County, Virginia | 280813 | 255061 | 25752 |
| 05000US51155 | 050 | Pulaski County, Virginia | 35127 | 16893 | 18234 |
| 05000US51157 | 050 | Rappahannock County, Virginia | 6983 | 0 | 6983 |
| 05000US51159 | 050 | Richmond County, Virginia | 8809 | 1384 | 7425 |
| 05000US51161 | 050 | Roanoke County, Virginia | 85778 | 66837 | 18941 |

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-----|------------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|
| 05000US51163 | 050 | Rockbridge County, Virginia | 20808 | 739 | 20069 |
| 05000US51165 | 050 | Rockingham County, Virginia | 67725 | 22473 | 45252 |
| 05000US51167 | 050 | Russell County, Virginia | 30308 | 3384 | 26924 |
| 05000US51169 | 050 | Scott County, Virginia | 23403 | 4286 | 19117 |
| 05000US51171 | 050 | Shenandoah County, Virginia | 35075 | 8254 | 26821 |
| 05000US51173 | 050 | Smyth County, Virginia | 33081 | 9688 | 23393 |
| 05000US51175 | 050 | Southampton County, Virginia | 17482 | 325 | 17157 |
| 05000US51177 | 050 | Spotsylvania County, Virginia | 90395 | 58977 | 31418 |
| 05000US51179 | 050 | Stafford County, Virginia | 92446 | 68289 | 24157 |
| 05000US51181 | 050 | Surry County, Virginia | 6829 | 0 | 6829 |
| 05000US51183 | 050 | Sussex County, Virginia | 12504 | 0 | 12504 |
| 05000US51185 | 050 | Tazewell County, Virginia | 44598 | 18674 | 25924 |
| 05000US51187 | 050 | Warren County, Virginia | 31584 | 13828 | 17756 |
| 05000US51191 | 050 | Washington County, Virginia | 51103 | 15480 | 35623 |
| 05000US51193 | 050 | Westmoreland County, Virginia | 16718 | 4281 | 12437 |
| 05000US51195 | 050 | Wise County, Virginia | 40123 | 15388 | 24735 |
| 05000US51197 | 050 | Wythe County, Virginia | 27599 | 6836 | 20763 |
| 05000US51199 | 050 | York County, Virginia | 56297 | 50952 | 5345 |
| 05000US51510 | 050 | Alexandria city, Virginia | 128283 | 128283 | 0 |
| 05000US51515 | 050 | Bedford city, Virginia | 6299 | 6299 | 0 |
| 05000US51520 | 050 | Bristol city, Virginia | 17367 | 17208 | 159 |
| 05000US51530 | 050 | Buena Vista city, Virginia | 6349 | 6162 | 187 |
| 05000US51540 | 050 | Charlottesville city, Virginia | 45049 | 45049 | 0 |
| 05000US51550 | 050 | Chesapeake city, Virginia | 199184 | 179307 | 19877 |
| 05000US51560 | 050 | Clifton Forge city, Virginia | 4289 | 4289 | 0 |
| 05000US51570 | 050 | Colonial Heights city, Virginia | 16897 | 16897 | 0 |
| 05000US51580 | 050 | Covington city, Virginia | 6303 | 6303 | 0 |
| 05000US51590 | 050 | Danville city, Virginia | 48411 | 45515 | 2896 |
| 05000US51595 | 050 | Emporia city, Virginia | 5665 | 5217 | 448 |
| 05000US51600 | 050 | Fairfax city, Virginia | 21498 | 21498 | 0 |
| 05000US51610 | 050 | Falls Church city, Virginia | 10377 | 10377 | 0 |

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-----|-------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|
| 05000US51620 | 050 | Franklin city, Virginia | 8346 | 8160 | 186 |
| 05000US51630 | 050 | Fredericksburg city, Virginia | 19279 | 19223 | 56 |
| 05000US51640 | 050 | Galax city, Virginia | 6837 | 6222 | 615 |
| 05000US51650 | 050 | Hampton city, Virginia | 146437 | 146190 | 247 |
| 05000US51660 | 050 | Harrisonburg city, Virginia | 40468 | 40351 | 117 |
| 05000US51670 | 050 | Hopewell city, Virginia | 22354 | 22349 | 5 |
| 05000US51678 | 050 | Lexington city, Virginia | 6867 | 6867 | 0 |
| 05000US51680 | 050 | Lynchburg city, Virginia | 65269 | 63164 | 2105 |
| 05000US51683 | 050 | Manassas city, Virginia | 35135 | 35128 | 7 |
| 05000US51685 | 050 | Manassas Park city, Virginia | 10290 | 10290 | 0 |
| 05000US51690 | 050 | Martinsville city, Virginia | 15416 | 15416 | 0 |
| 05000US51700 | 050 | Newport News city, Virginia | 180150 | 180079 | 71 |
| 05000US51710 | 050 | Norfolk city, Virginia | 234403 | 234403 | 0 |
| 05000US51720 | 050 | Norton city, Virginia | 3904 | 3563 | 341 |
| 05000US51730 | 050 | Petersburg city, Virginia | 33740 | 32838 | 902 |
| 05000US51735 | 050 | Poquoson city, Virginia | 11566 | 11016 | 550 |
| 05000US51740 | 050 | Portsmouth city, Virginia | 100565 | 100565 | 0 |
| 05000US51750 | 050 | Radford city, Virginia | 15859 | 15362 | 497 |
| 05000US51760 | 050 | Richmond city, Virginia | 197790 | 197790 | 0 |
| 05000US51770 | 050 | Roanoke city, Virginia | 94911 | 94911 | 0 |
| 05000US51775 | 050 | Salem city, Virginia | 24747 | 24747 | 0 |
| 05000US51790 | 050 | Staunton city, Virginia | 23853 | 23683 | 170 |
| 05000US51800 | 050 | Suffolk city, Virginia | 63677 | 45756 | 17921 |
| 05000US51810 | 050 | Virginia Beach city, Virginia | 425257 | 419304 | 5953 |
| 05000US51820 | 050 | Waynesboro city, Virginia | 19520 | 19112 | 408 |
| 05000US51830 | 050 | Williamsburg city, Virginia | 11998 | 11998 | 0 |
| 05000US51840 | 050 | Winchester city, Virginia | 23585 | 23585 | 0 |

Data as downloaded from US Census Bureau Website

http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/CTTable?_lang=en&_ts=78253551812

Data Set - Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data

US Census Bureau Definitions

Urban

All territory, population and housing units in urbanized areas and in places of more than 2,500 persons outside of urbanized areas. "Urban" classification cuts across other hierarchies and can be in metropolitan or non-metropolitan areas.

Urbanized area

(UA) An area consisting of a central place(s) and adjacent territory with a general population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile of land area that together have a minimum residential population of at least 50,000 people. The Census Bureau uses published criteria to determine the qualification and boundaries of UAs.

Rural

Territory, population and housing units not classified as urban. "Rural" classification cuts across other hierarchies and can be in metropolitan or non-metropolitan areas.

Population by Percentage

| Geography | Total population: Total | Total population: Urban | Total population: Rural |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Accomack County, Virginia | 38305 | 19.2% | 80.8% |
| Albemarle County, Virginia | 79236 | 51.8% | 48.2% |
| Alleghany County, Virginia | 12926 | 29.5% | 70.5% |
| Amelia County, Virginia | 11400 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Amherst County, Virginia | 31894 | 37.0% | 63.0% |
| Appomattox County, Virginia | 13705 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Arlington County, Virginia | 189453 | 100.0% | 0.0% |
| Augusta County, Virginia | 65615 | 22.2% | 77.8% |
| Bath County, Virginia | 5048 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Bedford County, Virginia | 60371 | 14.8% | 85.2% |
| Bland County, Virginia | 6871 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Botetourt County, Virginia | 30496 | 33.5% | 66.5% |
| Brunswick County, Virginia | 18419 | 24.1% | 75.9% |
| Buchanan County, Virginia | 26978 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Buckingham County, Virginia | 15623 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Campbell County, Virginia | 51078 | 38.2% | 61.8% |
| Caroline County, Virginia | 22121 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Carroll County, Virginia | 29245 | 1.7% | 98.3% |
| Charles City County, Virginia | 6926 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Charlotte County, Virginia | 12472 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Chesterfield County, Virginia | 259903 | 89.5% | 10.5% |
| Clarke County, Virginia | 12652 | 23.5% | 76.5% |
| Craig County, Virginia | 5091 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Culpeper County, Virginia | 34262 | 27.8% | 72.2% |
| Cumberland County, Virginia | 9017 | 3.9% | 96.1% |
| Dickenson County, Virginia | 16395 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Dinwiddie County, Virginia | 24533 | 26.2% | 73.8% |
| Essex County, Virginia | 9989 | 20.2% | 79.8% |
| Fairfax County, Virginia | 969749 | 98.6% | 1.4% |
| Fauquier County, Virginia | 55139 | 27.4% | 72.6% |
| Floyd County, Virginia | 13874 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Fluvanna County, Virginia | 20047 | 30.1% | 69.9% |
| Franklin County, Virginia | 47286 | 9.3% | 90.7% |
| Frederick County, Virginia | 59209 | 50.6% | 49.4% |
| Giles County, Virginia | 16657 | 16.9% | 83.1% |

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------|-------|--------|
| Gloucester County, Virginia | 34780 | 28.0% | 72.0% |
| Goochland County, Virginia | 16863 | 6.8% | 93.2% |
| Grayson County, Virginia | 17917 | 0.5% | 99.5% |
| Greene County, Virginia | 15244 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Greensville County, Virginia | 11560 | 35.6% | 64.4% |
| Halifax County, Virginia | 37355 | 23.8% | 76.2% |
| Hanover County, Virginia | 86320 | 56.6% | 43.4% |
| Henrico County, Virginia | 262300 | 94.3% | 5.7% |
| Henry County, Virginia | 57930 | 35.2% | 64.8% |
| Highland County, Virginia | 2536 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Isle of Wight County, Virginia | 29728 | 33.9% | 66.1% |
| James City County, Virginia | 48102 | 71.3% | 28.7% |
| King and Queen County, Virginia | 6630 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| King George County, Virginia | 16803 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| King William County, Virginia | 13146 | 19.5% | 80.5% |
| Lancaster County, Virginia | 11567 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Lee County, Virginia | 23589 | 0.5% | 99.5% |
| Loudoun County, Virginia | 169599 | 84.3% | 15.7% |
| Louisa County, Virginia | 25627 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Lunenburg County, Virginia | 13146 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Madison County, Virginia | 12520 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Mathews County, Virginia | 9207 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Mecklenburg County, Virginia | 32380 | 21.9% | 78.1% |
| Middlesex County, Virginia | 9932 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Montgomery County, Virginia | 83629 | 69.3% | 30.7% |
| Nelson County, Virginia | 14445 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| New Kent County, Virginia | 13462 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Northampton County, Virginia | 13093 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Northumberland County, Virginia | 12259 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Nottoway County, Virginia | 15725 | 46.8% | 53.2% |
| Orange County, Virginia | 25881 | 33.1% | 66.9% |
| Page County, Virginia | 23177 | 20.5% | 79.5% |
| Patrick County, Virginia | 19407 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Pittsylvania County, Virginia | 61745 | 10.6% | 89.4% |
| Powhatan County, Virginia | 22377 | 8.8% | 91.2% |
| Prince Edward County, Virginia | 19720 | 28.8% | 71.2% |
| Prince George County, Virginia | 33047 | 40.5% | 59.5% |
| Prince William County, Virginia | 280813 | 90.8% | 9.2% |
| Pulaski County, Virginia | 35127 | 48.1% | 51.9% |

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|---------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Rappahannock County, Virginia | 6983 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Richmond County, Virginia | 8809 | 15.7% | 84.3% |
| Roanoke County, Virginia | 85778 | 77.9% | 22.1% |
| Rockbridge County, Virginia | 20808 | 3.6% | 96.4% |
| Rockingham County, Virginia | 67725 | 33.2% | 66.8% |
| Russell County, Virginia | 30308 | 11.2% | 88.8% |
| Scott County, Virginia | 23403 | 18.3% | 81.7% |
| Shenandoah County, Virginia | 35075 | 23.5% | 76.5% |
| Smyth County, Virginia | 33081 | 29.3% | 70.7% |
| Southampton County, Virginia | 17482 | 1.9% | 98.1% |
| Spotsylvania County, Virginia | 90395 | 65.2% | 34.8% |
| Stafford County, Virginia | 92446 | 73.9% | 26.1% |
| Surry County, Virginia | 6829 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Sussex County, Virginia | 12504 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| Tazewell County, Virginia | 44598 | 41.9% | 58.1% |
| Warren County, Virginia | 31584 | 43.8% | 56.2% |
| Washington County, Virginia | 51103 | 30.3% | 69.7% |
| Westmoreland County, Virginia | 16718 | 25.6% | 74.4% |
| Wise County, Virginia | 40123 | 38.4% | 61.6% |
| Wythe County, Virginia | 27599 | 24.8% | 75.2% |
| York County, Virginia | 56297 | 90.5% | 9.5% |
| Alexandria city, Virginia | 128283 | 100.0% | 0.0% |
| Bedford city, Virginia | 6299 | 100.0% | 0.0% |
| Bristol city, Virginia | 17367 | 99.1% | 0.9% |
| Buena Vista city, Virginia | 6349 | 97.1% | 2.9% |
| Charlottesville city, Virginia | 45049 | 100.0% | 0.0% |
| Chesapeake city, Virginia | 199184 | 90.0% | 10.0% |
| Clifton Forge city, Virginia | 4289 | 100.0% | 0.0% |
| Colonial Heights city, Virginia | 16897 | 100.0% | 0.0% |
| Covington city, Virginia | 6303 | 100.0% | 0.0% |
| Danville city, Virginia | 48411 | 94.0% | 6.0% |
| Emporia city, Virginia | 5665 | 92.1% | 7.9% |
| Fairfax city, Virginia | 21498 | 100.0% | 0.0% |
| Falls Church city, Virginia | 10377 | 100.0% | 0.0% |
| Franklin city, Virginia | 8346 | 97.8% | 2.2% |
| Fredericksburg city, Virginia | 19279 | 99.7% | 0.3% |
| Galax city, Virginia | 6837 | 91.0% | 9.0% |
| Hampton city, Virginia | 146437 | 99.8% | 0.2% |
| Harrisonburg city, Virginia | 40468 | 99.7% | 0.3% |
| Hopewell city, Virginia | 22354 | 100.0% | 0.0% |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|
| Lexington city, Virginia | 6867 | 100.0% | 0.0% |
| Lynchburg city, Virginia | 65269 | 96.8% | 3.2% |
| Manassas city, Virginia | 35135 | 100.0% | 0.0% |
| Manassas Park city, Virginia | 10290 | 100.0% | 0.0% |
| Martinsville city, Virginia | 15416 | 100.0% | 0.0% |
| Newport News city, Virginia | 180150 | 100.0% | 0.0% |
| Norfolk city, Virginia | 234403 | 100.0% | 0.0% |
| Norton city, Virginia | 3904 | 91.3% | 8.7% |
| Petersburg city, Virginia | 33740 | 97.3% | 2.7% |
| Poquoson city, Virginia | 11566 | 95.2% | 4.8% |
| Portsmouth city, Virginia | 100565 | 100.0% | 0.0% |
| Radford city, Virginia | 15859 | 96.9% | 3.1% |
| Richmond city, Virginia | 197790 | 100.0% | 0.0% |
| Roanoke city, Virginia | 94911 | 100.0% | 0.0% |
| Salem city, Virginia | 24747 | 100.0% | 0.0% |
| Staunton city, Virginia | 23853 | 99.3% | 0.7% |
| Suffolk city, Virginia | 63677 | 71.9% | 28.1% |
| Virginia Beach city, Virginia | 425257 | 98.6% | 1.4% |
| Waynesboro city, Virginia | 19520 | 97.9% | 2.1% |
| Williamsburg city, Virginia | 11998 | 100.0% | 0.0% |
| Winchester city, Virginia | 23585 | 100.0% | 0.0% |

Percentages calculated by using the following formula:

(Total Population: Urban / Total Population: Total) * 100

(Total Population: Rural / Total Population: Total) * 100

APPENDIX B
Structured Interview Protocol

Appendix B

Structured Interview Protocol

I. Review Preliminary Information

- A. Restate researcher's name and status as a doctoral candidate at the University of Virginia
- B. Thank the respondent for agreeing to participate
- C. Summarize the interview protocol and restate that the interview is estimated to take one hour to complete
- D. Restate the purpose of the study and the manner in which data will be collected, handled, analyzed and reported
- E. Remind the respondent that the interview will be taped and transcribed
- F. Remind the respondent that he or she can withdraw from the study at any time, and that all data collected from the respondent would then be destroyed
- G. Ask for consent to turn on the tape and conduct the interview or for a better time to call back

II. Data Collection (Questions)

- 1.) Please tell me about your teaching background including the grades and subjects you have taught and how long you have been teaching. What is your current role?
- 2.) To what or whom do you contribute your success? Why?
- 3.) What knowledge base do you feel is critical for the success of urban teachers in raising student achievement? What pedagogical skills are necessary?
- 4.) Urban school populations are denoted for higher populations of culturally diverse and/or high risk students. What advice would you give in creating rapport and a positive learning environment for these students?
- 5.) What challenges have you encountered working in an urban school? What did you do to overcome these difficulties? How did you know to do that?
- 6.) How do you communicate with families and other important people outside of your classroom to positively affect the learning environment and achievement of your students?
- 7.) To what extent did you feel prepared to enter an urban classroom? What prepared you?

8.) What curricula, field practicums, or other educational experiences do you feel are necessary for schools of education to effectively prepare teacher candidates for working in urban classrooms?

9.) What final advice would you give to novice urban teachers and those who prepare them?

III. Wrap Up

- A. "This is the end of our interview. Thank you for participating in this component of my study. I appreciate the time you have taken to provide this data to me."
- B. "Is there any additional information related to any part of this interview that you would like to add at this time?"
- C. "Do you have any questions for me regarding any aspect of this study?"
- D. "You will soon receive a transcript of the interview today by mail or email. Please feel free to make any additions, deletions, or clarifications that you deem necessary. In addition, you will also receive a copy of the completed analysis and discussion of the study as soon as possible, but no later than September 1, 2004. Again, I am grateful for the opportunity to talk with you and I appreciate your input in this study."

APPENDIX C
Correspondence

Michelle B. Goodwin
5840 Quaker Parkway
Lynchburg, VA 24502

September 1, 2003

Participant Name
Participant Address

Dear _____:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study, *Perceptions of Exemplary Teachers in Urban Schools*. Enclosed you will find a consent agreement required by the University of Virginia's Institutional Review Board. Please sign and return the agreement at your earliest convenience so that I may include your interview in my data bank. You may fax the agreement to me at (434)582-2468 or mail it directly to me using the enclosed envelope. I have also included a copy of the interview protocol that will guide our discussion.

Once again, thank you for your willingness to share your experiences and ideas. I am confident they will provide insight and broaden my understanding of effective teaching in urban schools.

Please call me at (434)237-4865 [home], (434)582-2265 [work], or email me at mbgoodwin@liberty.edu if you have any questions or concerns related to your participation in the study.

With gratitude,

Michelle B. Goodwin

Informed Consent Agreement
Project Title: Perceptions of Exemplary Teachers in Urban Schools
Principal Investigator: Michelle B. Goodwin

Please read this consent agreement carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Page 1 of 2

Purpose of the research study:

The purpose of the study is to solicit your perceptions of necessary attributes and skills required for teaching in urban schools, specifically in the areas of pedagogy, curricula, content, classroom environments, parental communication, and other such factors that influence student learning and achievement for urban students. In addition, the study will seek your views concerning teacher preparation for service in urban classrooms.

What you will do in the study:

You will spend about 1 hour participating in a telephone interview. An interview protocol will be mailed to you approximately one week prior to the interview so that you may ponder the questions and reflect upon your experiences. Your interview will be tape recorded. After the interview is transcribed to text, you will then be sent the transcript for your review and approval so you may note any changes or clarifications you deem necessary.

Time required:

You will spend approximately one hour and thirty minutes participating in this study. The interview will take approximately 1 hour. In addition, you will be sent a transcript to review in order to confirm its accuracy. If there are any additions, deletions, or clarifications needed, this should take no longer than 30 minutes.

Risks:

There are no anticipated risks.

Benefits:

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the study. However, your input may help to inform novice teachers to be better prepared to serve in urban classrooms.

Confidentiality:

The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially, although complete confidentiality cannot be assured due to the nature of the study.

Your information will be assigned a code number. The list connecting your name to this code will be kept in a secured file. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, this list will be destroyed. Your name, school, or school division will not be used in any report.

Voluntary participation:

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary.

Right to withdraw from the study:

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from the study, all data and tapes associated with your participation will be destroyed.

How to withdraw from the study:

If you want to withdraw from the study, please notify the researcher or the faculty advisor at any time at the address and phone number provided below. Any data collected will be discarded.

Payment:

You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

Who to contact if you have questions about the study:

Dr. Cheryl B. Henig, Faculty Advisor
Curry School of Education, Ruffner Hall
Department of Leadership, Foundations, and Policy
The University of Virginia
405 Emmett Street S
Charlottesville, VA 22903
(434)924-3180

or

Michelle B. Goodwin, Primary Researcher
5840 Quaker Parkway
Lynchburg, VA 24502
(434)237-4865 [Home]
(434)582-2265 [Work]

Who to contact about your rights in the study:

Luke Kelly, Chairman, Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences, Barringer Wing, Room 4365, University of Virginia, P.O. Box 800392, Charlottesville, VA 22908-0392.
Telephone: (434) 243-2915

Agreement:

I agree to participate in the research study described above.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Michelle B. Goodwin
5840 Quaker Parkway
Lynchburg, VA 24502

September 1, 2003

Participant Name
Participant Address

Dear _____:

Enclosed please find a copy of the transcription for your interview in connection with my study, *Perceptions of Exemplary Teachers in Urban Schools*. Please feel free to make any additions, deletions, or clarifications you deem necessary. You may make these remarks on the text or on a separate sheet of paper. If the transcript meets with your approval, you need not respond. I have enclosed a stamped envelope and an address label should you need it. If you have not returned any revisions within 2 weeks, I will assume you wish to leave the data as printed.

Thank you again for all your efforts. I have learned a great deal from our conversation. Your responses have been insightful and have broadened my understanding of effective teaching in urban schools.

Please call me at (434)237-4865 [home], (434)582-2265 [work], or email me at mbgoodwin@liberty.edu if you have any questions or concerns related to your participation in the study.

With gratitude,

Michelle B. Goodwin