Student Voice: A Qualitative Study Investigating Students' Experiences and Teachers’ Perceptions of Instructional Practice Across Learning Levels

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STUDENT VOICE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY INVESTIGATING STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES

Student Voice: A Qualitative Study Investigating Students' Experiences and Teachers’ Perceptions of Instructional Practice Across Learning Levels

By

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Signature Page
Dedication

First giving honor to God, the completion of this dissertation adds to the noble legacy of the Andrew Moore Family. Through this project, I hope to extend the impact of my family on the community in which we live. I dedicate this work to the hosts of artists, preachers, business, medical, technology and educational professionals who laid the foundations for generations to come. Our mission has always been to listen, impact and change the world through the community in which we live.

I dedicate this work to those who seek to support the leaders, teachers and students whose only purpose is to make effective, lasting change and create opportunities for all people to thrive in our educational society.
Acknowledgments

In writing this dissertation, I acknowledge the many opportunities to listen to and hear many voices, read many headlines and witness many events concerning the evolution of acceptance of diversity and change in our society. Thank you to those participants who influenced this writing.

I thank the Faculty and Educational Leadership Department at Kennesaw State University, especially Dr. Sheryl Croft, Dr. Albert Jimenez, and Dr. Arvin Johnson for their guidance and support through this dissertation work. Thank you, Dr. Dishman and Dr. Whitlock for your continued support. Thank you to my editors Wendy LaRue and Marisa Braxton for being my sounding boards. Thank you to everyone who has helped me reach this point in my academic and professional career.

Thank you to my family and friends who supported me along my educational journey. I could not have completed any of this without you.
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Abstract

Using a 360-degree approach, this qualitative case study compared the experiences of students and the perceptions of teachers concerning instructional practice across learning levels in a northwest Georgia high school. The purpose was to use student voice to inform administrators of teachers’ and students’ classroom engagement. Using nine math classes across three learning levels (foundations algebra, on-level algebra, and advanced algebra), the study used open-ended surveys to collect self-reported data from students and teachers to identify common themes of learning and teaching practices. The common themes identified agreements and collaborative strategies between students and teachers at three different learning levels that aligned with the Georgia Teacher Keys Effectiveness System teacher effectiveness instrument (GADOE, 2016; Stronge, 2016). This study examined and reports the emergent common themes of instructional strategies, differentiated instruction and positive learning environment. This study aimed to add to case study knowledge of how administrators and teacher leaders can use student voice as a tool to inform instruction and support administrators in measuring teacher and student engagement prior to formal teacher evaluation by reporting the frequency of agreements between the experiences of students concerning their teachers’ practice among learning levels (Saldana, 2015; Merrimer & Tisdell, 2015).
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background of Study

Historically, state governments’ educational goals are to grant students equal access to education and to protect the rights of both students and teachers (Schoem, Modey & St. John, 2017). Local governments enact policy and recommend implementation of educational strategies to support the rights of pedagogical engagement of students and teachers (Schoem et al., 2017). The relationships between students and teachers play an instrumental role in achieving these goals (Greene, Miller, Duke & Akey, 2004; Wentzel, 2006; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Because school leadership defines the processes of achieving the objectives related to student-teacher engagement, teacher evaluation and developing a comprehensive measurement of teacher effectiveness that includes multiple accountability factors is an ongoing task of school improvement (Hodge & Welch, 2016; McGuinn, 2012; Shelly, 2012; Zinskie & Rea, 2016).

Teacher qualifications of appropriate professional background, evidence of student growth and learning, results of classroom observations, parent/guardian feedback, student feedback and measures of social development are among factors used to determine the measurement (Darling-Hammond, Jaquith & Hamilton, 2012; Goe, Wylie, Bosso, & Olson, 2017; Stronge 2018).

Among other methods, states evaluate teacher performance through classroom observations by school administrators, analysis of classroom artifacts (project-based instruction), teacher portfolios (Avalos-Bevan, 2018), value-added measures of student achievement, and student growth assessments, along with student ratings (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012; Georgia Department of Education, 2018; Harris, Ingle & Rutledge, 2014). These evaluation methods involve factors that vary based on the backgrounds of the evaluators, experiences of teachers and
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Developing requirements that measure multiple stakeholders’ feedback, including that of teachers and students, is challenging because there are so many variables involved that are not consistent from one teacher to next or even one school to the next.

Under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and subsequently Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) federal education mandates, Georgia uses the Teacher Keyes Effectiveness System (TKES) to streamline and evaluate teacher effectiveness (GADOE, 2012; Hamilton, Stecher, Marsh, McCombs & Robyn, 2007; Shelly, 2012; Spring, 2016; GADOE, 2018). The Georgia teacher evaluation process measures teacher effectiveness through classroom observations of teachers and by seeking teacher and student input through student achievement scores and value-added measures.

In response to Race to the Top (RT3), a competitive grants program intended to create innovation in education at the K-12 level, schools began using measures such as performance-based teacher and principal evaluations to increase teacher effectiveness and improve student learning (McGuinn, 2012). Georgia was among the states that implemented stakeholder input in identifying effective teacher practice and developed evaluation instruments aimed at better measuring teacher effectiveness (Vitiello, Bassok, Hamre, Player, & Williford, 2018). As a response to federal legislation to increase stakeholder input, in 2012, Georgia added stakeholder surveys to the teacher evaluation process (Stronge, 2012).

To facilitate stakeholder input, Georgia teachers and students used the Teacher Leader Effectiveness (TLE) electronic portal of TKES, an online data collection portal, to self-report their perceptions of instructional effectiveness through survey responses. Teachers self-assessed
by rating themselves I to IV on the ten identified state standards of instruction. Surveys of Teacher Self-Assessment in the Georgia’s Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) is an evaluation instrument designed to outline ten standards that identify educators’ professional development needs and provide a baseline for teachers to assess their own knowledge of their instructional practice. The Teacher Self-Assessment tool (Appendix A) allows teachers to rate their current performance level based on the TKES standards. The assessment provides nonevaluative guidance and teacher reflection to guide teachers’ classroom practice. Teachers self-profess their weaknesses and strengths and can set goals to develop the areas that need improvement. This reflection process supports teachers in providing professional topics for improvement and areas aimed at increasing student academic achievement and school improvement (GADOE, 2014). Students then anonymously completed surveys about their own teachers (Appendix B). A minimum of 15 students completed the survey for a given teacher before results populated in the electronic portal for review. In 2016, Georgia eliminated mandatory use of the student survey portion of the teacher evaluation assessment without reporting the findings of students’ perceptions of their teachers’ practice (Colvin, 2018; GADOE, 2016).

Based on the 2012-2013 composite results of the Georgia Teacher Assessment of Performance Standards (TAPS) ratings (Appendix C) from administrative observations, administrators rated teachers at 96.3% proficient and exemplary in instructional strategies, 92.2% in differentiated instruction, 96.5% in positive learning environment, and 94.3% in academically challenging environment. Evaluators that conducted classroom observations rated teachers 96.2% proficient to 98.8% proficient. Georgia’s pilot study using assessment data from 2013 of
26 of Georgia’s schools gave a different picture, with only 13.3% of students with high growth and 16.2% of students with low growth (GADOE, 2014). Students standardized test results from Student Learning Objective assessments for 2012 and 2013, for the same 26 school districts, resulted in 48% of teachers being rated ineffective, 28% of teachers being rated as needing development, 13% of teachers being rated proficient, and 11% being rated exemplary (GADOE, 2014). Comparing TAPS scores and student achievement data, a discrepancy exists between how administrators evaluate teachers and the academic measure of their student test scores. Based on the data, student academic performance does not correspond to principal assessment of effectiveness.

The structure of teacher evaluation systems in Georgia is determined traditionally by the results of administrative observations of teachers’ classroom performance (Ho & Kane, 2013). As an added element, the RT3 initiative (GADOE, 2014) included a student survey of instructional practice as part of teachers’ annual evaluation. The student survey was intended to answer whether students’ perceptions of teacher practice affects teachers’ performance. Additional research on student perceptions of teachers’ practice and how their perceptions compare to teacher perceptions will increase understanding of teacher practice. Adding this data to teacher evaluation gives a truer picture of teacher performance.

Statement of Problem

Although students have provided input about teachers’ performance in the past, how students’ experiences compare to teachers’ perceptions across learning levels defined by Georgia TKES in the standards of instructional strategies, differentiated instruction, and positive learning environment has been unclear. Each year in Georgia, classroom teachers are evaluated on how
they create an authentic, engaging classroom environment for their students. Principals provide teachers with a rubric that outlines the standards each teacher must meet and evidence they must provide to validate that they provide satisfactory conditions for the students they teach. Hattie (2015) identified the most important factor in a student’s education is the teacher (teacher quality) and the second most important is the school administrator, who is responsible for reinforcing teacher practices through guidance and leadership (Hattie, 2012; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Teachers are expected to relate to students, differentiate their instruction, and employ the most effective strategies to improve student academic achievement (GADOE, 2014; GADOE, 2018). Educators lose valuable opportunities for school improvement and opportunities to increase student academic achievement by using indirect methods of analyzing teacher effectiveness (Furrer, Skinner & Pitzer, 2014; Stronge, 2018). The current Georgia teacher evaluation system does not include the Student Surveys of Instructional Practice, thus leaving students out of the teacher effectiveness measurement process.

Teachers are often evaluated by administrators using prescribed guidelines. Subsequently, students are tested, and in some cases, the test scores do not align with administrators’ evaluations of teachers. As a result, a disconnect between administrators’ evaluations of teachers based on snapshot classroom observations and current measures of teacher performance seems to exist. This study suggests that an additional measure of teachers’ practice could come from student voices. If student voices were considered in the evaluation process, perhaps stakeholders would be more reflective of the teaching and instructional strategies used among teachers and students in the classroom.
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The overall research question for this bounded case study is, “How do teachers’ self-reported perceptions of their efficacy compare to students’ experiences of the teachers’ efficacy? The bounded case study approach was chosen due to not being able to predict the direction the data would lead (Crowe & Creswell, 2011; Stake, 1978). The discovered outcomes of this research were driven by the data collected. The theory was developed from the data. Multiple stakeholders’ views of the classroom were probed to understand agreements in the classroom through open-ended questioning.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

Students have observed teachers and compared them much longer than any other observer (LaFee, 2014). Students experience multiple teachers’ practices daily and compare their practices. Students as early as third and fourth grade are reliable and credible at providing consistent feedback on teacher performance (Tienken, 2008). Students’ consistent observations of teacher practice offer valuable insight into teacher performance and practice (Yoon, 2002). An additional voice in teacher evaluation would provide a more robust evaluation of teacher effectiveness (Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2002). Students who voice their opinions of teacher instructional behaviors provide first-hand, valuable information concerning teacher performance (Mitra, 2004). Better understanding how students’ experiences compare to teachers’ perceptions across learning levels defined by Georgia TKES in the standards of instructional strategies, differentiated instruction, and positive learning environment could enable observations of teachers’ instruction to provide meaningful data for evaluating teachers.

The following research questions guide this study.
1. Do ninth grade math students’ experiences and teachers’ perceptions about the use of instructional strategies differ across learning levels?

2. Do ninth grade math students’ experiences and teachers’ perceptions about differentiated instruction differ across learning levels?

3. Do ninth grade math students’ experiences and teachers’ perceptions about positive classroom environment differ across learning levels?

Ultimately the information in this study informs teacher-leaders and administrators of the importance of valuing student voice (Fielding, 2011; Rudduck & Flutter, 2004; Stronge, 2018). This research adds to the body of research regarding the experiences and perceptions students and teachers hold across learning levels concerning teachers’ use of instructional strategies, differentiated instruction, and positive learning environment to inform instructional practices.

**Conceptual Framework**

In an era of demand for social justice, individuals challenge the traditional order of authority (Marshall, 2004; Marshall & Olivia, 2017). Government entities and educational policies question traditional hierarchies and whether they effectively meet the needs of the people they serve (Jean-Marie, Normore & Brooks, 2009; Reynolds, 1999). Educational policy has traditionally accepted the philosophy that in an instructional classroom teachers and administrators set the priorities for educating students and for how the instruction should be evaluated. When multiple sources of information are used in deciding teacher effectiveness, including teacher and student perception, results are more reliable and valid (Barre, 2015).

This research uses the voices of those who participate daily in the education process—teachers, as well as students, who traditionally have limited voice in teacher effectiveness or
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Teacher quality is the primary factor that influences student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000). To maximize students’ acquisition of learning, teachers must engage students in three areas, which include self-efficacy/self-reflection, student voice, and student–teacher engagement (Stronge, 2018).

Multiple factors affect student academic engagement. Teachers’ attitudes toward their teaching practices affect students and their achievement the most (Hattie, 2012; Schunck, 2014). Students who have highly effective teachers show an increased level in academic achievement than those students who have a series of ineffective teachers (Hattie, 2012; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Effective practices that encourage continued use of best practices in a classroom promote teacher effectiveness and help ensure quality control in a school (Danielson, 2001).

Student voice is critical in the development of student achievement. According to Angelo (2004), classroom assessments, course-related self-confidence surveys, and assessing students’ knowledge of interest/knowledge/skills checklists are essential tools. These instruments should be developed using student feedback and designed to directly affect student learning and academic functioning (Angelo, 2004).

**Definitions of Relevant Terms**

*Authentic learning*: GADOE (2014) defined authentic learning as a teaching method that allows students to explore, discuss, and meaningfully develop concepts and skills in the authentic contexts of students’ real lives.

*Differentiated instruction*: GADOE (2013) defined differentiated instruction as a general term for an approach to teaching that responds to the range of students’ needs, abilities, and
STUDENT VOICE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY INVESTIGATING STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES preferences in the classroom. It also attempts to account for the differences in the ways teachers prepare and deliver instruction, as well as content, process, product, and learning environment.

*Math as a discipline:* Kahn (2001) defines math as a discipline as the process of demonstrating understanding of the content, demonstrating levels of calculation skills, applying concepts, and developing arguments.

*Student engagement:* This term refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they need learn and progress in their education (Great Schools Partnership, 2015).

*Student Surveys of Instructional Practice (SOIP):* GADOE (2013) defined SOIP as students’ perceptions of teachers’ classroom performance (GADOE, 2014).

*Student voice:* Student voice is defined as the values, opinion, beliefs, perspectives and cultural backgrounds of individuals and groups of students in a school with regard to instructional approaches and techniques that are based on student choices, interests, passions and ambitions (Great Schools Partnership, 2015).

*Teacher efficacy:* Bandura (1993) defined self-efficacy as the belief in one’s personal capabilities. For the purposes of this study, teacher efficacy refers to teachers’ belief in their own ability to teach and communicate with students effectively fulfilling a desired outcome.

*Teacher self-assessment (TSA):* GADOE (2013) defines self-assessment as a process by which teachers judge the effectiveness and adequacy of their practice, effects, knowledge, and beliefs for the purpose of performance improvement.
Organization of Study

Chapter 1 introduced the background of the study. It also stated the problem and described the purpose and significance of the study. It noted the conceptual framework and cited a list of relevant terms. Chapter 2 includes a review of the historical literature researched and summarizes the findings related to the theoretical frameworks. Chapter 3 presents the methodology of the research. It describes the processes used to qualify for and conduct the research along with a description of population, participants and the instruments used in data collection. The findings, organized by themes identified through the survey instruments along with responses to the research questions, are found in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 includes the conclusion, limitations, and implication for further research surrounding the area of research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Student–teacher engagement has been linked to student teacher quality (Hattie, 2012). The quality of the teacher is what affects students and their engagement the most (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hattie, 2012; Reeve and Jang, 2006; Wayne & Young, 2003). Ultimately, effective evaluation systems and monitoring protocols of evaluation support quality control in a school. To explore perceptions of educators and experiences of students inside a ninth-grade mathematics classroom across grade levels and inform teacher-leaders of best instructional practices and administrators in assessing teacher performance, this chapter examines social cognition and constructivism as theoretical frameworks and a brief history of teacher evaluation before NCLB, during the NCLB era, and during the ESSA era. It examines various types of evaluation models using student test scores and value-added measures and discusses evaluation models that use principal input, peer evaluation, teacher self-evaluation, and student feedback. It concludes with a discussion of teacher self-efficacy and student perception of teacher efficacy.

Theoretical Framework

This case study is informed by social-cognitive and social-constructivist theories. Social-cognitive theory holds the premise that potential development of a learner happens at a level comparable to that at which learning takes place (Bandura, 1977). The theory suggests that learning and its social context are a partnership (Bandura, 1978). Social-constructivism is the belief that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality, is contingent on human practices, being constructed in and out of interactions among human beings and their world, developed and transmitted within an essentially social context (Crotty, 1998). Learning improves when students are interested and motivated. Learning is not actualized when students are bored and are
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disengaged (Abbott, 2014). The social-constructivist theory also suggests that all cognitive
functions begin in, and must be explained as products of social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978).
Students and teachers socially interact daily in the instructional classroom. Students develop
perceptions of teachers’ practice, just as teachers form perceptions of their own practice. This
research was designed to show whether evidence of common perceptions exists between
teachers’ view of their own practice and the way students experience teachers’ practices.

According to social-cognitive theory, individuals coexist and operate within a series of
social systems (Bandura, 1993). Individuals socialize within an interdependent causal structure
in which one’s personality, behaviors, and environment interact. Each of the three components
simultaneously supports the others. Bandura refers to this process as the triadic reciprocal
causation (Bandura, 1978).

As a part of cognitive theory, in 1977, Bandura developed the idea of learning through
the experiences of others. Vicariously, people learn by watching others (Bandura & Walters,
1977). Bandura articulated that things do not have to happen to us for us to feel their effects.
Individuals feel they can see their successes through others and can repeat their process and be as
successful (Bandura, 1977, 1994). Students also learn from their teachers in the same way. As a
result, students mimic and attempt to reproduce the behaviors they see from their teachers and
vice versa (360-degree feedback model) (Morris, Usher, & Chen, 2017).

People are products and producers that support each other. In the educational
environment, teachers and students coexist to support each other in the classroom environment.
An interdependence among students and teachers builds students’ capacity for learning.
Subsequently, students’ new-found experiences prepare them for greater challenges (Bandura,
The relationship and predictability of the relationship among one’s past experiences, sense of efficacy, and future performances increase student motivation. Individuals exhibiting a high sense of self-efficacy tend not to avoid challenging circumstances. For those individuals (teachers and students) who develop a high sense of self-efficacy in the social environment, relational support increases academic rigor (challenging circumstances) and creates an environment in which students choose not to avoid challenge; ultimately manifesting in higher academic achievement and self-efficacy. Applying the results of the self-assessment for teachers and the student perception surveys exposes transparent characteristics of stakeholders in the educational environment. The exposure allows teachers and students alike to understand personalities and the triadic causation in which individuals implement the process to seek better outcomes for the students involved (Bandura, 1993).

During classroom instructional periods, students develop perceptions of their classroom environment, place value in teacher behaviors, and decide whether teachers’ behaviors affect students’ classroom performance (Bandura, 1993). Teachers, during this instructional period, develop perceptions about their practice and make decisions based on the evidence of learning that surfaces during instruction (Hattie, 2003). Teachers and students who hold similar views on instructional practices, differentiated instruction, and positive learning environment, and value the same factors, have the greatest potential of affecting student efficacy, achievement, teacher efficacy, and guiding effective teacher professional development (Pajares & Schunk, 2001). As a result, teachers’ effectiveness will increase based on the frequency of shared beliefs with students. Increasing teachers’ understanding of the effectiveness of self-practices, increases students’ progress (Marzano, 2001).
Evolution of Teacher Evaluation

The evolution of evaluating teachers can be categorized in multiple phases, some which overlap in different eras: supervision, individual development, clinical supervision, and feedback. Evaluation related to performance and value-added measures is also discussed. The historical process is divided by modern reform and federal policies of NCLB and ESSA and the measures used to evaluate teachers. The chapter concludes with a discussion of modern teacher evaluation models.

Evaluation Prior to NCLB

Teaching effectiveness was first articulated during the 1770s and was not considered a professional discipline (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011); however, it was considered a derivative of religious instruction (Tracy, 1995). Teaching was supervised by community-based organizations that established the criteria and possessed all authority to hire and fire teachers (Burke & Kyre, 2005).

In the 1800s, with industrialization, a need for specialized learning grew in urban areas and the need for teachers and individuals who could supervise the profession increased (Sadovnik, Cookson & Semel, 2001). Content-knowledgeable professionals and administrators were needed (Blumberg, 1985). Instructional organization separated into two different groups in the 1840’s—universities and school administrators and female teachers (Tracy, 1995)—resulting in a shift from teacher autonomy to administrative control (Popkewitz, 1994).

A shift to teaching as a complex process needing experts to supervise and to provide feedback to teachers occurred in 1845 (Tracy, 1995) when Blumberg suggested that skilled instruction was most important in teacher efficacy and that providing knowledge and
Between 1900 and 1920, business productivity models were used to evaluate teaching, moving away from inspection to teacher observation, thereby developing objectives to measure teacher performance (Tracy, 1995). The Hawthorne Model of teacher evaluation was a product of monitoring factory productivity (Tracy, 1995). It specified administrators assisting teachers and treating them as partners in the educational process to improve educational outcomes. This model gave teachers voice in their work and professional development (Tracy, 1995).

During the mid-1900s, principals observed whole class periods and conducted post-conferences recognizing the value of the alignment between the evaluator and the teacher was important and drove the reflection and improvement process (Goldhammer, 1969). Robert Goldhammer (1969) outlined five phases of clinical supervision: pre-observation conference, observation, analysis, supervision conference, and analysis of instruction. In the 1950s, there was a move to professionalize the teaching profession by defining standards and certification requirements (Popkewitz, 1994).

During the mid-20th century, the teaching profession developed state certification tests (Jewell, 2017). The thought was that teachers who performed well on tests and participated in ongoing professional development would increase in proficiency and effectiveness (Jewell, 2017). With the onset of the civil rights era, teachers were given more input into the teaching profession (Tracy, 1995). The frequency of participating in professional development and the more education teachers amassed decided whether teachers were more effective (Jewell, 2017).

Prior to 1965, states were responsible for overseeing the teacher evaluation process (Urban & Jennings, 1996). The U.S. Department of Education was created to help states support
special needs and economically disadvantaged students that had not been adequately served and to ensure equal access to education for all individuals (Radin & Hawley, 1988). States provided direction to local school districts concerning teacher evaluation (Radin & Hawley, 1988). New policies were enacted through litigation and adopted through state legislation. With the 1965 adoption of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), greater educational equality was the goal (Radin & Hawley, 1988).

A Nation at Risk (ANR) and the Rand study brought attention to improving public education (National Commission on Excellence, 1983; Sadovnik, 2001). ANR proposed a movement to improve teaching standards and add a degree of professionalism to the teacher education process (Grady, Helbling, & Lubeck, 2008). It proposed giving teachers input into student achievement and curriculum. This movement spurred the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, which created ways to recognize exemplary teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

Around 1980, Madeline Hunter developed a supervision model that contained seven steps used to evaluate teachers (Hunter, 1980, 1984). Madeline Hunter developed ideas about the use of professional development to support teachers and their understanding of speaking universal language and a way to encourage teachers to commonly adopt the use of research-based best practices (Marzano, 2011).

The Danielson Model (1996), *Enhancing Professional Practice, A Framework for Testing* became the model for teaching (Anderson, Butler, Palmiter, & Arcaira, 2016). The areas within the model were planning, preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and
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It created a system of ranking teachers “unsatisfactory, basic, proficient and distinguished” (Jewell, 2017 p. 387).

Awakening of the NCLB-Era Evaluation

The 21st century shifted measuring teacher effectiveness from supervision to evaluation (Marzano et al., 2011). Measure of teacher effectiveness shifted from teacher behavior to student behavior, achievement, and student outcomes (Marzano et al., 2011). Teaching evaluation and supervision shifted to teacher performance and growth and student learning (Nolan & Hoover, 2005). No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), signed into law in 2001, reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and was designed to support economically disadvantaged students (Jorgensen & Hoffman, 2003). It supported standards-based instruction and created measures to monitor students’ annual yearly performance outcomes (Gamoran, 2007; Jorgensen & Hoffman, 2003). The act emphasized standardized testing and continuous improvement (Marzano et al., 2011). NCLB held teachers individually accountable for how well students performed on standardized tests (Hanushek & Raymond, 2005).

NCLB changed expectations for student academic outcomes by focusing on student achievement data and high stakes testing (Jorgensen & Hoffman, 2003). Implemented in 2002, NCLB mandated that 100% of students would reach educational proficiency by 2014, placing a major focus on teacher effectiveness and performance (Ladd, 2017). During the NCLB era of measuring teacher performance, teacher evaluations showed that most teachers were proficient and received satisfactory evaluations although no state met the 100% proficiency goal (Klein, 2015).
Early Use of Student Test Scores in Teacher Evaluation

Nationally a comparison of student test scores was used to explain teachers’ performance (Hayock, 1998). The statistics then allowed teachers to be compared across school districts and nationally based on students’ academic gains (Wright, Horn & Sanders, 1997; Hayock, 1998). A study conducted in the Dallas Independent School District evaluating teacher performance showed that students taught over a consecutive 3-year period by teachers deemed as effective saw increased gains in performance (Darling-Hammond & Young, 2002; Hayock, 1998; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Students who were considered high achieving that were taught by ineffective teachers over a 3-year period demonstrated a decreased rate of growth (Hattie, 2012; Haycock, 1998).

A longitudinal study was conducted by Sanders where student achievement data systems were used to monitor and document the accountability measure for teachers determining how much the teacher added value to the educational objectives of a student (Hayock, 1998; Sanders & Rivers, 1997). Due to the multiple aspects and components of a teacher’s job description, a single measure has minimal validity in making a judgement on overall teacher practice (Grossman, Loeb, Cohen, & Wyckoff, 2013); therefore, additional stakeholders or data pieces are needed to add strength to the process.

A study conducted through the Tennessee Value Added Assessment System (TVAAS) used the Sanders’ model to link student test scores and learning outcomes to teacher evaluation (Sanders & Horn, 1998). The longitudinal study concluded that students’ socioeconomic differences, race, and classroom student diversity have little effect on students’ academic progress (Sanders & Rivers, 1998). Rather, the study determined that effective teachers are the
most important part of students’ yearly progress and linked teacher evaluations to student outcomes (Sanders & Rivers, 1998).

**Use of Value-added Test Scores in Teacher Evaluation**

Value-added evaluation was implemented to account for disparity in achievement among students and intended to shift the teacher evaluation focus to student growth, rather than just achievement on end-test scores (OECD, 2008). Value-added models examined academic gains in student test scores that could be connected to individual teachers over time (Everson, 2017; Sanders & Horn, 1994). Teachers linked to the greatest amounts of gains received higher effectiveness evaluation ratings (Sanders & Horn, 1994). In 2009, teacher effectiveness shifted from measuring teacher effectiveness through student outcomes and increased achievement focusing to value-added measures (VAM) (Jewell, 2017). It also incorporated use of student achievement data into professional development and tracking student academic gains (Jewell, 2012). Based on the student performance outcomes, school districts could make decisions concerning continued teacher employment (Anderson, Butler, Palmiter & Arcaira, 2016).

Use of VAM revealed learning gaps that students in urban and rural areas lagged behind their counterparts in academic achievement (Everson, 2017). Federal legislators implemented measures that would help identify educational deficiencies between students who had been traditionally underserved (Losen, 2004; Everson, 2017). Use of standardized test scores was independent of the subjective classroom observations and could be compared across states or school districts (Everson, 2017). Federal legislators and organizations demanded greater accountability from school systems (Steinberg & Donaldson, 2016). VAM was linked to individual teachers’ evaluations and students’ gains and were determined to reflect how
The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation awarded grants to school districts that implemented a version of the Danielson Model of classroom observation and incorporated student achievement data along with stakeholder input into teacher effectiveness measures known as the Measures of Teachers Effectiveness Project (MET) (Kane & Staiger, 2012). The MET Project combined multiple measures in search of a comprehensive method to measure teacher effectiveness (Kane & Staiger, 2012). Part of its findings showed that a combination of classroom observations and student outcomes can predict student achievement (Kane & Staiger, 2012).

Policy makers focused on educational reform with an added emphasis on improving teacher quality and teacher effectiveness (Everson, 2017). RT3 grant funding enabled school districts to devise measures to reward teachers for student academic progress through pay for performance for those who met their student outcome objectives, but at the same time documented teachers for lack of achievement that could possibly result in termination (GADOE, 2012). Delaware and Tennessee were among the first states to petition the United States federal government for involvement in the RT3 initiative (Ho & Kane, 2013; GADOE, 2014). The funding allowed evaluators/employers to evaluate the performance of a teacher and make recommendations for greater incentives, professional learning, or even termination based on a teacher’s performance (GADOE, 2013).
ESSA-Era Evaluation

In 2015, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was reauthorized as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which voided NCLB (Farley, 2017; Sawchuk, 2016). ESSA lifted the burden of documenting annual yearly progress and teacher accountability of NCLB (Sawchuk, 2016). ESSA diminished focus on testing, therefore de-emphasized using test scores as a key factor for teacher evaluation (Farley, 2017). ESSA assured that multiple measures must be used in the teacher evaluation process if federal funding was used to change the teacher evaluation process (Sawchuk, 2016).

ESSA removed the need for a “highly qualified” status for Title I schools. Where teachers had to show specific educational level, testing competency and hold state certification, teachers now only needed to meet state licensing requirements (Sawchuk, 2016). ESSA moved teacher effectiveness toward teacher professional development (Sawchuk, 2016). The use of student learning objectives which are student assessments created by teachers that monitor students’ academic progress in a content area are used as part of teacher evaluation (Sawchuk, 2016). Evaluators use the student growth from these assessments as evidence; not as a factor in teacher evaluation (Sawchuk, 2016).

Combination Approaches to Teacher Evaluation

New approaches to teacher evaluation emerged because of ESSA and used a combination of factors including classroom observations, student performance based on value-added measures and student surveys (Anderson et al., 2016). As a part of evolving teacher evaluation processes, classroom climate has been measured by performance ratings in the areas of implementing classroom routines and procedures, standards for student behavior, safety and
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security of the classroom environment, level of fairness, respect and diversity and responsive
communication. The US Department of Education’s Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy
Development conducted case studies in several US school districts based on compliance with
RT3 implementation that included multiple measures in their teacher evaluation process
including a formative component (Anderson, Butler, Palmiter & Arcaira, 2016). Chosen school
districts were considered pioneers in developing their teacher effectiveness measures within their
respective states (Anderson et al., 2016). Results of the case studies rendered that the goal of
teacher evaluation was to improve instruction (Anderson et al., 2016). Use of the Danielson’s
Framework for Teaching (FFT) was used as a standard for classroom observations (Anderson et
al., 2016). All of the case studies used multiple student assessment data as a factor in
determining teacher effectiveness (Anderson et al, 2016).

Use of student surveys to determine effectiveness of teaching strategies. Student
surveys have been used by several different organizations including the US Department of
Education and various states. For example, in case studies conducted by the US Department of
Education, two schools used student surveys as a component of measuring teacher effectiveness
(Anderson et al., 2016). Pittsburg Public Schools used grade-level appropriate surveys developed
from the Tripod student survey study where students rated their teachers on the constructs of
care, control, clarity, challenge, captivated, confer and consolidate (Anderson et al., 2016). The
Austin Independent School District used student survey data to capture their perception of how
teachers created engagement, provided rigor and relevance and management of classroom
climate (Anderson et al., 2016). Other types of standards-based evaluation processes like
National Board Certification and performance assessments for beginning teacher licensing,
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district and school-level instruments based on professional teaching standards, evaluation based on videotapes, artifacts and student surveys use evidence of student learning (Sato, Wei & Darling-Hammond, 2008).

Tennessee’s teacher evaluation is called the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) comprised of administrative observations, feedback and student growth measures (Center on Great Teachers & Leaders, 2019). In response to teachers’ need for additional feedback on observations, Tennessee created an online platform for teachers to upload student work samples. These samples allow peer evaluation and creates transparency in teacher performance (GTL, 2019). The database allows teachers to share content and teachers’ best practices. Peer feedback hopes to improve teaching by providing feedback and additional resources to teachers (GTL, 2019).

Several approaches to teacher evaluation emerged because of the effects of NCLB and implementation of ESSA. NCLB and RT3 federal regulations along with ESSA requirements reflected public sentiments of the need for better schools and increased teacher accountability. ESSA loosened the reigns and provided opportunities for greater flexibility in teacher evaluation. States sought alternative measures to implement each federal requirement and provided the confidence needed by the teachers evaluated.

Types of Teacher Evaluation Models

Modern teacher evaluation models in this research are categorized by the individuals responsible for contributing feedback to the teacher. Principals as evaluators, teachers’ self-reflection and the use of student feedback are models discussed in this research as part of the 360-degree approach to teacher evaluation. Both principals and students have unique
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relationships with teachers and offer perspectives on teachers’ practice that other stakeholders outside the classroom and school environment have limited first-hand observational experience. Teacher self-evaluation through reflection of practice is discussed as part of the 360-degree approach to teacher evaluation.

**Principal feedback.** The teacher evaluation process moved to supporting the clinical model where principals and administrative observers used a checklist of standards and grade-level pedagogy occurring within the classroom (Sullivan & Glantz, 2005). Clinical models use informal and formal reviews of a teacher’s practice observed while providing instruction (Anderson et al., 2016). Unlike value-added measures where roughly one-third of teachers can be evaluated by test scores, most states use principal observations as part of the measure of teacher effectiveness (Papay, 2012; Doherty & Jacobs, 2013).

Teacher effectiveness is improved with constructive feedback on teachers’ performance (Donaldson & Papay, 2015). When the feedback loop includes judgment, it fails to be helpful (Donaldson, 2013). Administrative observations are not effective in differentiating and identifying effective teaching (Weisberg et al., 2009). Toch and Rothaman (2008) described administrative observation as being ineffective because it does not address teachers’ professional development and use of instructional strategies along the course of their teaching year.

In a study conducted in Hillsborough County, Florida, 129 principal observers reviewed teaching videos of 67 teacher-volunteers (Ho & Kane, 2013). Researchers sought to understand the principals’ use of teacher rating scales used in observations (Ho & Kane, 2013). Findings of the study suggested that evaluators rarely use the entire scale when rating teachers (top and bottom ratings) and administrators differentiate in their ratings more often than teacher-peer
raters (Ho & Kane, 2013). Another study surrounding the role principals play in determining teacher effectiveness analyzed the amount of time principals needed for one person to act as primary evaluator (Anderson et al., 2016). Principals delegated the responsibility of evaluation to additional administrative personnel including assistant principals, district staff, teacher-leaders, and peer observers concluding that time and added responsibilities affect observation (Anderson et al, 2016). Principals as observers of teachers give each teacher individual observation ratings, but there are subjective perceptions and time restraints that add external factors to the teacher evaluation process (Anderson et al., 2016).

**Self-evaluation.** Among the common domains that recur from the teacher survey self-assessment tool are the themes of instructional pedagogy, relationships with students, and how teachers individualize instruction to meet student needs, differentiated instruction (GADOE, 2016). Bordelon (2012) conducted a study with students and teachers comparing student ratings of their teachers and teachers’ self-assessment ratings.

Teacher self-assessment tools were designed to support on-going teacher reflection of their practice along with the potential for leadership (Bangs & Frost, 2012). Teachers participate in the distributed leadership process to support organizational structures (Bangs & Frost, 2012). Teachers assume roles as department chairs and team leaders to assist in school management and implementation of programs (Bangs & Frost, 2012). Many teacher self-assessment tools are designed to assist in teachers’ career development (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

**Student feedback.** Educational policy has evolved to include additional stakeholders in determining teacher effectiveness (Stronge, 2018; Creemers & Kyriakides, 2015). Learners are encouraged to have unique perspective regarding their learning experiences (McCombs, 1997).
Teachers and students are collaborative partners in the learning process (Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, & Moore-Cherry, 2016). Student academic achievement is the goal of teaching and learning; therefore, students and teachers’ perceptions are important factors in achieving ultimate learning objectives. Yet, this occurs most often when

“the differences of learners’ cultures, abilities, styles, developmental stages, and needs are accounted for and respected. Learners are treated as co-creators in the teaching and learning process, individuals with ideas and issues that deserve attention and consideration” (McCombs, 1997).

The use of student surveys is a commonly accepted practice in college teacher evaluation (STP Presidential Taskforce, 2013). The practice is widely accepted to improve instruction (Richmond et al., 2014, STP Presidential Taskforce 2013). Students interact with teachers daily, unlike no other school stakeholder, including the teacher’s evaluators (Follman, 1992). Students develop perceptions of teachers and their practice in a unique way (Peterson, Wahlquist, & Bone, 2000). Students also make distinctions between teachers in their ratings. Students rank teachers high and low based on their positive and negative educational experiences with teachers (Ferguson, 2010).

One of the most prominent student surveys is the Tripod Project survey funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s Measure of Effective Teaching (MET) Project. This survey is designed to aid in measuring teacher effectiveness based on the Seven Cs: caring, captivating, conferring, controlling, clarifying, challenging and consolidating (Ho & Kane, 2013). In development of the survey, Ferguson created 80 questions to be rated using a seven-point Likert scale by students in grade 6-12 (Ho & Kane, 2013).
Educators have used student surveys to help them in determining their strengths and weaknesses in the classroom and to develop new teaching strategies (Balch, 2012). Studies have used student surveys as a component of the teacher evaluation process, but in Georgia the results have never been used as a determining factor of the teacher’s instructional effectiveness (Balch, 2011). Many schools survey students to determine how they feel on issues. Schools also use student surveys to support changes in policies and to respond to student concerns (Abbott, 2014).

Student surveys have become an important and accepted part of teacher evaluation. Most research has been completed on a post-secondary level. The feedback from students is used to improve the quality of instruction (Richmond et al., 2014). Using student evaluation in higher education is a normal practice (Miller & Seldin, 2014). In higher education teachers accept the feedback relayed by their students. Student surveys correlate with student learning outcomes (D’Apollonia & Abrami, 1997); while students’ evaluation of teacher performance has also correlated with teachers’ self-assessments and observations made by administrative professionals (Marsh & Roche, 1997).

States determined the degree of use of student surveys by the value or the weight of the student survey in teacher evaluations. According to the NCTQ, in the United States, Iowa ranked highest due to student surveys ratings directly used in teacher evaluation. Alaska, New Mexico, Ohio, and South Carolina received the next highest rating. Georgia provided an opportunity for students to offer information on the performance of teachers along with Alaska, Connecticut, Florida, Idaho, Maryland, Mississippi, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah and Wisconsin (NCTQ, 2015).
Local and state educational agencies demanded greater accountability for teachers. Using student feedback in teacher assessment created strategies to assist teachers in an inclusive environment to navigate and meet the demands of legislative accountability (Spruill, 2013). Additionally, student feedback was used in the development of classroom assessments, course-related self-confidence surveys, and assessing students’ knowledge of interest/knowledge/skills checklists. These instruments were developed from the use of student feedback designed to directly impact student learning and academic functioning (Angelo, 2004).

Often external factors of social climates, cultural differences, and the pressures of high-stakes testing often complicate the instructional effectiveness needed to support classroom efficiency and productivity (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Teachers adopt frequently changing prescribed curricula and mandates that influence their instructional routines (Barrow, 2015). Conversely, many teachers predominantly value the traditional approach of using demographic and assessment data to make decisions concerning implementation of learning practices and ignore research-based practices and instructional strategies shown to motivate student learning (McNeil, 2013). Teachers and administrators who value the voices of their students towards instructional practice gain information to influence educational practice and gain data in meeting educational goals (Mitra, 2002; Rudduck & Flutter, 2000).

Understanding how teachers feel about their teaching influences the practices used in the classroom. Students offer a unique perspective on teacher practice as first-hand observers. How teachers see themselves and how students see their teachers are discussed as ideas that impact classroom engagement and offer feedback to contribute to understanding student-teacher agreements in the classroom.
Teacher Perceptions and Students’ Perceptions

When teachers reflect on their own practice, they gain knowledge about their own practices. Teachers who perceive their practice as having high efficacy impact student relationships and classroom engagement (Hattie, 2015). Students who value the behaviors of their teachers often record having positive relationships with their teachers (Wubbles, 2005). Students experience a higher level of engagement and a higher degree of satisfaction within the classroom (Wubbles, 2005).

Teachers’ perceptions and self-efficacy. Teaching efficacy is defined as ones’ personal beliefs and influence to affect student outcomes (Ashton, 1985; Ashton & Webb, 1986). Studies on teacher self-efficacy suggest that the instructional strategies that teachers use to encourage cognitive development are determined by how teachers see themselves (Fuller, Wood, Rapoport & Dornbusch, 1982; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk & Hoy, 1998 & 2001). Teaching efficacy determines teachers’ actions and decisions made when providing instruction and curriculum for students (Chan, Lau, Nie, Lim, & Hogan, 2008). Teachers with low self-efficacy may provide activities that take minimal efforts and provide fewer opportunities for students to expand their knowledge (Newman, Rutter & Smith, 1989). Teachers with high efficacy tend to use strategies that are more rigorous and help students build critical thinking skills (Schunk, 2012).

A study on the effects of teacher efficacy on student learning outcomes was conducted involving more than 1,000 students’ literacy skills. The survey used the Teacher Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (Bandura, 1997) that allowed teachers’ students to rate their instructors on their ability to affect school climate, instruction, and classroom management (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk, Hoy & Hoy, 1998). It concluded that teacher self-efficacy has been shown to have a
positive relationship in how students perceive their teacher-students relationship in middle and elementary schools (Jimmieson, Hannam, & Yeo, 2010). Ashton and Webb (1986) and Ross (1992) concluded when teachers hold a high sense of self-efficacy, students’ have higher levels of achievement.

**Students’ experiences of teacher efficacy.** Studies on student perception and teacher self-efficacy have been conducted regarding their relationship to student outcomes (Anderson, et al., 2016; Raufelder, Scherber, & Woods, 2016). In a mixed-methods study focused on student motivation and perceptions of how students and teachers interacted, Smart (2014) examined the perceptions of students and teachers in a middle school science classroom. Using a sequential explanatory design, the study concluded that there was a positive correlation between students’ perceptions of teachers’ behaviors with their efficacy of learning science (Smart, 2014).

The interactions between students and teachers affect students’ levels of achievement and academic motivation (Brok, Levy, Brekelmans, & Wubbles, 2005; Van den Oord & Van Rossen, 2002). Teachers and students’ interactions have a positive effect in the elementary and secondary classrooms and affect learning outcomes associated with attitudes toward learning, climate, and academic development (Burchinal, Peisner-Fernberg, Pianta, & Heves, 2002; O’Connor & McCartney, 2007). An additional study regarding student perceptions notes students, regardless of race, achieve at a higher academic level when they view their teachers as caring and respectful (Toldson & Ebanks, 2014).

A study that included more than 3,700 math students ages 13-17, for which students completed questionnaires (Reschly & Christensons (2012)) was conducted comparing students’ perceptions of their teacher’s support and self-efficacy (Chong, Liem, Huan, Kit, & Ang, 2018).
It concluded that engagement with their teacher affects students’ sense of efficacy within the instructional classroom. The study results posited that students’ positive perceptions mediate their sense of teacher efficacy (Chong et al., 2018).

**Summary**

Measures of teacher instructional effectiveness transitioned through the major phases of supervision. Combinations of clinical supervision and feedback, evaluation related to performance and value-added measures were used prior to NCLB, era of NCLB and ESSA federal policy. Within the era of NCLB, use of student test scores and value-added measures were of major focus of teacher evaluation. Federal government compliance created demands to states controlling funding in ways in which states were motivated to make improvements to the teacher evaluation process. New teacher evaluation measures emerged in the ESSA era, including the use of stakeholder discussion, revisiting value-added measures, and the use of classroom observations as measures of effectiveness and methods of teacher self-assessment and gathering student feedback. Discussion of teacher self-efficacy and students’ perception of teachers’ practice are parts of this review of literature.

Multiple sources of teacher evaluation information include principal feedback, peer feedback, self-evaluation, and student feedback. Teacher evaluation has been influenced using standards-based observations, value-added measures, and stakeholder input. Data sources of administrator observations, peer-review, self-evaluation, and student surveys are discussed as part of teacher instructional effectiveness. A discussion of teacher perceptions and students’ perceptions of how they feel their teachers’ behaviors affect their experiences were discussed.
Chapter 3: Methodology

This qualitative study examined how students experience teacher classroom practices and how teachers view their own instructional practices in ninth-grade math classrooms in the standards of instructional strategies, differentiated instruction, and positive learning environment. The study was conducted in a suburban high school in Georgia. Data were collected through open-ended surveys derived from the Georgia Department of Education’s teacher TKES evaluation instrument (GADOE, 2013). Guided by the following research questions, this study compared students’ experiences and teachers’ perceptions of instructional strategies, differentiated instruction, and positive learning environment in a secondary school across learning levels (foundations, on-level, and accelerated algebra).

1. Do ninth grade math students’ and teachers’ perceptions about the use of instructional strategies differ across learning levels?

2. Do ninth grade math students’ and teachers’ perceptions about the use of differentiated instruction differ across learning levels?

3. Do ninth grade math students’ and teachers’ perceptions about positive learning environment differ across learning levels?

Worldview

The general world view of this case study research was predicated on the social cognitive and social constructivist theory approaches. The social constructivist approach operates from the perspective of using participants and their interactions to construct a reality (Creswell, 2013). Teachers’ and students’ actions develop a reality of the classroom environment. From the relationships formed, a level of effective classroom engagement is developed. Students articulate
The way teachers teach and the practices they use influence learning most (Eisner, 2017; Leigh, 2010; Stronge et al., 2011). Teacher self-efficacy influences teachers’ practices (Bandura, 1993). It is unclear how students’ experiences of teacher practice compare to teachers’ self-evaluation of their practice. This study specifically compared open-ended teacher reflective surveys and students surveys, derived from the Georgia Teacher Keys Effectiveness System for teachers to identify common agreements among teacher perceptions and student’s classroom experiences (GADOE, 2016).

Students of this school were demographically diverse representing students with diverse language backgrounds. Math was chosen over other disciplines that are more highly literacy-based to remove potential bias from the research. For example, in math students are asked to demonstrate understanding of the content, demonstrate levels of calculation skills, apply concepts, and develop arguments (Kahn, 2001, QAA, 2002). Georgia requires students in math to be able to make sense of problems, reason abstractly and quantitatively, construct arguments, critique the reasoning of others, model, use strategic tools, attend to precision, recognize and use structure and regularity in repeated reasoning, and connect math standards to mathematical practice (GADOE, 2016). Though achieving these math standards requires time and effective guidance, mastery of math skills was not the intent of this research.
This research focused on three levels of algebra that separate students by their level of knowledge of math standards upon entrance into ninth grade. Foundations algebra is the lowest distinction, on-level algebra is the mid-level class, and accelerated algebra is for those students with the highest assessment scores entering ninth grade (GADOE, 2016). Students’ motivation to learn is internal. Students decide how they interact with their environment and the people around them to impact their learning and engagement (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Ponz, 1992).

**Setting and Population**

This case study took place in a suburban school district in Georgia located approximately 5 miles northwest of a major metropolitan city. The population of the school was approximately 2,800 students. The full-time equivalent number of certified teachers was approximately 140. The student/teacher ratio was approximately 20:1. Among the students 1,500 students were eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. As a traditional high school, it serves grades 9-12. The male population is 49%, and the female population is 51%. The ethnic breakdown is as follows: 4% Asian/Pacific Islander, 44% Black, 32% Hispanic, 16% White, and 4% Multiracial. By grade level, the student-population is 32% ninth grade, 26% tenth grade, 21% 11th grade and 21% 12th grade (County Diversity Enrollment Data, 2018).

I researched the list of course offerings at the participating school and reviewed the Georgia Department of Education graduation requirements and courses offered at the researched high school. I reviewed the course enrollment numbers for students enrolled in ninth grade math classes. I then ranked the courses by the sequence of course work and the higher level of math knowledge and prerequisite knowledge expected by state standards to complete the course
I selected the following courses: Foundations of Algebra, Algebra I, and Accelerated Algebra I/Geometry. Math classes were separated based on student learning levels: low, middle, and high. Math teachers and individual groups of students were represented in the research based on a single occurrence as a non-duplicated sample. No students received instruction from multiple math teachers within this research experiment window.

Participants

The participants comprised a convenience sample of nine ninth-grade math teachers and 149 students (Creswell & Plano, 2011) in foundations, on-level, and advanced algebra classes at the research site (Appendix H). A minimum of 15 first-time ninth graders were active on the roster at the time of the survey to be included in the research. Teachers were selected based on the teachers that were actively teachers of record for the class. The students in this research were a convenience sample who took math for the first time as a high school course.

Of the teachers who participated, four identify as female and five male; four teachers identify as Black, three as White, and two as Mixed-race. Two have a bachelors’ degree, six have masters’ degrees, and one has a specialist degree (a post-masters, non-doctoral degree). Two teachers have fewer than 3 years of experience, three teachers have 4 to 10 years of experience, and the remaining four teachers have more than 10 years of experience. All teachers acquired teaching certification through a traditional certification process.

The table below shows the teachers who participated in the research. Each teacher was assigned a pseudonym to protect confidentiality. Each teacher was assigned a code that is used within this research which follows each teacher’s name. A signifies foundational, B signifies on-level, and C signifies advanced-level student groups. The table shows the gender, race, and
highest level of education each teacher possessed at the time of the research. The table also shows the years of teaching experience of each teacher participant along with the total number of years teaching math and the number of years each teacher has been at the school. All teachers in this research acquired their teaching certification through a traditional university teacher training program. The final column on the table below shows the number of student surveys that were completed for each of the individual teachers used in this research.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Math Teaching Level</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Highest Education</th>
<th>Years in Education</th>
<th>Years at this School</th>
<th>Years Teaching Math</th>
<th>Students Survey Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bailey (A1)</td>
<td>Foundations</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryanna (A2)</td>
<td>Foundations</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodrigo (A3)</td>
<td>Foundations</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedric (B1)</td>
<td>On-Level</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaun (B2)</td>
<td>On-Level</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson (B3)</td>
<td>On-Level</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelby (C1)</td>
<td>Accelerated</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney (C2)</td>
<td>Accelerated</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Todd (C3)</td>
<td>Accelerated</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the student participant sample, 76 (51%) were female, 71 (49%) were male; 57 (38%) identify as Black, 37 (25%) Hispanic, 35 (23%) White, 10 (7%) Asian, 5 (3%) Mixed-race, and 5 (3%) other.

This research presented the responses of the participants regarding their ideas about what happens on a daily basis inside their math classrooms. Additionally, I conducted field
observations within the classrooms to establish credibility to the perceptions and actions reported by the respondents.

**IRB Approval Process and Site Access**

To conduct this study, I completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) research ethics training that is a required component of the Kennesaw State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval process. The university IRB (see Appendix D) granted permission for the study. The local school district superintendent, through the department of research and accountability, received copies of the approved university IRB documentation along with the completed school district application and survey instruments (see Appendix E). The school district issued an approval letter that granted permission for research. The school district contacted the site principal about the request for research in the school. The school principal granted permission. I met with the principal to reiterate that the research and surveys would be conducted with limited interruption to normal classroom operations that would follow district procedures as outlined in the district approval for research.

Teachers of the identified math classes were presented with a letter of solicitation (Appendix H) informing of the study. Teachers signed a consent form to participate. Students were issued two copies of the letter of solicitation and consent forms to be signed by their guardians. Guardians retained one set of forms for their records. Students with guardian permission completed assent forms prior to taking the classroom survey. Solicitation documentation stated and students and teachers were told that their participation in the research and completion of the surveys was voluntary and had no impact on their grade or evaluation and
that participant identification would remain confidential and individuals’ identities would not be linked to their responses.

**Instrumentation**

Adapted surveys derived from the Georgia TKES were used to gather perception data in the standards of academic instructional practices, differentiated instruction, and positive learning environment (see Appendices F and G). The surveys consisted of eight open-ended questions directly aligned to three standards of the teacher evaluation process related to the student classroom experience and student–teacher interaction (GADOE, 2013).

The ability of the survey instruments to be considered valuable tools is based on the ability to remove bias (Eastridge, 1976; Follman, 1992). Surveys must be administered with fidelity, students must understand the questions being asked, and questions must effectively focus on the desired requirements (Aleamoni, 1999; Goe et al., 2008; Kyriakides, 2005; Little, Goe, & Bell, 2009). Student perceptions of practice are a valid and reliable source of data (Ferguson, 2010; Follman, 2005; Peterson et al., 2000; Worrell & Kuterbach, 2001), and secondary school students provide reliable views of teachers’ behaviors that can directly align with teacher assessment (Ferguson, 2010).

The teacher survey stated the purpose was to collect the teachers’ perceptions of their own practice and that completing and returning the survey reaffirmed participation in the research. The instrument collected data on teachers’ gender, racial or ethnic identity, highest education level, total years in teaching, years at the present school, years teaching math, and route to certification followed by eight questions for which teachers articulated in narrative form their responses to eight question about their instructional practice.
The student survey stated the purpose of the survey was to evaluate students’ own experiences of their teacher’s classroom practice. It stated their identity would remain anonymous. It asked that students provide answers to questions as completely as they knew how. The survey collected students’ gender, racial or ethnic identification, and current grade. Eight open-ended survey questions followed.

**Data Collection**

This research involved recording students’ and teachers’ personal experiences and perceptions about their regular classroom behaviors. The acknowledged participants gained permission and consented in the participants’ completed open-ended survey for which they documented their perceptions in narrative form. Open-ended surveys were used due to the volume of participants and the ability to transcribe data. Open-ended surveys also allowed responses that map to the current TKES evaluation instrument.

During the normal instructional period, hard-copy surveys were administered to the identified ninth-grade teachers’ classes. Each participant wrote narrative responses to the survey questions. Students completed the survey during their regular math period. To protect the confidentiality of the students, survey completion was monitored. Teachers completed their surveys independently of students to support confidentiality of responses. Students each received a copy of the survey. They were instructed to complete the survey using narrative and told to be as specific as possible. Students were told they could choose not to complete the survey and there would be no consequence. As students completed their surveys, returned survey forms were placed in a large envelope. The classroom teacher completed the teacher survey for the class from which students participated. Teachers were nonduplicated samples of participants in
No one teacher was represented in multiple levels of the survey. There were no penalties for teachers who chose not to participate in the research. No personal identifying data were collected. Teachers were assigned a pseudonym, and students’ survey responses were linked to their respective teacher’s pseudonym.

During the time that students completed their surveys, participating teachers completed their surveys independently, away from the students. At the end of the class period during which their classes took the student survey, the teachers returned their completed surveys to me, and I placed them in a large envelope. I also conducted field observations on a different day, and used those notes to support the reliability of the survey results.

**Field note data collection.** To add a degree of reliability to the perceptions reflected in teachers’ and students’ survey responses, I conducted field observations in each of the identified classrooms (Saldana, 2016). Notes from the observations were scripted noting the statements and actions communicated by the teacher and students. I used the key-words-in-context (KWIC) method to discover repetition of words, categorized and attached as comments to collected quotations of primary documents (Richards & Morse, 2007; Saldana, 2016). The field notes were compared with the students and teacher’s perceptions documented in the surveys. This research study reflected discoveries of relationships and common themes related to use of instructional strategies, differentiated instruction, and positive learning environment between teachers and students across learning levels (Altman, 1991).

**Data Analysis**

This qualitative data analysis identified the populations and used students’ responses to questions about their experiences within a ninth-grade classroom aligned with the Georgia
Teacher Keys Evaluation (GADOE, 2016). Teachers responses to those same questions were evaluated and analyzed for similarities between student responses using Atlas.ti 8 software.

Similar responses of the same questions from teachers and students were identified as agreements of common cognitive thought about classroom engagement that can be used as evidence to support effective use of instructional strategies.

The demographic information captured through the survey highlights the diversity in population of the school. Each participant completed the required levels of consent forms. Many classes had more than 30 students listed on classroom rosters. Some students did not complete the waiver process therefore did not participate in the study. Many of those students requested to participate but were not able to get parental consent. A minimum of 15 surveys were collected from each participating teacher. Several students completed the demographic portion of the survey but did not answer the written questions. Those surveys’ demographics are reported in the data even though questions were not answered. The participation itself and the idea of being included though not sure of how to respond are examples of student voice that the researcher understands (social cognition) cannot be left out of this research.

Handwritten survey data were transcribed into text and entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Data were then uploaded into Atlas.ti 8, which supported in identifying frequently used words and phrases. It allowed for identifying patterns that developed in the data. Eight themes emerged from the data collection: group work, multiple methods, tutoring, game review, demonstrating work, exercises of respect, correcting misbehaviors, and time. These emic themes align with the etic themes of instructional strategies, differentiated instruction, and positive
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learning environment that support the current Georgia TKES standards and teacher effectiveness instrument (GADOE, 2016).

**Open coding and common theme identification analysis.** This case study used the collected data from teacher and student surveys as the basis for research findings. Common words and phrases were documented from the responses of teachers and students in the standards of instructional strategies, differentiated instruction, and positive learning environment. Each survey was saved as a Microsoft Excel file. The Atlas.ti 8 program tracks and documents the common text used between teacher and students in each of the three standards. A search for word repetitions and key-words-in-contexts of math education took place through open-coding (Saldana, 2016).

The responses to each of the surveys were reviewed and linked to common ideas (Richards & Morse, 2007). I used Atlas.ti 8 to segregate and regroup the data to consolidate meanings and explanations of the data (Grbich, 2007; Saldana, 2015). The identified data were then analyzed for recurring subtle math themes, sentences, and schemes (Saldana, 2016). People speak and use words based on a network of ideas (D’Andrade, 1991). This process was performed using Atlas.ti 8, a computer-based program, to support making consistent agreements of identified themes.

**Atlas.ti 8 coding.** Data were transcribed from written surveys into comprehensive Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. Data were entered into cells according to responses of questions regarding the instructional standards of instructional strategies, differentiated instruction, and positive learning environment for both groups of participants (ninth grade math students and teachers). Transcriptions were edited and formatted for use in the Atlas.ti.8 software program. A
A hermeneutic unit (HU) was created to organize the primary documents (PD). The unit provided structure to analyze codes and memo comments to input researcher’s field note observations. Microsoft Excel documents were uploaded to the Atlas.ti 8 software. The HU then connected the relationships and tied the PD together in one unit. As a result of open coding, the data in the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet prior to uploading the primary source documents, a first-level in vivo coding occurred (Saldana, 2014). I then subcoded the data based on the emerging information. Related groups (families) and networks were created, further linking the data (Saldana, 2014). From the network, bundled representations of the data were created to show the agreements between student and teachers across learning levels.

Atlas.ti 8 helped in finding common themes between teachers’ perceptions and students’ experience responses. The program assisted in drawing potential summative statements and conclusions about the relationships of the discovered data. This exploratory coding aided in determining outcomes for each of the following research questions:

1. Do ninth grade math students’ and teachers’ perceptions about the use of instructional strategies differ across learning levels?
2. Do ninth grade math students’ and teachers’ perceptions about the use of differentiated instruction differ across learning levels?
3. Do ninth math students’ and teachers’ perceptions about positive learning environment differ across learning levels?

These emerging themes aligned perceptions of teachers’ practice with the experiences of their own students from level-to-level. The data may inform teachers’ use of student perceptions of practice in the classroom instructional environment and may inform administrators about
classroom engagement and the use of effective instructional strategies. The data presents information depicting areas to support teacher leaders and administrative leaders in improvement for teachers that will address student classroom needs from the perspective of the student. Coding of the transcribed surveys was based on three standards of analysis: instructional strategies, differentiated instruction, and positive learning environment. The themes of demonstrating work and game review in the standard of instructional strategies emerged. From the standard of differentiated instruction, the themes of multiple methods, grouping, and tutoring emerged. From the final standard of positive learning environment, the themes correcting misbehaviors, respect, and time emerged.

Limitations and Delimitations

The study used data collected from a single school located in a suburban area outside of a metropolitan area in Georgia. Participants were high school students and teachers. The group of students and teachers who participated constituted a convenient sample of ninth grade math (single grade level) students and teachers in a single school. Another major limitation is that teachers reflected on their own practice. There may be a tendency for teachers to over-represent their practice. In addition, a major limitation is that I am an administrator in the school represented in the case study; however, this limitation is mitigated by the fact that I do not evaluate any teachers of the responding sample. This school has several instructional initiatives in place that are required for teacher implementation. Teachers participate in collaborative communities where teachers are directed to implement certain recommended strategies. A composite of teacher responses and student responses for each question and survey area will be made available for review.
This qualitative study examined how students experience teacher classroom practices and how teachers view their own instructional practices in ninth-grade math classrooms in the standards of instructional strategies, differentiated instruction, and positive learning environment. It outlined the process of identifying participants and described the environment of the study. It outlined the steps taken to develop and organize the qualitative analysis. Data were collected through open-ended surveys derived from the Georgia Department of Education’s teacher TKES evaluation instrument (GADOE, 2013). Guided by the Georgia TKES evaluation system teacher evaluation instrument, this case study compared students and teachers’ voices of instructional strategies, differentiated instruction, and positive learning environment in a secondary high school across learning levels.

Chapter 3 reported on the process of developing emergent themes through in vivo open-coding, categorizing data, and using qualitative data processing software, Atlas.ti 8. It noted the quotations and comments made by teacher and student participants and the researcher as field observer that supported the triangulation of identified themes. Renderings from Atlas.ti 8 were presented to show the data findings.
Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter focuses on the findings and the data analysis of this study. Analytical tools such as Atlas ti. 8 provided supportive information to address the overarching research question for this study: How do teachers’ perceptions differ from students’ experiences of their teachers’ practice across learning levels? To present these findings I presented the responses of teachers and their students. The juxtaposition of teacher comments and student comments allowed me to better understand the differences among teacher perception and student experiences. It contains a summary of participants and then outlines teacher’s perceptions and students’ experiences by research question followed by a classroom summary of the agreements of teacher perceptions and student experiences. With the large amount of data captured within the study, the organization of information was designed to support an understanding of the dynamics of individual classrooms. Following is a summary of the emergent themes derived from the data and a display of the data by levels among stakeholders.

Nine teachers and one of their individual classes of students provided the data for analysis. Each teacher completed an individual survey, and these responses were compared to their respective individual students completed survey responses.

The categories of instructional strategies, differentiated instruction, and positive learning environment were defined directly from the current Georgia teacher evaluation tool. These etic themes are universally accepted in this evaluation process (Cambridge, 2017). These elements were previously defined by the standards of the teacher evaluation process (GADOE, 2016). Through the systematic coding of transcribed, open-ended surveys, meaning was derived from collected data (Rogoff, 1990).
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The overall question presented in this study addresses student voice and how it can be used to inform teacher-leader and administrative practice. The specific research questions this research addressed include the following:

1. Do ninth grade math students’ experiences and teachers’ perceptions about the use of instructional strategies differ across learning levels?
2. Do ninth grade math students’ experiences and teachers’ perceptions about differentiated instruction differ across learning levels?
3. Do ninth grade math students’ experiences and teachers’ perceptions about positive learning environment differ across learning levels?

Presented in this chapter are the emerging themes from participant responses, findings, and data analysis of the open-ended survey responses in this single high school outside metropolitan Atlanta.

Teacher and Classroom Student Group Findings

An analysis was completed for each of the nine teachers and their respective student group. I read and transcribed into a spreadsheet responses of teachers were identified and coded for instructional themes. Students surveys were coded and analyzed thematically to compare to teacher responses. When both individual teachers and their individual students themes are common, they are viewed as agreements. Each comparison is designed to answer the three research questions presented in this research.

The following is a summary of teachers’ perceptions and students’ experiences across learning levels. The findings are reported by grade level beginning with foundational Level A teachers; on-level teachers, Level B; followed by accelerated, Level C.
Research Question 1 Level A Teachers’ Responses Regarding Instructional Strategies

Question 1 asks whether agreement exists among student experiences and teacher perceptions across learning levels. The findings for this research question are divided by responses from level A, level B and level C teachers. Level A teachers responding to question 1 are Bailey, Bryanna, and Rodrigo. Level A teacher responses relate to instructional strategies used in the classroom.

**Bailey’s responses to Research Question 1.** From self-reported teacher survey results, Bailey’s use of instructional strategies included a pseudo-flipped classroom where students take notes for homework through recorded video presentations and graphic organizers. Time in class was reserved for practice and application. She stated that her instructional strategies included note-taking and graphic organizers.

Sixteen students in Bailey’s class completed the student survey. Although Bailey reported the following beliefs about her instructions, examination of students’ responses revealed similarities and differences in perceptions and experiences. Students in Bailey’s class reported that Bailey uses visual representation using the whiteboard, worksheets, and completing board work. Fifteen of Bailey’s students referenced playing games/review or the game trasketball and scavenger hunts in her instruction. No students used the terminology pseudo-flipped classroom, but several students referred to note-taking for homework. Consistent with Bailey, seven students stated Bailey presents information visually on the board and through videos.

**Bryanna’s responses to Research Question 1.** From self-reported teacher survey results, Bryanna’s use of instructional strategies included scavenger hunts, card sorts, and matching strategies. She encouraged small group instruction and station review.
Fifteen students in Bryanna’s class completed the student experiences survey. Five students in Bryanna’s class reported that Bryanna uses worksheets. Individual students referenced making songs or raps to retain information. Individual students stated they use sorting cards and use the walls of the room to organize activities. One student when asked about instructional activities stated he experienced, “Nothing.”

**Rodrigo’s responses to Research Question 1.** From self-reported teacher survey results, Rodrigo’s use of instructional strategies included use of technology through PowerPoint, Kahoot, video, IXL learning games and presentations. He also stated use of direct instruction and hands-on activities. He uses board work and provides students commentary as feedback. Rodrigo stated, “The key, I believe is language concept. I enforce language and understanding that math has its own language.”

Twenty students in Rodrigo’s class completed the student survey. Like Rodrigo, students described the use of the whiteboard to show work. Several students in Rodrigo’s class reported that he uses videos and writes examples on the board. Students also stated that he uses a variety of worksheets, arts, games, and visuals. Though not reported by Rodrigo, several students mentioned he uses real-life examples to connect with students. One student stated, “He tries to connect with us in a way that our generation would understand.” Students referenced playing games and “math basketball.” Students referenced playing Kahoot and watching YouTube videos.
Research Question 1 Level B Teachers’ Responses Regarding Instructional Strategies

Question 1 asks whether there is agreement among student experiences and teacher perceptions across learning levels regarding use of instructional strategies. Level B teachers responding to research question 1 are Cedric, Shaun, and Wilson in this study.

Cedric’s responses to Research Question 1. From self-reported teacher survey results, Cedric’s use of instructional strategies included technology-based and hands-on activities, worksheets, and quizzes. He mentioned use of real-world applications that show and explain new concepts. He stated that he repeatedly reviews to explain and to show new concepts. He also articulated his use of visuals and images that appeal to students’ personal interests.

Twenty students in Cedric’s class completed the student survey. Similar to Cedric, students responded that Cedric gives lots of examples and tries to make connections to their daily lives. He goes over and over information to help students remember. Several students commented that Cedric uses technology game review like Quizziz and Kahoot. He provides worksheets and handouts. Sometimes he gives students surprise quizzes. One student noted, “We work problems on the whiteboard.”

Shaun’s responses to Research Question 1. From self-reported teacher survey results, Shaun’s use of instructional strategies included warm-up and activators to spark students’ interests, guided notes to help students to take effective notes, and collaborative activities that encourage students to work with their peers. Shaun stated that he gives students multiple opportunities to master the content. He uses spiraling strategies and repetition to develop understanding and build retention. He stated he also uses song and dance to reinforce learning.
Fifteen students in Shaun’s class completed the student survey. Students in Shaun’s class reported that he plays games, and uses game reviews like Kahoot, Quizziz, and Jeopardy. He uses the whiteboard and students complete worksheets. Several students expressed that students must show their work. He provides details and repetition of problems. Students also mentioned playing basketball. Students stated that Shaun uses video notes and the whiteboard to show students how to solve problems. He allows movement in the classroom. Students say they participated in scavenger hunts and scenarios to help them understand math problems.

Wilson’s responses to Research Question 1. From self-reported teacher survey results, Wilson stated, “I love to have my students play different math games. Jeopardy, Kahoot, Quizziz or different hands-on things.” Wilson’s use of instructional strategies included technology-based and hands-on activities. He stated that he follows the “I do, we do, you [do] model often times. He allows students to teach each other because they may understand it better coming from another teacher/student.

Wilson’s students identified his use online assessments, assigning of projects, notes and visual representation using the whiteboard, worksheets, and board work. Students articulated that Wilson allows them to play games, engage in competitions, and participate in group work learning lessons. Some of the game reviews identified were Jeopardy, basketball, bingo games, and completing almost there tests.

Research Question 1 Level C Teachers’ Responses Regarding Instructional Strategies

Question 1 asks whether there is agreement among student experiences and teacher perceptions across learning levels regarding use of instructional strategies. Level C teachers responding to research question 1 are Shelby, Sidney and Todd in this study.
Shelby’s responses to Research Question 1. From self-reported teacher survey results, Shelby’s use of instructional strategies included use of cooperative learning groups for task completion, bell ringers to promote students inquiry, and discovery. Shelby stated that she uses game reviews as closure activities. She also used a random number generator to keep students “on their toes.” Additional strategies used included note-taking and project-based activities. Shelby stated she models problem-solving and allows students to present their own problems to the class.

Eighteen students in Shelby’s class completed student surveys. Several students commented that Shelby uses multiple methods of covering math. Strategies include videos, board work, handouts, and practice assignments. Shelby integrates technology, uses graphing methods, and incorporates games for review. Students stated they play trasketball and Kahoot. One student said, “My teacher has a spinwheel to randomly select people.”

Sidney’s responses to Research Question 1. From self-reported teacher survey results, Sidney’s use of instructional strategies included use of exploration activities that use technology such as Geogebra and Desmos. She tiered assignments and conducted station work using space around the classroom. She uses guided notes and practice assignments. She maintains a blog with notes and instructional videos. She provides after school tutoring and small group reviews. Sidney states that she uses game review as closure activities.

Students identified experiences of Sidney’s use of instructional strategies through worksheets, station work, use of technology, and board work most frequently. Students identified Sidney’s use of PowerPoint presentations and videos. One student articulated the use
of instructional games like Kahoot and Trasketball. Several students stated Sidney provides step-by-step directions and uses real-world examples.

**Todd’s responses to Research Question 1.** From self-reported teacher survey results, Todd’s use of instructional strategies included group work/discussion, investigations, scavenger hunts, and review games. Todd states that he prepares multiple activities to give students options.

Students identified Todd’s use of instructional strategies as study guides, worksheets, PowerPoint presentations, and review games like Kahoot and Trasketball. Several students remarked that Todd explains step-by-step and uses real-world applications. One student stated, “How my teacher walks us through each concept has made me appreciate math more than I have in years.” Several students stated that Todd shows students more than one way to solve problems.

**Research Question 2 Level A Teachers’ Responses Regarding Differentiated Instruction**

Question 2 asks whether agreement exists among student experiences and teacher perceptions regarding differentiated instruction across learning levels. The findings for this research question are divided by responses from level A, level B, and level C teachers. Level A teachers responding to research question 2 are Bailey, Bryanna, and Rodrigo.

**Bailey’s responses to Research Question 2.** Bailey stated that she provides differentiated instruction to her students by placing students in flexible groups and adjusting those groups based on student learning styles, personal interests, and current level of understanding. Along with written tests, she provides options of presenting the material to earn test grades or taking written tests. Bailey stated, “I will let a student tell me how to do [the
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Problem] and realize the answer. I’ll give full credit even though they don’t know that’s how they earned it.” She also stated that she takes requests from students concerning what they feel is important and assigns peer-tutors.

Bailey’s students’ experiences were similarly stated concerning the use of learning styles. Students stated that Bailey explains the same problems in different ways. Bailey’s students recognized that she puts students into groups. One student stated, “My teacher puts us in groups to get along with each other.” Several students articulated that Bailey breaks students into groups. Different than Bailey, one student articulated, “My teacher doesn’t really encourage us to work with different groups. I just work with the same people that are my friends.” Also dissimilar to Bailey, one student stated that Bailey rarely encourages students to select their own groups.

**Bryanna’s responses to Research Question 2.** Bryanna stated that she provides differentiated instruction to her students by allowing students to choose their approach and allowing oral response. Bryanna stated she uses multiple intelligence learning and allows students to present in song, by drawing, and through presentations. Bryanna also stated that some days she has to group the students (based on calculator, activity, level of understanding) so she tells them, “You know some days you pick your group, but today I need to pick your group. You know you can pick next time.”

Bryanna’s students stated she explains the same problem in different ways. She puts students into groups. Several students articulated that Bryanna repeats the work over and over to make sure students understand and provides instruction one-on-one. Several students mentioned being allowed to move around the classroom. Another stated, Bryanna allows students to “work
with students who struggle like they do.” Students remarked about *almost there* tests to assess their level of understanding. Dissimilar to Bryanna, one student stated that Bryanna rarely encourages students to select their own groups.

**Rodrigo’s responses to Research Question 2.** Rodrigo stated that he provides differentiated instruction to his students by placing students in flexible groups and allowing students to use peer support. Rodrigo stated, “I allow each student to gain knowledge in their own spaces. This takes a lot of individual teaching, which requires the student to find time to work directly with me.” He also stated, “I use group work consistently. It allows them to help each other with peer motivation.” He allows students to teach using Recordex. He uses multiple seating arrangements and individual teaching and tutorial. He gives students extra time and space to learn. “The object here is to listen to what the learner is saying in order to find out how they learn.” Rodrigo stated that lots of individual teaching is required for both teacher and student.

Students agree that Rodrigo explains math content in different ways. Students articulated that Rodrigo allows students to work in groups that he chooses for them. One student stated, “Usually people sit with their friends. He mixes up his lessons. Several students discussed Rodrigo providing weekend tutorials and using his personal time to support students. Like Rodrigo, several students recognize after school tutorial and Rodrigo’s giving of his personal time outside of school.
Research Question 2 Level B Teachers’ Responses Regarding Differentiated Instruction

Question 2 asks whether there is agreement among student experiences and teacher perceptions regarding differentiated instruction across learning levels. Level B teachers responding to research question 2 are Cedric, Shaun and Wilson.

Cedric’s responses to Research Question 2. Cedric stated that he differentiates learning for students through think-pair-share, class presentations, and question-and-answer sessions. He encourages students to work with different groups of students by allowing the comparison and contrast of two different concepts in a peer-teaching or group work simulation. He allows students to showcase their own learning individually through class poster presentations, open response questions, and completing performance tasks.

In response to how my teacher differentiates learning and encourages students to work with others, one student stated, “I would best work with a partner because I get my work done faster.” Several students mentioned that Cedric shows multiple ways to complete the work. Board work and mini-quizzes were identified by several students as to how Cedric creates personalized learning experiences. “He gives me almost there tests,” one student stated. “He talks to me one-on-one,” mentioned one student. Students articulated that Cedric allows students to pick their groups. However, one student stated, “I prefer to work alone.” Another student stated, “He does not necessarily encourage us, but he does allow each group to work as freely as we wish to without getting too loud.”

Shaun’s responses to Research Question 2. Shaun stated he provides differentiated instruction opportunities to students by allowing them to demonstrate their learning through quizzes, tests, and oral presentations. He stated he places students in flexible learning groups
based on performance on formative and summative assessment data. He also groups students based on students’ expressed interests. He often allows students to self-elect their own partners and friends. When asked to reflect on allowing student to show their understanding of the lesson best for their learning styles, Shaun openly stated, “I struggle with this aspect. Most times we use tests and quizzes to assess student understanding. I would like to do more.”

Several of Shaun’s students expressed experiencing differentiated instructional strategies through one-on-one support, tutoring, and partner work. Students also mentioned taking formative assessments and almost there tests. Students stated that Shaun assigns groups and adjusts students’ seating arrangements to encourage working with other students. Students expressed that he allows students to work at their own pace.

Wilson’s responses to Research Question 2. Wilson reported his differentiated instructional strategies include tests, computer-based assessments, and allowing student to verbally walk through [math] problems. He allows students to work with a partner to compare answers. Wilson reported that he usually picks partners for student groups. He pairs high and low students and have them to work with students they do not know as well as others in the class. When asked to describe how he allows students to show their understanding of the lesson in ways that best meet their learning styles, Wilson stated, “I wish I could do more projects to allow student to be more creative, but right now just electronically through IXL or through completion of tasks.”

Students expressed experiencing differentiated instruction in Wilson’s classroom through tutoring. Like Wilson, students also said that Wilson moves seats and allows students to do what is best for them while they learn. One student stated that he lets students listen to music. Wilson
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makes changes in seating often according to students. Students expressed completing independent work and having to show their work. They said that Wilson reviews work and goes over the answers to help those who need extra support. Students agreed that Wilson requires them to show their work step-by-step. Students stated that Wilson shows them ways to remember and uses mnemonic devices. One student stated, “Slide drop, multiply, don’t stop” was a saying Wilson used to help students remember.

Research Question 2 Level C Teachers’ Responses Regarding Differentiated Instruction

Question 2 asks whether there is agreement among student experiences and teacher perceptions regarding differentiated instruction across learning levels. Level C teachers responding to research question 2 are Shelby, Sidney and Todd.

Shelby’s responses to Research Question 2. Shelby articulated that she provided differentiated instruction to students through formative assessments that allow the students multiple opportunities to show mastery. She monitors their responses and informs them in real time if they have errors, so they can amend and resubmit answers. When asked how she encourages students to work with different groups of students, Shelby stated, “I think my students never know what to expect when they come into my classroom. The seating arrangements are always changing, so students can work together—sometimes they choose, and sometimes I group either heterogeneously or homogeneously.”

Students stated that Shelby recommends tutoring and provides extra practice as evidence of differentiated instructional strategies. Several students expressed that Shelby allows students to pick their own group. One student stated, “She doesn’t pick groups. She allows student choice.” Students stated they are allowed to engage in peer support and different seating
arrangements are used. Although articulated that group work occurs, a few students remarked that not much group work occurs. Another student stated, “Most work is independent work.”

Sidney’s responses to Research Question 2. Sidney articulated that she provides differentiated instruction to students based on ability levels determined by formative assessments. When asked how she encourages students to work with different groups of students, she stated, “I group my students sometimes and other times I tell them to work with students that will encourage them to finish their work.” She also provides students activities that are above their current level to challenge students.

Students stated that Sidney differentiates their learning by allowing students to work together as a group and by providing tutoring. Most students stated that Sidney assigns group members. Several students expressed that she assigns homework and quizzes before the test to see where students don’t understand. One student stated that Sidney allows students to show what they know in their own way. Students stated they make their own questions and create their own surveys as part of instruction. One student stated, “She doesn’t encourage us to work with different groups of students.” Another student stated, “We do activities that encourage us to branch out.”

Todd’s response to Research Question 2. Todd articulated that he provided differentiated instruction to students through group and class discussions, frequent quizzes and unit tests, along with class projects and remediation assignments. He supports students work in groups daily. He rotates the groups throughout the semester. He varies activities based on student interests and learning styles.
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Student responses depict that differentiated instruction is experienced by students in Todd’s classroom through quizzes and tests. Several students referenced the use of tests to support their needs in the classroom. Several students stated the Todd allows them to work in groups and engage in peer discussion allowing students to generate individual thoughts and perceptions. Like Todd, students stated that Todd allows students to ask questions and to show their understanding through assessments, projects, and discussions.

Research Question 3 Level A Teachers’ Responses Regarding Positive Learning Environment

Question 3 asks whether agreement exists among student experiences and teacher perceptions across learning levels regarding positive learning environment. The findings for this research question are divided by responses from level A, level B and level C teachers. Level A teachers responding to research question 3 are Bailey, Bryanna and Rodrigo.

Bailey’s responses to Research Question 3. Bailey stated that to provide a positive learning environment she gives students advance notice and class time to complete work. Bailey stated, “I have a great rapport with my students, so we really don’t have any disciplinary issues.” Bailey states building rapport and providing a stress free environment supports a positive learning environment. She stated, “I’m pretty straight forward . . . no nonsense.” She also said she does not allow students to disrespect each other and handles situations immediately. Bailey states that she listens to students and their concerns.

Several students stated that Bailey treats all students the same. One student stated, “[Bailey] relates our behavior to our futures and how it affects us. She treats everyone equal.” Another student stated, “[Bailey] gives us each the same amount of education.” One student
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mentioned [Bailey] sets the rules on the first day. Another stated, “She gets on to us.” Several students stated that Bailey calls them out and corrects their misbehaviors. Like Bailey, a student stated that she does not allow students to be disrespectful.

**Bryanna’s responses to Research Question 3.** Bryanna stated that to provide a positive learning environment she provides students positive redirection and contacts parents. When asked to describe ways you allow student to utilize their own learn styles, Bryanna stated, “I tell my students how much I care for them and want them to be successful.” When asked to describe different ways express positive learning environment, Bryanna stated the uses the following phrase format, “I understand that you want ____ right now. However, it would be better if you ____ now” as demonstrating treating students with respect.

Several students stated that Bryanna stressed the importance of “education every day”. One student stated, “She tries her best to teach us” and that she treats students with respect. Several student stated positive affirmations that Bryanna shared, “She tells us we’re doing great,” In contrast, a one students stated, “She can’t control us. Students in our class are wild.” Another student stated that she can be rude sometimes when we ask for help.

**Rodrigo’s responses to Research Question 3.** Rodrigo stated that to provide a positive learning environment he allows students to work their own way to solve problems. He speaks politely to students and provides snacks and rewards. He provides positive affirmations and helps students build their confidence. He corrects students’ misbehaviors and gives them time to work when they request it. He stated, “I let all of them know that the[y] can achieve regardless of the circumstance. I make it plain and clear. I will never give up on any of them. The[y] truly understand this about me.”
Like Rodrigo, students stated that he pushes them to do better. He moves students around the class classroom to give them space. “He gives us respect even if he does not get any,” stated one student. Several students stated that Rodrigo treats all students the same. Several students stated that Rodrigo rewards them with treats and snacks. “Cookies before the test makes everything better,” said one student. One student stated, “He always wants us to succeed. He tells us stories of his life and what he wants for us in the future.” Another student stated, “He treats us like his own kids and prepares us to be smarter before next year.”

**Research Question 3 Level B Teachers’ Responses Regarding Positive Learning Environment**

Question 3 asks whether agreement exists among student experiences and teacher perceptions across learning levels regarding positive learning environment. Level B teachers responding to research question 3 are Cedric, Shaun and Wilson.

**Cedric’s responses to Research Question 3.** Cedric when asked about positive learning environment and describing ways he gets students to behave well in class Cedric said that he encourages and praises positive behavior. He makes positive phone calls home to parents, and he addresses bad behavior quickly and in private. He also repeatedly reminds students of the classroom rules. Cedric stated that he treats students with respect by being consistent in reinforcing the rules, treating all students the same, remaining calm, and speaking to students in a calm voice.

Students responding about the positive learning environment of Cedric’s classroom said, “He will go above and beyond to make sure we actually understand no matter how many times we have to go over a lesson.” One student stated, “He doesn’t let others affect our learning.”
One student stated that he often warns of receiving a zero to deter bad behavior. One student stated that he makes students ask questions. Several students said Cedric calls parents. On the contrary, several students remarked that Cedric sometimes raises his voice or yells and kicks students out. The same student stated, “He helps us.” Another student stated, “He stays on us. He lets us explain how we feel.”

Shaun’s responses to Research Question 3. Shaun stated that to foster a positive learning environment, he gives verbal redirection and develops relationships to decrease behavior problems. He avoids yelling to discipline students as much as possible. He shows respect to students by addressing misbehaviors privately with students. He also asks students about their personal lives to show them that he cares.

Students articulated experiencing a positive learning environment and expressed that Shaun provides snacks, foods, and rewards. One student said that Shaun is nice and tries to respect everyone. One student stated, “He pushes us and sets high expectations.” Students expressed that Shaun shows respect to student even when he is correcting their misbehaviors. One student said about Shaun, “He yells at us in a nice voice.”

Wilson’s responses to Research Question 3. Wilson stated when asked to describe the ways he gets students to behave well in class, “We just have a good relationship. I allow them to be kids and give them opportunities to get up and do active activities, and I reward positive behavior. He stated, “I never belittle my students, and they know any criticism I give them comes from love. I am also friendly but stern with them.”

Students stated when asked about positive learning environment in Wilson’s classroom that he provides time for students to work in class. One student stated, “He gives us time.”
Another student stated that he says, “I’m waiting on you.” Students said that he greets students and listens to students’ opinions. He gives students warnings about behavior and he doesn’t offend students. “He speaks to us like human beings first if [they’re] in the wrong” said one student. Another stated, “Class is always quiet, so I don’t really know.” More than one student stated that Wilson understands students and that he corrects students when they are wrong. Oppositely, another student stated, “He does not say a lot about our behavior.”

**Research Question 3 Level C Teachers’ Responses Regarding Positive Learning Environment**

Question 3 asks whether agreement exists among student experiences and teacher perceptions across learning levels regarding positive learning environment. Level C teachers responding to research question 3 are Shelby, Sidney and Todd.

**Shelby’s responses to Research Question 3.** When asked about fostering a positive learning environment in the classroom, Shelby sets expectations at the beginning of the semester. When students violate rules, she revisits rules with the entire class. If she feels the misbehavior is “in excess” of the rules, she contacts the student’s parents. Shelby stated, “My students don’t want to disappoint me, so I don’t have issues.” Shelby states that she is friendly and is open to students. She takes a personal interests in students and celebrates their accomplishments.

Multiple students describe Shelby as funny and always in a good mood. One student stated, “She is enthusiastic about teaching and always gives a good vibe.” Another student stated, “She is not only my teacher, but my friend.” Several students stated that Shelby includes everyone. Several students stated that Shelby makes students show respect. A few students also stated that the classroom has few to no discipline issues. A student stated that she makes
students feel comfortable. She does not embarrass students about needing tutoring. Students also expressed Shelby’s ability to demand respect on behalf of other students. Students are respectful of students’ gender preferences and the names they wish to be called. “She does not allow us to disrespect each other,” stated one student. Another student remarked, “She makes it strictly clear that any offensive slurs said to anyone will be [disciplined].”

Sidney’s responses to Research Question 3. When asked about fostering a positive learning environment in the classroom, Sidney stated that participation is an expectation in her class. She redirects students if they are off task. She forms relationships with students that she feels builds trust and encourages students to be successful in her classroom. Instructional strategies to demonstrate respect include not yelling and using a calm, respectful tone. She allows students time to master concepts before demonstrating tasks afront the class. She stated that she engages in conversation and listens to students.

Students report that positive learning environment in Sidney’s classroom is experienced by her patience and her kind demeanor. “She takes her time and controls the class. She makes sure we understand before moving on,” one student stated. One student stated, “She values our opinions. Several students mentioned that Sidney uses kind words and does not yell, and she treats students fairly. She corrects students’ misbehaviors and tells students to behave.

Todd’s responses to Research Question 3. When asked about fostering a positive learning environment in the classroom, Todd stated that he connects with students on a personal level. He ties their interests into the curriculum. He feels this action increases student engagement and results in better behavior. He stated he shows and demonstrates treating
students with respect by allowing students to speak their mind and express themselves during class. He attempts clear and respectful communication with all students.

“He gets frustrated when we don’t do our best, because he knows we can do better.”

Several students mentioned behavior not being a major focus of the class. “We behave and respect each other,” stated one student. “My teacher is concerned with our emotional and mental stability, but also makes sure we learn in the best environment,” stated one student. Several students stated that Todd consistently checks on students or he checks for understanding. Several students express that Todd is polite and nice. One student stated, “He’s very cool and teaches us like we’re his kids.”

Teacher Summary

The following summarizes the individual perceptions of each teacher across learning levels.

Bailey’s perceptions of classroom instruction. Based on Bailey’s previously outlined beliefs about her classroom, examination of student perceptions reveals that students do identify instructional strategies and practices that are consistent with Bailey’s beliefs. The fact that Bailey’s beliefs about her classroom do align with the reported experiences of her class has implications for Bailey’s practice that students and teachers’ experience positive agreements and effective instructional strategies are being used within the classroom.

Bryanna’s perceptions of classroom instruction. Based on Bryanna’s previously outlined perceptions about her classroom, examination of student perceptions reveals that students do identify instructional strategies and practices that closely identify and align with Bryanna’s perceptions. The fact that Bryanna’s perceptions about her classroom do align with the reported experiences of her students has implications for Bryanna’s practice that students and
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teachers experience positive agreements and effective instructional strategies are being used within the classroom.

**Rodrigo’s perceptions of classroom instruction.** Based on Rodrigo’s previously outlined perceptions about his classroom, examination of student perceptions reveals that students do identify instructional strategies and practices that identify with Rodrigo’s perceptions. The fact that Rodrigo’s perceptions about his classroom do similarly align with the reported experiences of his class has implications for Rodrigo’s practice that students and teachers experience positive agreements and effective instructional strategies are being utilized within the classroom.

**Cedric’s perceptions of classroom instruction.** Based on Cedric’s previously outlined perceptions about his classroom, examination of student perceptions reveals that students identify some similar instructional strategies and practices, but some are significantly different and do not identify with Cedric’s perceptions. The fact that some of Cedric’s perceptions about his classroom do not align with the reported experiences of his class has implications for Cedric’s practice that students and teachers experience positive and negative agreements and effective instructional strategies may not be being used within the classroom.

**Shaun’s perceptions of classroom instruction.** Based on Shaun’s previously outlined perceptions about his classroom, examination of student perceptions reveals that students do identify instructional strategies and practices that identify with Shaun’s perceptions. The fact that Shaun’s perceptions about his classroom do align with the reported experiences of his class has implications for Shaun’s practice that students and teachers experience positive agreements and effective instructional strategies are being used within the classroom.
Wilson’s perceptions of classroom instruction. Based on Wilson’s previously outlined perceptions about his classroom, examination of student perceptions reveals that students do identify many more instructional strategies and practices that identify with Wilson’s perceptions than Wilson identified. The fact that Wilson’s perceptions and students’ experiences about his classroom do align, but students report many more experiences than Wilson may recognize has implications for his practice. Effective instructional strategies are being used within the classroom more frequently than realized by the teacher.

Shelby’s perceptions of classroom instruction. Based on Shelby’s previously outlined perceptions about her classroom, examination of student perceptions reveals that students do identify some instructional strategies and practices that identify with Shelby’s perceptions, but most are different. The fact that Shelby’s perceptions about her classroom do not align with the reported experiences of her class has implications for Shelby’s practice that students and teachers experience similar and dissimilar agreements and effective instructional strategies may be being used within the classroom, but not often identified by the teacher.

Sidney’s perceptions of classroom instruction. Based on Sidney’s previously outlined perceptions about her classroom, examination of student perceptions reveals that students do identify instructional strategies and practices that identify with Sidney’s perceptions. The fact that Sidney’s perceptions about her classroom do align with the reported experiences of her class has implications for Sidney’s practice that students and teachers experience positive agreements and effective instructional strategies may be being used within the classroom.

Todd’s perceptions of classroom instruction. Based on Todd’s previously outlined perceptions about his classroom, examination of student perceptions reveals that students do
identify some instructional strategies and practices that identify with Todd’s perceptions, but most are different. The fact that Todd’s perceptions about his classroom do not similarly align with the reported experiences of his class has implications for Todd’s practice that students and teachers experience many agreements that are not identified by the teacher and effective instructional strategies may be being used within the classroom, but not for the reasons thought by the teacher.

**Emerging Themes from Findings**

To better understand the context of the population, this data categorizes themes and development of codes to represent the emic responses that were collected from student surveys. The emic themes, derived from the literature, align the etic, themes derived from the data: instructional strategies, differentiated instruction, and positive learning environment. It is important in understanding this research not to confuse the researcher’s attempt to maintain alignment between the research instrument and the assessment instruments designed by the state. The state instrument that monitors teacher’s effectiveness has defined standards that are reported on in every teacher evaluation. This research parallels those standards in its presentation of those etic themes. Research in this case study allows the respondents to openly respond to questions without guiding their answers. Therefore, many themes arrive across the defined etic themes without restrictions. Figure 1 below is a network of themes collected through Atlas.ti 8 representing the vastness of the data collection.
The word cloud above represents the frequency of words and themes used by teachers and students in the research. The word cloud is organized by color and is represented by size.

Within this research it is important to understand the common themes across the student survey participants as a group. Exploring the common themes permits a view of students’ experiences across the entire grade level and not specific to an individual class. Among the recurring themes, those most frequently discussed were groups, demonstrating work, re, different [methods], tutoring, respect, misbehaviors, and time. The figure below is a representation of the open-coding conducted through Atlas.ti 8 for the first cycle of coding. The next level coding involved categorizing subthemes and identifying the themes that emerged from the data. For the purpose of this research occurrences of individual themes among respondents do not necessarily translate to agreements between teachers and students.
Theme One: Group Work

Group work or working with groups was an emic theme recorded 156 times from teacher and student participants. The subthemes of working with others and teams are within this theme. Group work assigned by the teacher and chosen groups by students were identified as a differentiated strategy. Group work was assigned randomly and also based on tiered levels of ability. Differentiated groups were also determined as communication in small groups allowing for student discussion and creative math potential. Group work was identified by students’ choice to decide their own groups to support getting to know other students. During field observations, four classes were witnessed working in groups and discussing the work being completed. Five other classes were witnessed working independently.

Theme Two: Demonstrating Work

The word work was repeated 208 times by respondents. When linked to the themes, it is used in relation to instructional strategies represented in the following subthemes: board work, worksheets, and show work. Participants described using the whiteboard or interactive presentations to facilitate both teacher and students demonstrating their work and collaborating. Several students stated they work their problems out on a display board that allows teachers and students to work together by demonstrating their ideas. Seven of the nine teachers who participated in the research record using this strategy to support student learning.

During field observations nine of nine teachers at some point used a guided-notes page for which students filled in outlines or completed practice problems on a worksheet. Four teachers used the whiteboard to demonstrate problems during the lesson. No student responded within written or verbally whether it was necessary to show their work when problem solving.
Theme Three: Multiple Teaching Methods

Participants refer to multiple methods and subthemes: notes, multiple intelligence, and visual learner 19 times. Multiple methods were linked to the etic theme, differentiated instruction. Many students made statements about their teachers explaining concepts in different ways and using video.

During field observations, several teachers openly responded to students’ questions. The teachers included students in discussion. Students used a guided notes page. One teacher referred to the video on her blog that students were able to review if they failed to the night before. All students had a document on their desk and used visual representations to problem solve whether they were working on a worksheet or an assessment.

Theme Four: Tutoring

The theme tutoring is recorded in 54 occurrences. One-on-one support was a subtheme that linked to differentiated instruction. Several students documented their teacher works with them one-on-one. Only one teacher used the phrase tutoring, but three teacher participants reported helping students at their desk and moving around the room answering students’ individual questions as a behavior in which they engaged. During field observation one teacher was witnessed referring students to tutorials which he held on weekends.

Theme Five: Game Review

Game review referred to more than 80 times among participants in this research. Game review included subthemes: electronic computer-assisted instruction (CAI) and technology game reviews including Jeopardy, Kahoot, and Quizizz. The most mentioned subtheme games among students (especially male students) was trasketball. Students among all three levels mention
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73 games and game review. Game review aligns with the etic theme instructional strategies. No students or teachers were witnessed participating in game review during field observations, the words game review were included in the agenda written on the whiteboard in two classrooms.

Theme Six: Demonstrating Respect

Respect is mentioned 94 times in participants’ responses. It contains the subthemes: positive affirmations, kind words, and equality aligned with the etic theme positive learning environment. Respect is noted through method of communication and tone. Students recognized when teachers used compliments and recognized them as individuals. Respect was communicated when recognition of when students felt their feelings were considered in decision making and when their levels of maturity were positively recognized. Another aspect of respect was communicated as treating students with the same degree of fairness.

Many students mention their teacher compliments their work and provides incentives. Several students discussed how conflict is handled directly with the student or through their parents. No referrals or the mention of contacting parents due to misbehaviors was witnessed during field observations.

Theme Seven: Time

Time is expressed in different formats aligning to the etic theme of positive learning environment. Students mentioned teachers giving them time in class to work and extra time to complete assignments. Students also mentioned when students misbehave, their teacher sends them outside and after a while goes outside to talk with them. The teacher and student exercised a timeout or time to cool off. Time in another teacher’s classroom was noted also as a timeout or
time away from the situation that causes the stress. No evidence of time related themes was recorded during field observations.

**Theme Eight: Correcting Misbehaviors**

Correcting misbehaviors is mentioned almost 50 times throughout statements as a method of care. Correcting misbehaviors is identified as how teachers respond to students when dealing with conflict or behaviors that violate classroom rules or behavioral norms. The theme is also related to the level of concern shown for students when resolving violations of the code of conduct. Most teachers are described as being pleasant when correcting students’ behaviors, but among Level B teachers’ classrooms, five students document their teacher raising his voice to correct behaviors. No teacher was witnessed correcting misbehaviors during the time of field observations.

Figure 2 below shows the organization of codes and frequency of code identification from the survey questions. Emergent themes were aligned with the themes associated with student engagement in relation to the Georgia TKES teacher effectiveness instrument (GADOE, 2016).
Summary of Teachers’ Perceptions and Students’ Experiences among Learning Levels

The table below shows the number of agreements among individual teachers perceptions and the their students’ experiences as represented by the identified themes. Level A teacher, Bailey (A1) and her students documented the following agreements for instructional strategies: 12 agreements of game review and 12 agreements for demonstrating work. In the standard of differentiated instruction, 12 agreements were documented for group work, one agreement for tutoring and six agreements for use of multiple learning methods. In the standard of positive learning environment Bailey documented 13 agreements among teacher’s perceptions and students’ experiences in the theme of respect, three agreements for the use of time and eight agreements for correcting misbehaviors.
The table below shows the number of agreements among Level A teacher, Bryanna (A2) and her students. Bryanna documented the following agreements among her students for instructional strategies: five agreements of game review and 11 agreements for demonstrating work. In the standard of differentiated instruction ten agreements were documented for group work, two agreements for tutoring and five agreements for use of multiple learning methods. In the standard of positive learning environment Bryanna documented 14 agreements among teacher’s perceptions and students’ experiences in the theme of respect, three agreements for the use of time and four agreements for correcting misbehaviors.

The table below shows the number of agreements among Level A teacher, Rodrigo (A3) and his students. Rodrigo’s students documented the following agreements among their experiences and Rodrigo’s perceptions for instructional strategies: eight agreements of game review and 17 agreements for demonstrating work. In the standard of differentiated instruction, 18 agreements for group work, 12 agreements for tutoring and 11 agreements for use of multiple learning methods were documented. In the standard of positive learning environment Rodrigo documented 17 agreements among teacher’s perceptions and students’ experiences in the theme of respect, eight agreements for the use of time and ten agreements for correcting misbehaviors. Rodrigo led in the number of agreements all teachers in each theme with the exceptions of game review and correcting misbehaviors.

The table below shows the number of agreements among Level B teacher, Cedric and his students. Cedric (B1) and his students documented the following agreements for instructional strategies: 13 agreements of game review and 17 agreements for demonstrating work. In the standard of differentiated instruction, 12 agreements were documented for group work, four
agreements for tutoring and six agreements for use of multiple learning methods. In the standard of positive learning environment Cedric documented nine agreements among teacher’s perceptions and students’ experiences in the theme of respect, five agreements for the use of time and 16 agreements for correcting misbehaviors. Cedric led all Level teachers in the number of agreements among correcting misbehaviors.

The table below shows the number of agreements among Level B teacher, Shaun and his students. Shaun (B2) and his students documented the following agreements for instructional strategies: nine agreements of game review and seven agreements for demonstrating work. In the standard of differentiated instruction, six agreements were documented for group work, six agreements for tutoring and four agreements for use of multiple learning methods. In the standard of positive learning environment Shaun documented six agreements among teacher’s perceptions and students’ experiences in the theme of respect, one agreement for the use of time and two agreements for correcting misbehaviors.

The table below shows the number of agreements among Level B teacher, Wilson and his students. Wilson (B3) and his students documented the following agreements for instructional strategies: 14 agreements of game review and 11 agreements for demonstrating work. In the standard of differentiated instruction, ten agreements were documented for group work, five agreements for tutoring and two agreements for use of multiple learning methods. In the standard of positive learning environment Wilson documented 12 agreements among teacher’s perceptions and students’ experiences in the theme of respect, four agreements for the use of time and two agreements for correcting misbehaviors. Among agreements in the theme of game review, Wilson led all teachers among levels.
The table below shows the number of agreements among Level C teacher, Shelby and her students. Shelby (C1) and her students documented the following agreements for instructional strategies: eight agreements of game review and 14 agreements for demonstrating work. In the standard of differentiated instruction, five agreements were documented for group work, six agreements for tutoring and ten agreements for use of multiple learning methods. In the standard of positive learning environment Shelby documented five agreements among teacher’s perceptions and students’ experiences in the theme of respect, six agreements for the use of time and two agreements for correcting misbehaviors.

The table below shows the number of agreements among Level C teacher, Sidney and her students. Sidney (C2) and her students documented the following agreements for instructional strategies: one agreement of game review and ten agreements for demonstrating work. In the standard of differentiated instruction, 11 agreements were documented for group work, three agreements for tutoring and eight agreements for use of multiple learning methods. In the standard of positive learning environment Sidney documented 11 agreements among teacher’s perceptions and students’ experiences in the theme of respect, six agreements for the use of time and five agreements for correcting misbehaviors.

The table below shows the number of agreements among Level C teacher, Todd and his students. Todd (C3) and his students documented the following agreements for instructional strategies: 11 agreements of game review and 11 agreements for demonstrating work. In the standard differentiated instruction, nine agreements were documented for group work, one agreement for tutoring and eight agreements for use of multiple learning methods. In the standard positive learning environment, Todd documented seven agreements among teacher’s
perceptions and students’ experiences in the theme of respect, two agreements for the use of time and zero agreements for correcting misbehaviors.

Table 2

*Agreements of Teachers’ Perceptions and Students’ Experiences Among Learning Levels*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Game Review</th>
<th>Demonstrating Work</th>
<th>Group Work</th>
<th>Tutoring</th>
<th>Multiple Methods</th>
<th>Respect</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Correcting Misbehavior</th>
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<tr>
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<td>5</td>
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Summarizing the table above, for game review, Level B teachers and students with 36 agreements documented game review more frequently than Level A (25 agreements) and Level C teachers and students (20 agreements). Level A teachers and student (40 agreements) documented demonstrating work more frequently than Level B and Level C teachers and students (35 agreements each). Level A students and teachers with 40 agreements documented group work as being a part of instruction more frequently than Level B (agreements 28) and Level C students and teachers (25 agreements). Tutoring was evident across all levels according to respondents; Level C (10 agreements) presented a lower number of agreements compared to Levels A and B (15 agreements each). Documented use of multiple methods, Level A teachers and students documented 22 agreements, Level B documented 12 agreements and Level C
documented 26 agreements. Level A students and teachers documented agreements on respect (44 agreements) more frequently than Level B students (27 agreements) and Level C (seven agreements). In regard to time, Levels A and C each documented 14 agreements among students and teachers compared to ten agreements among Level B teachers and students. The theme of correcting misbehaviors, Level C with seven agreements among teachers and students documented fewer agreements than Level B (20 agreements) and Level A (22 agreements).

**Unintended Findings**

The goal of this research was to compare individual teachers and their students among identified themes of the three standards of engagement in the classroom (instructional strategies, differentiated instruction and positive learning environment) across learning levels. The grouping of individual teachers into levels and identified themes into groups allowed an overall group comparison of all themes across learning levels. The overall finding of this research express that Level A teachers agree with their students more frequently among the identified eight themes within this research than Level B and C teachers. Level A teachers agree more frequently than Level B and C teachers in the themes of demonstrating work, group work, respect and correcting misbehaviors. Level A and Level B students and teachers agree equally in the theme of tutoring. Level A and Level C students and teachers agree similarly in the theme of time.

Level B teachers and students agree more frequently than Level A and C teachers in the theme of game review. Again, Level B and Level A teachers and students agree similarly in tutoring. Level B teachers agree similarly with Level C teachers and students in the theme demonstrating work. Level B teachers and students agree in the themes of group work, tutoring,
Level C students and teachers agree on the themes of multiple methods more frequently than Level A and B teachers and students. Again, Level C and Level A teachers and students agree similarly in the theme of time. Level C and Level B teachers and students agree similarly in the theme of demonstrating work. Overall, Level C teachers and students have the fewest number of agreements and have fewer agreements among teachers and students in themes of game review, group work, tutoring, respect and correcting misbehaviors.

Summary

Chapter 4 highlighted emergent themes from Level A, Level B and Level C instructional strategies: demonstrating work, use of game review, use of groups, use of tutoring, multiple methods, time, demonstrating respect, and correcting misbehaviors.
Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications, Recommendations and Conclusions

The uses of student-voiced experiences and teacher perception were developed to highlight the importance of student experiences in identifying effective instructional practices. This study was designed to help grow and support continuous improvement in teacher instructional strategies and student experiences by creating a platform to recognize perceptions of its stakeholders. Georgia laws on measuring teacher effectiveness are changing to reflect personal assessments of teacher professional learning and development based on school progressive achievement gains (value-added measures) and policy and political pressures. These decisions will affect teacher certification renewal and compensation; therefore, evaluating effectiveness based on the most consistent, immediate factors renders the truest and most robust depiction of teacher performance.

Discussion of Findings

The overall research question for this case study is, “Do students’ experiences and teachers’ perceptions differ across learning levels in the standards of instructional strategies, differentiated instruction and positive learning environment?” Discussion of the emic theme findings that emerged through research is organized by etic themes. The discussion connects the literature and theoretical frameworks of constructivism and social cognitive theories that support the emergent themes of this research: demonstrating work, use of game review, use of groups, use of tutoring, multiple methods, time, demonstrating respect, and correcting misbehaviors.

Following is the discussion of themes derived from the findings as they answer the questions within this research study. As part of the discussion of findings each research question was discussed by level answering the research questions.
The following vignette demonstrates how student experiences and teacher perceptions agree. Moreover, it illustrates how student/teacher perceptions can lead to student learning even though the teacher may not necessarily be perceived as using effective instructional strategies. The vignette aligns with the purpose of this research by identifying students as a missing component in the quest for information about teacher and student agreements. The vignette below is a scenario designed to illustrate the significance of this case study. It compares two different level teachers and the effect of the perceptions of teachers’ practice related to the research.

*Shelby and Rodrigo never show each other their yearly evaluations; but as competitive as they are, they attempt to compare the differences in their ratings through data from their common assessment given to their students. Rodrigo says he never gets to present at the beginning of the year to new teachers about effective strategies when Shelby always does. He wonders why he is never chosen. Rodrigo’s students always outscore Shelby’s students on the common assessments throughout the year; but on the standardized tests, Shelby’s accelerated students always score higher. Rodrigo left the meeting saying to himself, every time we have this talk, my students always outscore the higher-level classes, but when it comes to documenting my own success in the classroom, my evaluation never seems to reflect that. I will be sure to document what is happening in my classroom to understand how I am connecting with students.*

*Andrew raised his hand after leaving the whiteboard and asked his teacher, “Can you show us that problem one more time? Rodrigo said, “Of course, I appreciate you letting me know what helps you understand better.” The other students looked at Andrew with a sigh of relief because they needed to see the problem again. As the class progressed and repeated*
examples were displayed on the board, another student raised her hand and said to Rodrigo, “Is it time for us to get in our groups, we love to play that computer game. It’s fun to see how much I know.” “I always seem to know what I need to study for the test based on the number of points I get. I always try really hard to win the game,” another student stated. “Of course, we can”, Rodrigo stated as student moved their desks around and retrieved their electronic devices to logon to the website. As Rodrigo floated around the classroom answering individual students’ questions, he reflected on how informative the students’ responses and suggestions were. He also thought how he can provide even more challenging work as he continued to use the students’ suggestions about their experiences in his future lesson planning and teaching. If only there were a way to document and show others the growth experienced in the classroom outside a written test. I am making the connections with my students needed for their success.

This vignette paints a picture of a teacher’s interactions with his students in a classroom where student voice is used. Each interjection is a piece of data that can be used to make informed classroom decisions. This story gives an example of how a teacher can use students’ experience to influence the strategies, differentiated instruction, and positive learning environment of the classroom.

**Research Question 1**

*Do ninth-grade math students’ experiences and teachers’ perceptions of the use of instructional strategies differ across learning levels?*

In general, student experiences and teacher perceptions across learning levels agree regarding instructional strategies in relationship to game review and demonstrating work.
The findings of this research reveal that regarding student experiences and teacher perceptions about instructional strategies across learning levels, a difference exists among learning levels. Use of instructional strategies for this research was documented through the themes of game review and demonstrating work.

**Demonstrating work.** Another interesting finding emerged in the difference between teaching strategies among different grade levels. Evidence of social collaboration between teachers and students in demonstrating work allowed students to develop learning patterns (McLoughlin & Lee, 2007). Teachers showed students how to do the work, and students replicated those social interactions. These behaviors are supported by the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977). Respondents articulated the use of the interactive whiteboard being a primary subtheme to demonstrate work. “Use of the whiteboard puts the answers out to the public or entire classroom for teachers and students to view simultaneously,” noted one teacher. This action committed students and teachers to developing a community of learning in the classroom (Redman, Vincent, & Terence, 2015). This instructional strategy gave equal access to the classroom information. All participants saw the same information and had the same degree of transparency. Students demonstrated work through worksheets, with all students having the same problems to solve and presumably arriving at the same answers, which normalizes instruction and gives equal access.

**Game review.** For the purpose of this study, game review was observed in two different dynamics as an instructional strategy. The first observation of game review was defined as computer assisted instruction (CAI) with educational objectives (Tokac, Novak, & Thompson, 2019). Caillois (1961) defines games as “an activity that is voluntary and enjoyable, separate
from real world, uncertain, unproductive in that the activity does not produce any goods of external value, and governed by rules.” Games, as noted by respondents, promoted a team philosophy and motivated students through competition. Games promoted competition and set clear expectations for performance. Students were motivated to progress and conquer the games’ objectives. Games helped students develop problem-solving skills and provide ongoing feedback (Young, Slota, Cutter, Jalette, & Mullin 2012). Operating in a separate from real-world atmosphere, games’ social activity promoted the drive to freely explore and construct individual ways to connect to the learning outcome.

The use of games and competition in the classroom fosters both intrinsic and extrinsic competition was motivation (Gunter, Kenny, & Vick, 2008). Games in education allow students to self-regulate. In Kahoot and Jeopardy (CAI) game review, structures where students were placed on teams and allowed to self-pace and repeat served to eliminate the idea of individual failure (King & McInerney, 2014). Students were viewed as a team. Students who use educational games increase self-efficacy and develop social values (Gee, 2003). Students were willing to take more risks; therefore, they made additional attempts to get the answers correct [retention through repetition], promoting cognitive development.

The game review referred to as trasketball, mentioned by several respondents, featured students being named to teams and given a question to answer. When asked, “What is it about trasketball that engaged you?” one student replied, “It doesn’t matter if I know the answer. I can count on a teammate to get it right. I’m the one who will make the shot into the trash can.” Students allowed to choose game review and their teammates demonstrated use of student voice that consequently encourages student engagement and teacher performance.
The idea of competition and group experience, respect among peers and teachers, are achieved through this activity [etic themes]. Students removed potential bias and constructed their own meanings of learning, promoting social cognition and the constructivist view.

Research Question 2

*Do ninth grade math students’ experiences and teachers’ perceptions about differentiated instruction differ across learning levels?*

The findings of this research reveal a difference across learning levels regarding student experiences and teacher perceptions in differentiated instruction in the use of group work. Students and choice are part of social justice reform. Students who participated in their own decision-making took greater ownership of their academic success (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2011). Differentiated instruction for this research was documented through the themes of tutoring, group work and use of multiple methods. Foundations Level A teachers, as reflected through this research, showed increased use of agreed strategies. Social constructivist theory supports students learning from each other. Students develop behaviors, practices, and social constructs by engaging with others and their teachers (Bandura, 1977).

**Group work.** Teachers who assign groups rather than teachers who allow students to choose their own groups supports fewer misbehaviors (Toshalis, 2015)—which is a topic area that could be explored in future research. Teachers controlling the groups again put the focus on learning the content and task completion became the primary focus instead of students’ differences (Toshalis, 2015). This research suggested that students and teachers using best practices increases student and teacher engagement.
**Tutoring.** Tutoring in this research involved individualized attention, direct answering, and questioning. Because students and teachers were involved in on-on-one interactions, distractions were eliminated. As noted, there were fewer misbehaviors in accelerated classrooms; therefore, the need for one-on-one attention appeared less.

The use of this strategy as noted by both teachers and students suggests that both students and teachers responded that tutorial interaction was perceived as individualized attention inside and outside the regular classroom block of time. Further, during this time students and teachers build relationships and confront issues that affect a student’s ability to learn with anonymity from peers (Biggs, 2011). Students noted that they felt less exposed and were able to ask questions in one-on-one sessions. Students became transparent about their learning deficits. The student’s individual success became the focus. One-on-one tutorial relieved the social pressures of group and whole classroom performance (Morita, 2004). This collaboration and relationship building transfers to the regular classroom and the group setting potentially effecting motivation and students’ increased positive learning engagements.

**Multiple methods.** In this case study, a difference among levels is demonstrated by the number of agreements among students’ experiences and teachers’ perceptions in use of multiple instructional methods. Students assessed at lower literacy levels have limited experiences and limited critical thinking skills to reinforce their learning goals (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). Teachers supplemented those deficiencies by attempting to create authentic learning experiences rich in information for students to scaffold their learning (Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll, & Russ, 2009). In addition, students entered classrooms with unique learning experiences and diverse backgrounds. Teachers introduced increased numbers of instructional strategies to connect with
numerous student learning levels and multiple backgrounds. Teachers also allowed students to demonstrate their learning in multiple ways to provide evidence of content mastery, resulting in the need for various ways for students to show and explain their work.

Level A teachers and students expressed 77 total agreements and were exposed to more information and had more experiences on which to scaffold new information; therefore, increased strategies were needed to support student learning (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). Though backgrounds may still be diverse, the supplemental knowledge and increased literacy levels more readily close the gaps in learning, resulting in greater flexibility a need for greater number of strategies and ways to demonstrate comprehension as documented with 61 agreements in the accelerated classes and 55 total agreements among on-level classes. Students vocalizing the need for individual learning supports student voice as students’ expressions of individual needs.

Research Question 3

*Do ninth grade math students’ experiences and teachers’ perceptions about positive learning environment differ across learning levels?*

The findings of this research reveal that student experiences and teacher perceptions about positive learning environment across learning levels, a difference exists among learning levels. Positive learning environment for this research was documented through the themes of time, correcting misbehaviors, and demonstrating respect. In this school, Level A and Level C teachers and students with 14 agreements each demonstrate a greater number of agreements on the use of time than Level B teachers and students. In other words, level A and level C teachers perceptions and students experiences agreed on 14 occasions.
Time. This study revealed another aspect of time in that when students were allotted time to think or given time to complete work, students articulated that the teacher desired students to give a more involved answer, demonstrate more comprehensive or higher-level work, or give a student’s best effort. In this study, students experienced “time” as care and concern when students commented, “She gave us time to work” or “…gave us time to reflect and gather our thoughts.” Students experienced these strategies as care and concern.

Responses of students and teachers agreed that time represented a separation or time away from the classroom discourse. The separation allowed the student and teacher to reflect and think before their next actions occurred, thus avoiding negative recourse in the classroom. The interruption of time for reflection translated to concern or care, resulting in a more positive learning environment.

Correcting misbehaviors. To create a positive classroom climate, both students and teachers must adjust, and construct meanings of acceptable practice based on collaboration (MacSuga Gage, Simonsen, & Briere, 2012) creating an opportunity for increased student input and student voice. In this research there was a difference among levels of the numbers of agreement among teachers’ perceptions and students’ experiences identified as correcting their misbehavior. Level A students and teacher identified 22 agreements. Level B students and teachers identified 20 agreements and Level C seven agreements. This research did not address whether students and teachers approved of the methods for correcting behavior or whether one level was better behaved than another. This research did address that there were differences in numbers of agreements that potentially affected whether a positive learning environment existed among these classroom levels.
Respect. In an era of social justice, creating and understanding agreements of teacher perception and student experiences allow teachers and students to partner in processes improves the engagement opportunities in the classroom (Woodrow, 2018). Teachers and students benefit from the increased connectivity and communications that demonstrate respect, which could result in teachers benefiting through better evaluation. Students should be invited to stay in their learning and shown how to develop love for self and show respect for others (Hattie, 2015).

Results of the research suggests there is a difference in how students experience, and teachers perceive, positive learning environments among levels. Advanced level math classes documented fewer agreements resulting in a difference in how the levels demonstrate positive learning environment.

Students in the foundations algebra teachers and students agreed on 80 total experiences; therefore, increased strategies were used to support student engagement. Though backgrounds may still be diverse, increased methods of managing behaviors and relationships was noted in on-level classrooms with 57 total agreements of teachers’ perceptions and students’ experiences. More readily to foster positive interactions, a need for greater number of strategies and ways to demonstrate respect as documented with 80 agreements in the foundational classes and 44 total agreements among accelerated classes. Students vocalizing the need for demonstrating respect and nurturing relationships supports student voice as students’ expressions of positive learning environment.

Limitations of the Study

Research supports that students are a reliable source of information when reporting on teachers’ performance (Bach, 2012). Students are not always knowledgeable of the external
factors that might influence teachers’ performance such as curriculum requirements, demands of professional learning, or administrative demands. Teachers are trained professionals expected to be able to remove distractions that impact performance in the classroom. Teachers and students are human. They have bias and though this is research, it is impossible for students and teachers to remove all bias when they self-report on their own behaviors.

This research was conducted in a single school. Should this research study be duplicated, it is likely different results will occur, making this study nongeneralizable in research (Creswell, 2014). The researcher is also a member of the school body, which presents a perception of bias that cannot be removed because of this acquaintance with the respondents. Another possible limitation of the study is that teachers adjust their use of strategies as needed and as time progresses. Students may not have witnessed all strategies a teacher possesses due to nonuse or infrequent use of those strategies.

Field observations are not discussed in the findings of this research. Though the researcher sought to add reliability to the agreements demonstrated between teachers’ perceptions and students’ experiences, field observations conducted in each classroom lasted approximately 30 minutes and only occurred once during the study. Field observations according to this research therefore are referred to as snapshot observations. Snapshot observations, like administrative observations are viewed by this research as needing more insight to create a truer picture of teacher performance. Therefore the researcher chose not to discuss the fieldnote observations as part of the finding of this research to substantiate the argument that student voice and documented students’ experiences offer a more robust examination of teacher performance.
Implications and Recommendation for Future Research

A greater difference between the strategies of teachers in a single school exists than between schools (Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005). Student voice is an opportunity to gather information; when used in a classroom, it can render data to make agreements between teachers and students that cannot be captured by other means. Hattie (2015) redefined a teacher as a reflector and corrector of one’s own practice. Croft, Roberts, & Stenhouse (2015, p. 87) asserted, “Those who are authentic stakeholders must answer enduring questions about education and education reform: What kind of education do we want and need? For whom, for what aims.”

The emergent themes from the research overlap and present measures across etic themes [instructional standards]. A recommendation for the researcher is to conduct comparative analysis across a single learning levels and compare the individual studies due to the vastness of information collected. Another recommendation is to continue this research using an interview process rather than an open-ended survey. Interviews may increase the length of time to complete the data collection, but participants may be able to share emotion and feelings of relationships that are often lost through written transcripts.

While completing this research, I developed several questions about the agreement of teachers’ perceptions and students’ experiences in the classroom. Additional questions that emerged from this research include the following: 1) Do teachers who teach higher level students use more varied level strategies? 2) Do teachers who teach lower-level students have lower expectations? 3) Is teaching higher-level students viewed as a reward? 4) Are teachers with particular experience levels or certain demographics rewarded by teaching higher-level students? 5) Are teachers assigned higher level classes based on ethnicity rather than experience or
STUDENT VOICE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY INVESTIGATING STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES

productivity? 6) Additionally, though there were many references to time use in educational research, few studies explain how students experience the use of time as a method of care. Hence, students’ experiences of teachers’ use of time presents another opportunity for further study.

Implications for Practice

A significant implication of this research is that there exists a need for greater alignment between instructional levels: the curriculum of leadership preparation programs and the actual experiences of school leaders. An implication for this research is to share this data between institutional levels for teacher preparation. In leadership preparation programs, school administrators develop cognitive investigative skills that equip them for administrative leadership in schools. Leadership education programs that encourage educators to build multiple-stakeholder input into their practice allow educators to develop skills that allow them to construct new meaning from their observations and employ the constructivist approach in their practice. In a study conducted by Johnson (2015), 82% of administrators who participated reported that they used the skill developed in their university preparation program to make decisions in their current administrative positions. This research suggests that a university should focus on preparing its students to develop inclusive critical thinkers and prepare them to engage at the highest levels with stakeholders in their professional practice. Teachers and schools could potentially build stronger curriculums and ultimately see higher levels of student engagement and academic growth.

Teacher as reflective leaders of their own classrooms could use this research to further investigate how well their teaching strategies agree with student learning experiences. Time is
limited in classrooms, and every opportunity to introduce and develop students is limited. Teachers and administrators potentially can use student-voiced experiences to inform and improve teacher instructional strategies. Another implication for practice is that teachers may use student and teacher surveys in this research to formatively assess agreements among students’ experiences in their own classroom. Teachers may use the results to make changes to their teaching practices and encourage increased classroom engagement; therefore impacting their overall teacher performance.

Professional learning communities within schools can potentially benefit from the use of this research, along with new teacher induction processes to help teachers understand the relationships of teachers and students that are directly aligned to their evaluation instrument. Schools can potentially benefit from the use of this research in review of teacher retention processes and standards.

**Conclusion**

Educators shape the minds and values of students and lay the foundations of academic beliefs. Failure to include students in decisions that affect them the most is a disenfranchising process that has overshadowed American education and its history. As educational reforms continue to alter the present face of education, we continue to identify recurring issues that reveal those stakeholders with suppressed voices. To fully engage and empower students in the learning process, students must have a voice of their own education to create real, effective change.

Including the voices of multiple stakeholders to measure teacher practice creates a more robust interpretation and a more accurate assessment of teacher performance. Inclusion attempts to humanize the “mesoscale evaluation process” (Croft, et. al, 2015) that exists in this state’s
measure of teacher effectiveness. Comparing perceptions and experiences across learning levels creates data to assess particular teachers within a particular environment. Quantifying the instructional agreements among teachers’ perceptions and students’ experiences as measurable evidence offers a more valid and reliable source of information than snapshot administrative observations or merit-based perceptions. Involving informed students, critical stakeholders as a source of information in the teacher evaluation process is the desired goal of this research. Through this involvement teachers, teacher-leaders, and administrators gain valuable information to make more informed decisions about a teacher’s pedagogy within the classroom.

Optimally, using student voice in the learning process will create adaptive instructional strategies that diagnose student learning needs in specific learning areas, develop learning activities that conform to the evolving skill level of the student.

In this research, the combined actions of teacher and students determine classroom engagement. As defined, the more frequently these two primary stakeholders made agreements in the classroom setting, the more engagement occurred. Both students and teachers acted as partners in determining educational outcomes.

The findings of this research indicate that valuable information can be ascertained by examining similarities and differences among teacher perceptions and student experiences. To add to the existing body of knowledge on maintaining high quality teachers, administrators and local education agencies must understand the relationship among student experiences and teacher perceptions. An analysis of the data leads to a more informed understanding of how students experience teacher’s delivery of instruction and how teachers perceive their delivery. Ultimately, the agreement of students and teachers leads to more effective instruction. Conversely, the
disagreement of student experiences and teacher perceptions leads to a misalignment of instructional delivery and missed opportunity for student learning.
References


https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X07308739


https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X031007028


*ATLAS.ti* (Scientific Software Development) and Nudist (Qualitative Solutions & Research) are qualitative analysis packages distributed in the United States by SCOLARI, Sage Publications, Inc., 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320


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Cutts, Q., & Davis, C. L. (2011). *Using reflexivity to tame our subjectivities, identify our positionalities, and explore our identities.*


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https://www.edglossary.org/hidden-curriculum/


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## Teacher Keys Effectiveness

### Teacher Self-Assessment Instrument

To complete click Start New, rate the 10 Performance Standards, at the top click Save, Share, Finalize, and Save and Exit.

### Teacher Keys Effectiveness Teacher Self-Assessment Instrument

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<tr>
<th>Planning</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Professional Knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>The teacher demonstrates an understanding of the curriculum, subject content, pedagogical knowledge, and the needs of students by providing relevant learning experiences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Instructional Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>The teacher plans using state and local school district curricula and standards, effective strategies, resources, and data to address the differentiated needs of all students.</td>
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<td>3. Instructional Strategies</td>
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<td>The teacher promotes student learning by using research-based instructional strategies relevant to the content to engage students in active learning &amp; to facilitate the students’ acquisition of key knowledge &amp; skills.</td>
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<td>4. Differentiated Instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>The teacher challenges and supports each student’s learning by providing appropriate content and developing skills which address individual learning differences.</td>
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<th>Assessment of and for Learning</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
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<tr>
<td>5. Assessment Strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>The teacher systematically chooses a variety of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment strategies and instruments that are valid and appropriate for the content and student population.</td>
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<td>6. Assessment Uses</td>
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<tr>
<td>The teacher systematically gathers, analyzes, and uses relevant data to measure student progress, to inform instructional content and delivery methods, and to provide timely and constructive feedback to both students &amp; parents.</td>
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<th>Learning Environment</th>
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<tr>
<td>7. Positive Learning Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>The teacher provides a well-managed, safe, and orderly environment that is conducive to learning and encourages respect for all.</td>
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<td>8. Academically Challenging</td>
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<td>Environment - The teacher creates a student-centered academic environment in which teaching and learning occur at high levels and students are self-directed learners.</td>
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<th>Professional and Communication</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
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<tr>
<td>9. Professionalism</td>
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<tr>
<td>The teacher exhibits a commitment to professional ethics and the school’s mission, participates in professional growth opportunities to support student learning, and contributes to the profession.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>The teacher communicates effectively with students, parents or guardians, district and school personnel, and other stakeholders in ways that enhance student learning.</td>
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## Appendix B: Grades 9–12 Survey of Instructional Practice

**Georgia Department of Education**  
Teacher & Leader Keys Effectiveness System  
TLE Electronic Platform Survey Administration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades 9-12 Standard 3: Instructional Strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My teacher encourages me to be an active participant in class, rather than just sitting and listening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My teacher uses a variety of activities and strategies to help me be interested in class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My teacher frequently checks to see if I understand what is being taught.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. My teacher takes time each day to make sure we summarize what we have learned.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. My teacher asks me to use what I learn to solve problems or relate to real world topics.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Grades 9-12 Standard 4: Differentiation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. My teacher gives students as much individual attention as they need to be successful.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. My teacher teaches in different ways to meet the needs of the students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. When I don’t understand something, my teacher tries to figure out why I don’t understand it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. The work my teacher gives me meets my academic needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. My teacher gives me opportunities to use what I learned in creative ways.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades 9-12 Standard 5: Positive Learning Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. My teacher cares about my learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The instructions my teacher gives are clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. My teacher ensures the rules and procedures are followed in class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. My teacher treats students with respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I feel comfortable asking my teacher questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades 9-12 Standard 6: Academically Challenging Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16. My teacher makes productive use of class time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. The work assigned in class challenges me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. When confused by something, my teacher will not let me give up until I understand it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Because of my teacher, I push myself to learn as much as I can.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. My teacher encourages me to try new things, even when they are difficult.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Performance Standard 1: Professional Knowledge**
The teacher demonstrates an understanding of the curriculum, subject content, pedagogical knowledge, and the needs of students by providing relevant learning experiences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level IV</th>
<th>Level III</th>
<th>Level II</th>
<th>Level I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher continually demonstrates extensive content and pedagogical knowledge, enriches the curriculum, and guides others in enriching the curriculum. (Teachers rated as Level IV continually seek ways to serve as role models or teacher leaders.)</td>
<td>The teacher consistently demonstrates an understanding of the curriculum, subject content, pedagogical knowledge, and the needs of students by providing relevant learning experiences.</td>
<td>The teacher inconsistently demonstrates understanding of curriculum, subject content, pedagogical knowledge, and student needs, or lacks facility in using the knowledge in practice.</td>
<td>The teacher inadequately demonstrates understanding of curriculum, subject content, pedagogical knowledge and student needs, or does not use the knowledge in practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Performance Standard 2: Instructional Planning**
The teacher plans using state and local school district curricula and standards, effective strategies, resources, and data to address the differentiated needs of all students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level IV</th>
<th>Level III</th>
<th>Level II</th>
<th>Level I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher continually seeks and uses multiple data and real-world resources to plan differentiated instruction to meet the individual student needs and interests in order to promote student accountability and engagement. (Teachers rated as Level IV continually seek ways to serve as role models or teacher leaders.)</td>
<td>The teacher consistently plans using state and local school district curricula and standards, effective strategies, resources, and data to address the differentiated needs of all students.</td>
<td>The teacher inconsistently uses state and local school district curricula and standards, or inconsistently uses effective strategies, resources, or data in planning to meet the needs of all students.</td>
<td>The teacher does not plan, or plans without adequately using state and local school district curricula and standards, or without using effective strategies, resources, or data to meet the needs of all students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Performance Standard 3: Instructional Strategies**
The teacher promotes student learning by using research-based instructional strategies relevant to the context to engage students in active learning and to facilitate the students’ acquisition of key knowledge and skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level IV</th>
<th>Level III</th>
<th>Level II</th>
<th>Level I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher continually facilitates student engagement in metacognitive learning, higher-order thinking skills, and application of learning in current and relevant ways. (Teachers rated as Level IV continually seek ways to serve as role models or teacher leaders.)</td>
<td>The teacher consistently promotes student learning by using research-based instructional strategies relevant to the context to engage students in active learning, and to facilitate the students’ acquisition of key skills.</td>
<td>The teacher inconsistently uses research-based instructional strategies. The strategies used are sometimes not appropriate for the content area or for engaging students in active learning or for the acquisition of key skills.</td>
<td>The teacher does not use research-based instructional strategies, nor are the instructional strategies relevant to the content area. The strategies do not engage students in active learning or acquisition of key skills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Performance Standard 4: Differentiated Instruction**
The teacher challenges and supports each student’s learning by providing appropriate content and developing skills which address individual learning differences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level IV</th>
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<th>Level II</th>
<th>Level I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher continually facilitates each student’s opportunities to learn by engaging him/her in critical and creative thinking and challenging activities tailored to address individual learning needs and interests. (Teachers rated as Level IV continually seek ways to serve as role models or teacher leaders.)</td>
<td>The teacher consistently challenges and supports each student’s learning by providing appropriate content and developing skills which address individual learning differences.</td>
<td>The teacher inconsistently challenges students by providing appropriate content or by developing skills which address individual learning differences.</td>
<td>The teacher does not challenge students by providing appropriate content or by developing skills which address individual learning differences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Performance Standard 5: Assessment Strategies**
The teacher systematically chooses a variety of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment strategies and instruments that are valid and appropriate for the content and student population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Level II</th>
<th>Level I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher continually determines expertise and leads others to determine and develop a variety of strategies and instruments that are valid and appropriate for the content and student population and guides students to monitor and reflect on their own academic progress. (Teachers rated as Level IV continually seek ways to serve as role models or teacher leaders.)</td>
<td>The teacher systematically and consistently chooses a variety of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment strategies and instruments that are valid and appropriate for the content and student population.</td>
<td>The teacher inconsistently chooses a variety of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment strategies or the instruments are sometimes not appropriate for the content or student population.</td>
<td>The teacher chooses an inadequate variety of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment strategies or the instruments are not appropriate for the content or student population.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STUDENT VOICE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY INVESTIGATING STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES

Georgia Department of Education - TAFS Performance Standards and Rubrics

### Performance Standard 6: Assessment Uses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level IV</th>
<th>Level III</th>
<th>Level II</th>
<th>Level I</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;In addition to meeting the requirements for Level III, the teacher systematically gathers, analyzes, and uses relevant data to inform instructional content and delivery methods, and to provide timely and constructive feedback to both students and parents.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Level III is the expected level of performance.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;The teacher consistently gathers, analyzes, and uses relevant data to inform instructional content and delivery methods, and to provide timely and constructive feedback to both students and parents.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;The teacher inconsistently gathers, analyzes, and uses relevant data to inform instructional content and delivery methods, or inconsistently provides timely or constructive feedback.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Performance Standard 7: Positive Learning Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level IV</th>
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<th>Level II</th>
<th>Level I</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;In addition to meeting the requirements for Level III, the teacher continually engages students in a collaborative and self-directed learning environment where students are encouraged to take risks and ownership of their own learning behavior. (Teachers rated at Level IV continually seek ways to serve as role models or teacher leaders.)&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Level III is the expected level of performance.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;The teacher consistently provides a well-managed, safe, and orderly environment that is conducive to learning and encourages respect for all.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;The teacher inconsistently provides a well-managed, safe, and orderly environment that is conducive to learning and encourages respect for all.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Performance Standard 8: Academically Challenging Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level IV</th>
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<th>Level I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;In addition to meeting the requirements for Level III, the teacher continually creates an academically challenging environment in which teaching and learning occur at high levels and students are self-directed learners.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Level III is the expected level of performance.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;The teacher consistently creates an academically challenging environment in which teaching and learning occur at high levels and students are self-directed learners.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;The teacher inconsistently creates an academically challenging environment in which teaching and learning occur at high levels or where students are self-directed learners.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Performance Standard 9: Professionalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Level I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;In addition to meeting the requirements for Level III, the teacher continuously engages in a high level of professional growth and application of skills and contributes to the development of others and the well-being of the school and community. (Teachers rated at Level IV continually seek ways to serve as role models or teacher leaders.)&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Level III is the expected level of performance.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;The teacher consistently exhibits a commitment to professional ethics and the school’s mission, participates in professional growth opportunities to support student learning, and contributes to the profession.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;The teacher inconsistently supports the school’s mission or seldom participates in professional growth opportunities.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Performance Standard 10: Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level IV</th>
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<th>Level II</th>
<th>Level I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;In addition to meeting the requirements for Level III, the teacher continuously uses communication techniques in a variety of situations to proactively inform, network, and collaborate with stakeholders to enhance student learning. (Teachers rated at Level IV continually seek ways to serve as role models or teacher leaders.)&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Level III is the expected level of performance.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;The teacher communicates effectively and consistently with students, parents or guardians, district and school personnel, and other stakeholders in ways that enhance student learning.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;The teacher inconsistently communicates with students, parents or guardians, district and school personnel, or other stakeholders in ways that only partially enhance student learning.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Study 19-306: STUDENT VOICE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY INVESTIGATING STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE ACROSS LEARNING LEVELS

irb@kennesaw.edu

Reply all
Mon 1/14, 10:37 AM
Lisa Williams;
irb;
Albert Jimenez
1/14/2019

Lisa (2) Williams, Student
Educational Leadership

RE: Your followup submission of 1/14/2019, Study #19-306: STUDENT VOICE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY INVESTIGATING STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE ACROSS LEARNING LEVELS

Hello Ms. Williams,

Your application for the new study listed above has been administratively reviewed. This study qualifies as exempt from continuing review under DHHS (OHRP) Title 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) - educational tests, surveys, interviews, public observations. The consent procedures described in your application are in effect. You are free to conduct your study.

NOTE: All surveys, recruitment flyers/emails, and consent forms must include the IRB study number noted above, prominently displayed on the first page of all materials.

Please note that all proposed revisions to an exempt study require submission of a Progress Report and IRB review prior to implementation to ensure that the study continues to fall within an exempted category of research. A copy of revised documents with a description of planned changes should be submitted to irb@kennesaw.edu for review and approval by the IRB.

Please submit a Progress Report to close the study once it is complete.

Thank you for keeping the board informed of your activities. Contact the IRB at irb@kennesaw.edu or at (470) 578-6407 if you have any questions or require further information.
Sincerely,

Christine Ziegler, Ph.D.
KSU Institutional Review Board Director and Chair

cc: Ajimen17@kennesaw.edu
February 12, 2019

Lisa M. Williams

Dear Ms. Williams:

Your research project titled, Student Voice: A Qualitative Study Investigating Students' Experiences and Teachers' Perceptions Of Instructional Practice Across Learning Levels, has been approved. Listed below is the school where approval to conduct the research is complete. Please work with the school administrator to schedule administration of instruments or conduct interviews.

School

High School

Should modifications or changes in research procedures become necessary during the research project, changes must be submitted in writing to the department of Accountability, Research & Grants prior to implementation. At the conclusion of your research project, you are expected to submit a copy of your results to this office. Results cannot reference the Cobb County School District or any District schools or departments.

Research files are not considered complete until results are received. If you have any questions regarding the process, contact our office at 770-426-3450.

Sincerely,

Cindy Nichols
Grants & Research Manager
Accountability, Research & Grants

cg

BOARD OF EDUCATION
David Cheek, Chair • Brad Wheeler, Vice Chair
David Balle • Charisse Davis • John Howani • David Morgan • Randy Soothorn

SUPERINTENDENT
Chris Fagelada
Appendix F: Teacher Perception Survey

Math course _______________ Block ________________
Teacher ID (optional) ______________________________

The purpose of this open-ended survey is to evaluate teacher’s perceptions of their own practice. Answers to each question are desired. Completion and return of this survey implies that you agree to participate, and your data may be used in this research study.

This survey asks questions about your math classroom practices in the traditional classroom setting and how they impact student learning. Please answer each question as completely and as you know how.

Please write in complete sentences.

A. What is your gender? Male   Female   Other ______________
B. What is your racial or ethnic identification?
   Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin    American Indian or other Native American
   Asian American or Pacific Islander    Black/African-American
   White   Other, specify: __________________________
C. Highest educational level completed ____________________________
D. Total years teaching ___ E. Years at this school ___ F. Year teaching math ___
E. Certification type: Traditional    or    Non-traditional

Instructional Strategies
1. Describe the different kinds of activities you use to make class more interesting.
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

2. Describe what you do to help students understand different topics you are teaching.
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
Differentiation
3. Describe the ways you allow students to prove they understand the work.
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________

4. Describe the ways you encourage students to work with different groups of students.
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________

5. Describe how you allow students to show their understanding of the lesson in ways that best meet their learning styles.
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________

Positive Classroom Environment
6. Describe the ways you show students you care that they are learning.
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________

7. Describe the ways you get students to behave well in class.
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________

8. Describe the different ways you demonstrate treating students with respect in your classroom.
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________
STUDENT EXPERIENCES SURVEY

Math course _____________________________________________ Block ________________
Teacher name ____________________________________________

The purpose of this open-ended survey is to evaluate student experiences of teacher practice. This survey is anonymous. Please do not put your name on this survey. Answers to each question are desired. Completion and return of this survey implies that you agree to participate, and your data may be used in this research study.

This survey asks questions about your math teacher’s classroom practices in the traditional classroom and how it impacts your learning. Please answer each question as completely as you know how. Please write in complete sentences. ONE SENTENCE PER LINE.

A. What is your gender? Male Female Other

B. What is your racial or ethnic identification?
   Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin
   American Indian or other Native American
   Asian American or Pacific Islander
   Black/African-American
   White
   Other, specify: _____________________

C. What grade level are you? 9 10 11 12

Instructional Strategies
1. Describe the different kinds of activities your teacher uses to make class more interesting.

   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

2. Describe what your teacher does to help you understand different topics you are learning.

   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

   Differentiation
3. Describe the ways your teacher gets you to prove you understand your work.

   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

   (over)

4. Describe the ways your teacher encourages you to work with different groups of students.
5. Describe how your teacher allows you to show your understanding of the lesson in ways that best meet your learning style.

_________________________________________________________________________________

Positive Classroom Environment

6. Describe the ways your teacher shows he/she cares that you are learning.

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

7. Describe the ways your teacher gets students to behave well in class.

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

8. Describe the different ways your teacher treats students with respect.

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________
STUDENT VOICE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY INVESTIGATING STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES

Appendix H: Participant Letter

STUDY # 19-306

Letter of Solicitation

STUDENT VOICE: A COMPARISON OF MATH STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE ACROSS LEARNING LEVELS

Dear Colleague,

I am currently enrolled as a doctoral student at Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, Georgia, in the Ed. D. program, Bagwell College of Education, Department of Educational Leadership. I am writing to invite you to participate in a qualitative study examining the perceptions of secondary school teachers and students’ voice pertaining to teacher instructional practice. The data collected will be used to answer the research questions with my dissertation study.

The purpose of this study is to compare experiences of students and perceptions teachers hold concerning teachers’ instructional practices in a high school math classroom of various levels. The study will investigate how teachers and students view teacher effectiveness and engagement and add data to inform classroom instruction. It will use survey-collected data adapted from a state-designed instrument about student and teacher perceptions of practice.

The researcher will maintain complete confidentiality regarding your participation. Participants’ identity and responses will at no time be revealed. There are no foreseeable inconveniences or risks involved in your participation in this research. Your participation in the study is voluntary. The inability or refusal to participate or to discontinue your participation at any time will not result in penalty or loss of benefits which you are entitled. Again, you may choose to discontinue participation at any time. Information gathered during the study will become part of the data analysis and may contribute to published research reports and presentations.

Data will not remain on a desktop or laptop computer but rather, hard copies of data will be stored in a confidential and secured area. Only the researcher and the researcher’s committee chairpersons, Dr. Sheryl Croft and Dr. Albert Jimenez, Bagwell College of Education, Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, Georgia, will have access to the data. The data will be maintained through the course of this study and eventually destroyed.

You may participate in this study on perception by returning the attached letter of consent form to the principal. Once you consent, the principal will forward you additional instructions. Thank you for your consideration and participation.

Sincerely,

Lisa Moore Williams, Ed. S.
Ed. D. Program Doctoral Candidate
Kennesaw State University