PRINCIPAL CRITERIA FOR HIRING TEACHER CANDIDATES

by

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Principal Criteria for Hiring Teacher Candidates

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The criteria of the quality of teaching must be identified by the principal and incorporated at the point of hire with the potential teacher for the school during the teacher interview. Although NCLB criteria influenced and guided many teacher hiring decisions over the past decade, principals still want to hire “good teachers” who may not meet the highly qualified licensure requirements. The purpose of this study is to provide a deeper understanding of the teacher hiring criteria of principals through a qualitative case study design data generation. This study finds foundation in job performance theory (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993) and the theory provides this study with its conceptual framework. Specifically, job performance theory in this study applies to the selection of a teacher by the principal at the conclusion of the interview. The hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1987) and social learning theory (Bandura, 2001) are examples of two theories with which researchers have aligned their personnel recruitment and retention studies.

The qualitative data generated from this study includes the principal’s hiring criteria, the evidence of the hiring criteria observed during a teacher-for-hire interview, the analysis of the teacher-for-hire protocol document, and the analysis of the principal either bridging or buffering to the Core Beliefs in the hiring decision.

*Keywords:* teacher hiring criteria, job performance, interview, bridge or buffer
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DEDICATION

Inspiration comes from within one’s heart and soul. And, inspiration comes from the heart and soul of others who are a part of one’s life and who have earned unconditional love and respect. They extended their influence to motivate those with whom they come in contact in life. This dissertation is dedicated in remembrance of those who have been the influence of my chosen path and who have been the motivation for my journey: David and Margaret MacKenzie, grandparents; Vere and Evelyn Quail, grandparents; Kenneth MacKenzie, father; and Terri MacKenzie, wife. This challenging and complex endeavor has not been about the final destination, but it has been about the journey. This journey I have traveled was best described by Robert Frost’s poem, “The Road Not Taken.” The final stanza read:

I shall be telling this with a sigh

Somewhere ages and ages hence:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference.
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Principal Criteria for Hiring Teacher Candidates

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Chapter I provides an explanation of the problem to be addressed. The conceptual framework for this study for teacher recruitment and retention is presented. Next, some general theories that apply to teacher recruitment and retention are explained. The policy requirements, previous research on the principal’s hiring criteria, teacher attrition, organizational culture, and interview pre-screening instruments are introduced. The purpose of the study and the research questions are stated. The justification for the significance of the study is presented. The limitations of the study and terms used in the study are defined. The chapter closes with a brief overview of the organization of the study.

Statement of the Problem

Teacher shortages emerged as a problem for educators in the early 1980s during a time when student enrollment numbers were increasing and baby boomer teachers were beginning to retire (Ingersoll, 2003). Despite the perception that this demographic convergence is the primary cause of a teacher shortage, Ingersoll (2001) demonstrated that the demand for teachers is not primarily the result of a teacher shortage, but due to the high levels of teacher turnover resulting from teacher dissatisfaction with organizational conditions. Yet, the organizational culture where the teaching takes place has not been linked in previous studies to teacher effectiveness (Harris & Rutledge, 2010). It is also important to acknowledge that the definition of teacher quality which is often aligned with the policy pertaining to licensure and content knowledge must be separated from the definition of the quality of teaching (Little & Bartlett, 2010). The criteria of the quality of teaching must be identified by the principal and incorporated at the point of hire.
with the potential teacher for the school during the teacher interview. Although teaching conditions and organizational factors are primary drivers of turnover as suggested by Ingersoll (2001), teacher hiring practices may also play an important role in turnover as organizational fit has been found to be a predictor of turnover in research on other types of organizations (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, and Johnson (2005) also demonstrated in their meta-analysis that person-organization fit is even more important for an individual’s performance on the job.

Beyond the difficulty of filling open positions, teacher turnover can negatively affect student achievement and increase costs to replace teachers. The estimated attrition cost for the loss and replacement of 150 teachers each year is just over $900,000 (Gordon & Crabtree, 2006). Researchers have conducted few studies exploring district-hiring practices to determine why a teacher candidate is hired at one school, but not hired at another school (Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002). Moreover, little research has been conducted on why a teacher is hired by a principal who typically has the most influence and control over the teacher hiring process. As Liu and Johnson (2006) argued:

“At a time when so much focus of school reform is on teacher quality, we know remarkably little about how new teachers are actually hired and matched with schools and districts. This lack of knowledge is problematic because… in the field of education, we have argued, this fit is particularly vital, for it may have consequence for new teachers’ effectiveness and job satisfaction” (Liu & Johnson, 2006, p.349).

Additionally, in many districts, the principal has autonomy to hire teachers into their faculties and no particular criteria is explicitly developed and applied either within or across schools (Liu & Johnson, 2006). Therefore, a fuller answer to the question of how principals
judge the quality of the teacher candidates they interview is needed. In other words, there is a need to better understand what criteria and what evidence to assess the candidate against these criteria do principals use in the absence of explicit guidelines from their district or state education agency? Unlike most previous studies on teacher quality, this study focuses on the principal’s teacher candidate hiring criteria and not on the candidate’s decision to pursue or accept a particular teaching assignment in a particular school.

**A Conceptual Framework for Teacher Recruitment and Retention**

This study seeks to identify evidence of behaviors that predict performance success for the new teacher hire in the school organization. Job performance theory (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993) guides this study and represents the conceptual framework. This theory of job performance represents one construct with the following eight dimensions: job-specific task proficiency, non-job specific task proficiency, oral and written communication tasks, demonstrated effort, personal discipline, facilitate peer and team performance, supervisory and leadership behaviors, and management and administrative tasks. The construct of job performance incorporates eight dimensions or factors within the construct that relate to the principal’s hiring criteria for teachers. Admittedly, all eight dimensions would not necessarily be present in every job. However, core task proficiency, demonstrated effort, and maintenance of personal discipline are the three factors that would be identified in every job. In addition to the construct of job performance, related constructs include job effectiveness, productivity, and utility.

The line between job-specific tasks and non-job specific tasks blur for teachers. Teacher subject content knowledge is one job-task requirement while a non-job-task requirement would include monitoring and supervising children outside of the classroom when the teacher is not specifically assigned to the children. Teachers continuously function by communicating to
students, parents and colleagues by both oral and written methods. Supervisors evaluate teachers on both of these communication task methods. Teachers demonstrate effort in the classroom by making a commitment to the children they teach and by displaying persistence to educating children. Because teaching is a profession, teachers make a personal commitment to prepare lessons, adapt to diverse learners, and conduct themselves appropriately within the student/teacher relationship.

Not only do teachers hold themselves accountable individually, they hold each other accountable as peers when peers function as a team. Teachers individually and collectively problem-solve instruction, assessment, and student issues consistently as job-related performance tasks. In addition to being leaders of their students, some teachers take on leadership and supervisor roles within content departments or on school-wide endeavors by coaching or mentoring other teachers. Additionally, other teachers take on management and administration tasks at the school or district level, for example facilitating the school or district plan to increase student achievement.

The eight job performance factors or dimensions create an outline to guide the development of specific selection criteria behaviors. The specific teacher selection criterion for job performance emerged from declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge and skill, and motivation (Campbell & Campbell, 1988). Declarative knowledge refers to the foundation of skills and abilities while procedural knowledge and skill reference the individual’s abilities to perform interpersonal, cognitive, and perceptual skills. The choice and the extent to extend effort described an individual’s motivation. Also, other job behaviors come from the individual’s ability to be persistent, tolerant, or enthusiastic. The purpose of this qualitative study is to determine the principal’s job performance selection criteria and evidence for teachers that
surface from the principals who are interviewed. Once the job performance analysis by principals is determined, the specific evidence for teacher selection assessment is determined. Internal and external evidence of behaviors that predict success in the school organization are identified.

Campbell and Campbell (1988) stated that there is not an ultimate criterion or individual, organizational, or national productivity for any organization. Their advice is to adopt a productivity model that meets the organizational goals and is supported by the data. Furthermore, Campbell and Campbell recommended that organizations needed to develop better models of job performance to identify the major components of job performance and to indicate how those components fit the beliefs and goals of the organization. Specific to the employee selection process, they promoted finding new and better ways to predict how individuals would match the organization’s needs at the point of selection for hire and to predict which candidates for hire would be trainable when teaching employees additional skills and knowledge to enhance job performance during the employment period.

Theories Applied to Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Researchers develop hypotheses based on possible explanations of how employees are selected. Those hypotheses parallel with theory and, then, researchers make predictions based on the theory to be proven or disproven in the study. The theory grounds the researcher and provides an avenue to maintain a research focus. This focus guides the analyses of the data generated by the study. Historically, personnel recruitment and retention research processes for teachers have been founded in more than one theory of self-selection and/or selection by others. The hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1987), social learning theory (Bandura, 2001), and the theory of job performance (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993) are examples of three theories with which researchers have aligned their personnel recruitment and retention studies. Founded within the aforementioned theories, Ingersoll (2001) conducted his studies aligned with
social learning theory and reported that teacher motivation to join a school organization represented recruitment, and that teacher dissatisfaction with the organization caused attrition. Kelley, Heneman, and Milanowski (2002), showed congruence with Ingersoll and professed that a teacher’s perception of desire and motivation is identified when an organization offered both a system of intrinsic and monetary rewards. Boardman, Darling-Hammond, and Mullin (1982) promoted teacher supply and demand theory that aligned successful teacher recruitment and retention by meeting the teacher’s basic needs, identical to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory.

Maslow wrote a paper, entitled “A Theory of Human Motivation,” in 1943 and extended this theory of need fulfillment in 1954 by publishing the *Hierarchy of Needs* (Maslow, 1987). This theory of a progressive needs hierarchy included starting with basic needs by addressing the individual’s physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization needs. Self-actualization represented the highest level of need attainment. Maslow added self-transcendence in later years as the level above and beyond self-actualization. Physiological needs are the baseline needs that include food, water, and shelter. Job security and financial security are examples of attributes and characteristics of this level when safety needs are met. Love and belonging needs are met by friendship or intimacy. In a school organization, teachers want to be accepted and respected by colleagues to accomplish the esteem level of the hierarchy. When individuals know what their potential is and realize their potential, they become self-actualized. For the highest level of the hierarchy of needs, the self-transcendent individual displays and acts compassionately, spiritually, and creatively. The hierarchy of needs is depicted as a pyramid and functions as a continuum. The individual must accomplish each level, starting at the base of the pyramid with physiological needs, before moving on to master the next level. The personnel recruitment and retention function of schools align with the hierarchy of needs by meeting the
basic needs of the teacher candidate via a compensation package and via the candidate’s perceived satisfaction with working conditions in the school organization.

Social learning theory connects with the function of personnel recruitment and retention in schools. Social learning theory describes the continuous actions and interactions of human behavior that is influenced by the environment, by behavior, and by cognitive processes. These interactions between people create learning opportunities through modeling, observation, and even imitation. Bandura (2001) expanded his social learning theory by explaining that individuals, as actors and reactors, have control over their own actions, but rely on how others act to achieve the outcome desired, and individuals rely on their environmental experiences to influence the degree of their control on their outcomes. Specifically, Bandura includes self-reactiveness and self-reflectiveness as components in his extended social learning theory. Self-reactive individuals are motivated to make appropriate choices and are able to organize and execute those choices into a plan. Individuals who engage in continuous review of choices and plans are self-reflective. The cycle of planning, executing, and reflecting allows the individuals to grow through their cognitive, environmental, and behavioral experiences. Social learning theory connects with the expectations of a classroom teacher to possess content knowledge, pedagogical methods and skills, and connect with people within the parameters of the organization’s culture.

In this study, social learning theory applies to the teacher candidate and to the hiring administrator during the hiring process and social learning theory influences the retention decision. During the initial interview, both the candidate and the principal are comparing the hiring experience to what each has learned during other similar experiences. Because both parties are interviewing each other to make a choice to offer and to accept a teaching position, the
participants in the hiring process are influenced by what each has been taught through cognitive, behavioral, and environmental experience. Conversely, social learning theory applies during the retention process. Both the teacher and the principal are guided by self-reaction and self-reflection for the teacher to decide to leave the teaching position and for the principal to decide to terminate the teacher. For either party, making the decision to stay or leave has implications on teacher turnover where extensive interaction among administrators, teachers, students, and parents depend on commitment, continuity, and cohesion (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

Ingersoll (2001) aligned his theory of teacher satisfaction and motivation with social learning theory and contended that the characteristics of the organization determine the teacher’s satisfaction and influenced the decision to stay or leave. Similar to human capital theory, which identifies salary as a determining factor in employee retention, Ingersoll proposed that the lack of a monetary reward is one cause of the teacher’s dissatisfaction with the organization. The number of teachers (demand) needed to fill vacant positions is determined by the number of teachers (supply) available. The greater the supply in a given hiring season, the better the chance that all vacant positions are filled for the coming school year. However, the funding formula for per pupil expenditures in public schools has been challenged across the country, specifically citing the disparity between large and small districts and property tax-based rich and tax-based poor school districts. This funding disparity affects the district’s ability to offer a competitive base salary and a competitive benefits package that may include merit pay to assist in teacher recruitment and retention, causing teacher dissatisfaction. Teacher salaries aside, both the principal and the teacher candidate seek congruence on organizational cultural elements beyond compensation that satisfy the principal that this teacher candidate is the right candidate to offer the open teaching assignment.
Congruent with teacher satisfaction, teacher motivation theory, as defined by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (Kelley, Heneman, & Milanowski, 2002), is founded on the teacher’s perception of desire and motivation. Teachers are satisfied with the requirements and rewards of the pay for performance program and determine their own participation in the program to successfully earn merit pay. When the teacher is satisfied with the merit pay program components, the teacher will be motivated to pursue merit pay. However, before the merit pay plan is pursued, the teacher candidate must perceive an overall satisfaction with the school organization, and, conversely, the principal must predict which candidate will meet the needs of the students in the school and be offered a teaching position.

Boardman, Darling-Hammond, and Mullin (1982) reported that teacher salaries have not fluctuated over time and have not risen to a level of market competitiveness. State funding does not address competitive salary for teachers, and consequently, affects the supply for teachers. Also, in addition to the funding disparity through taxes, low beginning teacher salaries and low teacher salaries in general may be a factor contributing to the increasing demand and decreasing supply of teachers across the country (Haggstrom, Darling-Hammond, & Grissmer, 1988). Teachers examine the compensation package to determine their satisfaction with all the aspects that make this teaching position in this school favorable. Although compensation included the monetary rewards of salary, bonuses, earning over time, and other payments available, compensation also included the overall working conditions and teacher satisfaction (Ehrenberg, 2003; Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Ingersoll, 2001). One would conclude that an individual who chooses teaching as a career knows that salary will be low, and, therefore, are not motivated by compensation. So, when salary is removed from the equation, how does the
principal identify the teacher candidate who will be motivated to meet the needs of the students in the school?

Researchers have promoted varied job performance and teacher candidate selection theories that apply to employee hiring in the workplace. The preceding hierarchy of needs and social learning theories explain how teacher recruitment and retention processes address the teacher candidate’s motivation to pursue and maintain membership as an employee in a school. Other researchers have developed or identified hypotheses that parallel with the aforementioned theories. Ingersoll (2001) conducted research and concluded that teacher motivation to pursue employment in a particular school was based on the prediction of job satisfaction while the teacher leaving the school was motivated by job dissatisfaction. Kelley, Heneman, and Milanowski (2002) reported that teacher motivation and satisfaction were founded in the school’s system of intrinsic and monetary rewards. Boardman, Darling-Hammond, and Mullin (1982) promoted teacher supply and demand as a hypothesis that aligned with the hierarchy of needs by having the teacher attracted to the school organization to satisfy the teacher’s basic needs. Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, and Sager (1993) reported Campbell’s theory of job performance that is intended to be a model for all types of employment positions available across different organizations. Job performance theory is goal relevant and the individual’s performance must be related to the activities of the organization. Moreover, his job performance theory identifies the requirements of the job along with the context of how the job functions within the organization. In particular, this study finds foundation in Campbell’s job performance theory and provides this study with its conceptual framework. Specifically, job performance theory in this study applies to the selection of a teacher by the principal at the conclusion of the interview (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993).
Policy Requirement

President George W. Bush signed the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (NCLB, 2004) in 2002, which today is commonly known as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. This federal statute was applauded by those inside and outside of public education as the catalyst for change that would right the nation’s public school system. Conversely, others had a less than favorable opinion of the benefit that K-12 education would gain from this law. In particular, this law required all teachers to be “highly qualified” by holding state teacher licensure in the state they taught and by showing evidence of content knowledge in the curriculum they taught. NCLB became the guiding policy for teacher hiring decisions in many schools and districts across the nation. Choi (2010) reported that the district that used the NCLB definition of teacher quality to make teacher hiring decisions missed what the principal valued in a teacher’s quality which aligned with the school characteristics and culture regarding organizational fit. Darling-Hammond and Sykes (2003) called for a policy change at all levels of public education to enable school administrators to recruit and retain high-quality teachers to raise student achievement outcomes across the board and, in turn, changed hiring practices would cause minority and low-achieving students’ achievement to rise to the level that begins to close the achievement gap. Public education hiring authorities worked within the highly qualified teacher guidelines of NCLB and interpreted the policy for teacher hiring requirements by “bridging and buffering” between the requirements of NCLB and the needs of the school and the students in the classroom (Rutledge, Harris, & Ingle, 2010).

Principal’s Hiring Criteria for Teacher Candidates

The steps in the hiring process often operate independent of each other and are specific to each school organization to meet the needs of the student, school, and district and to satisfy the
expectations of law by operating in compliance with non-discriminatory practices. In general, administrators determine what the personnel needs are in the district or school by identifying teaching positions that are available due to a created vacancy or an increase in the allotted number of teachers for a site. Once the available positions are determined, the selection criteria are communicated to potential teacher candidates via the job description. The next step involves recruitment of candidates who qualify by the minimum expectation for a teacher candidate for this position. Recruitment will take on different methods per school and district. The majority of recruitment takes place via the district’s website or other advertising means where candidates are expected to seek out those employment opportunities as the teacher positions become available. Another recruitment method involves attending teacher job fairs where teacher recruiters interview and screen candidates. Successful candidates are placed into a pool for principals who may choose to interview the candidate a second time.

All candidates participate in the selection process by completing the required application and applying to the specific teacher position opening. The application may include, but is not limited to work history, current licensure, university transcripts, standardized test scores, letters of recommendation, and reference contacts. Those candidates who make application are measured against the position selection criteria and those candidates who meet the application selection criteria are chosen for an interview with the principal and the interview team.

Although NCLB criteria influenced and guided many decisions to determine which teacher to interview and hire over the past decade, principals still wanted to hire “good teachers” who may not meet the highly qualified licensure requirements. However, the notion of what is viewed by a principal as a good teacher is much more complicated than the criteria that can be defined by licensure and content knowledge evidence. The principal wants to interview and hire
the best teacher candidate who is the best fit to lead students in the classroom. Tooms, Lugg, and Bogotch (2010) stated that the desirable fit is attained when the candidate displayed evidence that he/she adhered to replicating the stated and assumed norms, culture, and philosophy of the school and district. During the interview, the principal observes teacher candidates, looking for the candidate who displays what a teacher in the school would display when promoting the organization’s values for reforming, transforming, and transcending the school organization through their teacher leadership (Minarik, Thornton, & Perreault, 2003; Tooms, Lugg, & Bogotch, 2010). In a study of 30 principals in a midsized Florida school district (Rutledge, Harris, & Ingle, 2010), quantitative analysis was conducted and the results indicated a relationship between the principals’ goals for their school and the candidates’ knowledge of student accountability assessment measures as they related to the school’s goals. Furthermore, the candidate’s knowledge of those assessment measures related to the teacher’s subject matter knowledge and teaching skills. Principals who are making the teacher hiring decisions match the school’s goals and philosophy to the teacher candidate’s goals and philosophy of education. Matching goals and philosophy during the interview enables the hiring administrator insight into the candidate who will be the most effective and successful instructor in the classroom (Rutledge, et al., 2010). Also, the more experience the principal has as an administrator in the district, the more effective the principal was at employing the criteria to match the school’s culture to the teacher candidate for hire (Papa & Baxter, 2008).

In addition to the candidate complimenting the culture of the school, the principal wanted to interview and hire the best teacher candidate who displayed a sense of “with it ness” during the interview (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003). The candidate who displayed an awareness of the art and science of teaching provided evidence of “with it ness.” The teacher
who has “with it ness” displayed an ability to handle classroom and student discipline management, utilized proactive interventions, connected with students, and was physically and mentally in the moment in the classroom. The principal wanted to identify the candidates who presented an emotional objectivity and will avoid extreme emotional responses when interacting with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators (Marzano, et al.). Commercial screening instruments have been incorporated as a tool in the teacher hiring process to assess teacher beliefs, attitudes, and values (Metzger & Wu, 2008), yet these, as well as other teacher attributes and characteristics, can be assessed by the principal during the interview.

A principal’s gut feeling during the interview about the predicted success of the teacher candidate in the classroom has specific and identifiable criteria. Harris, Rutledge, Ingle, and Thompson (2006) summarized the results of seven studies on principals’ preferences for teacher characteristics. The summary listed communication skills, enthusiasm, ability to motivate, student centered, establishes a positive classroom climate, knowledge of teaching skills, understands special populations, ability to work with students, honesty, and tact as the top characteristics. In the aforementioned study the principal interview criteria varied slightly to include communication skills, strong teaching skills, caring, knows subject, experience, and enthusiasm. Teaching is complex and the best teachers committed to student learning, valued diversity, and displayed persistence, patience, and caring (Becker, Kennedy, & Hundersmarck, 2003).

There is a wide variety of tools available to screen teacher candidates. Some hiring processes require the candidate to teach a lesson to students or to the hiring committee as part of the interview so the candidate can provide evidence of teacher characteristics and skills. However, this practice to require the teacher candidate teach a sample lesson is limited. Only
7.5% of potential teacher candidates were observed teaching a sample lesson as part of the hiring process in one study (Liu & Johnson, 2006). Some principals require teacher candidates to provide portfolio evidence during the interview to include student data and student work samples to provide evidence of teacher characteristics and skills while Reeves (2007) recommended that school data and student work samples be given to the candidate when they arrive for the interview and the candidate was then tasked to develop an analysis of the school’s academic achievement and individual student’s quality of work for the interview team. The candidate would present the analysis to the hiring committee as another piece of evidence to display teacher characteristics and skills and satisfy the principal’s gut feeling that the candidate will be successful in the classroom with students. The review of the available literature made it clear that the interview is the primary tool for making decisions about hiring teachers, and interestingly, this decision is comfortably made for around half of the principals in one study within a twenty minute time limit (Rutledge, Harris, Thompson, & Ingle, 2008). Rutledge, Harris, Thompson, and Ingle (2008) argued that there is a correspondence between the principal’s primary hiring criteria of communication skills, caring, and enthusiasm and the candidate’s presentation of evidence during the interview for hire.

Harris, Rutledge, Ingle, and Thompson (2006) seemed to have one of the most thorough reviews of the related literature and comprehensive studies of the criteria and tools that principals used to determine which teacher to hire. Their results indicated a preference for what they called a mix of personal and professional characteristics, with “strong caring” being the top ranked criteria and “strong teaching skills” being the second ranked criteria. In terms of generally being cited as important, “working well with others” and “knowing one’s subject” were also important in terms of the top criteria. This research is consistent with other quantitative research, although
the case study approach demonstrated the importance of the mix of both types of broad characteristics. However, the listing of the number of times principals cite specific criteria and the ranking of these criteria are not consistent with the principal’s preference for the use of specific criteria during the interview and what principals viewed as the most important tool to assess these criteria. Harris et al, (2006) explain:

“The fact that the interview is the highest ranked tool therefore reinforces our finding that caring, communication, and enthusiasm are among the key characteristics that principals look for. But for subject matter knowledge and teaching skills, this creates a bit of a puzzle. If these are actually among the most important teacher characteristics for principals, then why do principals give such low rankings to tools that would seem to help identify this characteristic—university transcript, demonstration lesson, video of instruction, and candidate’s university?” (Harris et al, 2006, p.37)

In a follow-up article Rutledge, Harris, Thompson, and Ingle (2008) attempted to explain this paradox by time and resource constraints. However, in additional data they noted about half of their sample being satisfied that they can determine which candidate is likely to be successful in a twenty minute interview, with some noting that they can make this determination in five minutes, would seem to suggest that the preference for the interview process is not an artifact of organizational constraints. Delli and Vera (2003) reported a substantial void in the research surrounding the pre-employment process and the function of the foundation teacher hiring tool, the selection interview. More noteworthy, the consequent bias of both the interviewer and interviewee during the introduction of variables, for example, attractiveness, likeability, expertness, and similarity presents an often unrecognized interplay between the interviewer and interviewee that may well bias the hiring decision process. The combined and unrecognized
effects of these variables during the interview process calls for further research into the principal’s interview selection criteria for teachers. Clearly there is a need for a deeper understanding of this contradictory finding and what principals may really be looking for in these interviews.

The principal hiring criteria for teachers are very important because the criteria enable the principal to identify the best candidate who will effectively influence and increase each student’s achievement. And, consequently, the teacher hiring decision will have impact on each student’s overall experience in the classroom and the school. After the interview group of candidates is determined, each potential teacher hire to be interviewed at this stage of the process is thought to have an equal chance to be hired by the principal to teach in the school.

The focus of this study is to determine the specific principal’s hiring criterion for teachers during the interview for hire. What evidence does the principal collect during the interview and how is that evidence assessed to determine which candidate is offered and hired into the available teaching position? Previous research has determined principal hiring criteria for teachers either prior to or during the interview. Other important criterion for the hiring process exists and that criterion has been analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative study of independent variables, for example teacher’s degree, licensure, and years of experience, concluded each individually indicated a small statistically significant relationship with student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Ding & Sherman, 2006; Goodhaber & Anthony, 2007; Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Jepsen, 2005; Kaplan & Ownings, 2001; Strunk & Robinson, 2006; Wayne & Youngs, 2003). Other teacher hiring criteria have been identified as a result of qualitative studies conducted to include teacher candidate attributes of the ability to motivate, provide a positive classroom environment, understand special populations, conduct
themselves with honesty, show tact, communicate effectively, center on students, and to display enthusiasm, openness, content knowledge, pedagogy, classroom management, student relationship-building, a commitment to student learning, a value of diversity, persistence, patience, and caring (Aaronson, Barrow, & Sander, 2007; Becker, Kennedy, & Hundersmarck, 2003; Harris, Rutledge, Ingle, & Thompson, 2010; Jepsen, 2005; Moyer-Packenham, Bolyard, Kitsantas, & Oh, 2008). Although concrete criteria, for example teacher licensure, can be readily identified, it is those abstract criteria that comprised the teacher’s characteristics, attributes, and personality that remain unclear concerning the effect on students and students’ achievement. The criteria that included characteristics, attributes, and personality are criteria that the teacher can display evidence of during the candidate interview, providing the opportunity for the principal to witness these criteria and assess the evidence presented by the candidate to determine the candidate who meets the principal’s hiring criteria for a teacher.

In an era of teacher and principal accountability to improve and maintain continuous student achievement growth, the teacher’s responsibility for sustained student academic achievement growth comes into play. When the principal enters the teacher candidate interview, does he/she have a set of criteria that complments the profile of a successful teacher currently teaching in the school to gather evidence from the candidate and assess the candidate to match the candidate to the school and the students to make a final decision? Does each principal use teacher hiring criterion that is accurate, consistent, and successful? Can all principals identify teacher skill, knowledge, and talent or is a teacher assessment survey tool administered prior to the interview? For example the Teacher Insight (Gallup, 2006) is an online inventory that provides an independent assessment score that rates teacher skill, knowledge, and talent for the principal to use as a resource. I argue that the teacher hiring decision by the principal is one of
the most important functions and responsibilities for the principal. Yet, little research has been conducted on the principal’s teacher hiring criteria during the interview for hire and the teacher candidate’s affect on student academic achievement.

Principals must realize what their teacher hiring criteria are that comprises the profile of a teacher candidate who can take on the role of a rigorous instructional leader and who can effectively sustain increased student achievement. Additionally, what evidence does the teacher candidate display during the interview to indicate they have the attributes that meet the expectations of the principal’s hiring criteria for teachers?

**Teacher Attrition**

Ingersoll (2001) contended that the characteristics of the organization determine the teacher’s decision to stay or leave. Similar to human capital theory, which identified salary as a determining factor in employee retention, Ingersoll proposed that the lack of intrinsic reward caused the teacher’s dissatisfaction with the organization. The teacher’s dissatisfaction with the organization became a leading cause of the teacher’s choice to leave the organization. Teachers choose the profession and choose to apply to be teachers at certain schools because they think the combination of salary, working conditions, and other satisfaction factors will bring the teachers the benefits they seek. Teachers leave the organization when their dissatisfaction with the organization becomes greater than the benefits they originally sought. In turn, hiring school administrators concurrently seek the “right” candidate to hire as a teacher in the organization. Principals interview candidates who display personal characteristics and intrinsic attributes and who the administrator perceives will benefit the organization by connecting with the school community and will improve student achievement. The teacher interview must be aligned with the school and/or district vision and mission. The philosophy of the organization must be
presented to include expectations of teaching and student learning. The teacher who connects with the mission and vision of the school communicates a compatible passion for teaching and learning. Matching candidates to the school’s profile of teacher quality, the administrator will increase the school’s rate of teacher retention (Minarik, Thornton, & Perreault, 2003).

It has been well documented that 14% of teachers leave the teaching profession after the first year, 24% leave the profession by the end of the second year, and 46% of new teachers leave the profession after the fifth year (Ingersoll, 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Teacher attrition results in the loss of instructional continuity and negatively affects student achievement. Minarik, Thornton, and Perreault (2003) presented five interrelated systemic strategies for recruitment and retention of teachers. Four of the strategies are functions of building a school community while the fifth strategy is to hire the right teachers. As part of the hiring process that the school administrator can utilize to increase the teacher retention rate prior to hiring the candidate to a teaching position is to establish hiring criteria that identifies the right teacher to hire at the interview. Principals experience the pressure to meet all accountability measures put in place at the district, state, and federal levels. Therefore, principals seek the best candidates to hire and retain as teachers. They also seek the best method to select a candidate who will improve student achievement and who will stay in their teaching assignment in their school. One cause of teacher attrition may be that teachers who leave the profession did not fit the organizational culture expectations and, therefore, cannot connect with students and colleagues by developing relationships and communicating effectively.

**Organizational Culture**

Although this research is not focused on organizational culture and school improvement per se, it is important to discuss the foundation of organizational culture in relation to the
principal’s criteria for hiring teachers. Culture is defined as the customary traits, social forms, and beliefs of a group shared by people that characterized the institution or organization by the set of practices, goals, and values within that particular field (Culture, n.d.). Scholars who have researched organizational culture concur with this definition (Lindahl, 2006). The study of organizational culture is founded in sociology, psychology, and anthropology and has been present in the research literature since the 1970s (Goldring, 2002; Van der Westhuizen, Mosoage, Swanepoel, & Coetsee, 2005). Culture is the glue that connects people to both the visible and spoken norms and mores and to the invisible and unspoken norms and mores of the organization (Goldring, 2002; Slater, 1999; Van der Westhuizen et al., 2005). In his meta-analysis on the role of organizational climate and culture in school, Lindahl (2006) reported that some researchers separately identified and defined climate and culture. He went on to state that delineation between climate and culture is not necessary as the terms, as well as the definitions of the terms, are synonymous. Although school climate and culture are pivotal components in the school improvement process, Lindahl stated that little has been written concerning the impact that school culture and climate have on school improvement.

Osborne and Price (1997) reported the two dimensions that come into play when determining an organization’s culture. One dimension comprised how people have their own perception of their goals as they pertain to the organization’s goals while the other dimension found that the organization has goals itself. When the individual’s goals do not align with the organizational goals, the individual’s fit to the organization’s culture is jeopardized. Organizational groups developed guiding principles that are specific to the group’s needs. Both stated and assumed, that the mores of the group come together to create the culture of the group.
The culture of the organization can be communicated through customs, collegial relationships, and competence and confidence (Saphier & King, 1985). One of the rituals of a school organization is the hiring season for new teachers. The hiring interview is often the first formal experience the teacher candidate has with the organization and first formal opportunity for the organization to communicate the culture of expectations to the candidate. Like building a house, the finished product is envisioned first, next the specifications are developed. When communicating the organization’s culture at the point of hire, the principal begins the relationship with the new teacher with the end or the outcome in mind (Covey, 1990). Moreover, effective schools have a clear vision of culture communicated by the principal to the teacher (Osborne & Price, 1997). Goldring (2002) concurred that a shared vision served as one of six key traits of culture and offered staff members direction and purpose for their work. Communicating the core beliefs to new teacher hires incorporated the norms of the organization so new teachers will be enabled to facilitate a culture of high expectations for all students to implement and sustain student academic improvement. The point of hire is an appropriate time for the principal to communicate the school’s values, norms, and beliefs by telling the story of the school to potential teacher hires, for example, that all students of poverty can learn at the same rate as any other student (Schein, 2009). Additionally, this dialogue between the principal and the candidate initiates common concepts and language. The principal’s teacher hiring criteria is particular to the school’s culture, which is based in large part on the needs of the students. The point of hire is the first opportunity for the principal to begin to develop a relationship with the teacher.

Transformational leaders inspired followers and developed relationships with their employees by incorporating the values and visions of the organization as the foundation to guide their actions (Zohar & Tenne-Gazit, 2008). Kozlowski and Doherty (1989) pointed out the
importance of culture formation communicated by the leaders to the staff. The study indicated that a greater consensus about culture existed when high quality relationships were established and developed by the leader with their subordinates. The principal served as the link between the organization and the perceptions of the potential new hire. Principals established that “first impression” with the teacher candidate and, as part of that first impression, the principal communicated the beliefs of the school to the candidate and engaged the candidate in a collegial dialogue to understand how the organization and the teacher candidate concurred on the organizational culture. Silins, Mulford, and Zarins (2002) identified six factors that defined the principals’ transformational leadership and promoted organizational learning which also included the principals’ practice of communicating vision and goals and promoting the school’s organizational culture. Dumay’s (2009) research indicated that school culture could be partially explained by the principals’ transformational leadership skills and explained by the teachers’ collective decision-making, resulting in cultural homogeneity. Dumay concluded that the lack of relationships between the principal, the teacher, and the importance of student performance reduced cultural homogeneity. Dumay’s data indicated that in schools of low socio-economic status, shared cultural norms of innovation predicted that academic math performance improved.

Student achievement is measured in schools by the student’s academic growth and the principal is held accountable for all student achievement growth in the school. Hiring an effective teacher candidate will have a positive effect on student achievement increases. The connection between the teacher’s concepts of what the organizational culture is for them is communicated to students as expectations for classroom work and behavior expectations (Dumay, 2009; Maslowski, 2006). These expectations for students included increased achievement by moving students beyond the initial data point over the course of the school year.
It stands to reason that the principal communicated school culture at the point of the hiring decision to the candidate by determining the best connection between the school and the teacher. The candidate who shares the same values and beliefs of the organization will have an impact on the school’s effectiveness. When the core beliefs are centered on student academic achievement, the relationship between the teacher’s effectiveness and the student’s achievement will be stronger (Gonzalez-Roma, Peiro, & Tordera, 2002). Additionally, schools with lower socioeconomic status (SES) have student issues outside of the classroom that impact student classroom performance. Lower SES school principals who communicated and operated within a strong culture of student academic success promoted the key values that are tightly tied to the organization and to the people in the organization, resulting in school organizations being more effective (Thrupp, 2001; Weick, 1982; Zohar & Tenne-Gazit, 2008). With the variety of challenges that low SES schools face daily, principals are charged with implementing a model that will change the organization’s culture to a culture that consistently enables student academic success and celebrates student achievement (Kezar & Eckels, 2002).

Principals made sense of the mission and values of the school for the teacher candidate by providing meaning during the interview as to what occurs within the life of the organization (Latta, 2009). Principals presented a dominant influence when providing the direction of the organization through values, norms, and beliefs to the candidate at the point of hire. The candidate continued to develop his assumptions about the organization and gained a sense of empowerment envisioning himself as a part of the highly successful organization (Schein, 2009). Indeed, the newly hired teacher may be continuously evolving in his adaptation to the school’s culture, but his adaptation to the beliefs and assumptions may never be totally realized as the organization’s culture controls the individual more that the individual controls the culture
This ever-evolving adaptation to culture gives another justification for the principal to provide information about the core beliefs of the school, and, consequently the culture of the organization at the point of hire so candidates can solidify their decision to pursue a teaching assignment in this school or make the choice to self-select out of the hiring process.

Models of organizational change include both conceptual and process models that can be aligned with the principal’s hiring criteria for teachers, the decision to offer a teaching position, and the teacher’s acceptance of the job offer (Latta, 2009). O’Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell (1991) reported two broad theories of person and organizational fit that are widely accepted by scholars. One theory finds that the individual’s characteristics fit the organizational attributes while the other theory identifies the fit between the organization and the people in the organization. One example of fit between the organization and the people in the organization would be exemplified by matching individual characteristics to the culture of the organization. Harris and Rutledge (2010) identified the person-organization fit model as the most important model of teacher effectiveness. This model of teacher effectiveness matches the person to the type of work and focused on the relationship between the worker and the organization. Judge, Bono, and Locke (2000) studied personality and job satisfaction and determined that individuals who had challenging jobs reported a higher level of job satisfaction and intrinsic enrichment. It is of interest to note, for example, that a candidate who initially applied for a teaching job in a high-poverty school should be made aware during the interview for hire that the teaching job he/she seeks is one that is very challenging. By communicating the school culture and core beliefs, the principal can connect the candidate to the challenges of working in a low SES school community. Very few studies have been conducted in education that propose models to identify
and understand school culture and those studies that do exist have focused on external variables that may affect school culture (Dumay, 2009).

Why consider culture in the principal’s hiring criteria for teachers? Porter, Steers, and Mowday (1974) reported that the individual’s commitment to the organization and subsequent involvement in the organization surrounded the interest the individual had to maintain membership in the organization. Also, the individual’s commitment to the organization was influenced by the degree to which the individual believed in the organization and by the degree that he/she accepted the organization’s values and goals. The teacher’s commitment to the school’s values and beliefs created a philosophical bond that connected the teacher to the actual work of that organization.

Principals are the change agents of the school organization. School leaders consciously set out to change the school’s culture to facilitate school improvement. When all the individuals in the organization are in agreement with the core beliefs of the school, the common purpose of all members of the organization facilitated successful school reform on a large-scale basis (Lindahl, 2006). The principal determined the candidate’s congruence with the school’s shared core beliefs, norms, and values and gain insight into how the potential teacher will compliment the organization’s culture and how effective the potential teacher will be with improving student achievement (Lindahl, 2007). The candidate who is in agreement with the culture is the candidate the principal wants to recruit into the school.

The principal can influence school culture and facilitate changes in the teachers linked to school collaboration and teacher professionalism connected to improved student work in the classroom (Eilers & Camacho, 2007). Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, and Kleiner (2000) defined collaborative leadership as a leadership style the principal used that is a
shared style with teachers and focused on student instruction. Although time is of the essence for principals to improve student achievement, the principal must make a thoughtful decision to hire or not hire a teacher candidate. Even though the principal is held responsible to implement cultural expectations and facilitate change in student achievement, the principal must recognize that change in a school is a process, not an event (Hall & Hord, 1987). The teacher hiring process provides one avenue to introduce and incorporate the organizational culture the principal must articulate for the new teacher candidate. The principal serves as an opinion leader to communicate expectations of the school culture to those new teacher hires who become change agents themselves to facilitate change by improving student achievement (Rogers, 1995).

Harris (2001) contended that school culture is paramount in the change process and consequently the culture of the school drove school improvement. When communicating the organizational beliefs, the candidate’s purpose in the organization is identified and the candidate’s ability to build their own capacity in the organization is identified. As teacher capacity increases, teacher effectiveness also increases and the students show academic achievement. Teachers are included in the organization and are empowered to be collaborative because they have a shared sense of purpose that finds the foundation of that purpose of the organization in the core beliefs of the school (Harris, 2001).

The principal’s hiring criteria is clearly influenced by the school’s culture. The hiring criteria must adapt to the individual school’s culture. The criteria must not conflict with the beliefs or values. Incorporating the core beliefs into the hiring process may well impact other parts of the organization. In systems thinking, all parts impact the whole and impact each other. The new hire teachers can be socialized into the culture of the organization at the point of hire to ensure the culture is institutionalized. Systemic communication provides one message from the
principals about the challenges and expectations during the candidate interview. Principals can observe, during the interview, the candidate’s energy, motivation, and commitment to embark and sustain as agents of improved student achievement one student at a time (Murphy & Meyers, 2009). Principals who explained to teacher candidates the core beliefs during the interview provided the principal with another element of the degree of confidence that the candidate would assimilate positively to the morale and contribute to the school’s culture. Moreover, principals who clearly communicate expectations during the interview may well improve teacher retention at the point of hire. Incorporating the core beliefs into the teacher hire interview empowers the candidate to display to the principal ownership of the student challenges and school expectations they will meet in the classroom. The principal shares the core beliefs and empowers the teacher candidate to take ownership in the organization prior to joining the organization, contributing to the organization’s growth. Additionally, the principal enables the candidate to be included and involved, creating leadership density in the school organization and contributing to school improvement (Reeves, 2008).

Teamwork is a cornerstone of the school improvement process (Murphy & Meyers, 2009) and the principal can rely on the core beliefs during the interview process to predict how effective a candidate for hire will be on the teaching team. Within the process of organizational change, individuals are asked to change the way they think and operate within that organization. At the point of hire, the school leader has the opportunity to identify and hire a potential teacher for the school who already thinks and acts in the way that the organization wants to change, enabling one less obstacle on the path to school improvement. The principal must articulate the school’s set of values via the core beliefs and recruit teachers who will operate within the core beliefs.
Personality and aptitude instruments have been available for employers to use as a pre-screening tool to test candidates’ values and qualify candidates into a select pool for hire since the 1950s. Ones, Viswesvaran, and Schmidt (1993) conducted a meta-analysis on 25 personnel selection integrity tests and found these integrity tests had validity across tests and across varying types of jobs as predictors of the individual’s performance on the job, correlating with supervisor’s rating of job performance. Although assessments to predict an individual’s job performance prior to hire are available for employers to use as a hiring pre-screen tool, Campbell and Campbell (1988) contend that criterion-referenced instruments specific to a job need to be developed to measure the candidate’s job skill and performance. The Teacher Insight (Gallup, 2006) is one such criterion-referenced assessment instrument. The Teacher Insight is a pre-interview screen tool instrument that used an inventory to assess the teacher candidate’s skill, knowledge, and talent, predicting the best teacher candidate for hire (Gordon & Crabtree, 2006). Should the teacher’s score on the Teacher Insight be included as criterion for teachers in the principal’s hiring decision? Koerner (2007) studied the relationship between the teacher’s Teacher Insight score and student achievement on the Texas Growth Instrument in the content areas of English/reading and math. The study incorporated assessment data from 7,000 students, and compared the Teacher Insight scores from 132 teachers. Although the findings indicated a statistically significant relationship between student achievement and the teachers’ Teacher Insight score, the relationship was very small with the English/reading correlation of .045 and the math correlation of .042. Koerner recommended future study analyzing the relationship between Teacher Insight and student achievement. Even with pre-screening instruments to qualify the pool of candidates in use, teacher attrition remains high in public school organizations. Little
research has been conducted on the correlation between the Teacher Insight score and student achievement or teacher retention.

**Rationale for the Study**

Even though the minimum hiring guidelines for teachers that principals have to meet are determined by NCLB and include the highly qualified requirements to provide evidence of a teaching license in the state where the teacher will teach and evidence of content knowledge in the content that the teacher will teach, the principal may choose to disregard the minimum hiring requirements and hire the candidate who does not have highly qualified status. The principal’s teacher hiring criteria and the decision to choose one candidate over another candidate remains unclear. Rutledge, Harris, and Ingle (2010) concluded in their study that policy requirements for teacher hiring, for example NCLB, emphasized the teachers’ professional preparation characteristics, creating limitations on the number of candidates in the pool to choose from for interviewees. They also found that principals were likely to “buffer” the requirements of policy mandates by moving away from the teacher’s highly qualified hiring criteria and “bridge” to other teacher hiring criteria that indicated a match to the profile of a teacher that would meet the needs of the school and the students. Principals want to hire the best candidate for the available teaching position.

Although principals hire the best candidate to be a teacher in the school, teacher attrition continues to be a concern because almost 50% of new teachers leave the profession after the first 5 years of teaching (Ingersoll, 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Teacher attrition depletes school resources, for example, the depletion of the hiring administrators’ time along with the associated costs to advertise, orient, and train a new teacher to the district. High teacher turn-over has a negative impact on student achievement. One factor identified as a cause for teacher attrition is
that the teacher becomes dissatisfied with the school organization. Teacher candidates can provide evidence during the hiring interview that a congruency exists between the candidate and the school’s organizational culture, identified by the organization’s core beliefs. Therefore, a candidate’s dissatisfaction with the organization’s culture can be identified during the interview at the point of hire. Job performance theory, applied to a teacher selected for hire, indicates that the best candidate for the teaching position will naturally surface during the hiring interview. If the best candidate is hired, why do nearly 50% of all teachers leave the teaching profession during the first five years of teaching when the principal selected the best candidate during the interview? Did the principal select the best candidate at the point of hire?

Since a demand for teachers does exist nationally, Ingersoll (2001) contended that the demand for teachers is not due to a teacher shortage, but due to the constant teacher turnover and high rate of attrition. Admittedly, some teacher turnover is good for the school organization because, for one, some individuals are misplaced in a school organization and secondly, because changing teachers infused the organization with new personnel as catalysts to embark on change and innovation that moves the school organization forward. Additionally, Ingersoll focused on teacher satisfaction as a leading contributor to retention and attrition. He contended that the characteristics of the organization determine the teacher’s decision to stay or leave. Similar to human capital theory, which identifies salary as a determining factor in employee retention, Ingersoll proposed that the lack of intrinsic reward causes the teacher’s dissatisfaction with the organization. Teachers choose the profession and choose to apply to be teachers at certain schools when they think the combination of salary, working conditions, and other satisfaction factors will bring the teachers the benefits they seek. Teachers leave the organization when their dissatisfaction with the organization becomes greater than the benefits they originally sought.
In turn, hiring school administrators concurrently seek the “right” candidate to hire as a teacher in the organization. Principals interview candidates who display personal characteristics and intrinsic attributes that the administrator perceives will benefit the organization by connecting with the school community and will improve student achievement. The teacher interview criteria must be aligned with the school and/or district vision and mission. The philosophy of the organization must be presented during the interview to include expectations of teaching and student learning in that school. The teacher who connects with the mission and vision of the school communicates a compatible passion for teaching and learning at the point of hire. By matching candidates to the school’s profile of teacher quality, the administrator increased the school’s rate of retention (Minarik, Thornton, & Perreault, 2003). Harris and Rutledge (2010) reported few studies have been conducted that have linked the organizational context of the school organization, represented by the core beliefs, to teacher effectiveness.

There are many factors that influence the principal’s hiring decision for a teacher. One factor that influences the principal’s teacher selection criteria is identified by NCLB and the evidence of the teacher’s highly qualified status of licensure and content knowledge. However, some principals let other hiring criteria factors take precedence and those principals do not adhere to the NCLB policy requirements. Teacher dissatisfaction with the school organization has been identified as one of the most prominent reasons that teachers leave the school and, in some cases, leave the teaching professional altogether. The teacher candidate’s alignment with the organization and the core beliefs of the organization can be assessed during the interview before the teaching position is offered. During the interview, the teacher candidate can provide evidence when answering interviewer questions that would indicate how congruent the candidate is with the core beliefs. Yet, teacher turnover remains high because the principal recommends the
teacher contract be non-renewed by the district or the teacher resigns from the teaching position held.

When the culture of the organization is consistent from the point of hire throughout the employment period, then the rate of teacher attrition speaks to the mismatch of the teacher to the teaching assignment and to the school occurring at the point of hire. Did the principal address the organizational culture of the school and district with the teacher candidate during the interview? Another principal hiring criteria factor is pre-screening and pre-interview instruments that assess and predict how successful the teacher candidate will be in the classroom with students. Similar to adherence to teacher licensure and highly qualified status for the teaching content evidence, some principals do not consider pre-screening assessment scores as relevant criteria to judge a teacher candidate. Seemingly, the principal’s teacher hiring criteria and the evidence the teacher candidate supplied evolved from criteria that have principal preferences that are based on the school and student need. Therefore, the principal’s hiring criteria and the evidence the principal uses to assess each teacher candidate at the point of hire to determine the teaching job offer remains a mystery.

Lankford et al. (2002) explained the mystery of the lack of teacher selection research by delineating two reasons why principal hiring criteria varied from principal to principal. Principals have varying degrees of autonomy during the teacher hiring process and the principals have a tendency to hire the teacher who matches the demographics of the school population. It is of interest that Lankford noted that high-poverty schools had a higher attrition rate than schools with students from low-poverty homes.

Few principals would argue that hiring an effective teacher initially is preferable to hiring an ineffective teacher to re-train or replace.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide a deeper understanding of the teacher hiring criteria of principals through qualitative and quantitative data generation. The qualitative data generated from this study includes the principal’s hiring criteria, the evidence of the hiring criteria observed during a teacher interview, and the principal bridging or buffering to the core beliefs in the hiring decision.

Many districts and schools within those districts operate with principal defined autonomy, giving the principal the authority to screen, interview, and hire the teacher candidate of his/her choice. Principals are often given the authority to create the protocol and criteria used during the teacher interview for hire. One of the most important decisions a principal will make is the selection of a new teacher to his faculty. The teacher hiring decision is one that the principal intends to make once for each position available because the principal would like to hire the best candidate at the point of hire who will be retained on the faculty.

Significance of the Study

The study will provide a process with results to guide and focus principals and other administrators who hire teachers to be placed in K-12 classrooms across the country by identifying criteria that would enable the right teacher for students to be hired in the first place in the individual school. When the right teacher for students is hired initially, teacher attrition will be reduced from school to school and the identified principal hiring criteria and the evidence of that criteria will identify attributes, characteristics, and qualifications of effective teachers to impact students and their academic achievement. Minimal research on the principal’s teacher hiring criteria during the interview for hire has been conducted and previous studies have not linked organizational culture to teacher effectiveness (Harris & Rutledge, 2010).
Identifying this criteria would not only inform principals of specific and consistent hiring criteria, the study would provide teacher candidates with information and those who deliver teacher education pre-service programs on teacher qualifications and expectations of the necessary preparation required to be a successful candidate who is offered a position as a teacher. The identification of the principal’s teacher hiring criteria is valuable to personnel in the university teacher preparation program to provide information to guide the development of teacher preparation course curriculum and teacher candidate experiences in the field. For example, if principal hiring criteria value teaching skills and methods that deliver differentiated instruction to students, pre-service instruction and coursework would emphasize differentiated instruction.

Although past studies have concluded specific principal criteria to be applied to teacher candidate hiring, I contend that specific and different criteria apply to each district and to each school in that district which is dependent on the individual emotional, social, and academic needs of the students in that school. Moreover, the district and school’s organizational culture or core beliefs determine the specific teacher hiring criterion that will vary from district to district and school to school. The significance of this research is to determine how one district and its school principals’ hiring criteria for teachers is influenced by the core beliefs above and beyond the highly qualified teacher requirements of NCLB. Also, the significance of this study is to provide a process for other districts to determine their district’s specific principals’ teacher hiring criteria.

Little research has been conducted to explain why a principal hired one teacher candidate over another (Liu & Johnson, 2006) or to explain why one teacher candidate is hired in one school district, but not in another school district (Lankford et al., 2002). The combined and unrecognized effects of these variables during the interview process calls for further research
into the principal’s interview selection criteria for teachers (Liu & Johnson, 2006). Clearly there is a need for a deeper understanding and examination of these inconclusive findings and a need to identify what evidence is observed or perceived to predict the teacher job performance that principals may be really looking for in teacher candidates during these interviews.

**Research Questions**

This study will be guided by qualitative and quantitative research questions. These qualitative research questions will lead this study:

1. What teacher hiring criteria do principals observe and/or identify that determine the decision to hire a teacher candidate?

2. Do principals “bridge” or “buffer” the candidate’s congruence with the district’s culture, represented by the Core Beliefs, to make a final determination for the job offer to the candidate?

**Limitations**

The limitations of the study included bias and sample size. As observations and interviews are conducted, the bias of individual principals may reveal that the findings of the observations and interviews are not representative of all the principals and bias evidence may surface to void internal generalization of the evidence to the principal’s teacher hiring criteria. The researcher bias includes the perception that, as a former principal responsible for hiring teachers, an inherent bias exists that could influence the researcher. Because the principals and researcher have worked together for years, an inherent relationship bias exists. The researcher is aware of bias and understands how the bias may affect the analysis of the qualitative evidence. Additionally, the sample is purposeful, convenient, and small in number. Although analysis of the qualitative data of this study may be able to be internally generalized to the principal’s
teacher hiring criteria and the school district in this study, the results should not be externally
generalized to the population.

**Definitions of Terms**

Capacity for Growth - the teacher’s power to access resources to impact the goals and
outcomes of the school (Honadle, 1981).

Content Knowledge - evidence the teacher is competent in the subject(s) he/she teaches,
often determined by NCLB requirements (NCLB, 2004).

Cultural Fit - desirable cultural fit is attained when the candidate displays evidence that
he/she will adhere to replicating the stated and assumed norms, culture, and philosophy of the
school and district (Tooms, Lugg, & Bogotch, 2010).

Effective and Effectiveness - teacher outcomes as a result of performance (Campbell &
Campbell, 1988).

Organizational Culture - the customary traits, social forms, and beliefs of a group shared
by people that characterized the institution or organization by the set of practices, goals, and
values within that particular field (Culture, n.d.).

Pedagogy - the method of instruction; how teachers teach content.

Person-Organization Fit - the congruence between the teacher candidate and the school
organization (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005).

Principal hiring criteria - the teacher candidate’s performance or the outcome(s) of
teacher behavior(s) during the interview (Campbell & Campbell, 1988).

Principal Hiring Criteria Evidence - observed behavior of teacher action(s) during the
teacher interview (Campbell & Campbell, 1988).
Teacher “Highly Qualified” Hiring Policy - the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act which today is commonly known as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2004). The law requires all teachers to be “highly qualified” by holding state teacher licensure in the state they teach and by showing evidence of content knowledge in the curriculum they teach.

Withitness - the candidate who displays an awareness of the art and science of teaching provides evidence of withitness. Specifically, the teacher displays an ability to handle classroom and student discipline management, utilizes proactive interventions, connects with students, and is physically and mentally in the moment in the classroom (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003).

**Organization of Study**

The review of literature is presented in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 will outline the sample population, methodology, data collection, and data analyses for the study. The results of the study will be presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 will present the discussion, implications and recommendations, future research, and the conclusion.
Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter opens with the policy requirements that guide teacher selection and hiring. An overview of the literature for the principal’s hiring criteria, teacher attrition, organizational culture, and a teacher selection instrument is presented. This section concludes with an overview of teacher, school, and district quality characteristics.

Policy Requirements

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2004) mandated all teachers in public schools across the United States to be highly qualified per the law’s minimum requirement by the end of the 2005/2006 school year. The law contained two provisions that identified the selection, evaluation, and retention of quality classroom teachers. One provision defined a highly qualified teacher as one who held a license in the state taught and provided evidence of content knowledge in the subject taught. The other provision stated that poor and minority children are not to be taught by out-of-field, unqualified, or inexperienced teachers at a higher rate than other students. Concurrently, principals were held more and more accountable to student achievement results as evidenced by the increase of mandated standardized assessments and wanted to hire the best qualified candidate as a teacher to positively affect student achievement. Sometimes the best teacher candidate to hire did not meet the minimum requirements of NCLB. Also, NCLB required that the teacher’s highly qualified status be reported to the parents of the children in the teachers’ classroom in those schools that received federal funding.

Although minimum standards are set by NCLB to define a highly qualified teacher, critics voiced concerns that the minimum standards the law provided disregarded the other
characteristics that make a teacher effective, representing a “floor” rather than a “ceiling” to measure teacher quality (Choi, 2010). Darling-Hammond and Sykes (2003) stated that NCLB highly-qualified mandates will not become reality until inequalities in school funding are addressed and the shallow pool of candidates in the teacher labor market are moved from a local concern to a national initiative to supply enough teachers for all schools across the country. Darling-Hammond and Sykes professed that the teacher shortage is not caused by the lack of qualified individuals, but by inequities of the distribution of qualified teachers caused in part by salary discrepancies from school to school across the country. Also, the shortage of qualified teachers can be targeted by addressing the teacher attrition rate of 30% which elevated to as high as 50% in low-income schools. Proponents of NCLB concluded that teacher standards would be lowered if the minimum license and content knowledge evidence requirements were not met.

Choi (2010) reported the results of a lawsuit against the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) that found judgment in favor of the plaintiffs. The California legislature passed six bills and one of the bills directly addressed the issue of providing equity in the distribution of highly qualified teachers to poor and minority schools. School officials used the NCLB requirements as the screen criteria for teacher candidates’ initial entry into the candidate pool and to generate data for compliance reporting purposes. Teacher candidates were categorized into three groups or “bands.” Band 1 comprised bachelor degree holders with less than 20 graduate credits and three or less years of teaching experience. The second band had teachers with 42 or more graduate credits and four to seven years of teaching experience while Band 3 had 56 teachers with graduate credits beyond the bachelor’s degree. To comply with the legal decree, principals were to hire teachers equally from all three bands. However, the influence of the teacher labor market came into play, and the challenge was not choosing from
the bands of teachers, but the challenge was the number of teachers available in each band and
the quality of the teachers available for distribution. The purpose of Choi’s research was to study
the distribution of teacher quality in elementary schools, across districts, and levels of school
characteristics, and change depending on the teacher quality definition. First, the study showed
that definitions of teacher quality determined if the distribution of quality teachers was healthy or
unhealthy. Secondly, the findings are consistent with other studies that the definition of teacher
quality matters because when the definition is weak, the quality of the teacher distribution
declines. Also, the definition of teacher quality is determined by each school and frequently the
school’s definition of teacher quality does not align with the NCLB policy mandates.

In a mixed-methods study in Florida, 17 elementary, six middle school, and four high
school principals were interviewed along with three district administrators to determine which
teacher quality factors influenced teacher hiring in that school district (Rutledge, Harris, & Ingle,
2010). Teacher hiring was influenced by teacher quality, for example, teaching experience and
content knowledge, NCLB highly qualified teacher mandates, and student assessment
accountability. The data generated from the study indicated that teacher hiring authorities were
“bridging and buffering” between the requirements of NCLB and the needs of the school and the
students in the classroom. Bridging was defined as the hiring authorities’ compliance with policy
mandates and adhering to policy goals while buffering was defined as the hiring authorities’
resistance to policy requirements. Instead, hiring authorities pursued teacher candidates to hire
that would meet the needs of the school and the students, without regard to adherence to policy.

The NCLB policy is the most recognized policy mandating initiatives for state teacher
licensure and academic preparation via content knowledge evidence. This highly qualified
teacher policy does not consider other elements of teacher quality, nor does this policy consider
teacher effectiveness or teacher retention, both priority needs of the school organization (Little & Bartlett, 2010). Although NCLB highly qualified teacher policy mandates and compliance to the mandates are still required, principals continue to “buffer” the requirements and pursue teacher candidates for hire who meet the principals’ teacher hiring criteria to be an effective teacher in the principal’s school (Rutledge, Harris, & Ingle, 2010).

**Principal Hiring Criteria for Teacher Candidates**

The principal brings the hiring criteria to the interview with the intent to hire the best candidate who will improve the student’s academic experience in the school. Teacher hiring may well be the most important functions of the school principal in the school organization. In addition, principal accountability for student achievement results continues to increase as each school year passes. The principal’s path to student achievement accountability and the criteria that principals use during the teacher interview to hire the best candidate are congruent and identifiable.

Some of the identifiable criteria that teacher candidates displayed evidence of possessing included communication skills, enthusiasm, ability to motivate, student centered, establishes a positive classroom climate, knowledge of teaching skills, understands special populations, ability to work with students, honesty, and tact as the top identifiable characteristics of the principal’s hiring criteria for teachers that emerged from a results summary of seven studies (Harris, Rutledge, Ingle, & Thompson, 2006).

Ingle and Rutledge (2010) summarized the research on teacher hiring and presented characteristics of high quality teachers who positively affect gains in student achievement. Principals prefer teacher candidates who possess verbal and quantitative ability skills, subject-matter competency, pedagogical skills, enthusiasm, motivation, caring, interpersonal skills, and
teaching experience. Principals were influenced by teacher candidates who shared similar background characteristics with the principal and principals favored younger candidates when hiring. Principals looked for a candidate who would be a complement to the department or grade-level and match the organizational culture of the school.

Harris and Rutledge (2010) reviewed the literature and identified three models of worker effectiveness, joining the principal’s teacher hiring criteria to match the culture of the organization. The “classic” model of worker effectiveness is the most common of the nonteaching occupations emerged from industrial psychology literature. This model emphasized job knowledge. The second model of worker effectiveness focused on “person-job fit” or “job compatibility” and assumed worker characteristics matched the job expectations. “Person-organization fit” was the third model which is described by the organization having values and a culture that would match the worker’s values that fit the culture, contributing to the worker’s effectiveness in the organization. Predictors of worker effectiveness included cognitive ability, experience, personality, and educational background. Models of teacher effectiveness included teaching as a labor, a profession, a craft, and an art. The organizational culture and environment is founded in the teaching-as-labor model of teacher effectiveness. Harris and Rutledge identified teacher personality, education, cognitive ability, and experience as the principal’s hiring criteria and that the teacher candidate who provided evidence of these traits and characteristics during an interview was offered the teaching position.

Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2002) hypothesized that teacher candidates choose to self-sort across different schools for various reasons. Even though all available candidates are from the same pool, one reason that teacher self-sorting takes place may be that the preferences of the district’s residents determine the type of teacher candidate hired. A second explanation may be
that one district’s hiring practices may be more efficient than another district’s hiring practices. Variance in the hiring criteria from principal to principal was the third explanation of how teacher candidates are sorted from school to school. Lastly, teacher candidate preferences comprised whether the teacher wanted to teach, what the teacher wanted to teach, or where the teacher wanted to teach. The Personnel Master File from the New York Department of Education for the school years 1984-2000 was the primary data source used to create the database for this study by Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff.

In this study, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2002) concluded that teacher sorting across schools and districts caused some principals to hire more qualified candidates than other principals. Teacher qualification differences were not across regions, but the differences occurred primarily between schools within districts and between districts. Students who were low performing, poor, and non-white were taught by teachers who were less qualified. Teacher candidate qualification disparity in New York schools has existed for the past 15 years. Teachers who were more qualified than their peers were more likely to transfer to another school which was more affluent and more likely to quit and work in another profession. Lastly, salary differences between schools or districts contributed to the inequitable distribution of teachers. Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff summarized their findings by stating that a policy strategy frequently employed is to provide incentives to attract and retain quality teachers. However, the authors of this study recommended that policy makers must incorporate teacher labor market dynamics in their recruitment and retention strategies if they hope to reduce teacher candidate sorting in hiring and increase student achievement, especially in schools with low-performing students.
Achinstein, Ogawa, and Speiglman (2004) conducted a case study design to explore the socialization of teachers (n=22) in two comparable districts with contrasting approaches to literacy instruction over a two-year period using a multilevel mixed methods design and were surprised to learn new teachers were tracked and sorted into low performing, high poverty schools. Two of the 22 teachers were chosen as the foci of the case studies. Data was generated from state-wide textbook adoption, state policy documents, school and district documents, classroom observations, and interviews. The qualitative data was analyzed at three levels and coded for background and preparation, school and district contexts, and state policy environment. The second level of data analysis compiled emergent theme data from the two focal cases. The third level of data analysis was a cross-case analysis of the case studies that incorporated matrices that provided comparisons and differences. Classroom observation of lessons were transcribed and scored with a rubric. Although the results are more suggestive and not generalized to the population, this study concluded that novice teacher tracking took place and, similar to students, teachers were tracked in low-performing, high poverty schools by being required to follow a scripted and regimented curricular delivery of literary instruction while other new teachers in high-performing, low-poverty schools were directed to use their discretion to maximize literary instruction and individualize instruction to meet student needs.

The implications of this study on principal hiring criteria addressed research, policy, practice, and theory. Additional research is called for in a variety of other school settings to explore what effect a combination of culture and school mission has on teacher sorting. In an attempt to provide educational equity to students, teachers in low-performing, high poverty schools followed a prescribed delivery for instruction that focused on the test, resulting in improved accountability at the cost of broader and enriching educational experiences. This
attempt at providing equity in low-performing, high poverty schools may actually have the reverse outcome by perpetuating the very educational inequities that need to be reconciled. Additionally, when new teachers are introduced to the school culture for the first time during induction and during the beginning years of teaching, these two experiences may be in practice the programs and processes that indoctrinate new teachers into the existing culture of the school and into the very educational inequities that should be abolished. Unfortunately, the implication between socialization theory and a new teacher is, with all things equal, that the new teacher may bring his/her own preconceived ideas to teaching that translated into classroom instructional practice that aligned with student assessment expectations of those students in a low-performing, high-poverty school, again, perpetuating educational inequities. This study impacts the principal’s hiring criteria for teachers by identifying factors, for example, compatibility with instruction, assessment, and with the school’s culture, that principals can address and identify in the teacher candidate during the interview for hire.

The principal’s ability to identify which teacher candidate at the point of hire is compatible to the students’ needs is valuable by increasing teacher retention and increasing student achievement. Befani (2010) examined evaluation methods within the organization and explored the comparisons and contrasts between theory-based and specific logic evaluation processes. She concluded that both logic and theory work in tandem during the evaluation of a program, policy, or personnel to improve the quality and value of the evaluation. In the principal’s hiring criteria for teachers, the theory of hiring incorporated value judgments, while logically the specific criteria that the principal used to generate and evaluate the data significantly contributed to the principal’s decision to offer the teaching position to the best candidate.
The specific criteria for teacher hiring varied from principal to principal, school to school, and content to content. In a study of hiring criteria for first-year agricultural education teachers, Cantrell and Weeks (2004) interviewed 24 public school administrators in a southern state by telephone who had hired a first-year agricultural education teacher during the 2002-2003 school year. The researchers scored the administrators’ responses on a Likert-type scale and generated a mean score for each interview item. Cantrell and Weeks reported that administrators were interested in the candidate’s academic achievement and activity participation in the content and were interested in the candidate’s overall grade point average. Additionally, administrators wanted teacher candidates who could develop relationships and educate a diverse community of learners. The candidate’s oral presentation and communication skills were important to hiring administrators, as well as the display of enthusiasm and professional appearance during the interview itself. The candidate’s professional references were valued by hiring administrators as were fully-certified teacher candidates who had pedagogical preparation and training.

In addition to reference checks, other hiring tools included applications, interviews, and work samples that provided the principal with evidence to assess the candidates and to determine who would be the candidates chosen for an interview. Prior to the interview process, the principal will determine what criteria will be considered during the interview process and how that criteria will be assessed. Although teaching assignments are similar in general, each specific teacher assignment is unique to the school, grade level, and the content to be taught (Campbell & Campbell, 1988). The principal will determine the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics that each particular teaching assignment requires.

Campbell delineated knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics by defining two types of knowledge. Declarative knowledge represented the foundation of abilities and skills. He
identified the individual’s abilities to perform interpersonal, cognitive, and perceptual skills as procedural knowledge and skill. He included the extent to extend effort as the individual’s motivation as part of other characteristics. Although all eight of Campbell’s job performance dimensions do not apply to every job, he stressed organizational fit with as many of the dimensions of the job performance construct as were applicable. Teacher candidates who meet the principal’s hiring criteria during the interview are more likely to be a fit for the organization, to be effective teachers, and to be retained.

The principal has to make an evaluative judgment of the evidence presented during the interview to determine if the hiring criteria were met. Some researchers may identify principal bias (Delli & Vera, 2003) in the teacher hiring process when principals have the opportunity to access pre-interview tools, for example, when reviewing the candidate’s application or resume prior to the interview. However, it is also an opportunity for the principal to connect the pre-interview review of application, essay question responses, and professional reference checks with the responses the candidate provided during the interview.

The principal can then consider the teacher candidate’s responses during the interview, both good and bad, and make judgment of the evidence the candidate provided. The final judgment of the principal considers the criteria, the process from start to finish, and the cultural fit of the candidate. The candidate has a clear understanding of the job in the context of the interview. The literature reported that models and theories of candidate hiring existed, yet teacher selection for available positions in the school remain a complex endeavor. Although decision-making models and theories should be considered in the teacher hiring process, these factors that affected decision-making are not the focus of this study.
The research is limited on teacher hiring criteria due to how the principal’s criteria varied from school to school (Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002). Initially, teachers choose what school or district they prefer by which school or district they submit an application for employment consideration. Then, principal teacher hiring criteria will vary from school to school depending on the balance of hiring protocols mandated by the district and the principals’ degree of autonomy in the hiring process for their own school. Finally, the principal may have specific hiring criteria, for example hiring teachers whose personal demographics match the students’ demographics, all of which contributed to varied teacher hiring criteria by the principal during the interview.

The interview process may be the most important part of the teacher selection process because the candidate has the opportunity to display evidence of the criteria that the principal seeks in a teacher. The evidence that the candidate provided during the interview could be seen and heard by the principal. The teacher met the hiring criteria of the principal by providing data for the principal to make a hiring decision. However, the assessment of the evidence of the hiring criteria provided by the teacher during the teacher interview can be influenced by the principal’s bias. Delli and Vera (2003) cautioned that the candidate’s attractiveness, likeability, perceived expertness, similarity or dissimilarity between the interviewer and interviewee were variables that influenced the hiring decision. Conversely, Delli and Vera acknowledged that the amount of experience the interviewer had as an interviewer along with the amount of training the interviewer has had to be an interviewer are variables that positively influence teacher candidate selection during the interview process. The structure and format of the interview contributed as variables that influenced the hiring process. In addition to NCLB, other policy influences, for example, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act,
became variables during the teacher interview that may affect the principal’s teacher hiring decision.

**Teacher Attrition**

The teacher shortage emerged 30 years ago when the “baby boomer” teachers were beginning to retire steadily each year and student enrollment was concurrently increasing. With the combination of more students and retiring teachers, school officials concluded that there were not enough licensed college graduates entering into the teaching profession to fill the teacher demand. The perceived teacher shortage has produced creative and innovative ways to recruit and train more highly qualified personnel beyond university teacher preparation training programs to become teachers to increase the pool of candidates for hiring administrators. The Teaching Opportunity Program, the New York City Teaching Fellows, and Teach for America have emerged as some of the alternative programs for candidates who did not complete a university teacher education preparation program to recruit new teachers to the profession to address increasing the supply of teachers to meet the current demand (Strunk & Robinson, 2006).

One aspect of the school organization that addressed how to lower the teacher attrition rate focused on pre-service and ongoing in-service programs that prepared teachers prior to entering and during the beginning years of teaching. University teacher education preparation programs and alternative licensure programs have been scrutinized for both theory and practice concerning the content and activities that potential teachers experience to prepare them for the classroom. Some university teacher preparation programs extended through the first year of classroom teaching (Wegmann, Adams, Higgins, Miller, Price, Simpson, & Swicegood, 2005; Quartz, 2003) and contended their programs had been successful when teacher participants are retained into the next school year. Induction programs that provided mentors during the first year
of teaching (Inman & Marlow, 2004; Kelley, 2004) not only increased retention of first year teachers, they provided mentors with a leadership opportunity to encourage the mentor to be retained in the school and their teaching position (Mihans, 2009). These programs purported teacher retention.

Strunk and Robinson (2006) suggested that teacher attrition may be due to other factors. They reported minimal evidence existed that tied teacher attrition causes to the individual teacher, the school, or the district characteristics. These individual teacher characteristics included gender, ethnicity, teaching assignment, teaching level, age, license, degree, experience, and reason for leaving the school. School and district characteristics included whether the school is rural, suburban, or urban, level of poverty (measured by free and reduced lunch participants), salary, teacher ethnicity, and student ethnicity.

Even with teacher education preparation program and induction program support, high teacher attrition rates continued to be a problem for school districts across the United States. Ingersoll (2003) reported the national teacher attrition rate for the 2000-2001 school year was 15.7%. Kain (2011) reported on March 8, 2011, the national teacher attrition rate was 16.8% and, the teacher attrition rate specific to urban schools was over 20%. The literature consistently acknowledged that disadvantaged students were more likely to be taught by inexperienced teachers who were teaching students outside their field of preparation. Additionally, the experienced and content qualified teachers were more likely to leave the low socioeconomic school students quickly after the teachers worked in the school for a short time (Little & Bartlett, 2010). This attrition negatively affected student achievement and increased costs to replace teachers (Gordon & Crabtree, 2006). For more than a decade, the school district in this study has averaged 150 teachers leaving each year. This attrition represents 18% of the teaching staff,
which is above the national average. At the conclusion of one recent school year, teacher attrition for this urban profile district was 22%.

Although a demand for teachers does exist nationally, critics argued that the shortage was not due to lack of teacher supply, but to the lack of teacher satisfaction with the organization motivating teachers to leave the school and causing high teacher attrition (Ingersoll, 2001). Admittedly, some teacher turnover is good for the school organization because, for one, some individuals are misplaced in a school organization and secondly, because changing teachers infused the organization with new personnel as catalysts to embark on change and innovation that moved the school organization forward. Ingersoll (2001) also argued that teacher retention and attrition are influenced by a sense of school community and cohesion within the school community as factors. These factors included establishing relationships with students, other teachers, and families. How well a school functioned and how well the teacher functioned in that school are both indicators of factors that contribute to building a school community. These individual, school, and district factors that lead to building a school community should be considered for their impact on student achievement and teacher retention.

Teacher retention is perpetuated by the fact that the demographic profile of today’s teacher has been consistent for the past 150 years. Teachers are often women, especially in elementary school, most are very young in their early 20s or nearing teacher retirement age. Many people in education are reluctant to commit to a career in teaching, and a majority of teachers are linguistically, ethnically, racially, and culturally homogeneous. Diversity in the teaching ranks defies equity or balance. Moreover, teacher academic preparation varied from teacher to teacher and university to university while the ethnicity of most teachers does not match the ethnicity of the students they teach. The majority of teacher candidates available
lacked a demonstration of multicultural characteristics or practices that caused teacher
effectiveness with diverse student populations to be a challenge. Lastly, teacher preferences
about what content to teach and what school the teacher chose to teach in rounded out the
inequitable distribution of teachers in the candidate pool (Little & Bartlett, 2010).

**Organizational Culture**

Scholars agreed (Lindahl, 2006) that the definition of culture included the beliefs, the
social forms, and the customary traits of a group shared by people that characterized the
institution or organization. This definition is guided by the set of practices, goals, and values in
place within that particular organization or community (Culture, n.d.). Since the 1970s, the
research literature has included the study of organizational culture. Organizational culture is
founded in sociology, psychology, and anthropology (Goldring, 2002; Van der Westhuizen, et al.,
2005). The organizational culture was described by how the visible and spoken norms and mores
of the organization are connected to the invisible and unspoken norms and mores of the
organization. The culture is the glue by which all elements of the organization are connected
(Goldring, 2002; Slater, 1999; Van der Westhuizen, Mosoage, Swanepoek, & Coetsee, 2005).

Goldring (2002) framed the glue of culture by identifying six key traits in culture that
included shared vision, traditions, collaboration, shared-decision making, innovation, and
communication. Each key cultural trait represented one piece of the organization’s whole picture.
A shared vision is identified by a vision statement and is created by the perimeters for the work
of the school, the relationships shared among the school’s members, and the environment to be
created in the school. The values of the school became visible and were communicated both
internally and externally through the traditions and rituals of the organization. When individuals
came together in groups to accomplish the goals of the school, the members collaborated. The
values of the group are put into action formally and informally when the members engaged in shared decision-making. One example of shared decision-making is found in organizations that promote community through site-based decisions. The school members experienced innovation through the introduction of change to the organization which challenged the school’s values, beliefs, and culture. The culture is communicated internally and externally via the established communication patterns.

Culture was further delineated by determining that three graduated levels of culture can be observed at each one of the aforementioned six key traits as the members of the school executed the business of curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Goldring, 2002). The three levels of culture within each of the six traits included things that can be observed, the values that support what can be observed, and the assumptions gathered about the school that support the first two levels. The first level is represented by the operating procedures of the school and the rituals held. The second level elements represented the values and beliefs that support the first level and are exemplified by the member’s behaviors and established relationships among members. Also, the symbols that represented the school culture supported those cultural elements that are observed in the first level. The collective assumptions of the school culture that have developed and evolved over time defined the third level of culture. Level 3 identified those school group members who have come together to be acculturated by the organization. This group determined who is a member and who can become a member of the school group. The relationships between school individuals were pivotal in Level 2 and 3 as a support element for Level 1 and the relationships established between school members became the culturally defining element in Level 3.
A school study indicated that culture had a positive impact on student achievement (Goldring, 2002). The study reported the findings of midsize, urban, and large high schools in northern and central California, generating data by surveying teachers and principals. The teachers and principals rank-ordered the culture traits they felt impacted student achievement. Also, principals designated teachers as either proponents or opponents of change in the school and these two groups of teachers were compared to the principals’ cultural priorities for the school. Four conclusions about school culture emerged from the study. First, a shared school vision unified the culture to positively impact student achievement. Next, schools do not require 100% buy-in by the organization’s members to achieve reform and sustain change. Third, the six culture traits are systemic and rely on the other to initiate change and sustain culture. Finally, all school members must collaborate to identify the strengths and weaknesses each has in each of the six culture traits. This collaboration among school members will balance each of the individual’s strengths and weaknesses, allowing the organization to move forward relying on all members of the school to work together to initiate reform and sustain cultural change to improve student achievement.

Culture, cultural change, and school improvement are each interrelated components of the school organization. Harris (2001) reported on the Improving the Quality of Education for All (IQEA) Project in practice in the United Kingdom. This successful school improvement program focused on internal and external intervention at the school and classroom level to evolve the culture of the school and instigate school improvement. As the culture evolved, teachers built capacity to influence improved student achievement. The internal individuals who facilitate capacity in the organization form the school improvement group (SIG). It is this group that is supported by the external local education agency (LEA) advisor. Together, the SIG and the LEA
advisor worked to improve student achievement. At the point of hire, a principal would benefit the school improvement efforts by identifying a new teacher to hire who indicated an agreement with the core beliefs and who indicated an ability to build capacity internally and within the organization.

The relationship between organizational culture and academic achievement in secondary schools has been examined through ethnographic interviews of principals, learners, and educators, and descriptive observations (Van der Westhuizen, et al., 2005). This qualitative research study stratified the schools in three categories: well-(n=24), average-(n=97), and poor-performing (n=128) schools. Five schools were chosen at random from each of the three categories, yielding 15 schools to determine the sample of participants (n=165). The study findings emphasized school philosophy and vision indicating that well- and average-performing schools’ culture was affected positively, while poor-performing school personnel were unclear as to the philosophy of the school and demonstrated a lack of understanding of the impact of philosophy and vision on school culture. The same was true of school values: well- and average-performing schools emphasized the values of the school, while poor-performing schools had little value commonality to bring school personnel together. These researchers concluded that organizational culture is directly related to student academic achievement. Also, these researchers concluded that principals in poor-performing schools do not have initiative or vision to lead the school. One implication of this study indicated the value of having a school culture and vision for personnel in a poor-performing school to serve as a catalyst to initiate reform and sustain student academic improvement. Another implication of this study indicated that teacher candidates for hire into the school organization must share the culture and vision of the school so the new teacher can impact student achievement quickly and positively.
The change process in schools is founded in the culture of the organization, and, consequently, the need to change the culture of the school is necessary before reform efforts in the school will be effective. A public university served as the sample and a qualitative research study of organizational culture was conducted via 100 individual interviews, observations, and reflection over a four-month period. A comprehensive ethnographic profile of the institution’s system of cultural meaning was a product of this study’s analysis. The second product of the analysis produced the change strategies taxonomy that the researcher developed into a seven-step model for organizational culture and change. The model was named the OC3 Model and this model informed existing processes of change and delineated the interplay between organizational culture and the change initiatives identified by the leadership agenda. The model contributed to the leaders’ effectiveness with change implementation and helped leaders understand the context and content between organizational culture and the change initiatives (Latta, 2009).

The approach and delivery of principal leadership to school staff and students addressed cultural change and impacted student achievement. Dumay (2009) sampled 2,595 students in 52 schools and 125 classes in Belgium to better understand how the relationship of the principals’ transformational leadership and the teachers’ collective decision-making enforced the school culture and impacted student mathematic achievement. The study found that a positive relationship existed between the principals’ transformational leadership and the teachers’ collective decision making related to pedagogy expectations of the principals and the practices of teachers’ instructional delivery to students. Also, teachers’ collective decision-making was mediated by the principals’ transformational leadership and the principal facilitated all school members to come to consensus on the homogeneity of school culture. Although the data indicated that a relationship between school culture and student achievement was not significant
collectively, the study did show partial evidence that culture did have significance to predict student achievement in schools with low socio-economic status.

The relationship between leadership, student outcomes, and organizational learning factors at the school-level was the focus of another study (Silins, Mulford, & Zarins, 2002). Organizational learning school characteristics were defined into four categories. Using latent variable path analysis with partial least squares, a nine-variable model was developed to examine leadership influences on organizational learning and on teachers’ work with student engagement and participation. The analysis indicated that the level of organizational learning and the level of leadership are related. Also, the organizational learning was influenced by the leadership behaviors of the principal and influenced by the extent which leadership is distributed to all teachers. The results indicated student outcomes were influenced by the teachers’ instruction and by organizational learning. The researchers concluded that principal leaders who promoted their schools and exemplified the characteristics and practices of learning organizations were effective school organizations.

Eilers and Camacho (2007) used a case study mixed-methods design to research principal leadership and its effect on school culture and improved student achievement. The elementary school in this case study had approximately 350 students with an urban profile of almost 90% free and reduced lunch numbers. Nearly half of the students were English language learners with Hispanic and African American students comprising just over 90% of the student body. The researchers concluded that the principal who was a leader that could organize the teachers in a learning community, engage teachers in collaborative practice, and incorporate evidence-based best practices in the classroom caused student achievement to improve, and consequently changed the culture of the organization.
The Cultural Analysis Questionnaire (CAQ) was administered to 636 elementary, 232 junior high, and 315 high school staff members with data collection occurring over a five year period. The CAQ instrument reported data on twelve cultural norm areas represented by four clusters in a two-dimensional analysis of the school organization. Osborne and Price (1997) reported the purpose of this study provided school-level disaggregated data on similarities and differences in school culture by school division. The results of the t-tests indicated that all three school divisions varied significantly ($p<.05$). The strength factor indicated that elementary teachers were more connected to the culture than their middle and high school counterparts. Middle school staff was more connected to the culture than the high school staff. Additionally, the data indicated that high school teachers are often isolated from their peers and tend not to share their similar cultural experience with colleagues.

Porter, Steers, and Mowday (1974) conducted a study and investigated the patterns in organizational commitment and job satisfaction over time. The sample was comprised of two classes or groups of psychiatric technicians ($n=84$). However, nine months after the beginning of the study, only 60 individuals remained in the study. The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979) is a 15-item questionnaire pertaining to the individual’s perceptions of loyalty to the organization. The OCQ was administered to the study participants to determine organizational commitment. The Job Descriptive Index (JDI) (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969 as cited in Porter et al, 1974) was also administered to the study participants to measure job satisfaction. The results of the study indicated that the attitudes that individuals have concerning the organization are predictive of employee attrition when employees have an unfavorable attitude about the organization. As time progressed, individuals had an unfavorable attitude about the organization the closer the individual came to leaving the
organization. The “stayers” had a better attitude and were more committed to the organization than are the “leavers.” The data from the two questionnaire instruments suggested that commitment and satisfaction are related, but attitudes were separate. The average inter-correlation between commitment and the five subscales of job satisfaction on the JDI found significant relationships in three of the four time periods. This study’s findings suggested that the individual’s commitment to the organization may be more important in the decision to stay with the organization than the employee’s job satisfaction.

The employee’s job satisfaction can be connected to the employee’s productivity in the organization. Burke and Pearlman (1988) defined organizational “fit” as the cohesion between the individual, the job, and the work context. The assumption was that the higher the correlation among these three variables, then, the individual’s job productivity would be higher. The opposite approach to increasing employee “fit” to the organization followed interventions after the employee was hired, for example changing the job description or providing additional training. Recruiting and selecting an employee who meets the hiring criteria for a specific job is a more efficient and cost-effective practice for organizations. Burke and Pearlman presented two theories of job performance where one focused on the individual characteristics of the worker and the other focused on the characteristics of the work.

In contrast to the employee’s productivity in the organization, O’Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell’s (1991) study concluded that their results offered strong support for the validity of person-organization fit due to the assessment of the individual’s value congruency with the organization’s culture. Also, results supported the association between person-organization fit and employee turnover. After nearly 24 months, the comparison of individual preferences for a specific culture to the culture profile of the organization predicted turnover through Q-sort
analysis. Q-sort analysis required participants to sort a 54-item deck into nine categories by responding to the questions, for example, “How important is it for this characteristic to be a part of the organization you work for?” providing an assessment to screen candidates against the organization’s culture. Correlations existed between person-organization fit and normative commitment ($r = .25, p < .01$) and overall job satisfaction ($r = .35, p < .01$). There was a correlation between person-organization fit and intent to leave an organization ($r = -.37, p < .01$). Moreover, the chi-square of the difference between the lag likelihood of the base equation and the lag likelihood of model 2 were statistically significant ($X^2 = 8.69, p < .01$). The assessment of organizational fit produced data that predicted employee attrition.

Assessing the teacher candidate for hire’s congruence with the cultural expectations and core beliefs of the school predicted teacher effectiveness and retention by hiring the right teacher candidate initially. School climate and culture studies (Dumay, 2009; Eilers & Camacho, 2007; Goldring, 2002; Harris, 2001; Latta, 2009; O’Reilly et al, 1991; Osborne & Price, 1997; Porter et al, 1974; Silins et al, 2002; Van der Westhuizen et al, 2005) indicated that organizational climate can be identified, measured, and promoted within the organization. Lindahl (2006) extensively reviewed and recorded the knowledge base of research for the role of climate and organizational culture in the school improvement process. The review gave definitions of organizational culture, how to assess organizational climate, the interaction of school climate and culture in the school improvement process, planning, implementation, and assessment of the transformation to achieve school improvement and influence student achievement. In accordance with the research conducted on organizational culture, teacher selection that aligned with organizational culture predicted teacher retention and teacher effectiveness to improve student achievement. The
organization’s current climate and culture may need to be amended prior to the adoption of the methods to be used to improve the school.

**Teacher Selection Instruments**

Organizations are focused on the recruitment, selection, or classification of new hires to increase the productivity of the organization. Recruitment and classification research has been limited because researchers have focused on personnel selection criteria to match the candidate to the job. By matching teachers to open teaching positions and to expectations of the classroom teacher in that school, the better the match or “fit” the teacher is to the school organization then the more effective the teacher will be with students (Burke & Pearlman, 1988; Campbell & Campbell, 1988). Numerous instruments have been developed over the past 30 years to assess and predict organizational fit. These personnel selection instruments either predicted the characteristics of the worker or the characteristics of the work.

Moreover, Burke and Pearlman (1988) contended that the administered assessment instruments identified the individual’s attributes and the relationship to job characteristics. However, these instruments did not identify the representativeness or comprehensiveness of the individual’s attributes and the individual’s relationship to the characteristics of the job which is driven by the goals of the organization. In other words, these instruments identified attributes of the individual, not how the individual attributes connected with the requirements of the job. Few studies have been conducted to tie worker characteristics to job characteristics. The challenges of developing a predictive correlation instrument between worker characteristics and job characteristics included what quantitative criteria should be included, how specific or general should this criterion be, and what weight or value was to be placed on each criterion. This contention questioned the validity of the available inventories and the inventories predictive
score between worker and job for organizational fit. Also, the validity of other related personnel selection procedures that included portfolio or work sample reviews and past employer reference checks were questioned because criteria vary from employer to employer.

The Teacher Insight (Gallup, 2006) is one such worker characteristic assessment instrument that is promoted as a predictor to correlate a teacher candidate’s attributes to a school organization’s expectations for a successful teacher. The quantitative on-line instrument takes the teacher candidate about 30 minutes to complete. The teacher candidate’s skill, knowledge, and talent are assessed and a composite strength score is calculated. The Gallup organization defined skill as the steps of an activity while the definition of knowledge encompasses factual knowledge and experiential knowledge. Talent is “a naturally recurring pattern of thought, feeling, or behavior that can be productively applied (Gallup, 2006, p. 7).” The composite strength score represented the indicator of teacher success in the classroom. The individual assessment score is a percent that is assigned a percentile. An individual score of 67% is the 50th percentile, or average. The Gallup organization recommended that teacher candidates at the 50th percentile or above be considered to be hired to a teaching position in the school. The qualitative portion of the teacher candidate assessment occurred during the interview with the principal. Gallup recommended that the interview incorporate their “fit interview” questions that addressed motivation, relationships, and instructional approaches. The responses to the fit interview questions indicated the evidence and behaviors presented by the teacher candidate to be considered for hire and judged by the principal.

Often performance is a dependent variable that organizations looked for after the new employee is hired to determine actual productivity and predict future productivity. Often a quantitative measure, employers find that other variables come in to play, diminishing the impact
of the individual on productivity. Also, the past 100 years have seen numerous tests and assessments developed to identify the variables that effect worker productivity. Researchers sought quantitative measures to determine worker performance to eliminate supervisor or evaluator bias (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993). I posit that 100 years of quantitative research has not yielded acceptable scientific results to identify what factors predict a productive employee in the workplace. At the point of hire, the teacher candidate can demonstrate teacher performance during the interview. Principal bias can be addressed proactively and the school or district can develop an appropriate and consistent rubric that identified the teacher behaviors sought as a predictor of effective teaching and successful employment in the school. The principal makes a series of formative evaluations before and during the interview as to whether the candidate provided evidence of the principal’s hiring criteria before arriving at the summative judgment on which teacher candidate to offer the teaching position.

**Teacher, School, and District Quality Characteristics**

Teacher quality characteristics include license, degree, teaching experience, content area, and gender. Highly qualified teachers must meet minimum criteria to be hired for a public school teaching position. A teacher’s highly qualified status and a teacher’s quality are often considered synonymous terms because both require criteria that includes the teacher’s certification type, advanced degree, teaching experience, content area. All teachers in public school are required to be certified and have a license to teach. Most states provide two levels of license that a teacher may qualify to earn. The two licenses fall into a beginning teacher and an advanced teacher license categories. Teachers who hold a beginning or probationary license are more likely to leave their current teaching assignment more often than all other teacher license holders combined at a calculated probability of .179 (Strunk & Robinson 2006). Teachers with probationary licenses are often in their beginning years of teaching. The Strunk and Robinson
study results indicated that emergency teacher license holders were no more likely to leave their teaching position than any other teacher license holder.

At a minimum, all teachers are required to have a bachelor’s degree. It is a pervasive thought among educators that teachers with a master’s degree are better prepared to teach their students. Additionally, teachers with a graduate degree are more committed to their profession. Struck and Robinson (2006) found that teachers with a master’s or doctoral degree are less likely to leave their current teaching assignments. In contrast, another study reported that teachers with advanced degrees may be more likely to quit teaching because these teachers’ advanced education made them more marketable for jobs in business and industry (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006).

Strunk and Robinson (2006) expected teachers with less teaching experience to be more likely to leave their jobs. The data indicated that teachers with zero to two years experience have a probability of attrition calculated at .174. Teachers with three to four years experience have a .177 calculated probability of leaving their teaching assignment. In the first five years of teaching experience, teacher attrition is between 40 and 50% (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Attrition is high for younger teachers and older teachers at the age of retirement providing a U-shape graph plot for both age and experience. Additionally, teachers identified by performance as proficient or advanced teachers were more likely to leave teaching because their higher level of ability made them more likely to get a job in the school outside of the classroom or outside of education (Guarino et al, 2006).

One prevailing thought in education is that the high need, hard to fill teaching positions for math, science, special education, and foreign language also have a higher attrition rate. Strunk and Robinson (2006) completed a study using the School and Staffing Survey (1999-
2000) data and found that there was evidence that math and science teachers did not have a higher attrition rate than other general education teachers. However, they concluded that foreign language teachers had a significantly higher probability of leaving a school. Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley (2006) reported that secondary teachers, especially math and science teachers, were more likely to leave their teaching assignment than their elementary counterparts. Ingersoll (2001) analyzed data from the School and Staffing Survey and the Teacher Followup Survey, finding that math and science teachers are not more likely to quit their teaching assignment than other teachers. However, Ingersoll concluded that special education teachers are more likely to leave their teaching position, but that result was slightly insignificant.

Women are more likely than men to choose teaching as a career and more likely to have higher attrition rates than men (Guarino et al, 2006). As more women enter the field of teaching, hiring administrators and policy makers should be aware that more women teachers may lead to female teachers entering and leaving the profession during the beginning of their career as they meet family obligations. Female teachers may leave the profession for family obligations, reenter the profession, and leave and reenter a second and third time. However, even though subject matter content areas and whether the teacher was elementary or secondary varied, Strunk and Robinson (2006) concluded that there was not a statistically significant result in their study that men were more likely to leave their teaching assignment than women. Conversely, the researchers predicted men may be less likely to leave their teaching position at their current school (Strunk & Robinson, 2006; Ingersoll, 2001).

Guarino et al (2006) reported that researchers do not agree on exactly which teacher quality characteristics address teacher recruitment and retention. Additionally, data that identified which factors described an effective teacher does not readily exist for the study of
attrition and retention. Strunk and Robinson (2006) concurred. They reported minimal evidence exists that ties teacher attrition causes to individual teacher, school, and district characteristics.

School and district characteristics include salary, teaching experience, school ethnic and racial composition, student/teacher racial composition, poverty, student achievement, and teacher performance evaluation. To date, researchers have focused their efforts on teacher quality evidence as the indicators to improve all aspects of education. Teacher yearly salaries have been below business and industry standards since the teacher in the one room school provided educator services to the community children. With a history of low salaries, educators often sight teacher attrition rates to low salary for beginning and veteran teachers (Guarino et al, 2006). Low rates of teacher retention affect consistency of program delivery and success, including student outcomes. The Obama administration is providing funds to states to reform public education and to reward effective teachers. The reward vehicle for effective teachers is a pay for performance or merit pay premise, comprising a combination of student achievement and teacher performance measures to determine teacher salary compensation (Richardson, 2009). When teachers are paid for their performance, they are paid either on their pedagogy and teaching skill or they are compensated based on the increase in their students’ academic achievement. Pay for performance plans rewarded effective teachers who met the goals of the school. Strunk and Robinson (2006) found that experienced teachers with a master’s degree with a higher salary were more satisfied and were more likely to be retained in their teaching position than a teacher with no experience, a bachelor’s degree, and a lower beginning teacher salary. Researchers have studied the number of years that a teacher has taught, attributing the teaching experience to success as indicated by increased student achievement. Over 10,000 first and third grade students in 200 schools were studied with data from the Prospects database by Jepsen (2005). Jepsen
determined that teacher years of experience (nine years) affected a 13% increase in student math scores and an 8% increase in student reading scores. However, Jepsen conceded that the results may overstate the causal effect of teacher years of experience on student achievement. In a study of eighth grade students in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Texas, Klecker (2002) did not find convincing evidence of meaningful differences on the number of years of teaching experience on student achievement as measured by the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) Mathematics Test.

Overall, the student body ethnic and racial composition is a stronger and statistically significant predictor of teacher attrition. Strunk and Robinson (2006) found that as student populations of Black and American Indian increased, the likelihood of teachers quitting increased. Schools with student populations with ethnic and racial diversity may have a higher attrition rate when teachers’ ethnic and racial backgrounds are the same as the student minority group’s ethnic and racial make-up. However, Ingersoll (2003) reported that minority teachers are less likely to leave their teaching positions than white teachers no matter the ethnic and racial background of the student body. Guarino et al (2006) reported that minority student enrollment has grown in recent years. Ethnically diverse teacher candidates reduce in number and availability for hiring administrators outside of the nation’s major urban centers. Hiring diverse candidates for teaching positions may reduce teacher attrition. The data also indicated congruence with social identity theory. Strunk and Robinson (2006) concluded that Black and American Indian teachers were less likely to leave a teaching position when the student population included Blacks and American Indians. When a teacher’s ethnicity matches a high number of students in the school, the teacher was more likely to be retained. Research and
program development has occurred to address this concern by focusing on the recruitment and retention of nontraditional candidates to teach in urban schools (Quartz, 2003).

Strunk and Robinson (2006) reported significance that teachers are more likely to leave their teaching position when the student body comprises more poor students. Strunk and Robinson’s study data consistently maintained that teacher attrition was higher in schools of poverty. The higher the free and reduced lunch percentage is for the school, it will more likely cause teachers to leave the school. Shen (2001) studied data from the School and Staffing Survey (1991) and concluded that a high percentage of free and reduced lunch and a high percentage of minority students in the school indicated that teachers were more likely to leave their teaching position in that school. Ingersoll (2001) reported that teachers in high poverty schools will leave at higher rates than teachers at more affluent schools. Strunk and Robinson (2006) did not find any statistical significance when identifying if the teacher’s school was located in a rural, suburban, or urban setting and teacher attrition.

Conversely, Kaplan and Owings (2001) concluded that teacher quality indicators like degree, licensure, and years of teaching experience had a positive effect on student achievement, while Goldhaber and Anthony (2007) indicated that these teacher quality indicators are not significant predictors of student achievement. A study of the effect of teacher quality on Chicago ninth grade students’ achievement in math (Aaronson, Barrow, & Sander, 2007) found that teacher quality raised math scores by 0.13, roughly one-fifth of average yearly gains. Darling-Hammond (2000) reported on certification status (e.g., the percent of teachers uncertified, the percent with full certification) as a measure of teacher quality. Teacher certification is also a strong correlate of student achievement. Darling-Hammond suggested that states interested in improving student achievement focus on the preparation and qualifications of the teachers they
hire and retain in the profession. It stands to reason that teachers who are more knowledgeable in their field and are skillful at teaching it to others are prepared, qualified, and confident teachers, enhancing student learning and teacher satisfaction. Darling-Hammond used data from a 50-state survey of case study analyses, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and the 1993-94 Schools and Staffing Surveys (SASS). Among variables assessing teacher "quality," the percentage of teachers with full certification and a major in the field was a more powerful predictor of student achievement than teachers' education levels (e.g., master's degrees). Darling-Hammond stated that a master’s degree may not be as strong a predictor of student achievement because the master’s degree could be in administration or other content that does not have specific instruction on classroom subject knowledge.

Ding and Sherman (2006) examined the relationship of teacher preparation and teacher quality on student achievement. The study was inconclusive on any direct causality. Ding and Sherman recommended a multi-level approach that holds students, teacher, and school equally accountable for student learning. Kaplan and Owings (2001) reported that studies show that teacher certification and licensure effect on student achievement is not clear and is misleading as a measure of teacher quality to increase student achievement. However, the authors concluded that other studies support teacher certification as a factor in increasing student achievement. The research literature indicated additional study is needed because current research is inconclusive as to whether salary, teaching experience, degree, and license, make a significant difference on student achievement and teacher job satisfaction (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Wayne & Youngs, 2003).

Researchers reported a connection between teacher quality characteristics and teacher performance evaluation criteria. Teacher quality characteristics included teacher practices and
beliefs, subject knowledge, certification status, pedagogical knowledge, experience, behaviors, and general ability (Moyer-Packenham, Bolyard, Kitsantas, & Oh, 2008). Moyer-Packenham et al. (2008) investigated the National Science Foundation’s Math and Science Partnership (NSF MSP) Program to determine which aspects of teacher quality were most frequently used as criteria to grant candidates the math and science award recognition. The study indicated that teacher behaviors, practices, and beliefs (85.4%), subject knowledge (81.3%), and pedagogical knowledge (77.1%) were identified as the top three assessment criteria for the award and are the same assessment criteria associated with student achievement outcomes (Moyer-Packenham et al., 2008). The aforementioned three assessment areas are often criteria for teacher performance evaluation.

After more than a decade of research on teacher quality indicators dictated by NCLB (2004), researchers reported that salary, teaching experience, degree, and license are individually and collectively inconclusive as to whether each are statistically significant predictors of student achievement. Additionally, teacher merit pay has been reintroduced into public education as a teacher satisfaction variable representing teacher quality. Teacher merit pay may not only be the incentive to increase student achievement; it may be the job satisfaction indicator that improves public education. Proponents of merit pay have contended that teachers will be satisfied with their job when they are compensated appropriately for their professional accomplishments in the school with students. Satisfied teachers will increase student learning as evidenced through student assessment, will be attracted to the profession, and will stay in the profession (Ingersoll, 2003). Further, proponents have argued that merit pay will attract better candidates who have more depth of content knowledge and pedagogical teaching skill (Solmon & Podgursky, 2000).
Researchers reported a connection between teacher quality characteristics and teacher performance evaluation criteria. Teacher quality characteristics included teacher behaviors, practices, and beliefs, subject knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge which were identified as the top three assessment criteria associated with student achievement outcomes (Moyer-Packenham, Bolyard, Kitsantas, & Oh, 2008). Value-added student assessment is another area for inclusion on the teacher performance evaluation. A teacher performance evaluation system based on standards consists of teaching standards that define what a teacher needs to know and be able to do; multiple forms of teacher performance data; a rubric to score all the data sources; an aggregate overall teacher performance score; multiple evaluation assessors; and a method to match evaluation results to financial incentives (Odden, 2004). The standards-based teacher evaluation correlated, and had criterion-validity, with student assessments to accurately measure student learning gains.

First and foremost, teacher accountability for student achievement topped the list of performance evaluation responsibilities for the teacher to earn merit pay. Teacher performance evaluation provided both the evaluator and the teacher an opportunity to create and sustain a process of communication and trust for continuous performance feedback (Schaeder, Becton, & Portis, 2007). The teacher performance evaluation tied to the school’s goals of providing students a quality educational experience and demonstrating academic growth. The merit pay awarded to teachers will improve recruitment and the retention of teachers and increase job satisfaction of those who seek this type of compensation plan.

**Summary**

The NCLB policy requirements that guided teacher selection and hiring opened this chapter, leading to the presentation of the review of the literature that focused on the principal’s
hiring criteria, teacher attrition, organizational culture, and teacher selection instruments. A description of some of the teacher, school, and district quality characteristics concluded this section.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to provide a deeper understanding of the teacher hiring criteria of principals through qualitative data generation. Having the knowledge of the application of the principals’ hiring criteria for teachers may reduce teacher attrition and, consequently, may provide a consistent teacher in the classroom who will increase student achievement over time. The qualitative data generated from this study included the principal’s hiring criteria, the evidence of the hiring criteria, and the degree to which the principal bridges to or buffers away from the Core Beliefs in the hiring decision. Additionally, the principals were observed during a teacher-for-hire candidate interview and the principals’ teacher interview hiring protocol used during the observation was analyzed. The methodology appears in this chapter and includes the research questions, design, participants, data collection, and data analysis of this study.

Research Questions

Specifically, the study investigated the principals’ teacher hiring criteria and examples of the evidence of the hiring criteria that emerged from the interviews with principals. Also, the study will determine how stringently the principal bridges to or arbitrarily buffers away from the school district’s Core Beliefs when making the final teacher hiring decision. Qualitative research questions guide this study:

1. What teacher hiring criteria do principals observe and/or identify that determine the decision to hire a teacher candidate?

2. Do principals “bridge” or “buffer” the candidate’s congruence with the district’s culture, represented by the Core Beliefs, to make a final determination for the job offer to the candidate?
Research Methods

Study Design

Principals have the autonomy and responsibility to hire teachers for the students in their schools. A qualitative study was warranted because the school’s principal is the best source to make sense of teacher hiring influences, meanings, and processes (Maxwell, 2005). Therefore, this study utilized a qualitative methods approach and a case study design that allowed the researcher to execute in-depth interviews with principals who are key respondents and the district experts for teacher hiring (Yin, 2009). Moreover, a case study design provided the researcher the opportunity to explain causal links from the data and make inferences to practices that cannot be easily measured by a survey or other method (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) advocated that a multiple case study design generated evidence that is more compelling and that is considered more robust.

The conceptual framework for teacher recruitment and retention for this study is founded in Campbell’s job performance theory (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993) and guided this study design (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The multi-case study design followed Campbell’s theory of job performance and specifically applies to the outcome of the hiring process with the selection of a teacher by the principal at the conclusion of the teacher interview. This conceptualization of job performance theory provided the study framework and directed the research question development, participant selection, data collection, and data analysis.

Although statistical analysis may reveal the impact of teacher retention and the hypothesized effect of the new teacher on student achievement, this study identified what is actually happening in one school district, seeking the principals’ teacher hiring knowledge, practice, and understanding how the principals’ teacher hiring knowledge and practice influences
the decision of which candidate to hire, who will be retained, and who will be effective with students by improving student achievement. The study design provided the researcher the opportunity to engage in a conversation with each principal that is guided by a structured, yet open-ended protocol (Maxwell, 2005). These conversations enabled the researcher the opportunity to develop a better understanding of the complexity and the factors that influence an actual principal practice. Also, the researcher observed principals during a teacher interview-for-hire process and observed how the principal acted and interacted in a natural teacher hiring setting (Yin, 2009). The teacher-for-hire interview protocol (TIP) document used by the principal was analyzed by applying the emergent themes from the structured principal interview protocol (SPIP) to the TIP.

Initially, one experienced elementary principal was interviewed as a pilot interview using an open-ended protocol for the purpose of generating this principal’s teacher hiring criteria to refine the SPIP to be used in this study (Cresswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2005). The principal was asked, “When you interview a new teacher for hire, what do you look for in the candidate that predicts success in the classroom?” and “What do you not see in a teacher that leads you to recommend that the teacher contract be non-renewed for the next school year?” The themes of feelings, pedagogy, creativity, culture, work ethic, intelligence, and relationships for principal hiring criteria initially emerged from an open coding of data generated from this first pilot interview. From the analysis of the data collected from this initial pilot interview, the SPIP was developed.

The SPIP was used to pilot interview two secondary and two elementary principals. The emerging themes from these four interviews were analyzed, coded, and the interview protocol was amended. Three questions were added and the four principals in the second pilot were
interviewed a second time and responded to the additional three questions. The data from these four principal interviews were included in the data analysis for this study. The third version of the SPIP (Appendix A) was used to interview the 22 principal participants in this study.

Twenty-two principals were interviewed and asked nine questions to determine each principal’s hiring criteria for teachers and the application of the criteria to the teacher candidates. The interview with each principal took approximately one hour to complete. The researcher took extensive notes, audio recorded, and then transcribed the audio recordings. The researcher composed a memo summarizing each of the 22 principal interviews.

Each principal was interviewed individually in the office at the school and asked the protocol questions with clarification prompts to determine the principal’s hiring criteria for teachers. For example, principals were asked, “When you interview a teacher candidate for hire, what qualities and behaviors in the candidate are important to you?” Another protocol question is, “When you interview a teacher candidate for hire, what qualities and behaviors in the candidate eliminate him/her from consideration?” Principals also responded to the question, “During the teacher hiring process, how do you predict which candidate will be the most effective with students?”

The memos generated from the principal interviews consistently recorded the need for the teacher candidate to align with the culture of the school and district, indicating that this alignment should be a criterion to be met by the candidate hired to be a teacher in the school. However, when principals were asked specific questions pertaining to the principal’s teacher hiring criteria, the data generated indicated an incongruent connection to the memos because the candidate’s alignment to the culture of the school is not emphasized when principals are asked for specific hiring criteria.
Because of this disconnect between what principals said about culture and what principals reported as specific hiring criteria, the study design was amended and another interview was scheduled with the 22 principals to ask follow-up questions to clarify how the culture of the school impacted the principal’s teacher hiring criteria (Yin, 2009). As Yin (2009) recommended, when a discovery emerged during the analysis of the data from a case study, a study redesign is called for in order to address the discovery and provide confidence in the research findings by amending the study, so the researcher was not thought to be selective in reporting the results. The principals were interviewed a second time and were asked seven questions, each with one prompt, about the school district’s Core Beliefs. This interview took approximately 45 minutes to complete. The researcher took extensive notes, audio recorded, and then transcribed the audio recordings. The researcher composed a memo summarizing each of these 22 principal Core Belief (CBIP) interviews.

Principal interview data included responses to questions pertaining to leadership, vision, and practice and how each represented the school culture (Appendix B). The principals were given a copy of the district’s six Core Beliefs at the beginning of the interview to review. Then, the principals were asked seven questions to determine the degree to which each bridged to the district Core Beliefs and prioritized the Core Beliefs in their teacher hiring criteria or buffered away from the district Core Beliefs to prioritize other teacher hiring criteria.

Harris and Rutledge (2010) employed the bridge and buffer method using interview questions with principals in their study that focused on the bridge and buffer tendencies of principals regarding compliance with No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2004) for teacher highly qualified hiring criteria. Harris and Rutledge wanted to determine the influence of NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements on the principal’s teacher hiring criteria. Principals who bridged
complied strictly to the NCLB highly qualified criteria to determine the teacher hire while those principals who buffered make teacher hiring decisions based on consideration of other criteria. In this study, principals were asked open-ended questions about their goals for the school and how the principals initiated change to achieve their goals. The questions aligned with the district’s Core Beliefs, which represented the culture of the organization.

For example, the principals were asked, CBIP Question 1: How would you describe the needs of the students? This question aligns to Core Belief 1, “Our main purpose is to improve student academic achievement.” The next question is CBIP Question 2: What are your goals for the school? This second question aligns to Core Belief 2, “Effective instruction makes the most difference in student academic performance.” Another example is CBIP Question 3: What are the challenges the school faces in reaching these goals? The third question aligns to Core Belief 3, “There is no excuse for poor quality instruction.”

Five principals, three elementary and two secondary, are chosen at random and their Core Belief interview data were analyzed to develop the bridge and buffer rubric (Appendix C). The frequency of responses among the five principals was recorded and descriptors based on the frequency of responses were created and applied to each one of the four numeric values, from 0 to 3, on the rubric scale.

Data were gathered via the observations of 19 principals during a teacher candidate interview process. The researcher took extensive notes during the observation of the interview process. The interviewer wrote a memo (OM) summarizing each of the teacher hire interview observations. Additionally, 22 of the principal’s TIP documents were analyzed to determine how these protocol questions aligned with the OM data and with the SPIP data generated during the principal interviews.
The methods of gathering data included the interview of principals (SPIP), the observation of the principals during teacher hiring interviews supported by the observational memos (OM), the analysis of the principals’ teacher interview protocol (TIP) document which identified recurring themes of the principals’ hiring criteria for teachers, and if the principal bridged or buffered the Core Beliefs in the teacher hiring decision (CBIP) (Cresswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2005; Yin, 2009). These four methods of gathering evidence triangulated the data and provided the study with construct validity and reliability (Maxwell, 2005). Construct validity occurs by using multiple sources of evidence and reliability of the evidence occurs when using a structured interview protocol to gather the data (Yin, 2009).

**Participants**

The study was conducted in a medium-sized, diverse, high poverty district with high mobility among the nearly 11,000 students and high teacher turnover. Additionally, for nearly two decades, the district in this study has experienced consistent teacher turnover ranging from 16% to 22% at the end of each school year mirroring the results of studies that conclude that teacher attrition is higher in schools and districts where students come from homes of poverty. This district was chosen for this study because 14 of the 15 elementary schools were designated as school-wide Title I schools and two of the four middle schools were target-assist Title I schools, receiving federal funding due to the high level of poverty among student attendees. The students who qualified for free and reduced lunch represent 69% of the district’s student population. Also, the student population is diverse with the racial composition represented by 40% Hispanic, 23% white, 18% African-American, and the remaining 19% of students are from other ethnicities. This district was purposefully chosen for the combination of these characteristics so that it would better illuminate hiring criteria given circumstances where the
stakes are high due to high teacher attrition and where the hiring pool to hire teachers from was more limited (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994). As no mandate was provided by the district in terms of the tools or hiring criteria, the data from principals revealed considerably more about their own views of what characteristics constituted a successful teacher in a diverse high poverty school.

The purposeful sample comprises all of the 22 principals from the district described. Qualitative research usually studies small groups of people who were selected intentionally or purposefully, not randomly, because of their expertise and/or experience nested in the context of the area to be studied (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Yin (2009) stated that the number of cases needed in a multiple-case study design depends on the number of cases required by the researcher to satisfy the literal and theoretical replications of the data generated for the topic to be studied. For a study with a straightforward theory, a smaller number of cases will suffice for the study. Conversely, if the theory is more subtle, a larger number of cases are warranted for the study. Yin (2009) concluded by advising that a multiple-case study have at least two or more cases. Fourteen elementary schools, one K-8 school, three middle schools, two high schools, and two alternative school principals describe the number and school division level of each case in the study.

Unlike many urban districts with similar demographics and student backgrounds, principals have considerable control over both the process and the criteria they use to determine teacher hiring. The principals in this study were held to one restriction: the candidate hired must meet the highly qualified teacher criteria as dictated by NCLB. However, principals in schools that did not receive federal funds could request an exemption of highly qualified status for a new teacher hire.
Data Collection

The collection of data is focused on ascertaining the principals’ teacher hiring criteria which leads to the decision to offer the teaching position to one candidate over the other candidates interviewed. The use of multiple sources of data lessened the concern of bias during the data generation and data analysis because the principals represent multiple sources utilized at multiple schools throughout the district (Cresswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2005; Yin, 2009). Also, bias diminished in the study because each principal brings a different perspective on teacher hiring that is guided by their own criteria and is influenced by what is nested in the needs of the students at the individual schools. Because the principals were the authorities to make the final decision on which teacher candidate to hire, principals were the best choice to be the source of data collection for this study. The principal who participated in the pilot interview with the purpose of providing data to develop the SPIP reviewed all the data collected from the SPIP, TIP, OM, and CBIP instrumentation methods of data collection and provided feedback on the data analysis to the researcher. The pilot principal’s data was gathered to develop the SPIP; therefore, this data was not included in this study.

Principal interviews. The 22 principals participated in an initial interview (SPIP) and a second, follow-up interview (CBIP). The interview is an important source of case study information as each principal discussed his/her criteria that narrowed the field of teacher candidates and led to the decision to offer the teaching position to the one candidate who meets the principal’s teacher hiring criteria (Yin, 2009). Miles and Huberman (1994) contended that multiple case studies offered an understanding that the data generated provided a deeper understanding of the processes and outcomes contributed by each case. Moreover, multiple case
studies increased the probability of causality from the data generated. The SPIP provided consistency when collecting data for the study with the questions asked, the probes used, and the answers given by principals. This consistency allowed for the data generated and the themes that emerged to be analyzed accurately and efficiently. Asking all the principals the same questions in the same order increases the validity and reliability of the principal data generated (Patton, 2002).

Principal answers were consistent from principal to principal, enabling clear themes in the principal’s teacher hiring criteria to clearly emerge. Although principals answered the questions consistently, each principal was able to bring his/her perspective of what the teacher hiring criteria was and why a specific criterion took priority over another specific criterion for the individual principal in the decision as to which teacher candidate to hire for the position.

Observations. Principals were observed during a teacher-for-hire candidate interview to determine if the principal applied their teacher hiring criteria that they reported during an actual teacher interview. An observation protocol was developed from the principals’ data generated from the SPIP and the observation data were recorded in the form of an OM. The emergent themes that were identified as the dimensions of the hiring construct were incorporated into a checklist. The observer took open notes during the observation and identified which dimension(s) of the hiring construct that emerged from the SPIP were present during the observation of the principal during the teacher candidate interview. The observer recorded an OM on the bottom of each protocol checklist for each observation, noting principal behavior during the interview so the researcher may draw inferences (Maxwell, 2005). The observation provided the researcher with another method to gather additional information about the principals’ teacher hiring criteria (Yin, 2009).
**Teacher interview protocols.** The TIP used by each of the 22 principals during a teacher candidate interview is analyzed and each protocol question was applied to the emergent themes that were identified as one or more of the four dimensions that emerged from the SPIP. The document analysis of the TIP provided additional evidence to determine how principals applied their reported teacher hiring criteria to the candidate during the teacher interview. This analysis of the TIP data provided evidence that corroborated the analysis of data that were generated from the SPIP and the OM recorded during a teacher candidate hiring interview (Yin, 2009). When completing case studies, Yin (2009) stated that these methods of documentation of the data played an explicit role in the collection and analysis of the data.

**Data Analysis**

The initial step for the qualitative data analysis by the researcher was to review each set of data generated immediately after gathering and continuously reflect on that data by reading and rereading interview notes, memos, and interview transcripts. The researcher listened to the audio transcripts of the SPIP as a source for analysis. The OM data along with the TIP data and the CBIP data were reviewed and included in the data analysis (Maxwell, 2005).

This unrefined data from the 22 SPIP, 19 OM, 22 TIP, and the 22 CBIP were reviewed in depth and the coding strategy was inductively created, allowing the themes of the principals’ teacher hiring criteria to emerge. Miles and Huberman (1994) described how codes are attached to words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs and how these codes denoted descriptive patterns within the principal reports of the teacher hiring criteria.

**Principal interviews.** The data generated from the principal interviews are analyzed first as this data was generated from a primary source and becomes the foundation data to guide the data analysis of the other sources of data for this study. Additionally, this data came from a
significant source as the principals have the experience and the decision-making autonomy in the teacher hiring process (Cresswell, 2007). The themes of the principals’ teacher hiring criteria that emerged from the principal responses were grouped into similar categories for analysis. The analysis of the principal responses represented categories of data that were initially designated into a data group and, in the next step, these emergent themes generated from open coding were reviewed for overlap combined into other groups or removed when repetition or similarity was identified.

The qualitative data generated from the principal interviews to determine the teacher hiring criteria were coded into the themes that emerged using an open coding (Glaser & Strauss, 2009; Patton, 2002). The researcher identified words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and direct quotes from the principal interview data that were categorized together, recorded on a contact summary sheet, and the emergent themes were coded in the process of the analysis of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Further coding using these themes led to additional sub-themes.

This iterative coding process allowed identification of the primary criteria for hiring identified by the principals and how these criteria were applied to making judgments about the suitability of candidates, including the evidence sought or used to justify this judgment. Miles and Huberman (1994) posited that the researcher’s role was to gain a holistic overview of the study and the data that were generated to understand the context of the study’s logic, arrangements, and rules. This holistic premise naturally evolved to a systemic coding process. To get a sense of the correspondence between these hiring criteria and the primary themes identified inductively from the data among the principals, the hiring criteria were analyzed, connecting the data to determine how and to what degree the criteria were met by the candidate. Inductive coding was applied at this point by the researcher and this inductive coding identified the themes
that emerged from the data analysis. To facilitate this analysis, matrices were developed and used for a cross-case analysis to identify the relationships between the general set of hiring criteria generated from the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The data codes were identified and were designated as the dimensions of the hiring construct. These four dimensions were labeled as relationships, pedagogy, cultural fit, and capacity for growth and the principal responses that generated their teacher hiring criteria were coded into one of these four aforementioned categories. These four dimensions are defined in Chapter 4.

Using the four dimensions of relationships, pedagogy, cultural fit, and capacity for growth, the researcher hand coded the principal responses from the transcripts of the principal interviews. Once the data were coded, the researcher recorded frequency counts for each response for each question for each principal. Direct quotes from the principal transcripts that described the evidence of the hiring criteria were analyzed and coded into one of the four dimensions.

Observations. The researcher developed an observation protocol checklist that included the four dimensions that emerged from the SPIP to document the observation of the principal in a teacher hiring interview process (OM). The researcher wrote 22 individual memos as part of this observation protocol checklist. The four dimensions of the hiring construct were applied to what the researcher observed during the teacher for hire interview. Once the observation data were applied to the four dimensions, the data were hand coded. The researcher recorded frequency counts for each of the four dimensions generated from the SPIP and applied these four dimensions to the OM data from the teacher-for-hire interview.
**Teacher interview protocols.** The individual questions for the TIP were analyzed and hand coded into one of the four hiring construct dimensions. TIP frequency counts for each dimension were recorded. The four dimensions that were applied to the OM data were compared to the TIP data. If the principal followed the TIP, the frequency counts for the OM data will be consistent with the frequency counts for the coded analysis of the TIP.

**Core belief interview protocol.** Next, the CBIP data were analyzed. This study employs the Harris and Rutledge (2010) bridge and buffer interview question format and formula to generate qualitative data and a composite score per principal to determine the influence of the cultural fit, as represented by the district’s Core Beliefs, on the principal’s teacher hiring criteria. The numeric values of 0, 1, 2, and 3 are assigned to one of the four rubric descriptors for each of the seven responses to the seven questions per principal. Of the four possible responses, the researcher assigns a number value to represent where each answer to each question fell on the continuum from 0 to 3 (from buffering to bridging). The researcher analyzed the principal’s bridge and buffer responses by identifying the cultural fit data that emerged from the SPIP data. The bridge and buffer (Harris & Rutledge, 2010) composite score was derived by assigning each of the principal’s seven responses to each of the seven questions a value for each response. The researcher applied each response to the rubric and a value on a scale from 0-3 was assigned. Each of the seven values was totaled and the sum was divided by seven to calculate the composite score.

The principal’s cultural fit bridge and buffer composite score indicated if the principal uses the district’s Core Beliefs to determine the decision to hire a teacher candidate or, if the principal buffers or diminished the importance of the district’s Core Beliefs when deciding which candidate to hire as a teacher. A composite score closer to 0 indicated that the principal
buffered the Core Beliefs in the hiring decision, indicating a low priority for the principal’s teacher hiring criteria while a composite score closer to 3 denoted a higher priority for the principal’s teacher hiring criteria guided by the Core Beliefs. Principals indicated a low priority with the Core Beliefs in the teacher hiring process when they scored between 0 and 1.4. Cultural fit, represented by the Core Beliefs, is a priority for principals when their composite score falls in the range of 1.5 to 2.4. Principals make the Core Beliefs and the cultural fit to the district a high priority in hiring when their composite score ranged from 2.4 to 3.

Summary

This chapter included the research questions and the methodology of design, participants, data collection, and data analysis for this study. Qualitative data were utilized to identify indicators and predictors of the principals’ hiring criteria for teachers and to determine if the school district’s Core Beliefs influence the principal’s hiring decision. The interview of principals (SPIP), the observation of the principals during teacher hiring interviews documented by the observational memos (OM), the analysis of the principal’s teacher interview protocol (TIP) document that identified recurring themes of the principals’ hiring criteria for teachers, and if the principal bridged or buffered the Core Beliefs in the teacher hiring decision (CBIP) represented the instrumentation of the four data collection methods utilized for this study (Cresswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2005; Yin, 2009). The data generated during individual interviews with the principal (SPIP) are hand coded into emergent themes.

The emergent themes were designated into four categories which represented the four dimensions of the hiring construct: relationships, pedagogy, cultural fit, and capacity for growth. The SPIP four dimensions of the hiring construct were applied to the observations of the principals during a teacher interview process (OM). The TIP used by the principal during the
observation of a teacher-for-hire interview was analyzed and applied to the four dimensions of the hiring criteria (SPIP). Whether the principal bridged or buffered to the district’s Core Beliefs (CBIP) was determined when the data were generated and analyzed.
Chapter IV
RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings. The principal hiring criteria for a teacher candidate data are analyzed and the iterative process is explained. The emergent themes from the data analysis are identified as the four dimensions of the principal teacher hiring construct. The four dimensions of the hiring construct are described and defined. The data findings that generate from the principal interviews that identify the principal hiring criteria for teachers are presented. The four dimensions of the principal’s hiring criteria are applied to the 19 memos recorded during the observation of the 19 teacher for hire interviews and those findings are reported. The 22 principals’ teacher-for-hire interview protocols are analyzed and each question is coded into one of the four hiring construct dimensions. The district philosophy, represented by the Core Beliefs, is applied to the four dimensions of the hiring construct and the principals’ application of the philosophy is analyzed to determine how the principal applies the Core Beliefs to the hiring criteria for teachers. During the interviews with principals that generate their hiring criteria data, the district’s philosophy emerges as an important consideration for principals to determine why one candidate is offered a teaching position in their school over another candidate.

This study pursues generation of data by asking 10 questions of each of the 22 principals to gather their hiring criteria for teachers. Also, this study seeks to determine to what degree the principal bridges or buffers to the Core Beliefs (Rutledge & Harris, 2010). All the principals responded to seven interview questions that align to adherence of the district philosophy, represented by the Core Beliefs.

Qualitative Research Questions

1. What teacher hiring criteria do principals observe and/or identify that
determine the decision to hire a teacher candidate?

In order to extract the principals’ hiring criteria, the assumption is made that there would be a strong overlap among principals with what each principal believed were the characteristics of an effective teacher. It is likely, although not certain, that the candidate who principals are looking to hire would have the qualities of their vision of an exemplary teacher. Principals did not review the protocol questions prior to their interview. However, each principal was given a copy of the questions at the beginning of the interview to reference as the interview proceeded. Principals answered each question “off the cuff,” providing an element of sincerity with each answer throughout the interview. Principal responses are not rote nor are the responses pre-rehearsed ones that find their basis in educational jargon.

Structured Principal Interview Protocol

The principals were asked 10 questions by the researcher using the structured principal interview protocol (SPIP) (Appendix A). All candidates who were selected into the pool for interview are similarly qualified by degree, license, and experience. However, the questions that the principal asked the teacher candidate and the candidate’s answers contributed to how the principal made a judgment on the final candidate, determining the job offer. The principals in this study have the autonomy to operate their own teacher hiring processes. Interview protocols vary from principal to principal. Yet, the findings of this study indicate that all of the principals interviewed and observed in a teacher interview process had very similar criteria for teacher hiring. When the principals began to describe the criteria to identify the profile of the teacher for hire, all principals told a consistent “story” of who they would like to hire and why they would predict a particular candidate will be a successful teacher.
Four overarching teacher hiring criteria themes surfaced persistently from the principals. The principals’ remarks consistently included a prominent role for the candidate’s ability to establish and develop relationships with students, parents, and colleagues. Consistently, the principals required the candidate to provide evidence to indicate the candidate’s overall intelligence as well as exemplary knowledge of content and teaching methodology. Also, the principals required that the candidate show an understanding of how the candidate will connect to the school and district culture. Principals continuously mentioned the teacher candidate who is a life-long learner and is able to accept teaching performance critique and grow as an individual in the areas of relationships, school culture, and teaching knowledge as a candidate to hire.

The ability to establish and develop relationships is intertwined with adherence to the culture of the school and in the effective delivery of instruction to students. All principals spoke to the teacher candidate’s ability to operate within the interconnection of the hiring criteria by establishing relationships, connecting to culture, and displaying teaching knowledge. These three criteria represent the baseline for teacher hiring. The candidate who displayed evidence of establishing relationships, connecting to the district’s culture, and having teaching knowledge satisfied the first step in the teacher hiring criteria and moved the candidate into the finalist pool. All principals report the candidate to be hired is the candidate who meets the three aforementioned criteria and who displays evidence of the ability to grow as a life-long learner as a classroom teacher. A candidate who demonstrates evidence of life-long learning and the potential for growth in relationships, school culture, and teaching knowledge appears to be the candidate who is likely to be hired.

**Emergent themes.** The previous themes of establishing relationships, connecting to culture, teaching knowledge, and life-long learning that emerged from the principal interview
data established the following four codes during data analysis: relationships, pedagogy, cultural fit, and capacity for growth (Table 1). The construct is the principal hiring criteria and the four theme codes represent the four dimensions of the principal hiring criteria. Sub-themes within each dimension also emerge to serve as further descriptors or examples of the four dimensions that principals follow as hiring criteria during the teacher hiring process (Table 2). Sub-themes in relationships that emerge include communication skills, “withitness,” team player, and rapport (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003; Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008;). Pedagogy sub-themes include intelligence, content knowledge, leadership, instruction, student learning, and assessment (Danielson, 1996; Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Cultural fit sub-themes include passion, all students can learn, and the commitment to teach at-risk students (Eilers & Camacho, 2007; Latta, 2009; Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004). Capacity for growth sub-themes include creativity, confidence, accept criticism, engagement, energy, enthusiasm, feelings, flexibility, motivator, passionate, personality, reflection, and work ethic (Lambert, 2003; Reeves, 2008; Smoker, 2006).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Pedagogy</th>
<th>Cultural Fit</th>
<th>Capacity for Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SPIP coded dimensions.** The principals were asked 10 questions by the researcher from the SPIP. The principal responses to the 10 SPIP questions were analyzed and coded into one or more of the four dimensions of the hiring construct (Table 3). After the data are coded into one of the four dimensions, frequency counts for each code are recorded. The code with the highest
frequency count determines the hiring construct dimension code(s) assigned to the SPIP question (Table 4).

Table 2

*Principal Hiring Criteria Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Withitness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team Player</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rapport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>Intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Fit</td>
<td>Passion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Students Can Learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At-Risk Student Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity for Growth</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motivator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passionate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work Ethic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relationship dimension comprises the following SPIP questions: SPIP Question 2: Describe the best teacher you have ever seen teach; SPIP Question 3: Describe the worst teacher
you have ever seen teach; and SPIP Question 5: When you interview a teacher candidate for hire, what are your top three criteria for not hiring in order of importance?

Table 3

*SPIP Data Coded to Dimensions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Pedagogy</th>
<th>Cultural Fit</th>
<th>Capacity for Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Style</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Impact Evaluation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe Best Teacher</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe Worst Teacher</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority Criterion to Hire</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority Criterion Not to Hire</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predict Effective Candidate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate Teacher Success</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsuccessful Teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommend Non-Renew</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dimension of pedagogy applies to SPIP Question 2: Describe the best teacher you have ever seen teach; SPIP Question 3: Describe the worst teacher you have ever seen teach; and SPIP Question 6: During the teacher hiring process, how do you predict which candidate will be the most effective with students? Pedagogy also applies to SPIP Question 7: When you observe a teacher in the classroom, how do you evaluate a teacher’s success? and SPIP Question 7a: What deems a teacher unsuccessful in the classroom?

Cultural fit codes are predominately in SPIP Question 2: Describe the best teacher you have ever seen teach; and SPIP Question 3: Describe the worst teacher you have ever seen teach.

The capacity for growth dimension applies to SPIP Question 2: Describe the best teacher you have ever seen teach; and SPIP Question 3: Describe the worst teacher you have ever seen teach. The other capacity for growth code is prominent in SPIP Question 8: What specific
teacher behaviors, whether you directly observe them or not, lead you to recommend
probationary teacher contract non-renewal for the next school year?

Table 4

*SPIP Interview Questions Coded to Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPIP</th>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Pedagogy</th>
<th>Cultural Fit</th>
<th>Capacity for Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The leadership style SPIP Question 1 is intended to be an ice breaker question that
focuses the principal on their school leadership style and practice as it relates to their teacher
hiring criteria. Principal responses are coded into all four dimensions and not one of the four
dimensions was prominent. Conversely, SPIP Question 1a responses were coded in capacity for
growth from 15 principal responses, indicating how their leadership style impacts teacher
evaluation with principals coaching the teacher and providing feedback so the teacher can grow
as an educator.

Principals provided a clear mix of the three dimensions of relationships, pedagogy, and
capacity for growth in their responses to SPIP Questions 2 and 3 when describing both the best
teacher and worst teacher principals have seen teach. The majority of principals described all
three of the aforementioned dimensions consistently in their reports. Twenty-one principal
responses that describe the best teacher were coded as relationships. Principal responses to the best teacher were also coded as pedagogy, 20, and cultural fit, 20. The dimension of cultural fit was coded for 12 of the principal responses when they described the best teacher. The principal responses for worst teacher were coded relationships, 22; pedagogy, 18; cultural fit, 10; and capacity for growth, 19.

Nine of the principal responses to SPIP Question 4 were coded into the relationships dimension and eight of the principals’ responses were coded into pedagogy as the prominent response from principals for the number one criterion to hire a teacher. Twelve principal responses to SPIP Question 5 were coded as relationships when principals respond to the number one criterion not to hire a candidate.

Twenty principal responses to SPIP Question 6, 20 principal responses to SPIP Question 7, and 19 principal responses to SPIP Question 7a were coded as pedagogy, determining that the responses coded as pedagogy represent how the principal predicts a teacher candidate’s effectiveness in the classroom. Also, principals make judgment on the success of a teacher or if the teacher is unsuccessful by observing their teaching performance in the classroom with students, coded as pedagogy.

Twelve of the 22 principals determine to non-renew the teaching contract, SPIP Question 8, due to the absence of capacity for growth within the teacher.

The SPIP questions were each assigned one or more of the dimensions of the hiring construct that apply, depending on the coding of the principals’ responses. Next, each of the four dimensions was defined. After each definition of the dimension, the principal responses from the SPIP are coded and the frequency counts of each code were presented. The first dimension is relationships.
**Relationships dimension.** The dimension of relationships creates a category that defines how teachers have connections and mutual dealings with other people and have “withitness” in the classroom (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003; Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008).

“Withitness” is the teacher’s overall awareness of what is taking place in the classroom joined with the teacher’s connection with all students all the time. These teacher connections create pathways of verbal and nonverbal communication methods with students, parents, and colleagues. The ability to team with students and parents to achieve the objectives of teaching and learning creates a bond between individuals and develops relationships built on mutual trust and respect. Although professional in practice, these relationships that develop provide an opportunity for the educator to connect with others in a personal, yet student/teacher appropriate degree. Withitness presents relationship awareness for all involved by developing that teacher’s awareness of relationship connections within, between, and among others.

**SPIP Question 1: Tell me about your approach to school leadership.** Principals shared their school leadership approach because this information guides all aspects of the interaction the principal has with the people associated with the school. In this study, the principals’ leadership style influences their teacher hiring criteria. Three of the elementary principal responses were coded in relationships, which is where each of the three principals feel the leadership goal is to develop, maintain, and improve relationships among and between the teachers, students, and parents (Table 5). An elementary principal stated:

> I think that relationships are the most essential piece to leadership in any position. I think it’s important for teachers to have good relationships with the kids and then be the leader of the classroom. I think it is important for the principal to do that with the staff and students.
One of the seven secondary principals indicated that relationships are a focus of this principal’s leadership style. This principal stated that it is his/her job to establish relationships by building a climate of trust and support for teachers. This principal stated, “My leadership philosophy is that I want it be one (a climate) of caring. I want everyone in the building, primarily children, to feel cared for.”

Table 5

*Dimension: Relationships*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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SPIP Question 1a: How does your leadership approach impact teacher evaluation?

Principals told how their school leadership approach impacts teacher evaluation because the teacher-for-hire interview is the first contact that the principal has with the potential new teacher and this contact establishes the principals’ initial evaluation of the candidate by applying the principals’ teacher hiring criteria. One elementary principal commented that her leadership goal is to establish, maintain, and improve relationships to positively impact the teacher evaluation process:
I think (after hiring the teacher) your next step is to build trust and a relationship that allows there to be open and honest communication (for evaluation). That allows there to be conflict resolution, and an open door kind of an environment where people can approach one another and talk about difficult and not difficult topics.

None of the secondary principals gave an answer that was coded into relationships after analysis of the principal answers for this question.

SPIP Question 2: Describe the best teacher you have ever seen teach. Twenty-one of the 22 principals included the teacher’s ability to establish a relationship with each student as a desirable hiring quality. Fourteen of the 15 elementary principals described the best teacher as one who provides evidence of the ability to establish relationships. One elementary principal described the relationship:

She had a way of bringing the kids together in the classroom. It wasn’t teacher – student. It was teacher facilitating student to student interaction; teacher facilitating her own interactions with the children. And I think she was just masterful with orchestrating the interaction in that classroom.

Another elementary principal concisely stated, “Relationships are critical.”

All seven of the secondary principals described the best teacher they have ever seen teach as one who includes evidence of relationship building at the interview. One secondary principal said, “They are personable. They know what kids like to do for fun. The teacher knows where kids struggle and where kids excel. The teacher can bring conversation to a student that show the teacher cares.”

SPIP Question 3: Describe the worst teacher you have ever seen teach. Principals responded to this request without pause for thought. The 22 principals identified the worst
teacher as the teacher who is unable to establish relationships with others. All 15 of elementary principals reported the inability to engage in relationships as a primary concern of principals when the teacher cannot establish or maintain classroom management and student discipline. One elementary principal made a comment on relationships, saying, “There seems to be either just a lack of awareness in general about what’s happening in the room, or what’s happening with a particular child whether it’s an interaction between two children, or between the teacher and the child.”

Secondary principals reported relationships as consistently as elementary principals when describing the worst teacher they have ever seen teach. All seven secondary principals described the worst teacher as one who cannot establish or maintain relationships with student, parents, and colleagues. A secondary principal described this teacher as one who cannot get along with anyone, especially teammates, concluding that this teacher’s “heart is not in it (teaching).” Another secondary principal described an instance she witnessed between a teacher and a student where the teacher did not meet her relationship expectations. She concluded:

So when you are working in low social economic areas, kids really need to know that you care. And, if you don’t, you will never win them over. And if you do, they will do whatever you want whenever you want it times ten. Our kids are very needy for affirmations. You are a good kid. I am very proud of you. Let’s do this together. That kind of bonding is just essential.

SPIP Question 4: When you interview a teacher candidate for hire, what are your top three criteria for hiring in order of importance? When principals were asked their top three hiring criteria in order of importance, many of the principals reflected on what they had stated as their answer during the previous three questions. Relationships ranked as the number one criterion by
four elementary principals (Table 6). It is of interest to note that 11 elementary principals ranked relationships in the top three hiring criteria break down. Elementary principals supported their top three hiring criteria by stating how important it is that the candidate has the ability to relate to students and colleagues. During an interview one elementary principal picked up on the candidate’s ability to relate by what the candidate says. The principal stated that “many of those (examples) are just subtle nuances that you pick up in their responses and in their actual words, and the way they deliver them.”

Table 6

*Principal Top Three Hiring Criteria Summary*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Pedagogy</th>
<th>Cultural Fit</th>
<th>Capacity for Growth</th>
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<td>22</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

For secondary, five principals ranked relationships as the top criteria when deciding which teacher to hire. Ten secondary principals included relationships in their top three hiring criteria break-down. A secondary principal interjected, “Engaging conversation and an engaging presence show an innate ‘with it ness’ …” that indicates success when establishing and maintaining relationships. The top hiring criteria for all principals in first, second, or third place emphasized relationships, totaling 22.
SPIP Question 5: When you interview a teacher candidate for hire, what are your top three criteria for not hiring in order of importance? This question generated the converse answers from the top three hiring criteria from all principals who reported the evidence the candidate presents for relationships as the criteria given most often as a reason not to hire a candidate (Table 7). Principal responses totaled 25 as the number one, two, or three criteria not to hire. Six of 15 elementary principals stated that the inability to establish, maintain, and grow relationships as the number one reason not to hire a teacher candidate. Elementary principals reported relationships as the criterion given most often as a reason to hire a candidate and as a reason not to hire a candidate. “When candidates say ‘I’ instead of ‘we’ when answering relationship questions, a red flag goes up for me,” commented an elementary principal. Fifteen elementary principals reported the inability of the teacher candidate to establish relationships is in their top three criteria not to hire a candidate.

Six of the seven secondary principals cited the evidence presented during the interview that indicates the teacher candidate’s inability to establish relationships as the number one reason not to hire a teacher candidate. A secondary principal stated, “How the candidate talks about students (past, present, and future) and how the candidate takes ownership (of students),” indicates how well they can establish relationships. The top three criteria not to hire a candidate reported by nine secondary principals emphasize relationships. Similarly, both elementary and secondary principals agreed that the perceived or observed inability to connect and establish relationships with others is a deterrent to the teacher candidate during the hiring process.
Table 7

*Principal Top Three Not to Hire Criteria Summary*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Pedagogy</th>
<th>Cultural Fit</th>
<th>Capacity for Growth</th>
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SPIP Question 6: During the teacher hiring process, how do you predict which candidate will be the most effective with students? None of the elementary principals mentioned relationships as a predictor while seven of the secondary principals noted the ability to establish and maintain relationships as a predictor of teacher effectiveness with students. A secondary principal determines teacher effectiveness with students by predicting during the interview how well the teacher communicates high expectations for self and students and how well the teacher interacts with students and with peers. He describes the teacher, “The kids like her because she respects them as people. And she has high standards of behavior and she makes it work. She has high standards for herself for instruction so she’s constantly seeking out more coaching.”

SPIP Question 7: When you observe a teacher in the classroom, how do you evaluate a teacher’s success? None of the elementary principals provided an answer that was coded into the dimension of relationships while one secondary principal identified relationships as an indicator of teacher success in the classroom. This secondary principal described teacher success as a well-managed classroom where behavior expectations are met by the student so learning can occur in
that classroom. She continues by describing when classroom management is not present, “Well, certainly the first thing has to be classroom management. Classes that are not under control; then nothing else will make any difference. And, that is the first and biggest way that a teacher looses their job.”

SPIP Question 7a: Principals are asked what deems a teacher unsuccessful in the classroom? One of the 15 elementary principals focused on relationships as the determiner that the teacher is unsuccessful because if the teacher has not established a relationship with each student, there will not be management and, consequently, there will not be appropriate student engagement in the learning. An elementary principal states, “Students aren’t engaged. Students are not only not engaged, they’re not doing anything that you would remotely consider should be going on at a school.”

When secondary principals were asked what deems a teacher unsuccessful, a secondary principal provided a response that was coded as relationships. This secondary principal stated that when “relationships are poorly developed or missing from the teacher’s classroom presentation,” then that teacher is not successful.

SPIP Question 8: What specific teacher behaviors, whether you directly observe them or not, lead you to recommend probationary teacher contract non-renewal for the next school year? A probationary teacher is in his/her first three years of employment in a school district and is employed on a term of one year at a time. Three elementary principals focused on relationships. One elementary principal stated that if she would not put her own child or grandchild in the teacher’s class, then the teacher contract would not be renewed for the next school year. An elementary principal concluded that teacher contracts are not renewed for the next school year when the principal “can do better” with another teacher who can establish relationships and be
effective with increased student achievement by seeking another candidate to teach in that classroom for next school year. One elementary principal comments, “The most important things to me are that they care about these children and they establish relationships.”

Secondary principals were asked what teacher behaviors lead the principals to make a decision to non-renew a probationary teacher contract for the next school year. Three secondary principals cited the hiring construct dimension of relationships as an area of focus for insufficient teacher skills and practice that lead to recommend the teacher employment contract be non-renewed. One of the secondary principals glibly summarized the decision to non-renew the teacher contract due to ineffective relationships because that teacher “did not get along and play well with others.”

**Pedagogy dimension.** Pedagogy is defined as the professional activities of the teacher and includes methods of instruction, the approach to teaching and learning, content knowledge, student learning and assessment (Danielson, 1996; Danielson & McGreal, 2000). The teacher has a foundation in pedagogy displays skills of communicating the curriculum, instructional delivery, and methodology. By using assessment to guide instruction, re-teaching students occurs routinely when student mastery of content objectives falls short of minimum expectations. Teachers produce evidence that they are intelligent by showing evidence of content knowledge by having an exemplary academic record as a student themselves.

SPIP Question 1: Tell me about your approach to school leadership? Three of the elementary principals described their leadership style as one that has a focus on influencing teacher instruction in the classroom, coded as pedagogy (Table 8). One of the elementary principals described a scenario:
For example, one of our goals for this year was to use data to improve our instruction. So, instead of taking an approach where I would just have a grade level team leader, like I had done in the past, I decide that I would take four people and put them on a data team that I meet with every other week. We review our data and answer question about what our data is showing and develop questions for the teachers on ‘if this is what the data is showing us then how can we change our instruction?’ Then that team facilitates out PLC meeting on Mondays. So, that when they bring the group of teachers together, they already have the data and the questions they are ready to speak to the teachers (about) to move them forward so that they can improve instruction in the classroom.

Table 8

*Dimension: Pedagogy*

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<th>Question</th>
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<tr>
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Secondary principals did not provide an answer about their leadership style that was analyzed and coded as pedagogy.

**SPIP Question 1a: How does your leadership approach impact teacher evaluation?**

Pedagogy comprises five coded responses from elementary principals. These principals stated
their leadership goal is to guide teachers to improve instruction in the classroom via the teacher evaluation process. One elementary principal spoke to the evaluation process:

Part of the evaluation process is for teachers to be able to work with their peers. So, they are observing their peers and giving them feedback. Or, they are doing professional development for their peers. So, for next year I am going to have to start looking at the teachers and their strengths. So, if they are a strong writing teacher or a strong reading teacher, I am going to start utilizing them for professional development with the new teachers we have in the building so that we can continue to grow as teachers.

Not one of the seven secondary principals gave a response that was coded as pedagogy on how their leadership style impacts teacher evaluation.

SPIP Question 2: Describe the best teacher you have ever seen teach. Thirteen elementary principals responded with answers that are coded as pedagogy. Pedagogy was described by an elementary principal by stating:

It’s a teacher who’s super-engaging. The teacher who constantly has kids doing more of the work. The teacher is organized. The teacher has a direct focus, and purpose to his/her lesson and has a way to evaluate that lesson. I see teachers who can teach to pretty high expectations, and then can figure out whether the students got it or they didn’t get it and differentiate instruction from there.

Seven secondary principals responded to the statement to describe the best teacher they have ever seen teach with responses that were coded as pedagogy. “The best teacher knows what students know and are able to do,” stated one of the secondary principals. Another secondary principal described the best teacher’s pedagogy:
Their pedagogy is excellent. They are able to teach in a way that the students learn, and they (students) will learn at levels that push their abilities. All of these teachers begin where the student are (at academically). They don’t just pick a spot on the curriculum map and say, ‘Now we go forward.’

SPIP Question 3: Describe the worst teacher you have ever seen teach. Fourteen of the elementary principals noted unprepared or undeveloped pedagogy as the criterion that describes the worst teacher. An elementary principal commented on the lack of pedagogy, describing the teacher behaviors as “chaotic, disorganized, fly by the seat of your pants, no planning, no energy put towards getting a full understanding themselves of their content and what they want to teach.”

Four of the seven secondary principals responded to the statement to “describe the worst teacher they have ever seen teach,” providing answers that were coded in pedagogy. A secondary principal commented on the worst teacher by describing, “It is clear there is no plan, no routine, and no direction established to keep students engaged and on task.”

SPIP Question 4: When you interview a teacher candidate for hire, what are your top three criteria for hiring in order of importance? Six elementary principals ranked pedagogy as the number one teacher hiring criterion. It is also of interest to note that 13 elementary principals included pedagogy in their top three hiring criteria breakdown (Table 6). An elementary principal addressed pedagogy by stating, “I’d say (the teacher is) mission driven. They (teachers) have that willingness to serve at whatever cost. They have a solid understanding of curriculum and assessment and instruction.”

For secondary, two principals ranked pedagogy as their number one teacher hiring criteria while five other secondary principals ranked pedagogy in their three top teacher hiring
criterion when deciding which teacher to hire. Pedagogy encompasses all elements of the act of teaching, including content knowledge competence. This secondary principal who ranked pedagogy as the number two criteria says why pedagogy is one of his teacher hiring criteria:

We want to make sure they have good pedagogy. (We want to know) that they know how to teach. Before it was required, we started having them do 10 to 15 minute lessons (during the interview). We just wanted to get a little view of how well they organized their lessons. How they presented. But, within the questions that we have, we have situational questions to see how well they lesson plan and how well they can explain information when students aren’t getting it. We want to see persistence, that’s another characteristic we’re looking for. If a student doesn’t understand it, what would you do? We wait for an answer. Then we ask, ‘Okay, they still don’t get it, what would you do?’ We wait for an answer, then we throw out for the third time, ‘They still don’t get it; what would you do?’ So what we’re looking for is at what point do (the teachers) blame the student. If they will go to peers, or, how they’re going to work with the student and how determined they are to make sure they can get the student to understand the information.

SPIP Question 5: When you interview a teacher candidate for hire, what are your top three criteria for not hiring in order of importance? Conversely, two elementary principals responded with answers that were coded into pedagogy. For these two principals pedagogy was their number one criterion not to hire a teacher candidate (Table 7). Seven elementary principals responded with answers that are coded pedagogy and represent the second or third rank criterion of elementary principals’ top three criteria not to hire a teacher candidate. One elementary principal added that being unprepared to teach a lesson during the interview to the interview committee, especially when the candidate is informed to be prepared to teach a lesson to the
interview committee, is a concern. The elementary principal described the unprepared teacher candidate:

Instruction is very hard and very difficult for them and then you add to that the teacher does not understand the content knowledge themselves. So, when they do get instruction out, it is not necessarily right. Then you (know you will) have kids getting confused and for me the worst part is that the teacher does not recognize any of this at all. (If hired) These teachers won’t accept feedback, thus won’t accept change. They just keep doing the same thing over and over.

Not one of the seven secondary principals answered the question to rank their top three criteria not to hire a teacher candidate with a number criterion answer that was analyzed and coded as pedagogy. Insufficient teacher content knowledge and teacher methodology was the second most often cited criterion by secondary principals as a reason not to hire a candidate. Seven secondary principals reported pedagogy as either their second or third criterion as why not to hire a teacher candidate. The seven secondary principals reported consistently that when the teacher candidate is not prepared to teach the lesson during the interview, they are eliminated from consideration for hire. A secondary principal explained why the teaching demonstration during the interview was important:

Well, that’s why I believe whole-heartedly that you’ve got to have people teach (as part of the interview). Because if you’re not having people teach, you have no idea what they might be capable of. And the other question I like to ask a lot in interviews is talk to me about activities and lessons that you have done in your … classes … that have gone well and (tell me) why they went well. I also want to hear about one (a lesson) that flopped
and why it flopped. I’m looking for: Do you understand what works, what kids are going to buck, and how reflective are you?

SPIP Question 6: During the teacher hiring process, how do you predict which candidate will be the most effective with students? Teaching a lesson, coded as Pedagogy, during the interview is a predictor of teacher candidate success in the classroom for 13 of the 15 elementary principals. “I look for someone who has a deep knowledge of their content, but then is able to express that (knowledge) in a clear way,” an elementary principal stated when describing the teaching performance.

Similarly, all seven secondary principals stated that the teaching performance during the interview is the best predictor of effectiveness with students. The lesson itself provides evidence of content knowledge and teaching skills. A secondary principal looks for evidence that will predict the teacher candidate will have “students eating out of the palm of the teacher’s hand” when teaching a lesson to students in the classroom after the job is offered. Among all principals interviewed, 20 of the 22 stated the teaching performance during the interview for hire is the best predictor of teacher effectiveness with students. Another secondary principal explained the effectiveness predictor with students:

I think the one piece that gets that for me is the performance interview. What do you see that predicts their effectiveness? Well I tell them ahead of time that we are going to expect a performance evaluation. Depending on the interview we might tell them we would like for them to present and have everyone present the same kind of presentation. In other words, presenting fractions and turning them into decimals in 10 to 15 minutes. If you are a strong candidate and I called you the night before and told you that my expectation is that you will come in with something prepared. I don’t know how you
would prepare. That’s your business. But if you have to stop at Office Depot or Staples and make copies, that is what you have to do because when you show up in the room you show up prepared. A copy for everybody that you thought would be there. Ideally you would have some kind of manipulative for the fraction into decimals activity. I have had people show up with their own dry erase markers. And they are just prepared to show us how they would show children how to convert fractions into decimals and back again.

SPIP Question 7: When you observe a teacher in the classroom, how do you evaluate a teacher’s success? All of the 15 elementary principals responded that success is measured in the classroom by the teacher’s performance when teaching students. The teacher performance in the classroom was coded as pedagogy. The elementary principals noted with consistency that the objective is stated and aligned with the demonstration of learning and the curriculum. All students are equally engaged and the teacher assessment indicates learning is occurring for each student. One elementary principal summarized succinctly, noting the teacher displays “rigor, relevance, and relationships” in the classroom with students.

When asked, “When you observe a teacher in the classroom, how do you evaluate a teacher’s success?” secondary principal responses concurred with elementary principal responses to this question. Secondary principals measure teacher success by evaluating the teacher’s performance in the classroom with increased student achievement as the top indicator of success. Five of the seven secondary principal responses were coded as pedagogy. The secondary principals identified a successful teacher by a good lesson that includes an objective, direct and organized focus, curriculum alignment, and student assessment. Also, secondary principals must see student engagement in the lesson for the teacher to be successful. A secondary principal stated that when the teacher incorporates a check for understanding with students as a component
of the teaching lesson, the teacher will know if he/she has been successful as a teacher. A
secondary principal described what a successful teacher does:

So, when I’m in the classroom, it’s how well they teach. I’m looking for the
characteristics of a good teacher. And a lot of it is research based. Are they very upfront
about their objective? Do they tell the student how they are going to assess it? Or, trying
to push all the teachers, and most of them are doing this now, to tell the students how
they are going to score it (assessment) upfront, so the first part of the lesson the students
(will) know what’s going to happen by the end of the lesson. Then, the other piece that
we look at is whether or not the activities are activities for activities’ sake. They’re really
cool but they don’t really support the objective. They may be related but they don’t really
support the objective and get to the assessment. Or, are they (activities) objective-based
activities? So, I look at that. And then student engagement, and of course that falls in
with the checks for understanding and the multiple response (strategies). How well
students know what they are supposed to do when they get in groups? Do they know their
roles? Everything is based upon getting as many students actively engaged as possible.
And, how well they learn the information by the end of the period?

SPIP Question 7a: Principals were asked what deems a teacher unsuccessful in the
classroom. Fourteen elementary principal responses were coded pedagogy. These elementary
principals stated the teacher’s classroom teaching as the concern that causes them to determine
the teacher is unsuccessful. An elementary principal said:

It’s often chaos in a classroom or quiet chaos where there is nothing going on. Children
aren’t running out of the room, but there’s nothing going on that’s purposeful. There is no
teaching and learning going on and students are not engaged. They’re not either with the
teacher or with each other. If they are not managed, and if there is no instruction going on, they are not successful.

When secondary principals were asked what deems a teacher unsuccessful, five principals gave responses that were coded as pedagogy. Quality instruction is poorly developed or missing from the teacher’s classroom presentation, determining how the principal concludes the teacher is not successful. A secondary principal described an unsuccessful teacher:

Students don’t have anything to do or they are in waiting mode. Students who are confused and trying to do something, but they are not sure where to go or how to get it done. Somebody who is not teaching something or discussing or working on something that is related to the objective ….

SPIP Question 8: What specific teacher behaviors, whether you directly observe them or not, lead you to recommend probationary teacher contract non-renewal for the next school year? A probationary teacher is in his/her first three years of employment in a school district and is employed on a term of one year at a time. Four elementary principals provided answers that were coded as pedagogy. Elementary principals view inadequate teaching skill or content knowledge as the consideration to recommend contract non-renewal. An elementary principal concluded that teacher contracts are not renewed for the next school year when the principal “can do better” by seeking another candidate who may have better pedagogy skill and content knowledge to teach students in that classroom for next school year.

Secondary principals were asked how they make the decision to non-renew a probationary teacher contract for the next school year. Two of the seven secondary principal responses were coded to the hiring construct dimension of pedagogy as the area of their focus on insufficient teacher skill and practice that lead these two principals to recommend the teacher
employment contract be non-renewed for the next school year. One secondary principal provided a pedagogy scenario:

That is very typical of what is going to happen (non-renew) to somebody the first year they teach … because they have not taught that content before. But, that made it real clear to me why you’ve got to know content and you’ve got to be way ahead of where your kids are. I met with somebody … and I had a conversation, the person was teaching algebra, and they said, ‘Well, but I don’t need to know calculus, I’m teaching algebra.’ And I said, ‘I beg to differ.’ Content knowledge was really important.

Cultural fit dimension. Cultural fit is best defined by how good a fit the teacher is for the students in the school (Becker, Kennedy, & Hundersmarck, 2003; Papa & Baxter, 2008; Tooms, Lugg, & Bogotch, 2010). The district in this study has Core Beliefs in place for school personnel that are founded in relationships, pedagogy, cultural fit, and capacity for growth (Eilers & Camacho, 2007; Latta, 2009; Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004). Teachers and administrators believe that a commitment to children is required. Cultural fit is an important and necessary dimension of the principal’s hiring construct that aligns the teacher candidate to the school culture and enables the teacher to implement curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular programs that develop the whole child and increase student achievement.

SPIP Question 1: Tell me about your approach to school leadership. Principals shared their school leadership approach because this information impacts their teacher hiring criteria. Two elementary principals promoted their leadership style as one that identifies and celebrates the culture of the at-risk community of student learners and embeds the vision and philosophy that “all students can learn” (Table 9). These two responses were coded in cultural fit. One of these principals shared his/her leadership philosophy:
It is based on my philosophy of why I do what I do and that it is my position in school and in life is to serve others. My positive approach is to make everyday a good day for all students and teachers. This philosophy is strongly guided by my own personal values.

Table 9

Dimension: Cultural Fit

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Question</th>
<th>Elem</th>
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<td>Unsuccessful Teacher</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommend Non-Renew</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Four of the secondary principals focused their leadership style on establishing and embedding the vision of the school which is founded in the culture of an at-risk student population. These four responses were coded into cultural fit. These principals look for teacher candidates to hire who can assist “the vision and the mission of the school” by contributing to the commitment to increase student achievement. A secondary principal stated:

The people within the school assist in growing the vision and they assist in developing the plan. They of course have input into what the needs are, but the final decision making approach lies in the hands of the leader of that school. You have to be prepared to set the bar high and move them in the direction that is going to be best for the kids.
SPIP Question 1a: How does your leadership approach impact teacher evaluation? One elementary principal gave a response to this question that was coded into the dimension of cultural fit. This elementary principal feels that his leadership goal is to embed the culture of an at-risk student population in the teacher evaluation process and introduce the teaching craft and skill interventions necessary for a teacher to have a successful evaluation. This principal explained:

I strive to be a community school inside and outside of the classroom and lead our staff to do the same. We have popcorn and movie night that kids can earn with 80% completion of homework. We do home visits to assist with academics, tardies, and absences by teaching parents and students love and logic strategies. We have dads and doughnuts and moms and muffins before school to get parents in the school. Education is the key to success and being a community school is the gateway.

When asked how their school leadership approach impacts teacher evaluation, none of the seven secondary principals reported answers that were coded into the dimension of cultural fit.

SPIP Question 2: Describe the best teacher you have ever seen teach. When asked to describe the best teacher they have ever seen teach, nine elementary principals gave responses that are analyzed and coded as cultural fit. Three of the secondary principals gave answers that were coded as cultural fit. These 12 principals described a desirable teacher candidate as one who understands the vision and mission of the school and is committed to do whatever it takes to ensure students are academically successful. The candidate displays cultural fit during the interview, according to an elementary principal, who stated, “Something that comes out (during
the interview) that directly or indirectly says, ‘I’m committed to children, and doing whatever it takes to do that.’”

**SPIP Question 3: Describe the worst teacher you have ever seen teach.** Eight of the elementary identified the candidate being disconnected with the cultural fit, including the vision and mission of the school, as an undesirable candidate to hire. An elementary principal made a comment on cultural fit, stating, “Lots of excuses. Complain about everything. Nothing’s ever their fault.”

Two of the secondary principals concurred that not being on board with the school vision and mission is unacceptable. One secondary principal summarized this view of the worst teacher as one who is not connected to students or colleagues; one who is opposed to the cultural fit of the school; and one who makes teaching about the teacher not the student. The other secondary principal concluded that the worst teacher operates in opposition to the school’s cultural fit because the “tail is wagging the dog.” This principal described the worst teacher as it pertained to the cultural fit of the school:

The very worst teachers are opposed to the school vision and tend to be very self-centered. I’m not a therapist, but it follows under the characteristics of borderline personality disorder. The tail is wagging the dog. They have to be the center of attention. What I’ve seen them do is they’ll rally the kids behind them in a really dysfunctional way to combat the school and what they (the school) are trying to do. In some ways they are probably the single most destructive type of person because they really can knock a school off its track of trying to accomplish its vision, so you have to address that immediately. In fact, one veteran teacher told me in probably my fifth year as a principal,
‘If you see a snake, kill the snake.’ That’s exactly what he’s referring to – people who undermine and aren’t on the bus with you.

SPIP Question 4: When you interview a teacher candidate for hire, what are your top three criteria for hiring in order of importance? Principals were asked to list their top three teacher candidate hiring criteria in order of importance (Table 6). One elementary principal provided a response that was analyzed and coded into the dimension of cultural fit, ranking as this principal’s number one criterion for the best teacher to hire. Five of the 15 elementary principal responses included cultural fit coded responses in their top three criteria that describe the best teacher. The candidate provides cultural fit evidence during the interview. An elementary principal stated, “The philosophy that all kids can learn because if you don’t believe that then you are coming to the wrong place. You don’t only believe in that philosophy but are willing to do anything for that.” The same elementary principal explained further:

Well in the interview packet their cover letter and the questions that are part of the application, if somewhere they say something about their passion for education for all kids especially coming to a Title I school. Somewhere that I can see that they identify with our kids and are willing to jump in with both feet and provide for those kids. Because I think it is easy to be a good teacher at an affluent school, but you really want to be here to be good. Somewhere in there (during the interview) if I can see that she has a passion for underperforming kids or she has a passion for diverse kids (she is considered for hire). Or, (she says) I understand where they are coming from and I want to provide them an opportunity in life.

Secondary principals did not provide data to indicate that cultural fit was a number one criterion for teacher hiring. During data analysis of the secondary principal’s top three teacher
candidate hiring criteria, it is of interest to note that none of the seven secondary principals provided responses that focus on the characteristics of cultural fit, representing the diverse and underprivileged students in the district when asked to describe the best teacher. Only one of the seven secondary principals included a response that was coded into cultural fit as one of the top three criteria that describes the best teacher. This secondary principal noted that, “Clarity of vision provides an understanding that teaching is service-based.”

SPIP Question 5: When you interview a teacher candidate for hire, what are your top three criteria for not hiring in order of importance? Elementary principals reported the candidate’s disconnect with cultural fit as another reason given not to hire. An elementary principal said, “When the candidate makes derogatory comments about schools and children, it sends up a red flag.” Four of the elementary principals identified the candidate as being disconnected with cultural fit as their number one criterion not to hire a teacher candidate (Table 7). Nine elementary principals reported that cultural fit is in their top three criteria for hiring a teacher. An elementary principal explained how the lack of cultural fit is identified in the candidate:

What I see more often as worst teachers, are teachers that makes excuses, even during the interview. Especially being at a Title I school, these kids are poor, so they can’t learn. These kids’ parents don’t care about them, so they can’t learn. They are never here, so they can’t learn. The worst teachers put all the blame on the outside factors that they can’t control rather than change the things that they can change in an eight hour day. I think that is more typical of what you see. No connection to the community so they are not calling parents for good things or bad things. Not attending any of the family nights
or soccer games or anything going on with the kids. Not invested so they are only here from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. They basically clock in and clock out and go home.

The theme of cultural fit emerged as an important factor in an elementary principal’s decision not to hire a candidate while secondary principals were not as concerned with the teacher candidate-for-hire’s connection with the cultural fit. None of the secondary principals listed cultural fit as important criterion to seek during the teacher interview. Moreover, only one secondary principal listed cultural fit in the top three teacher criteria to hire a candidate. This secondary principal identifies attributes in the teacher candidate that makes the principal ask that if the candidate is not student-centered, “why did the candidate choose teaching as a profession?”

SPIP Question 6: During the teacher hiring process, how do you predict which candidate will be the most effective with students? The cultural fit of the district is the most important hiring criteria for seven elementary principals when predicting which candidate during the interview will be most effective with students. Five of the elementary principals placed an emphasis on the teacher candidate’s fit into the culture of a high-poverty school. “I want to hear why they want to work in this district,” an elementary principal stated. I want to “sense self-efficacy and hear how they have faced challenges and overcome adversity and achieved success (in their own life),” which predicts effectiveness for me another elementary principal professed.

Secondary principals did not respond with answers that were coded cultural fit as a criterion that contributes to the prediction of an effective teacher as a candidate for hire.

SPIP Question 7: When you observe a teacher in the classroom, how do you evaluate a teacher’s success? Not one of the 22 principals provided an answer that was coded cultural fit.
SPIP Question 7a: Principals are asked what deems a teacher unsuccessful in the classroom. As reported on the previous question, none of the 22 principals responded with answers that were coded cultural fit.

SPIP Question 8: What specific teacher behaviors, whether you directly observe them or not, lead you to recommend probationary teacher contract non-renewal for the next school year? Two elementary principals gave answers that were analyzed and coded cultural fit and that not fitting into the culture of the school would be grounds for discontinuing teacher employment. One of the elementary principal comments gave a cause for contract non-renewal:

You just place (see in the teacher) a striking negativity about our students. Then you (the teacher) should not be here either. And that’s conveyed through word; that’s conveyed through your actions; or, just your attitude about them (students) or things you say about them. Then you should not be teaching here. And you won’t be.

The seven secondary principals did not provide one answer that was analyzed and coded cultural fit.

**Capacity for growth dimension.** The dimension coded as capacity for growth identifies the teacher with the ability to have the capacity to further develop knowledge and skill (Lambert, 2003; Reeves, 2008; Smoker, 2006). When combined with all the available resources within the school and community, the teacher can perform and produce at a level that will reduce the impact of at-risk factors on students. Not only is capacity for growth the avenue for the teacher to receive constructive criticism and to reflect on pedagogy and student achievement, the teacher demonstrates the ability to continue to grow as an educator and as an individual. Additionally, capacity for growth identifies the intrinsic qualities of personality as being evident, for example,
creativity, confidence, engagement, energy, enthusiasm, feelings, flexibility, motivator, passionate, and work ethic.

SPIP Question 1: Tell me about your approach to school leadership. Six elementary principals described their leadership style as one that is coded into the dimension of capacity for growth (Table 10). They said their leadership goal is to grow teachers professionally to positively impact student achievement. An elementary principal stated that principals are “teachers of teachers.” Another elementary principal placed capacity for growth and the principal’s leadership philosophy into perspective:

I think about being a leader from the center rather than the front. I think that one of my primary responsibilities as a leader is to discern and develop the talents of the staff including their own leadership capacity. I always felt as a classroom teacher that was a fundamental leadership role, providing that support with students. So I think my job as a leader of the school is to bring clarity to a shared vision, to make sure that we have goals that we feel passionate about and are committed to, and then really helping people develop their assets, talents, and abilities and make sure they have the appropriate resources needed, to be an advocate for them, to keep that clear focus on our central purpose, which obviously centers around student achievement.

Two of the seven secondary principals identified that their leadership goal is to grow the teacher’s craft and skill professionally to positively impact student achievement. These two responses were coded as capacity for growth. One of the secondary principals explained that his/her collaborative style of open and honest leadership sets the bar high for teacher performance expectations and enables teachers to grow in their profession.
Table 10

**Dimension: Capacity for Growth**

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<th>Question</th>
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<td>Priority Criterion Not to Hire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Predict Effective Candidate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluate Teacher Success</td>
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<td>Unsuccessful Teacher</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommend Non-Renew</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>28</strong></td>
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</tr>
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</table>

SPIP Question 1a: How does your leadership approach impact teacher evaluation? Eight of the 15 elementary principals stated their leadership style impacts teacher evaluation because they serve as a mentor and coach to the teacher to grow the teacher in the craft and skill of teaching. These eight responses were coded in the capacity for growth dimension. An elementary principal framed what it means to her to be a mentor and coach stating:

There’s a Spanish quote that I have over there (on the wall) that I grew up with and it’s ‘Dime con quinandas y de didere quineros.’ My grandmother would say, ‘Tell me with whom you walk and I will tell you who you are.’ And, so, if my students and my teachers are successful then I am successful.

Next, secondary principals reported how their leadership style impacts teacher evaluation. All seven of the secondary principals identified the impact of their leadership style on teacher evaluation as one to grow the teacher’s craft and skill professionally to positively impact student
achievement. Capacity for growth represents the code for these seven responses. A secondary principal remarked on mentoring and coaching a teacher by saying:

If we say up front this is what we want to reach and what we want to accomplish, then we ask (the teacher) what are the best ways of getting there? So, when I look at teacher evaluation, I really try to do as much formative as possible and then leave the summative for the end. So, even when we look at spot observations and informal observations, we really try to make it formative .... We try to make it formative and that’s the way the teachers approach it as well. We feel we get a lot more buy-in and a lot better participation and feedback from them as well on it.

SPIP Question 2: Describe the best teacher you have ever seen teach. When asked to describe the best teacher they have ever seen teach, all 22 principals emphasized that the best teacher each has observed teaching is one who has the capacity for growth in that they are life-long learners, open to feedback, and reflect on their life and professional practices. An elementary teacher described the best teacher as one who says, “There’s more I can do. I want to continue my own growth. I want to refresh, whatever it is, that says, ‘I’m a life-long learner.’ The ‘do’ is, I think, just that enthusiasm for teaching and learning.”

A secondary principal represented the best teacher description, coded as capacity for growth, by focusing on a teacher’s ability to multi-task, describing her as a juggler who could drop one ball, kick it to the side, catch the new ball and keep on juggling. This principal further described the best teacher:

Recognizing that teaching is juggling ten balls at once and sometimes you don’t get to have them all in the air at the same time. Sometimes you drop one and just kick it to the side with your foot. Often times what throws people is they don’t have the flexibility to
do that. They trip over the ball they dropped. ‘I want to go to the bathroom.’ ‘No, I told everyone to go before class.’ Well that rigidity does not really help us. Strong teachers will say, ‘Remember, I told you to go before class.’ ‘Yes, but I really have to go. It’s an emergency.’ ‘Okay, go. And hurry because you are going to miss this great thing that we are doing.’

SPIP Question 3: Describe the worst teacher you have ever seen teach. Thirteen elementary principals acknowledged that the worst teacher is one who does not demonstrate the ability to grow in his/her teaching craft, which was coded as capacity for growth. The lack of capacity for growth describes teachers who are not coachable and deny problems or make excuses. They are teachers who are not reflective, who are not receptive to feedback, and who do not grow as educators. These teacher candidates who do not show evidence of the capacity for growth are likely screened out of contention for employment during the interview process. An elementary principal gave an example of the teacher’s inability to grow within capacity for growth by restating what a teacher had said to this principal, “Poor kids cannot learn because their parents don’t care.” In other words, this teacher demonstrates that he/she is not likely to be a life-long learner, be open to feedback, and does not participate in reflection in life and professional practices.

Six of the seven secondary principals provided an answer to the statement, “Describe the worst teacher they have ever seen teach,” that were coded as capacity for growth. “When you tell them (teachers) this is what you need them to incorporate in their classroom instruction, they respond that they do not understand what you want them to do,” a secondary principal stated. So, these teachers indicated they are not able to grow in their profession. Another secondary principal described the lack of capacity for growth due to the teacher’s inability to accept
feedback, stating, “A lot of times the poor teachers are not flexible. They are very rigid. They don’t want to hear suggestions; they back off from putting themselves forward and asking questions.”

SPIP Question 4: When you interview a teacher candidate for hire, what are your top three criteria for hiring in order of importance? Four of the 15 elementary principals ranked capacity for growth as their number one criterion for teacher hiring (Table 6). In addition, 15 elementary principal responses were coded capacity for growth and are included in the top three hiring criteria. An elementary principal identified capacity for growth during the interview, stating:

I look for evidence of creativity. I look for evidence of high energy. I look for evidence of a personal standard of work ethic, and a sense of organization. Not necessarily a linear organization, but they understand the need to keep things in order and to be aware of time, materials and projects.

“The teacher does not bring her own needs to the students. She is stable and confident and her work is not about her; the work is about the students,” stated another elementary principal.

When asked to rank and prioritize the top three hiring criteria for teacher candidates, not one secondary principal provided a number one response that was coded as capacity for growth. One other secondary principal provided a number two response that was coded as capacity for growth. And, two secondary principal responses were coded capacity for growth as the third criterion to hire a teacher candidate. A secondary principal who ranked capacity for growth as the number two criterion to hire a teacher candidate noted, “Teacher candidates who have played team sports are very dedicated, driven, and collaborative. These candidates want to ensure that
all students win.” Another secondary principal described a teacher who displays the dimension of capacity for growth by enabling the students to learning:

I have had the opportunity to watch and it is not really about watching the teachers. It’s the kids learning in that classroom and that is what is so exciting. You watch them take a lesson a teacher designs and watch them start interacting with one another, and in this case, the poetry lesson. They read through the poem. The teacher stops them midway to show a video clip of the same poem being read by a student. Students just like these students and it is a short clip, a couple minutes, but the impact provoked such response from the kids that they were talking about it and interpreting that poetry at another level from when they first came in. You don’t really see a teacher teaching direct instruction. You see kids learning and that’s the power of a great teacher. The kids are working harder than he or she. It is a beautiful site to hold and I have been very fortunate to see that happen.

SPIP Question 5: When you interview a teacher candidate for hire, what are your top three criteria for not hiring in order of importance? Elementary principals as a group indicated capacity for growth as another important factor that teachers must show evidence of during the interview and if capacity for growth is not evident, teacher candidates will not be considered for hire (Table 7). Three of the elementary principal answers were coded as capacity for growth and denote their number one criterion. Thirteen elementary principal responses were coded to this dimension of capacity for growth as their top one, two, or three criteria not to hire a teacher candidate. One elementary principal stated she is looking for “someone who will be part of a team; someone who will be collaborative; someone who’s open to learning new things, and new ways of doing things.”
Secondary principals were asked what their top three criteria are for not hiring a teacher candidate in priority order. Two secondary principal responses were coded capacity for growth and are a number one and a number two criterion not to hire a teacher candidate, respectively, that would eliminate a teacher candidate from consideration (Table 6). A secondary principal commented that the candidate provides evidence that he/she cannot adapt to change and grow as a learner while another secondary principal noted the candidate provides evidence that he/she is unmotivated to perform as an exemplary educator. When evidence of capacity for growth is missing from the candidate’s words and actions during the interview, the candidate is no longer considered for the teaching position. A secondary principal related an instance:

What eliminates them from the get-go is and it’s interesting because I’ve never thought about it like this, but capacity would be the top thing to eliminate them. So, if I’m looking over their application and their transcripts or if they bounce around in jobs a lot (and I read the) reasons for leaving, It amazes me that people will be as honest as they are, but I’m glad that they are. They will say my last supervisor couldn’t get along with me. Or, the last supervisor was this, and they blame.

SPIP Question 6: During the teacher hiring process, how do you predict which candidate will be the most effective with students? Neither elementary nor secondary principals answered with a response that was coded capacity for growth as evidence they use to predict potential teacher effectiveness with students.

SPIP Question 7: When you observe a teacher in the classroom, how do you evaluate a teacher’s success? All principals were asked how they evaluate teacher success and they were also asked what deems a teacher unsuccessful when they evaluate a teacher’s classroom
performance. None of the elementary principals provided an answer that was coded as capacity for growth.

When secondary principals were asked how they identify teacher success in the classroom, one secondary principal’s response was coded capacity for growth as poorly developed or missing from the teacher’s classroom presentation, determining how that principal concludes the teacher is not successful.

SPIP Question 7a: Principals are asked what deems a teacher unsuccessful in the classroom. None of the elementary principals provided a response that was coded into the dimension of capacity for growth.

One secondary principal response was coded capacity for growth when secondary principals were asked what deems a teacher unsuccessful when the principal evaluates a teacher’s classroom performance. This secondary principal noted that the teacher has not shown growth as an educator. This secondary principal noted specifics:

There (the teacher) is blaming students for their (the teacher’s) performance. Another is I think not really knowing themselves as a person and not really being highly reflective. An inability to look at a child who doesn’t come with all the skills you wish they came with or that you value and the ability to look at that child and say here are the resources they do come with. But, I think there’s an inability of some adults to realize the resources that come there and they are looking at, so I think an inability to look at a person and see the assets that they do have rather than the shortcomings, (for example) looking at the glass as half-full rather than as half-empty all the time. And this would go with the good side, but an inability to be solution oriented as a trait of someone who is not workable. The inability to persist and solve the problem and work through it because when you’re
having trouble reaching a kid, I think your most dynamic teacher is obsessed with the challenge, the other person gives up. So, I personally think that some of our people that fail maybe they themselves have never had to struggle.

SPIP Question 8: What specific teacher behaviors, whether you directly observe them or not, lead you to recommend probationary teacher contract non-renewal for the next school year?

Ten of the 15 elementary principal responses were coded capacity for growth as the focus of concern and cause to recommend contract non-renewal for the next school year for a probationary teacher. In regard to the dimension of capacity for growth, an elementary principal noted:

The biggest thing for me is when someone does not take feedback and act on it. So, I don’t expect someone to have everything. I would be shocked if they did. So, when I give feedback (I want the teacher to be) hungry for feedback, seek it out, take it, and implement it immediately.

Two secondary principal responses were coded capacity for growth when asked, “What specific teacher behaviors, whether you directly observe them or not, lead you to recommend probationary teacher contract non-renewal for the next school year?” A secondary principal stated, “Failure to respond with effort and integrity to feedback that has been clearly provided to make changes that are necessary” would cause me to recommend the teacher employment contract not be renewed. Another secondary principal remarked, “When I am working harder than the teacher, it is time to non-renew the contract for the next school year.”

Teacher Interview Observations

Nineteen observations of principals during a teacher hiring interview were conducted. Twelve of the 15 elementary and all 7 of the secondary principals were observed. The principal,
in conjunction with the hiring committee members, has the autonomy to create the teacher interview protocol. The member composition of the hiring committee varies from principal to principal, ranging from the principal and another member to a panel of interviewers. Additionally, the number of candidates who are individually interviewed varies, as well. The observer recorded notes of the interaction between the hiring committee members and the teacher candidate. The observer followed along with each individual protocol during the teacher interview and took extensive notes during the process. After each interview, the observer wrote 19 observation memos (OM), one for each observation.

The emergent themes from the SPIP generated four principal hiring criteria themes for teachers. The emergent themes were identified as the four dimensions of the principal hiring construct and criteria for teachers. The four dimensions of relationships, pedagogy, cultural fit, and capacity for growth that represent the data from the SPIP were applied to the 19 OM. The analysis of the 19 OM provided verification that specific elements of the SPIP data were included in the teacher candidate for hire interview and that the four emergent themes that represent the teacher hiring criteria apply to the principal’s teacher hiring practice.

**Relationships dimension.** The researcher observed consistently with each teacher candidate interview that relationships were established between the teacher candidate, the principal, and the hiring committee members when the candidate came into the interview room. The dialogue among all parties present showed the importance of this dimension in the hiring process and the principals’ teacher hiring criteria. This relationships dimension reported by the principal that emerged from the SPIP data was observed in practice by the researcher. A common relationships coded question asked candidates to respond to a classroom management concern, for example, “Describe your philosophy on discipline. What type of classroom management
strategies will you incorporate?” Another example of a relationship question is, “How would you interact with your team to promote higher achievement for all students?” The relationship that developed with the adults during the interview was observed. The higher the degree that the principal and the committee members perceived that the candidate meets relationship expectations, the observer notes that the likelihood was greater that this candidate would be chosen for hire because the candidate displayed the intrapersonal and interpersonal communication skills that will transfer from the interview into the classroom with students.

**Pedagogy dimension.** As a group, the principals and the committee members asked the candidate more than one question about teaching skill and content knowledge during the teacher-for-hire interview. Candidates responded to questions, for example, “How do you teach reading?” and “Discuss some of the ways you will differentiate math instruction.” All 19 of the interview observations culminated with a teacher performance task, where each teacher candidate who was interviewed taught a 15 to 20 minute lesson to the interview committee. The dimension of pedagogy applied to the teacher hiring interview when each candidate was asked at least one question about pedagogy and taught a lesson to the hiring committee members.

**Cultural fit dimension.** The observer witnessed 19 teacher interviews that each included at least one Core Belief question for the teacher candidate to answer or one Core Belief activity for the teacher candidate to complete. The most common Core Belief activity included two tasks that engaged the teacher candidate in the district philosophy by asking the candidate to review the six Core Belief statements. The candidate was given a copy of the Core Belief statements and asked to choose one of the statements and defend why that Core Belief statement should be a Core Belief. The second question asked the candidate to choose another Core Belief statement and defend why that Core Belief statement should not be a Core Belief. For this activity, one of
the Core Belief statements was altered so one Core Belief statement could be eliminated by the
candidate. The observer witnessed and recorded on 15 of the 19 OMs that the only cultural fit
question asked during the teacher interview is the Core Belief activity. The observer recorded on
the OM that the remaining four teacher interviews included the Core Belief activity and an
additional question about cultural fit. The observer witnessed the presence of the dimension of
cultural fit applied to the teacher candidate with a Core Belief question(s) or activity.

Capacity for growth dimension. Of the 19 observations, the observer recorded that
three of the teacher interviews were void of questions that did not produce responses by the
candidates that were analyzed and coded into capacity for growth. Six OM recorded that
candidates were asked and responded to three questions that were coded capacity for growth and
one OM documented that the candidates were asked four questions that were coded by the
observer as capacity for growth. On average principals asked almost two questions coded as
capacity for growth per candidate, representing 20% of all questions asked the candidate.
Examples of a question asked during the interview and coded as capacity for growth included,
“Describe the strengths that you will bring to your grade level team.” Another question asked
and coded capacity for growth was, “Speak to a time professionally where your beliefs/decisions
were challenged. How did you handle this?”

The four dimensions that emerged from the SPIP data appeared during the teacher
interview and were recorded in the OM. The observation and OM record of the teacher candidate
for hire interview verified that each of the 19 teacher hiring committees asked at least one
protocol question that was coded into the dimensions of relationships, pedagogy, and cultural fit.
For capacity for growth, 16 of the 19 OM indicate record of a question asked that was coded into
this dimension. The OM created data that triangulates with the data that generated from the SPIP.
Teacher Interview Protocols

The 22 teacher interview protocols (TIP) were analyzed and each question on each protocol was coded into one of the four dimensions of the principal hiring construct for teachers (Table 11). The principals’ teacher hiring criteria generated from the principal reports were coded into the four dimensions, relationships, pedagogy, cultural fit, and capacity for growth, to determine how that generated SPIP data aligned with the application of this data by the principal and the hiring committee to the teacher candidate during the hiring interview. This data generation served as a source to triangulate to the data generated from the SPIP for the principal’s hiring criteria for teachers and how that data applies to the data that generated from the OM data and the analysis of the TIP.

**Relationship dimension.** Each TIP question was analyzed and coded into one of the four dimensions. Elementary principals averaged 10 questions asked for the teacher protocol while secondary principals averaged 11 questions asked. Of the 153 questions that the elementary principals and their hiring committee asked potential teacher hires, 38 of these questions were coded into the dimension of relationships. Secondary principals asked 22 questions of the total 78 that were coded into relationships. The total for all 22 principals was 60 relationship questions out of the 231 total protocol questions, which represented 26% of the total questions asked of teachers during a candidate for hire interview.

**Pedagogy dimension.** The analysis of the elementary principal protocol revealed 73 of the total 153 questions asked by elementary hiring committee members to potential new teacher hires were coded into the dimension of pedagogy. Thirty-eight of the 78 total secondary principal teacher interview questions were analyzed and coded into pedagogy. Of all questions asked of
potential teacher hires, 22 principals asked 106 of the total 231 questions, or 46% of all questions, that represent the dimension of pedagogy.

Table 11

*Interview Questions Coded to Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Pedagogy</th>
<th>Cultural Fit</th>
<th>Capacity for Growth</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>26</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Pedagogy dimension.** The analysis of the elementary principal protocol revealed 73 of the total 153 questions asked by elementary hiring committee members to potential new teacher hires were coded into the dimension of pedagogy. Thirty-eight of the 78 total secondary principal
teacher interview questions were analyzed and coded into pedagogy. Of all questions asked of potential teacher hires, 22 principals asked 106 of the total 231 questions, or 46% of all questions, that represent the dimension of pedagogy.

**Cultural fit dimension.** Elementary hiring committees asked teacher candidates 18 out of 153 questions that the analysis coded these 18 questions into the dimension of cultural fit. Secondary principal teacher protocol analyses generated data, coding 8 of the total 78 questions into the dimension of cultural fit. The total number of teacher protocol questions for all 22 principals coded into cultural fit was 26 of the total 231 questions, which was 11% of all questions.

**Capacity for growth dimension.** Of the total 153 questions asked by elementary teacher hiring committees, 24 questions were coded in the dimension of capacity for growth. Secondary questions coded into this dimension of the teacher hiring criterion numbered 15. For all of the 22 principals, 39 of the total 231 questions were analyzed and coded into capacity for growth, representing 17% of all questions asked of potential teacher hires.

2. Do principals “bridge” or “buffer” the candidate’s congruence with the district’s culture, represented by the Core Beliefs, to make a final determination for the job offer to the candidate?

**District Philosophy**

The school district in this study developed Core Beliefs to represent the philosophy, vision, and mission of the district (Appendix B). The four dimensions of the principal hiring construct for teachers that emerged during data analysis from the first principal interviews were applied to the district’s Core Beliefs (Table 12). Core Beliefs 1, 2, and 3 align with the dimension of pedagogy. The first three Core Beliefs, which clearly align with pedagogy, are,
“Our main purpose is to improve academic achievement;” “Effective instruction makes the most difference in student academic achievement;” and, “There is no excuse for poor quality instruction.” Core Belief 4, “With our help, at risk students will achieve at the same rate as non-at risk students,” is coded into the dimension of cultural fit. The dimension of relationships incorporates Core Belief 5, “Staff members must have a commitment to children.” Core Belief 6, “Staff members must have a commitment to excellence,” aligns with the dimension of capacity for growth.

Table 12

**SPIP Interview Questions Coded to Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPIP</th>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Pedagogy</th>
<th>Cultural Fit</th>
<th>Capacity for Growth</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1a</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
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</table>

Principals were directed to include a Core Belief exercise as part of the interview protocol for each teaching position that is available to be filled by a new teacher hire. During the principal interviews that generated the SPIP data, the fit of the teacher candidate to the high-poverty culture of the district’s community of learners emerged as a concern and a criterion that a teacher candidate for hire must show evidence of congruence. Yet, the dimension of cultural fit that emerged during the principal interviews was not identified as a prominent criterion, for example,
when principals were asked to name their top three criteria to hire or their top three criteria not to hire a teacher candidate, cultural fit does not appear in the majority of the principals’ data report. This incongruence in the data generation with the principal’s teacher hiring criteria prompted a second interview with all 22 principals to respond to a seven question Core Belief structured interview protocol (CBIP) to provide data specific to the district’s philosophy and culture, represented by the Core Beliefs, to determine if the principal bridges or buffers to the Core Beliefs. The CBIP responses were transcribed, reviewed, coded, and applied to the scoring rubric. The rubric score was calculated from the data generated by each principal.

**Pedagogy dimension.** The first CBIP question principals were asked is, “How would you describe the needs of the students?” This first question seeks to determine if the principal bridges or buffers to Core Belief 1, “Our main purpose is to improve student academic achievement.” A rubric score of three indicated the principal bridges to the Core Beliefs and the rubric descriptor for a three score on this question states “indicates improvement in academic achievement is the student need.”

An elementary principal responded to this question and answers, “Definitely the academic achievement. Because that is what our organization is about. That’s what our role and that’s what our responsibility is. Public education is to serve the student to achieve academically.” This principal’s response was scored a three on the rubric.

A secondary principal responded similarly and was scored a three on the rubric for the answer, “High academic expectations, first and foremost. That’s got to be pervasive among the whole entire staff.” The 22 principal rubric scores for CBIP question one produced an un-weighted mean of 2.73 on the 0 to 3 point scale (Table 13). This Core Belief aligned with the dimension of pedagogy.
The second CBIP question generated data from principals to indicate the degree of bridging or buffering to Core Belief 2, “Effective instruction makes the most difference in student academic achievement.” This Core Belief was coded in the dimension of pedagogy, also. Principals were asked, “What are your goals (action plan) for the school?” A principal who stated the priority is “effective instruction, assessment, and intervention to increase student achievement” received a rubric score of three, denoting the principal bridges to the Core Beliefs as a high priority. An elementary principal responded:

We still had a writing goal, and reading was just embedded through everything. We really expanded response to intervention (RTI), which meant that teachers had to bring in data. They had to collect data. They had to show fidelity to the RTI accommodations. They were required to pull up the item maps curriculum for the CBMs and the assessment sets.

Table 13

| Principal | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | Mean |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|    |
| Q1        | 0 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 2  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 2  | 2  | 3  | 3  | 2.73|
| Q2        | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 0  | 2  | 3  | 3  | 2  | 3  | 2  | 3  | 2.50|
| Q3        | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 1  | 2  | 2  | 2  | 3  | 2.36|
| Q4        | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 3  | 3  | 2  | 2.55|
| Q5        | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 1  | 3  | 2  | 1  | 3  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 2.23|
| Q6        | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3  | 3  | 2  | 3  | 1  | 3  | 3  | 0  | 3  | 3  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 2.32|
| Q7        | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2  | 3  | 2  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 2  | 3  | 3  | 2  | 3  | 2.64|

This response scored a two on the rubric because the plan to provide “effective instruction, assessment, and intervention to increase student achievement” was not stated in the principal’s response. A secondary principal answered:

Quality of instruction, using our data diagnostically, within that PLC component, the way that we have it structured, every week teachers are meeting in their teams, looking at their
student data to make sure that they are addressing and tailoring the students’ needs and their instruction for what the kids actually need in their areas of literacy and math. We also integrated our health curriculum and literacy curriculum in our areas of fine arts.

This secondary principal was scored a three on the rubric because “effective instruction, assessment, and intervention to increase student achievement” is in place. This CBIP Question 2 rubric score for all principals were calculated and produced an un-weighted mean of 2.50.

“What are the challenges the school faces in reaching these goals?” is the third CBIP question principals were asked. This question was to ascertain whether a principal bridges or buffers to the Core Belief 3, “There is no excuse for poor quality instruction.” This Core Belief is the third Core Belief that was coded into the dimension of pedagogy. A response that included the principal “acknowledging what the challenges are to reach the student academic goals and offers three or more solutions to the challenges” scored a three on the rubric for highly prioritizing and bridging to the Core Beliefs. One elementary principal stated three challenges with three solutions:

I think the fact that we’re a pretty young staff, but I think the standards, the Professional Standards that we’ve articulated as a district have proved enormously helpful to teachers. (Second) I think that another huge challenge for us right now is the breadth of the curriculum, the scope of it. It’s pretty enormous in its size. And so, I think one of our Action Plan goals, specifically, is to really work on that alignment piece and get to the point where we have a balanced focus, so we have the right priorities clearly in front of us. (Third) Well I think one of the things that really stuck out for me is the sub-group male/female differences. We are achieving some success with our female students, but I think our male students have a reluctance to read independently, and they don’t see
reading as a viable personal activity. We started this year with a Kindergarten initiative where we took all end of the year achievement targets and decided to make them end of first semester targets, with the hope that we could increase the rigor in the instructional program. And then we embedded a literacy coach and an external consultant who worked with us. Our Kindergarten results this year were spectacular because we had 95% of our students who achieved benchmark status across multiple measures.

A secondary principal responded to the question about the challenges the school faces, and stated:

The challenges are time and how we use our time, understanding that we have to use it differently. I think we can ask teachers and demand that the teachers use every minute they have with students purposefully and productively. (Second) I would say the informal assessments that the teachers are doing with students need to be tracked probably more rigorously. Teachers need to be able to articulate that and change their instructional practices whether it is for a whole class or a group or a few, based on that. (Third) I think we need systems in place for those particular kids that we were doing everything we know how to the best of our ability and they still are not learning, so we track students with a data board.

This response was designated a score of three on the bridge and buffer rubric because the principal stated three challenges and three solutions to academic challenges. This response provided three challenges and three solutions to ensure students reach academic goals. The un-weighted mean score for CBIP Question 3 for all principals was 2.36.

**Cultural fit dimension.** Question CBIP four asked principals about what changes they have made that address student academic achievement challenges. The data generated from
principals is for the Core Belief 4, “With our help, at-risk students will achieve at the same rate as non-at risk students.” The dimension of cultural fit was applied to this Core Belief. Principal responses that included “three or more changes that address improving instruction to increase at-risk student achievement” denoted a principal who bridges to and who highly prioritizes this Core Belief. An elementary principal addressed improving instruction:

The departmentalization has been huge. And really with that system, teachers have to plan less, and at elementary that’s huge when we ask them to plan for seven subjects, now I only ask them to plan for two subjects, so they can focus their efforts. So, they have more time to pull resources and they have more time to differentiate. (Second) And then that also has broadened the vertical articulation, But now, we’re having those conversations, for example as a fourth grade writing teacher, I need to tell my third grade writing teacher, ‘You need to have them at this point to come to me for fourth grade.’ So, it’s not only the expectations within the grade level, but throughout the vertical articulation. (Third) Math has been a struggle in the past. This past year we made huge improvements in that, and the departmentalization is part of the reason we made such great improvements, because now we can tailor our instruction.

This elementary principal response included three or more changes that address at-risk student achievement, earning a score of three on the bridge and buffer rubric. A secondary principal responded to the same question that asked what changes have made that address student academic achievement challenges:

Over the years we’ve just pushed the writing across the curriculum hard, so all our teachers require at least one short, constructed response from their students in each of their classes. That’s the minimum. And that has impacted the writing scores
significantly. (Second) The other things are what we’ve talked about, just staying consistent in our expectations that the teachers implement good instruction, to include data collection. You know, looking at the data, a number of our teachers reached the threshold of 70% of the students achieving more than one year’s growth.

This secondary principal included two changes that address at-risk student achievement, earning a score of two on the bridge and buffer rubric. The individual principal responses were scored on the rubric and the un-weighted mean score of 2.55 was generated for all principals for CBIP Question 4.

**Relationships dimension.** “What are the most important initiatives that you have undertaken in the last two years?” was CBIP question five. The data generated from the principal responses determined whether the principal was bridging or buffering to the Core Belief 5, “Staff members must have a commitment to children.” This Core Belief generated data that was coded in the dimension of relationships. A rubric score of three indicated the principal stated that student academic achievement increases, indicating a strong bridge to and high priority status for this Core Belief. An elementary principal responded to what important initiatives were undertaken:

I would guess that the two things that I’ve worked on and will continue to work on would be organizing and structuring the school, providing a framework for effective teaching and learning. And with that, laying out expectations and you will do this and you will do this in order to make our school successful. I know that my teachers who are consistently seeking me out, to discuss their children. They refer to them as ‘my kids.’ They have ownership and their conversation shows ownership of their children. Those conversations happen more and more with my more effective teachers that I would view as more
committed to their children. They’re the teachers who make the phone calls and want to go on home visits. These are the teachers who seek out parents when the parents won’t come. They’ll go hound the parents to be part of their child’s education. They’re strong advocates for their children all the time. And those teachers’ conversations when we’re having hard conversations about the school and the directions of the school, and the players in the school are about what kids’ need, not what adults need.

At this school, the principal reported that teachers have formed relationships with children, parents, and colleagues and participate in a culture of feedback to improve student achievement, earning this response a two on the bridge and buffer rubric. A secondary principal answered the important initiatives question this way:

I think one, the increase in the student assessment data for many of our teachers who had assessment data the previous year. The teachers have higher student assessment data now. The staff members’ understanding of why we needed to do the screening process for Advanced Placement (AP). And the teachers did not undermining that process. Also, understanding that this could mean an AP course may not be offered every year, but we may rotate courses because we don’t have the numbers every year. So, an understanding of that process and not thinking that was a bad thing. And, I think that after explaining to them what universities were saying, that meant that they had an understanding that this is what’s good for the kids. The special education teachers were willing to pilot things, try things, and also make scheduling more flexible. To me, this talked about their commitment to least restrictive environment and also preparing the kids and giving them access to more rigorous curriculum.
This principal response scored a three on the bridge and buffer rubric because the three initiatives addressed how relationships were established to achieve increased student achievement. The un-weighted mean score that calculates for all principals was 2.23 for CBIP Question 5.

**Capacity for growth dimension.** The sixth CBIP question sought to gather evidence on the Core Belief 6, “Staff members must have a commitment to the pursuit of excellence.” The dimension of capacity for growth describes this Core Belief. Principals were asked, “What specific goals were you trying to reach with each initiative?” to generate the data. When “student academic achievement increases” was the answer that is given by principals, then principals highly prioritize and bridge to the Core Belief 6 and score a three on the rubric. An elementary principal explained the commitment to the pursuit of excellence:

> With the Core Beliefs, the goal is trying to get people to believe, to not believe, but to understand what we’re doing. And then my goal this year was to get teachers to make that decision, ‘Are they on board or are they not on board?’ The other initiative with Effectiveness and Results, my specific goal was to try to get teachers just to understand how the assessment sets were scored. When you’re looking at who (teacher) is showing up to work, who is prepared to work, and who takes on the leadership roles, (they are committed to excellence). I think teachers who take the feedback on the spot observations and try to change what’s happening in their classroom are committed to excellence.

This principal scored a two on the bridge and buffer rubric teachers because the commitment to excellence was founded in performance, evaluation, and observations. A secondary principal responded to the question that asked about the goals of each initiative:
I wanted to make sure that our teachers understood the new professional evaluation program. How they were being evaluated, as well as how their results were being evaluated. At the beginning of the year, I just wanted to get it (assessments) done. I realized we were not only going to be able to do it (assessments), but we were going to be able to do it well. My expectation would be that everyone takes their assessments seriously.

The rubric score recorded for this principal’s response is zero because the principal does not indicate that any of the initiatives result with increased student achievement as a result of the teacher’s commitment to excellence. The data per principal were reviewed and the rubric score was assigned. The un-weighted mean score for CBIP Question 6 for all 22 principals was 2.32.

The final question asked principals about the most important changes they have made in the area of teacher recruitment and retention. This question generated data to determine if the principal bridges or buffers to the requirement to include a Core Belief exercise and a teaching performance demonstration during the teacher interview process. The principal who scored a three on the rubric stated that both a teaching demonstration and Core Belief exercise was present in the interview process. An elementary principal responded to important changes made with teacher recruitment and retention:

Well, I think teacher recruitment, having that performance piece has been huge. And I think that we continue to make changes in what we ask them to teach to make it even more of an indicator of how they’ll do in the classroom. I try to incorporate Core Beliefs into situational questions so that they’ll have to speak to a student who might be at risk. How are they (students) learning compared to other kids? But also, just having two, we usually have two very specific Core Belief questions where they have to read the Core
Beliefs and tell why it should be one or what do they know about (the school) that would support one of the Core Beliefs? So just having more questions speak to those values of a person has made a big difference.

This principal indicated that the teacher candidate taught a lesson to the hiring committee and that a Core Belief exercise was completed by the candidate during the interview, scoring a three on the bridge and buffer rubric. A secondary principal answered the question about changes in teacher recruitment and retention:

Here are the Core Beliefs and talk to me about them. And ask them to go through and do a variety of exercises around the Core Beliefs. But even the questions I ask have more to do with Core Beliefs than instruction or just classroom management. Well, we certainly do a performance exercise where they have to show us instruction. So, I mean, right then and there you know instruction is important because we’re having you instruct and then having them do a reflection on instruction about what that looks like.

Both the Core Beliefs exercise and the teaching performance were in the principal’s response, earning a rubric score of three on the bridge and buffer scale. The un-weighted mean score for all principals was 2.64 for CBIP Question 7.

Each principal’s un-weighted mean score for all seven questions was calculated (Table 14). The principal mean scores ranged from 1.29 to 3. Within the score range from 0 to 1.40 there was one principal who buffers the Core Beliefs, scoring a low priority. Ten principals had an un-weighted mean score between 2 and 2.43, placing these 10 in the bridging range that the Core Beliefs are a priority to the principal. Additionally, 11 principals had an un-weighted mean score between 2.57 and 3, indicating these 11 principals bridge to the Core Beliefs and make the Core Beliefs a high priority. The mean un-weighted average for all 22 principals was 2.47.
Overall, 21 of the 22 principals prioritize or highly prioritize the Core Beliefs in their teacher interview process and in their everyday practice as administrators in the school.

Table 14

*Principal Bridging Measure*

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<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Level</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>2.71</td>
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*A score closer to 0 would indicate buffering the Core Beliefs. Composite score indicates the degree principal bridges to Core Beliefs. Low priority = 0 to 1.4, priority = 1.5 to 2.4, high priority=2.5 to 3.*

The rubric score recorded for this principal’s response is zero because the principal does not indicate that any of the initiatives result with increased student achievement as a result of the
teacher’s commitment to excellence. The data per principal were reviewed and the rubric score was assigned. The un-weighted mean score for CBIP Question 6 for all 22 principals was 2.32.

The findings are presented in this chapter. The principals’ teacher hiring criteria for a teacher candidate were identified and the SPIP data were analyzed. The analysis produced four emergent themes that serve as the four dimensions of the principal hiring criteria construct that is applied to the teacher candidate. The four dimensions of relationships, pedagogy, cultural fit, and capacity for growth are described, defined, and applied to the data generated from the principal interviews. Nineteen principals were observed in 19 teacher candidate interviews. The 19 OM triangulated with the data that generated from the SPIP by applying the four emergent dimensions to the OM. The TIP data were analyzed and all 22 protocols were coded into the four hiring construct dimensions. Next, the CBIP data generated from the seven principal interview questions, which represent the Core Beliefs, were applied to the four dimensions of the hiring construct. The district’s Core Beliefs were examined to determine if principals’ bridge or buffer to the cultural fit of the district during the teacher interview, influencing the decision as to why a teacher candidate is offered a position over another teacher candidate.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

Potential teacher candidates for hire are scored by hiring personnel on a variety of measures, for example college grade point average, ACT and/or SAT score, and the points awarded for the university the candidate attends. Each of the aforementioned are assigned a value and a composite score is derived to predict which candidate will make the most effective teacher for students, raising student achievement. Over the past few decades, school administrators who are responsible for teacher hiring sought candidates who have teaching experience, have university teacher education coursework preparation, have a teacher license in the state where the school is located, and have a master’s degree (Walsh & Tracy, 2004). Policy makers have not successfully implemented teacher hiring policy that has been effective for K-12 public schools. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2004) is the federal law that governs teacher quality by establishing criteria that establishes a teacher’s highly qualified status by licensure and content knowledge in the grade and content the teacher is able to teach. These attempts to identify and require specific criteria that teacher candidates will possess have not successfully addressed decreasing teacher attrition or positively contributed to the increase in student achievement. The criteria for a successful teacher hire remains unclear.

To provide clarity, this study explores one school district and utilizes a multiple case study design to seek to understand what specific criteria principals want to observe in the candidate during a teacher-for-hire interview and how that evidence of the principals’ teacher hiring criteria culminates in choosing the final teacher candidate over the other candidates to be the new teacher in their school. One purpose of this study is to generate qualitative data that provides an in-depth understanding of the principal’s teacher hiring criteria while the other
purpose of this study is to gather data to determine the degree the principal bridges to or buffers away from the district’s Core Beliefs during the teacher hiring process.

Teacher attrition is a problematic issue in K-12 education due to the inconsistent delivery of classroom instruction and the high cost to replace a teacher each school year (Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll, 2003, Gordon & Crabtree, 2006). Additionally, hiring the best teacher candidate at the point of hire may reduce teacher attrition (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). This case study design allowed each of the 22 principals to share a comprehensive view about their own teacher hiring guidelines and criteria (Yin, 2003). These data that were gathered from the principals’ teacher hiring criteria structured interview protocol, the teacher candidate interview observation, and the Core Beliefs structured interview protocol are robust and rich, focusing on how the evidence the principal identifies during the teacher interview is used to identify the teacher candidate who will be an effective instructor by increasing student achievement (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Leppescu, & Easton, 2010; Little & Bartlett, 2010).

This study finds foundation and guidance in the conceptual framework of job performance theory (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993). In general, the guiding theory for this study represents one construct with eight dimensions of job-specific task proficiency, non-job specific task proficiency, oral and written communication tasks, demonstrated effort, personal discipline, facilitate peer and team performance, supervisory and leadership behaviors, and management and administrative tasks. Although all eight dimensions will not be present in every job, demonstrated effort, personal discipline, and core task proficiency will be present in every job. The core task proficiency provides foundation for the specific teacher selection criterion for job performance and emerges from declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge and skill, and motivation (Campbell & Campbell, 1988). Campbell and Campbell (1988) advised
adopter a productivity model that meets the organization’s needs and goals and is supported by the data. Moving away from objective criteria, for example teacher experience and license, this study focuses on the principals’ report of evidence that indicates the candidate has the ability to be a “good fit” for the students in this district in their school (Harris & Rutledge, 2010).

This study reveals four themes that emerge from the data as the prominent themes of the principals’ teacher hiring criteria. The four themes represent the four hiring dimensions of the principals’ teacher hiring construct: relationships, pedagogy, cultural fit, and capacity for growth. The discussion of the principals’ teacher hiring criteria, represented by the four teacher hiring dimensions, follows.

**Principal Hiring Criteria**

**Relationships dimension.** Aaronson, Barrow, and Sander (2007) and Jepsen (2005) concluded that teachers who display qualities, for example communication skills, relationship building techniques with students, and other intrinsic skills, as factors that may have been present in the teacher all along may positively affect student achievement. The act of relationship building was identified as an important outcome of effective teaching and learning when the theory of multiple intelligences emerged in the 1980s. Moran, Kornhaber, and Gardner (2006) summarized Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences and defined two of the intelligences, interpersonal and intrapersonal relationship skills, as the ability to understand others and self. Teacher candidates that utilized communication skills and intrapersonal skills to develop and grow relationships were sought to hire by the principal (Harris, Rutledge, Ingle, & Thompson, 2006; Ingle & Rutledge, 2010).

Principals emphasized relationships when they described the evidence they seek when describing the best teacher each has seen teach. Principals consider the teacher candidate’s
ability to establish, maintain, and grow a relationship with students as a desirable trait to observe and influence the principals’ decision to hire a candidate. Conversely, all principals provided an answer coded as relationships when describing the worst teacher each has observed teaching. These responses indicate that the teacher candidate’s inability to establish and grow a relationship disqualifies the candidate from the teaching job offer. More than half of all principals list the candidate who lacks relationship skills as the number one reason not to hire the teacher candidate. Additionally, the teacher who does not have the inability to establish, develop, and maintain relationships was a prominent reason to non-renew the teacher contract at the end of the school year. Cohen (2006) stated that social-emotional competencies provided an essential foundation for relationship interaction. Furthermore, he stated that individuals who displayed these attributes of pleasure, engagement, meaning, and interaction promote social-emotional competencies and display ethical dispositions that are foundations for learning and development.

Moreover, during the observations of the teacher-for-hire interviews, principals were observed showing an interest in how well the teacher candidate will establish a relationship with them. Principals noted that the candidate’s ability to connect with the principal and the teachers on the hiring committee during the interview and during the candidate’s teaching performance provides evidence of a desirable attribute. The candidate displays evidence of establishing and maintaining relationships that indicates future success connecting to and developing a relationship with colleagues, students, and parents. Teacher candidates have the opportunity to provide evidence during the interview of how they will manage the classroom and student behavior, create an environment for learning, and model rapport and respect (Danielson, 1996).

The principals established the need and the importance of assessing how the teacher candidate displays evidence of being able to establish relationships. The teacher interview
protocol document analysis reveals, on average, a quarter of the protocol questions asked of teachers during the teacher interview were coded relationships. A principal looks for the ability to establish relationships, describing the evidence of relationship building as “something that comes out (from the teacher candidate) that directly says, I am here for children and doing whatever it takes to do that,” stated a principal.

The relationships dimension interconnects with pedagogy and cultural fit and allows these two dimensions to connect with each other. Relationships connect all four of the dimensions and principals want teacher candidates who display communication skills and who develop student classroom behavior strategies. Relationship sub-theme attributes include being respectful, caring, innate, and nurturing. The relationship dimension identifies a higher level of application by engaging students, colleagues, and parents. Other relationship criteria describe the candidate who can engage with relevance in all interactions and engage in all activities with all participants by interconnecting all aspects of the various relationships.

**Pedagogy dimension.** The dimension of pedagogy comprises intelligence, content knowledge, leadership, instruction, student learning, and assessment. Walsh and Tracy (2004) reported that studies they have reviewed indicated that a teacher’s subject matter competency did not affect student achievement. Yet, they did report that a teacher’s literacy level, the knowledge of words, reflects the teacher’s general world knowledge (Walsh & Tracy, 2004). These researchers stated that college coursework in education that prepared students to become teachers added little value to the teacher’s effectiveness (Walsh & Tracy, 2004). The principals in this study contradicted what Walsh and Tracy report. Principals in this study reported pedagogy as an important criterion to require when hiring a teacher because the principals’ responses in this study placed the most emphasis on the themes that are represented by the dimension of
pedagogy. Data that generated from the principals was clear that exemplary pedagogy was very important in their decision as to which teacher candidate to offer the job.

Principals seek the best teacher candidate and the best teacher candidate displays evidence of teaching skill and content knowledge. Danielson (1996) promoted that effective teachers are proficient in the ability to demonstrate content knowledge, pedagogy, student engagement skills, and instructional strategies. Principals sought candidates who have the depth and breadth of content knowledge and who can communicate that knowledge to students so learning may occur with students. Although specific criteria, for example evidence of passing a content knowledge test, may not be required, the teacher candidates must display other evidence of content, indicating that they will be more knowledgeable than the students they will teach. Additionally, a deeper understanding of the content allowed teachers to tailor learning activities for their students that align with the scope and sequence of the curriculum, providing students with appropriate content tasks that will prepare them for future learning during that school year and for the school years to come. To be considered for hire, the teacher candidate must show evidence of teaching skill and methodology.

Principals consistently stated that the worst teacher is one who does not have pedagogical skills. Moreover, these individuals have no business being in the profession as an educator. These teachers often move from school to school on a yearly basis because they do not show enough promise when it comes to content knowledge or teaching skill or both to stay employed.

The observation of the principals during a teacher-for-hire interview provided evidence of how principals emphasize pedagogy as a criterion to hire a teacher. All the interviews included a teaching performance. Principals predicted teacher candidate success during the interview by how effectively the candidate presents the teaching lesson to the principal and the
hiring committee. Also, if the candidate is chosen for hire, the principals determine that teacher’s success as an educator by observing the teacher utilizing content knowledge and methodology in the classroom when teaching students.

The principals in this study know that students who come from homes of poverty are academically behind their peers who attend school in other districts. This knowledge demands that teachers teach so students achieve at a rate, in many student instances, of more than a year’s growth in a year’s time. The demands that administrators place on teachers in this district require teachers to be exemplary in their knowledge of the content and teaching methodology. This pedagogical requirement is evident with the number of teacher interview protocol questions that represented the dimension of pedagogy. Nearly half of all protocol questions asked a teacher candidate during the interview-for-hire provided evidence of the teacher’s content knowledge and teaching skill.

Pedagogy globally represents teaching skill and content knowledge. The intelligent candidate displays the ability to think quickly and “on their feet.” Also, the candidate displays evidence of attributes that the candidate is a good student. The candidate provides evidence of the content knowledge they will teach for the position sought. Demonstrating teaching methods and the skills content knowledge, rigor, and relevance comprise the dimension of pedagogy. Also, principals desire teachers who can contribute to the school and to the classroom synergy. Teacher candidates who can communicate that they have high expectations for behavior and academics are desirable to hire. The teacher candidate should possess organizational skills and be detail-oriented.

Cultural fit dimension. Principals seek to identify the teacher candidate who displays evidence that the teacher will fit into the culture of the school and adhere to the mission and
vision (Becker, Kennedy, & Hundersmarck, 2003; Papa & Baxter, 2008; Tooms, Lugg, & Bogotch, 2010). Furthermore, the principal seeks the teacher candidate who understands and will buy-in to the challenges that are present when teaching in schools where students come from homes of poverty. The district in this study has six Core Beliefs articulated and communicated to staff, students, parents, and patrons. The Core Beliefs will be discussed later in this chapter.

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) reported responsibilities of the principal that affect student achievement. Of the 21 responsibilities, one was to promote the beliefs of the school and communicate the culture of the school through a sense of cooperation and community. A second responsibility of the principal was to share how the beliefs and culture become operational in the school. The principal establishes and communicates clear academic goals and consistently communicates the achievement message. With these responsibilities that surround cultural fit, the teacher candidate interview is an appropriate place to share the school’s culture and goals and to ascertain the degree of agreement the teacher candidate has with the school’s culture. The principal and other staff members would expect a teacher new to the school would demonstrate behaviors that would be congruent with the culture.

Yet, as important as it is for a teacher candidate to assimilate into the culture of the school, principals in this study put little weight on cultural fit as a prominent criterion to assess for a new teacher hire. About half of the principals spoke to the importance of cultural fit when describing the best teacher each has watched teach. And, about the same number of principals reported the worst teacher is described as one who did not fit into the culture of the school. Otherwise, the majority of principals barely mentioned cultural fit specifically as a teacher hiring criterion. This imbalance of the frequency of principal reports prompted a second interview with
principals to determine what weight each principal places on the Core Beliefs in the teacher candidate hiring process.

The observation memos generated data that indicated that all principals observed have teacher candidates complete a Core Belief exercise to determine the candidate’s cultural fit to the students. The teacher interview protocol averaged one question per principal that addresses cultural fit and that one question is the Core Belief exercise. Principals appear to be talking the talk about identifying candidates who fit the culture of the school. However, it also appears that the principals are not walking the walk when it comes to determining the candidate’s cultural fit at the point of hire.

The sub-theme of passion appears in both the theme of cultural fit and the theme of capacity for growth. Teachers who verbalize a passion for teaching in schools with students of poverty display cultural fit and are sought for hire. Also, teachers who have had similar personal experiences as the students they may teach and can tell their story of how they have overcome hardship and challenge in their own lives move further along the continuum to be the candidate offered the teaching job. The candidate who seems to believe that all students can learn despite their family’s socio-economic status or the family’s structure will be more desirable for hire as a teacher. Indicating a love for children and a passion for teaching in general identifies the candidate who can to grow with the principal’s expectations of a teacher and be a life-long learner. The candidate will also display an attitude and practice of student-centered servitude that will reveal the candidate’s degree of cultural fit. Within the dimension of cultural fit, principals hire teachers who can connect to the school, the students, the colleagues, and the parents.

**Capacity for growth dimension.** The district in this study has extensive professional development activities that are scheduled and teacher participation is required. The teacher
candidate who displays evidence of capacity for growth assimilates to the expectations of professional development to improve instruction that is delivered to students. Teaching team responsibilities vary from weekly professional learning community meetings, periodic grade or content level meetings, and periodic curriculum alignment with lesson planning meetings. As Lambert (2003) described the variety of methods to gain and sustain teacher capacity in the school organization, a culture of feedback is a prominent element to help individual teachers grow as educators. This feedback often identifies areas of teacher improvement for instruction with the impact goal of increasing student achievement. The teacher-for-hire interview is an appropriate venue to observe evidence that the teacher candidate is capable of growth as a professional. Life-long learning as an educator is now a given expectation of teacher candidates as principals demand to hire teachers who are effective or who will have the capacity to become effective quickly (Lambert, 2003; Reeves, 2008; Smoker, 2006).

Principals reported capacity for growth as a prominent hiring criterion for teachers when they described the best and the worst teachers. The majority of principals reported that capacity for growth is an important attribute that the best teachers display and when this dimension of the hiring criteria is lacking or non-existent, the principal labeled the teacher as the worst. All of the elementary principals as a group ranked capacity for growth as one of their top three criteria to identify in a teacher candidate to hire. However, capacity for growth was identified by only a few secondary principals when specifically ranking their top three hiring criteria that they apply to teacher candidates. None of the secondary principals identified capacity for growth as the number one criterion to hire, while only three other secondary principals named capacity for growth in the top three criteria to hire a teacher candidate. Secondary principals were
inconsistent with what they reported as capacity for growth describing the best teacher and what they inquired about during the interview with a teacher candidate.

More than half of the principals stated that the reason to non-renew a teacher contract is the teacher’s lack of growth with content knowledge and teaching skill over the course of the school year. Why did the teacher not show significant performance growth during the school year? Is it possible that the principal hired the teacher candidate who did not provide sufficient evidence of the ability to grow as a teacher, enabling the teacher’s failure? With the demand on teachers in this school district to instruct with rigor and realize increased student assessment outcomes, the principal should gather more information on the teacher candidate’s capacity to grow as a teacher.

The observation memos of the teacher interviews revealed collaborating data that capacity for growth evidence is sought by the principal and the hiring committee. Although the principals asked the teacher candidate at least two interview protocol questions that align with capacity for growth, the questions did not address the demands the district places on teachers to meet instructional and student achievement expectations. The questions asked by the hiring committee members were not aligned with the demands and expectations that principals have for new-hire-teachers and the data generated from these questions will not satisfy the principal’s need to know if the teacher candidate is trainable. Capacity for growth is an important criterion for the principals’ teacher hiring criteria, but the protocol questions asked will not yield the data the principals need to make the best decision as to which candidate to hire.

Capacity for growth is the dimension for which principals provided the most examples of teacher candidate hiring evidence. The candidate’s level of honesty, morality, and ethics will be detected by the interviewers by how the candidate responds. Personality was a theme that
emerged and one that principals described as the candidate having strong character and strong attributes along with the candidate being outgoing and personable. Principals sought candidates who were a commanding presence in the classroom. The theme of creativity is exemplified by the candidate’s ability to be flexible and “think out of the box.”

Passion, enthusiasm, balance, energy, competitive, confidence, self-esteem, tenacity, intuitive, compassionate, and persistence exemplify the theme of capacity for growth. The candidate can perceive the needs of self and others. The candidate who is perceived by principals to “be a team player” and understand relevance in all interactions and understands interconnectedness with all participants in all activities fits into this dimension of capacity for growth.

The principals identify these hiring criteria that emerged as themes in the teacher hiring and retention process. Work ethic, reflection, motivation, and managing relationships are the themes that also align with this dimension. Along with having a strong work ethic, a sub-theme of the ideal candidate being competitive surfaced during the principal interviews and the candidate interview observations. Capacity for growth is described by the sub-theme of reflection, by seeking assistance as needed, receiving constructive criticism and managing feedback, and by being responsive to individuals as well as situations. The ability to motivate is a consistent theme that was supported by the sub-themes of influence of others, empowerment of others, and demonstration of the candidate’s intrinsic qualities. The successful candidate can manage relevance in all interactions and manage interconnectedness, making the learning authentic. The sub-theme of knowing self puts the candidate in a category of self-actualization.
Summary

The principal SPIP data clearly generated evidence and descriptors that denote the four themes that become the codes that make up the hiring criteria dimensions. The construct is the principal’s hiring criteria and the four hiring dimensions are relationships, pedagogy, cultural fit, and capacity for growth. This construct of principal hiring criteria and the four dimensions of the hiring criteria are represented in a graphic model for the hiring process that make up the four dimensions of the hiring criteria. The data analysis reveals that the dimensions of relationships, pedagogy, and cultural fit each interrelate and overlap with the other. The fourth dimension, capacity for growth, is the blanket that covers and measures the individual’s growth as a teacher in terms of the other three dimensions (Figure 1).

Overall, the principal SPIP data showed that as a group principals are more consistent when identifying positive evidence that become indicators of a good teacher candidate while the principals as a group provide varied responses on the negative indicators of evidence that the teacher is not performing to the principals’ expectations. As previously mentioned, the descriptors of evidence that were coded in the dimension of cultural fit are talked about by principals with frequency, but were not identified specifically as hiring or as firing criteria, suggesting a disconnect with “what principals say” in theory and “what principals do” in practice.

Core Beliefs

The principals’ teacher hiring criteria data that emerged from the SPIP were analyzed and coded into the four dimensions of the principals’ hiring construct. Relationships, pedagogy, and capacity for growth represent three of the dimensions that emerged from the principal data. Cultural fit was the fourth dimension that emerged from the SPIP data. Yet, the cultural fit data
was prominent in the principal reports because the Core Belief exercise is required by the district as part of the teacher-for-hire interview protocol. Although the principals’ reports prominently noted responses that were coded as cultural fit when interviewed, the principals do not provide data coded as cultural fit criterion when asked specific questions about their teacher hiring criteria. Due to this incongruence with the principal data reporting, further research is conducted to determine the degree that the principal bridges or buffers to the district’s philosophy, represented by the Core Beliefs.

Figure 1

_Principal’s Teacher Hiring Decision_

Principal's Teacher Hiring Decision

Capacity For Growth
The philosophy and culture of the district impact student learning and student academic achievement growth. Zmuda, Kuklis, and Kline (2004) presented a six step framework for continuous school improvement as determined by increased student academic achievement. The first four steps of the framework emphasize all adults working in the district have a shared vision of the district’s philosophy while the last two steps implement the innovations.

The aforementioned continuous improvement framework aligns with the district in this study because the shared vision that is founded in the Core Beliefs and identified in this study as the dimension of cultural fit interrelates to the other three dimensions of the principals’ teacher hiring criteria: relationships, pedagogy, and capacity for growth. The principal bridging measures determine the degree to which principals’ bridge, or adhere to the Core Beliefs, or buffer away from the Core Beliefs during the teacher candidate-for-hire interview.

**Relationships dimension.** The dimension of relationships aligns with Core Belief 5, “Staff members must have a commitment to children.” Principals prioritize and bridge to this Core Belief during the hiring process. A secondary principal addressed the commitment to children:

> One of the biggest changes this year is a homework policy. In the past, we haven’t had consistency with homework. We’ve seen clearly that with some teachers, who have the expectations, that the kids can and will do it. But, we are going to expect all teachers to issue homework to kids. I think three times a week. Something that’s meaningful.

An elementary principal describes the teacher who is connected and committed to students by describing teacher conversations:

> Just the everyday conversations of where we are on CBM tests or CSAP tests. If we are not 100% advanced, they (teachers) are not satisfied. If they’re 100% proficient
advanced, they’re still not satisfied because there are some kids who are not advanced.

So, what do we need to do to get them (students) to the next level? And, how do we keep moving? And how do we keep going? They are never happy and they are looking for what’s next and how do we get better?

However, this question produces the lowest bridging measure among all principals.

Interestingly, relationships are described by principals when describing the best and worst teacher for the principals’ teacher hiring criteria. Also, the SPIP data indicate those teachers who were deficit in the dimension of relationships are more likely to be let go and have their contract non-renewed for the next school year. Specifically, the dimension of relationships in the principals’ teacher hiring criteria and the alignment with the Core Beliefs of the district requires further study.

**Pedagogy dimension.** The first three Core Beliefs are, “Our main purpose is to improve academic achievement;” “Effective instruction makes the most difference in student academic achievement;” and, “There is no excuse for poor quality instruction.” Core Beliefs 1, 2, and 3 align with the dimension of pedagogy. The principals as a group consistently agreed that the student need is to improve academic achievement. An elementary principal stated, “(The student need is) high academic atmosphere and expectations. It can’t just be about giving them high quality instruction; it has to be demanding it of them and then really making sure that the atmosphere is conducive to learning.” Another elementary principal added:

I think that another huge challenge for us right now is the breadth of the curriculum … the scope of it. It’s pretty enormous in its size. And so, I think one of our Action Plan goals, specifically, is to really work on that alignment piece and get to the point where we have a balanced focus, where we have the right priorities clearly in front of us.
The system of instruction cycles through delivery, assessment, re-teaching, and re-assessment as dictated by the student learning need. One secondary principal commented, “The most important piece we’ve put in place is the feedback; feedback from the administrative team; targeted feedback to help teachers improve, and then peer feedback.”

As has been previously discussed, pedagogy is prominent in the principal reports of what their teacher hiring criteria is for candidates. This data gathered for the Core Beliefs supports the data gathered from the principals. Principals bridge to the first two Core Beliefs because the data indicates they highly prioritize them in the teacher hiring process. The SPIP data concludes that principals prioritize, and therefore bridge to Core Belief 3.

The final question pertaining to the district philosophy, Core Belief 7, asks principals, “What are the most important changes you have made in the area of teacher recruitment and retention?” The principal who bridges to this Core Belief responded by verifying that the principal includes a teaching demonstration during the teacher candidate interview. An elementary principal described the implementation of the teaching performance during the candidate interview, “For us, the biggest change that we made was we started doing performance interviews before the district started doing performance interviews.”

A secondary principal described how the teacher performance is part of the teacher candidate interview:

I think slowing down the (hiring) process here in terms of taking the time to post, get applicants, not being afraid to close it down and reopen it if we have to, (and) requiring performance interviews. So, we require teachers to deliver a lesson.

The data shows that principals highly prioritize teacher candidates teaching a sample lesson to the interview committee. This item, also, indicated the principals bridging to this Core
Belief during the teacher candidate-for-hire interview.

**Cultural fit dimension.** Principal data indicated bridging compliance with Core Belief 4, “With our help, at risk students will achieve at the same rate as non-at risk students.” This Core Belief was coded into the dimension of cultural fit. Principals indicated that all students can learn and they seek teacher candidates who believe the same about students who come from homes of poverty. These principal responses noted the second highest bridging measure of the Core Beliefs. When principals are asked what changes have they made in teacher recruitment and retention, principal responses highly prioritize and bridge to incorporating a Core Belief exercise during the teacher candidate interview. One elementary principal described how adjustments have been made to address at-risk learners:

We’ve totally revamped how we support kids that are not learning through a very meticulous process of data, notebook keeping, training of paraprofessionals, getting kids support, and progress monitoring to see if their data lines are going up compared to the average student. Definitely, I’ve really focused more instructional time.

A secondary principal echoed what the elementary principal stated about addressing the achievement rate for at-risk students:

I think (we are) just getting tighter and tighter about what good instruction looks like and how we deliver that instruction. Staff meetings are no longer kind of just sit and we just talk about upcoming events and dates that can be sent out on e-mail. When we spend any time together as a staff, we have training, instruction, discussing students’ needs, and how we’re going to meet those needs. And, being a bit more directive with parents about what we need them to do to support their students at home, so that they can be here ready to learn.
The final question pertaining to the district philosophy, Core Belief 7, asks principals, “What are the most important changes you have made in the area of teacher recruitment and retention?” The principal who bridges to this Core Belief responded by verifying that the principal includes a Core Belief exercise during the teacher candidate interview. An elementary principal described the implementation of the Core Belief exercise:

The Core Beliefs, what we do is we actually share with them not only the district Core Beliefs, but our belief of ensuring the success of one student at a time. That is our motto. So, I really try to listen to what they’re saying when they’re going over not only ensuring success with one student at a time, but as their deciding which one to defend in the Core Beliefs and which one to omit. It’s really trying to be in tune with what they’re saying to see if they’re going to be a right fit for our school.

A secondary principal described how the Core Beliefs are part of the teacher candidate interview:

We have them go through a Core Beliefs exercise. We’ve had people that you know, will say that ‘what’s the most important and why?’ and it’s very clear that they understand what it is that we’re about. Because of the Core Beliefs, there are several of those that if you pick it and you begin to elaborate on why you’ve picked that one, in your answer you’ll end up mentioning other ones.

Although the principals spoke consistently and highly prioritize the understanding that at-risk students can learn, the data generated from each principal does not produce specific cultural fit hiring criteria for teacher candidates, other than the candidate completing the Core Belief exercise. This justifies that this disconnect may cause the principal to hire the wrong candidate at the point of hire, leading to this teacher’s contract non-renewal after one year because the candidate’s adherence to the culture was not thoroughly assessed at the teacher interview.
The contention to ensure the Core Beliefs and the cultural fit of the candidate to the school district and the vacant teaching position is solidified by the evidence gathered from principals when they were asked what their top three criteria are not to hire. This finding identified an incongruent connection between the criteria principals state they follow to hire the teacher candidate initially and the reason principals give to retain or discharge the teacher at the end of the school year. The importance of the district philosophy in the teacher hiring process and the need to communicate a shared vision to teacher candidates requires further study.

**Capacity for growth.** Core Belief 6, “Staff members must have a commitment to excellence” aligns to the dimension of capacity for growth. SPIP data generated indicates that principals bridge to this Core Belief and incorporate this dimension in their criteria when hiring a teacher candidate. Principals responded that student academic achievement increases as a result of achieving the goal(s) of each initiative, indicating that principals prioritize and measure the staff member’s commitment to excellence through initiative goal attainment. An elementary principal explained the commitment to excellence:

I think it’s taken a little bit of time to get them to a point where they (teachers) have arrived at understanding that one of the most important things they can do for a child is not only to be there, to nurture, to support, … (and) for them (teachers) to recognize how important the student achievement piece is in the scope of that, in the scope of their mission. And so, I think I love the fact that our Mission Statement addresses the fact that we must have that commitment to children, to that total child and balance that with this pursuit of excellence. That’s what’s going to open doors and create possibilities for our students. I think, in the long run, that we’re giving them those foundational skills that will allow them (students) to be academically successful.
A secondary principal interjected on the commitment to excellence by principals and teachers:

You can’t ignore the data. You know, everyone (the teacher) is looking to see if what they’re doing is working. Their commitment is to follow up with their results. We are asking them to keep a data notebook and, again, to be very transparent with each other in their content areas. Looking at their own areas of strengths and weaknesses and trying to mitigate those weaknesses through working together with others. And, not being afraid to ask for help from anyone is, I think, a commitment.

Principals reported that capacity for growth is prominent in their hiring criteria when they described the attributes of the best teacher for hire while they also identify the lack of the candidate’s capacity for growth as the worst teacher. The capacity for growth criterion appears again in the data as the leading reason for the principal to non-renew the contract and have the teacher leave employment after one year of teaching at the school. Although the principals prioritize capacity for growth in the Core Beliefs, this Core Belief is the second lowest of the bridging scores among the principals.

**Summary.** The Core Beliefs data are embedded within the principal and the principal shows a congruence between the Core Beliefs and the teacher hiring process, yet, data coded as cultural fit are not identified by the principals as a prominent criterion to or not to hire a teacher candidate. Again, principals should place priority on cultural fit and include additional questions during the teacher candidate interview that will allow the candidate-for-hire to provide evidence of how the candidate will assimilate to the cultural fit of the district.

Principals bridge to the district’s philosophy, represented by the Core Beliefs, with students’ academic achievement outcomes and teachers’ commitment to educate students who
come to the school from homes of poverty. Principals account for teacher quality and the
effectiveness of the teacher by measuring both student achievement outcomes and the
commitment to work with at-risk students. Teacher quality and effectiveness in the teacher
recruitment and hiring process represent one element of teacher quality while another element of
teacher quality is identified by the teacher’s ability and willingness to work toward continuous
improvement (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Leppescu, & Easton, 2010; Lambert, 2003).

**Implications and Recommendations**

The principal decides who on the teaching staff is retained and that decision occurs at the
end of the school year (Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Kelley, Heneman, &
Milanowski, 2002). When the teacher or principal decides to terminate the relationship with the
school, the decision to leave becomes reactive. This reactive process removes any opportunity to
remediate either teacher concerns or performance evaluation deficiencies identified by the
principal and the teacher’s attrition seems inevitable. However, school administrators can
address teacher retention proactively during the teacher hiring process at the point of hire. The
focus on retention begins with hiring the “right” teachers in the first place (Minarik, Thornton, &
Perreault, 2003). Principals may be able to reduce teacher attrition by hiring candidates that
provide evidence of the principals’ teacher hiring criteria during the candidate interview. By
hiring the “right” teacher initially, principals can save time and money and not have to
extensively train the new teacher to meet the principal’s instruction and student achievement
expectations (Gordon & Crabtree, 2006). With specific teacher hiring criteria identified and
applied, principals may reduce the need to re-train or replace new teacher hires.

The data generated by principals indicates that the teacher candidate who was considered
for hire over the next candidate is the one who has the ability to work with students and who has
the ability to engage students with interpersonal skills (Harris, Rutledge, Ingle, & Thompson, 2006; Ingle & Rutledge, 2010). The teacher and student relationship was most often managed by the teacher, and principals identified the importance of the teacher candidate to connect with students as being imperative (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003; Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008). Principals were clear that the teacher candidate to hire was the one who showed evidence of being a team player and one who could establish and maintain a rapport with students, parents, and colleagues. The principals identified the attributes and evidence of the teacher candidate’s ability to establish, maintain, and grow relationships at the point of hire, based on the first impression that the candidate made on the principal. An implication of this study may be that the relationship ability that the candidate displays at the point of hire may be an important factor in the decision to release the teacher from employment after the first year of teaching because the lack of relationship building may well effect their instruction and overall pedagogical delivery to students in the classroom.

Due to the results of this study, pedagogy is a very important criterion identified by principals for potential teacher candidates-for-hire. School district hiring personnel require a specific set of teaching skills and content knowledge of all new teacher hires that will meet the initiatives of the district for student achievement by meeting the academic needs of the students. In a profession where nearly 50% of all new teachers leave the profession after five years of classroom teaching, the issue of teacher attrition may be addressed by higher education undergraduate teacher preparation programs that are aligned with teacher preparation that district students need (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Other study results indicate that education courses and other pre-service teacher activities make little difference in teacher effectiveness (Walsh & Tracy, 2004). One implication may be that school districts collaborate with colleges of education
to align pedagogical needs of the district with university teacher preparation. Another implication may well be that school districts provide on-going professional development and in-service activities after the new teacher hired, making the principals’ teacher hiring criteria more important as a tool to identify the best candidate to go into the district supplied teacher training.

Principals in this study reported consistently that the ideal teacher candidate for hire displayed evidence that would indicate the individual had the capacity to grow as a person and as an educator (Lambert, 2003; Reeves, 2008; Smoker, 2006). Although principals mentioned numerous attributes and characteristics, for example creativity, reflective, and flexibility, that the successful candidate would display evidence of during the teacher-for-hire interview, principals agreed that the ability for the new teacher hire to accept feedback and constructive criticism during the first year of employment to improve their teaching skills and abilities was the measure to determine whether or not that teacher was retained for a second year of employment. The implication of the data that was generated from this study identified the teacher candidate’s capacity to grow as an indicator to hire one candidate over another candidate and as an indicator to retain the candidate for the second school year of teaching, but the analysis of the teacher interview protocol used by principals indicated that less than two questions on average were asked of new teacher candidates during the teacher interview that queried capacity for growth. So, the teacher’s capacity for growth is not an area of focus for principals at the point of hire.

The philosophy of teaching and learning, along with the culture of the school district that is founded in the norms and core beliefs may be the key criterion for principals to use to identify the best teacher candidate at the point of hire (Eilers & Camacho, 2007; Latta, 2009; Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004). Moreover, the culture of the organization is the glue by which all elements of the organization are connected (Goldring, 2002; Slater, 1999; Van der Westhuizen,
Mosoage, Swanepoek, & Coetsee, 2005). One implication of this study is that the data indicates that the teacher candidate’s alignment and connection with the philosophy and culture of the school district improves the chances that the teacher will be effective with improving student achievement and improves the chances that the teacher will be retained for the second year of employment.

**Future Research**

Research studies specific to a school or district to determine the principals’ teacher hiring criteria will need to be conducted in the future. Qualitative and quantitative studies have been consistently conducted to determine the qualities and characteristics that teacher candidates should possess to be effective teachers that positively impact student achievement (Achinstein, Ogawa, & Speiglman, 2004; Befani, 2010; Cantrell & Weeks, 2004; Choi, 2010; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Delli & Vera, 2003; Harris, Rutledge, Ingle, & Thompson, 2006; Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002; Little & Bartlett, 2010; Rutledge, Harris, & Ingle, 2010). Yet, previous studies identify significant effective teacher characteristics, but student achievement data indicates ineffective teachers are still in classrooms and teacher attrition remains high across the nation, causing teacher hiring administrators to perceive a teacher candidate supply shortage (Ingersoll, 2001). This study sought to identify the principals’ teacher hiring criteria for the principals in one school district. The data generated from the principals in this study represent the teacher characteristics the principals require because students in this school district need teachers who meet these specific teacher hiring criteria. Therefore, the academic needs of the students determine the new hire teacher characteristics for each school district.
This study’s methods can be replicated in other school districts, yet the results from any one study with replicated methods cannot be generalized to any other school district because the results will be specific to the needs of the students in that particular school district. However, conducting similar studies in other school districts is recommended. Students need effective teachers identified and hired by principals who will stay in the profession. Ascertaining the principals’ teacher hiring criteria is recommended, especially if the district in question is experiencing high teacher turnover, low student achievement, or another related concern that may find a solution founded in the personnel hired as teachers.

Specific to this study, the results support that the criteria the principals identify at the point of hire for teachers is not the same criteria that principals apply at the end of the first year of teaching as the reason(s) that the principal uses to decide to terminate the new teacher’s employment with the school. This incongruence calls for additional study to determine what the actual criteria that principals should be using at the point of hire that will carry through to the continuous performance evaluation of a teacher in a position in the school. Additional study is recommended in this school district because one of the dimensions of the principals’ teacher hiring criteria, the cultural fit, identified by principals is incongruent with the actual application of the cultural fit criterion, represented by the Core Beliefs, by principals to the teacher candidate interview at the point of hire.

Conclusion

Job Performance Theory

The principals’ teacher hiring criteria data generated in this study and the process that culminates in the selection of a teacher by the principal at the end of the interview support Campbell’s job performance theory (Campbell & Campbell, 1988; Campbell, McCloy, Oppler,
& Sager, 1993). Of the eight dimensions of Campbell’s hiring construct, core task proficiency, demonstrated effort, and maintenance of personal discipline are the three factors that would be identified in every job. Furthermore, declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge and skill, and motivation are the specific areas where the specific employee selection criteria emerge. The four dimensions that emerge from the principal SPIP data align with Campbell’s hiring construct dimensions.

Relationships align with non-job specific task proficiency and pedagogy aligns with job-specific task proficiency. Cultural fit aligns with demonstrated effort while capacity for growth aligns with personal discipline. More specifically, declarative knowledge describes content knowledge, which is coded in the dimension of pedagogy. Procedural knowledge and skill define teaching skill and methodology, also coded as pedagogy. Motivation is coded into the dimension of capacity for growth. So, principals create their teacher hiring criteria that aligns with what a supervisor would follow for any type of employment.

Campbell and Campbell (1988) promoted finding new and better ways to predict how individuals would match the organization’s needs at the point of selection for hire. Principals seek the best candidate who will meet the criteria as set forth by the requirements of the job. The specific criteria emerges from what the principal perceives is needed for a successful candidate to fill that teaching position and be successful (Campbell & Campbell, 1988). In this study, a successful candidate is one who will be an effective teacher by raising student achievement.

**Principal Hiring Criteria**

This study focuses on one aspect of the teacher hiring process which is the principals’ teacher hiring criteria applied to the candidate during the interview. The four dimensions of the hiring construct emerged clearly from the principals in this school district. Teacher and
administrator accountability for student achievement is a focus among board members, parents, patrons, and students. The focus on public education and student achievement accountability impacts who will be hired as school personnel, especially teachers. Beyond the horizon of accountability is sustainability (Lambert, 2003).

Clearly, teacher hiring has implications for sustaining student achievement over years. Principals and teachers have spent much time and effort developing curriculum and aligning that curriculum with instruction. Currently, many states have enacted laws that require those responsible for the delivery of the instructional program to students be performance evaluated based on how well students perform on assessments. Given the high stakes associated with student achievement, it would behoove principals to develop a teacher hiring criteria and protocol that would align the academic needs of the students by qualifying candidates as a compatible teacher for student needs. Districts that continue to “churn and burn” teachers each year will continually have a challenge to meet student achievement accountability measures and will “spin their wheels” in the sand of teacher turnover, gaining little to no ground with student achievement.

One purpose of this study was to identify the teacher hiring criteria that principals in one school district used to determine why one teacher candidate was offered a teaching position over another similarly qualified candidate. The development of a teacher interview protocol better aligned to what principals reported as their teacher hiring criteria is warranted. Also, principals should consider aligning the teacher hiring protocol with the district teacher performance evaluation tool because what principals sought in a candidate for hire did not align with what principals reported was the cause to terminate the teacher contract after one year in the classroom. Principals’ descriptions of teachers they retained were described as teachers with a
propensity attributed to the dimension of capacity for growth. It appears that the candidate’s degree of capacity for growth played a larger role in the teacher hiring process than principals realized.

Additionally, the interview protocol should be structured to ask the teacher candidate scenario questions to meet the principals’ teacher hiring criteria and align consistently with the Core Beliefs. When teacher candidates respond to scenario-type questions, their answers are rich with explanation and description and teacher candidates describe how their skills and abilities align with the district philosophy, vision, and culture.

This research is necessary to identify teacher hiring criteria to reduce teacher attrition from the profession and to increase student achievement by hiring effective teachers. It is affirming that principals in the district where this study was conducted have consistent criteria that they apply to reduce the continuous cycle of replacing and retraining teachers. However, alignment in this district with the principals’ teacher hiring criteria, the teacher interview protocol, and the district’s Core Beliefs should be addressed. A teacher interview protocol aligned with the principal criteria would produce a systemic approach to teacher recruitment and retention that would reduce teacher attrition and reduce the negative effect on student achievement.

**District Philosophy**

Another purpose of this study was to determine the degree that each principal bridged to or buffered away from the cultural fit, represented by the Core Beliefs, during the teacher interview-for-hire. As the principals’ teacher hiring criteria emerged during the data collection, it was evident that the principals “talked the talk” about the district philosophy, represented by the Core Beliefs, but did not “walk the walk” when it came to apply the Core Beliefs with depth and
thoroughness to the teacher hiring criteria. The principals sincerely believe in the philosophy and communicated the philosophy to potential teacher candidates, but the principals did not embed the Core Beliefs into the teacher protocol questions and the principals reduced their ability to make an accurate judgment on the teacher candidate’s connection to the district’s philosophy.

However, the Core Beliefs of the district exemplify the cultural fit of administrators, teachers, students, parents, and patrons to the school district. Principals should prioritize the cultural fit of the district in the teacher hiring process. It should not be assumed that the cultural fit is engrained in the community where the district is located, nor should it be assumed there is a general awareness beyond the district and that everyone knows the student population’s ethnic diversity, poverty, and academic challenges. Principals should place priority on this ever-present theme of cultural fit that emerged throughout the data collection from the principals on their teacher hiring criteria.

By explicitly framing the Core Beliefs in conjunction with determining the cultural fit of the candidate to the district, this aligned teacher hiring criterion may help principals focus the other three dimensions of the hiring construct, make them more coherent, develop a shared understanding across committee members, and lead to the development of a teacher protocol instrument that would screen in the potential teacher candidates that principals sought.
Bibliography


Statistical Insights on the Arts, 7(4), 1-25.


Appendix A

Structured Principal Interview Protocol (SPIP)

1. Tell me about your approach to school leadership.
   a. Prompt: How does your leadership approach impact teacher evaluation?

2. Describe the best teacher you have ever seen teach.
   a. Prompt: Tell me more about your response. Give details, examples, and instances.

3. Describe the worst teacher you have ever seen teach.
   a. Prompt: Tell me more about your response. Give details, examples, and instances.

4. When you interview a teacher candidate for hire, what are your top three criteria for hiring in order of importance?
   a. Prompt: What does the candidate say or do that leads you to focus on him/her?
   b. Prompt: What evidence does the candidate provide during the interview that indicates they meet your top three criteria for hiring?

5. When you interview a teacher candidate for hire, what are your top three criteria for not hiring in order of importance?
   a. Prompt: What does the candidate say or do that causes you not to focus on him/her?
   b. Prompt: What evidence does the candidate provide during the interview that indicates they do not meet your top three criteria for hiring?

6. During the teacher hiring process, how do you predict which candidate will be the most effective with students?
   a. Prompt: Tell me more about your response. Give details, examples, and instances.

7. When you observe a teacher in the classroom, how do you evaluate a teacher’s success?
   a. What do you observe that deems the teacher unsuccessful?

8. What specific teacher behaviors, whether you directly observe them or not, lead you to recommend probationary teacher contract non-renewal for the next school year?
   a. Prompt: Tell me more about your response. Give details, examples, and instances.

9. What have I not asked that you would like to tell me about your criteria to select and retain the best teacher candidates?

Thank you for providing your expertise through this interview process.
Appendix B

School District Core Beliefs

• Our main purpose is to improve student academic achievement.

• Effective instruction makes the most difference in student academic performance.

• There is no excuse for poor quality instruction.

• With our help, at risk students will achieve at the same rate as non-at risk students.

• Staff members must have a commitment to children.

• Staff members must have a commitment to the pursuit of excellence.
Appendix C

Core Belief Interview Protocol (CBIP)

Directions: This section asks questions pertaining to how you incorporate the district’s Core Beliefs into your teacher hiring interview. For your reference, here is a copy of the Core Beliefs for your review. Take a moment to review the Core Beliefs. Now, using the Core Beliefs as a guide, please respond to the following 7 questions I will ask:

1. How would you describe the needs of the students (Bridge and Buffer)?
   - Our main purpose is to improve student academic achievement (Core Belief 1).

2. What are your goals for the school (Bridge and Buffer)?
   - Effective instruction makes the most difference in student academic performance (Core Belief 2).

3. What are the challenges the school faces in reaching these goals (Bridge and Buffer)?
   - There is no excuse for poor quality instruction (Core Belief 3).

4. What changes have you made that address these challenges (Bridge and Buffer)?
   - With our help, at risk students will achieve at the same rate as non-at risk students (Core Belief 4).

5. What are the most important initiatives that you have undertaken in the last two years (Bridge and Buffer)?
   - Staff members must have a commitment to children (Core Belief 5).

6. What specific goals were you trying to achieve with each initiative (Bridge and Buffer)?
   - Staff members must have a commitment to the pursuit of excellence (Core Belief 6).

7. What are the most important changes you’ve made in the areas of instruction and curriculum (Bridge and Buffer)?

The researcher codes the responses for each of the seven questions and determines where the answer to each question falls on the continuum from 0 to 3 (from buffering to bridging). A composite score is developed by adding up the coded responses (0, 1, 2, or 3) to each question and dividing by seven.

Thank you for providing your expertise through this interview process.
Appendix D

University of Colorado at Colorado Springs
Institutional Review Board

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Memorandum

TO:        David MacKenzie
FROM:      Sandy K. Wurtele, Ph.D.
           IRB Chair
DATE:      February 12, 2011
RE:        Principal Criteria for Hiring Teacher Candidates
           (IRB #09-206) Expedited

Thank you for submitting your Request for IRB Renewal. Given that there have been no substantive changes affecting the risk/benefit ratio the above-referenced study has been approved for another year, with a new expiration date of 2-12-12. **NOTE: Please include the IRB number and new expiration date on your informed consent document.**

Once human subject research has been approved, it is the Principal Investigator’s (PI) responsibility to report changes in research activity related to the project. The PI must provide the IRB with all protocol and consent form amendments and revisions. IRB must approve these changes prior to their implementation. All advertisements recruiting study subjects must also receive prior approval by the IRB. The PI must promptly inform the IRB of all adverse and serious adverse events to subjects. If the project is to continue beyond the expiration date, the PI must submit for a renewal before the expiration date. Failure to comply with these federally mandated responsibilities might result in suspension or termination of the project.

Thank you for your concern about human subject protection issues, and good luck with your research.

Cc: Office of Sponsored Programs
    John Weathers, Ph.D.