

HOW DO TEACHERS PERCEIVE EFFECTIVE TEACHING
IN A SMALL, URBAN DISTRICT?

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Steven, and my sons, Avery and Spencer. This dissertation would not have been possible without the love, support, and encouragement of my wonderful family. I love you more than you know.

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ABSTRACT

Educational reforms centered on standards and accountability have done little to impact instructional practices in the classroom. School and district leaders recognize that improving teaching quality and effectiveness is necessary for student learning to increase. However, teaching and learning cannot improve without thoroughly examining what happens inside the classroom. Unfortunately, many principals and teachers do not share the same understanding of what constitutes effective teaching. Knowingly, teachers behave in ways consistent with their ideological and pedagogical beliefs. Therefore, if reform efforts are to succeed, instructional leaders must explore teacher perceptions of effective teaching practices.

This study used a qualitative research approach to explore and understand teachers' perceptions of effective teaching. This study intends to support developing a sound instructional model for improving education across the district. Teacher interviews were the qualitative research method employed to create a case study. The findings revealed teacher practices compatible with Marzano's (2017) framework in the feedback and context areas, but inconsistent with the content elements. This study's findings provide practitioners and researchers with recommendations for supporting the implementation and continuation of effective educational practices in their academic setting through a shared cognition of instructional improvements.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Black and Wiliam (1998) declared, “raising the standards of learning that are achieved through schooling is an important national priority” (p. 1). It has now been over twenty years since this proclamation, and yet the sentiment remains today. Educational reforms centered on standards and accountability measures have done little to impact instructional practices in the classroom. If we want to achieve desired student outcomes, we must improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching. Black and Wiliam (1998) referred to the classroom as the “black box” (p. 1). The “black box” is generally neglected, while policies typically focus on standards as inputs and measuring student learning as outputs. Teaching and learning cannot improve without thoroughly examining what happens inside the classroom.

Since the 1998 publication, there has been a significant amount of literature on effective teaching practices and frameworks. However, this section outlines just a few of the more influential contributions to the subject of effective teaching. It also references four instructional frameworks, along with persuasive components.

Marzano’s work spans over thirty years. *The New Art and Science of Teaching* (Marzano, 2017) is a revision of his *Art and Science of Teaching* (Marzano, 2007). The perspective shifted from a focus on teacher actions to student outcomes in his latest edition (Marzano, 2017). Marzano (2017) focused on effective teaching from a student-outcomes perspective. Student learning is the outcome of teachers utilizing effective instructional strategies producing specific mental states and processes in students’ minds. Marzano (2017) organized teacher actions and student mental states and processes into three sections: feedback,

content, and context. Feedback ensued between the teacher and student through explicit learning goals and assessments and content-focused on the lesson's progression. Context referred to the psychological needs of the students.

Stronge's (2018) research focuses on "developing a profile of an effective teacher" (p. 1). His text, *Qualities of Effective Teachers* (2018), has been updated three times since 2002. His latest edition continues to "bridge the gap between research and practice" (p. xi). Stronge (2018) identified six categories of effective teaching than Marzano's (2017) ten types.

The Framework for Teaching (n.d.) is another instructional model. It focuses on four domains of teaching, twenty-two components, and seventy-six elements. Educators utilize the framework for various purposes; however, Danielson asserts that its primary goal is to guide educators' professional conversations to improve their instructional practices (The Framework for Teaching, n.d.).

Fisher and Frey present the FIT Teaching[®] framework (Hite, 2014). FIT denotes Framework for Intentional and Targeted Teaching based on five elements of teaching. Its components associate with planning, climate, instruction, assessment, and student outcomes. The focus is on improving teacher practice resulting in enhanced student learning.

While research supported that the teacher's quality is the most critical factor in students' academic growth and achievement (Danielson, 2009), the differences in teaching practices contributed to a wide range of teacher effectiveness in American schools. Incidentally, there continues to be a growing concern among researchers about how to effectively measure teacher practices and their impact on student learning (Ball & Rowan, 2004).

The task of improving teaching and learning in schools is challenging work. In most circumstances, external reform attempts fail to impact teachers' profound pedagogical principles

(Coburn, 2003). Teachers behave in ways consistent with their ideological and pedagogical beliefs. If reform efforts are to succeed indeed, then teacher perceptions of effective teaching practices must be explored.

While teachers are the number one influencers of student learning, the principal ranks second (Fullan, 2014); thus, in educational institutions all across America, school administrators are assigned the instructional leader's role in their building. However, to be an effective instructional leader, one must possess a deep understanding of the ideologies and pedagogies within their boundaries. It is also essential for instructional leaders/ principals to consider how teachers perceive effective teaching when improving education and learning (Coburn, 2003). This understanding served as a lever for enacting change and perpetuating student growth and achievement throughout Cedar City School District.

Therefore, this qualitative study aimed to explore teacher beliefs and practices encompassing effective teaching methods in four elementary schools in Cedar City School District. The intent was to construct a conceptual framework built on the practical teaching dimensions derived from a case study inquisition for each elementary school and then help school leaders create a sound instructional model.

Problem Statement

“Teachers function within the context of at least two systems: (1) the school and (2) the district. Those systems enhance individual teachers' effectiveness and contribute to individual teachers' ineffectiveness, usually simultaneously” (Marzano, 2017, p. 103). Assuming Marzano's statement to be accurate, how do school leaders respond to these circumstances regarding continuous school improvement measures?

Context

The study took place in four elementary schools located in the Cedar City School District, a pseudonym for a city school district in Tennessee's Mid-Cumberland region. It is a small, urban district composed of four elementary schools and two middle schools. The four elementary schools educate students pre-kindergarten through fifth grade, and the two middle schools educate students sixth through eighth grade. Upon graduating from eighth grade, all students transfer to the high school located in the Forest County School District, a pseudonym for a county school district.

Enrollment. Enrollment data obtained from the 2018-19 report card published by the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) reported 3,702 students currently enrolled in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade in the Cedar City School District. The students' population included 5.1% English Learners, 13.5% Students with Disabilities, and 33.3% Economically Disadvantaged. The student body was 62.7% White and 35.2% Black, Hispanic, and Native American.

The student body was 62.7% White and 35.2% Black, Hispanic, and Native American. Student enrollment differs between the four elementary schools in the district. School A has 549 students, School B has 657 students, School C has 695 students, and School D has 582 students. Even though School C has the largest number of students enrolled, it has the lowest percentage of students identified as Economically Disadvantaged (30.2%). Incidentally, School A has the most insufficient enrollment, but the highest rate of students identified as Economically Disadvantaged (37.7%). Both School B and School D have 35.2% of students identified as Economically Disadvantaged.

Student diversity also differs between the four elementary schools. At 29.5%, School A has the highest Hispanic population and the lowest number of White students (52.5%). School B has the second-highest number of Hispanic students (12.3%) and the highest number of White students (67.1%). School C and School D are similar concerning the percentage of White students and Hispanic students. School C has 10.1% Hispanic and 66.8% White while School D has 10.3% Hispanic and 64.9% White.

English Learners (EL) is another classification fluctuating between the schools. For example, School A has the highest percentage of English Learners (10.4%). School B has 5.2%, and School C has 4.9% of English Learners. School D has the lowest percentage of English Learners (2.9%).

Students with Disabilities (SWD) are relatively similar throughout the schools. School C and School D tied with 14.4%. School A has 13.8%. School B has the lowest at 11.6%.

Even though the schools differ in enrollment and demographics, each of the four elementary schools is similar in organization and structure. Each school has a leadership team composed of two administrators (principal and assistant principal), a learning leader, and a guidance counselor. The average student-teacher ratio for classroom teachers in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade is 16:1.

Each school has at least one Title I interventionist with a paraprofessional. School A has two Title I teachers with one paraprofessional due to the high percentage of Economically Disadvantaged students. Along with Title I interventionists, a Reading Specialist is assigned to each school to intervene with the students identified as reading below grade level. Based on the enrollment of English Learners (EL), English Language Learner (ELL) teachers are distributed

to the elementary schools. School A has three ELL teachers, School D has only one ELL teacher, and School B and School C have two ELL teachers.

Special education teachers are a distinct group in the schools. They are distributed based upon the programming needs of the district. Students with severe special needs attend Comprehensive Development Classrooms (CDC) and do not necessarily attend their zoned school. For example, one school may serve students kindergarten through second grade, while another school may focus on third through fifth-grade students.

Other faculty and staff include five related arts teachers and at least twelve paraprofessionals, depending on their programming needs. For example, to meet prekindergarten guidelines and requirements, an assistant is assigned to each classroom and the certified teacher. Paraprofessionals are set at the district level to accommodate prekindergarten, Title I, and Special Education requirements. Then school administrators assign remaining paraprofessionals to other duties such as RTI2 groups, cafeteria duty, and clerical assistance for the teachers.

Table 1

Demographic Information of Schools in the Cedar City School District and the State-wide Average (2018-19)

	Grade	Enrollment	Student Groups				Racial & Ethnic Groups					
			Black/ Hispanic/ Native Am	ED	EL	SWD	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Native Am or Alaskan	Native Am or Pacific Islander	White
School A	PK-5	549	45.7	37.7	10.4	13.8	1.1	16	29.5	.2	.7	52.5
School B	PK-5	657	31.5	35.2	5.2	11.6	1.2	18.9	12.3	.3	.2	67.1
School C	PK-5	695	30.2	30.2	4.9	14.4	2.3	19.6	10.1	.6	.7	66.8
School D	PK-5	582	33.7	35.2	2.9	14.4	.9	23.2	10.3	.2	.5	64.9
Cedar City School District	PK-8	3,702	35.2	33.3	5.1	13.5	1.6	19.8	15	.4	.5	62.7
TN Statewide Average	PK- 12	973,659	35.2	34.9	4.6	13.5	2.4	24	10.9	.4	.2	62.1

Note. Information obtained from the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE)

Performance. Performance data obtained from the 2018-19 report card published by the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) reported the state of Tennessee has recognized Cedar City School District as a high-performing district receiving a Level 5 rating for six of the past seven years. Achieving “Exemplary” status for two of the last three years, it has earned a current rate of “Advancing.”

According to data obtained from the 2018-19 TDOE statewide assessment, four is the highest score attainable for individual schools in the categories of Academic Achievement, Student Growth, and Progress on English Language Proficiency. For Academic Achievement, School C achieved a 3.3, the highest score in the district. However, School C received a .7 in Student Growth, one of the community’s lowest scores. Incidentally, School B achieved the lowest score in Academic Achievement, 2.6, but then received a 3.5 for Student Growth, the highest score in the district. Similar to School C, School D also had a significant contrast from

Academic Achievement (3.2) to Student Growth (.6). School A remained consistent on both measures, scoring 2.9 in Academic Achievement and 2.3 in Student Growth.

In Progress's area on English Language Proficiency, School C and School D achieved a 4, the highest attainable number. School B earned a 2.9, and School A achieved a 2.7, the lowest score in the district for Progress on English Language Proficiency. Interestingly, School A has the largest Hispanic population and English Learners, but they are making the least amount of growth on the measure of Progress on English Language Proficiency.

Table 2

Performance Data for Schools in the Cedar City School District and the State-wide Average (2018-19)

School	Academic Achievement Level 1-4	Student Growth Level 1-4	Progress on EL Proficiency Level 1-4
School A	2.9	2.3	2.7
School B	2.6	3.5	2.9
School C	3.3	.7	4
School D	3.2	.6	4
Cedar City District	not available	1	not available
TN Statewide Average	not available	not available	not available

Note. Information obtained from the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE)

Teacher evaluation model. The Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) is Tennessee's official teacher evaluation model. With the TEAM model, teachers receive an evaluation score based upon the average of observation scores throughout the year. The Cedar City School District is one of twelve districts who chose an alternative model, Teacher Instructional Growth for Effectiveness and Results (TIGER). The TIGER model is formative in nature. Teachers receive evaluation scores throughout the school year; however, their final score

is not an average but a combination of observations and collected evidence or artifacts (Tennessee Department of Education, n.d.). Both models, TEAM and TIGER, are based on the work of Charlotte Danielson's (2007) framework that identified research-based instructional practices to increase student learning in educational settings.

Statement of Purpose

As an instructional leader, my task is to improve teaching and learning in my school. But how does an instructional leader make changes to instructional practices that have long-lasting implications for student learning? As Reeves' (2016b) stated, the school leader's role is about maximizing the quality of instruction that students receive in school. Suppose instructional leaders intend to make profound and consequential changes in classroom practice. In that case, they cannot ignore "teachers' underlying assumptions about how students learn, the nature of subject matter, expectations for students, or what constitutes effective instruction" (Coburn, 2003, p. 4).

Therefore, this study aims to produce profound, lasting changes to instructional practices, leading to students' desired outcomes in my district. To accomplish this task, the researcher intends to explore teachers' perceptions of effective teaching to create a conceptual framework for each school. Once equipped with each school framework, the researcher plans to construct a sound instructional model to improve education across the district.

Research Questions

How do teachers perceive effective teaching in four elementary schools in a small, urban district?

Sub-questions:

1. What would a conceptual framework look like for each school?

2. How would I help build a sound instructional model to improve teaching and learning across the district?

Significance of Study

The study's significance is that reform efforts for school improvement generally lack depth and do not address teachers' underlying beliefs or assumptions (Coburn, 2003). Therefore, the researcher intends to tell the story of how teachers perceive effective teaching in four elementary schools in one district. The researcher wants to collect participants' experiences and create a shared understanding of their experiences to help build a sound instructional model to improve teaching and learning across the district.

Research Plan

The approach to this study was qualitative research. The researcher chose qualitative research to explore and understand teachers' perceptions of effective teaching. The primary method for data collection in this case study was teacher interviews.

Interpretative framework. The interpretative framework for this study was social constructivism. "Social constructivists believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8). The researcher chose this framework due to the intended goal of finding meaning in teachers' responses to the open-ended interview questions about effective teaching in their classrooms. Authors Creswell and Creswell (2018) identified several assumptions concerning the researcher operating through the lens of social constructivism:

1. Human beings construct meanings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. Qualitative researchers tend to use open-ended questions so that the participants can share their views.

2. Humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspectives - we are all born into a world of meaning bestowed upon us by our culture. Thus, qualitative researchers seek to understand the context or setting of the participants through visiting this context and gathering information personally. They also interpret what they find, an interpretation shaped by the researcher's own experiences and background.
3. The basic generation of meaning is always social, arising in and out of interactions with a human community. The process of qualitative research is largely inductive; the inquirer generates meaning from the data collected in the field.

(p. 8)

Theoretical frameworks. Marzano's book, *The New Art and Science of Teaching* (2017), served as the theoretical framework for this study. Marzano's (2017) instructional model deliberates the unique and complex areas of teaching. The framework is composed of ten design areas and questions within three categories. The framework serves as a road map for teachers to utilize when designing lessons and units of study. The focus on student learning and outcomes makes this model distinct in comparison to other instructional models.

The researcher derives beliefs about how children learn from Piaget's and Vygotsky's (Schunk, 2016) constructivist learning theory. Students construct their knowledge through assimilations and accommodations. The teacher's role is to implement teaching strategies to assimilate new information into their existing knowledge. As a result, the teacher arranges the learning environment to promote engagement, participation, and socialization (Schunk, 2016).

The role of the researcher. The researcher serves as the instrument of primary data collection in this qualitative study; therefore, it is necessary to disclose personal beliefs and

assumptions at the investigation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher currently holds a position of formal leadership within the district. The researcher views effective teaching through the lens of twenty-four years of educational experience, thirteen years as a classroom teacher, one year as an instructional coach, and ten years as a vice-principal.

Bounding the study. The researcher conducted the study in four elementary schools in a small, urban district in Middle Tennessee. The researcher chose six to twelve teachers at random from each elementary school. Using case study research methods, the focus of the study was teachers' perceptions of effective teaching.

Definition of Terms

Pedagogical: Fullan (2014) defines pedagogical as “learning partnerships between and among teachers and students” (p. 36).

Scale: Coburn (2003) defines scales as “involving solely or predominately the expansion of numbers of schools reached by a given reform effort” (p. 3)

Overview of Dissertation

This study added to existing research on teacher perceptions of effective teaching practices. The researcher explored teachers' perceptions of effective teaching, giving the teachers a voice, a chance to tell their story. In turn, the researcher constructed a conceptual model for each school based on their responses.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

William (2018) stated, “the quality of teachers is the single most important factor in the education system” (p. 1). Thus, the school principal must understand how to hire quality teachers while growing and developing existing ones in their schools. If large-scale improvements are to be made in educational structures today, then the focus must begin and end with the teacher’s quality in mind. However, Marshall (2013) argued that “there isn’t a shared definition of good teaching” (p. 23). Many teachers and principals do not share the same understanding of what constitutes effective teaching. Therefore, the question remains: *How do teachers perceive effective teaching?* This chapter essentially reviews the literature on significant education characteristics, the principal’s role as an instructional leader, and achieving scale regarding school improvement implementation.

Effective Teaching

Evidence supports that the teacher’s quality is the most important factor affecting student learning. A high-quality teacher can alter the trajectory of a low-performing student over time (Schmoker, 2018). So, what is it that effective teachers do differently from their less than influential colleagues? Goodwin & Hubbell (2013) argue that it is how the teachers spend the time that they have with students that really makes the difference.

What are the characteristics of effective teaching? Is teaching an art or a science? Many argue this conundrum; however, few arrive at a definitive answer. Marzano (2017) did not choose one side or the other; in fact, he described the act of teaching as both an art and a science. As he explained, one cannot merely implement instructional strategies and expect

desired student outcomes to occur without the skillful, focused technique likened to a refined artist. “The more skill the classroom teacher has with the instructional strategies that research and theory have uncovered over the decades, the better the teacher will be able to create lessons that optimize student learning” (Marzano, 2017, p. 2).

Consequently, to further explore these concepts, this section delves into a plethora of educational research. It involves discussions and explorations into the enigma of teaching and learning through an effective teacher’s lens. As Berndardt (2018) argues, “we do not act differently from what we value, believe, or perceive” (p. 42). If that assumption is correct, we can accept that educators perform every day in ways that align with those values, beliefs, and perceptions.

Every day, throughout schools across America, the teacher is tasked with masterfully positioning the teaching-learning puzzle pieces to amplify the occurrence of student learning in his or her classroom (Chenoweth, 2009). As educators and cognitive scientists continue to delve into the phenomenon of teaching and learning, the perplexity intensifies. It is indeed a complicated and complex matter for teachers to construct positive learning environments, provide challenging academic experiences, and collect evidence of desired student outcomes in concert (Stronge, 2018). Consequently, this literature review explores beliefs and practices encompassing effective teaching methods. While many discuss the specific criteria for effective teaching, most agree that the environment teachers create is an essential aspect of effective instruction.

Environment. The classroom environment is much more complicated than the physical attributes of desks and instructional materials. The environment’s influence plays a critical role in learning, especially for children who grow up in challenging circumstances (De Bruyckere,

2018). Effective teachers understand that they must spend time building a positive classroom environment conducive to student learning (Fisher, Frey, Quaglia, Smith & Lande, 2018). There are three essential components to consider when developing a positive classroom environment: teacher-student relationships, resilience, and expectations. The classroom environment or culture is the foundation for which student learning will occur (Stronge, 2018). Pedagogies, strategies, and instructional practices are essential; however, they are not as crucial as “positive learning environments built on trust, belief, and high expectations” (Heirck, 2017, p. 9).

Caring and nurturing teachers value the time spent developing relationships and building trust; they understand that relationships are the foundation of the teaching-learning environment (Couros, 2015). These favorable conditions foster an academically strong learning community because, as Resnick (2017) suggested, it is in a caring culture that children become more comfortable collaborating with their peers and experimenting with new ideas. Mutual trust and respect build positive teacher-student relationships. When a teacher builds relationships, the students feel welcome, accepted, and valued. Marzano (2017) affirmed that when the teacher communicates high expectations for all, it sends a message to the students they are loved. Students who are typically reluctant to participate in the class will not hesitate to interact with the teacher or their peers when they feel valued.

Hattie (2012) defined resilience as the “ability to react to adversity, challenge, tension, or failure in an adaptive and productive manner” (p. 59). Students with resiliency do not easily give up because they have confidence in achieving the learning goal. Students complete this level of trust through a series of favorable events in their academic career:

1. Past success in learning
2. Quality instruction and feedback provided by teachers

3. Tasks with appropriate scaffolding
4. Peer collaboration and sharing

(Hattie, 2012)

Promoting and supporting students toward a growth mindset is another strategy for guiding students towards resiliency (Resnick, 2017). When students have a growth mindset, they understand that intelligence is not fixed but developed through perseverance and hard work (Dweck, 2008). Resnick (2017) contended that when students have a growth mindset, “they’re willing to embrace challenges, persist in the face of setbacks, and learn from their mistakes” (p. 148).

In a positive learning environment, Hierck (2017) preferred expectations to rules for several reasons:

1. Expectations serve as guidelines that are important in the classroom as well as life
2. Expectations influence students’ interactions academically and behaviorally
3. Expectations emphasize lifelong learning and growth
4. Behavioral expectations combined with academic expectations set a positive tone

Ultimately, the teacher’s responsibility lies in creating and maintaining a lively learning community where children feel safe, valued, and supported (Fisher, Frey, Quaglia, Smith & Lande, 2018). According to Sousa (2006), children need to feel safe and emotionally secure before attending to a cognitive nature. Namely, once the teacher meets students’ socio-emotional needs, they focus on instructional strategies to meet their mental conditions.

Instruction. After establishing a positive learning environment, teachers delve into the design of engaging and motivating learning experiences centered on rigorous academic standards. Engagement strategies ensure that “students are paying attention, energized,

intrigued, and inspired” (Marzano, 2017, p. 6). By using engagement strategies, the teacher considers three motivation components during lesson planning: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Niemic & Ryan, 2009). All three techniques are grounded in research and, if implemented with fidelity, are proven to inspire students to participate in the learning process (Danielson, 2009; Marzano, 2017; Reeves, 2016a).

Another strategy aimed at increasing motivation is by providing students with choices leading to a sense of autonomy (Beecher & Sweeny, 2008). There are many approaches to integrate options into daily instruction. Students can choose which groups they would like to join, the technological tools they would like to use, and the projects they would like to create to demonstrate their conceptual understanding of newly acquired learning (Reeves, 2016a). When teachers provide students with choices, the learner is empowered (Resnick, 2017). Other systems for empowering students are through the planning of a lesson that inspires innovation. Couros (2015) defined design as “a way of thinking that creates something new and better” (p. 19).

Effective teachers understand the role competency plays in the classroom learning experience. Building competency is an avenue for motivating students best achieved through interactive classwork. Danielson (2009) argued, “children are born naturally curious and motivated by the drive for competence and independence” (p. 21). It is one of the reasons that students enjoy playing video games. They want the experience of a challenge, the immediate feedback they receive, and the opportunity to increase their competency (Reeves, 2016a).

Relatedness is belonging to and connecting with others. It is how effective teachers motivate students to persevere while performing a difficult task. Danielson (2009) asserted that

people are motivated by a powerful psychological need - “belonging and making a connection with others” (p. 37).

Even though the state and district adopted Danielson’s (2007) framework, Marzano (2017) was chosen as a generally acknowledged framework for teacher effectiveness as the lens to assess teacher perceptions. Although Charlotte Danielson’s (2007) framework is widely respected, the same can be said for Marzano’s (2017). And in light of recent research supporting Marzano’s high reliability schools (2014) as well as researcher-interest with regards to Marzano’s (2017) instructional strategies focused on generating specific mental states and processes in students’ minds that produce student outcomes, learning. In Table 3, Marzano (2017) described ways to enhance student learning by using explicit instructional strategies to instigate specific mental states and students’ processes.

Table 3

Teacher Actions and Student Mental States and Processes

Design Area	Teacher Actions	Student Mental States and Processes
Feedback	Providing and communicating clear learning goals	Students understand the progression
	Using assessments	Students understand how test scores and grades relate to their status on the progression of knowledge they are expected to master
Content	Conducting direct instruction lessons	When content is new, students understand which parts are important and how the parts fit together
	Conducting practicing and deepening lessons	After teachers present new content, students deepen their understanding and develop fluency in skills and processes
	Conducting knowledge application lessons	After teachers present new content, students generate and defend claims through knowledge application tasks
	Using strategies that appear in all types of lessons	Students continually integrate new knowledge with old knowledge and revise their understanding accordingly

Context	Using engagement strategies	Students are paying attention, energized, intrigued and inspired
	Implementing rules and procedures	Students understand and follow rules and procedures
	Building relationships	Students feel welcome, accepted, and valued
	Communicating high expectations	Typically, reluctant students feel valued and do not hesitate to interact with the teacher or their peers

When the teacher introduces new content, the student needs to receive direct instruction lessons (Rosenshine, 2012; Stronge, 2018) to understand the essential pieces and how they all fit together like a puzzle. Willingham (2009) asserted that “proficiency requires practice” (p. 210). Therefore, once the new content is delivered, students need to develop fluency in skills and process, so it becomes essential for the teacher to conduct practicing and deepening lessons (Rosenshine, 2012). Once students can deepen their understanding and develop fluency, the teacher must provide instances for them to apply their learning in new situations.

Reeves (2016a) stated, “effective practice occurs not at home in isolation, but at school, and is accompanied by feedback, repetition, and improvement” (p.11). De Bruyckere (2018) describes feedback as the “information that pupils and students get in response to their level of performance concerning a set objective” (p. 83). During guided practice, students need feedback from the teacher. The teacher may need to make lesson adjustments based on student responses and feedback. Feedback should be “FAST - fair, accurate, specific, and timely” (p. 19). Also, the teacher should engage the learners in providing feedback to one another. High-quality instructional practices are paramount; however, assessments are necessary to ensure that they are effective.

Assessment. After teachers have provided students with learning experiences based on the academic standards, the next step is to assess student understanding and mastery of the learning objectives. Assessments are the fundamental mechanisms employed by teachers in which students provide clear evidence of their learning in response to the instruction they received in the classroom (Reeves, 2016a). Teachers collect proof of student learning through various assessment methods categorized as formative, interim, and summative. “Types of Summative Assessment and Formative Assessment” (2018) contended that even though all assessment types collect evidence of student learning, each one provides the teacher with different insights and actions for moving forward with instruction.

Formative assessments are one method for assessing student learning. It is perhaps the most persuasive type of judgment for improving student understanding and performance (Monroe, 2019). Not only does it serve as an assessment of student learning, but it also increases student learning. While evaluations are generally associated with testing, Popham (2011) explained how formative assessments carefully planned to gather student learning evidence. Then after the evidence is collected, the teacher and student analyze the information to make instructional decisions.

Some examples of formative assessments are interactive class discussions; warm-up, closure, or exit tickets; quick checks, or short quizzes to check for student understanding and make instructional changes accordingly (Monroe, 2019).

William (2018) described five ways that formative assessment practices impact teaching and learning.

1. Learning intentions and success criteria are clarified, shared, and understood by all
2. Evidence that students have learned the material taught

3. Forward learning as a result of the feedback provided to teachers and students
4. Learners become instructional resources for one another
5. Learners become owners of their own learning

When teachers and students have a clear understanding of learning intentions and success criteria, then evidence of mastery is no longer a mystery to the learner (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). The teacher has proof of how well the material was taught and learned by the students. As a result of the evidence, instructional decisions determine how to move to learn forward. Consequently, students become masters of their learning in addition to becoming an instructional resource for others (Wiliam, 2018).

Popham (2011) described five ways for teachers to implement formative assessment practices in their classrooms.

1. Immediate instructional adjustments
2. Near-future instructional adjustments
3. Last-chance instructional adjustments
4. Learning-tactic adjustments
5. Classroom climate shift

Immediate instructional adjustments refer to formative assessment practices that elicit a quick response such as A, B, C, D cards, whiteboards, and thumbs up/ down. These responses prompted the teacher to make immediate instructional adjustments. Exit tickets and quick checks at the end of the lesson drive the teacher to make near-future instructional adjustments. Benchmarks are the last-chance instructional adjustments. Learning tactic adjustments refer to the current learning tactic's effectiveness and whether an adjustment needs to occur. A shift in

the classroom climate describes how the responsibility for student learning is shared by all (Popham, 2011).

Another method for assessing student learning is through interim assessments. Interim assessments tend to be more formal than their formative counterpart. Some provisional assessment examples are benchmark tests, extended essays, chapter exams, and projects scored using rubrics (*Monroe, 2019*). Students do not receive feedback from interim assessments as quickly as they do from formative assessments. However, they are instrumental in helping teachers identify specific gaps and discrepancies in student learning.

Summative assessments are yet another technique for assessing student learning. End of Course (EOCs) exams and standardized tests such as the ACT, SAT, or state-administered exams are the most commonly utilized summative assessments. These evaluations tend to be the least beneficial to the learner because results are not received promptly, and the information is minimal (*Stronge, 2018*). Besides, students do not have the opportunity to revise or resubmit their work for a better grade. Educators most readily use summative assessments to identify the curriculum and instruction's strengths and weaknesses (*Monroe, 2019*).

Another powerful tool not mentioned as part of the formative, interim, summative assessments is self-assessment. Allowing students to engage in their form of self-assessment is a compelling device for assessing student performance. Self-assessing motivates students to achieve at higher levels through empowerment (*Reeves, 2016a*).

All and all, assessments provide valuable feedback for the teacher and the student. It is a continuous loop of information between the teacher and the student about the effectiveness of the teaching and learning strategies utilized in the classroom. The teacher provides clear learning goals, so the students understand the progression of knowledge. In contrast, the assessments

provide the score or status of how well they progress towards that knowledge (Marzano, 2017). Simultaneously, the teacher has the most significant impact on student learning; the principal ranks second (Fullan, 2014).

Principal as an Instructional Leader

In the 21st century, the principal's primary role is to ensure that teachers implement practices to support student growth and achievement in their classrooms (Wagner, 2008). In educational institutions all across America, this represents a shift in school principals' roles and responsibilities. Due to increased accountability and outcomes-based measures, principals are currently designated as instructional leaders, whereas in the past, they mainly focused on managerial duties (Lunenburg, 2010). However, this change in assignment entails much more than a change in title. Even so, the instructional leader must also be deemed sufficient. To be an effective instructional leader, one must possess a deep understanding of the ideologies and pedagogies within their boundaries (Mendels, 2012). This understanding serves as a lever for enacting change and perpetuating student growth and achievement throughout the school.

Leadership. As a result of school leaders' shifting roles, studies have emerged in leadership styles to determine which one had the most significant influence on teaching and learning. In her research, Xhomara (2018) explored four different leadership styles: transactional, managerial, participative, and transformational. "Traditionally, the principal's role has been focused on management responsibilities" (Xhomara, 2018, p. 46). This managerial type of leadership operates on authority and influence without regard to a clear, focused vision for the school's future. Another type is transactional leadership. This form of leadership is purely a method of "exchange for some valued resource" (p. 44). It may produce short-term compliance but fails to build a long-term commitment to the principal's vision and mission.

Participative leadership unites the faculty and a democratic approach to decision-making while “easing the pressure” (p. 45) placed on school principals. Transformational leadership is most consistent with expectations for today’s school leaders. Unlike the managerial type of leadership, this organization has a shared mission and vision and focuses on schoolwide goals and objectives. Consequently, transformational leaders have a high level of commitment from their faculty and staff (Xhomara, 2018).

Elmore (2000) theorized that improving teaching on a large scale is possible through “dramatic changes in the way public schools define and practice leadership” (p. 2). Even though numerous leadership styles already exist, Elmore (2000) proposed creating a new leadership model, distributed leadership. Distributed leadership focuses on massive scale improvements and founded on five principles:

1. The purpose of leadership is the improvement of instructional practices and performance, regardless of role.
2. Instructional improvement requires continuous learning.
3. Learning requires modeling.
4. The roles and activities of leadership flow from the expertise required for learning and improvement, not from the formal dictates of the institution.
5. The exercise of authority requires reciprocity of accountability and capacity.

(p. 20-21)

The principal, as the instructional leader, must maintain a clear focus on teaching and learning. *Focus* is one of the seven elements of leadership described by Reeves (2016b). Focused leaders are intentional in helping their teachers perform at high levels. As a result, student performance increases. Reeves (2016b) defined four school leaders’ properties to

maintain their focus: relentless, require accountability, pursue the sustainable practice, and practice. School leaders must be determined to follow the very best initiatives that will significantly impact student achievement. They must hold their teachers accountable for implementing the best industries in their classrooms. While it is tempting for administrators to focus on the latest fads in education, it is more important to focus on sustainable practices. “Focus is about practice. Fragmentation is about distraction” (Reeves, 2016b, p. 35).

Also, Reeves (2016b) asserted that while maintaining focus is essential, it is even more critical to focus on the right elements. Reeves (2016b) considered curriculum, lessons; meaningful reading and writing; and implementation and monitoring of execution to be the four aspects of focus for the principals. School leaders must focus on guaranteeing an explicit, rigorous curriculum for every student. They must also ensure that teachers derive meaningful lessons from a guaranteed and viable curriculum, including reading and writing. Furthermore, school leaders must continually monitor and provide needed support in the implementation of these components. Reeves (2016b) advanced his leadership stance by arguing, “when a school is properly focused, it discovers the leverage points that yield the greatest impact on student learning” (p. 35). The next section discusses the processes principals utilize to impact student learning.

Processes. If the ultimate goal of 21st-century principals is to improve teaching and learning, they must first develop and refine their skills as instructional leaders of their organization (Wagner, 2008). Principals must know what constitutes effective teaching before teachers can improve practices to impact student learning. Wagner (2008) described “learning walks” (p. 130) as an effective method for equipping principals and other school leaders with this knowledge.

Once school leaders pinpoint the essentials of effective teaching, the next step is to support teachers in identifying the competencies required to be an effective instructor in their classroom. Wagner (2008) explored several ways to assist teachers with further development of their collective understandings. One method requires teachers to assemble and watch videos of effective teachers demonstrating proficiency. After the viewing, teachers discuss the elements of good teaching observed in the video. Another method requires “regular structured opportunities to observe classes together and discuss common problems of practice” (Wagner, 2008, p. 129).

Although Wagner (2008) doesn’t refer to the term Professional Learning Communities (PLC) in his text, several of his ideas infer this concept. For example, during and after “learning walks” (p. 130), administrators discussed their observations to establish a collective understanding of effective teaching. DuFour and DuFour (2010) examined the PLC establishment in schools as a process for sharing collective knowledge. Teachers collaborating to produce a consensus of effective instructional practices signify another example throughout Wagner’s (2008) text. He established the foundation for a PLC environment to occur (Wagner, 2008); however, the next step would be full implementation of a Professional Learning Community enabling teachers “to collaborate, share best practices, and integrate 21st-century skills into classroom practice” (DuFour and DuFour, 2010, p. 77).

Building team members’ capacity to establish a solid foundation is essential to the PLC continuum movement. DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, & Mattos (2016) emphasized the importance of constructing an accurate assessment of the current reality when trying to support the development of PLC teams. The focus should be on developing the PLC team members’ skills, enabling them to function as a high-achieving collaborative team.

As Lunenburg (2010) declared, “the principal’s primary responsibility is to promote the learning and success of all students” (p. 1). In efforts to improve student outcomes, Lunenburg (2010) suggested several strategies for school principals, such as a “focus on learning; encourage collaboration; analyze results; provide support; and align curriculum, instruction, and assessment” (p. 1). These strategies are in direct alignment with the mission and vision of Professional Learning Communities (PLC). Three big ideas drive PLCs’ work: a focus on learning, collaborative culture and collective responsibility, and results-orientation.

Research supports that Professional Learning Communities (PLC) consisting of teacher teams collaborating and sharing effective instructional practices lead to an increase in student academic growth and achievement (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, & Mattos, 2016). Sparks (Erkens et al., 2008) explained how teachers collaborating in PLC teams had replaced teachers working in isolation. The researcher described several components of the collaborative work depicted through PLCs, maintaining the importance of intentional creation. Lipton and Wellman (2012) defined the combined learning cycle as his solution to ensure collective work is focused and productive.

Eaker and Keating (2015) recounted the ripple effect on student learning when highly effective teachers collaborate and share their expertise with lower-performing teachers. Often, highly skilled teachers have a plethora of instructional strategies to share with their team members. PLCs provide the structural framework that allows collaborative cultures to thrive. Lipton and Wellman (2012) recognized the problems that may arise with PLC collaborations. The PLC committee must establish a clear focus for the work, maintain professional relationships, and have the tools necessary for data analysis. Norms, agendas, and transparent processes are a few ways to ensure that the PLC meetings are productive.

The school principal's role has shifted in the past decade towards instructional leadership, focusing on school improvement. Instructional leaders encourage school improvement by providing teachers with useful feedback towards instructional practices. Hattie (2012) identified helpful feedback as having an effect size of .75, which is considerably above the threshold he recommends .40. Stone and Heen (2014) identified three methods for providing feedback: appreciation, coaching, and evaluation.

Today's school leaders face significant challenges toward school improvement efforts. Principals, considered the school's primary instructional leaders, are tasked with producing learning (Fullan, 2014). A school immersed in a culture of learning promotes and sustains continuous cycles of improvement. In this ideal scenario, principals work collaboratively with teachers (Jacob, 2016) and focus on strengthening instructional practices that ultimately lead to desired student learning outcomes.

School leaders, serious about school improvement, understand the necessity of providing teachers with ongoing feedback about current practices and performance levels (Fullan, 2014). However, William (2018) insisted that the input must be focused and specific to improve teaching practices. While some teachers become defensive about feedback, Fullan (2014) emphasized that most teachers welcome feedback because they understand the value of obtaining someone else's perspective and their sincere desire to improve.

In essence, teachers receive feedback about their teaching practices two to three times per year as part of their observation process (Myung & Martinez, 2013). While this feedback provided by the principal or instructional leader is evaluative, improving teaching and learning is a continuous goal for educational leaders. However, once instructional shifts occur in the classroom, and student learning increases, the school leader must sustain and progress. School

leaders provide ongoing support for the teachers as they continually refine their instructional practices through expert coaching and constructive criticism (Wagner, 2008). Marshall's (2013) mini-observations illustrated an exemplary model of the implementation process.

Teachers desire and require ongoing feedback if they are to improve the quality of teaching. However, the question remains of how to deliver the feedback in a manner best to be receptive and apply the strategies suggested. Stone & Heen (2014) explored three forms of feedback: appreciation, coaching, and evaluation. Each type of feedback has a specific purpose for the giver and "satisfies a different set of human needs" (p. 35) for the receiver.

Feedback in the form of appreciation is highly motivating and drives individuals to achieve at high levels. It builds relationships and contributes to a healthy school climate, a vital component of a highly effective school. Teachers need to feel appreciated for the time, effort, and high level of dedication towards their school community (Stone & Heen, 2014).

Coaching provides specific, descriptive feedback related to the criteria. This form of feedback "informs learners about what they have done well and what they need to do differently" (Davies, 2007, p. 32) in a non-evaluative manner. It accelerates the learning process by improving or learning new skills (Stone & Heen, 2014). Fullan (2014) recognized feedback as essential to the improvement of teacher capability. However, Fullan (2014) argued against separating "coaching" from "evaluation" and instead focuses on developing a culture of feedback where high levels of trust are present. Once feedback is embedded in the culture, there are daily opportunities for formal and informal interactions and conversations between teachers and principals to promote reflective thinking (Tepper and Flynn, 2019).

Evaluative feedback compares individuals to a particular set of standards (Stone & Heen, 2014). Davies (2007) discouraged the overuse of evaluative feedback due to judgmental nature.

“When we feel threatened, our brains are too busy defending themselves to engage in learning” (p. 33). Instead, Davies (2007) encouraged specific, descriptive feedback to promote high levels of learning. Fullan (2014) argued that teachers would not improve without feedback. However, consistent with Davies (2007), Fullan (2014) agreed that evaluative feedback does not produce long-term effects on learning, and the current system of feedback is “crude and ineffective” (p. 74).

There is a cultural piece associated with feedback. The driving force in a culture of learning is relational trust between principals and teachers. Once school leaders establish trust, feedback can quickly become embedded in the school culture (Fullan, 2014). A culture of feedback encourages daily interactions and conversations between teachers and principals regarding teaching and learning (Fullan, 2014). Jacob (2016) reminded the reader that student learning should always remain at the center of the discussion. It is the school leader’s responsibility to create and maintain a culture of learning within the school. Within that learning culture, feedback is accepted, appreciated, and applied by the teacher (Stone & Heen, 2014). Even though evidence supports the practice of using feedback as a mechanism for increasing student learning, what is preventing the method from widespread use? In other words, why is it so difficult to bring effective techniques to scale?

Getting to Scale

There are two significant ideas for why the problem of scale is essential to U.S. educational reform (Elmore, 1996). The first idea points to the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk*. This report released by the National Commission on Excellence in Education criticized U.S. schools for succumbing to an atmosphere of mediocrity in typical classrooms. The second

idea refers to the slogan, “all students can learn” (Elmore, 1996, p. 5). This phrase challenged schools and teachers to engage students in higher levels of academic content.

Doerr (2018) defined scale as “big, systematic ways of looking at things done in a way that’s reproducible” (p. 11). As educational reform efforts continued, achieving scale is often measured in quantitative terms, such as the number of districts, schools, and teachers that have adopted a given reform effort. Coburn (2003) argued against this common notion and offered a more multi-dimensional conception of scale. Her scale concept has four dimensions: “depth, sustainability, spread, and shift in reform ownership” (p. 3).

Coburn (2003) emphasized the importance of depth when instituting change. If reformers want profound, lasting change in classroom practice, they must give attention to the nature of change. Another element is sustainability. To sustain changes to teachers’ profound pedagogical principles, then structures must be in place to support the efforts while encouraging spread. A shift in ownership occurs when the reform effort is no longer an external entity but internalized by schools and teachers.

Morel, Coburn, Catterson, and Higgs (2019) agreed with Coburn’s (2003) argument that unsuccessful attempts at achieving scale are due to a lack of conceptual clarity. They offer four conceptions of scale as a strategy for establishing a shared understanding of the term. They are adoption, replication, adaptation, and reinvention. Each concept entails different constructs for research and the cultivation of scale.

The widespread enactment of Kindergarten during the progressive movement is an example of scale as adoption. The theory of inputs and outputs best represents the idea of scale as replication. The assumption implies that “replicated procedures lead to replicated outcomes” (Morel, Coburn, Catterson, & Higgs, 2019, p. 371). The view of scale as adaptation appeals to

educators who want to adopt and adapt it to their specific needs. Generally associated with digital aspects, reinvention is probably the most unfamiliar conceptualization of scale in education; however, it grows in popularity (Morel, Coburn, Catterson, & Higgs, 2019).

Quinn and Kim (2017) explored three program implementation models while attempting to “scale up” effective educational practices. The three models are fidelity-focused, structured-adaptive, and scaffolded-sequence. Through fidelity-focused implementation, program guidelines are strictly adhered to and monitored with fidelity. Then the teacher is left with little autonomy for program implementation. The structured-adaptive approach provides more flexibility for the practitioner while adhering to the core structure of the program. The scaffolded-sequence approach is consistent with a Vygotskian perspective (Vygotsky, 1978). The scaffolded-sequence process begins with a fidelity-focused approach at the start of implementation. It then moves towards a structured-adaptive phase as the teacher becomes more knowledgeable about its inner workings (Quinn & Kim, 2017).

Research supports that the teacher’s quality is the most critical factor in students’ academic growth and achievement (Wiliam, 2018). The good news is that “decades of educational research has given us a great deal of insight into what works in the classroom, allowing us to identify specific behaviors and practices that make a big difference for students” (Goodwin & Hubbell, 2013, p. xiii). However, the difference in teaching practices contributes to the wide range of teacher effectiveness. Therefore, there exists a growing concern among researchers about how to effectively measure teacher practices and their impact on student growth and achievement. Another problem is how to create conditions in educational institutions that encourage teachers to change their current practices and adopt more effective practices (Ball & Rowan, 2004).

In 1996, Elmore released his strategy for large-scale improvements to teaching and learning. His design consisted of four proposals for addressing the problem with scale. First, he proposed creating an external normative structure of acceptable teaching practices. Once developed, the normative system becomes a tool for evaluating teachers and assigning competence (Elmore, 1996).

After assisting 100-plus low-performing U.S. schools, Elmore (2016) retracted his earlier statements concerning his theories for arriving at scale. Instead, he approached the argument of scale from a divergent model of learning perspective that was a “simpler, more focused, more coherent, more instructional flexible learning environment” (p. 529). His revised notions considered four principles: transparency, divergent thinking within a well-defined practice, intentional surprise, and deliberate design (Elmore, 2016 October).

Elmore (2016) described these principles regarding students and the learning environment. For example, in the classroom, students are working towards proficiency, and the requirements of becoming proficient are transparent to the learner and the teacher. Also, teachers challenge learners in a well-defined classroom. Intentional surprise involves subjecting students to pursuits of inquiry and discovery throughout the learning experience. Through Elmore’s (2016) description of deliberate design, he challenged the reader to consider when learning occurred for them. He asked them “where, and under what conditions, this learning occurred” (p. 536).

Summary

Achieving desired student outcomes is the consequence of teachers utilizing effective teaching practices. Effective teaching is not just an art, and it is not just a science; it is both. It is indeed a healthy balance of art and science. It takes all of the teaching-learning puzzle pieces to

accurately portray a description of what an effective teacher should be and how it should manifest itself in the classroom. Nonetheless, teachers need their principals' support to aid them in this continuous journey of refining instructional practices. The principal's role as the instructional leader is to maintain a focus on teaching and learning. One way to achieve this goal is by supporting research-based best practices in the classroom and school. Conducting mini-observations and establishing Professional Learning Communities is another way to maintain the focus. In conclusion, moving towards lasting, large-scale improvements requires a scaffolded-sequence approach.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter provides information about the research design and methodology for this qualitative study. In the first section, I restate the problem that inspired this inquiry into teachers' perceptions of effective teaching. Then I share the research questions. Next, I describe the research setting, providing more context for the research. I then describe the research design, followed by a rationale for the study. The next section describes the participants and data sources of the investigation. Then I specify the process of collecting and analyzing data in detail. I conclude with a chapter summary describing the process I followed throughout the study.

Restatement of the Problem

“Teachers function within the context of at least two systems: (1) the school and (2) the district. Those systems enhance individual teachers' effectiveness and contribute to individual teachers' ineffectiveness, usually simultaneously” (Marzano, 2017, p. 103). Assuming Marzano's statement to be accurate, how do school leaders respond to those circumstances regarding attempts at school improvement design?

Teachers perform in ways consistent with their values, beliefs, and perceptions (Bernhardt, 2018). This knowledge prompts the researcher to investigate teachers' perceptions of the critical piece to improving teaching and learning in these respective schools. These assumptions lead to the research questions guiding this qualitative study.

Research Questions

The primary research question: How do teachers perceive effective teaching in four elementary schools in a small, urban district?

Sub-questions:

1. What would a conceptual framework look like for each school?
2. How would I help build a sound instructional model to improve teaching and learning across the district?

Research Setting

The study took place in four elementary schools located in the Cedar City School District in Tennessee's Mid-Cumberland region. It is a small, urban district composed of four elementary schools and two middle schools. The four elementary schools educate students pre-kindergarten through fifth grade, and the two middle schools educate students sixth through eighth grade. Upon graduating from eighth grade, all students transfer to the high school located in the Forest County School District. Table 4 detailed the demographic data of the two school districts located in Forest County, Tennessee.

Table 4

Demographic data from Cedar City School District and Forest County School District (2019-20)

School District	# of Elementary Schools	# of Middle Schools	# of High Schools	# of students	Econ. Dis.	White	Ethnic Groups
Cedar City	4	2	0	3692	66%	69.5%	30.5%
Forest County	13	8	6	18,343	14.8%	81%	19%

Research Design

My primary research question was, *How do teachers perceive effective teaching in four elementary schools in a small, urban district?* To answer this research question, I chose a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is described by Creswell & Poth (2018) as “beginning with assumptions and the use of interpretative/ theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 8). A qualitative approach is appropriate for this research because I am interested in exploring and understanding teachers’ perceptions of effective teaching as a recourse for school improvement measures.

Due to the study’s qualitative nature, I served as the primary data collection and analysis instrument. In the following sections, I explain the philosophical assumptions and frameworks that guide my beliefs about the world and the nature of reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Interpretative framework. The interpretative framework for this study is social constructivism. “Social constructivists believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8). I chose this framework due to the intended goal of finding meaning in teachers’ responses to the open-ended interview questions about effective teaching in their classrooms. Authors Creswell and Creswell (2018) identified several assumptions concerning the researcher operating through the lens of social constructivism:

1. Human beings construct meanings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. Qualitative researchers tend to use open-ended questions so that the participants can share their views.

2. Humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspectives - we are all born into a world of meaning bestowed upon us by our culture. Thus, qualitative researchers seek to understand the context or setting of the participants through visiting this context and gathering information personally. They also interpret what they find, an interpretation shaped by the researcher's own experiences and background.
3. The basic generation of meaning is always social, arising in and out of interactions with a human community. The process of qualitative research is largely inductive; the inquirer generates meaning from the data collected in the field.

(p. 8)

I identified with all three assumptions described previously by Creswell and Creswell (2018). As the researcher, I constructed meaning from the participants' responses during the data collection process. The open-ended interview questions allowed the teachers to share their viewpoints on effective teaching. Therefore, the researcher and participants reflected upon past and current teaching practices, although somewhat shrouded in their past experiences and educational background, aligned with the stated assumptions. Finally, this information leads to discussing the theoretical structure that provided the framework for effective teaching.

Theoretical frameworks. Marzano's book, *The New Art and Science of Teaching* (2017), served as the theoretical framework for this study. Marzano's (2017) instructional model takes into account the unique and complex areas of teaching. The framework is composed of ten design areas and questions within three categories. The framework represents a road map for teachers to utilize when designing lessons and units of study. The focus on student learning and outcomes makes this model distinct in comparison to other instructional models.

The researcher's beliefs about how children learn are consistent with Piaget's and Vygotsky's (Schunk, 2016) views on constructivism. "Piaget concluded from his research that children's cognitive development passed through a fixed sequence" (Schunk, 2016, p. 304).

Table 5 (Schunk, 2016, p. 304) identified the stages of cognitive development.

Table 5

Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development

Stage	Approximate Age Range (Years)
Sensorimotor	Birth to 2
Preoperational	2 to 7
Concrete operational	7 to 11
Formal operational	11 to adult

The key points of Vygotsky's (Schunk, 2016, p. 313) sociocultural theory:

1. Social interactions are critical; knowledge is co-constructed between two or more people.
2. Self-regulation is developed through internalization (developing an internal representation) of actions and mental operations that occur in social interactions.
3. Human development occurs through the cultural transmission of tools (language, symbols).
4. Language is the most critical tool. Language develops from social speech, to private speech, to covert (inner) speech.
5. The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is the difference between what children can do on their own and what they can do with assistance from others. Interactions with adults and peers in the ZPD promote cognitive development.

The researcher believes that children construct their knowledge. Therefore, it becomes the teacher's role to design an environment with rich experiences motivating children to learn; while also implementing teaching strategies to acquire the new information. In conclusion, the teacher should arrange the learning environment to promote engagement, participation, and socialization (Schunk, 2016).

Rationale

As an instructional leader, the researcher assumes the challenge of improving teaching and learning in her school and district. But how does an instructional leader make changes to instructional practices that have long-lasting implications for student learning? As Reeves' (2016b) stated, the school leader's role is about maximizing the quality of instruction that students receive in school. Suppose instructional leaders intend to make profound and consequential changes in classroom practice. In that case, they cannot ignore "teachers' underlying assumptions about how students learn, the nature of subject matter, expectations for students, or what constitutes effective instruction" (Coburn, 2003, p. 4).

Therefore, this study intends to produce significant, lasting changes to instructional practices, leading to students' desired outcomes in the researcher's school district. To accomplish this task, the researcher explored teachers' perceptions of effective teaching to create a conceptual framework for each school. Once equipped with each school framework, the researcher constructed a sound instructional model to improve education across the district.

Participants and Data Sources

As an act of courtesy and respect, the researcher emailed all four elementary school principals to inform them of the study and request recruitment permission. Each principal granted permission and then forwarded my invitation to all certified teachers in their building.

Even though a few teachers did respond to the initial recruitment email, the researcher found it necessary to apply the snowball sampling technique to recruit additional participants.

In keeping with a naturalistic inquiry approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018), the researcher interviewed the participants separately. Even though the schools differ in enrollment and demographics, each of the four elementary schools is similar in organization and structure. Each school has a leadership team composed of two administrators (principal and assistant principal), a learning leader, and a guidance counselor. The average student-teacher ratio for classroom teachers in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade is 16:1.

Schools are assigned Title I interventionists based upon the percentage of Economically Disadvantaged students. Each school has at least one Title I interventionist with a paraprofessional. School A has two Title I interventionists with one paraprofessional. Along with Title I interventionists, a Reading Specialist is assigned to each school to intervene with the students identified as reading below grade level.

District leaders distribute English Second Language (ESL) teachers based on English learners' enrollment (EL). School A has three ESL teachers, School D has only one ESL teacher, and School B and School C have two ESL teachers.

Special education teachers are a diverse group in the schools. They are distributed based upon the programming needs of the district. Students with severe special needs attend Comprehensive Development Classrooms (CDC). One school may serve CDC students in kindergarten through second grade, while another school may focus on third through fifth-grade CDC students.

Other faculty and staff include five related arts teachers and at least twelve paraprofessionals, depending on their programming needs. District leaders assign a

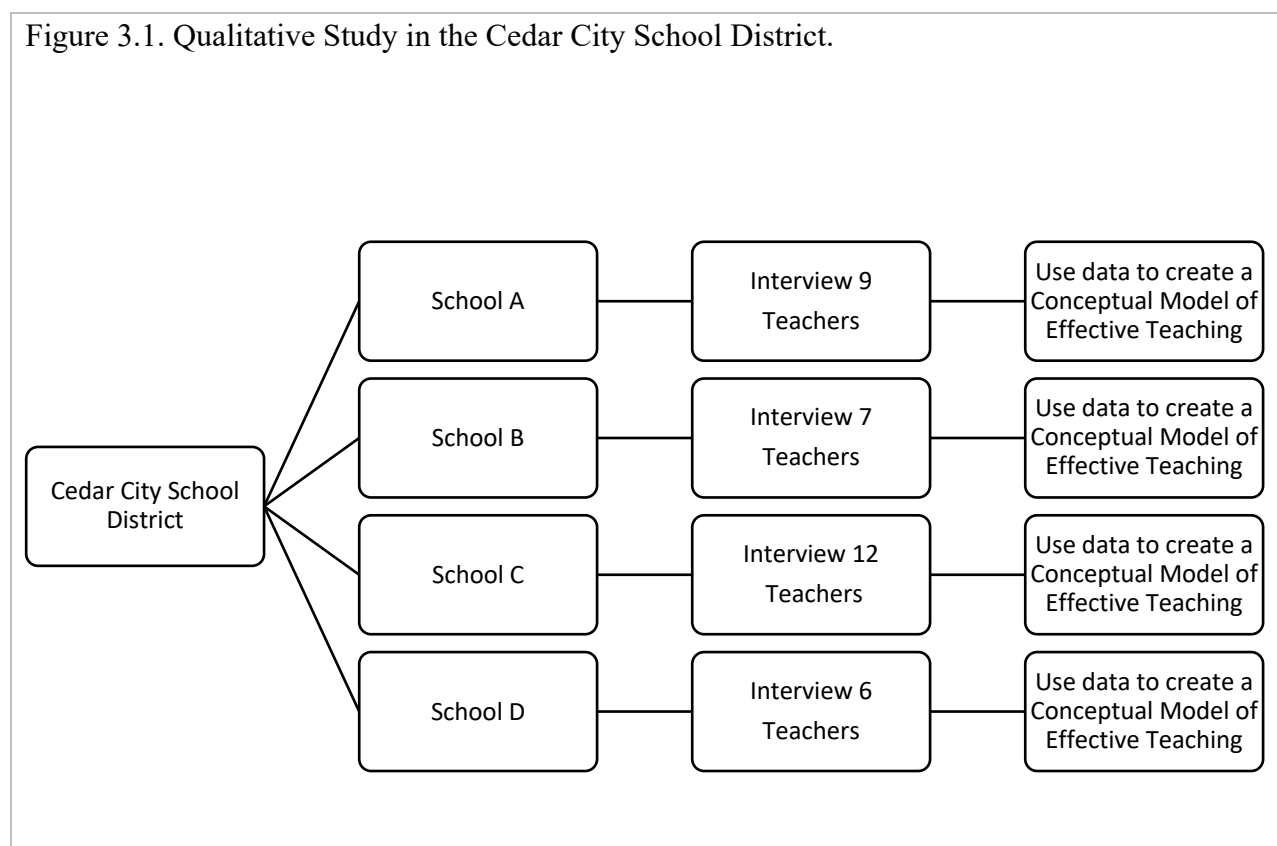
paraprofessional to each classroom with the certified teacher to meet kindergarten guidelines.

District leaders also post paraprofessionals to accommodate prekindergarten, Title I, and Special Education requirements. Then school administrators assign remaining paraprofessionals to other duties such as RTI2 groups, cafeteria duty, and clerical assistance for the teachers.

Data Collection and Analysis

Due to the qualitative nature of this study, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Figure 3.1 presents a visual representation of the process for this study.

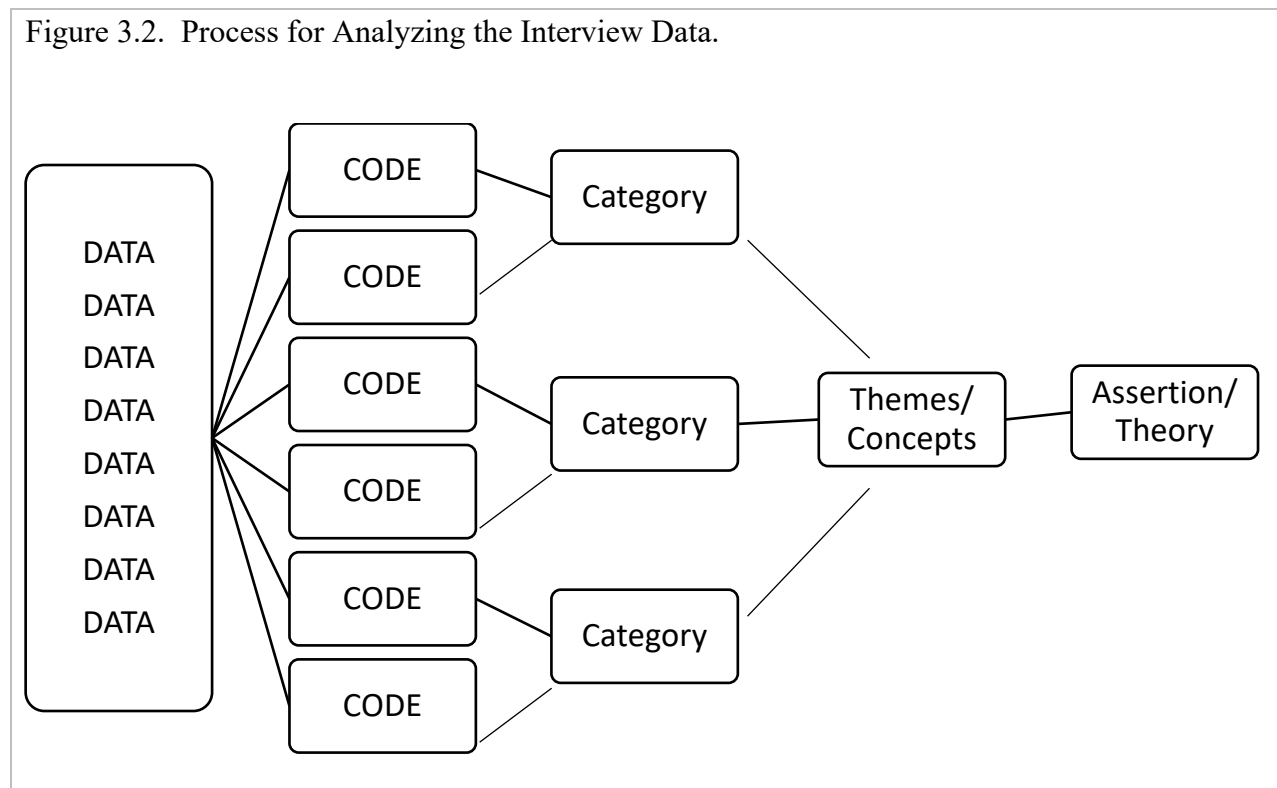
Figure 3.1. Qualitative Study in the Cedar City School District.



The primary sources of data in this study were the transcribed interviews collected via Zoom online platform. The researcher collected interview data from 6-12 teachers at each of the four elementary schools in the Cedar City School District. Then the researcher created data files

to manage and organize the data. The researcher transcribed the 34 structured interviews into a word document. Once transcribed, the researcher read through the text, highlighted keywords, and used in vivo coding as the initial coding scheme. The emerging data guided the subsequent coding schemes. Figure 3.2 presents a visual representation adapted from Saldana (2016) of how the data is analyzed to form an assertion or theory.

Figure 3.2. Process for Analyzing the Interview Data.



Next, the researcher used in vivo coding to classify the codes into themes. Afterward, generating an assessment of the interpretations and then using direct understanding to represent and visualize the data. The final stage of data analysis produces a naturalistic generalization of what was “learned.” (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Summary

As school improvement measures continue to be a subject of concern in education, school leaders lead the charge. Principals are no longer just the managers of schools but deemed

“instructional leaders.” At no time in history have school principals been faced with the daunting issues that they face today. If they are to improve schools, indeed, then school leaders must address teaching and learning. Teachers are doing the best that they know how to do. Instructional leaders must understand their perceptions of effective teaching before they can entice them to change their practices, especially veteran teachers. The outdated approaches of the latter methods are no longer effective in today’s 21st-century schools. In summary, this chapter contained information about a researcher’s journey to uncover teacher’s beliefs and values about effective teaching practices through a qualitative research study.

CHAPTER IV: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

This chapter presents the case study findings at four elementary schools in the Cedar City School District, located in the Mid-Cumberland region of Tennessee. In this chapter, I examine the evidence collected from teacher interviews based on their perceptions of effective teaching practices. Following this, I provide a conceptual model for each school founded on collecting and analyzing data. Lastly, I present recommendations for building a sound instructional model to improve teaching and learning across the district.

Contextual Information

Four elementary schools located in the Cedar City School District participated in this study. The number of teachers contributing to this study varies from each school in the district.

Table 6 provides the context for certified participants from each school:

Table 6

School Participation

School	Classroom Teachers (K-5)	Librarian	Instruction Coach	ESL Teacher	Computer Teacher	Intervention Teacher	Art Teacher	Total	Percentage of Participation
SCHOOL A	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	9	20%
SCHOOL B	4	0	1	1	0	1	0	7	15%
SCHOOL C	8	1	1	0	1	1	0	12	25%
SCHOOL D	3	0	1	0	0	2	0	6	15%

At 25%, School C had the highest number of certified teachers participating in this study. This included 8 classroom teachers: 5 kindergarten, 2 second grade, and 1 third grade. Other

support and related arts teachers included a librarian, an instructional coach, a computer teacher, and an interventionist.

School A ranked second, at 20%, for participation rate. It included 3 classroom teachers: 2 third grade and 1 fifth grade. Additional certified teachers included a librarian, an instructional coach, an ESL teacher, a computer teacher, an interventionist, and an art teacher.

School B tied for third with a participation rate of 15%. There were 4 classroom teachers: 1 kindergarten and 3 fifth grade. Other participants included an instructional coach, an ESL teacher, and an interventionist.

School C also had a participation rate of 15%. There were 3 classroom teachers: 2 second grade and 1 fifth grade. Support teachers included an instructional coach and 2 interventionists.

Coding

In this section, I describe my coding process and identify the categories and trends developed from the procedure. I used initial coding to collect teachers' responses from the structured interview protocols (Appendix B) at each school. Following this, I sorted codes into categories. After I completed the types for each school, I identified trends across the four elementary schools.

School A. Using initial coding for School A, I collected responses from three classroom teachers, a librarian, an instructional coach, an ESL teacher, a computer teacher, an art teacher, and an interventionist. The responses revealed one hundred and forty codes from nine participants. Then I sorted regulations into eighty-eight categories for School A displayed in

Figure 4.1

Figure 4.1. Categories from Code Collection: School A

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. academic games | 45. knowledge gain celebration |
| 2. address unique student needs | 46. motivational hooks |
| 3. areas for whole group and small group | 47. occupying the whole room (physically and visually) |
| 4. background knowledge to answer questions | 48. overall discipline plan |
| 5. benchmarks | 49. overt linkages |
| 6. brief practice tests | 50. parent teacher conferences |
| 7. body representations | 51. personal projects |
| 8. chart class progress | 52. possible selves' activities |
| 9. chart student progress | 53. use preassessment data to chunk content |
| 10. clear learning goals | 54. present claims orally or written |
| 11. collaborative processing | 55. preview questions |
| 12. confidence ratings | 56. provide evidence |
| 13. connections to prior learning | 57. real world connections |
| 14. cooperative learning | 58. modeling |
| 15. cumulative reviews | 59. provide reasons |
| 16. different types of assessments | 60. questioning |
| 17. dramatic enactments | 61. questioning sequences |
| 18. dramatic instruction | 62. research skills |
| 19. encouragement | 63. response boards |
| 20. rules and procedures | 64. response cards |
| 21. exit tickets, quick checks | 65. room transformations |

- | | |
|---|--|
| 22. experimental-inquiry tasks | 66. rubrics, scales, and exemplars |
| 23. explicit connections | 67. scheduling interactions |
| 24. feedback | 68. selected response items |
| 25. fluency practice | 69. self-assessment |
| 26. frequent structured practice | 70. short constructed response items |
| 27. friendly controversy | 71. sort, match, categorize |
| 28. generate claims | 72. stand up and stretch |
| 29. goal setting | 73. student learning profiles |
| 30. greet students at the door | 74. student-designed tasks |
| 31. preassessment information for groupings | 75. summative scores |
| 32. growth mindset | 76. tangible recognition |
| 33. guided practice | 77. teacher circulate the room |
| 34. importance of content | 78. teacher dress-up |
| 35. independent investigations or research projects | 79. think-pair-share |
| 36. score level assessments | 80. token economy |
| 37. informal class interviews | 81. use nonverbal and verbal indicators of respect |
| 38. individual student learning goals | 82. physical behaviors |
| 39. informal class interviews | 83. verbal and nonverbal affirmations |
| 40. informal student conferences | 84. verbal feedback |
| 41. informational hooks | 85. use of visuals |
| 42. interest surveys | 86. visual analogies |
| 43. investigation tasks | 87. What do you think you know? |
| 44. judge reasoning and evidence in text | 88. word splashes |

School B. I used initial coding for School B to collect responses from five classroom teachers, an ESL teacher, and an interventionist. Responses revealed one hundred and fifty codes from seven participants. The codes were then sorted into eighty-two categories for School B displayed in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2. Categories from Code Collection: School B

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1. academic goal setting | 42. observation of students |
| 2. address unique student needs | 43. feedback |
| 3. background knowledge to answer questions | 44. overall discipline plan |
| 4. proactive in minimizing disruptions | 45. overt linkages |
| 5. benchmarks | 46. parent communication |
| 6. chart student progress | 47. peer feedback |
| 7. class discussions | 48. perspective analysis |
| 8. clear learning goals | 49. display of student/ family photos |
| 9. collect informal assessment information | 50. physical behaviors |
| 10. interview students | 51. preassessment data for chunking |
| 11. connections to prior learning | 52. present claims orally or written |
| 12. cooperative learning | 53. provide evidence |
| 13. corner activity | 54. provide reasons |
| 14. cumulative reviews | 55. provide resources |
| 15. dramatic enactments | 56. questioning |
| 16. dramatic instruction | 57. questioning sequences |
| 17. emotional triggers | 58. re-engage individual students |
| 18. encouragement for participation of all students | 59. reflective journals |

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 19. error analysis | 60. repetition and practice |
| 20. exemplars | 61. room transformations |
| 21. explain and review | 62. rules and procedures |
| 22. explicit connections | 63. selected response items |
| 23. explicit instruction | 64. self-assessment |
| 24. familiarity with student culture | 65. self-reflection |
| 25. frequent structured practice | 66. seminars |
| 26. friendly controversy | 67. short constructed response items |
| 27. generate claims | 68. structured groupings |
| 28. greet students at the door | 69. student friendly scales |
| 29. group for active processing | 70. student interviews/ conversations |
| 30. growth mindset | 71. student-designed tasks |
| 31. humor | 72. collaborative processing |
| 32. importance of content | 73. tangible recognition |
| 33. interest surveys | 74. targets & scales |
| 34. knowledge gain celebration | 75. visual analogies |
| 35. letting students off the hook temporarily | 76. think-pair-share |
| 36. teacher modeling | 77. verbal and nonverbal cues |
| 37. modeling with vignettes and role playing | 78. verbal affirmation |
| 38. monitor overall class engagement | 79. feedback |
| 39. motivational hooks | 80. use of visuals |
| 40. verbal/ nonverbal indicators of respect | 81. teacher dress-up |
| 41. escape room | 82. themes |

School C. Using the initial coding for School C, I collected responses from eight classroom teachers, a librarian, an instructional coach, a computer teacher, and an interventionist. Responses revealed one hundred and fifty-three codes from twelve participants. Codes were sorted into seventy-two categories for School C displayed in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3. Categories from Code Collection: School C

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. academic games | 38. informal linkages during class discussions |
| 2. address unique student needs | 39. informational hooks |
| 3. proactive approach | 40. invention tasks |
| 4. benchmarks | 41. letting students off the hook temporarily |
| 5. body representations | 42. teacher modeling |
| 6. chart class progress | 43. monitor overall class engagement |
| 7. chart student progress | 44. motivational hooks |
| 8. clear learning goals | 45. varying types of questions |
| 9. collaborative processing | 46. verbal and nonverbal indicators of respect |
| 10. connections to prior learning | 47. observations |
| 11. cooperative learning | 48. feedback |
| 12. cumulative review | 49. overall discipline plan |
| 13. debates | 50. overt linkages |
| 14. design classroom décor that is relevant to what the students are learning | 51. physical behaviors |
| 15. dramatic instruction | 52. possible selves' activities |
| 16. dramatic enactments | 53. preassessment to plan for chunks |
| 17. encouragement for participation for all students | 54. present claims orally or written |

18. error analysis	55. student presentations
19. establish rules and procedures	56. provide resources
20. exemplars	57. questioning sequences
21. exit slips	58. reflective journals
22. experimental-inquiry tasks	59. response cards
23. rules and procedures	60. rubrics
24. explicit connections	61. self-assessments
25. explicit instruction	62. short constructed response item
26. fluency practice	63. status celebration
27. formative assessments	64. tangible recognition
28. generate claims	65. think-pair-share
29. greet students at the door	66. verbal and nonverbal cues
30. growth mindset	67. verbal feedback
31. guest speakers	68. visual activities
32. guided practice	69. wait time
33. body movements & hand signals	70. What do you think you know?
34. importance of content	71. whole group and small group instruction
35. score level assessments	72. writing tools
36. informal student conferences	73. verbal affirmation
37. individual student learning goals	

School D. Initial Coding for School D collected responses from three classroom teachers, an instructional coach, and two interventionists. Responses revealed one hundred and

thirty-two codes from six participants. I sorted codes into fifty-four categories for School D displayed in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4. Categories from Code Collection: School D

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. academic games | 28. importance of content |
| 2. advanced organizers | 29. individual student learning goals |
| 3. anticipate student errors | 30. informational hooks |
| 4. attend after-school functions | 31. interest surveys |
| 5. proactive approach | 32. teacher modeling |
| 6. body representations | 33. monitor student engagement |
| 7. centers/ stations | 34. multiple types of questions |
| 8. chart student progress | 35. observation of students |
| 9. clear learning goals | 36. overall discipline plan |
| 10. collaborative processing | 37. overt linkages |
| 11. collect informal assessment information | 38. peer feedback |
| 12. cooperative learning | 39. pictorial notes and pictographs |
| 13. cumulative reviews | 40. present claims orally or written |
| 14. debates | 41. questioning sequences |
| 15. display student work | 42. reflective journals |
| 16. dramatic enactments | 43. response boards |
| 17. encouragement | 44. student interviews/ conversations |
| 18. rules and procedures | 45. verbal affirmation |
| 19. exit slips | 46. visual analogies |
| 20. explicit connections | 47. visuals to help create mental images |

21. dramatic instruction	48. verbal and nonverbal cues
22. frequent, structured practice	49. verbal affirmation
23. generate claims	50. verbal and nonverbal indicators of respect
24. graphic organizers	51. student designed tasks
25. growth mindset	52. think-pair-share
26. humor	53. preassessment data to chunk content
27. individual student learning goals	54. routines for using targets and scales

All schools. Having identified categories at each of the individual schools, the researcher examined codes collectively. In this section, I report out trends from across all four elementary schools in the district. Through interacting with all regulations, twenty-five categories emerged that spanned the entire community. Figure 4.5 displays the categories present in all four schools.

Figure 4.5 Categories from Code Collection: All Schools

1. chart student progress	14. generate claims
2. clear learning goals	15. growth mindset
3. collaborative processing	16. teacher modeling
4. cooperative learning	17. overall discipline plan
5. cumulative reviews	18. overt linkages
6. dramatic enactments	19. preassessment data to plan for chunks
7. dramatic instruction	20. present claims orally or written
8. encouragement	21. questioning sequences
9. rules & procedures	22. think-pair-share

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 10. explicit connections | 23. verbal and nonverbal affirmations |
| 11. feedback | 24. verbal and nonverbal cues |
| 12. importance of content | 25. physical behaviors to indicate respect |
| 13. use of visuals | |

Three out of four schools. Then I identified similar categories present in at least three of the four elementary schools. For example, School A, School C, and School D identified educational games as an engagement strategy. Another example is School A, School B, and School C discussed using tangible recognition strategies to acknowledge students for adhering to rules and processes. Figure 4.6 displays the models and the remainder of the similarities.

Figure 4.6. Categories from Code Collection: Three out of Four Schools

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. academic games | 12. individual student learning goals |
| 2. address unique student needs | 13. informational hooks |
| 3. proactive approach | 14. motivational hooks |
| 4. benchmarks | 15. exemplars |
| 5. body representations | 16. selected response items |
| 6. connections to prior learning | 17. self-assessments |
| 7. exit slips, quick checks | 18. short constructed response items |
| 8. frequent structured practice | 19. student designed tasks |
| 9. greet students at the door | 20. tangible recognition |
| 10. importance of content | 21. verbal feedback |
| 11. interest surveys | |

Two out of four schools. Following this, I identified similar categories present in at least two out of the four elementary schools. For instance, School A and School C teachers mentioned playing the game, *What do you think you know with students?* School B and School C teachers used error analysis strategies. Figure 4.7 display those examples and similarities.

Figure 4.7. Categories from Code Collection: Two out of Four Schools

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. background knowledge to answer questions | 17. explicit instruction |
| 2. fluency practice | 18. humor |
| 3. friendly controversy | 19. physical behaviors |
| 4. guided practice | 20. letting students off the hook temporarily |
| 5. score level assessments | 21. monitor overall class engagement |
| 6. informal student conferences | 22. questioning |
| 7. knowledge gain celebration | 23. observations |
| 8. possible selves' activities | 24. debates |
| 9. provide evidence | 25. experimental-inquiry tasks |
| 10. provide reasons | 26. motivational hooks |
| 11. research skills | 27. room transformations |
| 12. response boards | 28. teacher dress-up |
| 13. response cards | 29. escape room |
| 14. What do you think you know? | 30. themes |
| 15. collect informal assessment information | |
| 16. error analysis | |

As illustrated in this section, I identified categories and trends across and within the four elementary schools in the Cedar City School District.

Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

This section describes the findings for the primary research question: How do teachers perceive effective teaching in four elementary schools in a small, urban district? The researcher used *The New Art and Science of Teaching* (Marzano, 2017) to guide a deductive application of Marzano's framework (Appendix A) through the emergent categories. The theoretical framework is composed of ten design areas and questions within three categories: 1) feedback, (2) content, (3) context. The three types describe teacher strategies intended to activate specific mental states and processes in students. Student learning, the desired outcome occurs when these mental states and processes are activated. "Without mental states and processes, a given strategy will have little to no effect on students" (Marzano, 2017, p. 7).

Feedback. The feedback category intends to "provide students with an awareness of what they should be learning and how they are doing" (Marzano, 2017, p. 6). Two design areas complete the feedback category: (1) providing and communicating clear learning goals, and (2) using assessments. Feedback begins with the teacher providing and communicating clear learning goals in the classroom. As stated by School D Teacher 6, "I think it is really important that the students know the end goal or expectation. It drives what you do."

Providing and communicating clear learning goals. Marzano (2017) details three elements essential to clearly defined and communicated learning goals: (1) providing scales and rubrics, (2) tracking student progress, and (3) celebrating success.

Providing scales and rubrics. Marzano (2017) discusses many strategies for providing learners with scales and rubrics to facilitate the learning process. A few plans include clear learning goals, individual student learning goals, and scales or rubrics. Marzano (2017) defines scale as a progression of knowledge, while the term rubric is bound to one task. Marzano (2017)

also describes learning targets, defined as the activity's objective or goal. He also explains implementing routines for using targets and scales, using teacher-created targets and scales, and creating student-friendly scales (Marzano, 2017). These are all techniques designed to activate student mental states and optimal learning processes in the classroom.

As illustrated in Table 7, teachers in all four schools described methods for clarifying learning goals and providing scales and rubrics in the classroom. Teachers in School A identified four actions: (1) clarify learning goals, (2) provide rubrics and exemplars, (3) create scales, and (4) identify individual learning goals. Teachers in School B identified four actions: (1) clarify learning objectives, (2) implement routines for using targets and scales, (3) create student-friendly-scales, and (4) provide exemplars. Teachers in School C identified two actions: (1) clarify learning goals, and (2) provide rubrics and exemplars. Similar to School C, teachers in School D also identified two steps: (1) define learning objectives and (2) routines for using targets and scales.

Table 7

Providing Scales and Rubrics (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
Clearly articulating learning goals, creating scales or rubrics for learning goals, implementing routines for using targets and scales, using teacher created targets and scales, creating student-friendly scales, identifying individual student learning goals	clarify learning goals; provide rubrics and exemplars; create scales; identify individual student learning goals	clarify learning goals, provide exemplars, implement routines for using targets and scales, create student friendly scales	clarify learning goals, provide rubrics, exemplars	clarify learning goals, routines for using targets and scales

Tracking student progress. When individuals witness evidence of their hard work and perseverance, individuals respond positively. Therefore, tracking student progress is intrinsically motivating for learners. Marzano (2017) delivers a variety of strategies for monitoring student progress. They include creating formative assessments, using student scores from the formative assessments, using individual score-level reviews, charting student progress, and charting class progress.

As illustrated in Table 8, teachers in all four schools discussed various methods for tracking student progress. Teachers in School A described five techniques: (1) administer different types of assessments, (2) use score-level individual evaluations, (3) use summative scores, (4) chart student progress, and (5) chart class progress. Teachers in School B identified charting student progress as the primary method for tracking student progress. Teachers in School C discussed four techniques: (1) design assessments that generate formative scores, (2) administer individual score level assessments, (3) chart student progress, and (4) chart class progress. Teachers in School D identified charting student progress as the preferred method for tracking student progress. Teacher 6 reported, “My students have an individual data folder where they record and graph their score. We talk about what level they are on, where they are supposed to be, and how they are going to get there.”

Table 8

Tracking Student Progress (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
Using formative scores, designing assessments that generate formative scores, using individual score-level assessments, using different types of assessments, generating summative scores, charting student progress, charting class progress	administer individual score-level assessments and different types of assessments; use summative scores; chart student progress and class progress	chart student progress	design assessments that generate formative scores, individual score level assessments, chart student progress and class progress	chart student progress

Celebrating success. Marzano (2017) affirms two ways to celebrate student success: status and growth. Status indicates a score achieved at one point in time. The development represents progress on a particular topic over time. In his text, Marzano (2017) describes three techniques for celebrating success in the classroom: (1) status celebration, (2) knowledge gain celebration, and (3) verbal feedback.

Teachers in three of the four schools discussed celebrating success, as illustrated in Table 9. Teachers in School A and School B described verbal feedback and knowledge-gain celebration as the primary tactics for recognizing student achievement and growth. School A Teacher 3 explained, “Celebrating students’ success is a powerful method for building confidence leading to more success. Teachers in School C identified status celebration and verbal feedback as the preferred method for celebrating success. They stated that celebrating success in the classroom was important but also sharing their success with others outside of the classroom such as administrators. Teachers in School D did not mention celebrating success with their students.

Table 9

Celebrating Success (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
status celebration, knowledge gain celebration, verbal feedback	verbal feedback; knowledge gain celebration	knowledge gain celebration, verbal feedback	status celebration, verbal feedback	

Using assessments. Assessments provide information to teachers and students about how well the student has learned the teacher's content. Using assessments is described by Marzano (2017) as "a transparent relationship between students' scores on assessments and their progress on a proficiency scale" (p. 21). Marzano (2017) credits two elements within the using assessments design area: (1) using informal assessments of the whole class, and (2) using formal assessments of individual students.

Using informal assessments of the whole class. Informal whole-class assessments provide evidence of how well the class performs as a whole on specific skills and standards. Some strategies include confidence-rating techniques, voting techniques, response boards, and unrecorded assessments (Marzano, 2017). Unrecorded assessments are simply assessments for student practice, and the grade book doesn't record the results.

All four schools described methods for using informal assessments of the whole class, as illustrated in Table 10. Teachers in School A discussed confidence ratings, response boards, and self-assessments. Teacher 4 warned against using confidence ratings, stating "you may not always get an honest opinion unless you have a good relationship with the students." Teachers in School B reported self-assessments and quick-checks. Teacher 6 described using five-question quick checks to assess students' understanding of concepts and computations. She stated, "I need to know if they understood the concept or if they just made careless errors with

computation.” School C identified self-assessments. Teachers in School D described exit tickets and response boards as their primary method for using informal assessments of the whole class.

Table 10

Using Informal Assessments of the Whole Class (Marzano, 2017): Teachers’ Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
confidence-rating techniques, voting techniques, response boards, unrecorded assessments	confidence rating; response boards; self-assessments	self-assessment, quick checks	self-assessments	exit tickets, response boards

Using formal assessments of individual students. Formal individual assessments provide evidence of students’ performance at one point in time on a particular topic. Marzano’s (2017) examples include common formative assessments, assessments using short constructed-response items or selected-response items, student demonstrations, student interviews, and student observations.

As illustrated in Table 11, teachers in all four schools discussed using formal assessments of individual students. School A teachers described using benchmarks, selected-response items, and short constructed-response items. School B responses were identical to School A but added student interviews, conversations, and observations. Teacher 7 described collecting observational data while her prekindergarten students were in centers. She explained, “I like watching the students in their natural environment. When I ask questions related to what they are doing, then they don’t feel like I am putting them on the spot.” School C identified benchmarks, selected-response items, short constructed-response items, and observation of

students. School D identified student interviews, conversations, and observations as the primary methods for using formal assessments of individual students.

Table 11

Using Formal Assessments of Individual Students (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
common assessments designed using proficiency scales, assessments involving selected-response or short constructed-response items, student demonstrations, student interviews, observation of students, student-generated assessments, response patterns	benchmarks, selected response, short constructed response items	benchmarks, selected-response, short constructed-response items, student interviews/conversations, observation of students	benchmarks, selected-response assessment, short constructed response item, observation of students	student interviews/conversations, observation of students

Content. In the content category, Marzano (2017) refers to “lesson progression, which allows students to move from an initial understanding of the content to the application of content while continuously reviewing and upgrading their knowledge” (p. 6). Four design areas supply the content category: (1) conducting direct instruction lessons, (2) conducting practicing and deepening lessons, (3) conducting knowledge application lessons, and (4) using strategies that appear in all types of lessons.

Conducting direct instruction lessons. Marzano (2017) describes three elements essential for conducting direct instruction lessons: (1) chunking content, (2) processing content, and (3) recording and representing content.

Chunking content. Chunking content is one strategy for helping students process large amounts of new information. This strategy uses preassessment data to plan for chunking, and then the content is presented in increments to allow time for processing (Marzano, 2017).

All four schools identify using preassessment data to plan for chunks, as illustrated in Table 12. School B added a collaborative piece in which students are working together to process information. Teacher 2 reflected how she learned from her peers during school and system-wide professional development sessions and believed her students learned from their peers as well. School D combined presenting content in small sequentially related sets with using preassessment data to plan for chunks. Teacher 4 stated, “I use preassessment data to assess what my students already know and then plan accordingly.”

Table 12

Chunking Content (Marzano, 2017): Teachers’ Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
Using preassessment data to plan for chunks; presenting content in small sequentially related sets; allowing for processing time between chunks	use preassessment data to plan for chunks	use preassessment data to plan for chunks, students work together to process information	use preassessment data to plan for chunks	use preassessment data to plan for chunks, presenting content in small sequentially related sets

Processing content. After receiving chunks of information, learners need time and opportunities to process the new content that has been delivered by the teacher. Marzano (2017) describes several activities to aid in effectively processing new content: perspective analysis, Thinking Hats, collaborative processing, jigsaw cooperative learning, reciprocal teaching, concept attainment, think-pair-share, and scripted cooperative dyads.

Teachers in three out of four schools mentioned collaborative processing, as illustrated in Table 13. School A added think-pair-share strategies. School B added perspective analysis as a tool for processing content.

Table 13

Processing Content (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
perspective analysis; thinking hats; collaborative processing; jigsaw cooperative learning; reciprocal teaching; concept attainment; think-pair-share; scripted cooperative dyads	collaborative processing; think-pair-share	perspective analysis	collaborative processing	collaborative processing

Recording and representing content. Another tool for helping students process new information is through recording and representing the content. Marzano (2017) provides several examples of how teachers can provide opportunities for learners to practice this approach: informal outlines, summaries, pictorial notes and pictographs, combination notes, pictures, summaries, graphic organizers, free-flowing webs, academic notebooks, dramatic enactments, mnemonic devices, rhyming peg words, and link strategies.

As illustrated in Table 14, teachers in all four schools identified approaches for recording and representing content. Also, all four schools mentioned dramatic enactments as a means of recording and representing content. School B Teacher 7 described, “When students recreate the story and repeat what they characters are saying then I know they have grasped the concept.” School D added pictorial notes, pictographs, and graphic organizers.

Table 14

Recording and Representing Content (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
informal outlines; summaries; pictorial notes; link strategies; combination notes, pictures, and summaries; graphic organizers; academic notebooks; dramatic enactments;	dramatic enactments	dramatic enactments	dramatic enactments	pictorial notes and pictographs, graphic organizers, dramatic enactments

Conducting practicing and deepening lessons. Once the teacher presents the new content, their role is to orchestrate the ways students are analyzing content. Analyzing content is achieved by practicing and deepening lessons. Marzano (2017) considers three elements crucial for the success of this venture: (1) using structured practice, (2) examining similarities and differences, and (3) examining errors in reasoning.

Using structured practice sessions. Structured practice sessions provide students with opportunities to practice procedural knowledge: skills, strategies, and processes (Marzano, 2017). Strategies for implementing structured practice sessions include modeling, guided practice, close monitoring, frequent structured practice, varied practice, fluency practice, worked examples, and practice sessions before testing (Marzano, 2017).

As illustrated in Table 15, teachers in all four schools identified strategies for using structured practice sessions in their classrooms. All four schools described teacher modeling. Teachers in School A and School B added guided practice to their repertoire. School B included think-alouds. School A and School C discussed fluency practice. Lastly, School A, School B, and School D teachers described the frequent structured practice as primary methods for using

structured practice sessions to increase student learning. School D Teacher 6 emphasized the use of meaningful practice. She explained, “Students work together, explain to each other, and even teach each other to deepen their own understanding.”

Teachers in School A and School D described using centers and/ or stations for their structured practice sessions. School A Teacher 3 described, “I found the most effective way to teach is through centers. My new teaching of content is limited to a quick 20-minute lesson. Then I pull kids in small groups and they rotate through centers.” School D Teacher 1 stated, “Small groups, stations, and centers are really where children in my classroom get most of their practice.”

Table 15

Using Structured Practice Sessions (Marzano, 2017): Teachers’ Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
modeling; guided practice; close monitoring; frequent structured practice; varied practice; fluency practice; worked examples; practice sessions prior to testing	modeling; guided practice; frequent structured practice (centers/ stations); fluency practice	modeling; think aloud; frequent structured practice	modeling; guided practice; fluency practice	modeling; frequent structured practice (centers/ stations)

Examining similarities and differences. Examining similarities and differences is another strategy for practicing procedural knowledge. It assists students in helping them deepen their comprehension of declarative knowledge. Some methods for examining similarities and differences include sentence-stem comparisons, summaries, constructed-response comparisons, Venn diagrams, t-charts, double-bubble diagrams, comparison matrices, classification charts,

dichotomous keys, sorting/matching/categories, similes, metaphors, sentence-stem analogies, and visual analogies. (Marzano, 2017).

As illustrated in Table 16, teachers in three of the four schools described strategies for discussing similarities and differences during practicing lessons. School A, School B, and School D teachers mentioned visual analogies. School A teachers added sorting, matching, and categorizing.

Table 16

Examining Similarities and Differences (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
sentence-stem comparisons; summaries; constructed-response comparisons; Venn diagrams; t-charts; double-bubble diagrams; comparison matrices; classification charts; dichotomous keys; sorting, matching, and categories; similes; metaphors; sentence-stem analogies; visual analogies	visual analogies; sort, match and categorize	visual analogies		visual analogies

Examining errors in reasoning. Examining reasoning errors is another strategy for teachers facilitating students' understanding of information presented to them. Methods include identifying errors of faulty logic, attack, weak reference, and misinformation. Other approaches involve examining support for claims, judging reasoning and evidence in the author's work,

identifying statistical limitations, using student-friendly prompts, anticipating student errors, and avoiding unproductive habits of mind (Marzano, 2017).

Teachers in all four schools described tools for examining errors in reasoning, as illustrated in Table 17. School A teachers detailed judging reasoning and evidence in an author's work. School B and School C teachers mentioned error analysis. School B Teacher 6 reported being “really big on error analysis.” She stated, “I feel like if they can pick out the error in a problem then they really understand the concept.” School D teachers discussed anticipating student errors and planning accordingly.

Table 17

Examining Errors in Reasoning (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
identify errors of faulty logic; attack; weak reference; misinformation; practice identifying errors in logic; finding error in the media; examine support for claims; judge reasoning and evidence in author's work; identify statistical limitations; using student-friendly prompts; anticipate student errors; avoid unproductive habits of mind	judge reasoning and evidence in an author's work	error analysis	error analysis	anticipate student errors

Conducting knowledge application lessons. Once the teacher presents the initial content, students need opportunities to apply their new learning in context. The teacher's role is to provide support as students work with relative independence on knowledge application tasks. Conducting knowledge application lessons includes three elements: (1) engaging students in

cognitively complex tasks, (2) providing resources and guidance, and (3) generating and defending claims (Marzano, 2017).

Engaging students in cognitively complex tasks. By engaging students in cognitively complex tasks, the teacher provides students with an opportunity to apply their knowledge in new ways. Marzano (2017) discusses several cognitively complex functions in his work: experimental-inquiry, problem-solving, decision-making, student-designed, investigative, invention, and efficiencies of multiple methods of problem-solving.

Teachers in all four schools described techniques for engaging students in cognitively complex tasks as illustrated in Table 18. School A, School B, and School D teachers discussed student-designed tasks. School A and School C teachers described experimental-inquiry tasks. School A teachers added investigation tasks, and School C teachers added invention tasks.

Table 18

Engaging Students in Cognitively Complex Tasks (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
experimental-inquiry tasks; problem-solving tasks; tasks to examine the efficiencies of multiple methods of problem solving; decision-making tasks; investigation tasks; invention tasks; student designed tasks	experimental-inquiry tasks; investigation tasks; student-designed tasks	student-designed tasks	experimental-inquiry tasks, invention tasks	student-designed tasks

Providing resources and guidance. Teachers provide resources and guidance as students apply their knowledge in new situations. Teachers offer support and guidance by employing informational handouts, teaching research skills, conducting interviews, circulating the room,

collecting informal assessment information, offering feedback, and creating cognitive dissonance (Marzano, 2017).

Illustrated in Table 19, teachers in all four schools provide resources and guidance using various techniques. School A teachers described circulating the room, offering feedback, and teaching research skills. School B teachers discussed offering feedback, providing resources, conducting interviews, and collecting informal assessment information. School C teachers mentioned providing resources and offering feedback. Lastly, School D teachers collect everyday assessment information to provide help and guidance during knowledge application lessons.

Table 19

Providing Resources and Guidance (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
using proficiency or scoring scales; provide resources; provide informational handouts; teaching research skills; conducting interviews, circulate the room, collect informal assessment information; offering feedback; creating cognitive dissonance	circulate the room; offer feedback; teach research skills	provide resources, conduct interviews, offer feedback, collect informal assessment information	provide resources, offer feedback	collect informal assessment information

Generating and defending claims. Engaging in cognitively complex tasks allows students to create and provide evidence for their new ideas. Teachers promote these tasks by introducing claims and support, presenting the formal structure of requests and support,

generating claims, providing grounds, providing evidence, developing qualifiers, and formally delivering shares (Marzano, 2017).

In response to interview questions, teachers in all four schools described similar techniques for generating and defending claims. As illustrated in Table 20, all four schools mentioned developing claims, providing backing or evidence, and presenting claims, either orally or written.

Table 20

Generating and Defending Claims (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
introducing the concept of claims and support; presenting the formal structure of claims and support; generating claims; providing grounds; provide backing; generating qualifiers; formally presenting claims	generate claims; provide evidence; present claims oral or written	generate claims, provide evidence, present claims oral or written	generate claims, provide backing, present claims oral or written	generate claims, provide backing, present claims oral or written

Using strategies that appear in all types of lessons. While teachers continue to advance students' understanding by integrating new knowledge with existing knowledge, some strategies appear in all types of lessons. These include eight elements: (1) previewing strategies, (2) highlighting critical information, (3) reviewing content, (4) revising knowledge, (5) reflecting on learning, (6) assigning purposeful homework, (7) elaborating on information, and (8) organizing students to interact.

Previewing strategies. Teachers use previewing strategies to activate students' background knowledge. Previewing plans include: informational hooks, bell ringers, overt linkages, brief teacher summaries, skimming, teacher-prepared notes, KWL strategies, advance

organizers, anticipation guides, word splashes, pre-assessments, and *What do you think you know?* (Marzano, 2017).

Teachers in all four schools listed previewing strategies, as illustrated in Table 21. School A teachers described informational hooks, *What do you think you know?*, overt linkages, preview questions, and word splashes. School B only told overt connections. School C teachers discussed informational hooks, *What do you think you know?*, overt linkages, and assessments. School D teachers described informative clips and overt associations.

Table 21

Previewing Strategies (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
informational hooks; bell ringers; <i>What do you think you know?</i> Overt linkages; preview strategies; brief teacher summaries; skimming; teacher-prepared notes; KWL strategies; advance organizers; anticipation guides; word splashes; preassessments	informational hooks; <i>What do you think you know?</i> Overt linkages; preview questions; word splashes	overt linkages	informational hooks, <i>what do you think you know?</i> Overt linkages, preassessments	informational hooks, overt linkages

Highlighting critical information. To ensure that students notice the most critical elements during the lesson, teachers use various approaches to highlight essential information: repeating, questioning, visualizing, and narrating. Additional strategies include the teacher's tone of voice, facial gestures, body language, and pause time. Teacher 6 explained, "I'm honest with kids and I let them know that what they are learning is really important. Everything builds on each other. It's a stepping-stone to get to the next step."

Other techniques consist of using critical-input experiences, explicit instruction, dramatic instruction, advance organizers, and references to what students already know about a topic to cue critical content (Marzano, 2017). Illustrated in Table 22, teachers in all four schools named various strategies for highlighting critical information. They all mentioned using visual activities and dramatic instruction. Due to the large English Language Learner (ELL) population in School A, teachers specified the importance of using visuals to reinforce concepts. As Teacher 2 reported, “I find it so much easier to show them things to help them understand.” School A, School B, and School C teachers added explicit instruction and using what students already know about a topic. School A and School B teachers added questioning to their strategies. School C teachers added narratives to their list, and School D teachers describing using advanced organizers in their interviews.

Table 22

Highlighting Critical Information (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
repeating the most important content; asking questions that focus on critical information; using visual activities; using narrative activities; using tone of voice, gestures, and body position; using pause time; identifying critical-input experiences; using explicit instruction to convey critical content; using dramatic instruction to convey critical content; providing advance organizers to cue critical content; using what students already know to cue critical content	Ask questions, visual activities, explicit instruction, dramatic instruction, use what students already know	repetition, ask questions, visual activities, explicit instruction, dramatic instruction, use what students already know	visual activities, narrative, explicit instruction, dramatic instruction, use what students already know	visual activities to help create mental images, dramatic instruction, advance organizers

Reviewing content. Teachers review previously learned content to assist students with recalling important material. Techniques for remembering content include cumulative review, cloze activities, summaries, presented problems, demonstrations, brief practice tests or exercises, questioning, and give-one/ get-one activities (Marzano, 2017).

Table 23 illustrates teachers in all four schools reviewing content strategies. All schools described using cumulative review practices as the primary mode for checking content. School A teachers added brief practice sessions to their list.

Table 23

Reviewing Content (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
cumulative review; cloze activity; summary; presented problem; demonstration; brief practice test or exercise; questioning; give one, get one	cumulative review, brief practice	cumulative review	cumulative review	cumulative review

Revising knowledge. Teachers provide students with concrete opportunities to revise or add to their current knowledge. Strategies for changing understanding include academic notebook entries, academic notebook review, peer feedback, assignment revision, basic five processes, visual symbols, and writing tools (Marzano, 2017).

As illustrated in Table 24, teachers in all four schools shared limited information concerning revising knowledge. School B and School D teachers discussed peer feedback. School C teachers described writing tools. School A teachers did not have any responses similar to Marzano's list of strategies for revising knowledge.

Table 24

Revising Knowledge (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
academic notebook entries; academic notebook review; peer feedback; assignment revision; the basic five processes; visual symbols; writing tools		peer feedback	writing tools	peer feedback

Reflecting on learning. Teachers guide students through the metacognitive strategy of self-reflection on the content and themselves as a learner. Systems for reflecting on learning include reflective journals, think logs, exit slips, knowledge comparisons, and two-column notes (Marzano, 2017).

Teachers in all four schools described methods of reflecting on learning, as illustrated in Table 25. School A, School B, School C, and School D teachers discussed exit slips or quick checks. School A teachers added artist's statements in addition to exit slips. School B, School C, and School D teachers mentioned reflective journals to reflect on learning.

Table 25

Reflecting on Learning (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
reflective journals; think logs; exit slips; knowledge comparisons; two- column notes	Exit slips (quick checks, artist's statement	quick-checks, reflective journals	reflective journals, exit slips	reflective journals, exit slips

Assigning purposeful homework. Teachers assign purposeful homework to practice skills and processes while deepening students' understanding of meaningful content. Homework can be beneficial when used to preview an upcoming topic, deepen knowledge, and practice a technique or skill (Marzano, 2017).

As Table 26 illustrates, the teachers interviewed in all four schools did not mention assigning purposeful homework as a strategy.

Table 26

Assigning Purposeful Homework (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
Homework to preview, deepen knowledge, or to practice a process or skill				

Elaborating on information. Teachers use inferencing and questioning strategies to help students develop information. These include general inferential questions, elaborative interrogation, and questioning sequences (Marzano, 2017).

As illustrated in Table 27, teachers in all four schools described techniques for elaborating on the information. Questioning sequences were present in all schools. School A and School B teachers added providing reasons and using background knowledge to answer questions.

Table 27

Elaborating on Information (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
general inferential questions; elaborative interrogation; questioning sequences	use background knowledge to answer questions; provide reasons; questioning sequences	use background knowledge to answer questions, provide reasons, questioning sequences	questioning sequences	questioning sequences

Organizing students to interact. Teachers promote collaboration by organizing students' interactions with peers. A plethora of examples exist on managing students to interact in the classroom purposefully—teachers group students for processing information actively or developing norms. Teachers assign students job cards within their respective groups. Teachers also group students based on preassessment data. Fishbowl demonstrations, pair-check, think-

pair-share, inside-outside circles, peer response groups, tournaments, and peer tutoring are a few more ways to organize students for interaction. Another way to reflect on learning is structured grouping. Other considerations include having a contingency plan for ungrouped students. (Marzano, 2017).

Table 28 illustrates teachers in all four schools organizing students to interact. All schools identified cooperative learning as a strategy. Also, School A teachers described grouping using preassessment information and think-pair-share. School D teachers also added think-pair-share to collaborative learning. School B teachers discussed grouping for active processing, pair-check, and structured groupings as methods for organizing students to interact in their classroom. School B Teacher 2 stated, “I sometimes pair students with their friends. When I go to professional development sessions, I enjoy and have learned so much from working with my friends. I want my students to learn from and with their friends.”

Table 28

Organizing Students to Interact (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
Organize groups: for active processing, creating norms, fishbowl demonstration; assign job cards; predetermined buddies; contingency plan for ungrouped students; use preassessment data; pair-check; think- pair-share; tournaments; inside-outside circle; cooperative learning; peer- response; peer tutoring; structured grouping; reflecting on learning	group using preassessment data; think-pair-share; cooperative learning	group for active processing, pair check, cooperative learning, structured grouping	cooperative learning	think-pair-share, cooperative learning

Context. In the context category, Marzano (2017) addresses the psychological needs of students essential for learning to occur in the classroom. The psychological needs include “engagement, order, sense of belonging, and high expectations” (Marzano, 2017, p. 6). Four design areas furnish the context category: (1) using engagement strategies, (2) implementing rules and procedures, (3) building relationships, and (4) communicating high expectations.

Using engagement strategies. Marzano (2017) describes ten elements of the “using engagement strategies” design area: (1) noticing and reacting when students are not engaged, (2) increasing response rates, (3) using physical movement, (4) maintain a lively pace, (5) demonstrating intensity and enthusiasm, (6) presenting unusual information, (7) using friendly

controversy, (8) using academic games, (9) providing opportunities for students to talk about themselves, and (10) motivating and inspiring students.

Noticing and reacting when students are not engaged. Teachers monitor overall class engagement and respond when students disengage from learning. Self-reported student engagement data and boosting global class energy levels are a couple of techniques for maintaining students' focus in the classroom (Marzano, 2017).

As Table 29 illustrates, three out of the four schools described techniques for noticing and reacting when students are not engaged. School B and School C teachers discussed watching overall class engagement. However, School D teachers told monitoring of individual student engagement versus overall class engagement. School B teachers added re-engaging individual students to their list of strategies.

Table 29

Noticing and Reacting When Students are not Engaged (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
monitoring overall class engagement; using self-reported student engagement data; re-engaging individual students; boosting overall class energy levels		Monitor overall class engagement and re-engage individual students	monitor overall class engagement	monitor individual student engagement

Increasing response rates. Teachers apply a variety of techniques to increase students' participation in the classroom. These techniques include random names, hand signals, response cards, response chaining, paired response, choral response, wait time, elaborative interrogation, and questioning (Marzano, 2017).

Teachers in three out of the four schools described techniques for increasing response rates, as illustrated in Table 30. School A and School C teachers described response cards as tools for improving student response. School C teachers added hand signals, wait time and multiple types of questions. School D teachers only told various kinds of problems.

Table 30

Increasing Response Rates (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
random names; hand signals; response cards; response chaining; paired response; choral response; wait time; elaborative interrogation; multiple types of questions	response cards		hand signals, response cards, wait time, multiple types of questions	multiple types of questions

Using physical movement. Teachers use physical movement in the classroom to stimulate engagement by increasing the blood flow to the brain. Some strategies for keeping students engaged in the learning process include stand up and stretch, vote with your feet, corner activities, stand and be counted, body representations, and drama-related actions (Marzano, 2017).

Illustrated in Table 31, teachers in all four schools mentioned physical movement as an engagement strategy. School A, School C, and School D teachers discuss body representations. School A teachers added stand-up and stretch. Lastly, School B teachers described corner activities as a tool for engaging students.

Table 31

Using Physical Movement (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
stand up and stretch; vote with your feet; corner activity; stand and be counted; body representations; drama-related activities	stand up and stretch, body representations	corner activity	body representations	body representations

Maintaining a lively pace. Teachers maintain a lively pace to increase students' energy levels in the classroom. A few approaches for keeping a lively pace include instructional segments, pace modulation, parking lot, and motivational hooks (Marzano, 2017).

Table 32 illustrates teachers in all four schools maintain a lively pace as an engagement strategy. School A, School B, and School C teachers described motivational hooks. School D teachers described dividing lessons into instructional segments to maintain a lively pace in the classroom.

School A and School B teachers added room transformations, teacher dress-up, escape rooms, and themes for student engagement techniques. School A Teacher 2 stated, "I'm a very positive person. I feel like if I stay positive then the students feed off my energy. When we are doing color mixing, I transform my classroom into a laboratory and dress up like a scientist." Teacher 5 used scavenger hunts to build interest and curiosity. She stated, "I turned my room into a gigantic game board and used giant blow-up dice for them to roll. It was just a fun and exciting way to teach the different reference sources in the library." School B Teacher 6 reflected on a math assessment her students had "completely bombed." She reported, "I was

like, man, how am I going to get their attention? So, I created a room transformation. My students became detectives looking for evidence. It really motivated them to do their best work.”

Table 32

Maintaining a Lively Pace (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
instructional segments; pace modulation; parking lot; motivational hooks	motivational hooks, room transformations, teacher dress-up, escape room, themes	motivational hooks, room transformations, teacher dress-up, escape room, themes	motivational hooks	instructional segments

Demonstrating intensity and enthusiasm. Teachers show intensity and enthusiasm to make the content interesting for the students. The teacher can make the content enjoyable by delivering direct statements about the significance of the material. Other delivery approaches include explicit connections, nonlinguistic representations, personal stories, verbal and nonverbal signals, humor, quotations, and movies or film clips (Marzano, 2017).

As illustrated in Table 33, teachers in all four schools provided similar responses to demonstrating intensity and enthusiasm in the classroom. All four schools described the importance of content, explicit connections, and verbal and nonverbal signals. School D teachers added humor to their list of strategies.

Table 33

Demonstrating Intensity and Enthusiasm (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
direct statement about the importance of the content; explicit connections; nonlinguistic representations; personal stories; verbal and nonverbal signals; humor; quotations; movie and film clips	importance of content, explicit connections, verbal and nonverbal signals	importance of content, explicit connections, verbal and nonverbal signals	importance of content, explicit connections, verbal and nonverbal signals	importance of content, explicit connections, verbal and nonverbal signals, humor

Presenting unusual information. The brain loves novelty (Willingham, 2009); therefore, one-way teachers can nurture the mind and engage students is by giving unusual information. The teacher can stimulate the mind and engage students by introducing information, fast facts, WebQuests, *Believe it or Not*, history files, guest speakers, and first-hand consultants (Marzano, 2017).

Table 34 illustrates one school revealing guest speakers as a strategy for presenting unusual content.

Table 34

Presenting Unusual Information (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
teacher presented information; WebQuests; fast facts; <i>Believe it or Not</i> ; history files; guest speakers and firsthand consultants			guest speakers	

Using friendly controversy. Another strategy for creating interest and intrigue is through the use of social controversy. Teachers can achieve social discussion through class votes, seminars, expert opinions, visiting different points of view, diagrams comparing perspectives, Lincoln-Douglas debates, town hall meetings, and legal models (Marzano, 2017).

Table 35 illustrates social controversy as an engagement strategy in two of the four schools. School B teachers also use seminars to engage learners. School C and School D teachers utilize debates as a technique for using friendly controversy. School D Teacher 6 described modeling the debate process for students. She explained, “If you want your kids to debate and do it correctly, then you’ve got to model it. You have to set the stage and teach them how to explain their thinking and defend their rationale. It’s a great way for students to deepen their understanding of what you’ve taught.”

Table 35

Using Friendly Controversy (Marzano, 2017): Teachers’ Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
friendly controversy; class vote; seminars; expert opinions; opposite point of view; diagrams comparing perspectives; Lincoln Douglas debate; town hall meeting; legal model	friendly controversy	friendly controversy, seminars	debates	debates

Using academic games. The general nature of educational games provides intrinsic motivation for learners. A few educational games include *What is the question*, *Name that Category*, *Talk a Mile a Minute*, *Classroom Feud*, and *Which One Doesn’t Belong?* Other

games include tournaments, little competitions, questioning games, and vocabulary review games (Marzano, 2017).

Teachers at three out of four schools reported using educational games as engagement strategies. As illustrated in Table 36, teachers at School A, School C, and School D discussed using educational games in their classroom. Only School A teachers mentioned using educational games to reinforce vocabulary and math skills. School B teachers did not report educational games as a strategy for engagement.

Table 36

Using Academic Games (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
What is the question? Name that category; Talk a mile a minute; Classroom feud; Which one doesn't belong; Inconsequential competition; Questions into games; Vocabulary review games	academic games, vocabulary & math		academic games	academic games

Providing opportunities for students to talk about themselves. Creating a classroom community is vital for optimal learning to occur in an educational setting. Teachers help develop a classroom community by scheduling opportunities for students to talk about themselves. School A Teacher 4 described how morning meetings helped create a positive classroom community in her classroom. She stated, "Every student has the opportunity to talk and answer the question. Every one of those questions allowed me to get to know that child a little more and see a glimpse into their lives." Using interest surveys, student learning profiles, life connections,

and informal linkages during class discussions, teachers allow students to share personal details about themselves in a safe environment (Marzano, 2017).

As illustrated in Table 37, teachers at all four schools provide students with opportunities to talk about themselves. Teachers at School A, School B, and School D give their students interest surveys. School A teachers added student learning profiles and life connections to their repertoire. School B teachers described class discussions in addition to the interest surveys. School C teachers discussed using informal linkages during class discussions.

Table 37

Providing Opportunities for Students to Talk About Themselves (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
interest survey; student learning profiles; life connections; informal linkages during class discussion	interest surveys, student learning profiles, life connections	class discussions, interest surveys	informal linkages during class discussions	interest surveys

Motivating and inspiring students. Self-actualized strategies drive and inspire learners to perform at their personal best. Teachers use the following techniques to motivate and inspire students: academic goal setting, growth mindset cultivation, possible-selves' activities, personal projects, altruism projects, gratitude journals, mindfulness practice, and inspirational media (Marzano, 2017).

As illustrated in Table 38, teachers at all four schools utilized strategies to motivate and inspire their students. All schools discussed cultivating a growth mindset. School B Teacher 4 reported, "We talk a lot about being human and making mistakes. I tell them that even teachers make mistakes and the important thing is to learn from those mistakes and not repeat them."

School A and School B teachers also revealed setting academic goals. Also, School A and School B teachers mentioned possible selves' activities. For example, School B Teacher 2 described, "I want my students to be internally motivated to learn. I try to help them think about their future and see themselves as they grow up. I want them to dream and understand that learning is important because it helps you reach your dreams." School A teachers added personal projects for motivating and inspiring students.

Table 38

Motivating and Inspiring Students (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
academic goal setting; growth mindset; possible selves; personal projects; altruism projects; gratitude journals; mindfulness practice; inspirational media	academic goal setting, growth mindset cultivation, possible selves' activities, personal projects	academic goal setting, growth mindset	growth mindset, possible selves' activities	growth mindset

Implementing rules and procedures. Teachers maximize learning when students perceive the classroom to be a safe and orderly place. Five techniques were contributing to a safe and orderly classroom: (1) establishing rules and procedures, (2) organizing the physical layout of the school, (3) demonstrating withitness, (4) acknowledging adherence to regulations and practices, and (5) acknowledging lack of compliance to rules and procedures (Marzano, 2017).

Establishing rules and procedures. Teachers develop rules and procedures to create a safe and predictable environment for optimal learning to occur. Some methods involve using a small set of rules and procedures and then explaining, modifying, and reviewing them during

class meetings. Modeling with vignettes and role-playing are also useful techniques for helping students internalize regulations and guidelines. Other helpful approaches consist of using the language of responsibility and statements of school beliefs. A class constitution with gestures and symbols is also an effective means of establishing rules and procedures (Marzano, 2017).

As illustrated in Table 39, all four schools described establishing rules and procedures in their classrooms. School A, School B, and School C teachers added explaining and reviewing practices and policies. School B teachers included modeling with vignettes and role-playing.

Also, teachers revealed different theories for why their classroom operated smoothly. For example, School A Teacher 1 claimed consistency was the key. She reported, “I think it helps students be successful if they know what is going to happen every day in my classroom.” School B Teacher 2 stated, “I really don’t have discipline issues and I think it is because we have mutual respect in the classroom.”

Table 39

Establishing Rules and Procedures (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
using a small set of rules and procedures; explaining, generating, modifying, reviewing rules and procedures; using the language of responsibility and statements of school beliefs; posting around the school, writing a class pledge or constitution; using posters and graphics; establish gestures and symbols; modeling with vignettes and role playing; classroom meetings; student self-assessment	establish rules and procedures, explain and review	establish rules and procedures, explain and review, modeling with vignettes and role playing	establish rules and procedures, explain and review with students	establish rules and procedures

Organizing the physical layout of the classroom. The physical layout of the classroom either enhances or inhibits the perception of order for the students. The careful selection of classroom décor can also create a warm and inviting atmosphere for the students to learn. Displaying student work provides students with a sense of ownership and pride in their accomplishments. Another consideration is the placement of furniture, materials, and supplies in the classroom. It's essential to allow space for group and independent work, including learning centers, technology and computers, and classroom libraries (Marzano, 2017).

As illustrated in Table 40, teachers at three out of four schools described organizing the classroom's physical layout. Teachers at School A and School C mentioned creating areas for

the whole group and small group instruction. Also, School C teachers emphasized using lesson artifacts as decorations to reinforce what the students are learning in class. Teachers at School D referenced displaying student work in the classroom.

Table 40

Organizing the Physical Layout of the Classroom (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
design classroom décor; display student work, consider classroom materials; teacher's desk placement; students' desk placement; areas for whole group work; areas for learning centers; consider technology and computers; consider lab equipment and supplies; plan classroom libraries; involve students in the design process	areas for whole group instruction and small groups		design classroom décor that is relevant to what the students are learning, whole group instruction and small group work	display student work

Demonstrating withitness. The teacher demonstrates withitness when he or she is aware of what is happening in the classroom and responds appropriately. Illustrating withitness begins with the teacher walking around the room while visually scanning for potential problems, and then uses a series of graduated actions when necessary (Marzano, 2017).

Teachers at all four schools demonstrated withitness throughout the interviews. As illustrated in Table 41, School B, School C, and School D, teachers discussed taking a proactive classroom approach. Teachers at School A referenced occupying the whole room physically and

visually. Teacher 4 stated, “I don’t want to be just at the front of the room. I constantly walk around. I weave around the tables to ensure the students are engaged.”

Table 41

Demonstrate Withitness (Marzano, 2017): Teachers’ Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
being proactive; occupying the whole room physically and visually; noticing potential problems; using a series of graduated actions	occupying the whole room physically and visually	be proactive (designate a calm area in the classroom) notice potential problems	be proactive	be proactive

Acknowledging adherence to rules and procedures. The teacher should recognize when students adhere to classroom rules and procedures. Some acknowledgment examples are verbal affirmations, nonverbal affirmations, tangible recognitions, token economies, daily recognition forms, color-coded behavior cards, certificates, phone calls, emails, and notes home to parents (Marzano, 2017).

Teachers at all four schools acknowledge adherence to rules and procedures in their classrooms. As illustrated in Table 42, School A, School B, and School C, teachers use verbal and nonverbal affirmations and tangible recognitions to recognize students who follow the rules and procedures. Also, School B and School D added parent communication. School D included verbal affirmation. Teachers at School A mentioned using a token economy to reinforce positive behavior. Teacher 9 explained, “They will do anything to earn house points.”

Table 42

Acknowledging Adherence to Rules and Procedures (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
verbal affirmation; nonverbal affirmation; tangible recognition; token economies; daily recognition form; color-coded behavior; certificates; phone calls, emails and notes	verbal and nonverbal affirmations, tangible recognition, token economy (house points)	verbal affirmation, nonverbal affirmation, tangible recognition, parent communication	verbal and nonverbal affirmation, tangible recognition	verbal affirmation, parent communication

Acknowledging lack of adherence to rules and procedures. The teacher should also acknowledge when students do not adhere to classroom rules and procedures. Marzano's (2017) strategies include verbal and nonverbal cues, pregnant pause, overcorrection, time-out, overall disciplinary plan, and high-intensity situation plan.

As illustrated in Table 43, teachers at all four schools respond when students choose not to adhere to rules and procedures. All four schools mentioned an overall disciplinary plan. School A and School B teachers added verbal and nonverbal cues.

Table 43

Acknowledging Lack of Adherence to Rules and Procedures (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
verbal cues, pregnant pause; nonverbal cues; time-out; overcorrection; interdependent group contingency; home contingency; high-intensity situation plan; high- intensity situation plan; overall disciplinary plan	verbal and nonverbal cues, overall discipline plan	overall discipline plan	verbal cues, nonverbal cues, overall disciplinary plan	overall disciplinary plan

Building relationships. Students learn best in environments in which they feel welcome, accepted, and valued. Teachers create this perception by focusing on teacher-to-student relationships and student-to-student relationships (Marzano, 2017). Building relationships involve three elements: (1) using verbal and nonverbal behaviors that indicate affection for students, (2) understanding students' backgrounds and interests, and (3) displaying objectivity and control.

Using verbal and nonverbal behaviors that indicate affection for students. Teachers use verbal and nonverbal behaviors to give students a sense of well-being in the classroom community. Marzano's (2017) examples include greeting students at the door, holding informal conferences, attending afterschool functions, greeting students by name, scheduling interactions, displaying a photo bulletin board, demonstrating humor, and giving leadership or special responsibilities to students.

Teachers in all four schools describe using verbal and nonverbal behaviors to indicate affection for students. As illustrated in Table 44, School A, School B, and School C, teachers

told greeting students at the door. School A teachers added informal conferences, scheduling interactions, and physical behaviors to show students affection. School C teachers also said using physical behaviors. Only School D teachers mentioned attending after-school functions as well as humor in the classroom. School B teachers mentioned humor, a photo bulletin board, as well as physical actions. Teacher 4 reported, “I teach struggling readers. My students typically don’t have good relationships or feel good about school. Their teachers are generally frustrated with them because they can’t read, and they don’t know what to do. So, number one for me is to build a trusting, respectful relationship because that is something they don’t have. I create a safe zone so that students can be comfortable and feel successful at least in my room.”

Table 44

Using Verbal and Nonverbal Behaviors that Indicate Affection for Students (Marzano, 2017): Teachers’ Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
greeting students at the door; holding informal conferences; attending afterschool functions; greeting students by name outside of school; giving students special responsibilities or leadership roles in the classroom; scheduling interaction; create a photo bulletin board; using physical behaviors; using humor	greeting students at the door, informal conferences, scheduling interactions, using physical behaviors (smiles, high-fives)	greet students at the door, photo bulletin board, physical behavior (smiles, high-fives) humor	greet students at the door, use physical behaviors (smiles, high-fives)	attend after school functions, humor

Understanding students’ backgrounds and interests. Students feel a sense of belonging and respect when teachers demonstrate a genuine concern for their culture and interests.

Marzano (2017) describes several strategies for teachers to learn more about students' backgrounds and interests: surveys, questionnaires, independent investigations, and individual student learning goals. Parent-teacher conferences, student-teacher conferences, and informal interviews are also ways teachers can learn more about their classroom students. Other strategies include six-word autobiographies and autobiographical metaphors and analogies. Also, becoming aware of the school's diverse cultures is another technique for understanding students' backgrounds and interests (Marzano, 2017).

Teachers in all four schools identified strategies for understanding students' backgrounds and interests. As illustrated in Table 45, School A, School C, and School D, teachers discussed individual student learning goals in their interviews. Only School A teachers mentioned parent-teacher conferences, independent investigations, and informal class interviews. School A teachers described individual teacher-student conferences. School B teachers discussed becoming familiar with students' cultures. Teacher 2 described talking to students and learning about their birth country and culture. She reported, "We talk about their cultures and where they are from. I get excited to learn about them and their cultures. I tell them how awesome it is that they are speaking two languages."

Table 45

Understanding Students' Backgrounds and Interests (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
student background surveys; opinion questionnaires; individual teacher-student conferences; parent-teacher conferences; school newspaper, newsletter or bulletin; informal class interviews; familiarity with student culture; autobiographical metaphors and analogies; six-word autobiographies; independent investigations; quotes comments about student achievement or areas of importance; individual student learning goals	parent teacher conferences, independent investigations or research projects, individual student learning goals, informal class interviews	familiarity with student culture	individual teacher-student conferences, individual student learning goals	individual student learning goals

Displaying objectivity and control. Teachers should remain calm and unemotional when handling misbehaviors. Marzano (2017) describes several methods for maintaining objectivity and control when dealing with students. These include practicing self-care, self-reflection, and self-monitoring. It involves the teacher having an awareness of emotional triggers and maintaining composure at all times. The teacher is assertive but maintains a calm, relaxed demeanor. Also, it requires the communication style of active listening and speaking (Marzano, 2017).

As illustrated in Table 46, teachers in all four schools describe techniques for displaying objectivity and control with students. School A, School B, and School C teachers address unique student needs. School B teachers self-reflect and understand their emotional triggers. School D teachers explore different communication styles for maintaining objectivity and control in the classroom.

Table 46

Displaying Objectivity and Control (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
self-reflection; self-monitoring; emotional triggers; self-care; assertiveness; a cool exterior; active listening and speaking; communication styles; unique student needs	address unique student needs	self-reflection, emotional triggers, address unique student needs	address unique student needs	communication styles

Communicating high expectations. “The greater the teachers’ expectations for students, the more teachers challenge and interact with them” (Marzano, 2017, p. 97). Communicating high expectations consists of three design areas: (1) demonstrating value and respect for reluctant learners, (2) asking in-depth questions of reluctant learners, and (3) probing incorrect answers with reluctant learners.

Demonstrating value and respect for reluctant learners. Teachers need to communicate high expectations for reluctant learners in a positive manner. To complete this task, teachers utilize various strategies such as identifying expectations for all students, identifying differential treatment for reluctant learners, and using nonverbal and verbal indicators of respect (Marzano, 2017).

As illustrated in Table 47, teachers in all four schools use verbal and nonverbal indicators to demonstrate value and respect for reluctant learners. School A Teacher 4 reported, “It is important to hear everyone’s opinion. It is all valued. I think that is just the kind of environment I set in my classroom. I feel like all student feel valued and they could talk no matter their disability or shyness or even how extroverted they were, they could express themselves in their way.”

Table 47

Demonstrating Value and Respect for Reluctant Learners (Marzano, 2017): Teachers’ Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
identify expectation levels for all students; identifying differential treatment for reluctant learners; using nonverbal and verbal indicators of respect	use nonverbal and verbal indicators of respect	use verbal and nonverbal indicators of respect	use nonverbal and verbal indicators of respect	use nonverbal and verbal indicators of respect

Asking in-depth questions of reluctant learners. It is also crucial for teachers to maintain high expectations by treating reluctant learners equally as their peers. This design area’s strategies include questioning levels, response opportunities, follow-up questioning, evidence and support for student answers, encouragement, wait time, response tracking, and avoiding inappropriate reactions (Marzano, 2017).

Teachers in all four schools described asking in-depth questions of reluctant learners. As illustrated in Table 48, all schools encouraged hesitant learners. School A, School C, and School D teachers also used questioning techniques to promote unwilling students.

Table 48

Asking In-Depth Questions of Reluctant Learners (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
question levels; response opportunities; follow-up questioning; evidence and support for student answers; encouragement; wait time; response tracking; inappropriate reactions	question levels, encouragement for participation for all students	encouragement for participation of all students	question levels, encouragement for participation for all students	question levels, encouragement for participation for all students

Probing incorrect answers with reluctant learners. Teachers should implement a variety of strategies to guide students from an incorrect response to a correct response. The guidance includes using an appropriate response process, temporarily letting students off the hook, using answer revision, and think-pair-share strategies. (Marzano, 2017).

As illustrated in Table 49, all schools described methods for addressing incorrect answers given by reluctant learners. Teachers in all four schools discussed the think-pair-share strategy. Teachers in School B and School C mentioned letting students off the hook temporarily.

Table 49

Probing Incorrect Answers and Reluctant Learners (Marzano, 2017): Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Marzano	School A	School B	School C	School D
Use an appropriate response process; let students off the hook temporarily; use answer revision; use think-pair-share	think-pair-share	let students off the hook temporarily, think-pair-share	let students off the hook temporarily, think-pair-share	use think-pair-share

Conceptual Frameworks

This section presents a conceptual framework for each school constructed on the interview protocol (Appendix B) based on teachers' perceptions of effective teaching. The Conceptual Model for School A, illustrated in Figure 4.8., represents the interview protocol's (Appendix B) findings. The researcher divides each model into three categories: feedback, content, and context. Then, the classes are separated into subcategories and followed by feedback divided into goals and assessments. Teachers separate content into lesson types and then divide context into engagement, rules, relationships, and high expectations. Findings, or teacher responses, are organized under the subcategories.

Figure 4.8. Conceptual Model for School A

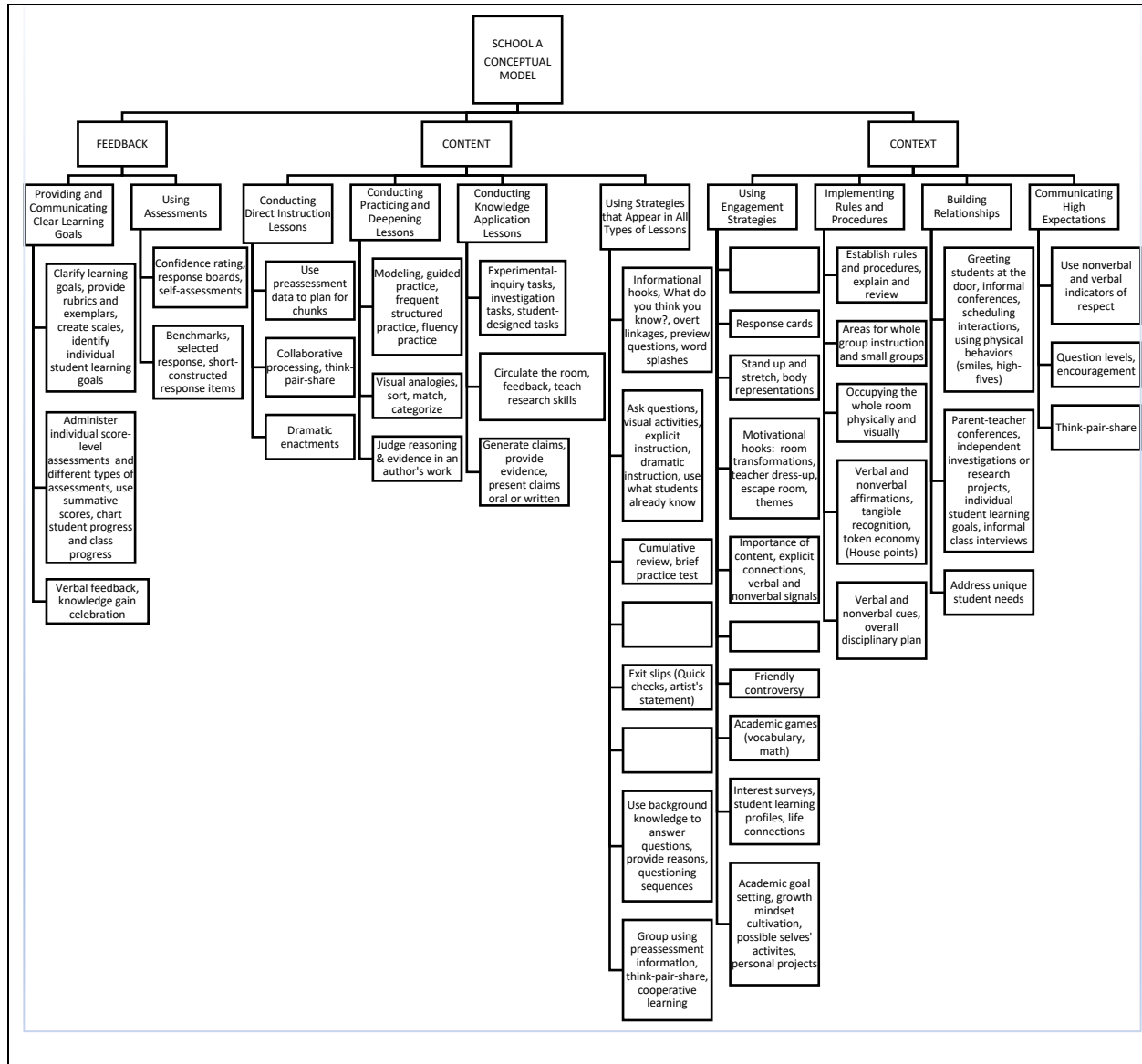


Figure 4.9. Conceptual Model for School B

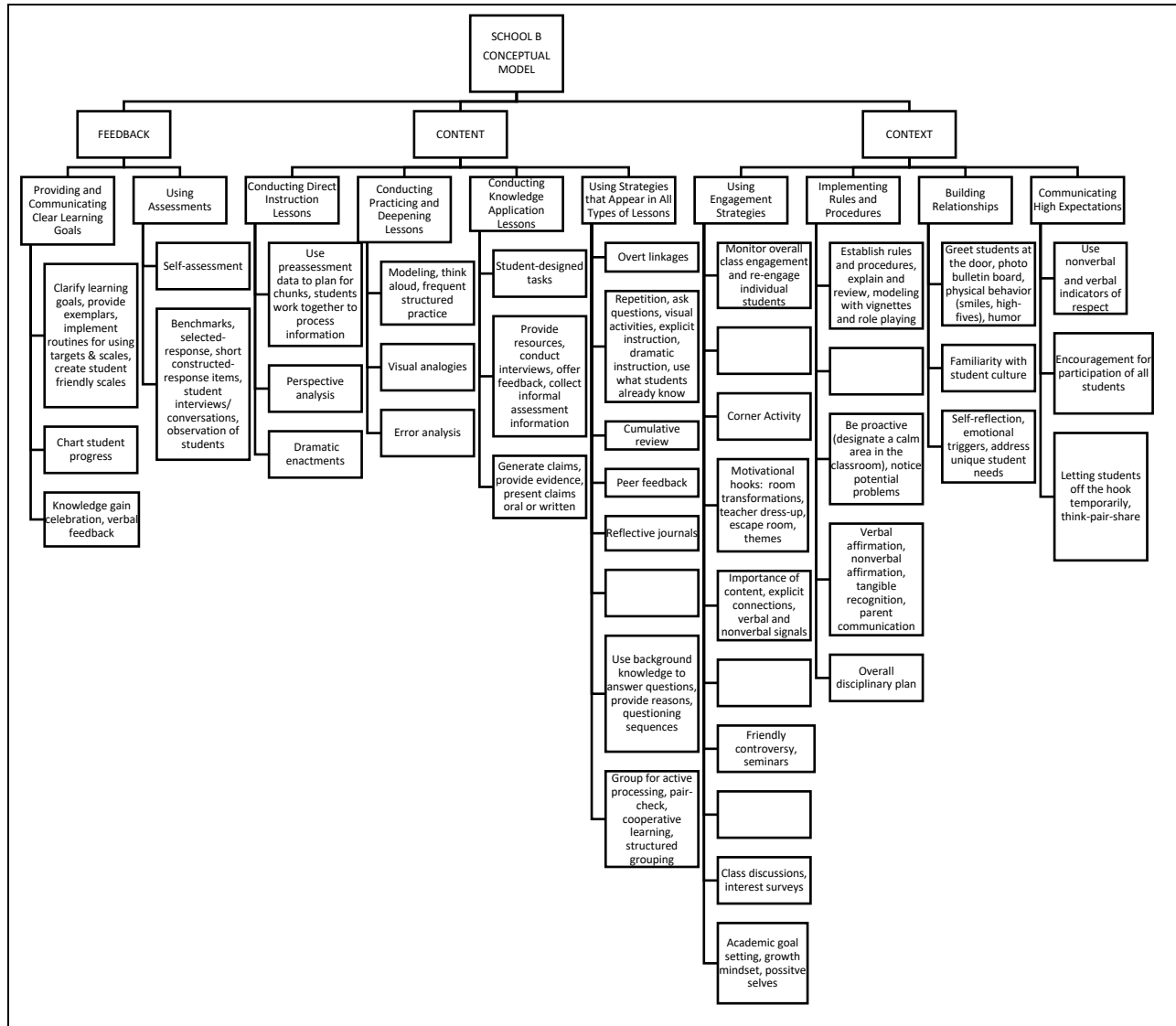


Figure 4.10. Conceptual Model for School C

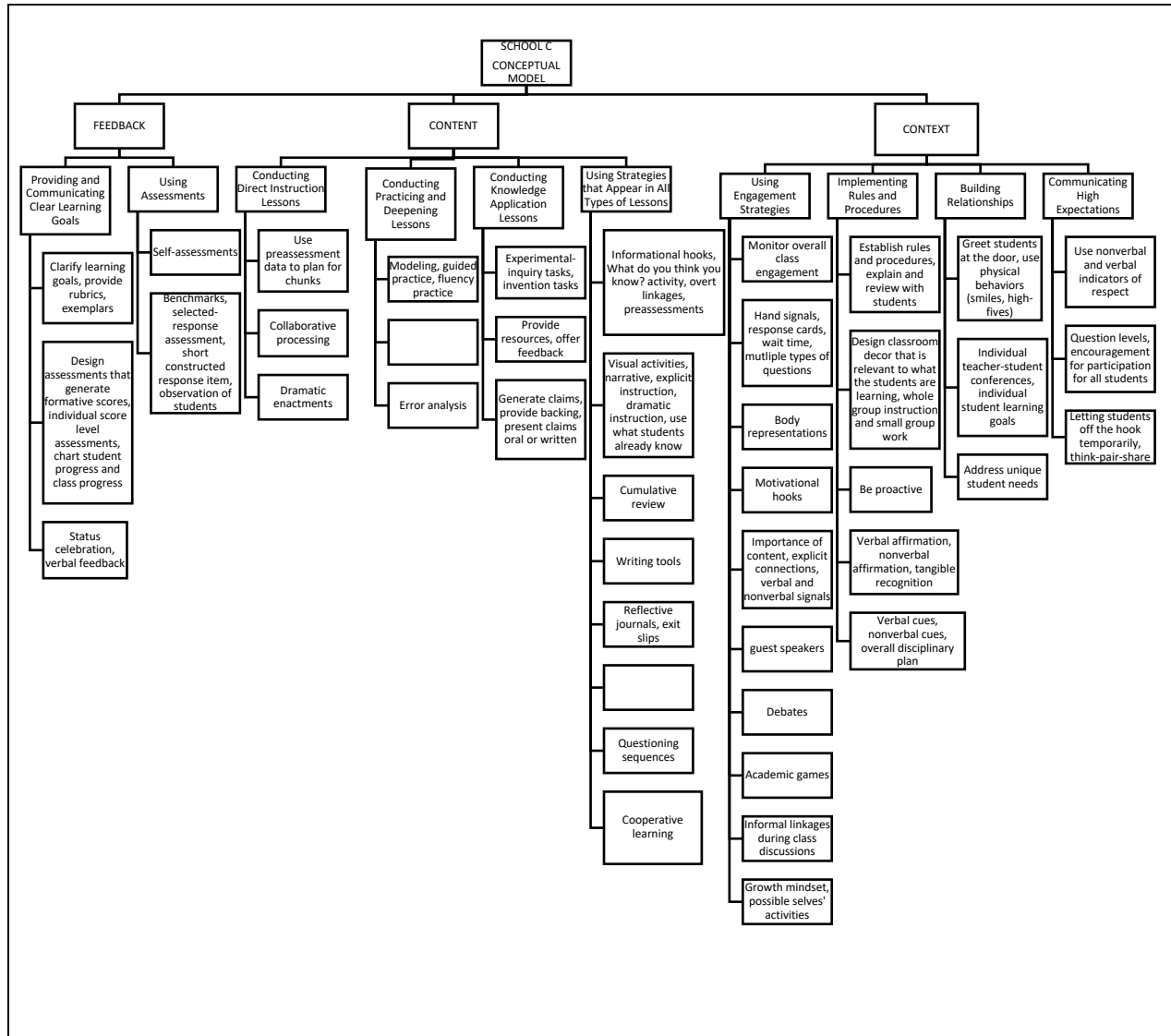
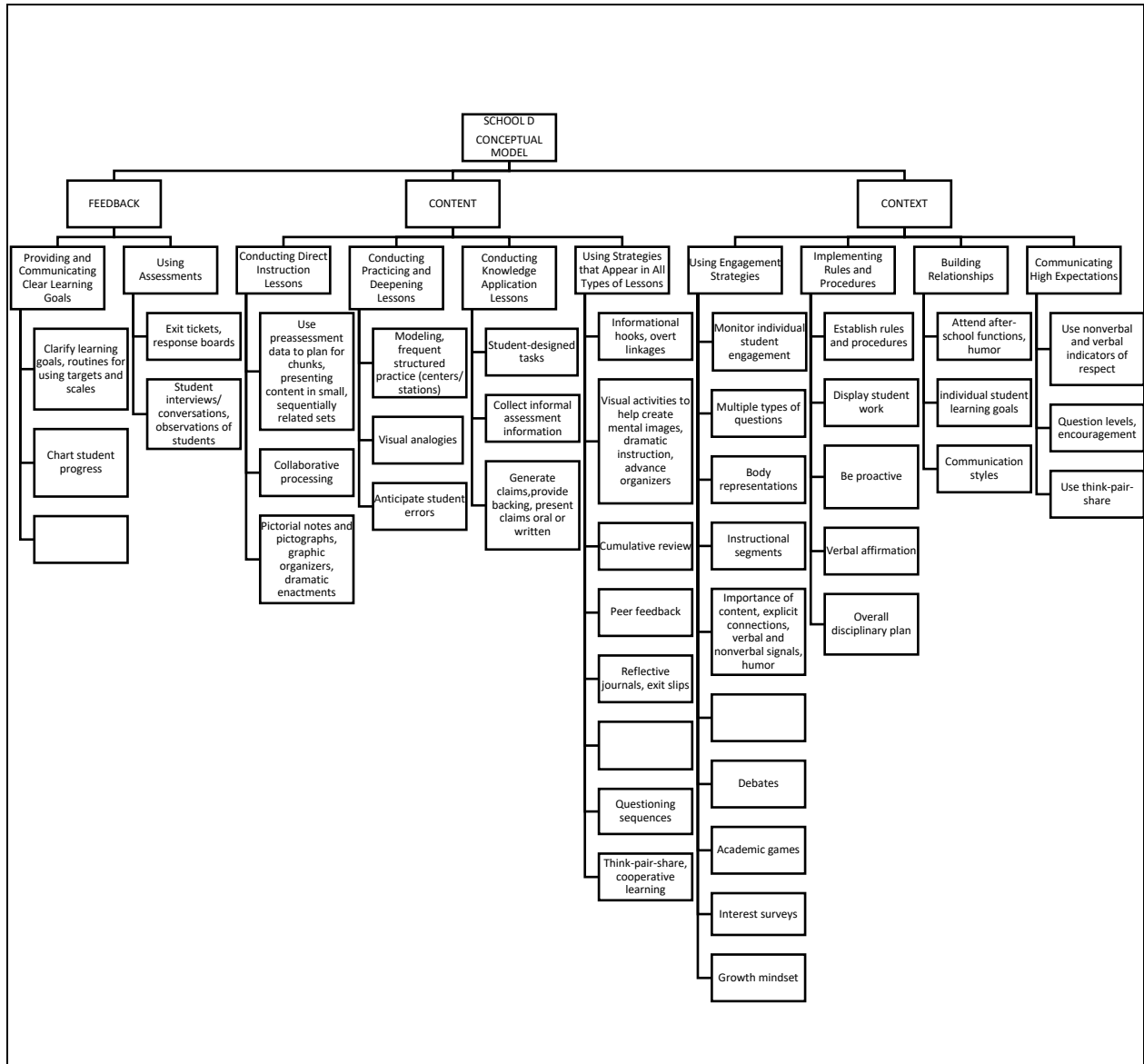


Figure 4.11. Conceptual Model for School D



Conceptual Framework Comparison

Marzano's (2017) framework identifies research-based strategies in the areas of feedback, content, and context. Feedback has 26 strategies, content has 105 strategies, and context has 99 strategies. Table 49 presents the percentage of research-based strategies in each category identified for each school. The absent category represents the percentage of Marzano's researched-based strategies unspecified during interview protocols for each school. Overall the district scored lowest in identifying content-related instructional strategies and highest in the feedback category.

Table 49

Comparing Conceptual Frameworks

	Feedback (26)	Content (105)	Context (99)
School A	65%	37%	41%
School B	42%	31%	32%
School C	54%	26%	34%
School D	27%	23%	23%
Absent	15%	43%	32%

Improve Teaching and Learning

This section presents recommendations for building a sound instructional model to improve teaching and learning across the district. This process begins with sharing research findings with district leaders, and then requesting permission to move forward with plans for a professional development workshop focused on *The New Art and Science of Teaching* (Marzano, 2017). The instructor divides the professional development opportunity into three components: (1) feedback, (2) content, and (3) context. Each piece will have clearly defined teacher actions related to their impact on students' cognitive ability to process and retain information. Once

plans have been finalized, I will invite teachers to participate in a workshop learning how deliberate actions can spark specific mental states' and processes in their classroom. After receiving an overview of Marzano's (2017) framework (Appendix A), the instructor will give special attention to the untapped instructional strategies uncovered during the data analysis process. Following the professional development opportunity, additional conversations will ensue to support the implementation of Marzano's (2017) structure.

Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

This section summarizes each school's findings in the district and answers the primary research question: How do teachers perceive effective teaching at four elementary schools in a small, urban district? This section also gives voice to the teachers as they describe in their own words what effective teaching means to them and their profession in the areas of feedback, content, and context.

School A. According to the findings, teachers in School A believe effective teaching is all-encompassing. As Teacher 4 stated, "It's not just the instructional piece but the culture in your classroom and the relationships that you build with your students. You may be phenomenal in your brain, but until you find a way to make a connection and control the atmosphere in your classroom, then it doesn't matter what a good teacher you are instructional because they are not taking it in." Therefore, all of the instructional strategies are important, but to maximize learning, the teacher must find a way to connect with the student.

Teacher 3 defined effective teaching as "igniting the love of learning within a student and making sure they want to come in and learn every day." School A teachers described igniting the love of learning through room transformations, teacher dress-ups, escape rooms, and

scavenger hunts. As Teacher 7 explained, “I’m a circus performer, we dress up and play music.” Other strategies for engaging students included educational games and social controversy.

When it comes to reluctant learners, School A teachers understand what it takes to engage them in learning. Teacher 7 described the importance of making every child feel important. Regarding implementing rules and procedures, Teacher 7 explained that once she found a way to connect with a chronically disruptive student, then he wasn’t a discipline problem anymore. “I listen to their stories. I try to make them feel important. I just go over and sit and talk to those kids. I found that connecting to students is more effective than anything else,” reported by Teacher 7.

Teachers in School A identified ways of providing student feedback through clear learning goals: providing rubrics, administering different types of assessments, charting student progress, verbal feedback, and knowledge-gain celebrations. Checks are also formative and summative. Confidence ratings, exit statements, response boards, and self-assessments are just a few ways teachers assess student learning during the lesson.

School A teachers also use a variety of methods for conducting lessons. They use preassessment data to plan for chunks. They also use think-pair-share for collaborative processing. Teachers described modeling, guided practice, and visual analogies as strategies for practice lessons. Teachers also reported using project-based learning, experimental-inquiry tasks, and investigation tasks for applying knowledge lessons. Teacher 1 described inquiry-based learning as “giving them a problem and letting them solve their way out of it. Even if they make a huge mess, they learn from the experience.” The teacher also reported that science was ideal for inquiry-based learning and projects.

School B. Teachers in School B describe meeting the needs of the whole child: academically, socially, and emotionally. Teacher 1 described one strategy for attending to the whole child: *charting student progress* serves as a motivator especially for strugglers. When students chart their gain, and the learning is visible, they become encouraged to try even harder.

Teacher 6 also explained how she attends to the child's cognitive and emotional needs by communicating high expectations during direct instruction lessons. She always described the highest questioning level, finding the most challenging question related to that concept. She reported, "I tell them that this is the hardest, highest level of the standard. We start to break it apart. We look at each piece, and kids don't give up as much because sometimes if they figure out that that is the highest level, they feel confident when I go into the standard instead of feeling defeated. Therefore, I start at the top and work backward."

Several teachers reported strategies that appear in all types of lessons, such as relating the content to current events or previous learning. Also, using a good piece of literature to make connections to learning. Another typical response was having conversations with students about their writing and boosting their confidence by telling them what they are doing as good readers and writers.

All seven teachers interviewed described using songs, music, and movement for engagement strategies. Teacher 2 explained, "I use lots of videos, songs, visuals, and music. I try to be fun and positive. I recognize students when they are working hard. I want them to be internally motivated to learn. I help them think about their future and their dreams. I tell them learning is important because it helps you reach your dreams."

All teachers described the importance of culture and the classroom community in their classroom. Demonstrating respect for one another is essential to the teachers. As Teacher 6 told,

“When students feel valued by you, they work harder for you in the end. They start buying into what you are selling instead of just thinking that we’re just up there talking again.” Teacher 1 discussed spending time with the students and talking to them. She said, “I encourage them, when the other students see that I value the student, then they’re going to value the student as well.”

School C. Like the other schools, School C teachers described meeting their students’ academic, social, and emotional needs. Teacher 2 discussed, “pulling out all of the stops to reach everyone in your classroom so that they can learn and grow into a productive human being, no matter where it takes you. You have to find out what is hindering the child from learning, and then you proceed with that and eliminate those things, correct them, and then they will learn.”

School C teachers discussed communicating clear learning goals. Teacher 2 reported, “I tell them what the standard is, whatever we’re doing. I just talk to them in terms they will understand, which we have to learn. Teacher 3 responded similarly, “you have to show them where they are going and why they are going there.” Teacher 9 takes it further by saying, “I state the goal to them, and they know what it is that we’re working on. I modeled the path for them to completion before we started to understand expectations from the beginning, middle, and end.”

Existing in the feedback category, teachers employed a variety of methods for assessing students. They reported self-assessments, exit tickets, observations, and district benchmark assessments. They also described personal data folders so the students can track their learning. Several teachers also described giving students verbal feedback.

In the content area, several teachers described using pre-assessments, informational hooks, and *What do you think you know?* activities. Teachers utilized several techniques for

conducting direct instruction lessons. They included using preassessment data to plan for chunks, collaborative processing, and dramatic enactments. One teacher explained actively involving students by clapping, creating rhythmic patterns, using their hands, and any material thing so the students can commit that to their head and heart and produce it.

School C teachers expressed the importance of community in their class and school. Teacher 3 reported, “I give them pep talks about how you are a team, and you have each other’s back. I try to create a trusting community feels, so the students are willing to take chances when learning their academics.” Other teachers described greeting students at the door with a hug and a smile. One teacher stated that “the morning meaning sets the tone for the day because it makes them feel welcome, builds classroom community, and everybody wants everybody to succeed. Then everyone has that high expectation and are motivated and excited to come to school every day and succeed.”

School D. School D teachers describe effective teaching as being a combination of things. Teacher 3 stated, “An effective teacher serves with compassion not only for the practice but students as well.” Teacher 4 reported, “effective teaching is meeting the needs where they are and filling in gaps that need filling and challenges where they need to be challenged and moving them in an upward direction.” Other teachers mentioned effective planning, time and behavior management, and delivering instruction on everyone’s level.

Teachers reported providing clear learning goals throughout their lessons. Teacher 1 described relating the standards and goals to real-world scenarios and talking about why we need to know this and how it will help us. Some teachers posted the learning goal, and others included the plans in daily conversations. One teacher has individual student goals in a folder

for each child. Teacher 6 discussed how she posted the goals and referred to them throughout the lesson because she wants them to know the end goal and expectation.

Some teachers utilized assessments formally, while others assessed students informally. For example, Teacher 4 stated, “I do something with a daily standard, and I guess you would say some of it is just informal. It might be that they’re talking to each other, and I circulate and ask questions before they leave class, such as *What did you learn today?* or *Tell me about what we did today.*” Other teachers described keeping data folders and requiring students to keep track of their data because it gives them ownership.

Teacher 1 discussed the motivation of a six-year-old reporting, “I don’t put a lot of emphasis on assessments. I administer them, but there is no added pressure. I just tell the students that this is what we are learning now; this is where we are going. They see their progression. I don’t focus a lot on where they are now because I think it is more motivating for a six-year-old to know – What do you want me to do next? They are so eager to please. I capitalize on that a little bit.”

Teachers at School D took ownership of their classroom. Teacher 1 stated, “It starts with me and my enthusiasm level. If I’m excited and enthusiastic, then they are going to be excited and enthusiastic.” Teacher 4 described the importance of relationships. She reported, “relationships are probably the number one motivating factor for my students. The only reason they are going to do what I need them to do with any amount of effort is that they know how much I care. Relationships are what keeps them working hard.”

In the implementing rules and procedures category, Teacher 3 described the importance of communication with parents. She recalled, “I communicate with parents often, I let them know if there is a pattern. If there is an observed pattern, we need to discuss how we will move

forward to meet their needs better. I tell them after an established pattern that their child develops, what we'll call a label, and that we want people to see their child for more than their behavior. We want everyone to see the best in their child. Once I'm able to communicate with parents, I have more parent support, which helps the classroom."

Relationships are essential at School D. For example, Teacher 2 described using humor in the classroom. She said she likes to laugh and tell corny jokes. Teacher 2 reported, "If you can get a kid to laugh, then you made some kind of bond with them. Laughter breaks down barriers, and they can come in and be a little more comfortable in your classroom." Another teacher reported relationships that allow her to be more effective in the classroom and establish good classroom management. Teacher 4 stated, "Without classroom management, you can't be effective. If your class is crazy, I don't care how much fun you are having; nobody's learning stuff. Management is important, and then you can address the student's needs individually and the whole class."

Summary

As illustrated above, this chapter presents my findings to the primary research question: How do teachers perceive effective teaching at four elementary schools in a small, urban district? Using structured interview protocols (Appendix B), I collected data from teachers at each of the four elementary schools. The researcher reported findings throughout the chapter. Then I responded to sub-question 1: What would a conceptual framework look like for each school? I created a conceptual design for each school using the findings from the primary research question. Then I developed a proposal for assembling a sound instructional model to improve teaching and learning across the district. Finally, I completed the chapter with a

summary of teachers' perceptions of effective teaching at each of the four elementary schools in the Cedar City School District.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented and analyzed the evidence collected from teacher interviews and their significant teaching perceptions. Using the data, I created a conceptual model for each school based on Marzano's framework (Appendix A). Then I discussed building a sound instructional model to improve educational practices within the schools. In this chapter, I use the literature reviewed in Chapter II to discuss effective teaching strategies employed by teachers in the Cedar City School District. I also emphasized several implications for practice and research. Then the conclusion closes the chapter.

Discussion

A couple of assumptions driven by educational research provided the foundation for this study. One hypothesis stated that teacher quality is the number one influencer of students' academic growth and achievement (Wiliam, 2018). Another assumption ranked principals second as influencers of student learning in their schools (Fullan 2014). If these assumptions are correct as evidence supports, then principals must focus on teacher quality if they genuinely want to influence student learning. School principals need to hire quality teachers while growing and developing existing ones (Marshall, 2013).

While I embraced the role of instructional leadership in my school, I sympathized with Marshall, who argued that "there isn't a shared definition of good teaching" (p. 23). Many principals and teachers do not share the same understanding of what constitutes effective teaching. Knowingly, teachers behave in ways consistent with their ideological and pedagogical

beliefs. If improvement efforts are to succeed, school leaders must explore teacher perceptions of effective teaching practices (Coburn, 2003).

These circumstances led to my qualitative study exploring teachers' perceptions of effective teaching in my school and district. The investigation developed around a primary research question and two sub-questions.

Research Question: How do teachers perceive effective teaching in four elementary schools in a small, urban district?

Sub-questions:

1. What would a conceptual framework look like for each school?
2. How would I help build a sound instructional model to improve teaching and learning across the district?

I developed an interview protocol (Appendix B) from Marzano's (2017) framework (Appendix A) to answer the research questions. The interview protocol (Appendix B) had three divisions: feedback, content, and context.

Feedback. Feedback represents a continuous loop of information between the teacher and the student about the effectiveness of the instructional strategies implemented in the classroom (Marzano, 2017). Two elements comprise feedback: (1) providing and communicating clear learning goals, and (2) using assessments. Findings from the research concluded that teachers in Cedar City School District implemented several strategies within the two elements.

Providing and communicating clear learning goals. Providing and communicating clear learning goals (Marzano, 2017) equip students with a clear understanding of learning intentions and success criteria. Therefore, evidence of mastery is no longer a mystery to the

learner (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Findings revealed that teachers implemented various techniques to share clear learning goals in the Cedar City School District. Teachers also tracked class and student progress through individual score-level assessments and summative assessments. Furthermore, student status and knowledge-gain celebrations honor student accomplishments.

Using assessments. Assessments are the fundamental mechanisms employed by teachers in which students provide clear evidence of their learning in response to the instruction they receive in the classroom (Reeves, 2016a). Along those same lines, Popham (2011) declared formative assessments to be more of a process than a test. The study's findings consistent with Popham's (2011) immediate instructional adjustments, included confidence ratings and response boards. While Marzano (2017) and Reeves (2016a) had self-assessments, *Monroe* (2019) added exit slips to *using assessments of the whole class* (Marzano, 2017). Lastly, benchmarks, selected responses, short-constructed responses, student interviews, and observations included *formal reviews of individual students* (Marzano, 2017).

Content. Marzano (2017) describes ways to enhance student learning by using explicit instructional strategies to instigate specific mental states and students' processes. Content represents the instruction that teachers provide for the students. Four elements divide content: (1) conducting direct instruction lessons, (2) conducting practicing and deepening studies, (3) conducting knowledge application lessons, and (4) using strategies that appear in all types of assignments. Findings from the research concluded that teachers in Cedar City School District implemented a few strategies within these four elements.

Conducting direct instruction lessons. When teachers expose students to new content, direct instruction is essential to understand which parts are crucial and how they all fit together

(Rosenshine, 2012; Stronge, 2018; Marzano, 2017). Findings support teachers' chunk content using preassessment data for planning, present content in small sequential-related sets, and then use collaborative learning for processing. Additional strategies for processing include perspective analysis and think-pair-share strategies. Lastly, students record and represent content through dramatic enactments, pictorial notes and pictographs, and graphic organizers.

Conducting practicing and deepening lessons. Proficiency requires practice (Willingham, 2009); therefore, after the content is delivered, teachers should conduct practicing and deepening lessons (Rosenshine, 2012; Marzano, 2017) to allow students to develop fluency in skills and processes. Reeves (2016a) also supports practice but insists that “effective practice occurs not at home in isolation, but at school, and is accompanied by feedback, repetition, and improvement” (p. 11).

Findings support that teachers have many strategies for frequent structured practice: modeling, guided practice, think-aloud, and fluency practice. They also use visual analogies, sorting, matching, and categorizing to examine similarities and differences. Other strategies include reading errors in reasoning through error analysis, anticipating student errors, and judging reasoning and evidence in the author's work.

Conducting knowledge application lessons. Marzano (2017) affirms that students need opportunities to engage in cognitively complex tasks and apply their learning in new situations. A few teachers' techniques in Cedar City School District include experimental-inquiry, investigation, invention, and student-designed studies. Teachers also provide students with resources and guidance by circulating the room, giving feedback, teaching research skills, conducting interviews, and collecting assessment information. A few teachers designed

students' opportunities to generate claims, provide evidence, and then present claims orally or in a written fashion.

Using strategies that appear in all types of lessons. While Marzano (2017) recommends organizing the students for interaction, Reeves (2016a) encourages explicitly engaging the learners in providing feedback to one another. Findings consistent with these principles include teachers using preassessment information, pair-check, think-pair-share, structured grouping, and cooperative learning to organize students for interaction. Other strategies for activating students' prior knowledge involve informational hooks, overt linkages, preview questions, word splashes, and the game: *What do you think you know?* Teachers highlight critical information through questioning, visual activities, explicit instruction, repetition, dramatic instruction, and connections to what students already know. Then students elaborate on the statement using their background knowledge, reasoning, and questioning. Teachers allow students to reflect upon their learning using exit slips, quick checks, journals, and the artist's statements.

Context. A positive classroom environment is essential for optimal learning (Fisher, Frey, Quaglia, Smith, & Lande, 2018). Context encompasses the physical and cultural components of the teaching and learning environment. Four elements include context: (1) using engagement strategies, (2) implementing rules and procedures, (3) building relationships, and (4) communicating high expectations. Findings from the research concluded that teachers in Cedar City School District implemented several strategies within the four elements.

Using engagement strategies. Engagement strategies ensure that "students are paying attention, energized, intrigued, and inspired" (Marzano, 2017, p. 6). The study's findings confirmed that teachers utilize various techniques to monitor overall and individual student engagement. For instance, response cards, questioning, hand signals, and "wait time" increase

student response rates. Body representations, corner activities, and stretch breaks incorporate physical movement into the lessons. Teachers also maintain a lively pace using instructional segments, motivational hooks, room transformations, dress-ups, escape rooms, and themes.

Findings revealed using educational games as a technique for engaging students.

Danielson (2009) stated, “children are born curious and motivated by the drive for competence and independence” (p. 21). It is one reason children enjoy playing video games – the challenge, the immediate feedback they receive, and the opportunity to increase their competency (Reeves, 2016a).

Teachers also use various techniques to motivate and inspire their students, thus spurring engagement. Some strategies include academic goal setting, possible selves’ activities, and promoting a growth mindset. When students have a growth mindset, they understand that intelligence is not fixed but developed through perseverance and hard work (Dweck, 2008). Promoting and supporting students toward a growth mindset is another pathway towards resiliency (Resnick, 2017). As Hattie (2012) confirms, students with resiliency do not give up quickly because they can achieve the learning goal.

Implementing rules and procedures. Sousa (2006) declares that children need to feel safe and emotionally secure before attending to a cognitive nature. Teachers create safe environments by establishing rules and procedures in their classrooms (Marzano, 2017). Data collected revealed that teachers implement regulations and guidelines by explaining, modeling, role-playing, and reviewing them periodically. Teachers remain alert and proactive about the classroom’s happenings, including following procedures when students adhere or fail to adhere to rules.

Building relationships. Danielson (2009) states that people are motivated by a powerful psychological need – “belonging and making a connection with others” (p. 37). Establishing relationships in the classroom fulfill those feelings of belonging and connection that students seek. Teachers involved in this study disclose numerous techniques for building relationships with their students. Teachers show affection for students in the following ways: greeting students at the door, conducting informal conferences, scheduling interactions, using humor, and physical behaviors such as high-fives and thumbs-up. Some teachers shared using photo bulletin boards and attending afterschool functions as additional strategies for building relationships with students.

Findings revealed becoming familiar with cultural differences as a way to understand students’ backgrounds and interests. Becoming aware of students’ cultural differences can be achieved through parent-teacher conferences, independent investigations, informal class interviews, individual student learning goals, and individual teacher-student meetings. Techniques for displaying objectivity and control also surfaced in the study. For example, teachers reveal unique student needs, self-reflecting, communication styles, and awareness of emotional triggers.

Communicating high expectations. Heirck (2017) expresses that trust, belief, and high expectations build positive learning environments. Therefore, when teachers communicate high expectations for all, they send the message to students that they are valued. When students feel valued, they won’t typically hesitate to interact with the teacher and peers in class (Marzano, 2017). In this caring culture, children are comfortable collaborating with their peers and experimenting with new ideas (Resnick, 2017).

Findings confirm that teachers in the Cedar City School District communicate high expectations in various methods. Teachers use verbal and nonverbal indicators to demonstrate respect for all students. They encourage reluctant learners using varying question levels, think-pair-share strategies, and sometimes letting students “off the hook” temporarily.

Conceptual Models

To answer sub-question 1, I created a conceptual map from Marzano’s (2017) framework (Appendix A). Then I replicated the format to create a separate map for each school based on the responses from the interview protocols (Appendix B).

School A. The conceptual model illustrated in Appendix C represents the interview protocol (Appendix B) at School A. The majority of the responses were consistent with Marzano’s framework (Appendix A) in the feedback, content, and context categories. Content had a couple of missing components in *using strategies that appear in all types of lesson* area. They were *revising knowledge* and *assigning purposeful homework*. Context also had a couple of missing details in *using the engagement strategies* area. They were *noticing and reacting when students are not engaged* and *presenting unusual information*.

School B. The conceptual model illustrated in Appendix D represents the interview protocol (Appendix B) at School B. Similar to School A, the majority of the responses aligned with Marzano’s framework (Appendix A). Content had one missing component, *assigning purposeful homework* to *strategies that appear in all lesson areas*. The context had a couple of missing elements in *using engagement strategies* and *implementing rules and procedures*. The areas missing in *using engagement strategies* were *increasing response rates*, *presenting unusual information*, and *using educational games*. The element overlooking in *implementing rules and procedures* was *organizing the physical layout of the classroom*.

School C. The conceptual model for School C, illustrated in Appendix E, represents the interview protocol's (Appendix B) findings. Consistent with School A and School B, the data collected from School C teachers closely aligned with Marzano's framework (Appendix A). However, there were a couple of missing areas in the content category. The missing regions include *conducting practicing and deepening lessons* and *strategies that appear in all types of studies. Examining similarities and differences in teaching, practicing and deepening classes* was not evident in the findings. Also, *assigning purposeful homework* was not discussed in *strategies that appear in all types of assignments*.

School D. The conceptual model for School D (Appendix F) represents the findings from the interview protocol (Appendix B). School D had a missing area in each category. In the feedback category, *celebrating success* was not discussed. *Assigning purposeful homework* was not evident in the content category. Also, in the context category, *presenting unusual information* was also omitted during the interview protocol (Appendix B).

Improve Teaching and Learning

To answer sub-question 2, I utilized the methods described in the literature review and the conceptual models. I offered recommendations for a sound instructional model, improving teaching and learning across the district. The recommendations included a professional development workshop geared toward teachers' deliberate behaviors to initiate their students' specific mental states and processes. It also has supports for teachers to assist with implementation.

Principal as instructional leader. As the instructional leader, the principal must maintain a clear focus on teaching and learning (Reeves, 2016b). Therefore, as an instructional leader, I intend to focus on a professional development workshop emphasizing *The New Art and*

Science of Teaching (Marzano, 2017). As Reeves (2016b) states, “when a school is properly focused, it discovers the leverage points that yield the greatest impact on student learning” (p. 35). I feel that a focus on *The New Art and Science of Teaching* (Marzano, 2017) would significantly impact the Cedar City School District.

Processes. The schools in the Cedar City School District already engage in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). As DuFour and DuFour (2010) described, PLCs are a process for sharing collective knowledge and building team members’ capacity. There is a ripple effect on student learning when highly effective teachers collaborate and share their expertise with lower-performing teachers (Eaker & Keating, 2015). I intend to develop teacher capacity that is shared and strengthened during Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings by creating a professional workshop focused on Marzano’s (2017) framework (Appendix A).

Scale. Marzano (2017) stated, “teachers function within the context of at least two systems: (1) the school and (2) the district. Those systems enhance individual teachers’ effectiveness and contribute to individual teachers’ ineffectiveness, usually simultaneously” (p. 103). In these statements, Marzano described how district and school policies could support teachers while also hindering their advancement. Through continuous cycles of professional learning to support teacher growth and development, it improves teachers’ effectiveness by increasing their knowledge of human understanding and providing them with a repertoire of strategies to employ in the classroom.

Implications for Practice

It is essential that school and district leaders understand the profound principles of learning theories and how that translates into classroom practices for the students they serve (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). Equipped with this knowledge, school and district leaders can

increase learners' proficiency by developing teachers with substantiated instructional strategies and techniques. This study has revealed implications for schools and communities interested in school improvement measures by exploring teachers' perceptions of effective teaching.

Strong instructional leaders in the school and district. Strong instructional leadership must be present in schools and districts to promote optimal student learning by implementing best practices (Reeves, 2016b). Exemplary leadership is critical to overseeing effective ways of guiding and supporting teachers. Influential leaders must be aware of what is happening in classrooms and have a comprehensive understanding of effective instructional practices.

This study's findings indicate inconsistencies in teachers' routines and the absence of research-based instructional methods within the school and district. It is up to the district leaders to recruit, hire, and equip individuals to be quality instructional leaders. Principals must also continue to grow and develop professionally in ways to transform learning in their school. They must know what they are looking for and can effectively guide teachers in different directions as needed. They must know how to encourage and support changes as required.

Research-based instructional framework. A research-based instructional framework is essential to guide effective practices so that everyone has a shared and accurate understanding of what best practices look like in action (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). Research findings suggest the absence of an instructional framework, or perhaps the current framework is outdated and no longer viable as an instructional guide. The researcher recommends revisiting the current model for clarity or the exploration of a new framework.

Accountability measures. Accountability measures are vital for ensuring that high-quality instructional practices are occurring consistently. The study's findings revealed discrepancies in teachers' routines and a deficiency in specific instructional methods.

Accountability measures are typically associated with formal evaluations; however, Fullan (2014) reports that the feedback related to traditional teacher evaluation systems, involving rewards and punishments, do not produce lasting effects. Fullan (2014) recommends achieving *accountable behavior* through *targeted capacity-building* because it indirectly impacts accountability. It is essentially using “the power of the group to change the group” (p. 29). Fullan (2014) insists that you improve accountable behavior when you improve the individuals’ performance and the group capacity building.

Marshall (2013) argued that even though school leaders spend a large portion of their time formally evaluating their teachers, research reports that it has little impact on improving instruction quality in the classroom. Marshall (2013) utilized “mini-observations” as a different strategy for improving instruction quality through accountable tactics. There are a plethora of benefits to “mini-observations.” During the frequent, unannounced visits, school leaders watch for critical instructional practices observed in the school. Afterward, informal conversations include candid conversations based on the observed patterns in the classroom. Then continuous suggestions and redirections ensue. The intent is to empower and energize teachers to assume real responsibility for improving teaching and learning (Marshall, 2013).

Professional development. If school and district leaders want to continue to grow and develop teachers in education, they must provide them with high-quality professional development opportunities. This study’s findings indicate inconsistencies in teachers’ routines and the absence of research-based instructional methods within the school and district. Therefore, the consideration is, *how do teachers link educational research of knowledge acquisition with instructional practices in an academic setting?*

Ertmer & Newby (2013) insist that teachers must first understand learning theories to apply them in practical situations. Therefore, the initial recommendation for these schools and other K12 schools is holding a symposium educating teachers on principles of learning theories. A seminar on principles of learning theories equips teachers with different perspectives on the learning process. The second recommendation is for teachers to receive spaced, continuous training on Marzano's framework (Appendix A) to link learning ideas with instructional strategies and techniques. After establishing the foundation of learning theories and instructional design, subsequent actions support implementing and continuing effective educational practices in one's academic setting. In addition to professional development cycles, providing each new hire and every teacher with a shared book read in the school and district is another approach for cultivating a sense of shared cognition. In essence, the intent is to build a collective understanding around instructional improvements within the school and district's confines.

This study is meaningful for several reasons. First, it encourages school and district leaders to build a shared cognition around goals for instructional improvement. Second, it reinforces the support for teachers' refinement in inconsistent areas to increase student learning. This study also encourages best practices and expands the teachers' repertoire of techniques and tactics employed in the classroom.

This study revealed teacher beliefs and practices encompassing effective teaching methods in four elementary schools in the Cedar City School District. Based on the findings, I created a conceptual model for each elementary school modeled against Marzano's (2017) framework (Appendix A). I also provided recommendations for developing a sound instructional model for the district. As a result of this study, leaders can take specific actions to make lasting changes to instructional practices for students in the community—professional

development workshops designed to strengthen teachers' instructional practices in elementary schools.

Implications for Research

This study's findings highlight several implications worthy of future research. The questions requiring further research are (1) whether similar results would be found at the middle school, (2) additional interviews with teachers to determine the credibility of the findings, (3) an investigation into the current teacher evaluation system, and (4) an exploration of professional development opportunities for teachers from the past five years.

Middle school. Expanding the study to include middle school is recommended to determine whether results are similar. One component of Rosenshine's (Spring 2012) research focused on engaging students' weekly and monthly content reviews. The research findings report that students need extensive practice to move knowledge into long-term memory. It is the review and rehearsal that creates more robust interconnections in the brain. As a result, students at the secondary level performed better on final exams when they had weekly quizzes (Rosenhine, Spring 2012).

Additional interviews. The researcher recommends additional interviews with participants to determine the credibility of the findings. Discovering teachers' philosophical attitudes regarding instructional practices are important. In the study, teachers struggled to aligned philosophical approaches to the instruction from those informed by Behaviorism, Cognitivism, and Constructivism (Ertmer & Newby, 2013).

Teacher evaluations. Further research into the current teacher evaluation system is warranted to answer the following questions: *Is the current evaluation method effective? What impact does the current model have on instructional practices in the classroom? Does the model*

improve instruction and student achievement in schools? DeMatthews (2015) reports that improving education goes beyond formal teacher evaluation systems. Improving instructional practices in schools involves everyone in the build, knowing what constitutes effective teaching. Improving instructional practices begins with a clear mission and vision charged by the principals and school leaders.

Professional development. It is necessary to expand this study to explore professional development opportunities for interview participants. This study would answer the following questions: *In the last few years, what professional development have the participants attended? Were any of the conferences, seminars, training focused on high-quality instructional practices? If so, which ones were the most impactful in changing their instructional practices or developing them as teachers?*

DeMatthews (2015) addresses the need for high-quality professional development for teachers through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). In these circumstances, experienced educators mentor teachers with particular professional development needs. By targeting content knowledge and pedagogical skill, this strategy supports a collaborative learning community.

Further expansion of this study includes (1) lessons learned following the development of linking research and practice, (2) teachers' perception of effective leadership in academic settings, and (3) instructional practices associated with high academic achievements.

Linking research and practice. The researcher recommends that further research encompasses lessons learned while developing a model linking research and practice. Additional research includes exploring the philosophical approaches of behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism and then aligning those basic assumptions with instructional practices. Each

system has its own unique set of defined principles. Ertmer and Newby (2013) describe the tactics as moving “along the behaviorists-cognitivist-constructivist continuum, the focus of instruction shifts from teaching to learning, from the passive transfer of facts and routines to the active application of ideas to problems” (p. 58). Lastly, research supports that the approach depends upon the context (Ertmer & Newby, 2013), meaning it is not a one-size-fits-all situation.

Teachers’ perceptions of effective leadership. Research might extend to exploring teachers’ perceptions of effective leadership in an academic setting. According to Bernhardt (2018), when planning for continuous school improvement, it is essential to take a “comprehensive and honest look” (p. 15) at multiple sources of data to assess the current situation. The researcher believes that a study exploring teachers’ perceptions is warranted because schools do not include perception data when planning for school improvement purposes. Interviews and surveys are a good source of perception data to have in the study.

Instructional practices associated with high academics. A study of direct instruction practices is worthy of additional research to determine the impact on academic achievement. Along with Marzano’s (2017) work, Rosenshine (Spring 2012) lists ten research-based strategies that all teachers should know. The practices are grounded in the following research: cognitive science, classroom practices of expert teachers, and using mental supports to help students engage in complex tasks (Rosenshine, Spring 2012).

Implications for Theory

This study correlates with Schunk’s (2016) learning theories of behaviorism, social cognitive theory, information processing theory, and constructivism. Understanding teacher behaviors that cause learning to occur in students’ minds relates to behaviorism. Also, engaging students in cognitively complex tasks link to social cognitive theory. Conducting practicing and

deepening lessons with students describe information processing theory. Finally, using engagement strategies for students to construct their learning applies to theories of constructivism.

Consistencies with the Literature

The following bullet points illuminate how the study aligns with literature:

- In alignment with Popham (2011), Reeves (2016a), Stronge (2018) and Wiliam (2018), teachers described the uses of formative assessments as an effective instructional practice
- Compatible with Fullan (2014), researcher intends to build capacity with the knowledge gained from the study
- Aligned with Wiggins & McTighe (2005), teachers described providing clear learning goals throughout their lessons
- Interview responses agreed with Dweck's (2008) growth mindset and Resnick's (2017) resiliency stance
- Consistent with Schmoker (2011), participants did not mention homework as a viable strategy
- Like Bernhardt (2018), researcher values perception data as a viable source of information
- Teachers emphasized the importance of a creating a positive classroom environment. This agrees with Fisher, Frey, Quaglia, Smith & Lande (2018) and Hierck (2017).
- In accordance with Danielson (2009) and Marzano (2017), interviewees strongly believe in the value of developing positive teacher-student relationships

Inconsistencies with the Literature

The following bullet points highlight how the findings conflicts with the literature:

- Differentiated instruction was mentioned frequently during interviews; Schmoker (2011) argues against differentiated instruction; Marzano (2017) focuses on research-based practices; Willingham (2009) insists that students are more alike than different in terms of how they learn
- Teachers described creative, engaging techniques for presenting content; Schmoker (2011) warns against fads and innovations citing that most quality instruction is mundane and unremarkable
- Teachers failed to mention homework as an effective practice; Marzano (2017) supports assigning purposeful homework
- Teachers named group work as an effective instructional strategy; Schmoker (2011) contends that active learning declines during group work
- Marzano (2017), Rosenshine (2012), and Stronge (2018) provide a plethora of research-based content strategies; however, interviewees were limited in their reporting of direct instruction strategies

Limitations and Delimitations

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the location of the study was limited. The case-study design was to interview participants in their classroom, the natural field setting. Instead, the research conducted one-on-one interviews virtually using the Zoom platform.

Additionally, the researcher serves in a leadership capacity at one of the schools represented in the study. Therefore, there is a possibility that responses were biased (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) due to the researcher's position as assistant principal within the district. The

small sample size in individual schools may also be the result of the researcher's leadership position.

Another limitation of the study is faulty interview questions in the content section. The researcher regrets failing to prompt participants to elaborate on direct instruction methods. Immediate instruction responses were not as explicit as anticipated, and further questioning might have inspired participants to expand their answers.

Conclusion

This study has shown teachers' perceptions of effective teaching practices in four elementary schools in a small, urban school district. These findings reveal teacher practices compatible with Marzano's framework (Appendix A) and a few incompatible. These findings are significant because they reveal inconsistencies in teachers' practices. It should not matter which school or teacher you get; every child should be assured a consistent, quality education. The findings encourage school leaders to support teachers' refinement in inconsistent areas. Future research in this area highlights teachers' perceptions as a tool for school improvement measures.

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Appendix A

Marzano's Framework

FEEDBACK	CONTENT	CONTEXT
CLEAR LEARNING GOALS	DIRECT INSTRUCTION	ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES
SCALES AND RUBRICS	CHUNKING CONTENT	NOTICE AND RESPOND
TRACKING STUDENT PROGRESS	PROCESSING CONTENT	INCREASE RESPONSE RATES
CELEBRATING SUCCESS	RECORDING AND REPRESENTING	PHYSICAL MOVEMENT
		MAINTAIN LIVELY PACE
USING ASSESSMENTS	PRACTICE AND DEEPENING lessons	DEMONSTRATE ENTHUSIASM
WHOLE CLASS INFORMAL	USING STRUCTURED PRACTICE	PRESENT UNUSUAL INFORMATION
INDIVIDUAL FORMAL	EXAMINE SAME/ DIFFERENCES	USE FRIENDLY CONTROVERSY
	EXAMINE ERRORS IN REASONING	ACADEMIC GAMES
		STUDENTS TALK about themselves
	KNOWLEDGE APPLICATION lessons	MOTIVATE AND INSPIRE
	COGNITIVELY COMPLEX TASKS	RULES AND PROCEDURES
	PROVIDING RESOURCE & GUIDANCE	ESTABLISH RULES and procedures
	GENERATE AND DEFEND CLAIMS	ORGANIZE PHYSICAL LAYOUT
		DEMONSTRATE WITHNESS
	STRATEGIES for all lessons	ACKNOWLEDGING AHERENCE (positive reinforcement)
	PREVIEWING	RELATIONSHIPS
	HIGHLIGHTING CRITICAL INFO	VERBAL AND NONVERBAL behaviors to indicate affection for students
	REVIEWING CONTENT	UNDERSTANDING students' backgrounds and interests
	REVISE KNOWLEDGE	DISPLAY OBJECTIVITY & CONTROL
	REFLECTING ON LEARNING	COMMUNICATE HIGH Expectations (RELUCTANT LEARNERS)
	PURPOSEFUL HOMEWORK	DEMONSTRATE VALUE & RESPECT
	ELABORATING	ASK INDEPTH QUESTIONS
	ORGANIZING students for interactions	PROBING INCORRECT ANSWERS

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol *[Interview takes place via Zoom]*

Opening Information: *(Provide an electronic copy of the informed consent to the participant prior to the interview. At the beginning of the Zoom interview, ask the participant if they have any questions regarding the informed consent before moving into the Introduction.)*

Intro: I have been doing research for the past year on the idea of “effective teaching” and how teachers perceive it and am now moving into a phase in which I am exploring these in much greater depth. I am going to record today’s interview and will ask some demographic types of questions but will give you and your school both pseudonyms and will ensure that your personal identity is kept confidential in anything written on these findings. Do I have your permission to record the interview? Do you agree to provide informed consent and to participate in this study? Would you please sign and date the informed consent page and mail it to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided for you?

If yes -> I will record the verbal agreement. Thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview.

Continue: I am going to begin by asking you to define “effective teaching” in your own words. Then I will ask a few basic demographic questions. From there, I will ask a set of questions about your perspective on the ideas of “effective teaching” in relation to feedback, content, and context.

Questions:

Introductory Question:

1. Define “effective teaching” in your own words?

Set I: Demographic Questions

2. Two parts to this question but they should be related: What degrees do you have and what are you certified for?
3. For how many years have you been teaching?
4. What subject do you teach primarily, right now?

Set II: Perspective of Effective Teaching: Feedback

5. How do you communicate the learning goals to help students understand the progression of knowledge they are expected to master and where they are along that learning progression?

6. How do you design and administer assessments that help students understand how their test scores and grades are related to their status on the progression of knowledge they are expected to master?

Set III: Perspective of Effective Teaching: Content

7. When the content is new, how do you design and deliver direct instruction lessons that help students understand which parts are important and how the parts fit together?
8. After presenting content, how do you design and deliver lessons that help students deepen their understanding and develop fluency in skills and processes?
9. After presenting content, how do you design and deliver lessons that help students generate and defend claims through knowledge application?
10. Throughout all types of lessons, what strategies do you use to help students continually integrate new knowledge with old knowledge and revise their understanding accordingly?

Set IV: Perspective of Effective Teaching: Context

11. What engagement strategies do you use to help students pay attention, be energized, be intrigued, and be inspired?
12. What strategies do you use to help students understand and follow rules and procedures?
13. What strategies do you use to help students feel welcome, accepted, and valued?
14. What strategies do you use to help typically reluctant students feel valued and comfortable interacting with you and their peers?

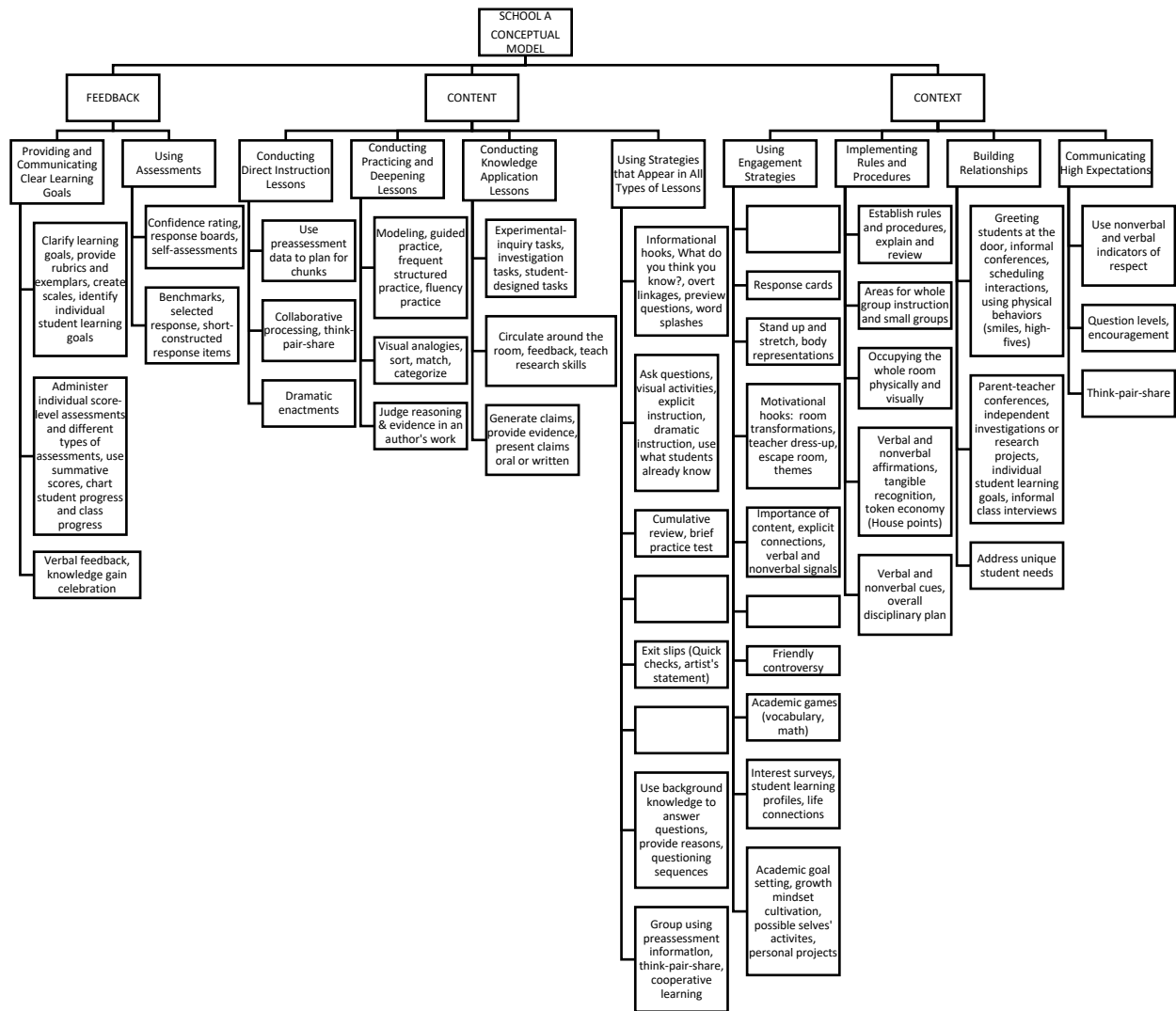
Closing Question:

15. Is there anything related to “effective teaching” that I have not asked but that you would like to share with me?

Debriefing: Thank you so much for taking the time to share your perspectives on this issue with me. Please do not hesitate to reach out and follow up with any questions and thank you again for your time.

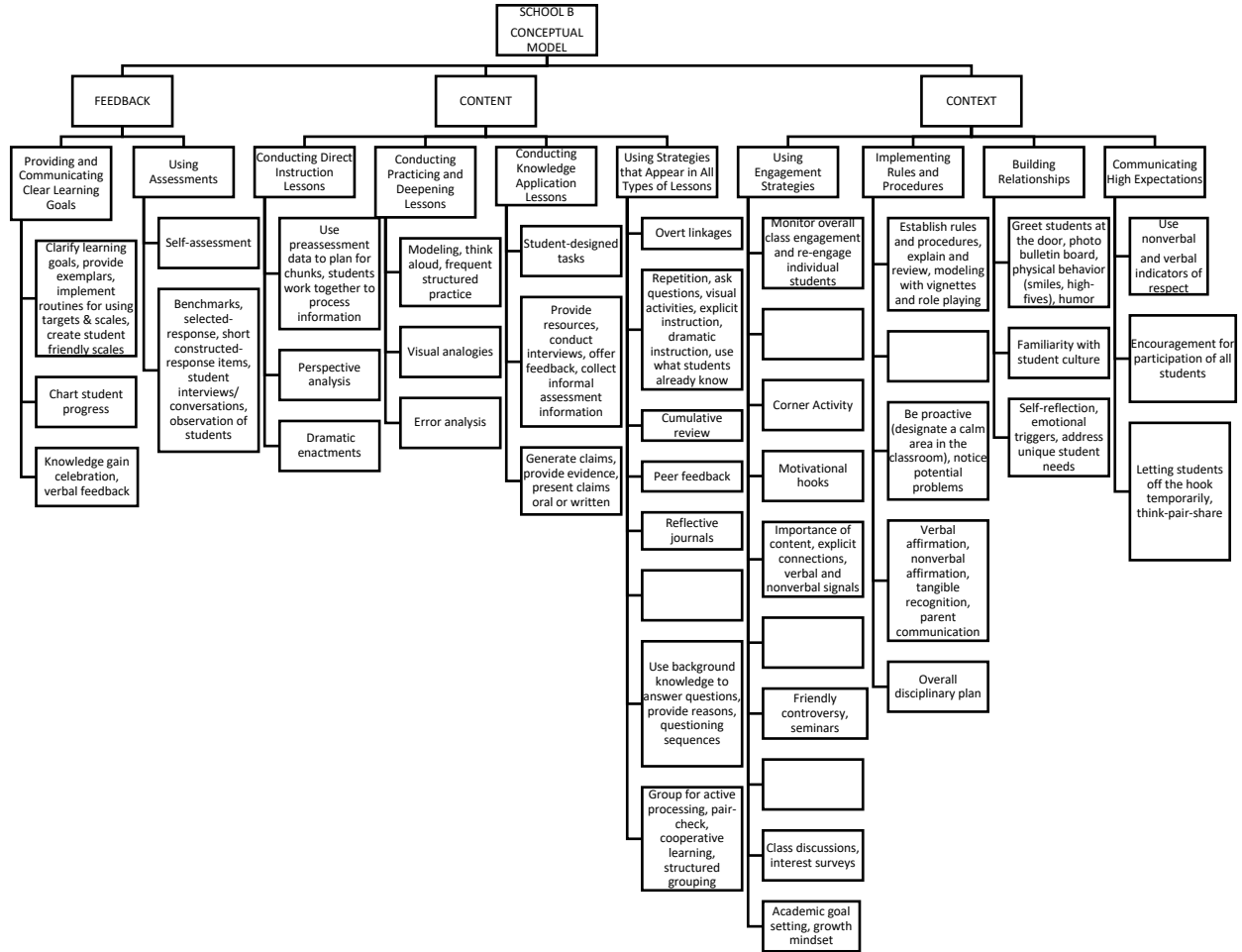
Appendix C

School A Conceptual Model



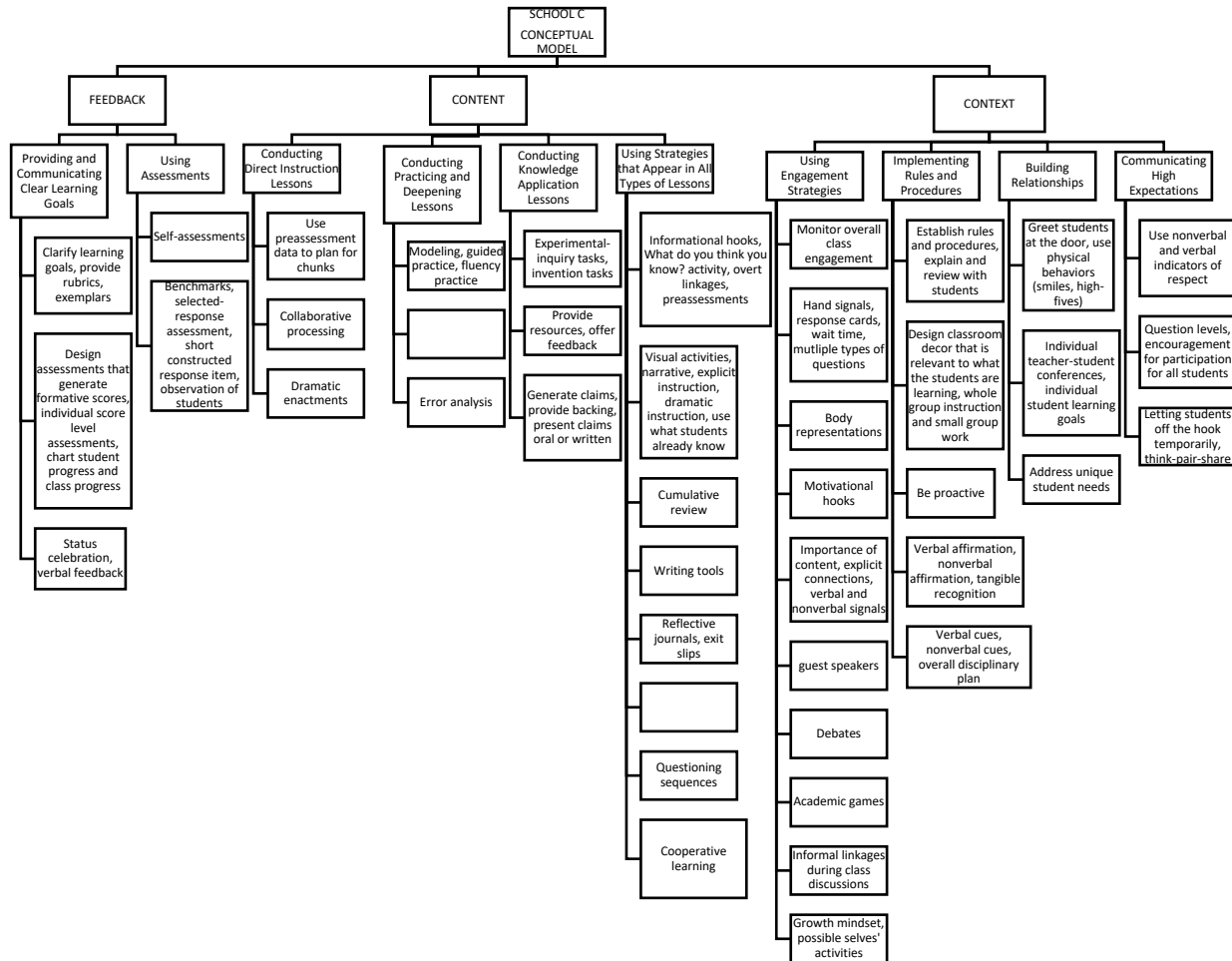
Appendix D

School B Conceptual Model



Appendix E

School C Conceptual Model



Appendix F

School D Conceptual Model

