

THE PREPARATION AND EDUCATION OF FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS: A
MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF
FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS, AND UNIVERSITY SUPERVISORS

by

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The Preparation and Education of First-Year Teachers: A Multiple Case Study of the Perceptions and Experiences of First-Year Teachers, Principals, and University Supervisors

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this multiple case study was to provide a policy analysis of the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) standard that requires teacher preparation programs to provide evidence that their graduates are positively impacting student growth and achievement, displaying evidence of effective teaching, and that the graduates and their employers are satisfied with their preparation and performance in order to receive nationally recognized accredited status. Using the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards as a conceptual framework, this qualitative multiple case study explored the perspectives of three cases: first-year teachers, principals, and university supervisors. Interviews and observations with first-year teachers were conducted at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year to discover five first-year teachers' perceptions of their preparation, needs, level of confidence in all areas of teaching, and the ways in which they could have been better or more prepared for the classroom. Interviews with the principals of the the first-year teachers and university supervisors from the teacher preparation program where they graduated were conducted to gather insight into their perspectives of the first-year teachers' preparation and training. The first-year teachers' annual teacher evaluations provided insight to their evidence of effective teaching and impact on student growth. The overall finding among the three

cases was that the first-year teachers received a strong foundation in preparation; however, there were areas of need that the cases all identified. The need for more preparation in differentiating instruction and classroom management strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners was the most common theme. By following the CAEP policy, practical suggestions for change in improving the preparation and education of first-year teachers were discovered.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Dan. Your love and support through this journey made it all possible. Also, to Dad, Mom, and Becca, for encouraging me and praying me through every step of the way. I am so blessed. I love you all!

All glory to God whose divine power gives us everything we need . . . 2 Peter 1:3

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As a result of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, the belief that schools should be held accountable for student excellence and academic success, as measured through student testing, has become the foundation for educational policies. The creation of state academic standards and No Child Left Behind are examples of policies built on this belief (Coburn, Hill, & Spillane, 2016; Mehta, 2015; Rury, 2015). However, it is in recent years that the focus has shifted to the quality of the individual teacher on student academic success. Researchers have identified that there is a connection between teacher quality and student learning and have emphasized the importance of high-quality teaching for student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hightower et al., 2011; Minnici, 2014; Stronge, Ward, Tucker, & Hindman, 2007).

While an overall definition of high-quality teaching has not been created nationwide, several indicators of quality and effective teaching have been linked to student achievement: teacher leadership and collaboration, effective classroom management and positive learning environment, masterful content knowledge and delivery, high expectations for self and students, and creation of engaging learning opportunities (Danielson, 2013; Goldstein, 2014; Hightower et al., 2011; Little, Goe, & Bell, 2009). In order to promote and ensure that high-quality teachers are positively impacting students in classroom across the country, policymakers at the national and state level have promoted teacher evaluations as a tool for measuring and improving teacher quality in the United States (Darling-Hammond, 2014a; Rury, 2015).

In the state of Colorado, Senate Bill 10-191 changed the way teachers were evaluated by creating a new evaluation measurement tool based on the six Colorado Teacher Quality Standards: content knowledge; establishing a classroom environment; facilitating learning; reflecting on practice; demonstrating leadership; and student growth. The state developed a rubric to measure the first five Teacher Quality Standards, which focused on professional practices. The rubric described elements with each standard and practices that demonstrated competencies within each element. Practices increased in quality, complexity, depth, breadth, and consistency within a scale of basic, partially proficient, proficient, accomplished, and exemplary (Colorado Department of Education, 2015).

While 50% of the annual evaluation was based on competencies related to the five professional practice Quality Standards as determined by observations and artifacts, the other 50% was based on the sixth Teacher Quality Standard: student growth. In order to demonstrate student academic growth, multiple measures were used, including summative statewide assessment results, as well as other standards-based measures that reflected student growth on Colorado Academic Standards (Colorado Department of Education, 2015).

As teacher evaluations have been reviewed and restructured, the renewed focus on teacher quality has heightened the attention on teacher preparation programs and the ways in which these programs are training new teachers. Teacher preparation programs are tasked with educating and preparing high-quality, effective teachers to meet the needs of students in a diverse and changing world. However, within the last few years, high ranking politicians, officials, policymakers, and researchers have criticized teacher

preparation programs for doing a mediocre job of producing and preparing teachers for the 21st century classroom (Field, 2014a; Mehta & Doctor, 2013; Shawcuk, 2014; Weisberg et al., 2009). Teacher preparation programs have been criticized for low admission and graduation standards, lack of rigorous content, outdated curriculum, and ineffective field experiences (Chelsey & Jordan, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2014b; Good, 2014; Levine, 2006; Mehta & Doctor, 2013). Due to all of these concerns, researchers, policymakers, and educators have concluded that graduating from a teacher preparation program with a teaching license does not guarantee that the new teacher has been fully prepared to meet the high-quality standards and expectations of a classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2014a).

In response to the ongoing criticisms of the quality of teacher preparation programs, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) adopted new standards in 2013 which made accreditation for teacher preparation programs more rigorous and outcome-focused. According to CAEP's policy, teacher preparation programs must provide evidence that their graduates are positively impacting student growth and achievement, displaying evidence of effective teaching, and that the graduates and their employers are satisfied with their preparation and performance in order to receive nationally recognized accredited status (CAEP, 2013). The aim of this policy is to gather information regarding the ways in which teacher preparation programs around the country are preparing new teachers and to improve the quality of education and preparation that new teachers receive before they enter the field. The United States Department of Education and the state of Colorado have proposed similar policies that

line up with the CAEP expectations and standards (Heafner, McIntyre, & Spooner, 2014; US Department of Education, 2015).

In Colorado, Senate Bill 10-036 required teacher preparation programs to submit a report on the effectiveness of graduates from their programs during their first three years of teaching. The report required information regarding the correlation between education preparation programs in the state and student academic growth, educator placements, and educator mobility and retention (Colorado Senate, 2010). However, it is important to note that at the time this study was conducted, this data was not being collected in the manner that is required by the bill due to limitations in the state department for collecting accurate and useful data.

While these mandates are relatively new, they are changing the way in which teacher preparation programs prepare and track their graduates. There must be systems in place to follow graduates into their first years of teaching in order to assess the impact that graduates are making on their students' growth and achievement, evidence of their effective teaching strategies, feedback from graduates regarding their preparation, and feedback from their employers regarding their satisfaction with the graduate's performance. While the main incentive of meeting CAEP's policy is accreditation, knowing how well their graduates were prepared for the teaching profession, as well as holes that need to be filled in order to improve preparation and satisfaction, may provide teacher preparation programs with information they need to enhance their programs. The purpose of this case study was to provide an analysis of the CAEP policy for tracking recent graduates into their first year of teaching through the experiences and perceptions

of five first-year teachers, their principals, and university supervisors from their teacher preparation program.

Purpose of the Study

In order to provide an analysis of the CAEP policy, a qualitative multiple case study was conducted to explore the experiences of recent teacher graduates across the state of Colorado throughout their first year of teaching. The five first-year teachers in the multiple case study graduated from the same teacher preparation program in the spring of 2015 and began their first year of teaching in the fall of 2015. The analysis followed the model from the CAEP policy which requires evidence of effective teaching, perceptions of recent graduates and their employers regarding preparation, and impact on student growth. Through the multiple case study, the perceptions of the first-year teachers, their principals, and university supervisors regarding the training and preparation they had received were discovered and explored.

Research Questions

The research questions for this case study are the following:

1. How well prepared do first-year teachers feel they are at the beginning, middle, and end of their first year of teaching?
2. What evidence of effective teaching do first-year teachers display in their classrooms?
3. What areas of strength and areas for growth are identified by first-year teachers, their principals, and university supervisors?

4. What are the perceptions of first-year teachers, their principals, and university supervisors regarding their preparation, effectiveness, and success during their first year?

The research questions were answered through interviews and observations as the first-year teachers described their preparation, their needs, their level of confidence in all areas of teaching, and how they could have been better or more prepared for the classroom. In order to discover how the first-year teachers' perceptions and experiences changed during their first-year of teaching, interviews were conducted at the beginning of the school year, after the first semester was complete, and at the end of the school year. Interviews with the principals of the five first-year teachers were conducted at the end of their first-year of teaching to discover the principals' perceptions of and satisfaction with the training that the first-year teachers received in their teacher preparation program. University supervisors from the teacher preparation program were interviewed as well to discover their experiences and perceptions of the training and preparation of candidates who are moving into their first year of teaching.

Observations of the first-year teachers instructing in their classrooms were conducted twice throughout their first year and evaluated using the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards rubric, which is the template for the annual teacher evaluation in Colorado. The observation data was used to inform the ways in which first-year teachers demonstrated high-quality teaching and positively impacted students in their classrooms. Also, each teacher's annual evaluation from the end of their first year of teaching was analyzed descriptively to provide another measure of impact on student growth and evidence of effective teaching strategies. Each teacher's annual evaluation was completed

by her principal thus providing more evidence of the principals' level of satisfaction with and perceptions of their teaching.

To provide a well-rounded analysis of the CAEP policy, all five first-year teachers graduated from the same teacher preparation program and received the same training. However, upon graduation, they were hired in a variety of schools throughout the state of Colorado. Their experiences as first-year teachers were impacted by the population, diversity, and overall culture of each elementary school where they taught, and their perceptions of the training they received were captured through interviews three times during their first-year of teaching. The principals provided insight into overall trends they had observed in the preparation and experiences of first-year teachers, as well as specific needs and strengths of the five first-year teachers in the case study. The university supervisors also provided insight into their experiences training new teachers and their satisfaction with the preparation that the teachers received, as well as general strengths and needs of new teachers. A cross-case analysis of the first-year teachers, principals, and university supervisors was conducted to discover common themes in perceptions and experiences.

Conceptual Framework

As a response to Race to the Top, the state of Colorado passed Senate Bill 10-191, which has changed the way teachers are evaluated across the state. This new evaluation measurement tool is based on the six Colorado Teacher Quality Standards: content knowledge, establishing a classroom environment, facilitating learning, reflecting on practice, demonstrating leadership, and student growth (Colorado Department of Education, 2015). These six domains served as the framework for this study and guided

the data collection and analysis. The participants in the study were observed and evaluated using the six Teacher Quality Standards during their student teaching experiences, and the Teacher Quality Standards were used as the evaluation tool for their annual teacher evaluations during their first year of teaching.

As shown in Figure 1, the six Teacher Quality Standards encompass the most commonly identified factors of teacher quality included in the literature. Standard I states that a teacher demonstrates expertise in content and pedagogical knowledge. Standard II focuses on the safe, respectful, and inclusive learning environment that teachers create for their students. High-quality planning and instruction in an environment that facilitates learning for all students is the backbone of Standard III, while Standard IV focuses on the reflective practices that teachers engage in to enhance their practice. Standard V states that teachers demonstrate leadership in their schools, build positive relationships with students, staff, and families, and demonstrate high ethical standards. Standard VI states that teachers positively impact student academic learning and growth.



Figure 1. The framework of teacher quality. Adapted from the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards by the Colorado Department of Education, 2011, <https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatoreffectiveness/teacherqualitystandardsreferenceguide>

Significance of Study

The focus on teacher quality has been the driver for new teacher evaluations and higher accountability for teacher preparation programs across the country. One of the goals of the recent changes in educational policies related to teacher quality is to ensure that new graduates from teacher preparation programs, as well as current teachers, are exhibiting highly effective practices in their classrooms and positively impacting student growth. However, it is important to note that in many states, there is a disconnect between the standards that students must meet to graduate from a teacher preparation program and receive licensure and the standards that teachers must meet in the field to be considered highly qualified and effective (Darling-Hammond, 2014a). Therefore,

students graduating from teacher preparation programs are often not fully prepared to meet the expectations and demands of teaching (Field, 2014a; Mehta & Doctor, 2013; Shawcuk, 2014; Weisberg et al., 2009).

This disconnect has caused struggles and frustrations for new teachers entering the field and has impacted teacher attrition in the United States (Darling-Hammond, 2014b). The average yearly turnover rate in education is 13.2% (Bland, Church, & Luo, 2014). Forty to 50% of new teachers leave within their first five years of teaching (Bland et al., 2014; Womack-Wynne, et al., 2011). The main reasons that teachers leave the profession are student discipline, high stress levels, and the overwhelming demands of teaching. Teachers noted that the demands were not worth the payoff (Bland et al., 2014). In a study of 113 first-year teachers, Womack-Lynne et al. (2011) found that 43% felt like they had made the wrong career choice after four months in the classroom, and 63% said that they did not see themselves teaching in 10 years.

With this in mind, it is imperative that teacher preparation programs around the country are fully preparing their graduates to meet the demands of classrooms, not only to improve teacher quality, but also to improve teacher retention as well. New teachers need to enter the classroom with the tools required to effectively meet the needs of their students and be prepared to implement high-quality practices in their classrooms. One of the ways that teacher preparation programs can ensure that they are providing the training and preparation that new teachers need is to collect and implement the feedback from graduates and their employers that is required by the CAEP policy.

This study followed the requirements of the CAEP policy in order to explore how well prepared recent graduates were for their first year of teaching and to provide insight

into the trends and themes that result from following the CAEP policy. The intent of following this policy is that teacher preparation programs, states, and accrediting bodies such as CAEP will have the opportunity to identify trends of highly successful programs and components of programs that best prepare teachers for the field. By identifying these components, programs across the country can strengthen their training and preparation by using the suggestions and experiences of their own graduates, as well as the trends and perceptions of first-year teachers throughout the United States.

Dissertation Structure

The focus on teacher quality and teacher evaluations in the United States has brought more attention to the ways in which teacher preparation programs are preparing new teachers for the diversity of the 21st century classroom. Ongoing criticisms of teacher preparation programs have prompted new policies for the ways that programs are accredited. The CAEP policy requires teacher preparation programs to provide evidence that their graduates are implementing effective strategies, positively impacting student growth, and that the graduates and their employers are satisfied with the preparation they received. To provide an analysis of this policy, a qualitative multiple case study was conducted with five first-year teachers, their principals, and university supervisors from their teacher preparation program. Chapter two of this dissertation includes a review of the literature and Chapter three describes the methodology. Chapter four includes the results of the interviews and observations with the first-year teachers. Chapter five focuses on the interviews with the principals and Chapter six focuses on university supervisors. Chapter seven provides a cross-case analysis of the three cases: the first-year

teachers, the principals, and the university supervisors, as well as implications, recommendations, and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The renewed focus on teacher quality in the United States has heightened the attention on teacher preparation programs and the ways in which these programs are training new teachers for a diverse and changing world. New policies have been implemented across the country in order to determine which teacher preparation programs are sending high-quality teachers into the field who are positively impacting student learning and development (Darling-Hammond, 2014a). A study with the focus of analyzing the CAEP policy using a multiple case study and gathering perceptions on teacher preparation from first-year teachers, principals, and university supervisors has not been done before. However, in order to provide background on why these policies have been implemented, this review of the literature will focus on teacher quality and effectiveness, new teacher evaluation systems, and teacher preparation programs across the country and specifically in the state of Colorado. It will also review literature regarding first-year teachers, their employers, and university faculty in teacher preparation programs.

Teacher Quality

In an era of high-stakes testing and value-added measurement, the achievement of American students has been scrutinized, evaluated, and analyzed to determine whether American students and schools are meeting national standards and expectations, as well as competing on an international level (Goldstein, 2014). With student academic growth and achievement as the goal, the impact of quality teachers on student learning has become a central focus of research and policy. Researchers have identified the connection

between teacher quality and student learning, emphasizing the importance of high-quality teaching for student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hightower et al., 2011; Minnici, 2014; Stronge et al., 2007). Nye, Konstantopoulos, and Hedges (2004) found that the teacher had the most significant impact on student achievement as compared to other school effects. According to Hattie (2003), teachers contributed to 30% of the variance in student achievement, the most significant in-school effect, and the second most influential factor overall following student characteristics and abilities. Darling-Hammond (2000) found that the effects of high-quality teachers on student achievement were stronger than the influences of student background factors such as socioeconomic status and language diversity. According to Hightower et al. (2011), a quality teacher had year-long and cumulative effects on student achievement.

Similarly, Hanushek (2010) found that over a school year, students with a high-quality teacher demonstrated one and half years of growth in student achievement, as opposed to less than half a year's growth made by students with a less effective teacher. Hanushek (2010) also translated his findings into the economic impact of high-quality teachers. The top 15% of high-quality teachers with a class of 20 or more students provided \$240,000 in economic surplus every year compared to average teachers. In addition, students who had higher scores in mathematics by the end of high school due to the impact of a high-quality teacher earned 10 to 15% more income in their lifetime. Consistent throughout the literature, a high-quality teacher has the potential to make a significant impact on the growth and achievement of students during school years and throughout their lives.

One of the more difficult tasks has been defining high-quality teaching (Hightower et al., 2011). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 identified a quality teacher as one who held a bachelor's degree, state certification and licensure, and a knowledge of the content area being taught (Goldstein, 2014). There was some correlation among a teacher's degree, certification, and student achievement; however, it was most significant at the high school math level (Hightower et al., 2011). Researchers have continued to identify other key aspects of quality teaching. While an overall definition has not been created nationwide, several indicators of quality and effective teaching have been linked to student achievement: teacher leadership and collaboration, effective classroom management and positive learning environment, masterful content knowledge and delivery, high expectations for self and students, and creating engaging learning opportunities (Danielson, 2013; Goldstein, 2014; Hightower et al., 2011; Little et al., 2009).

In addition, Darling-Hammond (2016) found that high-quality teachers developed effective practices and strategies in the classroom. High-quality teachers engaged students by drawing on students' experiences, interests, and modes of learning in order to ensure that they understood the content and performed at high levels. Other common practices of high-quality teachers included developing engaging learning experiences with meaningful work, providing students choice when producing assignments, identifying what students are thinking, feeling, and struggling with, constantly assessing students to identify strengths and needs, scaffolding instruction, and developing students' confidence, effort, and motivation. The ways in which the teachers built relationships

with their students and implemented these practices had a direct impact on the learning outcomes and achievement of students (Darling-Hammond, 2016).

Teacher Evaluation Systems

High-quality teaching includes a myriad of effective practices, strategies, and personal characteristics (Hightower et al., 2011). With the importance of teacher quality on achievement in focus, policymakers and school districts nationwide have placed higher importance on evaluating teachers to ensure that they are providing high-quality, research-based instruction for their students (Rury, 2015). Prompted by legislation and funding, changes have begun to occur in the way teachers are evaluated throughout the United States. Developing and measuring high-quality teachers has been a central debate as policymakers have encouraged using standardized test scores as a measure of teacher quality and effectiveness (Goldstein, 2014).

Federal regulations have required new teacher evaluation tools to include multiple categories for teacher ratings based on multiple observations, feedback, and the use of student test scores to assess overall teacher effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, 2014a; Hightower et al, 2011; Little et al., 2009). The evaluation tools have been encouraged to be used when determining a teacher's tenure, compensation, promotion, and dismissal. In addition, in order to receive funding for Race to the Top, federal regulations mandated that states implemented new teacher evaluation tools that met their criteria. Policymakers have promoted teacher evaluations as a tool for measuring and improving teacher quality in the United States (Darling-Hammond, 2014a).

As described in Chapter 1, Senate Bill 10-191 in Colorado changed the way that teachers were evaluated. According to the Colorado Senate (2010), Senate Bill 10-191

was designed to improve instruction and enhance curriculum implementation across the state, as well as measure and evaluate educators and administrators. In addition, Senate Bill 10-191 changed the way in which teachers received tenure in the state of Colorado. In order to receive non-probationary tenure, a teacher must demonstrate effectiveness as measured by the new teacher evaluation tool for three consecutive years. Non-probationary status was lost after two consecutive years of ineffective ratings. Implementation of Senate Bill 10-191 began with a pilot for teachers and principals during the 2012-2013 school year. School districts across the state could implement the prepared tool, or create their own, dependent on state approval (Ramirez, Clouse, & Davis, 2014). As of the 2014-2015 school year, 160 of the 178 school districts in Colorado were following the state model (Colorado Department of Education, 2015).

As teacher evaluations have been reviewed and restructured, the renewed focus of high-quality teachers has brought teacher preparation programs into consideration as well, tasking college and university programs with producing high-quality, effective teachers for the 21st century. As researchers, practitioners, and educators have responded to new teacher evaluation systems around the country, one theme has emerged. Teacher evaluation tools are only one part of the picture when improving teacher quality. Teacher evaluation should be connected to teacher preparation programs as well (Darling-Hammond, 2014a; Hightower et al, 2011; Minnici, 2014). In Colorado, Senate Bill 10-191 is one way that the state is attempting to link teacher evaluations with teacher preparation.

Teacher Preparation Programs

The US Department of Education (2013) defined teacher preparation programs as “a state-approved course of study, the completion of which signifies that an enrollee has met all of the state’s educational, or training requirements, or both, for an initial credential to teach in the state’s elementary, middle, or secondary schools” (p. xiii). Both public and private institutions of higher education provide teacher preparation programs. The majority of teacher preparation programs are considered traditional and require students to take courses in pedagogy and academic content, as well as courses concentrated on students with diverse abilities, such as special education or English Language Learners (ELL). As part of the program, students are also required to complete a certain number of time in a supervised clinical experience which is often referred to as student teaching (US Department of Education, 2013). Every state differs on their requirements regarding the amount of time that student teachers must spend in a clinical experience. On average, states require ten weeks of student teaching (Greenberg, J., Pomerance, L. & Walsh, K., 2011). In the state of Colorado, the required time in a clinical experience is counted by hours in a classroom, and student teachers in Colorado must complete 800 hours of clinical experience as part of their teacher preparation program for licensure (Colorado Department of Higher Education, 2010).

During the clinical experience, student teachers are required to complete a performance-based assessment, often referred to as a Teacher Work Sample. Student teachers create lessons connected to academic standards, implement the lessons, assess student learning, and reflect on their instruction. The Teacher Work Sample is designed to assess student teachers’ competency, knowledge of content and pedagogy, and ability

to reflect and impact student learning (Green & Brown, 2006). Many teacher preparation programs have adopted the edTPA, which stands for Teacher Performance Assessment, and was developed by the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity, as their required assessment that student teachers must successfully complete during their clinical experience (Lu, 2013).

Due to teacher shortages in recent years, institutions began offering alternative teacher preparation programs which required students to already hold a bachelor's degree and have an expertise in a subject area. Students in these programs receive an initial teaching license in their area of expertise and teach in the classroom full-time while completing the content and pedagogical coursework required by the program. Students in alternative programs have three years to complete the required coursework and are supervised throughout the program by other teachers and faculty from teacher preparation programs (US Department of Education, 2013).

Whether traditional or alternative, the goal of teacher preparation programs is to effectively prepare new teachers to teach in diverse classrooms across the country. Programs are designed to provide the necessary training and clinical experiences so that new teachers are equipped with the academic content, pedagogical skills, and tools for meeting the needs of students with diverse backgrounds and abilities (Greenberg et al., 2013). However, today's classrooms are more diverse than ever before. According to Hoerr (2016), schools are impacted by the increasing ethnic, socioeconomic, and linguistic diversity in the United States, as well as diversity of race, family arrangements, sexual orientation, and religion. One in four children in the United States lives below the poverty line, and two-thirds of teachers work in schools where more than 30% of their

students are economically disadvantaged (Darling-Hammond, 2015). Schools are also impacted by students with diverse learning needs, such as students with disabilities, ELLs, and gifted and talented students (Greenberg et al., 2013). Not only are classrooms more diverse, but teachers have larger class sizes across the United States than ever before, averaging 27 students per class from kindergarten through twelfth grade (Darling-Hammond, 2015). The challenge of meeting the needs of all students in a classroom has grown.

Criticism of Teacher Preparation Programs

Within the last few years, President Obama, the former United States Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, and other high-ranking politicians and officials have criticized teacher preparation programs for doing a mediocre job of producing and preparing teachers for the diversity and needs of the 21st-century classroom (Field, 2014a; Mehta & Doctor, 2013; Shawcuk, 2014; Weisberg et al., 2009). Researchers have also criticized teacher preparation programs for not producing high-quality educators, and low admission and graduation standards have been major concerns (Good, 2014; Levine, 2006; Mehta & Doctor, 2013). Mehta and Doctor (2013) found that teachers in top-performing nations around the world graduated in the top third of their college classes. In the United States, most teachers graduated in the bottom 60%. More rigorous entrance expectations have been suggested by policymakers to improve the quality of teacher candidates. Some suggestions for acceptance into teacher preparation programs included basing entrance on a higher grade point average, scores on college placements tests, or requiring an entrance exam (Coggshall, Bivona, & Reschly, 2012). In addition, requiring a rigorous exit exam, similar to a bar exam, that measures a student teacher's knowledge

of content, pedagogy, and professionalism, as well as examples of the student teacher's positive impact on student growth has been suggested in order to establish a higher standard for graduating from teacher preparation programs. The proposed exam would include multiple measures in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of a student teacher's knowledge of content and pedagogy, ability to implement that knowledge, and positively impact student growth (Mehta & Doctor, 2013).

One major area of criticism has been the training that teacher preparation programs provide in specific content areas, especially with the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in elementary and secondary schools across the nation that require teachers to teach differently than the ways in which they were taught (Chelsey & Jordan, 2012; Paliokas, K., 2014; Walsh, 2013). While not every state has adopted the Common Core State Standards, the level of academic mastery and high expectations have increased in state academic standards across the nation. Greenberg, McKee, and Walsh (2013) found that only one in nine elementary teacher preparation programs and only one-third of high school teacher preparation programs adequately prepared their student teachers in the content areas at the level required by the Common Core State Standards. The content and teaching strategies being taught in most teacher preparation programs lacked rigor and were out of date for today's classrooms (Chelsey & Jordan, 2012). Pae, Freeman, and Wash (2014) gave both elementary and secondary student teachers in one university teacher preparation program the statewide fifth-grade language arts exam that was based on the Common Core State Standards. The average test score for the preservice teachers was 78.2%, which demonstrated their lack of content knowledge at an elementary level.

In addition to content, teacher preparation programs have been criticized for not providing enough training for teaching students of diverse abilities and backgrounds. Greenberg, McKee, and Walsh (2013) found that new graduates from teacher preparation programs around the country did not have the classroom management strategies or pedagogical knowledge appropriate for effectively teaching diverse students. The majority of teacher preparation programs did not include enough strategies for conveying content to ELLs or students with disabilities. In addition, three out of four teacher preparation programs did not teach methods for reading instruction that would benefit students who were significantly behind in reading (Greenberg et al., 2013). Teacher preparation programs needed to provide more training in differentiating instruction to meet the diverse needs of students (Coggshall et al., 2012). Differentiation refers to the ways in which a teacher assesses the needs of his or her students and customizes instruction to meet their varied needs. Differentiation occurs in the way that teachers implement instruction, using different strategies for different learning modalities, styles, and multiple intelligences, as well as providing choice and leveled activities and assessments so that students of all abilities and backgrounds have the opportunity to demonstrate their learning (Chapman & King, 2008). By differentiating instruction, teachers teach each student at his or her academic level while still meeting the overall standard. However, these specific skills and strategies for meeting the needs of diverse students were missing from the majority of teacher preparation programs.

Another critical component of teacher preparation programs that has come into focus is the clinical or student teaching experience. During student teaching, preservice teachers are required to assume the responsibilities and role of a classroom teacher for a

period of time. According to researchers, the most effective teacher preparation programs integrate theory and practice, in which the student teachers implement their learning from their university coursework in the classrooms where they are student teaching (Coggshall et al., 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2014b; Good, 2014). However, many teacher preparation programs did not include a connection between theory and practice during field experiences, and many lacked strong partnerships between school sites and the university programs. In addition, student teachers were often placed with cooperating teachers who volunteered as opposed to being purposefully placed with the most effective teachers in the schools (Greenberg et al., 2013; Wong & Glass, 2011).

Teacher Preparation Program Accountability

Each state has its own set of standards for teacher licensure and teacher preparation programs. While there is variation in the standards from state to state, the majority of states incorporated a version of the model standards for licensing and accreditation that were created by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) in the 1990s. In 1996, the National Board for Professional Standards created standards that defined what teachers should know and be able to do. INTASC used these standards and previous research on effective teaching to develop model standards and assessments for new teachers seeking licensure (Darling-Hammond, 2016). The standards were divided into four main categories: the learner and learning; content; instructional practice; and professional responsibility. Effective practices and implementation strategies were described under each category. The first category, the learner and learning, referred to the diversity of students and their different learning processes. It included standards regarding learner development, learning differences, and

the learning environment. Standards under content included the teacher's content knowledge and application. Instructional practices included standards for assessments, lesson planning, and instructional strategies. Professional responsibility outlined standards for professional learning, ethical practices, leadership, and collaboration (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011).

As states integrated these standards into their own licensing and accreditation standards for teacher licensure and teacher preparation programs, many teacher preparation programs across the country used these standards as a foundation for their program's curriculum and expected outcomes for their graduates (Salzman, Denner, & Harris, 2002). In addition, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, which merged with the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) to become the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), incorporated the INTASC standards into their teacher preparation accreditation standards (Darling-Hammond, 2016). In order to receive accreditation, teacher preparation programs had to meet and follow these specific standards.

In response to the ongoing criticisms of the quality of teacher preparation programs, CAEP adopted new standards in 2013 which made accreditation for teacher preparation programs more rigorous and outcome focused. The standards required all teacher preparation programs to set minimum criteria for admissions, include rigorous instruction in content and pedagogy, and to develop strong partnerships with elementary and secondary schools where their preservice teachers complete their student teaching experience. The partner schools were also required to provide student teachers with strong mentors and a diverse setting (Heafner et al., 2014). In addition, CAEP (2013)

included a new policy that required teacher preparation programs to demonstrate their graduates' impact on student learning and achievement in their first years of teaching.

CAEP has set the goal that by 2020 their standards will be adopted by states across the nation as the requirements for teacher preparation programs. CAEP has created indicators for each standard as targets for states to implement in order to meet each standard. For example, by 2020, all teacher preparation programs will set a minimum 3.0 GPA requirement for admission and pre-screen all applicants to ensure that they are a good fit for teaching. In addition, CAEP recommends that all states require a content knowledge assessment that is rigorous and comprehensive, as well as a standardized performance exam, such as the edTPA. Another indicator is that student surveys will be completed in order to demonstrate that student teachers in teacher preparation programs are positively impacting student learning, and value-added measures will be collected to demonstrate that graduates of the teacher preparation programs are impacting student growth (Allen, Coble, & Crowe, 2014).

The Department of Education echoed the same standards in their proposal to provide more accountability for teacher preparation programs (Sawchuk, 2012). In December 2014, the Department of Education agreed on a proposal for how to evaluate and rank teacher preparation programs. In order to determine ranking, outcome indicators based on graduates from the teacher preparation program would be analyzed. The indicators proposed included teacher placement rates, surveys from graduates and district officials on the quality of the program's preparation for teaching, and the student achievement results from statewide and local standardized tests from graduates' classrooms (Field, 2014b; Sawchuk, 2014). In addition, graduates needed to demonstrate

quality performance on teacher evaluation measures as well as evidence that their teacher preparation program had included rigorous entry and exit requirements (US Department of Education, 2015). As described in Chapter 1, Colorado Senate Bill 10-036 also requires evidence that graduates from teacher preparation programs across the state are making a positive impact on student achievement, as well as information regarding teacher placement and retention (Colorado Senate, 2010).

One of the critical components among CAEP, the Department of Education, and the state of Colorado is that teacher preparation programs must demonstrate that their graduates are positively impacting student academic growth and achievement. The policies have indicated that evidence must be shown using multiple measures such as standardized assessments, student portfolios, value-added measures, and student learning and growth objectives required by each individual state. The comprehensive evaluation that states are now using to demonstrate the quality of their teachers is the annual teacher evaluations (Heafner et al., 2014). CAEP's policy also has required programs to provide evidence that the graduates and their employers are satisfied with the preparation and training they received and that the graduates are effectively implementing the theory, knowledge, and skills they gained from their preparation programs (CAEP, 2013). While the ways in which this information will be gathered has not been clearly defined, teacher preparation programs must now focus on recent graduates and their experiences as first-year teachers.

First-Year Teachers

Studies have been conducted that generalize the issues and challenges that first-year teachers face as they enter their own classrooms. Many first-year teachers suffer

reality shock when they begin teaching and do not feel that they are fully prepared for all of the details and demands of teaching (Veenman, 1984). While most first-year teachers identify the student teaching experience as the most beneficial component of their teacher preparation program (Chelsey & Jordan, 2012), often they have not had complete control of a classroom without the supervision or guidance of a cooperating teacher (Womack-Wynne et al., 2011). In addition, first-year teachers are not accustomed to managing and organizing all classroom responsibilities. The most common struggles that first-year teachers have identified are classroom management, instructional organization, planning, curriculum expectations, evaluations, preparing students for high-stakes tests, and demonstrating student achievement (Chelsey & Jordan, 2012; Freiberg, 2002; Houston, 1993; Smeaton & Waters, 2013; Wodlinger, 1986; Womack-Wynne et al., 2011). The intense pressure for improving student achievement increased frustration and stress for many first-year teachers as well (Franklin & Snow-Gerono, 2005). According to Chelsey and Jordan (2012), first-year teachers reported that they did not have enough experience or preparation in how to teach content effectively, especially in light of the Common Core State Standards. In addition, McKinney, Jone, Strudler, and Quinn (1999) found that first-year teachers did not have enough training in effectively implementing technology in their classrooms.

Employers and University Faculty

While several studies have identified the needs and perceptions of first-year teachers, there are few studies regarding employers' perceptions of first-year teachers and their preparation. Kono (2010) conducted a survey of principals in South Dakota to determine the traits and skills that principals value when hiring first-year teachers for

kindergarten through twelfth grade classrooms. Principals looked for first-year teachers with training in classroom management, planning and preparation, and implementing effective lessons. They also identified respect for students as an important trait. Principals also looked for first-year teachers who demonstrated enthusiasm, a positive attitude, problem-solving skills, and a dedication to professional development and teamwork.

Rodd (1997) conducted a study of employers' perceptions of the training that early childhood teachers received and found that employers valued previous experiences with children as well as specific training in content. Employers wanted teachers who had a knowledge of the development and special needs of young children, as well as how to adapt curriculum to meet those diverse needs. In addition, the most desirable preparation programs included courses focused on child development, observation, assessment and evaluation of students, working with parents, and integrating theory and practice. The clinical experience that teachers had in early childhood settings was important to their employers as well.

McFadden and Scheerer (2006a, 2006b) conducted two studies in North Carolina to discover the perceptions of the training that teacher preparation programs provided. One study surveyed university faculty from teacher preparation programs across the state, and the other surveyed superintendents of school districts within North Carolina. Eighty-one superintendents and 84 university faculty from eight public and eight private institutions responded to the surveys. Both superintendents and university faculty believed that first-year teachers had an adequate knowledge base regarding the skills and content for teaching. However, the superintendents did not believe that first-year teachers had enough practical experience in the classroom as part of their preparation programs. In

addition, the superintendents believed that first-year teachers needed more training on differentiating instruction to meet the diverse needs of students.

The majority of superintendents also believed that there was a disconnect between the instruction and training that teacher preparation programs provided and what was actually going on in public schools. They felt that college faculty did not understand or have enough first-hand experience in public schools to effectively connect theory and practice. The university faculty did not share this view; however, only 45% of faculty said that programs devoted adequate attention to real problems of practice. Both faculty and superintendents strongly agreed that courses in the programs should be linked to school settings and valued the collaboration and partnerships between preparation programs and public schools. However, superintendents believed that the teacher preparation programs should have more experiences in the public school settings so that their training was more relevant. Eighty-eight percent of superintendents believed that traditional teacher preparation programs needed to be completely redesigned in order to produce more effective teachers. The majority of university faculty defended the preparation of their programs and did not believe that an overhaul of the programs was necessary; however, the majority of faculty agreed that some changes could be made to create stronger programs (McFadden & Scheerer, 2006a, 2006b).

Need for Research

There have been many criticisms regarding the preparation that new teachers receive, and past studies have provided general pictures of the trends and struggles that first-year teachers face. However, for change to occur, more specific details regarding individual programs is needed. The new CAEP policy requires teacher preparation

programs to provide these details by reporting the perceptions of first-year teachers and their employers regarding the training they received, as well as evidence that first-year teachers are providing effective instruction and positively impacting student growth.

It is imperative in light of the new policy changes that first-year teachers have the opportunity to share their stories, experiences, and perceptions regarding their specific training. In addition, the perceptions of their employers, the principals in this case study, will provide another layer of information about the training that first-year teachers received and how it was implemented in their classrooms. Employers' perceptions will also add to the literature as there are few studies that have researched their experiences and perceptions. Even fewer studies have discovered the perceptions of university faculty in teacher preparation programs regarding the training that their students receive. Their insights, along with the first-year teachers and their employers, will provide a well-rounded picture of the preparation and impact of first-year teachers. The information will provide valuable insight for teacher preparation programs as they are tasked with improving the quality of their preparation, instruction, and impact in a diverse world.

Summary

In recent years, the importance of teacher quality for the growth and achievement of students has been a main focus of policymakers and educational researchers throughout the United States. New teacher evaluations have resulted from this work, as well as new policies that require teacher preparation programs to demonstrate more rigor and accountability in their training of new teachers. Previous research regarding new teachers has shown that many do not feel adequately prepared for their first-year of teaching, and principals and employers do not feel that recent graduates have had enough practical

experience in the classroom to be fully prepared. New policies through CAEP now require teacher preparation programs to track their graduates and demonstrate their effective instruction, satisfaction with their preparation, and impact on student growth.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research provides insight into the experiences of people while creating a deeper understanding of how people have been impacted by a specific phenomenon or problem of interest (Patton, 2015). Conducting a qualitative case study allows the researcher to explore an issue or problem by using a specific case or cases that are within a real-life context or setting (Creswell, 2013). The time spent in the setting allows the researcher to collect extensive data through observations, interviews, and other documents in order to analyze the case and provide meanings and implications related to the issue being explored. The patterns and themes that emerge from the interviews, observations, and documents allow the researcher to develop generalizations about the case as well as lessons learned from the study (Yin, 2014). Relying on multiple sources of data, specifically interviews, observations, and other documents, provides corroboration of themes and findings which strengthens the validity of the case study through triangulation of data (Yin, 2014). By collecting and analyzing the data in the field, a more comprehensive picture of the details, experiences, and dynamics of the specific situation and experience develops (Patton, 2015).

Research Design

There are different types of case studies depending on the focus, intent, and units of analysis. Since this study is focusing on the preparation of first-year teachers by discovering the perspectives and experiences of three different cases, the first-year teachers, principals, and university supervisors, this is a multiple case study (Yin, 2014). According to Yin (2014), the benefit of a multiple case study is that the overall study is

considered more robust due to the inclusion of different perspectives. The multiple case study design is within the same case study methodological framework as a single case study (Yin, 2014).

Additionally, there are five components of a case study research design that are essential: “a case study’s questions; its propositions, if any; its units of analysis; the logic linking the data to the propositions; and the criteria for interpreting the findings” (Yin, 2014, p. 29). The first component, the research questions, drives the design of the qualitative study (Patton, 2015). According to Creswell (2013), a case study is an appropriate method when the research questions include “clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and seek to provide an in-depth understanding of the cases or a comparison of several cases” (p. 100). The following research questions met the standards that Creswell described; specifically, the cases are defined as the first-year teachers, the principals, and university supervisors, and the questions are designed to provide insight into the perceptions and experiences of each case.

1. How well prepared do first-year teachers feel they are at the beginning, middle, and end of their first year of teaching?
2. What evidence of effective teaching do first-year teachers display in their classrooms?
3. What areas of strength and areas for growth are identified by first-year teachers, their principals, and university supervisors?
4. What are the perceptions of first-year teachers, their principals, and university supervisors regarding their preparation, effectiveness, and success during their first year?

Yin's (2014) second component of a case study is the study propositions; however, he states that case studies that focus on an exploration of experiences may not have any propositions. Nevertheless, the case study must include a purpose. Since this study is an exploration of the perceptions and experiences of first-year teachers, principals, and university supervisors, the second component of Yin's case study structure is met by focusing on the purpose of the study. The purpose of this study was to provide an analysis of the CAEP policy for tracking recent graduates into their first year of teaching through the experiences and perceptions of five first-year teachers, their principals, and university supervisors from their teacher preparation program.

The third component of a case study is the units of analysis or the case to be studied (Yin, 2014). The main focus of this multiple case study is the preparation of first-year teachers, and the cases are defined as the first-year teachers, their principals, and university supervisors. The overall study was bound by the 2015-2016 school year because that was the first year of teaching for the teachers involved. In addition, the teachers were bound by being first-year elementary school teachers. The principals were bound by being the principal at the specific elementary schools where the first-year teachers taught, and the university supervisors were bound by being faculty within the teacher preparation program where the first-year teachers received their education.

The fourth component, linking the data to the propositions, refers to the ways in which the data will be analyzed in the case study (Yin, 2014). More details regarding data analysis are described below; however, the data was analyzed inductively, deductively, and through cycles of coding to analyze themes and patterns within and across cases (Creswell; 2013; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Yin, 2014).

The final component of Yin's (2014) case study is the criteria for interpreting the findings. The findings in this multiple case study were interpreted by discovering themes and patterns during the data analysis and using the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards as a conceptual framework. For the purposes of this study, the multiple case study design provided a detailed picture of the experiences and perceptions of five first-year teachers, their principals, and university supervisors.

Research Sample and Settings

First-Year Teachers

The five first-year teachers in the multiple case study completed their teacher preparation program coursework at a mid-sized university in southern Colorado. The university has approximately 11,000 students, and 30% are minority students. The population of males and females are nearly equal, and approximately 30% of students are eligible for Pell grants. The College of Education offers several different degrees, licensure programs, and endorsements, and serves over 1,000 students. The five first-year teachers were enrolled in a teacher preparation program through the College of Education, and they all received their elementary teaching license for grades kindergarten through sixth in May 2015. The teacher preparation program required students to major in an area of emphasis, such as English or biology, and then complete the teaching licensure coursework and field experiences during their "professional year." The university also offered the same professional year coursework and field experiences to post-baccalaureate students who were seeking teacher licensure. During their professional year, which was 2014-2015, there were approximately 60 students in the program. Two-thirds of the students received licensure to teach at the elementary level (grades

kindergarten through sixth) and one-third received licensure to teach at the secondary level (grades sixth through twelfth). Of the students who received elementary licensure, 99% were white females.

Prior to their professional year, students were required to take core education classes that include Educational Psychology, Introduction to Special Education, School, Society, and Diversity, and a practicum course in which students observe in local elementary schools. The professional year began during the summer when students start their elementary methods coursework. They took two classes: Elementary Reading Methods and Elementary Curriculum, Instruction, and Classroom Management. During the year-long student teaching experience, which was part-time in the fall semester and full-time in the spring semester, students were placed at one elementary school with a cohort of other student teachers from the program. During the fall semester while they were student teaching in the elementary schools part-time, they completed their methods coursework which included literacy, mathematics, social studies, and science. They were also formally observed implementing instruction in their classrooms six times each semester, and they were evaluated using the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards in all of their formal teaching observations.

To protect their privacy, each participant chose a pseudonym that was used throughout the study. All five first-year teachers were white females in their early to mid-20s. Jackie was the only first-year teacher who completed the teacher preparation program as a post-baccalaureate student teacher. She received her bachelor's degree in communication from a different university in Colorado, and she worked in the business sector for a couple of years before she decided that she wanted to pursue a teaching

career. Nicole, Esther, Marian, and Susan were all undergraduates when they completed the teacher preparation program, and they all had different areas of emphasis prior to completing the requirements for teacher licensure. Nicole majored in geography and held a passion for traveling abroad. She was married the summer after she completed the teacher preparation program, and her husband is now considering pursuing a career in education as well. Esther also had a passion for traveling and living abroad, and she hoped to use her degree in Spanish and teach English overseas in the near future. She was married the summer before the teacher preparation program began and her husband was originally from England, so they were considering moving back to England once she had had a few years of teaching experience in the United States. Marian majored in English and always knew she wanted to be a teacher because her mother taught in elementary schools for over 20 years. She also was married the summer after she completed the teacher preparation program, and she had aspirations of continuing her education through the doctorate level. Susan majored in biology and ran track in college. She helped with running clubs and other extra-curricular activities at the elementary school where she taught. All five first-year teachers were enthusiastic and passionate about teaching, building relationships with children, and becoming effective, high-quality educators.

The five first-year teachers in the case study were hired in a variety of elementary schools throughout Colorado upon graduation for the 2015-2016 school year. In order to ensure that the first-year teachers would be teaching in different schools with diverse populations, I conducted purposeful maximum variation sampling (Creswell, 2013). The benefit of this approach according to Creswell (2013) was the increased likelihood of different perspectives and experiences due to the different settings in which the first-year

teachers were instructing. While they received similar training and preparation, their experiences as first-year teachers were impacted by the population, diversity, and overall culture of each elementary school where they taught.

Research Settings

Jackie and Susan were hired at the same elementary school in a large city in southern Colorado. The school enrollment had increased steadily over the past five years to 500 students due to district realignment and school closings. During the 2015-2016 school year, the school was Title I, and 85% of the students received free or reduced lunch. The student population consisted of 43% White, 39% Hispanic, 8% Black, and 9% identifying as other. Ten percent of the population was ELLs, 3% qualified as gifted and talented, and 9% received special education services. During their first year of teaching, Jackie taught fifth grade with 27 students in her class, and Susan taught second grade with 29 students.

Marian taught fourth grade in an affluent school district in a large city in southern Colorado. She had 28 students in her class. The student population in her elementary school consisted of 80% White, 10% Hispanic, 3% Black, and 7% identifying as other. Four percent of the population was ELLs, 9% received free or reduced lunch, 10% were identified as gifted and talented, and 8% of the student population received special education services. The school enrollment had remained consistent in the past five years, averaging around 330 students.

Nicole taught fourth grade in a Title I elementary school in a city in northern Colorado and she had 26 students in her class. The school enrollment had declined steadily in the last few years. Of the 400 students, 30% were White, 65% were Hispanic,

1% was Black, and 4% identified as other. Eighty percent of the students received free or reduced lunch, and 16% were ELLs. Ten percent of the students received special education services, and 1% was identified as gifted and talented.

Esther taught second grade to 24 students at a new charter school in a suburb of a large city in northern Colorado. It opened in 2011, and the enrollment had increased each year since opening. During Esther's first-year of teaching, there were 340 students. The student population was 87% White, 7% Hispanic, 2% Black, and 4% identifying as other. Four percent of the population received free or reduced lunch, 1% were ELLs, 2% were identified as gifted and talented, and 4% received special education services.

Principals

Criterion-based sampling was conducted to ensure that the principals from each of the four schools represented by the first-year teachers would be included in the multiple case study (Patton, 2015). According to Patton (2015), one benefit of criterion-based sampling is that all cases included meet a predetermined criterion of importance, which for this study was their positions as principals at the schools where the first-year teachers were teaching. Another benefit of this sampling process is a deeper understanding of the rich information provided by the sample with regards to their position and the program in which they are involved (Patton, 2015). For this multiple case study, the principals provided another layer of insight regarding the preparation and training of first-year teachers. The principals' roles as leaders and evaluators of the first-year teachers, as well as their years of experience in elementary schools, provided another perspective to the strengths and needs of first-year teachers.

To protect their privacy, each principal chose a pseudonym that was used throughout the study. All of the principals were white females that range in age from their mid-30s to mid-50s. Ms. Waldorf was the principal at the school where Susan and Jackie taught during their first year. During the 2015-2016 school year, she was in her fifth year as principal at the school. Prior to becoming a principal, she was an Assistant Principal for three years and a literacy coach for two years in the same school district in southern Colorado. She received her elementary teaching license and principal license from universities in California, where she started her teaching career. She taught in California for seven years prior to moving to Colorado.

Ms. Kay was in her fourth year as principal at the elementary school during Marian's first-year of teaching. She received her elementary teaching and principal licensure in Michigan. She had been a principal in Michigan for eight years prior to moving to Colorado. She started her career as an elementary school teacher and taught second, third, and fourth grades before moving to administration.

Ms. Barnes, the principal at Nicole's school, was in her second year as principal. She had received her licensure in elementary education and principal administration in Colorado. Prior to becoming a principal, she had been an Assistant Principal in the same school district for five years, an instructional coach for one year, and a teacher in a demonstration classroom for three years. Before she came to the school district in northern Colorado, she taught elementary school for eight years in a different school district in Colorado.

Ms. Peters was in her first year as principal at the school where Esther was teaching. She had been in the charter school system for 15 years prior to becoming a

principal. She taught kindergarten, second, and fourth grades at the elementary level, and then worked as a Dean of Students at a charter middle school. She had experience working with students from preschool through eighth grade.

University Supervisors

Criterion-based sampling was conducted with the university supervisors to ensure that they were from the same teacher preparation program where the first-year teachers graduated (Patton, 2015). The predetermined criterion of importance for this sample was their positions as university supervisors at the teacher preparation program where the first-year teachers graduated. The university supervisors' experiences in training and observing student teachers during their student teaching experience provided perspectives on the specific preparation that the first-year teachers had received. While the university supervisors did not directly supervise the first-year teachers included in this case study, they all had experience supervising and evaluating student teachers from the same preparation program. Therefore, they provided insight into the general trends and training of first-year teachers in the teacher preparation program.

In order to have a large enough sample of elementary university supervisors, both current and recently retired supervisors were invited to participate in the study. There were four participants: three who were current supervisors and one who had recently retired. Three of the supervisors were white females and one supervisor was a white male. Each supervisor chose a pseudonym that was used throughout the study in order to protect their privacy. Dr. Snap had a long history as an educator in Colorado. She received her bachelor's degree in elementary education, her master's degree in special education, and her doctorate in reading from universities in Colorado. She taught in

elementary and middle schools, as a general education teacher and a special education teacher. She worked at the school district level as a curriculum coordinator, and then began teaching at a university in northern Colorado. She served as the chair of the elementary education department for many years before moving to the university and teaching in the teacher preparation program in this case study. She has been teaching and supervising student teachers in the teacher preparation program for nine years.

Mr. Carson has been a supervisor and instructor in the teacher preparation program for eight years. He completed his bachelor's degree in Illinois and started his career as an elementary teacher in northwest Colorado. He taught both second grade and sixth grade for a total of seven years. He received his principal licensure from a university in northern Colorado, and he served as a principal for three years in northwest Colorado and 22 years in southern Colorado. When he retired as a principal, he began working at the university in the teacher preparation program.

Ms. Taylor received her bachelor's degree in elementary education and her certificate for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) from a university in Michigan. She taught abroad in Mexico and London before getting her master's degree in TESOL at a university in London. When she moved to Colorado, she taught at both a middle school and high school, starting a newcomer program at each school for ELLs. She also taught at the community college level before working in the International Affairs office at the university from this case study. After serving as assistant director in the International Affairs office, she decided to go back into teaching and became an instructor in the College of Education. She has served as a university supervisor for two years.

Ms. Lillian recently retired from the teacher preparation program after serving as a university supervisor for ten years. She received her bachelor's degree in elementary education from a university in Michigan, and her master's degree and principal licensure from universities in Colorado. She taught elementary school in Colorado and overseas in Puerto Rico and England for a total of 19 years. She took some time off from teaching to work in the retail business before returning as a principal of an elementary school. She was a principal in Colorado for 11 years.

Data Collection

First-Year Teachers

In order to discover how the first-year teachers' perceptions and experiences changed during their first year of teaching, interviews were conducted at the beginning of the school year, after the first semester was complete, and at the end of the school year. Following IRB approval, the first round of semi-structured interviews were conducted. According to Patton (2015), "the purpose of qualitative interviewing is to capture how those being interviewed view their world, to learn *their* terminology and judgments, and to capture the complexities of *their* individual perceptions and experiences" (p. 442). Therefore, 11 interview questions were designed to gain the participants' perspectives on the training and preparation they had received in their teacher preparation program, as well as the experiences and lessons they had learned during their first few weeks as classroom teachers (see Appendix A). The interviews focused on the strengths and weaknesses of their preparation, their level of confidence in all areas of teaching, and how they could have been better or more prepared for the classroom. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes.

Before each interview began, the purpose of the study was reviewed, and each participant was given the letter of informed consent to read and sign. Once participants signed the letter of informed consent, each participant's approval was requested for using a recording device during the interview. As stated above, each participant chose a pseudonym to use throughout the study. All measures of confidentiality that would be taken throughout the study were reviewed with the participants: the use of a pseudonym, the destruction of recordings following the transcription of the interview, and the anonymity of the elementary school and teacher preparation program in the analysis.

The second round of semi-structured interviews occurred at the end of the first semester using ten interview questions that were similar to the first set of questions. However, the questions were designed to discover if the participants' perceptions regarding their preparation had changed throughout the semester as well as to gather more information regarding their experiences in their first semester of teaching (see Appendix B).

The third round of semi-structured interviews was completed at the end of the school year and addressed similar questions; however, the nine interview questions focused more on how their perceptions and experiences had changed and developed throughout the school year (see Appendix C). The second and third round interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. Measures of confidentiality were reviewed at each interview, and the interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Observations were conducted in each of the five classrooms during the first semester and at the end of the school year. According to Creswell (2013), observations provide the researcher with the opportunity to become an insider in the field that is being

studied and engage the five senses while experiencing the setting, participants, interactions, conversations, and activities. As a participant observer, I spent time in each classroom at the beginning and end of the school year, and the observations lasted an average of two to three hours. Observations were recorded by hand using the Qualitative Observation Field Notes I had created (see Appendix D). The Colorado Teacher Quality Standards served as a guide for observation and analysis of the practices, instructional strategies, and interactions observed in each classroom. Throughout each observation, field notes were taken, diagrams of the layout of the classrooms were drawn, and observations of the teacher instructing, the students working, and other interactions between students and the teacher were recorded. I observed small group instruction, whole group instruction, and student work time. I walked around each classroom and helped students as needed. No video or audio recording took place.

In addition, each first-year teacher's annual evaluation was collected at the end of the school year and analyzed using the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards to determine evidence of effective teaching and impact on student growth as captured by the evaluation. Each evaluation was completed by the first-year teacher's principal and included a rubric of the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards as well as evidence of student growth on classroom and district assessments. According to Yin (2014), the most important documents in a case study "corroborate and augment evidence from other sources" (p. 107). The annual teacher evaluations provided another layer of data regarding the impact that first-year teachers made on student growth, their examples of effective teaching, and the principals' formal evaluation of their first year. Also, the handbook for the teacher preparation program was used to provide information regarding

the expectations, protocols, and requirements of the teacher preparation program from which each teacher graduated. The handbook provided background information about the teacher preparation program, but it did not contribute to the codes or themes that emerged from the data analysis.

Principals

In order to discover the perceptions of principals regarding the strengths and needs of first-year teachers, as well as their satisfaction with the preparation that the first-year teachers received, interviews were conducted with the four principals at the end of the teachers' first year of teaching. Following IRB approval, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each principal using ten questions created to discover the strengths and needs that they identified in first-year teachers, their satisfaction with the preparation of first-year teachers, and their suggestions for improvement and change in the preparation of first-year teachers (see Appendix E). Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes.

The same protocols were followed in the interview process with the principals as they were with the first-year teachers. Before each interview began, the purpose of the study was reviewed, and each participant was given the letter of informed consent to read and sign. Once participants signed the letter of informed consent, each participant's approval was requested for using a recording device during the interview. As stated above, each participant chose a pseudonym to use throughout the study. All measures of confidentiality that would be taken throughout the study were reviewed with each participant: the use of a pseudonym, the destruction of recordings following the

transcription of the interview, and the anonymity of the elementary school and teacher preparation program in the analysis.

University Supervisors

Interviews with four university supervisors were conducted in order to discover their perceptions of the training that the teacher preparation program provided for the five first-year teachers in this case study. The supervisors were asked about the teacher preparation program as a whole, not the specific first-year teachers in this study.

Following IRB approval, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each university supervisor using ten questions that were similar to the questions asked of the principals (See Appendix F). Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes.

The same protocols were followed in the interview process with the university supervisors as they were with the first-year teachers and principals. Before each interview, the purpose of the study was reviewed, and each participant was given a letter of informed consent to read and sign. Participant's approval was requested for using a recording device during the interview and pseudonyms were chosen by the participants which were used throughout the study. All measures of confidentiality that were taken throughout the study were reviewed with the participants.

Data Analysis

The process of data collection and analysis was conducted simultaneously for each case, with the cases defined as the first-year teachers, the principals, and the university supervisors. The data collection and analysis of first-year teachers was conducted first, because it occurred three times throughout the school year. The collection and analysis for the principals followed in order to get their perspectives on the

first-year teachers after they had taught for a year and their annual evaluations were complete. The data collection and analysis for the university supervisors occurred last.

According to Yin (2014), case study data can be analyzed both inductively, by noticing patterns in the data and finding possible relationships and themes, and deductively, by using a theoretical or conceptual framework to guide the analysis. I used both methods of data analysis throughout the coding process. Following each interview, observation, and review of the annual teacher evaluations, analytic memoing occurred where thoughts and ideas regarding emerging themes and patterns in the data were noted (Charmaz & Bryant, 2008; Creswell, 2013). All transcripts were entered into NVivo qualitative software for further memoing and coding.

First Cycle: Inductive Coding

The data was analyzed in cycles for each case (Miles et al., 2014), and the same protocol was followed for each case. Prior to the first cycle of data analysis, all of the transcripts, field notes, and documents were read and reviewed, and memos were added (Creswell, 2014). During the first cycle of analysis, different types of codes were created in order to analyze the data: in vivo, descriptive, evaluative, and attribute (Miles et al., 2014). The in vivo codes were created by using the exact words of the participants that best described the data. In addition, descriptive codes were created in order to summarize the basic topics in the data. Evaluative codes were used to make specific judgments regarding the merits and significance of a program or policy. These were used in particular when participants focused on the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher preparation program. Attribute coding was used to differentiate between types of data, whether interview, observation, or document, time of interview, whether beginning,

middle, or end of the school year, and participant and school characteristics (Miles et al., 2014).

Second Cycle: Deductive Coding

During the second cycle of data analysis, deductive analysis was conducted by using the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards. According to Patton (2015), deductive analysis uses an existing framework in order to identify patterns and themes in the data. The Colorado Teacher Quality Standards served as the existing framework for defining and describing quality teaching. The field notes, interviews, and annual evaluations were compared with the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards in order to identify evidence of quality teaching as measured by the standards.

During this stage of coding, memoing continued in order to focus on emerging themes and patterns within each case. In addition, a content analysis of the annual teacher evaluations was conducted to identify patterns between the evaluations and the interviews and observations (Patton, 2015). During the content analysis, the text of each annual evaluation was analyzed using the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards as the framework with the standards providing the description of quality teaching.

Third Cycle: Establishing Themes

During the third cycle of data analysis, pattern coding was conducted in order to further categorize and condense the data to establish themes (Yin, 2014). For the first-year teachers, similarities and differences between the feelings and perceptions of preparation from the beginning of the school year to the middle and end of the school year were noted. The patterns discovered in the content analysis of the annual evaluations were compared with those that emerged from the interviews and observations with the

first-year teachers, the interviews with the principals, and the interviews with the university supervisors. The patterns that emerged from the observations were also compared with the patterns from the interviews from each case. Major themes were identified through pattern coding, memoing, and further review of the data.

Fourth Cycle: Cross-Case Analysis

Following the data analysis of all three cases of participants, a cross-case analysis was conducted to discover the similarities and differences in the themes and patterns among the first-year teachers, principals, and university supervisors. The cross-case analysis was completed using the NVivo software to compare and contrast the codes, patterns, and themes among the three cases. Each research question was reviewed and answered using the themes and patterns that emerged from the cross-case analysis. The cross-case analysis provided a more comprehensive picture of the experiences and preparation of first-year teachers from different perspectives (Patton, 2015). According to Yin (2014), in a cross-case analysis, findings among cases are aggregated; however, differences in cases deserve to be considered and reported as well. Therefore, the findings from each case were reported separately and the overall findings from the cross-case analysis were reported and discussed.

Positionality

As a former elementary school teacher and a current instructor and supervisor of student teachers in a College of Education, I am passionate about educating and preparing high-quality teachers for our diverse public schools. My training and experience as a supervisor of student teachers prepared me to observe and identify evidence of quality teaching in the interviews and observations for this case study. In addition, I have used

the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards in my instruction and observations as a supervisor and instructor in a teacher preparation program. I was familiar with the first-year teachers in this case study due to my role as an instructor and supervisor in the teacher preparation program; however, I had no supervisory role during their first-year of teaching. My experiences of being a teacher in an elementary school made the setting a familiar one, and my experiences observing student teachers was helpful as I collected and analyzed data; however, I approached the study from the researcher perspective and designed the study to purposely address issues of trustworthiness.

Trustworthiness

To enhance credibility and trustworthiness, triangulation of data sources, which included interviews, observations, and the annual teacher evaluations, were used in order to find corroborating evidence in the themes and patterns that emerged from the data (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015). Rich, thick description through details of the participants and schools, as well as participant quotations that supported each theme, were used throughout the case study to provide the readers with a deeper understanding of the experiences of the first-year teachers and to achieve possible transferability or connections to other contexts (Creswell, 2013; Geertz, 1973; Tierney & Clemens, 2010). By incorporating the perspectives of participants in different roles related to teaching, credibility was provided through authenticity, defined as the inclusion of different perspectives, and triangulation (Creswell, 2013). After identifying themes across the interviews, observations and evaluations, member-checking was performed by sharing the themes, interpretations, and conclusions with the participants in the study (Creswell, 2013) and no changes were necessary. In addition, dependability was established

throughout the research process, by following a structured data analysis plan, coding in cycles, and looking for all possible explanations in the data (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014).

Limitations

One limitation of the study is that it only addresses first-year teachers' perceptions of their preparation at the elementary school level. The principals and university supervisors were all at the elementary level as well. I interviewed and observed first-year teachers and principals in a variety of elementary schools with different demographics and needs in order to determine their level of preparation for teaching in a wide variety of schools. However, further studies of teachers at the middle and high school levels would provide a broader perspective of first-year teachers' perceptions.

Another limitation is that all of the first-year teachers in this case study are white females. While this is representative of the graduates of the teacher preparation program, as 99% of the elementary graduates were white females, gaining the perspectives of a more diverse population of elementary teachers could also add more insight into the preparation and experiences of first-year teachers. Similarly, the four principals and three of the four university supervisors were white females. I am also a white female. While about 50% of elementary, middle, and high school principals in the state of Colorado are white females, and the majority of faculty in the teacher preparation program are also white females, a more diverse population may provide differing perspectives and experiences as well.

In addition, the first-year teachers and university supervisors in the case study were from one teacher preparation program. While the CAEP policy requires that

individual teacher preparation programs provide the information included in this case study regarding their specific program, including perceptions of first-year teachers from different programs may help teacher preparation programs across the country continue to identify the themes, areas of strength and need, and implement suggestions from their own graduates who are in the field.

Therefore, due to the fact the participants involved were all related to elementary school and from one teacher preparation program, there is a limitation of lack of generalizability. The major themes and findings may not be easily generalized to the overall population for first-year teachers and teacher preparation programs due to their localized focus. However, the transferability of the findings are evident across the experiences of first-year teachers, as well as their principals and university supervisors.

CHAPTER 4

FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS FINDINGS

In order to analyze the CAEP policy, a multiple case study was performed with three distinct cases: first-year teachers, their principals, and university supervisors. For the first-year teachers, interviews were conducted at the beginning, middle, and end of their first year of teaching. Observations, lasting an average of two to three hours in each classroom, were conducted at the beginning and end of the school year. The first-year teachers' annual teacher evaluations, which were completed by their principals, were also analyzed for evidence of effective teaching throughout their first year, and the handbook from the first-year teachers' teacher preparation program provided information regarding the expectations and requirements of the program. After analyzing the data through the cycles of coding, there were 79 final codes which fit into six major themes. See Table 1 for a display of major themes.

Table 1

First-Year Teachers: The Major Themes, Exemplar Quotes, and Data Triangulation

Major Theme	Exemplar Quotes	Triangulation
Areas of best preparation	“The actual experience of being in the classroom, what it’s like to teach, and what happens and how to react when things happen, that was definitely the most valuable experience.” Interview: Beginning of the year	Interviews: Beginning, middle, and end of the year

Areas of need in preparation	<p>“I wish we had looked at different ways to run curriculums, even like multiple ways to do one curriculum because that’s where I feel like I’m struggling the most.”</p> <p>Interview: Middle of the year</p>	Interviews; Beginning, middle, and end of the year
Greatest challenges	<p>“We have so many meetings and so much data that we have to show and talk about. . . . it doesn’t feel like it leaves enough time to plan and reflect and decide what we are going to do.”</p> <p>Interview: Middle of the year</p>	Interviews; Beginning, middle, and end of the year; Observations
Commitment to professional development	<p>“Whenever there was an opportunity for training that came up within the school, I went to that training.”</p> <p>Interview: End of the year</p>	Interviews: Beginning, middle, and end of the year
Evidence of high-quality teaching	<p>“You are on to something! Let’s go back into the text and find more text evidence to support your ideas.”</p> <p>Observation: End of the year</p>	Interviews; Beginning, middle, and end of the year; Observations; Annual evaluations
Perceptions of student growth	<p>“[Esther] is very professional and collaborates with all stakeholders to ensure student growth.”</p> <p>Annual evaluation</p>	Interviews; Beginning, middle, and end of the year; Observations; Annual evaluations

Theme 1: Areas of Best Preparation

Student Teaching Experience

All five first-year teachers felt as though they had received adequate preparation to begin their teaching career and identified areas they felt provided them with the best preparation for their first year. At the beginning of the year, they all identified the experience of student teaching in the elementary classroom as what made the most difference in their preparation. Since the first-year teachers were part of a teacher preparation program that required part-time student teaching in the fall and full-time in the spring, each first-year teacher had been in an elementary classroom from the first day of school in August until they graduated from the teacher preparation program in May. They had experienced setting up a classroom, getting to know students from the beginning of the school year, implementing classroom procedures and expectations, attending staff and data meetings, as well as daily instruction, assessments, field trips, parent/teacher conferences, and observing student growth over time. As Marian pointed out, “The actual experience of being in the classroom, what it’s like to teach, and what happens and how to react when things happen, that was definitely the most valuable experience.” Esther reiterated that being in the classroom for a full year provided her with more confidence when she started her first year of teaching: “I did not feel nervous, I did not feel scared to start. I felt very prepared.”

While time spent in the classroom was the most beneficial for all of them, their varying student teaching experiences and the schools where they student taught impacted the degree to which they felt prepared. Nicole student taught in a public Montessori school. She appreciated the training and the exposure to the Montessori manipulatives

and style; however, she felt like her student teaching experience was not representative of the school where she was hired, a Title I school that was highly impacted with ELLs and students with disabilities. Nicole did not have the same exposure to students of diverse abilities that student teachers in traditional public schools received. In addition, she said:

I felt like being in a public Montessori school was not useful, not realistic. I didn't learn how to use curriculum and how to tear it apart and figure out those different things. . . . I didn't know what to expect coming into this school.

Jackie's classroom demographics were reflective of the school where she student taught; however, the classroom where she student taught was focused on personalized learning, which was not the focus of her current school. In her words,

I was in that personalized learning classroom where they had one-to-one technology too, so that's very different, but I try to model a lot of what she did last year because I saw a lot of growth in those students on that independent learning piece.

While her classroom experience during her teacher preparation was different from her current classroom, she was able to apply strategies and skills she had learned from that experience to her first year of teaching. Despite their different experiences, throughout the year, they all reiterated that the student teaching experience was the most beneficial in their preparation.

Coursework

As part of their teacher preparation program, the first-year teachers were required to take methods courses. For all five teachers, the majority of the classes they took were worthwhile and provided them with strategies, resources, information, and ideas that they

had implemented in their classrooms during their first year of teaching. According to Susan, “knowing how to relate the standards to your content and the content to your standards” was an area she felt most prepared in due to the assignments and practice she had in her methods courses. She went on to explain that applying what she learned in her courses to the classroom where she was student teaching prepared her for her first year as well. Similarly, Marian felt prepared to plan lessons based on the standards. In her words, “I felt really prepared with lesson planning, just the basics of where you start a lesson to where you end it. Pulling it from the standards, that was huge.” By the end of the year, Jackie realized how often she had used the ideas and strategies she had received from her course instructors. She referred to them as her “bag of tricks,” and as she said, “you don’t realize how much you will even use something that was given to you for a second grade idea in fifth grade . . . that bag of tricks made a huge difference.” She had returned to her class materials and notes from her coursework to find strategies and ideas to implement throughout her first year of teaching. All five of the teachers said that the early reading methods course they took in the summer and the literacy course they took in the fall provided them with the best preparation.

Theme 2: Areas of Need in Preparation

Curriculum

By mid-year, their perceptions on the areas where they received the best preparation for their first-year had not changed. They reiterated that their student teaching experiences had been the most valuable training and preparation; however, they were able to better identify their areas of need after a semester of day-to-day life in the classroom. By mid-year, all of the teachers felt like they had not received enough

preparation in using and implementing curriculum. Nicole stated, “I wish we had looked at different ways to run curriculum, even like multiple ways to do one curriculum because that’s where I feel like I’m struggling the most.” Jackie noted that only one of her professors had demonstrated how to use curriculum: “More hands-on training with [curriculum] would have helped even if you’re using a different curriculum [in your own classroom], being able to analyze and figure out what they mean, that would have helped.” While each school in which the five teachers were teaching used different curriculum for each subject area, the exposure to and experience working with a variety of curriculum in their methods courses would have helped them feel more prepared for using the curriculum they were later assigned.

Differentiation

By mid-year, the first-year teachers felt as though they needed more preparation in teaching students with diverse abilities. According to the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards, high-quality teachers have the tools to adapt their teaching for the benefit of all students across all ability levels; however, this was an area the participants viewed as lacking from their preparation. Both Nicole and Jackie did not feel like they had received enough training in special education, and they were both teaching in Title I schools that were highly impacted with students with special needs. Their teacher preparation program required one introductory special education course, but Nicole did not feel as though she had enough resources or training to support her students who were identified as special education: “I don’t know who qualifies as special ed, so until you actually have a face to put to it, it’s hard to understand.” Similarly, Jackie needed more training in the Response-to-Intervention (RtI) process, which uses student assessment data to provide

support to students with learning and behavior needs, as well as more resources for understanding Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and special education services:

I wrote seven or eight RtI plans this year and I had never even seen one written before so that was a challenge . . . At a school like this where there are so many, that's huge and that's really important for me.

The first-year teachers emphasized this need at the end of the year as well. According to Marian, she needed more "specific student interventions. Like RtI plans or how do I approach this situation or I've tried these things, what can I do to help this student more?"

In addition, the teacher preparation program did not require students to take a class on teaching ELLs. Even though it was not required, Esther took the class as an elective, because she believed that "if I wouldn't have taken that, and I had been in any school setting, I would think it was very necessary . . . it opened my eyes and it was very intriguing and important." Nicole, whose classroom was highly impacted with ELLs, did not think she had enough training in that area and wished that it had been a requirement to take an ELL class. For Marian, who taught in a more affluent elementary school, more training on providing enrichment for gifted and talented students was an identified need: "Those students that could teach the math lesson, they're so high. Finding something for them that doesn't make them bored to tears . . . gifted and talented, a seminar on it or something would have been really good." She reiterated that need at the end of the school year: "[I needed more] tools, programs that help teachers, support teachers, provide differentiation for students . . . it's a lot and you're always looking for more as a teacher." At the end of the year, all of the first-year teachers expressed that more specific strategies

and training for the diverse needs of students would have helped them feel more prepared.

Theme 3: Greatest Challenges

Classroom Responsibilities

At the beginning of the year, one of the biggest challenges that the first-year teachers mentioned was the learning curve that comes with managing, organizing, and being responsible for their own classrooms. In Marian's words, "not knowing what you don't know" with regards to all of the programs, procedures, and responsibilities of a new school and classroom was challenging. As she said, "You can learn about what it looks like to teach for so long—until you're there, it's not the same." Jackie also reiterated that there is no way to be "100% prepared for your first year, it's not even humanly possible, stuff comes up that you just didn't know." Likewise, Nicole found that no matter how much preparation she had received, "you just have to get in the classroom. You really won't know until you know, until you're there." While they felt as prepared as they could for starting their first-year of teaching, there were challenges that arose due to the fact that they were now the classroom teacher. The student teaching experience prepared them for many aspects of the demands of teaching; however, as Esther pointed out,

It's a whole other level when you're actually on your own, planning every little aspect. You don't really get that when you're student teaching because someone has already done that for you, all the little things someone has done for you.

Taking responsibility for all aspects of teaching, which they had not fully understood as student teachers, created a learning curve during their first year.

In addition, planning, going to meetings, assessing and entering data, and time management, which they had some exposure to as student teachers but not to the extent of being the classroom teacher, was challenging. Nicole stated:

We have so many meetings and so much data that we have to show and talk about . . . it doesn't feel like it leaves enough time to plan and reflect and decide what we are going to do.

As Susan said, "I didn't realize how challenging scheduling [each day's lessons] would be. It took a while for me to figure out what's going to work and what's not going to work." Balancing all of the requirements of being a classroom teacher took time to learn.

By the end of the year, the first-year teachers still noted that all of the responsibilities and requirements of teaching were a challenge in their first year. Esther said:

It's so much more than it seems when you're in a college class, before you are a teacher . . . all of the aspects that go into it, I just think it's so much and you wear so many hats.

Marian said that her focus on the students could get lost in the midst of all that she had to balance: "I spent a lot of time lesson planning and looking at data and emailing parents and dealing with this or making sure all these papers got out." She had to make the effort to refocus on what was important: the needs of her students.

Classroom Management

Susan named classroom management as her greatest challenge at the beginning of the school year. By the middle of the year, it was still a struggle, but she had seen improvements and was trying new management strategies. While she was more

comfortable with classroom management at the end of the year, she still named it as her biggest challenge. In her words, “There are so many different ways that you can [manage a classroom], so I tried so many different ways and I’m slowly finding things that actually fit me.” During the observations, she spent a lot of her time trying to get her students back on track, reminding them with signals such as “Class, Class!” and “One, two, three, all eyes on me.” The need for constant redirection and reminders took time away from her instruction. Growth in classroom management was evident by the end of the year; however, she still took a lot of time out of her instruction to refocus her students and remind them of her expectations.

At the end of the year, Esther and Marian both identified specific students as a challenge during their first year. While they did not feel like classroom management overall was a struggle, they both had individual students in their classrooms who required more support and effort on their part to be successful. When discussing the particular student, Esther said that

I’ve had to go through a big process of learning about her past and how research has been shown why her brain is working the way it is and all of the things that have been a part of her actions towards me and others in class. It has been really difficult learning about that and adapting to it.

Marian had to go through a similar process to meet the needs of a student whose behavior was “horrible, it was horrible. I really had to spend a lot of time getting to know him and getting to know his parents, and began working alongside his parents.” For Esther and Marian, learning how to work with specific children whose needs were so

different from the rest of their classes was a challenge; however, they both noted that the success and growth of these individual students was a great reward by the end of the year.

Parents

By the end of the year, communicating with parents was a challenge that the first-year teachers identified. None of the five first-year teachers felt like they had received enough training or coaching on how to deal with difficult parents or how to effectively communicate with parents. The expectations from parents were different depending on the demographics of the schools. For Nicole, she struggled with not having enough support from parents when dealing with behavior issues. The parents at Marian's school wanted so much information regarding the needs of their children that she felt overwhelmed: "They're really supportive and they really care about their students, but trying to meet their expectations and being able to communicate clearly with them is challenging." Learning how to navigate the expectations or lack of support from parents was another piece of the puzzle for the first-year teachers.

Theme 4: Commitment to Professional Growth

Formal Training

While all five first-year teachers identified areas of need in their preparation, as well as their biggest challenges during their first year, it was evident that they had all sought out more training both during their preparation program and their first year of teaching. As mentioned above, Esther took the ELL class as an elective during her teacher preparation program because she believed it was an important addition to her training. While she was in her teacher preparation program, Susan said that she

took the time to spend more time with the class. I stayed a little bit later and talked to the teacher, I came in on days that I really didn't have to come in. I wanted to make sure that the students knew me before I stepped in and did the solo stuff.

Jackie also spent more time at the school than was required, and she spent time observing in all classrooms: music, art, physical education, ELL, and special education.

Professional Development

While all five teachers were part of an induction program during their first year, they all attended training and classes above and beyond the requirements of their induction program. They attended trainings on specific programs and curriculum, assessments and testing, as well as classroom management. "Whenever there was an opportunity for training that came up within the school, I went to that training," Marian said. Susan has done the same because she believed it was imperative to "take the initiative to make sure that I'm doing everything I can to support my students."

In addition to formal trainings, they all regularly met with their teammates and other staff at the schools for support and advice. As Jackie stated, "Talking to everybody and not being afraid to ask for help and seek advice in other areas is huge." Esther reiterated:

I have great teammates . . . so if I ever have questions about the timing or the pacing or am I doing this right, I can ask them, and I'm not afraid to ask if I'm doing something wrong or are we supposed to be doing it like this.

All five of the first-year teachers reported in all three interviews that they had sought the advice and guidance of the special education team, gifted and talented

teachers, school counselors, and administration at their schools throughout their first year when they needed more support for individual students. Relying on teammates and staff helped all of them navigate through their first year of teaching. It is also evidence of reflective teaching, as identified by the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards, because they were focused on professional growth and the application of new skills to improve their practice.

Theme 5: Evidence of High-Quality Teaching

Connecting With Students

When observed in their classrooms, each teacher demonstrated evidence of high-quality as identified by the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards. During the interviews, each teacher identified areas they felt were personal strengths, and their identified areas of strength were evident in the observations as well. All five teachers identified one of their greatest strengths to be building relationships with their students and creating a community in their classrooms. According to Nicole, her greatest strength was “connecting with them. Which has really helped because even if they don’t like math, they respect me and like school, and that’s huge.” Similarly, Susan said,

Building connections and relationships with kids. I can tell when they are having an off day, and they are willing to talk and be open and honest with me about it. [I ask] what can we do today to get you to be successful in here?

Marian noted, “I’ve worked really hard to get to know [my students] and who they are and their personalities and how they learn so that I can teach them better.”

It was evident in each observation that the five first-year teachers had connected with their students. The Colorado Teacher Quality Standard III states that teachers

establish a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environment, and that they foster a positive, nurturing relationship with their students. These qualities were evident as each teacher interacted with their students, provided instruction and clear expectations, and gave specific praise to individual students and the class as a whole. Marian acknowledged her students who were on task during their writing assignment while she walked around providing one-on-one support. Nicole pointed out specific ways that students had correctly used diagrams to represent equations, praising them for their hard work and asking questions to prompt problem-solving. Esther repeatedly used “I noticed” statements, such as “I noticed that you counted by fives to get the answer” and “I noticed that you were using active listening.” In her classroom, there was a lot of laughter, praise, and mutual respect.

Instructional Strengths

Each first-year teacher demonstrated other strengths captured in the Teacher Quality Standards as well during each classroom observation. During one observation, Jackie led her students in an interactive writing assignment as they looked for text evidence in an article about explorers. Throughout her lesson, she integrated technology to enhance student learning, which is evidence of planning and delivering effective instruction, the second Colorado Teacher Quality Standard. She used the Smart Board in her classroom to project more information on explorers, and she also used the document camera to model how to find text evidence in the article. Susan provided clear expectations and modeled how to use visualization skills during a whole group reading lesson, which is also meeting the standard for effective instruction. Marian, Esther, and Nicole all engaged students in the “I Do, We Do, You Do” lesson format in which they

demonstrated how to solve a problem, worked together as a class, and provided students with independent practice as well. Overall, their knowledge of the content and curriculum in each observation was evident as they delivered instruction that met the academic standards and followed the curriculum expectations. By the end of the year, it was clear that each first-year teacher had grown in their classroom management techniques, instructional strategies, and confidence. Throughout the year they displayed evidence of effective teaching as described by the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards.

Annual Teacher Evaluations: Colorado Teacher Quality Standards Rubric

Evidence of high-quality teaching was also captured in each teacher's annual evaluation. Each evaluation was structured differently depending on the school and district. Although Colorado mandates that 50% of the annual evaluation is based on the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards rubric and 50% is evidence of student growth, the schools have autonomy to decide the format of the evaluation and how the student-growth part of the evaluation will be determined (Colorado Department of Education, 2011). Despite the different formats, each teacher was given a rating based on their instructional practices, as measured by the rubric, as well as their impact on student growth. Esther and Nicole's evaluations included more of a narrative explanation regarding their progress throughout their first year, whereas Susan, Jackie, and Marian's evaluations were focused more on scores achieved in each standard on the rubric, as well as an overall score based on the collective ratings of all the standards. All five first-year teachers were rated as effective overall. This rating indicated that each teacher had demonstrated high-quality practices throughout their first year of teaching.

According to their evaluations, each first-year teacher demonstrated their effectiveness in the five quality standards measured on the rubric: expertise in content and pedagogy; safe, respectful, inclusive learning environment; high-quality planning and instruction; reflective practices; and leadership. While their level of proficiency varied, the first-year teachers were acknowledged for effectively building relationships with students, demonstrating collaboration and teamwork, implementing content effectively, and facilitating learning in the classroom. Areas for growth were also indicated on the evaluations. For Esther and Nicole, their principals included a narrative goal for growth, based on their overall evaluations. For Marian, Jackie, and Susan, the ratings on the rubric indicated in which areas the teachers were most successful and which areas to focus on for growth. For the first-year teachers, the areas of growth were related to differentiating instruction and classroom practices in order to meet the needs of all students (see Table 2).

Table 2

Examples of Effective Teaching from the Annual Teacher Evaluations

First-Year Teacher	Evidence of Effective Teaching	Areas of Growth
Esther	“[Esther] is a strong advocate for each and every student. She seeks all resources to ensure each student has the best learning environment possible.”	“Include visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning aspects in all lessons and subject areas.”
Nicole	“Celebrations: Relationships with students Blended learning in math More hands-on activities in literacy Comfort and expertise with technology Responding to parent needs”	“Individualize instruction to meet student needs and ensure growth.”
Marian	Demonstrating a mastery in content/curriculum;	Adapting teaching to meet the needs of all students

	Establishing a safe, respectful learning environment; Reflecting on practice	
Jackie	Planning and delivering effective instruction; Facilitating learning in the classroom; Reflecting on practice; Demonstrating teamwork and collaboration	Adapting teaching to meet the needs of all students
Susan	Developing a positive relationship with students; Reflecting on practice; Demonstrating teamwork and collaboration	Adapting teaching to meet the needs of all students; Classroom management

Prior to being evaluated, all five of the first-year teachers had identified differentiating instruction as a need in the mid-year interviews. They had all reported that they needed more strategies and tools for meeting the needs of students with diverse abilities. From the evidence in their annual evaluations, the principals identified this need as well. While this area of need was identified in the evaluations, overall, each teacher had evidence of effective and high-quality instruction throughout their first-year of teaching.

Theme 6: Perceptions of Student Growth

A-ha Moments

By mid-year, all five teachers identified student learning and growth as their greatest reward and success of their first year. According to Esther, “Seeing my students do it independently knowing that I taught them is really rewarding. It means you’ve done your job and you taught them what they needed to know.” Jackie mentioned the “a-ha” moments in the classroom as her biggest reward: “When you get to see them, when you know that you helped them reach that, it’s so incredible, especially this first year.”

Marian also mentioned that “seeing where they were and where they’ve come, seeing their progress” made her feel successful. Similarly, Susan said:

I love watching their growth right now. There are students who were really, really low and they’re not where they need to be, but they’ve made some tremendous growth. And seeing that and saying, I’m not messing them up! It’s so great!

For Nicole, “It’s really cool when they get it and they’re excited about it and they love learning.” By the end of the year, student growth was still their greatest feeling of success. For Susan, “Just watching them grow and develop over time is probably the best part, that’s why I do it.”

While the overall growth of the class was important to them, the strides made with individual students were also great rewards. As mentioned above, the individual students who had been the greatest challenges for Esther and Marian were also their greatest rewards by the end of the year. Marian noted that the time spent building relationships with her student and his parents made the difference in his behavior: “It changes everything. It changes his work ethic, it changes how he responds to me, his peers, everything . . . it was a lot of work and I’m really thankful that we have that relationship now.” Similarly, the time spent and relationships built with Esther’s challenging student also paid off. As she said,

Seeing this student who at the beginning of the year she wouldn’t be at a desk, she wouldn’t speak unless she was shouting at you, she didn’t have any friends, wouldn’t play at recess . . . now she can sit through a whole entire class, she’s never with me at recess, she’s with her friends, and she’s learning so much . . . that one student has definitely been one of my greatest challenges and rewards

especially at the end of the year to think back on what she was like when she came to school for the first time.

For all five of the first-year teachers, the growth that their students had experienced throughout the year, both individually and as a class, made their first year feel like a success.

Annual Teacher Evaluations: Student Growth

At mid-year, all five felt the success of seeing their students grow; however, they were all concerned about future assessments and their annual teacher evaluations because 50% of their evaluations were based on measures of student growth. By mid-year, they had not experienced the evaluation, and one thing was evident across all five mid-year interviews: they were all unsure of what their evaluations looked like and what data and assessments would be used to evaluate them. There was confusion as to what assessments would be used in the 50% student growth piece of their evaluations, and it appeared to differ from school to school, district to district. For Jackie,

I've never had a job or anything where my results are not dependent on what I do, I mean this is what I do, how I teach, but you know, what I'm saying with that, I could stay up all night studying for a test and make sure that I passed it. I can't have my kids study the same way that I do. So that is very nerve-wracking and panicking thinking that student growth is on me and that's my results.

Nicole also felt anxiety about the state standardized assessments being part of her evaluation: "I don't think that the state tests show growth, they show a score. And that doesn't show where they started and where they've come to, so I don't really feel that good about that." Similarly, Marian mentioned that she had noticed in her own classroom

that assessment did not always accurately reflect her students' knowledge and growth: "Sometimes student growth can't be measured by those tests." Student growth is an indicator of quality in the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards, and while the first-year teachers had experienced student growth in their classrooms, as measured on standardized and classroom assessments, they were most apprehensive of the assessments that would be used to measure their impact as teachers on their annual evaluations.

However, by the end of the year, all five teachers had been through the annual evaluation process and felt more confident because their positive impact on student growth was captured in their evaluations. While they had expressed confusion and anxiety regarding the assessments used on their evaluations at mid-year, they all demonstrated student growth in their individual evaluations.

As stated above, each evaluation was structured differently and the assessments used to demonstrate student growth were different depending on school and district policies. For all five of the teachers, student growth was calculated by using a mixture of classroom assessments and standardized tests. All four schools used assessments in literacy as one component of the student growth measure. The administration at Esther and Nicole's schools chose which assessments would be used as part of their annual evaluations. Jackie, Susan, and Marian had more autonomy in choosing learning goals for their students that were calculated into the student growth part of their evaluation, in addition to the assessments chosen by administration. Jackie chose student goals related to math and writing, Susan chose student learning outcomes in writing and math, and Marian chose evidence of growth in students' ability to create and answer higher-order thinking questions. On the writing assessment that was a part of Susan's evaluation, the

students did not make as much growth as expected on the second grade writing rubric in the area of grammar. However, they showed growth in their ability to develop stronger content in their writing. This was the only area on all assessments included in the evaluation that did not show as much growth, but it did not negatively affect Susan's overall impact on student growth as captured on the evaluation. On all other assessments used in their evaluations, the five first-year teachers demonstrated "expected" or "more than expected" student growth.

Discussion

The CAEP policy includes several components that teacher preparation programs must fulfill in order to demonstrate that they are effectively preparing their graduates for the classroom: evidence of effective teaching, positive impact on student growth, and graduate and employer satisfaction with their preparation. The research questions for this multiple case study are also based on these components:

1. How well prepared do first-year teachers feel they are at the beginning, middle, and end of their first year of teaching?
2. What evidence of effective teaching do first-year teachers display in their classrooms?
3. What areas of strength and areas for growth are identified by first-year teachers, their principals, and university supervisors?
4. What are the perceptions of first-year teachers, their principals, and university supervisors regarding their preparation, effectiveness, and success during their first year?

The themes that emerged from the experiences and perceptions of first-year teachers provide detailed information regarding their needs, successes, and impact on students.

Due to this CAEP policy, programs must track their graduates in order to determine their perceptions regarding their training, specifically that it was relevant and effective. In order to analyze this policy, the research questions of this case study also focus on how prepared the first-year teachers felt at the beginning, middle, and end of their first-year of teaching, as well as their perceptions regarding the preparation they received. While the five first-year teachers felt prepared to begin their first year of teaching, by the middle and end of the school year, they identified areas in which they needed more preparation in order to feel more confident and successful during their first year. They all identified their student teaching experiences as the best preparation for their first year as they had opportunities to observe, practice, implement lessons and training, and receive coaching and mentoring from their cooperating teacher throughout the school year. As noted in the literature, these experiences during student teaching positively impact the effectiveness and quality of preparation for the first year of teaching (Coggshall et al., 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2014b; Good, 2014).

However, it is important to note that the schools where the first-year teachers completed their student teaching impacted their degree of preparation. For Nicole, the Montessori student teaching experience did not easily transfer to her first-year because the population of students and the style, demands, and expectations of her school were drastically different from the school where she student taught. She did not have the training she needed for instructing and meeting the needs of a more diverse population of students, and therefore, felt that she had not received relevant or realistic training. For

Jackie, who student taught in a personalized learning classroom, the strategies and lessons she learned were easier to transfer to her current situation because the population of students was similar. However, she did not have the experience of working with curriculum or learning the expectations of a traditional classroom which she had to learn on her own as she navigated through her first year of teaching.

Teacher preparation programs are designed to prepare teachers to go into any school and be a high-quality teacher. This requires that the classroom experience is realistic and transferrable so that the teachers graduating from the program are ready to enter a variety of schools and have the tools they need for success. As Darling-Hammond (2014b) stated, the most effective student teaching experience provides student teachers with the opportunity to put theory into practice and meet the needs of a diverse population of students. Ensuring that the schools in which student teachers are placed reflect the diverse population of students and provide student teachers with opportunities to implement strategies with children of all abilities will better prepare them for their first-year of teaching.

The diverse needs of students was also a theme as first-year teachers discussed the areas where their preparation was lacking. Meeting the needs of diverse students was also the most noted area of growth, as indicated on their annual teacher evaluations. Overall, the first-year teachers did not feel as though they had enough preparation for instructing and providing effective interventions for their students with diverse needs, which included students with disabilities, ELLs, and gifted and talented students. All five of the first-year teachers were teaching in diverse schools with a myriad of needs, and their identified areas of need were reflective of the schools where they were teaching. In order

to be more prepared, they needed more specific training for meeting the needs of all children, as opposed to only learning general strategies. As Greenberg et al. (2013) stated, classrooms today reflect the ever-increasing ethnic and socioeconomic student diversity of the United States, as well as diverse learning needs, and first-year teachers are not provided with enough training and preparation for meeting these needs. By including more specific coursework that is reflective of the diverse classrooms of today, as well as ensuring that student teachers are placed in classrooms that also reflect this diversity, first-year teachers will have more specific preparation and skills as they begin their careers.

While there were areas of need, the first-year teachers in this case study went above and beyond the requirements of their teacher preparation programs as well as their first-year school district expectations in order to receive more training and preparation. By seeking out trainings and the advice and support of other teachers, the first-year teachers ensured that they were getting more support in their areas of need. By the end of the year, the first-year teachers identified the extra trainings and support of their colleagues as helping to fill the gaps in their preparation. Due to their commitment to professional development and ongoing learning, they felt more prepared throughout the first year.

Another component of the CAEP policy is that programs must demonstrate that their graduates are effectively implementing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that they learned in their teacher preparation programs in their classrooms. This component is also reflected in the research question of this case study: what evidence of effective teaching do first-year teachers display in their classrooms? The five first-year teachers all

demonstrated evidence of effective teaching in their classrooms as captured by the observations and their annual teacher evaluations. Specifically, they demonstrated their knowledge of content and curriculum, integration of technology, facilitation of a safe, respectful learning environment, and positive relationships with students.

As part of their teacher preparation program, they had all learned the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards and had been observed using the standards in all of their formal observations during their student teaching experiences. Since all public schools in the state are required to use the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards for their annual teacher evaluations, the first-year teachers felt well prepared for how the state and their schools identified high-quality teaching. This connection between their preparation and practice was important in their confidence for demonstrating these qualities in their classrooms. Their exposure to the standards helped them identify their own strengths in the classroom as well; all five first-year teachers believed that building positive relationships with their students, specifically Colorado Teacher Quality Standard II, was their greatest strength.

Despite their familiarity with the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards, at mid-year they all demonstrated confusion regarding their own annual teacher evaluations and how assessments would be used to determine if they had positively impacted student growth. Once they experienced the process by the end of the year, they were no longer apprehensive; however, they had not received clear information regarding how they would be evaluated until late into their first year of teaching. Similarly, Brown, Bay-Borelli, and Scott (2015) found that new teachers are often unaware and have not received enough training regarding new teacher evaluation policies and how these

policies and expectations will directly impact them. While teacher preparation programs could include more information regarding policies that will impact them as they go into the teaching field, it is also the responsibility of school districts and administrators to provide specific information and training regarding evaluations and assessments for their new teachers. Having this information earlier in the school year would have helped the first-year teachers feel more prepared to meet the expectations of their evaluations.

Despite their initial apprehension regarding their annual teacher evaluations and how student growth would be calculated, all five first-year teachers were rated as effective based on the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards rubric and the assessments used to demonstrate student growth. When asked to identify their area of greatest success during their first year, they all stated that watching their students grow and knowing they had a direct impact on their learning was their biggest accomplishment. Not only did they feel successful due to the growth captured on their annual teacher evaluations, they also felt successful when they observed their students having “a-ha” moments and witnessed individual and collective growth in academics and behavior throughout the year.

By the end of the year, all five first-year teachers were satisfied with their decision to become teachers. Some noted that they did not know if they would always teach in an elementary school; however, their overall experience of building relationships with their students, impacting student growth, and growing as an educator made their first year worth the challenges.

CHAPTER 5

PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

In order to provide another layer of insight into the preparation of first-year teachers, the perspectives of the principals of each first-year teacher in this multiple case study were gathered through interviews at the end of the school year, after the first-year teachers had completed their first year. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. Ms. Kay was the principal at Marian's school, Ms. Baker was at Nicole's school, Ms. Peters was at Esther's school, and Ms. Waldorf was the principal of Jackie and Susan. The principals provided feedback regarding general trends they had noticed in first-year teachers, specifically regarding their strengths and needs, as well as specific feedback regarding the effectiveness of the first-year teachers included in this study. They provided suggestions for change for teacher preparation programs, as well as their level of satisfaction with the training that the five first-year teachers in this multiple case study received. Following the cycles of coding, there were 42 final codes that were captured in four major themes. See Table 3 for a summary of the themes.

Table 3

Principals: The Major Themes, Exemplar Quotes, and Data Triangulation

Major Theme	Exemplar Quotes	Triangulation
Strengths of first-year teachers	"Above all else [first-year teachers] have the desire to do it well."	Interviews; Annual teacher evaluations
Needs of first-year teachers	"There isn't a magic wand . . . depending on why [the student's] behavior is what it is and what things motivate that child. What I do for this child may have to be very different than what I do for other children."	Interviews; Annual teacher evaluations

Satisfaction with the teacher preparation program	“I was very impressed actually with how much they were ready [for their first year], and I wouldn’t have hired them if I didn’t think they were ready.”	Interviews; Annual teacher evaluations
Hiring practices	“What I’m looking for more than anything else is somebody who is open to suggestions, somebody who is reflective on their own without me suggesting it.”	Interviews

Theme 1: Strengths of First-Year Teachers

Passion for Teaching

All of the principals identified strengths that they consistently noticed in first-year teachers and considered to be a trend among the first-year teachers they had worked with throughout their careers. One strength that they all observed was the excitement and passion for teaching that first-year teachers exhibited. According to Ms. Waldorf, “they’re fresh, they’re excited, they’re ready to go.” Along with a passion for teaching, first-year teachers were often optimistic and coachable. For Ms. Baker, one of the most positive experiences of working with first-year teachers was that “they’re very eager to learn, very coachable and positive.” Ms. Kay noticed that “above all else [first-year teachers] have the desire to do it well.” In addition, qualities such as passion, openness to feedback, asking for help, and the knowledge that there is still much to learn about teaching were strengths that Ms. Kay valued in first-year teachers. Ms. Peters reiterated that she was most impressed with first-year teachers who had a desire to learn and worked to meet the needs of their students to the best of their abilities.

Implementing Technology

Familiarity with and use of technology in the classroom was a strength of first-year teachers that was noted by all of the principals as well. According to Ms. Peters, “I watch these first-year teachers and they are using all of these technology devices, and I’m like, oh my gosh, I’m out of the loop!” Similarly, Ms. Baker remarked that many first-year teachers come in “very strong in technology, and often times can take a leadership role [in the school] right away with technology.” According to Ms. Baker, first-year teachers have had more recent training and experience with how to implement technology in the classroom and they are able to share their skills and ideas with veteran teachers. Ms. Kay and Ms. Waldorf also noticed that their first-year teachers had many ideas for how to integrate technology thoughtfully and successfully into their lessons. The ability to implement and utilize technology in order to enhance student learning is a description of high-quality teaching under the Colorado Teacher Quality Standard III: Facilitating Learning, and the principals all valued the use of technology as an important and effective teaching strategy demonstrated by first-year teachers.

Content Knowledge

The principals also felt that first-year teachers they had worked with in recent years came in with a strong knowledge of content and lesson planning. While they all acknowledged that first-year teachers still had a lot to learn, they noted that first-year teachers were prepared to create lessons that demonstrated a solid foundation in the content they were teaching and was directly connected to academic standards. Ms. Waldorf was impressed that the first-year teachers she worked with in the past two years were able to follow and implement the academic standards. “They were able to build their lesson plans on [the standards], they didn’t just go to the next page in the book and

teach it. There were always prepared for connecting content [to standards].” Ms. Baker also noted that first-year teachers were graduating from teacher preparation programs with a strong academic background and skills for teaching content.

Colorado Teacher Quality Standard I specifically describes the ability of teachers to demonstrate their expertise in all of the content areas that they teach, which for elementary teachers includes literacy, mathematics, social studies, and science, and to be able to connect the Colorado Academic Standards with their instruction as elements of high-quality teaching. For the principals in this case study, first-year teachers they had worked with in recent years demonstrated effective teaching in this area. The principals were all satisfied with first-year teachers’ level of knowledge and ability to connect the standards to their instruction.

Natural Teaching Ability

The principals provided general trends that they had observed in first-year teachers throughout their careers; however, they also gave specific examples of the strengths that the five first-year teachers in this multiple case study exhibited during their first year. Ms. Kay noted that Marian reflected all of the strengths that she described as general trends of first-year teachers, especially the desire to do her best for her students. In her words, Marian “has a really nice balance of passion and confidence and knowing that there's so much for her to learn. She asks for help, she asks for feedback, she's appreciative of any feedback, and then she incorporates it.”

Ms. Waldorf said that both Jackie and Susan came into the school year with a strong background in lesson design and connecting the standards to the content. She also believed that they both had a natural ability to teach and possessed the other strengths

that she had noticed as general trends: knowledge and implementation of technology, a passion for teaching, and an eagerness to learn and improve their skills.

Nicole, according to Ms. Baker, built strong relationships with the staff, students, and parents at the school. She was also willing to ask for help whenever she needed it, from her teammates, other staff, and the principal. Nicole asked for support in dealing with difficult parents, meeting the diverse needs of her students, and brainstorming new ways to use curriculum. Ms. Baker also referred to Nicole's "natural ability" as a teacher. She noted that even though Nicole "worked really hard to make sure she knew the curriculum," she possessed a natural teaching ability that Ms. Baker believed made her a stronger educator overall.

Ms. Peters also referred to the "natural ability" that Esther possessed, which she believed made her a strong and effective teacher. She praised Esther for her ability to connect with her students, communicate openly with parents, and create a positive, nurturing learning environment for her students. In Ms. Peters' words, Esther

naturally does a great job organizing the classroom and setting expectations in a nurturing and caring way . . . overall, her organization and desire to learn and making sure she's doing the best that she possibly can for her kids is what I've been most impressed with.

All of the principals believed that the five first-year teachers in this multiple case study possessed a natural ability for teaching. While they articulated specific strengths that made the first-year teachers effective, which were also documented in their annual teacher evaluations, they all attributed their overall success and strengths as teachers to their natural abilities as well.

Theme 2: Needs of First-Year Teachers

Communicating with Parents

While the four principals identified strengths of first-year teachers, there were many needs that they noticed as well. The needs that they identified led to their suggestions for change and areas of training that they felt teacher preparation programs needed to better provide for first-year teachers. The one area that all four principals said first-year teachers needed more training on was how to communicate with parents. Ms. Kay identified communicating with parents as the area first-teachers struggled with the most, and as she said, “I think that more instruction on difficult conversations would be helpful . . . understanding how hard those conversations are for the other person on the other side of the table would go a long way for new teachers.”

Similarly, Ms. Peters said that “those difficult conversations have to happen for the best interest of the child,” and in her experience, many first-year teachers relied too heavily on technology such as e-mail, which could easily be misinterpreted, instead of talking to parents face-to-face or over the phone. In her words, “I’ve been coaching a lot of first-year teachers on, don’t send a two-page e-mail, just pick up the phone and say, ‘is there a time when we can meet, I have some things I’d like to discuss.’” Ms. Waldorf also noted that “difficult conversations, fierce conversations, that would be really good for [first-year teachers] to be trained on . . . you have to know the tricks, documenting everything, making sure you have open communication.”

Ms. Baker said that knowing how to effectively communicate with parents without upsetting them was a skill and strategy that she wanted first-year teachers to know. They all noted that learning how to communicate and “growing thicker skin,” in

Ms. Waldorf's words, came with time and experience as well. However, if first-year teachers had more specific training on the strategies for effectively communicating with parents, especially in difficult circumstances, they believed that the teachers would be more successful in their first year.

Classroom Management

Classroom management was an area of struggle that the principals had noticed as a trend in first-year teachers. Even though teacher preparation programs provide training in classroom management, more specific training on strategies and skills for working with diverse students was a need that the principals all identified. Ms. Kay noticed the need for more training specifically with “the more intensive kids that require a firmer hand and more consistent follow-through, the strength that’s required for those kids to understand that you mean what you say and you’re going to follow through on what you say.” Ms. Peters also said that understanding “the purpose behind the consequence, what is best for the students, it’s not punitive, it’s a learning process,” was an area that first-year teachers needed to understand. Similarly, Ms. Baker noticed first-year teachers were often frustrated when the same classroom management strategies did not work for all students. In her words,

There isn't a magic wand . . . depending on why [the student's] behavior is what it is and what things motivate that child. What I do for this child may have to be very different than what I do for other children.

However, the principals also recognized that classroom management and specific strategies and skills for diverse students could be learned through experience, coaching, and professional development. Ms. Waldorf believed that “by year three, they’ll know

really how they'll continue with their classroom management," but she could tell by the end of their first-year of teaching whether or not they would be successful. If she saw signs of growth and openness to feedback during their first-year of teaching, she was more confident in their ability to develop those management skills. Ms. Baker also said that "make or break is classroom management, so if they are struggling with that, and not willing to be coached on it, that can be really difficult." For the principals, the openness to feedback that they noted as a strength of first-year teachers was important in developing their classroom management skills as well.

Differentiation

All of the principals believed that first-year teachers started their first year with the ability to positively impact student growth overall; however, in order to be more successful, they needed more training on how to differentiate instruction to meet the diverse needs of all students. The demographics of the schools where they worked impacted the specific areas of need that they all identified. Ms. Baker, whose school was Title I, and heavily impacted by students with disabilities and high-rates of poverty, believed that first-year teachers needed more support and training in how to teach and connect with students with social-emotional disabilities. As she said,

Especially working in a school with higher poverty levels, teachers need to come with skills for dealing with kids who are coming from trauma, and have more of a social-emotional disability . . . knowing just like somebody who is blind has a disability, these students often have a disability, you just can't see it.

She believed that first-year teachers needed more specific training for dealing with the multiple needs of students, especially those with mental health issues that needed

different support than the rest of the class. She reiterated what she said when discussing classroom management: not every student needs the same strategies or support, and understanding the background and specific needs of a student is critical.

Ms. Kay, who was the principal at a more affluent school, said first-year teachers needed more training in “how to take a lesson and bump out both ends, upper and lower,” specifically, how to meet the needs of students who were above and below grade level. At her school, the biggest challenge that she noticed was the teachers’ ability to meet the needs of the highest achieving students because it required knowing the academic standards at the level where the student was performing, not just the grade level they were teaching. As an example, “having complex texts that’s developmentally appropriate for a fourth grader to practice and learn tenth grade skills.” In addition, she found that first-year teachers needed to push their students to think critically and not “do all the work for them.” Specifically, first-year teachers needed to implement better questioning strategies so that their students developed critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Ms. Waldorf also identified the use of questioning as an area of need and believed that first-year teachers needed more training in specific ways to push their students to think at a higher level. She specifically referred to the importance of teachers using Webb’s (1997) Depth of Knowledge as a framework and guide for developing questions that promote higher levels of thinking. Webb’s Depth of Knowledge identifies the level of thinking and understanding that is required in order to complete specific learning tasks or assessments. There are four depth of knowledge levels that grow in complexity from basic recall to extended thinking that requires students to analyze, evaluate, and create. Ms. Waldorf believed that first-year teachers needed more training in how to successfully

implement Depth of Knowledge strategies and questions in the classroom in order to teach the “high, middle, and low students all at the same time.” The need for more effective strategies in differentiation was reflected in the first-year teachers’ annual evaluations as well. It was a noted area of growth for each of the five first-year teachers.

Theme 3: Satisfaction with Preparation and Performance

Satisfaction with the Teacher Preparation Program

When asked about their satisfaction with the specific teacher preparation program that the five first-year teachers in this case study attended, the principals all expressed their satisfaction. While they had all identified areas of need described above, as well as suggestions for change or more training with regards to their preparation, they still believed that the first-year teachers were prepared to begin their first-year of teaching. Similar to the first-year teachers, they identified the full-year of student teaching as a benefit to the teacher preparation program.

When first-year teachers apply for a job at her school, Ms. Kay pays attention to which teacher preparation program they attended, and if they are from the teacher preparation program in this case study, “that matters to me . . . I know that they had a rigorous student teaching year.” Similarly, Ms. Waldorf said she can tell a difference in the first-year teachers and the preparation that they received. Specifically, when discussing Jackie and Susan, both first-year teachers at her school, she said, “I was very impressed actually with how much they were ready [for their first year], and I wouldn’t have hired them if I didn’t think they were ready.” In her experience, the teacher preparation program in this case study produced more prepared teachers than other programs.

Even though it was her first year as a principal, Ms. Peters said that “you can definitely tell a difference [in first-year teachers], the experience that they were exposed to in their program.” When speaking about Esther, she said, “I am beyond thrilled [with her preparation] because there are so many pieces in place that you would never know that she is a first-year teacher.”

Ms. Baker had four first-year teachers at her school during the 2015-2016 school year from three different teacher preparation programs. It was evident to her that the first-year teachers from two of the programs, including Nicole and the program in this case study, had stronger content knowledge, skills, and a range of experiences in classrooms than the teacher from the third teacher preparation program. The first-year teacher from the third program “just doesn’t have all the experiences that she needed to have, I feel like, which has made it more difficult for her.”

Satisfaction with Performance

Not only were the principals satisfied with the experiences that the teacher preparation program in this case study provided for the first-year teachers, they were also satisfied with the performance of the first-year teachers during the year, as well as the impact the first-year teachers made on student growth. The four principals completed the annual teacher evaluations on the five first-year teachers, and each first-year teacher was rated effective and significantly impacted the growth of their students. Depending on the school and district requirements, each teacher’s evaluation used different assessments to determine the growth of students, including standardized assessments and classroom learning objectives. Regardless of assessments included in the evaluation, the students of all five first-year teachers demonstrated positive growth during the year. While Susan’s

students did not demonstrate as much growth in grammar on the writing assessment that was included in her evaluation, they did grow overall in their ability to develop stronger content in their writing. Grammar was the only part of the assessment that did not show as much growth as expected, but it did not negatively impact Susan's demonstration of student growth on her evaluation.

The principals also identified areas of high-quality teaching as determined by the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards on each teacher's evaluation. As described in Chapter Four, the principals rated the first-year teachers as effective based on their ability to implement content and curriculum, create safe and respectful learning environments, engage in high-quality planning and instruction, reflect on their teaching, and demonstrate leadership in the schools. The areas of strength that were documented on each teacher's annual evaluation was reflective of the strengths that the principals identified for each first-year teacher as well. Table 4 provides a description of the strengths captured in the evaluations and interviews, as well as the demonstration of student growth that made up 50% of each teacher's evaluation.

Table 4

Evidence of Effective Teaching and Student Growth

First-Year Teacher	Evidence of Effective Teaching	Measures of Student Growth
Esther	Building positive, nurturing relationships with students; Facilitating learning for all students; Implementing technology in the classroom; Communicating high expectations for students; Connecting standards to content; Reflecting on practice	Standardized assessments in reading and math: All students demonstrated growth.

Nicole	Building strong relationships with students; Seeking professional development; Collaboration and leadership; Connecting standards to content; Expertise in technology; Reflecting on practice	Standardized assessments in math and reading: Students demonstrated “expected” growth.
Marian	Passion for teaching; Openness to feedback; Connecting standards to content; Building positive relationships with students; Facilitating learning; Reflecting on practice	Reading and Math Assessments: Students demonstrated “more than expected” growth on both grade-level assessments; Assessment of higher-order thinking: Students met end of the year goal.
Jackie	Implementing technology in the classroom; Connecting standards to content; Delivering effective instruction; Reflecting on practice; Demonstrating teamwork and collaboration	Writing Assessment: Students demonstrated “expected” growth. Math Assessment: Students demonstrated “more than expected” growth.
Susan	Connecting with students; Implementing technology in the classroom; Connecting standards to content; Reflecting on practice; Demonstrating teamwork and collaboration	Math Assessment: Students demonstrated “more than expected” growth. Writing Assessment: Student demonstrated “less than expected” growth in grammar, but “expected” growth in content.

Theme 4: Hiring Practices

Reflective Attitudes

While the principals noticed a difference in the preparation programs that first-year teachers attended, there were specific skills and qualities that they were looking for when hiring new teachers for their schools. These qualities were more important to them than the specific training or preparation that teachers had received. For Ms. Kay, “what

I'm looking for more than anything else is somebody who is open to suggestions, somebody who is reflective on their own without me suggesting it." While preparation mattered to Ms. Kay, having a humble, reflective attitude made Ms. Kay more likely to hire a first-year teacher. She stated that out of five teachers, she might find two that possessed this attitude. She noticed from her first interactions with Marian that she was very coachable, reflective, and open to suggestions, which made her confident in hiring her as a first-year teacher.

Similarly, Ms. Baker looked for reflective, coachable teachers when hiring new teachers. In addition, she wanted teachers who truly loved children and built positive relationships with them. She saw this as a natural ability reflected in many teachers, which she believed made them stronger and more effective. Specifically, she stated that Nicole exhibited this strong, natural ability as a teacher and that it had come across clearly in her interview. Ms. Peters also wanted teachers who could develop "solid relationships, trusting relationships where kids feel comfortable to make a mistake and learn from it." She referred to the natural ability that effective teachers possess in connecting with and building strong relationships with students. She also noted that Esther possessed this natural ability and it was reflected throughout her instruction.

Experienced Teachers

Interestingly, Ms. Waldorf stated that she does not often hire first-year teachers. She hired Susan because she had been a student teacher at her school, therefore Ms. Waldorf had observed her many times during her student teaching experience and knew that she was capable and effective. Jackie did not student teach at her school; however, she came with a strong recommendation from the principal at the school where she

student taught. Ms. Waldorf knew the principal well and fully trusted his recommendation. Unless she had first-hand experience with a first-year teacher or trusted the recommendation from a principal, she tended to hire teachers with more experience. The needs of her school population played heavily into her decision not to hire new teachers, as it was Title I and highly impacted with students of diverse needs and abilities. Experienced teachers did not need as much coaching, training, or support, and in her words, “why wouldn’t you want that?”

Discussion

The CAEP policy requires that teacher preparation programs provide evidence that the employers of first-year teachers are satisfied with the preparation they received. To discover the level of satisfaction of the principals in this multiple case study, the research questions focus on how prepared the first-year teachers were throughout their first year, their effectiveness in the classroom, their areas of strength and growth, as well as the principals’ perceptions on the training and preparation the first-year teachers received. All four of the principals stated that they were satisfied with the preparation that the first-year teachers received and that each first-year teacher in this case study demonstrated effective teaching strategies in their classrooms. They noted individual strengths of each first-year teacher, as well as the benefits of working with first-year teachers that they had experienced in their years of leadership.

The principals’ satisfaction with the content knowledge that the first-year teachers from the teacher preparation program demonstrated in their classrooms was attributed to their preparation. In addition, the first-year teachers’ ability to connect the content to academic standards was also a positive reflection of the training and preparation they had

received. The principals' satisfaction with the first-year teachers' knowledge of content and standards differs from previous research which stated that first-year teachers have not had adequate training in the content areas or standards (Chelsey & Jordan, 2012; Greenberg et al., 2013; Pae, Freeman, & Wash, 2014). However, for the principals, this was not representative of the teacher preparation program or the first-year teachers in this case study. In addition, the principals all believed that first-year teachers were strong in their knowledge of technology and how to effectively implement it in their classrooms. This also differs from the research which stated that first-year teachers have not received enough training in how to use technology (Alexander & Kjellstrom, 2014; McKinney et al., 1999). For the principals in this case study, the first-year teachers were not only well-trained in technology, but they were also able to provide guidance and support for other teachers and staff in their schools with how to use technology effectively.

The four principals in this case study also provided another layer of insight into the preparation and needs of first-year teachers. For the principals, the teacher preparation programs from which first-year teachers graduated made a difference in their hiring choices. Due to their experiences working with student teachers and first-year teachers from different teacher preparation programs, the principals were able to identify the programs that they believed best prepared first-year teachers. Ms. Waldorf and Ms. Kay had had student teachers in their schools from different teacher preparation programs across the state of Colorado, which provided them with more insight into the expectations and structure of certain programs. This exposure and experience with a variety of preparation programs led them to identify which student teachers were more prepared and ready for the classroom.

In addition, all four of the principals had hired first-year teachers from different preparation programs and built opinions of strong programs due to the effectiveness and success of the first-year teachers in their schools. Specifically for the program in this case study, the principals all noted that the year-long student teaching experience was a beneficial component that impacted their perspective and consideration in hiring first-year teachers. They knew that first-year teachers coming from this program had been in an elementary school from the first day with students until the end of the school year. Therefore, while the first-year teachers were student teaching, they had had a myriad of experiences and coaching opportunities throughout the school year, and they had been able to observe and participate in setting up a classroom, setting routines and expectations, instructing, assessing, and managing a classroom. The hands-on experience in the classroom was a valuable component to the teacher preparation program, as noted by both the principals and the first-year teachers.

While the principals all believed that the first-year teachers in this case study were prepared for their first-year, there were areas where they needed more preparation and support. The three main areas that they identified were communicating with parents, classroom management, and differentiation, which were all areas that the first-year teachers identified as needs in their preparation as well. While all of these areas were identified as needs, the principals also stated that they knew that first-year teachers would learn from experiences and professional development during their first years of teaching. They believed that more training in areas such as conducting difficult conversations and effectively managing a classroom would be beneficial for first-year teachers; however, they believed that those were areas in which first-year teachers would learn and grow

over time. As Ms. Waldorf stated, all first-year teachers need experience and time in order to grow in their skills, strategies, and effective practices.

The principals all expected that first-year teachers would come into the classroom with needs due to their lack of experience. Even though the full-year of student teaching provided the first-year teachers in this case study with more opportunities and experience, they were not fully in charge of the classroom during that year. They always had the support and coaching of their cooperating teachers and university supervisors; therefore, it was not a surprise to the principals that the first-year teachers had not honed all of their classroom management strategies or engaged in difficult conversations with parents. For the principals, even though needs and areas of growth were present, it was most important that the first-year teachers came in with coachable attitudes and an eagerness to learn new skills and strategies. By having those positive attitudes in place, they believed the first-year teachers were more successful because they were willing to learn, ask questions, seek out support, and develop their skills.

However, there were specific areas that the principals wanted first-year teachers to have more training in during their teacher preparation program and prior to entering the classroom. The principals wanted first-year teachers to have more training in how to differentiate instruction and meet the needs of all students. This theme is reflective of the literature as well as the insight from the first-year teachers in this case study (Cogshall et al., 2012; National Council on Teacher Quality, 2013). However, the principals included another layer to differentiation. They did not refer to differentiation solely as the ability to teach students with diverse needs, but also the ability to manage behaviors and understand students' backgrounds so that all students could be successful in the

classroom. Differentiation was related to the ways in which teachers adapted their classroom management strategies, expectations, and instruction to meet the needs of all of their students. Like the first-year teachers, the principals indicated areas of need that were reflective of the demographics of their schools. For example, Ms. Baker saw a greater need for first-year teachers to be trained in teaching students with social-emotional disabilities and understanding the needs of students coming from poverty since her school population was impacted by these needs.

Even though the preparation of first-year teachers was important to each principal, they were most interested in the attitudes and behaviors of first-year teachers. While they believed there were areas of need and growth for all first-year teachers, the principals were most open to working with first-year teachers if they were coachable, eager to learn, and open to feedback. These characteristics made the most impact on their principals' views of first-year teachers and their potential for success. They believed that specific skills and strategies in such areas as classroom management and differentiation could be taught, but positive attitudes and openness to feedback were the most important characteristics to have in place when starting a teaching career. The principals believed that the five first-year teachers in this case study possessed these desirable attitudes which made them more successful during their first year.

In addition, having a natural teaching ability was an important trait that the principals looked for when hiring new teachers, and it was also a noted strength the principals identified in the five first-year teachers. This natural ability was reflected in the ways that the teachers connected with their students, built positive relationships within the school, delivered content, and set expectations. Each principal believed they could

identify the natural ability they desired by observing teachers in action. Ms. Barnes stated that she could tell Nicole had a natural ability by the way she answered questions and presented herself when she interviewed for the teaching position at her school.

It is important to note that the natural ability and positive attitude that the principals all considered most important in first-year teachers is not captured in the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards. The standards include specific strategies, skills, and practices that, according to the state of Colorado, define a high-quality teacher. However, for these principals, the skills and strategies described in the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards were only part of the definition of a high-quality teacher. The willingness to learn, the passion for teaching, and the natural ability to connect with children were vital as well.

These are not necessarily characteristics that can be taught in a teacher preparation program or captured in an annual evaluation. Perhaps it can be assumed, as the principals in this case study believed, that teachers with these natural abilities and characteristics will be more successful and demonstrate the effective qualities that are included in the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards due to their openness, eagerness, and natural talents. However, it poses an important question: can natural abilities be measured? *Are* teachers who possess these abilities and characteristics more successful in the classroom? Are they more likely to exhibit the elements of effective teaching that are described by the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards or other measures of high-quality teaching?

It is also important to note that while Ms. Waldorf looks for the desired characteristics and natural ability that the principals described when hiring new teachers,

she is not prone to hiring first-year teachers. She places more value on the experience that veteran teachers bring with them because they “already know what to do.” Considering the diverse needs of the students at her school, she believed that veteran teachers did not need as much coaching and support as first-year teachers in order to meet the needs of the students. She made exceptions in hiring first-year teachers only when she had personally observed the first-year teacher when she was student teaching at her school, or when she had received a strong recommendation from another principal she knew and trusted. This is important for teacher preparation programs and student teachers to consider: the exposure and experiences that student teachers have while they are student teaching may have a direct impact on their future job opportunities. Throughout their student teaching experience, student teachers have the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and effectiveness for the principals at their schools. This may influence a principal’s decision to hire them or recommend them to a colleague.

CHAPTER 6

UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR FINDINGS

The four university supervisors, Dr. Snap, Mr. Carson, Ms. Taylor, and Ms. Lillian, all taught and supervised in the same teacher preparation program that the first-year teachers in this multiple case study attended. As university supervisors, they served as liaisons between the teacher preparation program and the elementary schools where the student teachers were placed during their professional year, and they observed, coached, taught, and mentored several student teachers each school year. The supervisors provided their perceptions of the preparation and training provided by the teacher preparation program. Within each 30 minute interview, they provided insight into general trends of preparation and strengths of the graduates who completed the program. Following the cycles of analysis, there were 50 codes that fit into five themes. See Table 5 for a review of the major themes.

Table 5

University Supervisors: The Major Themes, Exemplar Quotes, and Data Triangulation

Major Theme	Exemplar Quotes	Triangulation
Solid foundation in preparation	“We give them that foundation to be successful in the classroom.”	Interviews
Areas of need in preparation	“It’s a challenge to not just base [differentiation] on who is in special ed or who is an English Language Learner, because even with that, ELLs have different needs, special ed students have different needs . . . it’s something [the program] needs to continue working on.”	Interviews; Annual teacher evaluations

Areas of strength	“Building community, connecting with students, making the students feel comfortable in their classrooms, I think that is a strength.”	Interviews; Annual teacher evaluations
Biggest challenges for new teachers	“Teaching is a very difficult profession, very demanding, if you want to do the best you can.”	Interviews
Admission into teacher preparation programs	“You can’t necessarily tell based on interviews and performance in core classes and so on who is going to be successful and who isn’t going to be successful [as a teacher]. I’m not sure we know how to make that selection.”	Interviews

Theme 1: Solid Foundation in Preparation

Foundation

The four university supervisors believed that the teacher preparation program provided new teachers with a solid foundation in order to be an effective teacher. The coursework and time in classrooms required by the program provided the first-year teachers with the skills and strategies they needed to be successful; however, they all acknowledged that there is no teacher preparation program that can fully prepare a new teacher. In Mr. Carson’s words,

There’s no teacher training going around that’s going to prepare you to do everything, but that’s what makes teaching fun . . . I think that we provide you a base to succeed when you’re challenged, but that we could go through every challenge that someone is going to face in a 30-some-year teaching career in a training [program], it’s not going to happen.

For Mr. Carson, the preparation that the first-year teachers received was sufficient to successfully begin a career in teaching; however, there was still more that new teachers

would learn through their experiences and time in their own classrooms. As he stated, there are many challenges that arise within a teaching career, and no program could address every challenge that each teacher could possibly face. However, he believed that “we give them that foundation to be successful in the classroom.”

Ms. Taylor believed that part of the foundation that the first-year teachers received in the program were the opportunities to reflect on their instruction, identify their areas of need, and use the strategies and tools provided by the program to improve as teachers. As she said, “I think that the way [we] prepare them is by giving them tools so when things don’t go as anticipated, how do you reflect on that?” To be successful she believed that first-year teachers needed to have:

awareness of what an effective class, what an effective lesson looks like . . . if you have that awareness of what the effective classroom looks like, when I reflect and I see I’m not there, how do I get there? What changes do I need to make?

In her experience, the preparation program provided student teachers with the ability to design effective lessons, identify effective instruction, and know where to go for help when their own instruction did not line up with expectations. The program provided the foundation that first-year teachers needed to reflect and grow as educators.

Ms. Lillian also believed that there was no way to fully prepare a new teacher; however, in her experiences as a university supervisor and a principal, she believed that the graduates from the teacher preparation program in this case study “are better prepared than any group that I have seen.” She recounted working with a student teacher who had transferred from a different teacher preparation program, and the student teacher “was positively overwhelmed with the expectations of this program. Which told me that the

expectations of the program at her former university were not as rigorous as the ones we have.”

However, she also compared the first year of teaching as “their fifth year of college” due to the challenges and learning curve that comes with being in a new school, having total control of all classroom responsibilities, and learning all of the details that go into teaching. As she said, teachers have to “see the whole picture and all the way down to the individual child, and they have to have knowledge of both of those aspects of education.” It takes time and experience for new teachers to learn how to successfully handle all of the moving pieces and expectations that come with teaching. While the foundation was laid by the teacher preparation program, she believed:

it is a principal's duty and responsibility to be there as a supervisor for a first-year teacher. . . and a principal is very, very busy but that has to be at the top of their list because they've got this beautiful thing in their hands, this intelligent, eager, young person that is passionate about our field, and we need to do everything we can because we know the statistics of who quits in a five-year period.

Similarly, Mr. Carson said that first-year teachers need a lot of support as they begin their career, and it is important that the principal, their teammates, and other colleagues at the school where they are hired are there to help them through the challenges of their first year. While a solid foundation in teacher preparation was of utmost importance, the support that first-year teachers received once they started their teaching career was just as important in their overall success and tenure as teachers.

Areas of Best Preparation

The four university supervisors identified the areas in the preparation program that best prepared first-year teachers and provided them with a solid foundation to begin their teaching career. For all four supervisors, it was the full-year of student teaching that provided new teachers with the best preparation. As Ms. Taylor said, “having that amount of experience in a school and seeing the ebbs and flows of a school year is vital.”

During the full year of student teaching, the university supervisors all identified the amount of supervision and feedback that the student teachers received as a strength. Throughout the student teaching experience, each student teacher was formally observed three times each quarter: once by their cooperating teacher, once by the university supervisor, and once by a site coordinator, who was another faculty member at the elementary school where they were student teaching. Each elementary school had the autonomy to decide who would fulfill that role, and it could be a principal, assistant principal, a learning coach, or other faculty member. As Dr. Snap said,

They get supervision from the university supervisors, the classroom teachers, they're observed by the site coordinator ... they get a lot of feedback ... and they have to reflect on that feedback . . . The students who get the most out of the program really reflect on those observations and they change.

Similarly, Ms. Lillian identified the amount of supervision and support as a crucial part of the student teaching experience which helps each student teacher learn and grow throughout the year. In her words,

all three of those professionals [the cooperating teacher, supervisor, and site coordinator] are working with this student who is wanting to become a teacher, so

they get strengths from all of them, and they get different points of view . . . they can try on different approaches and different philosophies, if you will, and see what works best for them.

The amount of support that each student teacher in the program received was identified as an overall strength. Within the full year of student teaching, the student teachers had the opportunity to implement content, curriculum, new ideas, classroom management strategies, and put theory into practice. As Mr. Carson stated, the time in the classroom and supervision by the classroom teacher, supervisor, and other faculty also provided student teachers the opportunity to implement these new strategies and ideas and “fail, but they are supported in failure, and they’re supported in success.” They had the opportunities to fail, succeed, and grow as a teacher over the course of the year. In Ms. Lillian’s words:

I saw them go from August with no understanding or little understanding of the demands of the classroom to being rather proficient for an emerging teacher, and I think that’s because we spend so much time in the classroom. That full year made a huge difference.

Knowledge of the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards

The student teachers in the teacher preparation program were all observed and evaluated using the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards; therefore, their knowledge and understanding of the standards upon graduation made them more prepared for the classroom in their first year. Dr. Snap believed that due to the comprehensive nature of the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards, the student teachers had been evaluated on many practices including “lesson preparation and classroom management and the content

of the lesson and whether or not the lesson are integrating and whether or not they are assessing.” Therefore, going into their first year of teaching, graduates knew what the high quality expectations for effective teaching looked like in every area described by the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards.

Mr. Carson described the amount of time and ways in which he broke down the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards for his student teachers in order for them to understand the expectations within each standard. He believed that the student teachers needed help with the “interpretation” of the standards in order to realize the practical implication of each standard. The time spent in the program breaking down the standards helped them to understand the strategies and expectations of effective teachers. He believed that “it’s good that we use what they are being evaluated on [in the field].” Similarly, Ms. Lillian appreciated that the standards were used to evaluate student teachers in the program because the first-year teachers were already experienced with and aware of the standards once they started teaching.

Theme 2: Areas of Need in Preparation

Differentiation

The supervisors identified differentiation as the area where student teachers needed more instruction and support in order to be successful in their first years of teaching. As Dr. Snap said,

it’s a challenge to not just base [differentiation] on who is in special ed or who is an English Language Learner, because even with that, ELLs have different needs, special ed students have different needs . . . it’s something [the program] needs to continue working on.

For the supervisors, identifying the individual needs of their students was critical for student teachers to do in order to differentiate instruction. As Ms. Lillian stated, “you have to see the students and you have to learn how to [differentiate]. Every child is different.” As she said, differentiation was not something that could easily be learned out of a textbook. It came with experience working with students and learning the skills and strategies required to meet a variety of diverse needs. As Dr. Snap said, “finding out about the students, what do they care about, what is their background, it’s really important.” By knowing who their students were and what they needed, first-year teachers would be more able to identify how to help them.

Mr. Carson believed that the student teachers in the program felt prepared to teach students “in the middle of the [bell] curve,” but they did not feel as prepared to teach students who were above or below grade level. Ms. Taylor saw this need as she observed her students teaching lessons they had prepared. “They’re really nervous to veer off [the lesson plan] and help those students that might be getting the concept quicker or might be struggling because it might not be in their lesson plan.” The student teachers that she worked with did not have the confidence to know how to meet those needs and adjust their teaching accordingly. Her suggestion was that practical strategies in differentiation needed to be taught in each of the content methods courses: “Weaving differentiation into [all classes]. What does it look like in social studies, what does it look like in math, in English?” By providing strategies and ideas for how to reach the needs of diverse students within each content area, as well as within classroom management, would provide first-year teachers with more concrete support in differentiating instruction.

Classroom Management

Dr. Snap and Ms. Lillian identified classroom management as an area of need in preparation; however, Mr. Carson and Ms. Taylor did not see as strong of a need in this area. The preparation program included a course in classroom management in which student teachers learned strategies and theories behind different management techniques. For Mr. Carson, this course provided student teachers with a solid foundation in skills to implement in the classroom. Even though the students had received coursework and training, Dr. Snap said,

classroom management looks really easy if you watch somebody who is really good at it. . . then [the student teachers] get in front of a class and they find out, oh, it's not so easy! They have to build their skills.

Even though the student teachers learned skills in their courses, they had a harder time implementing them effectively in the classrooms. Similarly, Ms. Lillian said that classroom management was an area where many of her students needed more coaching and support, and that she spent a lot of her time talking about effective classroom management with her student teachers. She believed they needed more strategies, techniques, and modeling in effective classroom management than the coursework provided.

Ms. Taylor attributed her student teachers' success in classroom management to the teachers at the elementary school where she supervised. The school district had strict expectations for the ways in which teachers managed and structured their classrooms, therefore, "those classrooms already are running very smooth and very tight." The student teachers had the opportunity to observe, model, and implement the techniques

used at the school with the support and guidance of their cooperating teachers. For Ms. Taylor, the experience of learning and implementing the strategies that the school mandated made her student teachers stronger in classroom management. Therefore, it was their practical experience in the classroom that provided them with the best preparation, not the classroom management coursework on its own.

Theme 3: Areas of Strength

Ethic of Care

The university supervisors identified strengths that the graduates from the teacher preparation program demonstrated that made them effective first-year teachers. One of strengths that the supervisors had observed throughout their years of experience was a passion for teaching and a love for children. Dr. Snap referred to this as “the ethic of care.” She said, “We can give them all the knowledge and techniques and all the strategies, but if they don’t care about kids, it doesn’t matter.” She identified that the best teachers were the ones who cared about their students, knew their backgrounds, needs, and strengths, and adjusted their instruction to meet those specific needs. In her experience, the student teachers who demonstrated care for children and built strong relationships with their students were the most successful in their careers. One of the reasons that she believed that they were more successful was that teachers who demonstrated an ethic of care were more eager to learn and open to feedback. Similarly, Ms. Lillian believed that the graduates who exhibited a willingness to learn, enthusiasm for teaching, and a genuine love for children were the most successful.

The ethic of care, as described by the supervisors, is reflected in the Colorado Teacher Quality Standard II: Establishing a Classroom Environment. One of the elements

of a high-quality teacher is the ability to develop a positive, nurturing relationship with students, as well as ensuring that they “engage students as individuals with unique interests and strengths” (Colorado Department of Education, 2011). Ms. Taylor specifically identified Colorado Teacher Quality Standard II as an area of strength for the graduates she had worked with. Specifically “building community, connecting with students, making the students feel comfortable in their classrooms, I think that is a strength.” Possessing an ethic of care was not something that the supervisors believed could be taught; it was an inherent passion and love for children. However, it was of utmost importance in the success of new teachers.

Content, Standards, and Lesson Planning

The supervisors believed that the graduates from the program were strong in their ability to design effective lesson plans and demonstrate a knowledge of content. Ms. Lillian believed that the reason that the first-year teachers were strong in lesson planning was due to the fact that in the program “every single lesson that they teach is dissected and torn apart and put together again, and the whys and the wherefores are there so that again, they see the bigger picture of what education is all about.” Ms. Taylor also observed that lesson planning was a strength of the graduates from the program. Specifically, the teachers knew how to connect their lesson to the state academic standards.

Mr. Carson also believed knowledge of content and curriculum was a strength for the graduates; however, he noted that the graduates were strong in the grade level where they student taught. While they had not had exposure to content and curriculum across all grade levels, they did have an “understanding of curriculum and how the year should pan

out from the beginning to the end” in the grade level where they were placed. While he identified this as an area of strength, he also reiterated that the graduates would need to continue to learn about content and curriculum depending on the grade levels they would teach throughout their careers.

Colorado Teacher Quality Standard I: Content Knowledge encompasses the ability to demonstrate knowledge of content and standards in the classroom. While the supervisors identified this as a strength of the graduates from the program, the principals also identified this as an area of strength for the first-year teachers in this case study. It was reflected in their annual evaluations as well.

Theme 4: Biggest Challenges for New Teachers

Difference in Schools

The university supervisors believed that the graduates from their teacher preparation program were prepared to begin teaching; however, there were many challenges that first-year teachers would face. One of the challenges was the diversity of schools where teachers were hired. In many cases, the schools did not reflect the same population or demographics as the schools where the first-year teachers student taught. Therefore, the first-year teachers’ expectations as to the school culture, diversity, parental involvement, supplies, curriculum, etc. were very different from what they had experienced in the preparation program. As Mr. Carson said,

[Student teachers] are in a school with a certain level of materials, supplies, technology . . . and then if they get [hired] at a school that has better materials, supplies and technology, they feel that they weren’t too well prepared for a wealth of stuff. But then if they get into a school with less than that, they’re frustrated

that they don't have as much as what they would expect that they are to have and they feel challenged.

During the student teaching experience, the student teachers became comfortable with the level of expectations, supplies, and diversity at the schools where they were placed; however, being hired in a school that varied drastically from their previous experiences provided new challenges, specifically in adjusting their expectations, in order to meet the demands of the new school.

For Dr. Snap, the challenge was also that curriculum differs from school to school. At the elementary school where she supervises, the teachers use scripted curriculum, and teachers do not have to design their own lessons or objectives. In her words, "The teachers are not having to look at the needs of children, they are just going by the book." For student teachers in that environment, they are not getting the same experience in developing lessons and differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all their students. She has made sure that her student teachers practice writing their own objectives and lessons so they are able to do so if they are hired in a school without scripted curriculum. However, that dichotomy was a difficult transition for many teachers as they began their first year of teaching.

Misconceptions of Teaching

One of the challenges that Mr. Carson believed new teachers face is that "in this day and age, education has really been lambasted by politicians, and sometimes it's a challenging career to have, in certain ways it's looked down upon." He referred to this as a "devaluing of the profession" that can negatively impact new teachers. There is a misconception that anyone can be a teacher, and many people do not realize that "there is

a specific set of skills that can be learned in the classroom that's predictably going to lead to student attention, student involvement, and student achievement." In his experience, people do not always appreciate that "teachers work really hard and they are doing a really important job." This can be difficult for new teachers to reconcile and face as they enter the field.

Ms. Lillian also identified that "teaching is a very difficult profession, very demanding, if you want to do the best you can." Similarly, Ms. Taylor said that the challenge of teaching is that it is a process. "Teaching is so dynamic, and you have to be willing to be a lifelong learner." While it is a "24/7" job, the reality that there is little compensation for the amount of work required is a challenge for new teachers as well. It is well-known that teaching is not a high paying profession. Ms. Lillian described a friend whose son recently graduated with an accounting degree and was offered a new job making \$60,000 a year, which is significantly more than a first-year teacher. In her words, "what's wrong with that picture?" She believed that salaries were one reason why the attrition rate of new teachers was so high.

Theme 5: Admission into Teacher Preparation Programs

Gatekeeping

All of the university supervisors were passionate about training and preparing highly effective teachers, and they also discussed the importance of admitting strong candidates who have the potential to be effective teachers into the teacher preparation program. However, this caused a dilemma for the supervisors as they did not have answers as to how to accurately identify strong candidates through the admission process. To be admitted into the teacher preparation program where they supervise, potential

candidates must submit a career goals statement, a list of experiences working with children, three letters of recommendation, hold a GPA of 2.5 or higher, demonstrate successful completion of core classes, and then participate in an interview with faculty from the College of Education. CAEP plans to implement the policy that students must have a 3.0 GPA or higher in order to enter a teacher preparation program and all programs must pre-screen the candidates to ensure that they are a good fit for teaching (Allen et al., 2014). However, the supervisors were not convinced that the application process currently in place or the implementation of a required 3.0 GPA would ensure that strong candidates, who will become effective teachers, are admitted. As Mr. Carson said, “You can’t necessarily tell based on interviews and performance in core classes and so on who is going to be successful and who isn’t going to be successful [as a teacher]. I’m not sure we know how to make that selection.”

Similarly, Ms. Taylor recounted working with a student who struggled as a student teacher and was not highly effective. In her words,

I had her in another class and there were some red flags just in her coursework, how she handled it then. Should she have been admitted into the program? That’s a hard call to make, it’s a very hard call to make, but it’s a difficult profession.

And some people say, well, everybody can teach, and they can’t. What is our role in deciding or determining if someone can or can’t?

Even though teacher preparation programs are putting more rigorous checkpoints in place, such as a 3.0 GPA, in order to identify strong candidates for teaching, the supervisors felt as though the screening process was not always predictive. As Mr. Carson said, “You may think you know how to make that selection [of admission into the

teacher preparation program], but then you start making it and you may be excluding some people who are pretty good at it.”

The ability to successfully measure and identify traits and qualities of potential effective teachers was a difficult task, and test scores, interviews and GPA did not completely capture or effectively measure the candidate. While Ms. Lillian said that a GPA does not necessarily indicate that a student will become an effective teacher, she did recognize that, “we need people who are going to understand how difficult it is to be a teacher, and if you have a 3.0 . . . you’ve probably worked pretty hard for that, and that’s a factor.” However, Dr. Snap had worked with teacher candidates who had high GPA’s, but did not relate well with children in the classroom. A score on a test or a certain GPA did not necessarily ensure that a candidate would be successful teacher.

One of the most difficult things to measure is the natural ability that many teachers possess. In Ms. Taylor’s words,

How do you measure [natural ability] in an interview? Or GPA? You can walk into a classroom and say, she’s a natural, he is not. Now, how do I work with that person who is not a natural? Can they still be an effective teacher? Sure, I think so . . . but what are those qualities of a natural teacher that we can teach?

Similar to the principals, the supervisors could see a natural teaching ability in many of their student teachers. But this raised more questions. How can that natural ability be measured or captured? How can it be identified in an application process? In Dr. Snap’s experience, the most effective student teachers were the ones that had demonstrated strong grades, skills, and genuinely cared about students. While some of those qualities

could be identified in the process by reviewing GPA, coursework, recommendation letters, and interviews, was it enough?

Discussion

The university supervisors provided another layer of insight into the preparation and experiences of first-year teachers, due to their own experiences of training and working with new teachers. In addition, their individual backgrounds in education prior to becoming supervisors, as teachers and principals, also provided more insight into working with new teachers in different capacities. When discussing the teacher preparation program in this case study, they all expressed their satisfaction with the preparation that new teachers received. However, the supervisors were all very clear that the program provided a strong foundation in teaching, but first-year teachers still had much to learn as they started their careers. They believed that the full-year student teachers spent in the classroom, as well as the coursework that they completed during their program, provided them with the background and introductory knowledge and skills that they needed to be successful. However, the preparation program could not account for or fully prepare any teacher for all of the variables and challenges they would face in their careers. In addition, it took time and experience for teachers to hone their skills and learn from their challenges and mistakes.

Mr. Carson and Ms. Lillian emphasized the importance of the principals and other faculty mentoring, coaching, and supervising first-year teachers. The need for that mentorship and supervision did not end once the preparation program was complete. In fact, they saw it as a vital component in training effective teachers. First-year teachers need a lot of support to navigate all of the demands of teaching, and in their opinions, the

school where they are teaching should provide that support. Preparation programs can provide a solid foundation, but the schools and districts need to continue training and supporting their teachers in order to ensure their success.

To answer the research questions regarding the areas of strength and growth for first-year teachers, the university supervisors mentioned many of the same areas that were identified by the first-year teachers and the principals in this case study. The biggest area of need was differentiation. All of the supervisors believed that first-year teachers needed more specific training in how to differentiate for all students in every content area. While they identified the need for more robust training in this area, it is also important to note that they identified a vital part of differentiation as the knowledge of each student's background, strengths, areas for growth, likes, and dislikes, as well as their test scores and abilities. By knowing this information, the supervisors believed that teachers would be able to better differentiate because they could tailor their instruction and interactions with the students accordingly. While specific strategies for how to differentiate could be taught, getting to know students well was an area that first-year teachers would need to take upon themselves to learn and do.

Interestingly, this leads to the strengths of first-year teachers that university supervisors also identified. Having the foresight and dedication to getting to know each student is part of the ethic of care that Dr. Snap described. The supervisors believed that first-year teachers who possessed that ethic of care and truly loved children were the most successful. Therefore, if first-year teachers have that in place, they are one step closer in being able to differentiate well for their students.

While the foundation for teaching was in place and the teachers all possessed strengths that made them effective in their classrooms, the supervisors also believed that there were many challenges that first-year teachers would face. The diversity of the schools and differences between where they student taught and the school where they were hired was a challenge. The supervisors identified a range of differences from expectations to supplies to curriculum to demographics. Dr. Snap recommended that teacher preparation programs make sure that the schools where they place student teachers have diverse populations of students, and that student teachers have the opportunity to work with different kinds of curriculum, as well as create their own. Her ideas reflect the research by Darling-Hammond (2014b) that recommends student teachers are placed in diverse settings to put the theory they are learning into practice. Dr. Snap noted that this would be the ideal situation. However, it could be difficult for programs to find diverse schools to place their student teachers in depending on location, opportunities, and the willingness of schools to partner with teacher preparation programs. Nevertheless, the more experience with diverse settings that student teachers can have, the more successful they may be transitioning to a different school in their first year.

Another challenge is economic. Teachers work very hard for the compensation that they receive, and it is not as competitive when compared to other professions. Ms. Lillian believed that this fact could contribute to the high attrition of new teachers; they are working hard for little pay. With the devaluing of the profession that Mr. Carson described, this could also exacerbate the problem. While there are no easy answers to these challenges, teacher preparation programs can help prepare their students by making

them aware of and discussing these issues together. As Mr. Carson pointed out, helping student teachers realize that teaching is a valuable and important career and that they have unique skill sets that will positively impact the lives of children can help them reconcile these challenges. This also relates back to having a passion for children and demonstrating an ethic of care. Student teachers who enter the profession due to their passion to help children may not be as focused on the pay or outside value placed on the profession. They are teaching to fulfill their own passions and desire to help children.

One of the other important parts of preparation in the eyes of the supervisors was admission into the preparation program. They all acknowledged the need for highly effective teachers in the diverse classrooms of the 21st century. However, ensuring that only those with the potential to be highly effective are admitted into programs is a problem that has no easy or quick solution. While CAEP, the Department of Education, and other policymakers have pushed to make entrance into teacher preparation programs more rigorous, there are big questions to consider. Does GPA accurately reflect a candidate's potential for being an effective teacher? How does a natural ability to teach come into play? Is there any way to measure this ability? How much can we know about a candidate's potential before they are admitted? According to the supervisors, there is not a policy or checklist that can answer these questions and admit all of the candidates with the potential for success. Their preparation program has checkpoints in place to try to capture a well-rounded picture of a candidate; however, no admission process can ensure that every candidate that is admitted will be an effective teacher.

CHAPTER 7

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

In order to provide an analysis of the CAEP policy that requires teacher preparation programs to provide evidence that their graduates are positively impacting student growth and achievement, displaying evidence of effective teaching, and that the graduates and their employers are satisfied with their preparation and performance, a multiple case study of five first-year teachers, four principals, and four university supervisors was conducted. The five first-year teachers, Nicole, Jackie, Susan, Esther, and Marian, were interviewed at the beginning, middle, and end of their first year of teaching, and observations in their classrooms were conducted at the beginning and end of the school year. Their annual teacher evaluations also provided insight into their effective teaching practices throughout the first year. The four principals, Ms. Baker, Ms. Waldorf, Ms. Peters, and Ms. Kay, were the principals of the first-year teachers involved in the study, and they were interviewed at the end of the school year. The four university supervisors, Dr. Snap, Ms. Lillian, Ms. Taylor, and Mr. Carson, were interviewed to provide insight into the preparation the first-year teachers received, as they were all supervisors in the teacher preparation program from which the first-year teachers graduated.

A cross-case analysis of the findings from the first-year teachers, the principals, and the university supervisors was performed in order to identify themes and patterns across the three cases. The different perspectives and experiences of the first-year teachers, principals, and university supervisors provided a more robust picture of the

preparation and education of first-year teachers, and the patterns that emerged between them demonstrated that there were common strengths, needs, and perspectives of the preparation of first-year teachers. There were 54 common codes among the three cases that represented patterns and similarities in the data. The codes were grouped into the themes represented by each research question (see Table 6). To fully answer each research question, the findings of the cross-case analysis will be detailed under each question.

Table 6

Cross-Case Analysis Themes

Major Theme	Common Codes	Triangulation
Satisfaction with preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student teaching experience • Instruction • Supervision • Strong foundation • Colorado Teacher Quality Standards 	Teachers; Principals; Supervisors
Evidence of effective teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content knowledge • Academic standards • Positive relationships • Technology • Facilitating learning • Student growth • Collaboration • Reflecting on practice 	Teachers; Principals; Supervisors; Annual teacher evaluations; Observations

First-year teachers' strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive relationships • Content • Academic standards • Technology • Student growth • Commitment to professional development • Natural ability • Ethic of care 	Teachers; Principals; Supervisors; Annual teacher evaluations; Observations
Areas of need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiation • Classroom management • Communicating with parents • Curriculum 	Teachers; Principals; Supervisors; Annual teacher evaluations; Observations

Question 1: How Well Prepared Do First-Year Teachers Feel They Are at the Beginning, Middle, and End of Their First Year of Teaching?

Throughout the school year, the first-year teachers reiterated that they felt prepared to begin their first year of teaching. Even though there were areas where they needed more support, overall, they were satisfied with the preparation they received. Their attributed their satisfaction mostly to the year-long student teaching experience, which as Marian stated, was the most valuable part of the preparation program. Due to their time in the classroom from August to May, the first-year teachers felt more prepared to start their teaching careers. Their perceptions about their training and preparation did not change during the year. By the middle and end of the year, they were better able to articulate the areas where they needed more support, due to their time and experience in the classroom throughout their first year. However, they still believed that they were adequately prepared to begin their teaching career.

The principals and university supervisors also expressed their satisfaction with the preparation that the first-year teachers had received. It is important to note that the university supervisors saw the preparation program as the foundation to begin a career in teaching. As Mr. Carson articulated, no teacher preparation program could fully prepare new teachers for all of the challenges and demands that they would face over their careers, as it was not possible to identify and plan for every challenge. However, the supervisors believed that the program provided the tools and experiences that new teachers needed in order to be successful and effective. The instruction and strategies that were covered in coursework, the experience of student teaching during the full-year, the supervision and coaching they received throughout their student teaching experience, and the practice of reflecting on their instruction and improving throughout the year provided the first-year teachers with a solid foundation for their career. The first-year teachers would need more support from their principals, teammates, and other colleagues as they began their teaching careers and faced the challenges that came with all of the responsibilities of teaching. The supervisors named the diversity of schools and differences in supplies, curriculum, and expectations as some of the challenges that new teachers would need support in navigating during their first years of teaching.

Similarly, the principals all expressed their understanding that first-year teachers still had a lot to learn. Even though the teachers were well-prepared for their first year, they would learn how to become more effective and deal with challenges that arose due to their time and experience in the classroom. The principals all believed that the first-year teachers would grow in their ability to manage a classroom, communicate effectively with parents, and differentiate instruction for their students over time. While

the principals noted that time and experience were a vital part of becoming a more successful and highly effective teacher, Ms. Kay and Ms. Baker also believed that first-year teachers needed to possess coachable and reflective attitudes in order to grow. Being open to suggestions and implementing feedback throughout their first years of teaching would help new teachers become more effective.

Question 2: What Evidence of Effective Teaching Do First-Year Teachers Display in Their Classrooms?

Evidence of effective teaching was captured through the interviews with all three cases, observations in the first-year teachers' classrooms, and the annual teacher evaluations. The Colorado Teacher Quality Standards provided a framework for defining effective teaching through the descriptions of the six standards: content knowledge, establishing a classroom environment, facilitating learning, reflecting on practice, demonstrating leadership, and student growth (Colorado Department of Education, 2015). The first-year teachers also attributed their knowledge of highly effective practices to their training in the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards during their teacher preparation program. Since they were evaluated throughout their student teaching experience on the standards, they had a strong foundation in the characteristics and markers of highly effective teachers. The university supervisors also pointed out the importance of using the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards in the preparation program, because it helped to prepare student teachers for their own evaluations once they were in the field. It also provided a common definition of high-quality teaching in the preparation program and in elementary schools across the state.

The first-year teachers identified the ability to connect with their students and build strong, positive relationships with their class as an area where they felt the most effective. Esther described the importance of building a community with the students in her classroom, and Marian noted that knowing her students and connecting with them helped her teach them more effectively. This was supported in their annual teacher evaluations as the first-year teachers all scored effective on Colorado Teacher Quality Standard II: Establishing a Classroom Environment. Their principals also praised their abilities to build relationships with their students, and in each observation with each teacher, a positive environment and solid rapport with students was noticeable.

There were other areas in which the first-year teachers were regarded as highly effective on their annual teacher evaluations: knowledge of content; demonstrating collaboration and teamwork; reflecting on practice; facilitating learning in the classroom; and demonstrating leadership in the schools. The principals and university supervisors also identified general trends in strengths of first-year teachers. One trend that was common for both cases, the principals and supervisors, was knowledge of content and connecting the lesson to academic standards. The supervisors believed that this was due to the strong preparation and support the first-year teachers received in creating lesson plans that were connected to standards. The principals had also noticed that first-year teachers were proficient in implementing technology effectively, and they often took on a leadership role in the schools by helping veteran teachers with ideas and strategies for implementing technology in their classrooms.

Student growth was also evidence of effective teaching in each teacher's classroom. The first-year teachers were able to identify areas of collective and individual

student growth that they had witnessed throughout the school year. They described student academic growth, as well as growth in behavior and maturity. While the first-year teachers felt satisfied with the growth their students made on standardized assessments, they also identified the day-to-day moments that helped them realize they were positively impacting their students. Jackie described these as “a-ha” moments when her students understood a concept she had taught, and Esther noted the moments when students were able to accomplish their work independently due to her instruction. The individual moments, as well as collective growth over time, were evidence of their effective instruction.

The principals also expressed their satisfaction with the positive growth that the students of each first-year teacher had made. The first-year teachers’ influence on student growth was also documented in their annual teacher evaluations. As 50% of their evaluation was based on student growth, each evaluation included evidence from classroom and standardized assessments, and each first-year teacher showed positive growth on the assessments used in their evaluations. For example, Marian’s students showed “more than expected growth” on the math and reading assessments that were included in the 50% student growth part of her evaluation.

Question 3: What Areas of Strength and Areas for Growth are Identified by First-Year Teachers, Their Principals, and University Supervisors?

Interestingly, the areas of strength that the first-year teachers, principals, and university supervisors identified were the same as the evidence of effective teaching that was captured in their interviews, observations, and evaluations. This demonstrates that the areas of strength that each case identified were also considered high-quality and

effective practices as defined by the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards. Positive relationships with students, ability to connect academic standards to content, implementation of technology, and student growth were all identified as strengths of first-year teachers, as well as evidence of highly effective teaching.

An area of strength that was evident in the interviews with the first-year teachers was that they all exhibited a commitment to professional development and continuous improvement of their teaching. They all described the ways in which they sought out additional trainings and classes to support their areas of need, including classroom management and specific curriculum training. They asked their teammates, other teachers, and principals for advice, support, and direction when they had questions or needed ideas for how to meet specific needs of their students. This dedication to their own development as teachers is reflected as evidence of effective teaching in the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards as well.

A theme that arose in both of the principals and supervisors' interviews as a strength of many first-year teachers was a natural teaching ability. The principals noted that they looked for a natural ability when hiring new teachers. The ability was evident in the way that the teachers interacted with their students, built strong relationships with them, and "seemed to just know" what to do and how to work with students. While it was not easily defined or measured, a natural ability was something that the principals could identify by watching teachers in action. Similarly, the university supervisors emphasized the importance of a natural ability, specifically when demonstrating care and passion for children. Dr. Snap referred to it as "an ethic of care," and the other supervisors described it as the ways in which teachers positively interacted with their students. Like the

principals, Ms. Taylor said she could walk into a classroom and know by observing the teacher whether he or she possessed a natural ability.

While this natural ability was not measured on annual teacher evaluations, it was an important part of high-quality, effective teaching, according to the principals and supervisors. Dr. Snap believed that the teachers who demonstrated an ethic of care and natural ability were more willing to learn, more open to feedback, and therefore, were more likely to demonstrate highly effective strategies in the classroom. Ms. Taylor said that student teachers who did not possess a natural ability could still learn those effective strategies; however, it was hard to know how to teach natural abilities. It was difficult to even define what that natural ability encompassed, so breaking it down in order to teach it was a challenge.

The supervisors also believed that those with the natural ability were more likely to be effective, and this led to another important issue. How can natural ability be identified so that those who possess it are admitted into teacher preparation programs? With new policies being implemented to make admission into teacher preparation programs more rigorous, how can natural ability be captured and valued? There was no easy answer to the question, as it goes beyond a test score or GPA. Ms. Barnes, who was Nicole's principal, said that Nicole's natural ability was evident in her interview through the ways in which she discussed her experiences working with children. Similarly, Dr. Snap identified the interview as an important part of the admission process into the teacher preparation program as love for children and a passion for teaching often came across during the interview, whereas it did not come across in the other required components of the admission process. Therefore, having a comprehensive and robust

admission process that included multiple checkpoints, especially an interview, were important in admitting strong candidates.

When discussing the areas for growth in first-year teachers, the most common theme that came up among the three cases was the need for more preparation and instruction in differentiation. Each of the participants in all three cases talked about the importance of differentiating in order to meet the diverse needs of students. The first-year teachers in the case study felt most comfortable teaching content to students who were at grade level, but they struggled to fully meet the needs of students both above and below grade level. Their areas of need for more training was reflective of the demographics of their schools. The first-year teachers who were teaching in schools that were more impacted with ELLs and students with disabilities expressed the need for more strategies in ELL and special education; whereas the first-year teachers in more affluent schools that had a higher population of gifted and talented students needed more support in how to effectively challenge them.

While the first-year teachers focused more on differentiating instruction, the principals also brought up the need for differentiating in classroom management as they saw that the diverse needs of students went beyond academic skills. The principals all believed that strong classroom management was the foundation of a successful classroom, and as Ms. Baker pointed out, there is not one strategy or “magic wand” that works with every child. Children have different needs depending on their diverse backgrounds; therefore, teachers need to have a solid background and diverse skills for meeting the needs of every student. This belief was also reflected in the interviews with the university supervisors. As Dr. Snap and Ms. Lillian pointed out, knowing the

individual children in a classroom, not only their academic needs, but their family backgrounds and experiences, provided a strong foundation for knowing how to differentiate to meet their needs. A teacher could not successfully meet the needs of every child if he or she was not aware of what their needs were. For the supervisors, this went beyond knowing test scores or academic abilities. It was understanding and knowing the child as a whole.

This provided another perspective of differentiation. For new teachers, differentiation is more than adjusting instruction to meet the academic needs of students. It also includes taking the time to build strong relationships with students in order to understand their backgrounds, needs, strengths, likes, and dislikes, and adjust both instruction and classroom management strategies accordingly. Knowing the background information about the students helped teachers be more effective at meeting their needs, instructionally and behaviorally.

Question 4: What are the Perceptions of First-Year Teachers, Their Principals, and University Supervisors Regarding Their Preparation, Effectiveness, and Success During Their First Year?

For the first-year teachers, principals, and university supervisors, the full-year of student teaching provided the best preparation for the first year of teaching. The amount of supervision that the student teachers received from their supervisors, cooperating teachers, and site coordinators provided them with the support and direction they needed as they learned how to put theory into practice. It is important to note that the principals were most impressed with the amount of time that the teachers from the preparation program in this case study spent in a classroom during their preparation program. It was

one of the reasons why the principals considered hiring first-year teachers from the preparation program; they knew that the first-year teachers had a full-year in the classroom with support and direction. The structure and expectations of the program in this case study stood out among other programs due to the principals' experiences with first-year teachers from a myriad of preparation programs.

While the principals were impressed with the teacher preparation program, they also believed that the first-year teachers could have used more preparation and instruction in communicating effectively with parents and differentiation strategies. As discussed above, the principals all believed that the first-year teachers would grow in their skills in these areas with time and experience. However, they also believed that some more direct instruction and strategies in these areas would help the teachers be more effective during their first year.

The first-year teachers also believed that they needed more preparation in how to work with parents and differentiate for students. Weaving these topics into their coursework and meetings with their university supervisors during the preparation program would have provided them with more tools during their first year. They also expressed the need for more preparation in how to use different types of curriculum. They were struggling with learning new curriculum that differed from the curriculum they had used in the schools where they student taught. This was also a concern raised by the university supervisors. They believed that first-year teachers were often challenged by the difference in curriculum from the school where they student taught to the school where they were hired. While the teacher preparation program cannot predict all of the different curriculum that will be used in the schools where graduates will be hired,

providing more hands-on experiences with examples of different curriculum commonly used in schools would have helped the first-year teachers feel more comfortable and confident during their first year.

The first-year teachers in this case study were all rated effective on their annual teacher evaluations, and their effectiveness was also evident in their impact on student growth. All three cases described the effectiveness of first-year teachers in relation to the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards. Effective practices that were described and observed were captured in the six Teacher Quality Standards: content knowledge, establishing a classroom environment, facilitating learning, reflecting on practice, demonstrating leadership, and student growth. However, the principals and supervisors also noted that first-year teachers who demonstrated a natural teaching ability were perceived to be more effective in the classroom. While a natural ability was not directly captured in the standards, it was a vital part of being an effective teacher, according to the principals and supervisors. The five first-year teachers in this case study were all described by their principals as possessing a natural ability for teaching.

Student growth was identified by the first-year teachers as their biggest success during their first year. Watching their students grow and change throughout the school year, academically, behaviorally, and personally, provided the first-year teachers with the strong sense of satisfaction and success. Knowing that they had an impact on the growth their students made was the most rewarding experience during the year. As Susan said, student growth “is probably the best part, that’s why I do it.”

Discussion

The themes that emerged from the three cases indicated that there were strengths and needs in teacher preparation. One of the major themes was the need for more preparation in differentiation, which is consistent with the literature that found that teacher preparation programs across the country did not provide enough training in how to meet the diverse needs of students (Coggshall et al., 2012; The National Council on Teacher Quality, 2013). The first-year teachers in this case study had diverse classrooms that were impacted by a variety of needs: ELLs, gifted and talented students, students with disabilities, and children with impoverished and traumatic backgrounds. The teachers did not feel that they had the appropriate strategies and tools for meeting those needs. The principals and supervisors also indicated that new teachers needed more training to effectively differentiate for students.

While only one of the first-year teachers indicated classroom management as an area of need, the four principals and two of the supervisors believed that new teachers needed more preparation in this area. Classroom management was an area of need that was identified in the literature as well (Frieberg, 2002; Walsh, 2013; Womack-Wynne et al., 2011). However, the principals related classroom management to differentiation. They believed that teachers needed to be able to differentiate the ways in which they managed a classroom, and to do so, they needed to understand their individual students' backgrounds, strengths, and needs. The supervisors also stressed the importance of knowing the individual children in the classroom and demonstrating "an ethic of care" in order to effectively meet their diverse needs. This is an important addition to the literature. First-year teachers need more preparation and strategies in how to differentiate

instruction and classroom management; however, this training should also include the importance of building relationships with students and taking the time to know and understand their diverse backgrounds in order to effectively differentiate instruction and classroom management strategies. Understanding the relationship between demonstrating an ethic of care and differentiating instruction and classroom management may provide new teachers with more effective and stronger preparation in these areas.

One of the strengths of the teacher preparation program that was identified by all of the cases in the study was the amount of time spent in the classrooms during the student teaching experience. During the full year in the classroom, student teachers had the opportunity to put theory into practice. The student teaching experience has been identified in the literature as a vital component to preparation; however, it is imperative that the experience is practical, meaningful, and allows student teachers to implement what they have learned from their coursework in the classroom (Coggshall et al., 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2014b; Good, 2014). While this was a strength of the program in this study, not all of the elementary schools where student teachers were placed provided the most realistic or meaningful experience. Therefore, it is important for the program to consider the schools where student teachers are placed to ensure that they do receive the preparation they need.

One of the strengths of the program was the inclusion of the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards as the basis for the observations and evaluations during the student teaching experience. The first-year teachers in this study felt confident in their knowledge of the qualities of highly effective teachers due to their training and experience with the standards during the preparation program. One of the criticisms of teacher preparation

programs has been the lack of consistency between the standards student teachers must meet to graduate and receive licensure and the standards that teachers must meet in the field in order to be considered highly qualified (Darling-Hammond, 2014a). For this program, the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards were the standards for graduation and licensure, and they were the same standards that teachers across Colorado must exhibit on their annual teacher evaluations. Due to this consistency, the first-year teachers were more confident in their abilities to demonstrate highly effective practices, as they had received a significant amount of training, coaching, and preparation with the standards. While the first-year teachers expressed apprehension regarding the structure of their annual teacher evaluations during their first year, they were confident in their knowledge of the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards.

The principals and supervisors in this case study identified knowledge of content and academic standards as a strength of the first-year teachers. This was a contradiction with the literature which identified a stronger knowledge of content, in relation to the Common Core State Standards, as a need of new teachers (Chelsey & Jordan, 2012; Greenberg et al., 2013; Paliokas, K., 2014; Walsh, 2013). According to the principals and supervisors in this study, the first-year teachers' knowledge of content and standards could be attributed to the preparation they had received and the amount of time and attention spent on creating effective lesson plans that were connected to the academic standards. The principals also noted that the first-year teachers demonstrated a strong knowledge of how to effectively implement technology in the classroom; however, this was also a contradiction with the literature which noted that more preparation in

technology was a need of new teachers (Alexander & Kjellstrom, 2014; McKinney et al., 1999).

The insight of principals and university supervisors regarding teacher preparation adds to the literature, as there were few studies that focused on their perceptions. One of the major themes that emerged from the interviews with both cases is the importance of a natural teaching ability and an ethic of care. While Kono (2007) found that principals wanted teachers to have a respect for students and an enthusiasm for teaching, the principals and university supervisors in this case study were even more specific about the abilities and relationships that they looked for in new teachers. In addition, the principals and supervisors believed that teachers with these natural abilities were more effective in the classroom.

While the findings from this case study confirm some of the strengths, needs, and criticisms of teacher preparation programs in the literature, there were noted differences as well. This indicates that there is a need for more specific feedback and research regarding individual teacher preparation programs. Research has focused on general trends in teacher preparation and needs of first-year teachers, and while these trends may provide some insight for programs, there is also a need for feedback that is specific to particular programs in order to make necessary improvements to strengthen preparation. The CAEP policy provides the opportunity for programs to receive specific feedback, as well as identify general trends of strong preparation programs throughout the country.

Colorado Teacher Quality Standards

The Colorado Teacher Quality Standards, which served as the conceptual framework for this study, provided a description of high-quality, effective teaching

practices that was consistent with the descriptions of high-quality teaching in the literature (Danielson, 2013; Goldstein, 2014; Hightower et al., 2011; Little, Goe, & Bell, 2009). In addition, the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards were used in the teacher preparation program for all of the student teachers' observations and evaluations, and they were the foundation of the state's annual teacher evaluations. Therefore, the consistency of the standards with the program and state's definition of high-quality, effective teaching provided a strong framework to use for analysis of the data in this case study. All of the participants in this case study discussed and identified effective teaching practices through the lens of the standards, which created a common language and understanding during data collection. In addition, the standards provided a comprehensive framework for identifying evidence of effective teaching in the interviews, observations, and evaluations.

Implications and Recommendations

Teacher Preparation Programs

The first-year teachers in this case study felt most prepared to begin their teaching career due to their student teaching experiences, methods courses that provided direct instruction with curriculum, standards, and strategies, and their experience with the Teacher Quality Standards which helped them to understand the qualities of effective teaching and how to implement them in their classrooms. The principals and university supervisors also reiterated that the preparation program provided the first-year teachers with a strong foundation to start their careers, and the full-year of student teaching provided them with the best preparation due to the hands-on experiences in the classroom. However, there were areas of need as well, including lack of training

regarding students of diverse abilities, unrealistic student teaching experiences, and lack of specific training for implementing a variety of curriculum and communicating with parents. The areas of strength and need in preparation were evident and consistent among the three cases.

As this case study demonstrates, following the CAEP policy provides teacher preparation programs with valuable and specific information regarding how well prepared their graduates were for the classroom. The feedback from graduates and their employers will help programs identify the areas in which teachers were best prepared and the areas where they needed more instruction and support. Teacher preparation programs should use the feedback and suggestions to implement changes in their program in order to provide new teachers with more support in the identified areas of need. By using the information provided by the CAEP policy, there is the potential for teacher preparation programs to improve their practice to ensure that they are preparing high-quality educators and engaging in continuous improvement efforts.

For the teacher preparation program in this study, it was evident in all three cases that first-year teachers needed more preparation in how to effectively differentiate instruction and classroom management strategies to meet the diverse needs of students. This is also a common criticism of teacher preparation programs in the literature: there is not enough training in how to effectively teach diverse students (Coggshall et al., 2012; Greenberg et al., 2013; National Council on Teacher Quality, 2013). One recommendation to strengthen the preparation program is to provide new teachers with a rich repertoire of differentiation strategies in the content area methods courses and the classroom management course, as well as training in diverse backgrounds, such as

students coming from poverty or trauma, and skills specific to providing effective instruction and support for students in those areas. For example, in a literacy methods course, the professor could provide concrete examples for how to differentiate reading content in order to incorporate different learning styles and abilities through class activities and assignments. While more courses in classroom management do not necessarily need to be added to the program, more specific strategies and interventions that meet the needs of a variety of students from different backgrounds should be incorporated into the course. Providing student teachers with a variety of strategies and ideas that they can implement during their student teaching experience would provide them with more training during their preparation program. The more that the program weaves differentiation strategies and instruction into their coursework, the more confident and prepared new teachers will be for the classroom. However, it is also important that the faculty of the preparation programs themselves are modeling differentiation in their courses so that new teachers are not only learning theory and strategies, but observing how to effectively implement differentiation in practice.

In addition, providing practical information and strategies for how to communicate with parents would also provide new teachers with more confidence in how to address parents during their first year. While the program would not necessarily need to include a new class on communicating with parents, they could include this information into current coursework. For example, including direct instruction on how to communicate effectively and providing role-playing opportunities for student teachers to practice these skills as if they were communicating with parents would provide them with more practice and preparation.

As the first-year teachers suggested, having more hands-on experiences with different types of curriculum would have also helped them feel more confident. This could also be included in the methods courses if each professor introduces different curriculum in their subject area and gives student teachers the opportunity to explore and work with them. These suggestions for change are not drastic; they are additions to current coursework that would help to provide a stronger foundation in preparation.

Considering the schools in which the student teachers are placed for their student teaching experience is also important for the teacher preparation program in this study. Both the first-year teachers and supervisors expressed the challenge of teaching in a school during their first year that was vastly different from the school where they student taught. Dr. Snap suggested that the preparation program needs to place student teachers in schools with diverse populations that allow them to implement new strategies while also practicing with the curriculum provided, as this will provide the student teachers with a more realistic, comprehensive experience. If first-year teachers had more experience in schools that reflected the demographics and expectations of where they were hired, they would have felt more confident in their first year.

However, this may be a difficult task as no preparation program can predict what kind of school a graduate will be hired in, and preparation programs are reliant on schools that are willing to accept student teachers. Nevertheless, it is important for programs to consider the demographics and opportunities provided by the schools where student teachers are placed. For Nicole, student teaching at a Montessori school was not a practical or helpful experience as it was a completely different model and educational philosophy than a traditional school. Similarly, Dr. Snap's student teachers were placed

at a school that required them to use scripted curriculum to teach, as opposed to creating their own objectives and lessons. Due to the experience with scripted lessons, not all of the student teachers felt well prepared for creating their own.

While it is valuable for student teachers to have experiences in a variety of schools, some schools may be better suited for early practicum courses in which students complete observational hours, as opposed to hosting full-time student teachers. For example, the teacher preparation program from this case study requires students to spend time observing in schools prior to their professional year of student teaching. Including the Montessori and scripted curriculum schools for observational hours would expose students to different models and methods of teaching; however, they would not be used for the student teaching experience as they do not provide as practical of an experience for all student teachers. Being more selective and screening schools to identify their philosophy and practices would provide teacher preparation program with a stronger sense of which schools would be better suited for observation hours and which schools would provide student teachers with a stronger student teaching experience. By including more traditional models for the student teaching year that are reflective of the majority of schools in an area, student teachers can have a more practical and realistic experience so that they feel more prepared for their first year.

National Implications

The CAEP policy may also provide the opportunity for programs, states, and accrediting bodies to identify trends of highly successful programs and components of programs that best prepare teachers for the field. For example, from this case study, it was evident that the structure of a program, specifically the year-long student teaching

experience, was a valuable component that provided the student teachers with rich experiences that better prepared them for teaching. For other programs that do not include as long of a student teaching experience, this may be an important component to consider that would better prepare their students. By identifying these components, programs across the country can strengthen their training and preparation by using the suggestions and experiences of their own graduates, as well as the trends and perceptions of first-year teachers throughout the United States.

By strengthening the preparation of new teachers in programs across the country, there is the potential for first-year teachers to feel more prepared to meet the challenges that they will face. Ms. Lillian believed that the more prepared teachers felt during their first years of teaching, the more likely they would be to stay in the profession. One of the major reasons why teachers do not stay in the profession, according to the literature, is that they are not fully prepared to meet the demands and expectations of the classroom (Field, 2014a; Mehta & Doctor, 2013; Shawcuk, 2014; Weisberg et al., 2009).

The potential for the CAEP policy is that preparation programs will be able to not only identify the demands and expectations of the classroom through the feedback from first-year teachers and their principals, but they can also use this information to improve their programs in order to better prepare their graduates to meet these demands. While stronger preparation in programs across the country may not solve all of the problems that are related to teacher attrition, there is the potential that by improving the preparation, new teachers will begin their careers with a stronger foundation so they can effectively meet the needs of diverse students.

Natural Teaching Ability

One of the major themes that emerged in the interviews with the principals and university supervisors was the importance of a natural teaching ability. The principals looked for evidence of this natural ability when hiring new teachers for their schools, and the university supervisors believed that the student teachers who possessed this natural ability were more successful in their teaching careers. While a natural ability is not directly measured on an annual teaching evaluation or captured in the application process for entrance into a teacher preparation program, it is an important topic to consider. For teacher preparation programs, the more robust and comprehensive their application process, the more likely they are to discover the potential for a natural teaching ability in their applicants. GPA, coursework, and test scores do not always predict that a person has that natural teaching ability; however, according to the supervisors, there is more of a chance that a natural ability will come across in an interview. Therefore, including several indicators, such as the interview and review of academic history, for entrance into a program may help faculty identify this potential ability.

As the university supervisors indicated, the more natural ability a teacher possesses, the more effective they will be in the classroom. If this is the case, then there is the potential that a teacher with natural abilities will demonstrate more effective practices in the classroom, which can be captured in observations and evaluations during the student teaching experience and on their annual teacher evaluations.

For principals who are hiring new teachers, they may have a better chance of discovering whether a new teacher has a natural ability if it has been documented on recommendation letters or evaluations from a teacher preparation program. The

principals in this case study believed that they could identify a natural ability by observing a teacher in action. While principals may rely on the recommendations or evidence from a teacher preparation program, having a new teacher instruct a lesson as part of the interview may provide principals with greater insight into their teaching abilities. While this is a time consuming suggestion, depending on the number of interviews that occur, it is a recommendation for principals to consider to ensure that they are hiring a teacher with the desired skills and abilities that they are looking for.

Preparation Beyond the Program

While the CAEP policy has the potential to help improve the preparation of new teachers, it is also important for policymakers to understand that teacher preparation programs cannot fully prepare new teachers for all of the demands and challenges of a classroom. There is only so much that a student teacher can learn in a teacher preparation program, and while practice, student teaching, and coursework are important factors in preparing them, there is something to be said for the experience that comes with having their own classrooms. In addition, there is such a vast difference in the demographics, expectations, needs, and strengths of schools across the country that there is no way to fully prepare each new teacher for every situation and challenge he or she will face. Therefore, it is also important to consider the ways in which first-year teachers are supported at the schools where they are hired and what kinds of training, development, and induction programs are in place to further prepare and guide new teachers during their first years of teaching. While teacher preparation programs provide the foundation to begin a teaching career, it is the responsibility of the schools and districts to continue

to educate and support their new teachers so they are prepared for the expectations and demands of their specific classrooms.

For all new teachers, it is important that they have a strong team in place that will support them throughout their first year. Not only do new teachers need support from their grade level team, it is also imperative that the special education teachers, ELL teachers, gifted and talented teachers, school counselors, and other support staff introduce themselves and offer their help to new teachers. Knowing that they are not alone, but have a supportive staff to help them navigate through the challenges they will face may help new teachers feel more confident throughout their first year. In addition, the school administration should provide new teachers with specific training regarding curriculum and classroom management expectations, a review of standardized assessments that will be implemented throughout the year, as well as expectations for routines such as recess duty, daily schedules, and fire and weather drills. This school level support is needed beyond the mandatory school district induction programs offered to new teachers. The more information that new teachers have regarding how the school operates and the expectations they should meet, the more comfortable they will feel.

In addition, the first-year teachers in this case study were all apprehensive during the first half of the school year about their annual teacher evaluations and the ways in which student growth would be collected and documented as part of the evaluation. Since every school district has the autonomy to decide how they will structure their evaluations, it is important that schools train new teachers about the evaluation process. Teacher preparation programs can provide some background on the issue to help prepare new teachers; however, it is also the responsibility of the school districts to provide that

information to their new teachers. Being informed about how they will be evaluated early on in the school year would have eased some anxiety for the first-year teachers.

Collecting Data

There are many positive implications with regards to the CAEP policy and the potential for program and preparation improvement. However, as this multiple case study demonstrated, the process of gathering the information needed to meet the requirements of the policy was time-consuming and required IRB approval, as well as consent and approval from the university supervisors, principals, and first-year teachers involved. In order to fulfill the policy, multiple interviews with the three cases, as well as several observations in the first-year teachers' classrooms were conducted throughout a year. In addition, the annual teacher evaluations were collected to provide more detailed information regarding the first-year teachers' effective teaching practices.

With that in mind, meeting the requirements of the policy provides important information; however, the processes for meeting all the requirements could be difficult for teacher preparation programs to create and sustain due to time and budget constraints (Bramberger, Rugh, & Mabry, 2012). There is not enough time to interview and observe every graduate from every program, so implementing a survey or conducting focus groups may be a better option. However, keeping track of where all graduates are hired in order to conduct these surveys or focus groups could prove challenging, as could ensuring a strong response rate to requests for participation. In addition, it may be difficult to provide evidence that first-year teachers are positively impacting student growth without access to the annual teacher evaluations, which are not public information and require IRB approval and teacher consent to obtain. While the aim of the policy is

positive and has the potential for providing teacher preparation programs, policymakers, accrediting bodies, and educational researchers with valuable information regarding the preparation and experiences of first-year teachers, it may be challenging to collect and analyze all of the information required in a time and cost-effective manner.

Conclusion

There have been many criticisms in recent years regarding the ways in which teacher preparation programs are training new teachers, and new policies have been implemented to hold programs more accountable for the preparation and education that first-year teachers receive. As this case study demonstrates, there is valuable information that can be collected by following the CAEP policy. By identifying practical suggestions for change, as well as areas of strength within the program, teacher preparation programs can continually improve the preparation and education of new teachers. As this information is collected over time and from different programs, the opportunities to identify the strongest components of programs across the country will also help improve the preparation of new teachers nationwide. The potential for stronger preparation of new teachers will yield more high-quality teachers in the field who are ready to meet the demands and diversity of the 21st century classroom.

One of the important aspects of the CAEP policy is that the preparation programs are collecting the perceptions of new teachers and their principals regarding their preparation. The teachers and principals are the ones in the field on a daily basis. Their experiences in diverse classrooms across the country provide the basis for what needs to be taught in preparation programs. While faculty in teacher preparation programs may be up-to-date on new policies and practices that are impacting schools, the teachers and

principals are the ones who are directly affected by them and working to meet the demands. Therefore, their feedback on how well prepared they were to face the demands of the classroom is vital for understanding the needs and ways in which to improve teacher preparation.

While feedback from university faculty is not a mandatory regulation of the CAEP policy, their perceptions and experiences provided another layer of insight into the preparation of new teachers for this study. Due to their positions as liaisons between the university and elementary schools, supervisors were well aware of the challenges, successes, strengths, and needs of new teachers. They provided more information as to how the program could strengthen their preparation of new teachers. For preparation programs, discovering the perceptions of their faculty, in addition to the graduates and principals, can also help with continuous program improvement. As this multiple case study demonstrated, there were major patterns that emerged among all three cases, which indicated areas where the program could grow and change.

This multiple case study added to the literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of the CAEP policy and discovering the perceptions and experiences of first-year teachers, principals, and university supervisors. While previous studies have focused on the overall needs of first-year teachers, this study provided specific and detailed information of their needs related to their preparation. It also provided insight into how the first-year teachers developed during their first year of teaching. In addition, prior to this study, there was a lack of information in the literature regarding the perceptions of principals and university faculty regarding teacher preparation. The inclusion of principals and university supervisors in this study provided another layer of insight, as

well as specific experiences and general trends of first-year teachers. The study also provides teacher preparation programs with an example of the information that can be gathered and analyzed by following the CAEP policy.

For future research, having a more robust database of first-year teachers and principals will help teacher preparation programs continue to identify the themes, areas of strength and need, and implement suggestions from their own graduates who are in the field. While this multiple case study only focused on elementary teachers, principals, and supervisors, including the perspectives and experiences of secondary first-year teachers, principals, and supervisors will also provide preparation programs with the strengths and needs in secondary preparation as well. In addition, conducting longitudinal studies of new teachers during their first several years of teaching will provide more insight into how new teachers grow and change with time and experience. By tracking new teachers over time, there is the potential to discover how their perceptions of their preparation and teaching change, as well as their likelihood to stay in the profession. This data would provide teacher preparation programs with even more valuable information to guide program improvement. More research on natural teaching ability and the ways in which it can be captured for admission into teacher preparation programs and on teacher evaluations would be helpful as well.

One of the indicators of a high-quality teacher, as defined by the Colorado Teacher Quality Standard IV, is the ability to reflect on practice, analyze student learning, and apply what was learned to improve practice. The expectation is that teachers are continually learning, reflecting, and growing in order to become stronger and more effective educators. This should be the standard for teacher preparation programs as well.

Through the CAEP policy, teacher preparation programs have the opportunity to demonstrate the indicators of Standard IV by analyzing how well their graduates were prepared through their feedback and evidence of student growth, and applying what was learned from following the policy in order to improve their preparation and education of new teachers. Education is not static; the demands and diversity of today's classrooms are always growing and changing. Just as teachers have to adapt their strategies and practices to meet the needs of their students, teacher preparation programs need to adapt their instruction to meet the demands that new teachers are facing. In doing so, preparation programs will not only provide a stronger foundation for new teachers, but have the potential to positively impact students in classrooms across the country by better preparing their teachers.

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APPENDIX A**First-Year Teacher Interview Questions: Beginning of the Year**

1. Tell me about the preparation you received from your teacher education program. What kind of classes did you take? What experience did you have in the classroom?
2. How well prepared do you feel for beginning your first year of teaching?
3. What are your areas of strength in the classroom?
4. What are areas in which you want to grow?
5. What have been the most challenging experiences you have faced so far this year?
6. What have been the biggest rewards?
7. What do you wish you would have known before you began your first year?
8. In what areas do you feel you've had the best preparation? In what areas do you feel like you needed more support?
9. What suggestions for change would you give your teacher education program so they can better prepare new teachers in the future?
10. In what ways will you seek out more support, guidance, and preparation as you continue this first year?
11. What is one thing you want new graduates to know about the first year of teaching?

APPENDIX B**First-Year Teacher Interview Questions: Middle of the Year**

1. You are a semester into your first year of teaching, how have your perceptions regarding the training you received changed? Are there areas where you feel the most prepared? Least prepared? Needing more preparation?
2. What have been the most challenging experiences you have faced so far this year?
3. What have been the biggest rewards?
4. What have been the biggest surprises?
5. For your program, you received a degree in a different area of emphasis and then took the licensure. How did that impact your preparation? How do you feel about having an area of emphasis outside of teaching? Has it made a positive impact on your teaching?
6. If you had the choice to major in elementary education as opposed to the program that you were involved in, would you have done so? Why or why not? What else do you think you would have received regarding preparation had you done so?
7. In what areas do you feel you've had the best preparation? In what areas do you feel like you needed more support?
8. In what ways have you sought out more support, guidance, and preparation this semester?
9. Tell me about the emphasis your school has on student achievement. What are your requirements as a teacher? (Teacher evaluations?) How well prepared were you to meet these expectations?

10. Teacher preparation programs are required to track their graduates and use student achievement data to show their positive impact on student learning. What is your response to this?

APPENDIX C**First-Year Teacher Interview Questions: End of the Year**

1. You are now at the end of your first year of teaching! As you reflect on your first year, what has been your greatest reward? Challenge?
2. Now that you are at the end of your first year, how have your perceptions regarding the training you received in your teacher preparation program changed? Are there areas where you feel the most prepared? Least prepared? Needing more preparation?
3. In what areas did you seek out the most support, guidance, training this year?
4. Tell me about your annual teacher evaluation process. How were observations incorporated? How was student achievement data included?
5. Did you feel prepared for impacting student growth this year? What did you learn in the process?
6. How have you grown and changed as a teacher this year?
7. What have been your greatest strengths this year? What are your areas of need and growth?
8. How have your perceptions of teaching changed this year?
9. What would you like your teacher preparation program to know after a year's experience?

APPENDIX D**QUALITATIVE OBSERVATION FIELD NOTES**Qualitative Observation Field Notes

Date: _____ Time: _____ Location: _____ Observer: _____

Descriptive/Empirical	Reflective/Analytical

APPENDIX E

Principal Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your background in education – teaching, administration, etc.
2. Tell me about your experiences with the first year teacher.
3. What are her strengths? What are areas in which she needs to grow?
4. How satisfied do you feel about the preparation she received in her teacher education program?
5. In reference to the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards, what are her effective strategies and practices in content knowledge? Classroom environment? Facilitating learning? Reflecting on practice? Demonstrating leadership? And student growth?
6. In what areas do you feel like she has had the best preparation? In what areas do you feel like she needs more support?
7. What suggestions for change would you give the teacher education program so they can better prepare new teachers in the future?
8. What do you wish that all new teachers knew more about as they begin their first year of teaching? What trends have you noticed in the preparation and experiences of first-year teachers?
9. What do you think is the most important thing that new teachers need to have in place when they start their first year?
10. What other suggestions for change or improvement do you have regarding teacher education programs?

APPENDIX F

University Supervisor Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your background in education, how long you have been a university supervisor, etc.
2. Tell me about your experiences training first-year teachers.
3. What are their strengths? What are areas in which they need to grow?
4. How satisfied do you feel about the preparation they receive in the teacher education program?
5. In reference to the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards, what are their effective strategies and practices in content knowledge? Classroom environment? Facilitating learning? Reflecting on practice? Demonstrating leadership? And student growth?
6. In what areas do you feel like they have the best preparation? In what areas do you feel like they need more support?
7. What suggestions for change would you give the teacher education program so they can better prepare new teachers in the future?
8. What do you wish that all new teachers knew more about as they begin their first year of teaching? What trends have you noticed in the preparation and experiences of first-year teachers?
9. What do you think is the most important thing that new teachers need to have in place when they start their first year?
10. What other suggestions for change or improvement do you have regarding teacher education programs?

APPENDIX G



Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects

Date: 12/17/2015

IRB Review

IRB PROTOCOL NO.: 16-103

Protocol Title: The Preparation and Education of First Year Teachers: Perceptions of Supervisors and Mentors

Principal Investigator: Jennifer Tygret

Faculty Advisor if Applicable: Marcus Winters

Application: New Application

Type of Review: Expedited 7

Risk Level: No more than Minimal Risk

Renewal Review Level (If changed from original approval) if Applicable: N/A No Change

This Protocol involves a Vulnerable Population: N/A (No Vulnerable Population)

Expires: 16 December 2016

*Note, if exempt: If there are no major changes in the research, protocol does not require review on a continuing basis by the IRB. In addition, the protocol may match more than one review category not listed.

Externally funded: No Yes

OSP #: Sponsor:

Thank you for submitting your Request for IRB Review. The protocol identified above has been reviewed according to the policies of this institution and the provisions of applicable federal regulations. The review category is noted above, along with the expiration date, if applicable.

Once human participant research has been approved, it is the Principal Investigator's (PI) responsibility to report any changes in research activity related to the project:

- The PI must provide the IRB with all protocol and consent form amendments and revisions.
- The IRB must approve these changes prior to implementation.
- All advertisements recruiting study subjects must also receive prior approval by the IRB.
- The PI must promptly inform the IRB of all unanticipated serious adverse (within 24 hours). All unanticipated adverse events must be reported to the IRB within 1 week (see [45CFR46.103\(b\)\(5\)](#)). Failure to comply with these federally mandated responsibilities may result in suspension or termination of the project.
- Renew study with the IRB *prior to expiration*.
- Notify the IRB when the study is complete

If you have any questions, please contact Research Compliance Specialist in the Office of Sponsored Programs at 719-255-3903 or irb@uccs.edu



University of Colorado Colorado Springs

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

Sincerely yours,
Michele Okun, PhD
IRB Reviewer

Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects

Date: 7/20/2016

IRB Review

IRB PROTOCOL NO.: 16-017

Protocol Title: The Preparation and Education of First-Year Teachers

Principal Investigator: Jennifer Tygret

Faculty Advisor if Applicable: Sylvia Mendez

Application: Renewal

Type of Review: Expedited 7

Risk Level: No more than Minimal Risk

Renewal Review Level (If changed from original approval) if Applicable: N/A No Change

This Protocol involves a Vulnerable Population: N/A (No Vulnerable Population)

Expires: 10 August 2017

*Note, if exempt: If there are no major changes in the research, protocol does not require review on a continuing basis by the IRB. In addition, the protocol may match more than one review category not listed.

Externally funded: No Yes

OSP #: Sponsor:

Thank you for submitting your Request for IRB Review for renewal of an approved protocol. The protocol identified above has been reviewed according to the policies of this institution and the provisions of applicable federal regulations. The review category is noted above, along with the expiration date, if applicable.

Once human participant research has been approved, it is the Principal Investigator's (PI) responsibility to report any changes in research activity related to the project:

- The PI must provide the IRB with all protocol and consent form amendments and revisions.
- The IRB must approve these changes prior to implementation.
- All advertisements recruiting study subjects must also receive prior approval by the IRB.
- The PI must promptly inform the IRB of all unanticipated serious adverse (within 24 hours). All unanticipated adverse events must be reported to the IRB within 1 week (see [45CFR46.103\(b\)\(5\)](#)). Failure to comply with these federally mandated responsibilities may result in suspension or termination of the project.
- Renew study with the IRB **prior to expiration**.
- Notify the IRB when the study is complete

If you have any questions, please contact Research Compliance Specialist in the Office of Sponsored Programs at 719-255-3903 or irb@uccs.edu



University of Colorado Colorado Springs

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

Sincerely yours,
Michele Okun, PhD
IRB Reviewer

Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects

Date: 8/30/2016

IRB Review

IRB PROTOCOL NO.: 16-103

Protocol Title: The Preparation and Education of First-Year Teachers: Perceptions of Supervisors and Mentors

Principal Investigator: Jennifer Tygret

Faculty Advisor if Applicable: Sylvia Mendez

Application: Report of Change (1)

Type of Review: Expedited 7

Risk Level: No more than Minimal Risk

Renewal Review Level (If changed from original approval) if Applicable: N/A No Change

This Protocol involves a Vulnerable Population: N/A (No Vulnerable Population)

Expires: 16 December 2016

*Note, if exempt: If there are no major changes in the research, protocol does not require review on a continuing basis by the IRB. In addition, the protocol may match more than one review category not listed.

Externally funded: No Yes

OSP #: Sponsor:

Thank you for submitting your Request for IRB Review to interview 4 *university supervisors from the UCCS College of Education who participate in the training and preparation of new teachers*. The protocol identified above has been reviewed according to the policies of this institution and the provisions of applicable federal regulations. The review category is noted above, along with the expiration date, if applicable.

Once human participant research has been approved, it is the Principal Investigator's (PI) responsibility to report any changes in research activity related to the project:

The PI must submit all protocol, recruitment, advertising, and consent form amendments/revisions to the IRB for approval.

The IRB must approve these changes prior to implementation.

If you are a student, please note that it is required to include the IRB approval letter to the library when you submit the dissertation/thesis.

The PI must promptly inform the IRB of all unanticipated serious adverse (within 24 hours). All unanticipated adverse events must be reported to the IRB within 1 week (see [45CFR46.103\(b\)\(5\)](#)). Failure to comply with these federally mandated responsibilities may result in suspension or termination of the project.

Renew study with the IRB at least **10 business days prior to expiration**.

Notify the IRB when the study is complete

If you have any questions, please contact Research Integrity Specialist in the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Integrity at 719-255-3903 or irb@uccs.edu

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

Michele Okun, Ph.D.
IRB Reviewer

APPENDIX H

Coding Guide

The following codes were created during the first and second cycles of coding for each case. Codes that are in italics indicate the codes that were similar among cases.

Above and Beyond – these codes relate to the ways in which the first-year teachers sought out more preparation and help during their student teaching and first-year experiences. Codes included:

- **Trainings** – any extra trainings that they attended, including curriculum, classroom management, assessments
- **Extra Time** – refers to extra time spent in the classrooms during student teaching to meet with the teacher, observe in other classrooms, work with students
- **Teammates** – refers to spending time with teammates, asking questions, advice, help for first year
- **Support Staff** – refers to asking questions of special education teachers, gifted and talented teachers, ELL teachers, school counselors
- **Admin** – refers to seeking help from principals, assistant principals

Annual Evaluations – references to annual teacher evaluations

Assessments – reference to testing and assessments implemented in the classroom

Attributes – these codes relate to the attributes of the schools, type of data, and time of year

- **Beginning** – interviews and observations at the beginning of the school year
- **Mid** – interviews and observations at the middle of the school year
- **End** – interviews and observations at the end of the school year
- **Title I** – references to the schools in which they are teaching regarding Title I
- **SPED** – refer to experiences with students in special education
- **ELL** – experiences with students who are English Language Learners
- **GT** – experiences with students who are gifted/talented
- **FRL** – free and/or reduced lunch
- **Interview** – responses in interviews
- **Observations** – data from observations
- **Eval** – data from annual evaluations

Biggest Rewards – refers to the rewards that the first-year teachers identified during their first-year of teaching. Codes include:

- **A-ha Moments** – moments when teachers realized that their students “got it” and learned from their instruction
- **Relationships** – building relationships with students
- **Connections** – connecting with students
- **Community** – creating a community in their own classroom
- **Student Growth** – watching students grow academically over time
- **Confidence** – confidence that built over time as a teacher

Biggest Surprises – includes any surprises first-year teachers identified during the first-year

Change in Strengths – any mention of growth, change from beginning to middle to end of the year

Changed Perceptions – how perceptions of teaching changed from beginning to middle to end of the year

CTQS – Colorado Teacher Quality Standards – used as codes to identify evidence of effective and high-quality teaching in interviews, observations, and evaluations. Codes included:

- **CTQS 1** – evidence of teacher demonstrating mastery of and pedagogical expertise in the content they teach (connecting instruction to standards and curriculum)
- **CTQS 2** – evidence of the teacher establishing a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environment for a diverse population of students (classroom management strategies as well)
- **CTQS 3** – evidence of planning and implementing effective instruction and creating an environment that facilitates learning for all students
- **CTQS 4** – evidence of teachers reflecting on their practice and linking professional growth to goals
- **CTQS 5** – evidence of teachers demonstrating leadership in their schools and contributing knowledge to the teaching profession
- **CTQS 6** – evidence of the teachers taking responsibility for and positively impacting student academic growth

Degree of Emphasis – refers to the area in which first-year teachers received their bachelor’s degree (English, Spanish, Geography, Biology, Communications)

Difference in Schools – identified differences between schools where first-year teachers student taught and where they were hired. Codes within this theme:

- **Montessori** – how training in Montessori impacted first year
- **Personalized Learning** – how personalized learning classroom was different from first year

- **Style** – differences in style between teacher they student taught with and themselves

First-Year Realizations – what first-year teachers realized about themselves and teaching during the first year.

First-Year Teacher Strengths – strengths of the first-year teachers. Identified in interviews with three cases.

- **Passion for Teaching** – refers to the excitement and passion that principals witnessed in first-year teachers
- **Positive Relationships** – refers to the positive relationships that first-year teachers develop with students
- **Technology** – refers to comfort with and expertise in using technology in the classroom
- **Content Knowledge** – refers to knowledge of content and lesson planning in the classroom
- **Lesson Planning** – refers to ability to develop lessons connected to standards
- **Standards** – refers to knowledge of academic standards
- **Natural Ability** – any mention of a natural teaching ability that the first-year teachers possessed
- **Ethic of Care** – refers to the love of children and relationships that are built

Gatekeeping – refers to the process for being admitted into the teacher preparation program. Codes include:

- **GPA** – references to GPA being used to determine program admittance
- **Interviews** – references to importance of interviews in the process

Greatest Challenges – challenges that first-year teachers face. Codes within this theme:

- **Administration** – challenges with administration in the school
- **Classroom Management** – any reference to classroom management, implementing strategies and procedures for students
- **Curriculum** – challenges with learning and implementing curriculum in each subject area
- **Classroom Responsibilities** – references to managing, organizing, and running a classroom
- **Devaluing of Profession** – reference to how teaching is devalued in society
- **Differentiation** – how to meet the specific needs of a diverse group of students from special education to ELL to gifted and talented

- ***Diversity of Schools*** - refers to differences in schools from student teaching to hiring
- **Economic** – low compensation for hard work
- ***Parents*** – references to communicating and dealing with parents
- **Scheduling** – references to creating and implementing successful schedules in the classroom as well as managing time
- **Students Moving In and Out** – challenge of high-turnover in schools

Growth – any reference to how the first-year teacher grew throughout the school year

Hiring Practices – refers to what principals look for in preparation and personalities when hiring new teachers for their schools

Induction – any reference by first-year teachers to the induction program that first-year teachers are in including required seminars, observations, mentors, etc.

Learning – any reference to student learning and how the first-year teachers are impacting students

More to Learn – any reference to what first-year teachers still need to learn

Needs of First-Year Teachers – specific needs of first-year teachers, which became suggestions for improving the teacher preparation program. Codes include:

- ***Classroom Management*** – need for more training in classroom management
- ***Diverse Abilities*** – more training for students of diverse abilities including special education, ELL, and gifted and talented
- ***Differentiation*** – more training needed with differentiating instruction and classroom management
- ***Diverse Settings*** – more training in diverse schools
- ***Curriculum Training*** – references to more training in how to use curriculum
- **Assessment Training** – references to more preparation for state specific assessments
- ***Parents*** – references to how to better communicate with and handle parental interactions

Preparation – From Word Frequency Query – whenever participants mention preparation for teaching

Program Strengths – specific strengths of the teacher preparation program from which the first-year teachers graduated. Areas of best preparation. Codes include:

- ***Academic Standards*** – refers to learning and understanding the academic standards

- **Instruction** – specific coursework that provided teachers with solid preparation
- **CTQS** – experience with the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards
- **Student Teaching Experience** – time and experience student teaching
- **Supervision** – evaluations and observations by university supervisor, cooperating teacher, and site coordinator
- **Foundation** – refers to the baseline foundation that the teacher preparation program provided

Program Weaknesses - needs identified within their teacher preparation program. Codes include:

- **Classes** – references to specific classes that did not offer enough preparation/content
- **Lack of Training** – specific areas where the first-year teachers did not receive enough training
- **Difference in Styles** – disconnect between current schools and schools in which they are now teaching

Reality of Teaching – any reference from the three cases regarding the reality of teaching vs. training

Satisfaction with Prep Program – reference to first-year teachers, principals, and supervisors' satisfaction with the teacher preparation program

Satisfaction with Teaching – references to first-year teachers' satisfaction and decision to become a teacher

Student Growth – evidence of student growth in the classroom.

Team – reference to the teams of teachers that first-year teachers work with

Teacher Attrition – references to high teacher attrition