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A Program Evaluation of a Hiring Process in a School District

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A Program Evaluation of a Hiring Process in a School District

By
Charles Westley Wood

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb University School of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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2014

Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Charles Westley Wood under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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Abstract

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The purpose of this program evaluation was to analyze the effects of the Ventures for Excellence program on the hiring process of a northwestern North Carolina school district. The perceived problem was that in this particular school district there was a need for a hiring instrument that provided a large applicant pool of quality teachers and created an efficient hiring system. There was also a need to have a hiring system that would protect the school district from any legal issues that might arise from the interviewing of teacher applicants.

The setting for this project was a school district located in northwestern North Carolina. This school system implemented the Ventures for Excellence program in 2009. The identified school district was chosen because the researcher was a district-level administrator of the school district and had access and working knowledge of the implementation of the program. Principal leaders were asked to complete a 5-point Likert survey comparing qualities of teachers hired using the program to qualities of excellent teachers. Focus-group interviews of principal leaders were conducted by an appointed proxy.

The study's methodology included survey responses, focus-group interview data, a study of human resources data related to legal issues, and a study of North Carolina Educator Value-Added Assessment data for teachers hired using the program. Findings substantiated that Ventures for Excellence, when used in the district hiring process, was met with different degrees of success in various areas.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Ventures for Excellence (2004) stated, “The selection and on-going development of teachers is the single most important responsibility of school administrators. No school administrator can be truly excellent without continuing to develop great skills in teacher selection and development” (p. 3). School administrators should strive to hire teachers who have the highest potential for success. In many cases, the more successful a teacher is in a school district, the less likely they are to leave (Behrstock & Coggschall, 2009). According to human resources executives, managers, and directors from the private sector, when budgeting funds to spend to improve staff development or to improve the hiring process, an organization should choose the hiring process.

Organizations should hire candidates who are a good match and who share the same cultural values. Behrstock and Coggschall (2009) stated that some skills, such as judgment, adaptability, and people skills, can take years to develop; therefore, it is important to make sure employees have desired skills before they are hired. There are some skills that can be quickly and easily developed but assessing if candidates have them at the time of the hire is more cost-effective than developing them later (Behrstock & Coggschall). The investment for a single teacher’s salary and benefits in many districts could be at least \$45,000 per year, with an average of 10 years. Therefore, the cost of a single teacher over a 10-year period could be a minimum of \$450, 000. Through early and effective recruitment, schools and districts can generate a large applicant pool (Levin & Quinn, 2003). Behrstock and Coggschall suggested that typical tedious hiring processes often cause the most qualified candidates to accept positions in other school districts. If districts streamline human resource systems and develop protocols that lead to strong hiring choices, schools and districts can have a large, more qualified applicant pool. Due

to issues in the hiring process of an organization, some of the stronger candidates are more likely to take a job where the application process and job hire are organized systems (Levin & Quinn, 2003).

Employers today are faced with many challenges when hiring employees. Legal issues and actions taken to not discriminate against potential candidates should be a focus (“Legal Issues Regarding the Hiring Process,” 2011). Discrimination lawsuits based on unfair hiring practices have increased across the United States. Rejected applicants may feel that they were treated differently than other candidates who may have applied for a position. Rejected applicants could interpret this feeling as discrimination. It is the right of the employer to set the qualifications and characteristics of the wanted candidate, but employers must be aware of scrutiny and possible charges of discrimination (“Legal Issues Regarding the Hiring Process,” 2011). Charges of discrimination in hiring are serious issues for employers. Hiring managers undertake tremendous responsibilities when implementing hiring processes. People who come in for a job interview expect to be treated fairly and without discrimination. When a candidate feels that he or she has been treated in a manner that is illegal, charges often arise. Many times discrimination is unintentional (Sandberg, 2008). Employment applications are a valuable tool for hiring, but asking the wrong questions can violate discrimination laws.

The major source of law governing discrimination in employment is Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) reports that the selection process organizations use is responsible for more charges of discrimination than any other employment practice. A major problem in many organizations is that persons conducting interviews have had no training in interviewing. Without proper training, many times unfair preemployment questions are asked that

relate to age, disabilities, family, marital status, national origin, pregnancy, race, color, and relatives (“Legal Issues in Employment Interviewing,” n.d.). The best way to avoid an organization facing issues with discrimination claims in the hiring process is to be sure that all involved in hiring are aware of the laws. Periodic training can prevent such claims.

Looking for a quality candidate can take a tremendous amount of time if the hiring process is not efficient (“The Benefits of Effective Hiring Process Automation,” 2010). Looking through numerous applications can be a major, time-consuming process. In today’s workplace, time is very important to hiring managers and administrators due to other responsibilities related to their job. Having an effective hiring process is extremely important so that managing personnel do not divert from the strategic goals of the organization. The hiring process can be one of the biggest diversions from these goals (“The Benefits of Effective Hiring Process Automation,” 2010).

Nature of the Problem

The most important part of an organization is its ability to attract, hire, and retain the right people (“The Benefits of Effective Hiring Process Automation,” 2010). Research indicates that 33% of teachers leave the profession during the first 3 years of employment and up to 50% of new teachers leave the profession within their 5 five years (Anthony, 2009). A study conducted in Texas concluded that the yearly state turnover rate of 15% of all teachers costs the state around \$329 million a year. Beginning teachers, or those in their first 3 years, were included in the study and had a turnover rate of 40%. The cost calculated to about \$8,000 per teacher. The potential cost to a school district as the result of hiring a poor teacher is enormous. Hiring quality teachers can save substantial amounts of money for school systems (Anthony, 2009).

It is a general understanding that school officials intend to hire good teachers. Most districts solicit applications, screen resumes, and interview candidates. Traditional districts believe they are looking for qualified candidates who will be the right fit for the district. National experts on education, such as the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, state that more often than not districts are looking to fill vacancies quickly rather than focusing on hiring high-quality candidates. The effort that some school officials put into hiring high-quality candidates can vary widely (Lee, 2003). Teacher hiring in some districts typically consists of submitting a resume, passing a background check, and having a teacher license. Candidates are then put in a pool for an interview. There are hiring systems available to be used (O'Brien, 2011). The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement published a newsletter in 2005 entitled "Things to Remember During the Teacher Hiring Season" and stated that school systems could do better when hiring quality candidates. Hiring teachers who have a high potential for success is important educationally in the lives of students. The newsletter also indicated that of all the factors that schools control, teacher quality is the one that most affects student achievement. When you compare the academic growth of students who had an effective teacher versus and an ineffective teacher, the learning gap could be as much as 1 year ("Things to Remember During the Teacher Hiring Season," 2005). Studies show that characteristics of a school, such as the classroom size and certifications of the teacher, do not have much of an effect on student performance. Teacher quality influences student performance more than race, class, or the school a student attends ("Things to Remember During the Teacher Hiring Season," 2005).

Program Setting

The school district chosen for this study is a rural school district in northwestern

North Carolina. The district has hired an average of 70 to 90 teachers per year since the beginning of the 2009 school year. This district is made up of 13 elementary schools, four middle schools, and five high schools. This specified district has approximately 10,600 students, with each elementary, middle, and high school being below the state average in pupils per school.

According to the 2011-2012 North Carolina School Report Card, the subject district spends approximately 83% of total funds on salaries and benefits. District funding, as described in Table 1, is above the state average in federal and state funding but below the state average in local funding.

Table 1

Source of Funding Per Student

	Local Funds	State Funds	Federal Funds
State Average	\$1,904.20	\$5,355.19	\$1,158.10
District Average	\$1,510.15	\$5,509.95	\$1,007.45

Note. Source: North Carolina School Report Card, 2011-2012.

There is only one Local Education Agency (LEA) in this northwestern North Carolina county. The county has an estimated population of 70,000 people (United States Census, 2012). According to the local economic development agency, this school district is the third largest employer in this county. This northwestern North Carolina county has a median income of \$33,478 per person, with 19.2% of people being below the poverty level (United States Census, 2012). Over the last decade, the county has experienced a decrease in economics due to manufacturing leaving the area and businesses closing. The current unemployment rate is 11% (Google Public Data, 2012).

The subject district has a 58% free and reduced lunch status that includes all K-12 schools but has a 76% free and reduced lunch status in Grades K-5. This district consistently performs above the state average in end-of-grade (EOG) and end-of-course (EOC) testing, with the exception of English 1 high school testing. Overall, student proficiency in EOG testing in Grades 3-8 is 72.4% in reading and 84.7% in math. High school EOC testing proficiencies are also above the state averages in Algebra 1 and Biology. The current graduation rate is 90.1% in this school district, which is above the state average and the highest since this data has been collected at the state level.

The subject district teacher turnover rate in 2012 was lower than the state average in the areas of middle and high schools, as seen in Table 2.

Table 2

District Teacher Turnover Rate Compared to the State

	Elementary	Middle	High
District	9%	15%	9%
State	12%	14%	14%

Note. Source: North Carolina School Report Card, 2011-2012.

Approximately, one-fifth of elementary teachers in this district have less than 4 years of experience, followed by 24% at the middle school level and 20% at the high school level according to Table 3.

Table 3

Years of Teaching Experience

	0-3 Years	4-10 Years	10+ Years
Elementary	21%	40%	38%
Middle	24%	21%	55%
High	20%	22%	58%

Note. Source: North Carolina School Report Card, 2011-2012.

Beginning in 2009, this school district began to implement a hiring instrument called Ventures for Excellence. According to the assistant superintendent of human resources and the school superintendent of the subject district, like many districts, it was faced with the challenge of providing an efficient hiring process that produced a large pool of quality candidates.

We felt for sure Ventures would streamline the application process, in that we would post on our vacancies that you must be screened through the Ventures process in order to be considered. This placed the onus on the candidate to contact us rather than our having to sort through thousands of applications. We also struggled with how to get good candidates to surface to the top of the pool. (N. Wilson, personal communication, August 22, 2012)

Another problem that was evident prior to 2009 was a need for a hiring instrument that provided consistent practices for legal protection. Wilson (personal communication, August 22, 2012) stated, “I feel at some point we would have faced legal challenges from applicants not selected for positions. There were too many principals interviewing the same individuals, using very different interviewing techniques.”

This district was also faced with the need to streamline the hiring process for efficient time management and organization.

Purpose

The purpose of this program evaluation was to analyze the effects of the Ventures for Excellence program on the hiring process of a western North Carolina school district. The perceived problem was that in this particular school district there was a need for a hiring instrument that provided a large applicant pool of quality teachers, along with creating an efficient hiring system. There was also a need to have a hiring system that would protect the school district from any legal issues that might arise from the interviewing of teacher applicants. For the purpose of this study, an excellent teacher, as defined by Ventures for Excellence (2004), is a teacher who demonstrates research-based qualities of an excellent and effective teacher. According to Ventures for Excellence, teachers hired who demonstrate these qualities have a higher predictability of teacher success.

Background of the Problem

According to the human resources director of the subject district in 2008, The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction implemented a state-wide application system in the late 1990's. A part of this system allowed applicants to apply specifically by county or statewide. The statewide option generates thousands of applications each year. Often the applicants were not really interested in our district; however, the statewide option made it very easy for them to apply to multiple counties. Our principals spent hours sorting through and calling applicants only to find out they had no interest in [this] County. We were looking for a way to add a step to our application process in order to get those

seriously interested in [this] County and at the same time finding a screener that protected us legally. (N. Wilson, personal communication, August 22, 2012)

According to the superintendent of this district, during 2008, the school system was looking for a tool that would assist with the teacher hiring process, particularly time management. Because of the large number of applicants each school year, district leadership (superintendent, associate superintendent, and associate superintendent of human resources) indicated that at times principals would interview the same candidates as they went through the application process at several different schools within the district. This data led to the perception that the efficiency of the hiring process needed improvement. Legal concerns arose relating to the school system not having a consistent interview tool and process that would ensure all principals were conducting legal interview practices.

Another quality this district was looking for in a hiring instrument was a way for the district to screen applicants not only for their credentials but for an indication of qualities the teacher might demonstrate in the classroom prior to employment. The superintendent, associate superintendent, and assistant superintendent of human resources felt that if more quality candidates were hired, time and money would be saved while increasing the retention rate of teachers.

During the 2008 school year, the school superintendent began a series of conversations with the associate superintendent and assistant superintendent of human resources about what the school system was looking for in a hiring process and how it could be implemented. The consensus was to locate an instrument that would provide a common hiring process, produce quality applicants and quality hires, and establish a hiring process for legal protection. Other topics of discussion included who would be

trained from the district, the training model, and how the project would be funded.

The human resource director supervising the implementation of Ventures for Excellence had previously worked in another North Carolina school district that used a similar hiring instrument. The director felt that this hiring instrument was reliable and provided information about applicant qualities before the applicant was hired.

The [nearby] County School District used the system in the 80's. At the time it was called the Teacher Perceiver. I worked for [nearby] County during that time and remembered that it was a very reliable indicator of who you were hiring. Several school districts across the United States and particularly in the southeast were contacted for references (N. Wilson, personal communication, August, 22 2012).

According to the human resources director in 2008, discussion was generated between herself and the school system superintendent concerning Ventures for Excellence. Contact was then made between the human resources director and a representative of Ventures for Excellence. A list of references for the program was provided, with one of them being a neighboring school district. The human resources director contacted the neighboring school district in North Carolina for a reference and overview of the Ventures for Excellence interview system. This district was the first school district in North Carolina to use Ventures for Excellence. According to the human resources director, several school districts in Ohio were contacted as well. The purpose of the Ohio contacts was to get an opinion of the Ventures for Excellence company service (N. Wilson, personal communication, March 19, 2013). During the spring of 2008, three principals, consisting of two elementary principals and one high school principal, along with the human resources director, were trained in the Ventures for

Excellence instrument. The goal of this training was to have four certified Ventures for Excellence interviewers in the school district. The training was held in an adjacent school district. The Ventures for Excellence interview process was piloted by these principals and the human resources director during the 2008-2009 school year. During the spring and summer of 2009, all school principals and assistant principals in this northwestern North Carolina school district were trained in the Ventures for Excellence interview instrument. The expectation was set that Ventures for Excellence would be used as a system-wide hiring instrument (L. Joines, personal communication, March 13, 2013).

The training of all school administrators produced a set of procedures that have been followed since the beginning of the 2009 school year. As teacher vacancies became available, these vacancies were posted in the human resources section of the school system website. Interested candidates completed an online application that also contained a written screener interview “Form B” produced by Ventures for Excellence. The screener consisted of seven questions that addressed purpose, relationships, teaching strategies, and learner outcomes. After completing the screener, a human resources representative reviewed the application and screener questions. In order for an applicant to move to the formal Ventures for Excellence interview, the candidate had to score a minimum of three of a possible seven points. An applicant received a point for a question if the content of their answers matched the response guide provided by Ventures for Excellence.

All candidates who scored a minimum of three points on the screener moved to the formal interview using the Ventures for Excellence instrument. Candidate names and demographic information were placed in an applicant database (Appendix A). The

school system worked with an independent contractor to establish this database. The database would notify certified Ventures for Excellence interviewers at random to complete the formal interview process. An interviewer would contact an applicant to arrange either an interview by phone or in person. An interview would take approximately 45 to 60 minutes and would consist of 30 scripted questions (L. Joines, personal communication, March 19, 2013). The interview addressed four themes: purpose, relationships, teaching/learning, and specialty areas. According to Ventures for Excellence (2004), the 30 questions were designed around their research of qualities of excellent teachers.

Prior to the interview, eight introductory questions were asked of each candidate to set the ground rules. The formal Ventures for Excellence interview process followed the same process as the teacher screener instrument. In order for a candidate to receive a point for an answer, the content of the candidate response had to match the candidate response guide for the 30-question interview. Interviewers were encouraged to record interviews for accuracy. Answers to interviews were recorded in the school system online database where the total points acquired by each candidate were calculated. A candidate who received a total of up to six points was considered by Ventures for Excellence to have a very low predictability of success. A candidate who received a total of 7-11 points was considered to have a low predictability of success. A candidate who received a total of 12-15 points was considered to have a moderate predictability of success. Finally, a candidate who received 16 or more points was considered to have a high predictability of success.

Applicant data were stored in the database and were available to all school administrators to review as school vacancies became available. The data could be sorted

by certification area and by total points scored by candidates. Since each candidate available in the database was scored by certified Ventures for Excellence interviewers, if a school administrator needed to fill a vacancy, an additional formal interview was not necessary.

The hiring process of this district began in the year 2009 and continued until the 2011-2012 school year. The Ventures for Excellence interview instrument and database are still being used. Candidates are no longer interviewed at random by a qualified interviewer but are interviewed by the hiring manager of a particular school with a vacancy. A retired school administrator has also been hired, effective January 2013, as a part-time Ventures for Excellence interviewer. This employee is a certified interviewer. According to the employee, most of the 15-20 employment hours per week are spent interviewing candidates who are considered to be a district need. These positions include Spanish teachers, special education teachers, and middle school teachers. The employee also interviews all current student teachers who are working in district schools in order to get an understanding of their potential service to the district (M. Dancy, personal communication, March 26, 2013). Ventures for Excellence scores are then reported to the current human resources director for record keeping and input into the system-wide database.

Definitions

North Carolina end-of-course (EOC) test. The North Carolina EOC tests are used to sample a student's knowledge of subject-related concepts as specified in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and to provide a global estimate of the student's mastery of the material in a particular content area (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI], 2013a).

North Carolina end-of-grade (EOG) test. The North Carolina EOG tests are designed to measure student performance on the goals, objectives, and grade-level competencies specified in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCDPI, 2013b).

Educator Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS). A system that describes the academic growth effect an individual teacher has on a composite classroom from year to year (SAS Institute Inc., 2008).

Local Education Agency (LEA). As defined by the United States Department of Education (2013), a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a state for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a state, or for a combination of school districts or counties that is recognized in a state as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools.

North Carolina School Report Card. Offers a snapshot of some important information about individual schools (NCreportcards.org).

Summary

Sophisticated rating scales, such as the Ventures for Excellence, have been used for teacher selection. Ventures for Excellence was developed to accurately predict teacher success. Ventures for Excellence selection tool scores are then considered as factors in the determination of quality teacher candidates in the teacher selection process. If educator effectiveness could be predicted by analyzing character traits and Ventures for Excellence is an accurate instrument, then administrators could select better quality teachers to enhance the school climate and increase student achievement (Clemons, 2010).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Recognizing the impact of teachers on student achievement is important in making decisions about possible teacher candidates. Reviewing research on traits of quality teachers and what makes them successful in the classroom helps determine the characteristics of an effective teacher (Clemons, 2010). One of the purposes of this program evaluation was to explore the effects of a teacher hiring instrument in relation to hiring high-quality teachers in a northwestern North Carolina school district.

Teacher Purpose

Excellent teachers have a clear sense of purpose by providing excellent learning and growth opportunities for all students. These teachers think positively and demonstrate enthusiasm about the potential success of each student. Excellent teachers see student growth as one of the most important reasons for teaching. Social skills and the development of self-responsibility are of high importance. Excellent teachers are committed to helping students learn that they are capable of reaching their academic goals by promoting self-affirmation (Ventures for Excellence, 2004).

John Hattie (2003) studied classrooms across the United States to identify qualities of effective teachers. Hattie's research was driven by the goal of ascertaining the attributes of excellence. In Hattie's research, many variances were studied to determine their impact on student achievement. Factors studied included the student, home, school, principal, peer effects, and teachers.

Hattie (2003) determined that the student accounts for 50% of the variance of achievement. The correlation between ability and achievement are high; thus, bright students have steeper trajectories of learning. Hattie determined that the home accounts for 5-10% of the variance of achievement. The home effects are more related to the level

of expectation and encouragement. Hattie determined that the school also accounts for 5-10% of the variance of achievement. Attributes of the school which impact achievement include finances, school size, class size, and the school building. Hattie determined that the principal had minimal direct impact on student learning. The effect on learning is trickled down to students because of the principal's influence on school climate and atmosphere. Hattie determined that peer effects account for 5-10% of the variance of achievement. Students have a minimal effect on student achievement.

Hattie (2003) concluded that over 30% of student achievement is directly related to the teacher in the classroom. Other than the student, the teacher has the most influence on the success of a student's education when compared to other factors such as the home, peer relations, the school, and school administration. Hattie determined that the teacher controls many influences in the classroom such as feedback, instructional quality, class environment, and overall classroom goals. Regardless of the style and personality of good teachers, there is a degree of similar inherent qualities that set them apart as being excellent. Excellent teachers have a sense of purpose that inspires them as they grow in their career. This sense of purpose drives the focus of the classroom and student outcomes (Hassett, 2006).

The studies of Richard Allington and Peter Johnston (2000) concluded effective classroom instruction has been identified as critical for fostering student achievement. It was also concluded that differences in teaching practice can lead to more or less student achievement. Studies with the National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement concluded that instructional programs are less important than the nature of the teacher in the classroom providing the education to students. Allington and Johnston studied small groups of upper elementary classrooms and researched literature of

exemplary teachers. Allington and Johnston were less interested in the studies that compared different curricula and more interested in studies that attempted to delve into the complicated arena of good teaching. Research conducted by Allington and Johnston included observations, interviews, and surveys of 95 teachers. This research was conducted on fourth-grade teachers of two schools in the same school district. While each teacher worked with similar curriculum materials and operated under common achievement expectations, Allington and Johnston found that the teachers did not have the same effectiveness. Differences in these teaching practices translated into more or less student achievement. Many of the practices of the effective teachers included providing explicit instruction, using classroom routines, challenging students, creating an engaging classroom environment, creating a safe and supportive environment, and displaying student work.

Documented by the studies of Allington and Johnston (2000), there were common personal characteristics of effective teachers. Effective teachers promote a warm, caring, flexible, and motivating environment. Effective teachers demonstrate sensitivity to student needs, demonstrate enthusiasm, and show concern for problems and issues that might arise in the life of a student. The promotion of high expectations and relevant instruction were also a common characteristic of effective teachers (Allington & Johnston).

According to Metcalfe and Game (2006), vitality of the classroom comes from the energy a teacher creates with the students. Classroom enthusiasm is created by teacher passion. When students in the classroom recognize this enthusiasm, it makes them curious, leading to student-led learning (Metcalfe & Game). Andrew Metcalfe and Ann Game from the University of South Wales conducted a research project entitled *Teachers*

Who Change Lives. The research project was based on interviews of 13 individuals and 22 teachers. Non-teacher interviewees were invited to talk about their experiences of life-changing teachers. Teacher interviewees were asked to talk about their own teaching practices and experiences. The purpose of this project was to develop an understanding between the relationship between students and effective, engaging learning and teaching. This research concluded that good teachers create a shared enthusiasm between the teacher and the student. Many people remember excellent teachers who demonstrated dynamic enthusiasm from their education experience. It was determined from the teacher interviews of the study by Metcalfe and Game that teachers do not always realize the impact their enthusiasm had on the education of the students they taught in their career. Teachers are not enthusiastic because they have knowledge that can be dispensed to students but, rather, are enthusiastic because they are still eager to learn as adults. Teachers promote this trait to their students which makes them excellent teachers (Metcalfe & Game).

Hal Urban (2008) stated there are other words similar to enthusiasm such as zest, eagerness, liveliness, excitement, enjoyment, vitality, energy, delight, vigor, fervor, zeal, and devotion. When a student refers that a teacher is *fun*, they do not mean that the teacher lacks the promotion of rigor or effectiveness. The student simply means that the teacher enjoys his/her profession. The enjoyment impacts the culture of the classroom (Urban). Urban conducted surveys during 2006 and 2007 as he visited educational conferences and schools across the United States. Urban's study indicated two types of enthusiasm: enthusiasm for kids and enthusiasm for learning. Good teachers share both types. Urban also investigated over 40 research studies on teacher enthusiasm, all grades, through experiments, surveys, observations, case studies, and interviews. His research

showed that enthusiasm is a top quality of excellent teachers.

Having a sense of humor is an important aspect of teacher enthusiasm. A sense of humor is described as the ability to enjoy funny things that surround a person daily. Most teachers have fun in their classrooms by working hard outside the classroom preparing for instruction (Urban, 2008).

Teacher attitude has a profound impact on teacher practices and behaviors. Having a positive attitude demonstrates kindness, shared responsibility, acceptance of diversity, and creativity and fosters individualized instruction (Gourneau, 2005). Gourneau (2005) indicated the importance of indwelling an attitude of shared responsibility in the classroom to promote student achievement. Effective teachers have an attitude of creating learning processes where students take responsibility for learning. Effective teachers promote an attitude of acceptance when it comes to diversity. An accepted attitude can change the self-esteem and confidence of a student when teachers show support and appreciation. Effective teachers also have an attitude to promote individualized instruction by preparing motivating activities and motivating lessons. This is critical for active involvement in student learning (Gourneau).

Cathy Lawson (n.d.) stated that children are born with social competencies just as they are born with other strengths and weaknesses. Failing socially can be more painful for a student than failing academically. Therefore, school is not only a place where academics are learned but it is a place where students interact and develop social and life skills. Social skill weaknesses should be identified early because this could lead to lifelong issues such as misbehavior, aggressiveness, withdrawal, bullying, and teasing (Lawson). Students are constantly grading each other on how they interact with each other.

Lawson (n.d.) also concluded that if students do well socially, they are liked by their peers, they do well in school, and student attendance is better. Excellent teachers see the amount of time they spend with students as an opportunity for students to learn valuable social skills encouraged and taught by teachers. Excellent teachers instruct students on fundamental social skills such as greetings, initiating conversation, listening, empathizing, reading social cues, and apologizing. In many cases, social and communication skills are taught by cooperative learning opportunities facilitated by the teacher (Lawson).

Excellent teachers help students develop the ability to make appropriate choices that lead to self-responsibility. McCombs's (n.d.) research studies have shown that excellent teachers use instructional activities to teach self-responsibility. Excellent teachers connect learning with student interest, cooperative learning, giving students a voice, and providing students with data-related feedback. McCombs's studies also have shown that excellent teachers build self-responsibility in students by providing students with opportunities to make their own choices, opportunities to ask questions, praising students for successes, and involving students in curriculum objectives.

Richard Allington and Peter Johnston (2000) studied 95 teachers and documented common characteristics in excellent teachers that consisted of having a positive attitude, demonstrating enthusiasm, developing social skills, and developing self-responsibility. Their research demonstrated that these characteristics contribute to identifying the purpose of an excellent teacher.

Relationships

Excellent teachers manifest expertise in human relationship skills, prizing interacting with people in a caring and supportive manner. Teachers who possess strong

teacher-to-student relationship skills identify with the feelings and thoughts of students in empathetic and helpful ways (Ventures for Excellence, 2004). Relationships in the classroom have an impact on student achievement because the brain does not separate cognitive from emotion. When psychological needs are met by teachers developing one-on-one relationships, students want to perform at their best. Excellent teachers focus on fulfilling emotional needs of students which increases student motivation to learn. Students are motivated when they have belief that their teachers care about them and respect them (Rogers & Renard, 1999). In any classroom, it is important to have balanced relationships. Relationship balance is the exact point in which students feel cared for in appropriate ways and they also know they must respect the teacher (Rigsbee, 2010).

Nancy Hall and Phillip Hall (2003) discovered that strong relationships can change and alter student lives. Hall and Hall further studied an intervention program that had been put in place for 6 years to determine its effectiveness in helping students be successful. The study concluded that only a handful of participants were able to turn their lives around from participating in this program. Participants who were successful were further evaluated and it was discovered that their successes were contributed to having one thing in common. Each student had developed a special relationship with an adult. These adults valued students, treated them as individuals, and expressed their faith concerning their abilities to succeed.

Excellent teachers seek first to understand the students they teach in their classroom by developing positive relationships (Rogers & Renard, 1999). Student relationship building begins with the aura of the teacher on day one. These actions include greeting students, making eye contact when addressing students, or by just a

simple touch. Excellent teachers also develop positive relationships by sharing stories about themselves and providing a sense of family and teacher commitment. Student connections can be made by teachers being good listeners and paying attention to student concerns, problems, and issues, even if they seem petty or unimportant (Rigsbee, 2010).

Several standards undergird relationship-centered teaching that excellent teachers exhibit. Students must feel safe, valued, successful, involved, and cared for. Students must feel safe from physical danger and embarrassment. According to the research of Eric Jenson by Rogers and Renard (1999), learning depends on removing the threats from the classroom. Threats might include the possibility of embarrassment, sarcasm towards students, and an environment that it is not ok for risk taking. Everyone has a basic need to be loved and to belong. Excellent teachers show that they value and care for students by being sincere listeners and by valuing student responses. Students must also feel involved for strong relationships to develop. Students feel involved when they have a meaningful stake in what is going on in the classroom. Excellent teachers provide this when they allow students to make choices regarding instructional methods, content, assessments, and evaluation. Rubric-designed activities provide evidence of this standard (Rogers & Renard).

Strong student relationships also have an impact on classroom management and discipline provided by the teacher. Marzano and Marzano (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of 100 individual studies. Marzano and Marzano found that the quality of the teacher-student relationship is the key to successful classroom management. Teachers who had a high-quality relationship with their students had 31% fewer discipline problems over a typical school year than teachers with low-quality relationships. According to Marzano and Marzano, student relationships that contribute to effective

classroom management are characterized by teachers who display an appropriate level of dominance, cooperation, and being aware of student needs. Dominance is the teacher's ability to provide clear purpose, strong guidance in academics, and strong guidance in behavior. Excellent teachers establish this by providing clear expectations and learning goals. Cooperation is characterized by showing the concern for the needs and opinions of others. Excellent teachers create an environment where the teacher and students are seen as functioning as a team. Students are given a voice in instructional decisions. Marzano and Marzano stated that 12-22% of all students suffer from mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders. Excellent teachers build strong relationships with a caring attitude by refraining from criticism, rewarding small successes, giving students responsibilities, and by acknowledging extracurricular activities in and out of school. A key to developing strong student relationships while providing effective classroom management is to not always focus on student punishment but to teach appropriate responses when students need discipline. Excellent teachers reflect on how they respond when students do something inappropriate because this sets the tone for positive student relationships (Hall & Hall, 2003).

Students are more likely to succeed in learning when they feel connected to school. This is crucial during adolescent years and has a substantial effect on student achievement. School connectedness refers to an academic environment in which students believe that adults in the school care about their learning and about them as individuals (Blum, 2005). Blum (2005) stated that 40-60% of students do not feel connected to school and that a positive teacher-to-student relationship is the key influential factor for students to feel connected to school. Teachers are the key factors in this equation and must create a classroom culture that creates meaningful learning, consistent structure,

consistent expectations, practices student decision making, and recognizes student achievements.

Establishing a rapport or caring relationship can dramatically change student behavior, effort, and performance. Having a rapport means that two people are alike physiologically and emotionally. Excellent teachers have a genuine desire to build a relationship with all students. Students respond positively to teachers when they like their teachers (Mendes, 2003). Judith Deiro (2003) studied six excellent teachers for almost two years on how they developed strong relationships with students. What she observed was that teachers who developed strong relationships with students always considered their tone of voice when speaking to students, earned the respect of students, helped students learn from their mistakes without feeling judged, and focused on classroom discipline as a learning experience. Caring is not just a way of acting but it is a way of thinking. Caring implies a relationship. Demonstrating care to students is different than showing care in other relationships. In most relationships, reciprocal caring is expected. In teacher-to-student relationships, excellent teachers take the majority of the responsibility (Deiro).

Classroom relationships build community and a learning environment. Student-centered teachers educate the whole child, helping to mold moral identities. Healthy relationships are formed by showing students genuine interest in what they are doing in school. This could be done by providing a curriculum to students that is interesting, creative, purposeful, communal, and relevant. Engaged learning and strong student relationships go hand-in-hand (Wolk, 2003). Several characteristics shape caring student relationships. Power between the student and teacher should be asymmetrical with the teacher being the change agent in the classroom. Excellent teachers give more and hold

most of the power. Excellent teachers also plan for the growth of all students by planning curricular activities that produce student growth. Students feel teachers show care when they honor their opinions, see them as worthy, and sincerely listen when needed (Deiro, 2003). Students care less about teacher credentials or awards; they just want to know that a teacher cares about them. Good teachers love their kids but maybe not their actions at every moment. They enjoy being with, connecting with, and helping students and enjoy their energy (Urban, 2008).

Teaching and Learning

Excellent teachers are insightful about what motivates others and are perceptive about using approaches that will bring out the best in students. Excellent teachers are versatile in utilizing high student involvement to ensure learning. The teacher is able to clearly document learning outcomes (Ventures for Excellence, 2004).

When students are taught beyond basic concepts of the curriculum, they are taught creativity, common sense, wisdom, ethics, dedication, honesty, teamwork, hard work, and lifelong learning. Excellent teachers assess what students need to become active, engaged citizens (Stenberg, 2008). Today's classrooms are filled with diverse learners who differ not only culturally but also in prior experiences, academic abilities, and learning preferences which call for a need for differentiated instruction.

Differentiated instruction is a process to approach teaching and learning for students of differing abilities in the same class. The intent of differentiation is to maximize each student's growth and individual success by meeting each student where he or she is, rather than expecting students to modify themselves for the curriculum. Excellent teachers differentiate by adjusting the content, the process of learning, or the product for assessment (Huebner, 2010).

Excellent teachers combine differentiation with assessment practices to help students envision quality work, measure their own success, and set goals (Dobbertin, 2012). Carol Ann Tomlinson (2007) explained that excellent teachers have specific understandings about classroom assessment.

- Informative assessment is not just about tests. Authentic assessment gives students multiple ways for students to express their learning and to show what they know. Informative assessment engages students.
- Informative assessment is not just about the grade book. Assessment is not about judging students, but guiding students. Giving feedback is more productive than just giving a grade.
- Informative assessment is not always formal. Informative assessment occurs anytime there is a search of information about a student, such as student journals, monitoring student work, antidotal notes, and spot checks.
- Informative assessment is not separate from the curriculum. Assessment is part of the curriculum design process. Assessments should be designed from the curriculum and then used to guide instruction.
- Assessments should take place throughout the unit, not just at the end. If assessments are only given at the end, they cannot guide instruction during the unit.
- Informative assessment is not an end in itself. Informative assessment gives teachers the capacity to be better teachers and allows the teachers to see what the students are not grasping at a given moment.
- Informative assessment is not separate from instruction. Formative assessment helps teachers understand the need for differentiation. If teachers

know the precise learning destination and consistently check to see where students are relative to that destination, differentiation is not just an option, but is the logical step in teaching.

- Informative assessment is not just about finding weaknesses. Assessments can be used to focus on student interest, learning preferences, and positives.
- Informative assessment is not just for the teacher. Assessments help build partnerships in learning between the teacher and student and also promote better learners who focus on clear learning objectives.

Assessment is most valuable when used as a part of the teaching and learning process to provide feedback on individual learning difficulties. This process is described as mastery learning. Excellent teachers model the process by organizing skills into units to be taught, provide high quality instruction, and use formative assessments to provide targeted intervention (Guskey, 2010).

Excellent teachers allow students a voice in their instruction. If students are allowed to choose what they study, they will be motivated to learn. A 2008 meta-analysis of 41 studies found a strong link between giving students choice and student performance. When direct instruction is combined with student choice, students gain more content knowledge than when taught by traditional teaching practices (Goodwin, 2010).

Excellent teachers have an understanding of student motivation. Students develop their abilities long term when they are motivated intrinsically (Goodwin, 2010). Unmotivated students perform poorly, learn little, and often exhibit disruptive behaviors. Internal motivation is fueled by the natural drive within a student, while external motivation relies on rewards and punishment. Internal motivation guides all behavior.

Excellent teachers recognize that student needs contribute to the source of internal motivation. Such needs include the need to feel physically and emotionally safe, the need of love and belonging, the need of freedom, and the need to have fun (Erwin, 2003).

Excellent teachers do not use the carrot approach of external motivation. Goodwin (2010) examined a study that involved 18,000 students from four United States cities. The 18,000 students were offered a total of \$6.3 million dollars in rewards for improvement in attendance, behavior, and grades. The study showed no improvements. Only short-term changes were noted. No students mentioned an increase in study habits or homework completion. Across the United States, the number of students who have enrolled in high school advanced placement courses has increased by 50% from 2004 to 2009; however, the pass rates have plunged as low as 6% in some school systems due to the fact that students have not been motivated (Goodwin, 2012).

When students connect schoolwork to their strengths and interests, change happens (Clarke, 2012). Excellent teachers personalize learning by connecting the curriculum to topics that interest students the most. Personalized learning means allowing students to choose their own paths as the curriculum is taught. Helping students connect course goals to their own passions is a key ingredient to success. Excellent teachers do this by probing conversations, directing students to resources that might spark interest, and encouraging students to share their passions. Personalized learning requires students to reflect deeply on their effort and to assess their own work and progress (Richardson, 2012).

Excellent teachers promote fairness. Creating fairness takes an everyday effort. Not promoting fairness can impact all students in the classroom (Saitz, n.d.). Fairness is a complex concept. Student perceptions are influenced by many variables such as age,

culture, context, relationships, understandings, and adult direction (Welch, 2000).

Students need and appreciate consistency and are quick to characterize teachers as unfair.

Negative impressions that educators may send to students have long-term effects on student performance. Students who experience an unfair environment may experience anxiety and disengagement from the classroom (Gottfried, 2007). Problems arise when educators show differences in how they treat students. Strategies that promote equity promote student achievement. Strategies that do not promote equity promote disillusionment, distrust, and disengagement (DiMartino & Miles, 2004). Excellent teachers ensure fairness by using self-assessment methods and strategies that ensure fairness such as when calling on students, grading, rewarding, and interacting with students (Saitz, n.d.). Excellent teachers reflect back on student feelings, respond to student unfairness concerns with consistency, teach fairness, and develop a caring cooperative classroom (Welch, 2000).

Excellent teachers promote lifelong learning. Education reform emphasizes the need for the development of skills and attitudes and a capacity for lifelong learning. Educators play a critical role in promoting development of lifelong learner skills (Lord et al., 2010). Teachers have the duty to impress upon their students the importance and value of lifelong learning. Lifelong learners typically exhibit love of learning for their own sakes, voluntarily participate in learning activities, reflect, and demonstrate self-directive skills (Helterbran, 2005). Developing a learning environment and activities that foster lifelong learning is not a simple task. Excellent teachers are skilled in facilitation pedagogy that engages students in self-direction (Lord et al., 2010). Teachers must promote activities that are interesting, applicable, and connected to the world to help develop lifelong learning (Helterbran, 2005).

Interview-Rating Systems to Select Quality Teachers

A growing number of school districts in the United States are using interview-rating systems to assist in selecting quality teacher candidates for employment. Ventures for Excellence, Gallup Teacher Insight, and the STAR Teacher are such examples of interview-rating systems being used (Clemons, 2010). Teacher interview-rating systems have become more prevalent and the process used to hire teachers has changed. The changes are due to the influence of quality teaching on student achievement (Clemons, 2010).

Previously, teachers have been assessed based on submitted resumes, interview skills, and experience; however, there has been a shift to identify teacher candidates based on character traits (Clemons, 2010). Research of Sanders and Rivers (1996) determined that hiring teachers with certain character traits could promote student achievement. Character traits are now evaluated along with job applications, resumes, letters of recommendation, and transcripts.

One such hiring instrument that predicts to measure candidate character traits is Ventures for Excellence. Ventures for Excellence claims that their structured interview is only one piece of a candidate assessment, but it is the most important. Ventures for Excellence was founded in 1978 by Dr. Vic Cottrell after 30 years of studying qualities of excellent teachers (Ventures for Excellence, 2004).

According to Ventures for Excellence (2004), children learn best when the following 16 behaviors are modeled by teachers:

1. The teacher is highly committed to their intellectual and emotional growth.
2. The teacher is empathetic and caring toward them.
3. They are accepted as unique individuals.

4. There are high expectations for all students.
5. Positive relationships are built in the classroom.
6. They are listened to and involved in two-way sharing with the teacher.
7. There is support for them as individuals.
8. The teacher is highly committed to their intellectual and emotional growth.
9. Learning is structured around a process which includes knowledge about the students, clarity on what is to be learned, guided practice, checking for understanding and adjustment of the learning process for those students who need it.
10. Learning is tied to experience and real world application.
11. Learning is tied to their interests.
12. They are active participants in the learning.
13. They see the connection between what is being taught and their present life.
14. They take responsibility for their own behavior and learning.
15. Teaching strategies, well documented by research, are used consistently.
16. The building administrator facilitates teachers in being learning specialists.

Each of the 16 teacher-modeled behaviors is an area addressed in the Ventures for Excellence structured interview system.

In 2004, Ventures for Excellence answered three questions behind the concepts of the Ventures for Excellence interviews: (1) what is a Ventures for Excellence interview; (2) how does Ventures for Excellence arrive at a decision regarding the questions to be asked; and (3) how does this analysis process convert into a score? Ventures for Excellence (2004) explained that the Ventures for Excellence interview is a set of open-ended questions that allow for individual interviewee interpretation. The questions are

designed to determine follow-through behaviors of teacher candidates and potential for being a quality teacher. The questions are developed through a process that works with professionals to determine the ideal employee for a given position. Ventures for Excellence then states the ideal employee is evaluated and analyzed for specific qualities that make him/her an ideal employee to generate correct questions. The interviewer must be able to identify the most dominant life themes of each applicant. Once identified, the interviewer must study the responses to every question posed to the applicant. The three dominant themes found in the Ventures for Excellence interview are purpose, relationships, and teaching/learning strategies. A given question is likely to be predictable if at least 50% of excellent employees reveal the theme when responding to a given question.

The Gallup Organization was a company founded by George Gallup in 1935. The primary focus of the Gallup Organization has been to assess public opinion in areas of political, social, and economic issues (Clemons, 2010). Since 1935, the Gallup Organization has grown in many different areas of research including education. The organization has focused on offering assistance with selection, development, and improvement of school culture (Clemons, 2010).

The Teacher Insight interview-rating system developed by the Gallup Organization is an automated online interview system used by many school districts to help identify quality teachers. The Teacher Insight does not replace personal interviews but allows districts to identify the best potential teacher candidates so that more time can be spent on a formal traditional interview (Gallup Organization, 2010).

The Gallup Organization (2010) teacher interview-rating system consists of three types of questions: multiple choice, forced-choice, and Likert questions. First are

multiple choice questions in which a candidate has 50 seconds to choose a response that best describes them. The second type of questions on the Teacher Insight tool are forced-type questions. Candidates are given two statements in which one must be chosen within 50 seconds that best describes the candidate. Third, candidates have 20 seconds to read a statement and to respond using a Likert scale. Possible responses include strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree (Gallup Organization).

The Gallup Organization (2010) recommended that school systems use the Teacher Insight interview as one piece of information when making a hiring decision. Decisions on who to formally interview from Teacher Insight scores are made locally by school districts according to school district policies and procedures.

Another common teacher interview-rating system used throughout the United States is the Star Teacher Selection Interview developed by Dr. Martin Haberman. The Star Teacher Interview System was developed after 30 years of research. Dr. Haberman claims that the Star Teacher Interview System can identify potential successful multicultural teachers by using an interview process (Haberman Educational Foundation, 2006). Martin Haberman, professor of education and researcher on the study of excellent teachers, believed that teachers are the most important factor when it comes to student achievement (Becoats, 2009).

According to the Haberman Educational Foundation (2006), applicant scores on this instrument correlate highly with their success as first-year teachers in multicultural classrooms. Questions on the interview address seven different teacher characteristics. These characteristics include persistence, response to authority, application of generalizations, approach to at-risk students, personal/professional orientation, burnout, and fallibility. The seven functions are divided into two subparts resulting in a total of 14

characteristics that result in an overall profile of a potential candidate (Haberman Educational Foundation).

The Star Teacher Interview System is made up of 50 questions. A candidate is given a total of three possible answers for each question in which one answer must be selected before moving on to the next question. The interview system evaluates teacher knowledge and skills when it comes to teaching low-income students (Haberman Educational Foundation, 2006). The Haberman Educational Foundation (2006) claimed that the instrument boasts a 95% accuracy rate in predicting which teachers will stay and succeed and which ones will fail or quit. High success rates result from the ability of the scenario-based interview to give a clear picture of the candidate's beliefs about teaching at-risk youth and to predict how a candidate will behave on the job.

This type of interview has been used as a basis for establishing interview systems based on characteristics of excellent teachers. These characteristics have been used in determining if a teacher has the potential to be successful in the classroom (Clemons, 2010).

Research Questions

1. How has the implementation of Ventures for Excellence impacted the efficiency of the hiring process in this school district?
2. How has the implementation of Ventures for Excellence impacted the hiring of high-quality teachers in this school district?
3. How have legal issues associated with hiring practices of this school district been affected by the implementation of Ventures for Excellence?

Summary

According to Clemons (2010), school administrators have always looked for ways

to hire teachers who will enhance school climate and increase student achievement.

School districts may receive hundreds of teaching applications per year. In order to fill the position with the most highly qualified candidate, school administrators may use a variety of methods, ranging from interviews to candidate-rating systems.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the Ventures for Excellence interview instrument in the hiring process of a northwestern North Carolina school district. This study examined the benefits and limitations of the Ventures for Excellence instrument. The goals of the program were

- To provide a hiring tool that assist hiring managers in selecting candidates who have a potential to be of high quality,
- To provide a hiring tool that is streamlined and efficient, and
- To provide a hiring tool that prevents legal issues that might occur due to an ineffective interview system.

Rationale of the Study

The researcher chose a management-oriented program evaluation model for this evaluation. The researcher, along with district-level administration, will use the program evaluation as a resource to determine effectiveness of the program. The management-oriented approach was designed for decision makers, such as district-level administration (Robinson, 2002).

The management-oriented model chosen for the study followed Stufflebeam's CIPP Model. The CIPP model of evaluation was developed by Daniel Stufflebeam and colleagues in the 1960s (Robinson, 2002). The core concepts denoted by the model were program contexts, inputs, processes, and products. The objective of context was to define the purpose of the program being implemented as it relates to the current state of the school district. The input evaluation determined the program design. The process evaluation was used to determine how well the program was being implemented, while the product evaluation provided information on what program results were obtained and

how well they met the program's context (Angelove & Weas, 2009).

Participants

Participants in this study included 12 elementary principals, four middle school principals, and four high school principals who served as hiring managers of schools in the district. All participants had been trained in the Ventures for Excellence instrument. Permission to conduct research in the district was provided by the superintendent of schools (Appendix B).

Instruments

The researcher used a proxy for focus-group interviews. The proxy was an employed human resources specialist from the school district. The proxy had not been trained in the Ventures for Excellence instrument and, therefore, did not interject personal bias. The focus groups were divided into three groups that consisted of elementary school principals, middle school principals, and high school principals. The proxy was provided instruction (Appendix C) in proper procedures for conducting a focus-group interview as well as a focus-group script and questionnaire (Appendix D). The interview survey included the following questions:

1. Explain the circumstances that gave rise to Ventures for Excellence being implemented in this school district.
2. How has the Ventures for Excellence hiring process impacted the time you spend filling a vacant position?
3. The components of the Ventures for Excellence program include applicant screener, Ventures 30-question interview, and applicant database managed by the district human resources department. Which components do you think are effective and which components do you feel are ineffective?

4. What are the main difficulties with implementing Ventures for Excellence?
5. Should the program be continued? Why or why not?

Focus-group responses were divided and tagged by key words and phrases. One Likert scale survey (Appendix E) that was created by Ventures for Excellence was administered to principal administrators in the district. The purpose of the survey was to compare qualities of teachers hired using Ventures for Excellence to qualities of excellent teachers.

Research Questions and Method of Data Collection

Quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used to answer the research questions. From the quantitative perspective, EVAAS reports of teachers hired using Ventures for Excellence were reviewed and summarized for the years 2009, 2010, and 2011. In addition to EVAAS data, Likert scale surveys were given to hiring managers. The purpose of the surveys was to determine how qualities of teachers hired with the Ventures for Excellence instrument compare to the qualities of excellent teachers. From the qualitative perspective, one proxy researcher conducted focus-group interviews. The purpose of the focus groups was to determine overall opinions of the efficiency of the implementation of Ventures for Excellence in this school district. The focus-group interviews were audiotaped and the researcher analyzed each for themes. Themes were determined by transcribing the focus-group interviews. The researcher read the scripts several times and color coded repeated themes. The frequency of themes was denoted as strong, the theme was mentioned three or more times; sufficient, the theme was mentioned two times; and weak, the theme was mentioned once.

Research Question 1

How has the implementation of Ventures for Excellence impacted the

efficiency of the hiring process in this school district? School leaders in the district faced many issues related to efficient hiring since the development of the state-wide application system in the 1990s as referenced in Chapter 1. The state-wide application system generated many applicants across the state who may not have been really interested in employment in the school district. Principals would spend hours of time sorting through applications and setting up candidate interviews. In many cases, principals would interview the same candidates for different teaching positions. The perception was that the district did not have an efficient hiring process. Ventures for Excellence was implemented in order to create and maintain an efficient, streamlined hiring process. A proxy researcher conducted focus-group interviews with elementary, middle, and high school principals to address the question.

Research Question 2

How has the implementation of Ventures for Excellence impacted the hiring of high-quality teachers in this school district? One of the district goals for implementing Ventures for Excellence, as referenced in Chapter 1, was to hire high-quality teachers. The district was looking for an interview instrument that would indicate if applicants had qualities of excellent teachers. Prior to the implementation of Ventures for Excellence, principal administrators used generic interview questions for all applicants interviewing for teacher positions. The district was looking for an interview system that would give more of an insight into the skills and qualities an applicant might possess. Two research instruments were used to evaluate this question.

Teacher EVAAS reports were reviewed for teachers who were hired using Ventures for Excellence. The EVAAS used in North Carolina (and developed by SAS in Cary, NC) is based on a value-added model of assessment that compares the relative

performance of students between two grade levels on the North Carolina EOG tests. Three different comparisons of EVAAS data were conducted. These comparisons provided a measure of teacher quality indicated by North Carolina EVAAS scores.

North Carolina EOG and EOC test scores are reported to individual students in developmental scale scores. The number of questions a student answers correctly is called a raw score. The raw score is converted to a developmental scale score. The developmental scale score allows for comparisons of achievement proficiency levels and measures growth.

Teachers in North Carolina who are responsible for the instruction of EOG- or EOC-tested subjects receive an annual value-added growth score. A positive growth score indicates students made progress, while a negative score indicates students lost progress. A score of zero is considered as the standard for academic growth for the tested subject across the state. A teacher value-added growth score indicates the effect the given teacher had on the average developmental scale score of a student under their instruction.

Teacher value-added growth scores determine the overall growth rating a teacher receives. A teacher can receive a rating of above, below, or no detectable difference (NDD). This label represents a conservative estimate of how effective teachers have been in the selected test and subject. To be labeled above, a teacher must have an effect significantly higher than the standard academic growth state average (two standard errors above). Likewise, to be labeled below, a teacher must have an effect significantly lower than the standard academic growth state average (two standard errors below). Effects within two standard errors of the standard academic growth state average are labeled NDD (SAS Institute Inc., 2008). Standard error is defined as a measure of certainty

around a given score. Uncertainty in student test scores could be caused by measurement error, the mobility of students, or missing student data (SAS Institute Inc., 2008).

In the first measure, EVAAS value-added teacher effect score reports were broken into three school years: 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012. Each school year was summarized into the percentage of teachers who scored in the categories of NDD, below, and above for an overall report of how teachers hired with Ventures for Excellence performed compared to the state average.

As a second measure, an overall comparison of teachers hired with the Ventures for Excellence instrument versus those hired not with the Ventures for Excellence instrument was conducted. This comparison compared mean EVAAS teacher value-added teacher effect scores of those teachers hired with Ventures for Excellence versus an equal random sample of teachers in the district who were hired not with the Ventures for Excellence instrument. The comparison was made for 3 years: 2009, 2010, and 2011. The comparison indicated how both populations perform when EVAAS is used as a measure of teacher quality.

As a final measure, mean EVAAS value-added teacher effect scores of elementary teachers hired with Ventures for Excellence were compared to middle/high school teachers hired with the Ventures for Excellence instrument by using North Carolina EVAAS scores as a measure of teacher quality. The comparison was made for 3 years: 2009, 2010, and 2011.

Likert scale surveys were given to principal administrators. The purpose of the surveys was to determine how qualities of teachers hired with the Ventures for Excellence program compare to the qualities of excellent teachers. The survey consisted of four sections and a total of 45 questions. The sections were teacher purpose,

relationships, teaching and learning strategies, and specialty areas. A list of teachers hired using the Ventures for Excellence instrument was given to each school administrator. Each administrator was given an opportunity to answer questions with the following responses: rarely, seldom, sometimes, often, and almost always. The survey questions were developed by Ventures for Excellence and were provided in the *Teacher Selection and Development Resource Workbook*. Responses to the surveys were summarized in relation to qualities of excellent teachers as discussed in Chapter 2.

Research Question 3

How have legal issues associated with hiring practices of this school district been affected by the implementation of Ventures for Excellence? The third goal of the implementation of Ventures for Excellence in the school district was to prevent legal issues associated with hiring practices being implemented by principal administrators of schools within the district, as discussed in Chapter 1. Prior to the implementation of Ventures for Excellence, there was not a common interview instrument being used throughout the school district for interviewing teacher applicants. District leadership in 2009 was concerned that the district might face legal issues that could arise from candidate interviews. The goal of the Ventures for Excellence hiring process was to provide common interview protocol across the district in order to create consistency in applicant interviewing. The human resources department of this school district was contacted in order to summarize the frequency of legal issues associated with hiring practices for 5 years prior to the implementation of Ventures for Excellence, 2004-2009. These data were compared to the frequency of legal issues associated with hiring practices from 2009-2012.

Limitations

Principal administrators may have intentionally or unintentionally affected the results of this study by not following the guidelines of the Ventures for Excellence hiring instrument. Another limitation was the status of principal administrators, teachers hired with Ventures for Excellence, and the location of the schools in which they served within the district. Since the implementation of Ventures for Excellence in 2009, there have been administration changes at multiple schools across the district. The administration changes consisted of new hires, transfers, and retirements. The same is also true for teachers hired using the Ventures for Excellence instrument. Some teachers hired were no longer employed by the school district. Some teachers transferred schools within the district and are no longer working at the school in which they were hired by using Ventures for Excellence.

Delimitations

Several choices were made by the researcher which should be mentioned.

1. The study of the Ventures for Excellence program used as a hiring process was limited to data collection from one school district.
2. All current principal administrators were asked to be participants in the study.
3. Data from all teachers hired using the Ventures for Excellence instrument were used in the study.
4. The researcher is a district-level administrator in the district which could have affected information given in the focus interview. The researcher used a proxy to conduct interviews to avoid as much bias as possible.

Summary

This study evaluated the Ventures for Excellence hiring instrument in a

northwestern North Carolina school district. The program evaluation model that was used to guide this study was the CIPP model created by Stufflebeam. The study utilized a mixed-methods approach. Focus interviews provided qualitative data. Surveys, EVAAS data, and frequency counts provided quantitative data. Triangulation, by summarizing the data from the focus-group interviews, surveys, EVAAS data, and frequency counts, was used to determine the consistency of the data.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of the program evaluation was to analyze effects of the Ventures for Excellence program on the hiring process of a northwestern North Carolina school district. The perceived problem was that there was a need in the school district for a hiring instrument that provided a large applicant pool of quality teachers, along with creating an efficient hiring process. There was a need to have a hiring system that would protect the school district from legal challenges associated with the district hiring process. Participants in this study included elementary, middle school, and high school principals who served as hiring managers. Data collected in the study followed the management-oriented program evaluation model. The model chosen was Stufflebeams's CIPP model (Angelove & Weas, 2009). This model examined the context, inputs, processes, and products of the program. Data were collected through both qualitative and quantitative means. Quantitatively, EVAAS data were reviewed and summarized for the years 2009, 2010, and 2011. In addition to EVAAS data, Likert scale surveys were given to school administrators in the district and summarized. Qualitative data were collected through focus-group interviews.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How has the implementation of Ventures for Excellence impacted the efficiency of the hiring process in this school district?
2. How has the implementation of Ventures for Excellence impacted the hiring of high-quality teachers in this school district?
3. How have legal issues associated with hiring practices of this school district been affected by the implementation of Ventures for Excellence?

Data Analysis

The study was guided by the research questions; therefore, the results are reported based on these questions.

Research Question 1: How has the implementation of Ventures for Excellence impacted the efficiency of the hiring process in this school district?

Focus-group interviews were conducted by a proxy in order to gather qualitative data.

Focus-group interviews were divided into three sessions that included 21 school administrators from the elementary, middle, and high school levels of the school district.

The purpose of the focus groups was to determine opinions of the efficiency of the implementation of the Ventures for Excellence hiring process in the school district. The focus-group interviews were audiotaped for accuracy. The researcher analyzed the interviews, summarizing the data into themes. Each audio recording was transcribed and reviewed by the researcher. The researcher then read the scripts several times and color coded repeated themes. The frequency of themes was denoted as strong, the theme mentioned three or more times; sufficient, the theme was mentioned two times; and weak, the theme was mentioned once. The focus-group interview consisted of five questions that included:

1. Explain the circumstances that gave rise to Ventures for Excellence being implemented in this school district.
2. How has the Ventures for Excellence hiring process impacted the time you spend filling a vacant position?
3. The components of the Ventures for Excellence program include applicant screener, Ventures 30-question interview, and applicant database managed by the district human resources department. Which components do you think are effective and which

components do you feel are ineffective?

4. What are the main difficulties with implementing Ventures for Excellence?
5. Should the program be continued? Why or why not?

Question 1 asked school administrators to explain circumstances that gave rise to Ventures for Excellence being implemented in this school district. Results for Question 1 are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

Key Words and Phrases Reported for Focus Group Question 1

Strong	Sufficient	Weak
To produce quality applicants	To streamline the district interview process	To provide credibility to the district interview process
To produce a fair district interview process	To provide commonality among the district	
To gain a better understanding of job applicants		

During the focus-group interviews, school administrators reported for Question 1 that Ventures for Excellence was implemented in the school district due to the quality of applicants the district was receiving. It was the belief of school administrators that if the district had more qualified applicants, selection of quality teachers would be greater enhanced. One administrator stated,

It's my belief that Ventures for Excellence was implemented in the district due to the quality of applicants we were receiving for interviews during our hiring process. We wished to improve the interview process by guaranteeing that we

had the most qualified applicants in the interviews, so that our selection would be greatly enhanced. (R.Mastin, personal communication, August 2, 2013)

Through the Ventures for Excellence training, administrators were told the Ventures interview rubric would provide more information about applicants directed toward core values and beliefs of an applicant. Administrators indicated the human resources director at the time of the initial implementation of Ventures for Excellence had some concerns about the consistency of applicants receiving interviews at schools in the district. An administrator stated,

It is my understanding that the human resources director at the time had some concerns concerning who was and was not granted interviews and wanted to streamline the process, so that we made sure that we identify the most qualified applicants and their mindsets, thoughts, and philosophies concerning educating children. (W. Shepherd, personal communication, July 26, 2013)

A random applicant may not have had a chance of getting an interview at all schools in the district; therefore, the hiring process of the district needed to be streamlined.

Administrators also indicated in the focus-group interviews that the district did not have an interview process consisting of common interview questions for teacher applicants.

Question 2 asked school administrators to explain how the Ventures for Excellence hiring process impacted the time spent filling a teacher vacancy. Results for Question 2 are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5

Key Words and Phrases Reported for Focus Group Question 2

Strong	Sufficient	Weak
Time required has been extended	Program is not being implemented to fidelity	Time spent coaching/mentoring is reduced
Interview rubric is not job specific	Interview scores are being used to determine who gets an additional interview	Scoring inconsistencies
Interview rubric indicates characteristics of applicants		Hiring system has been inconsistent since implementation
		Has produced quality applicants

During the focus-group interviews, school administrators reported for Question 2 that the Ventures for Excellence system had extended the amount of time required to complete the interview process. An average Ventures for Excellence interview takes approximately 45 minutes. Administrators indicated the amount of time had been extended due to the Ventures for Excellence interview rubric not being specific to all teacher vacancies. Such specifics related to teacher vacancies. Those indicated by administrators related to curriculum and general needs of the school. One administrator stated,

As far as the time spent filling a vacancy, I think once a person has gone through the Ventures process it helps to narrow down those applicants, but the entire process has really lengthened because of having to go through the Ventures

questions and then on top of that once we get through that process we still have our own questions that we have to ask specific to our school; specific to the vacancy. So it's added a good deal of time to the entire process. (J. Weatherman, personal communication, July 26, 2013)

Several administrators reported that they do not use the Ventures for Excellence scores as the only measure to select teacher applicants; however, they do use the teacher rubric scores to determine who to invite to a second interview.

School administrators noted that the Ventures for Excellence interview process gives an indication of characteristics an applicant might have as a teacher. One school administrator indicated that there is a lot of time spent implementing the interview process but because of the selection of quality hires, time had been saved in the area of coaching and mentoring of new hires. The principal added, "I feel like I have gotten quality candidates based on those I have hired with Ventures. So I think the time on the forefront has really helped" (M. Shepherd, personal communication, July 26, 2013). Also indicated was Ventures for Excellence had not been implemented throughout the district to fidelity by school administrators. This principal stated, "Unfortunately the truth is, it has not been used in the fidelity so I don't know that it's had a true impact" (D. Stocks, personal communication, August 2, 2013).

Question 3 asked school administrators to explain which components of Ventures for Excellence were effective and ineffective. Results for the effective components are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6

Key Words and Phrases Reported for Effective Components, Question 3

Strong	Sufficient	Weak
Available database of applicant scores	30-question rubric Hired position to complete applicant interviews for the district	Post implementation training

Results for the ineffective components are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7

Key Words and Phrases Reported for Ineffective Components, Question 3

Strong	Sufficient	Weak
Applicant screener		

During the focus-group interviews, school administrators noted several effective components of the Ventures for Excellence program but only mentioned one component that was ineffective. Administrators indicated the most effective component is the database the district created to maintain interview scores. Participants reported the database was effective because the database communicated scores of applicants to all school administrators. One principal stated, “I think that the database held here at the central office is very effective, because you don’t have to go through the whole process of interviewing someone again if somebody else has interviewed” (D. Smith, personal

communication, August 1, 2013). This communication helped eliminate a person possibly being interviewed twice by different administrators.

Another effective component mentioned during the focus-group interviews was having a hired employee conduct Ventures for Excellence interviews for the district. Administrators indicated that by having a hired employee trained in Ventures for Excellence to fulfill this role, it saved time of having to perform this task. Administrators reported they could review interview scores conducted by the hired employee in order to decide which applicants would receive a second interview with an individual school. Administrators indicated that the database of scores assisted in narrowing down the applicant pool. One administrator stated,

It was kind of a nice way to know what the person's score was on it so you had that screening part on it. Then you had a pool of applicants that you could look at and pull from and try to go from those that were scoring higher, and not spend as much time looking at somebody that was at the very bottom of the rating scale.

(D. Stocks, personal communication, August 2, 2013)

School administrators explained that the Ventures for Excellence interview rubric was an effective component of the hiring process. Several administrators indicated it helped identify good applicants by examining core values and beliefs of an applicant, helping make better hiring decisions. One principal stated, "I really like the 30 questions. I think those questions are excellent. And you really get to the root of what a person believes. It's an excellent way to identify a good candidate" (R. Hemric, personal communication, August 2, 2013).

One school administrator noted the screener was an effective component of the hiring process. The screener assisted in narrowing down the applicant pool for a vacant

position; however, many administrators stated it was the least effective component of the hiring process. One reason indicated was the screener did not provide enough information in order to help narrow down an applicant pool. Another reason indicated related to the number of applicants the district receives each year for positions. One principal stated,

I think it's a waste of time. I think if we were a district that got 30,000 applicants every year and you wanted to narrow it down maybe it would be worth screening, but for us especially at our level, it's not like we get 40 applicants for every job we post. We're just as well off to interview the applicants that we feel like are most capable. (D. Stocks, personal communication, August 2, 2013)

Question 4 asked school administrators to explain the main difficulties with implementing Ventures for Excellence. Results for Question 4 are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8

Key Words and Phrases Reported for Focus Group Question 4

Strong	Sufficient	Weak
The amount of time required to complete applicant interviews		Not all administrators are trained in the district
		Rubric scoring consistency across the district

During focus-group interviews, school administrators reported for Question 4 that the main difficulty implementing Ventures for Excellence is the amount of time required

to perform candidate interviews. School administrators reiterated if the district continued having a Ventures for Excellence-trained employee to perform interviews, it would allow them to select applicants from interview scores for possible vacancy candidates. One principal stated, “Time is the biggest element, so that it’s not on weekends or late in the evening. Phone interviews are how we conducted those and I think time is definitely the worst enemy” (M. Shepherd, personal communication, July 26, 2013).

One administrator indicated it was the belief that not all the school administrators in the district were trained in the Ventures for Excellence hiring process. Therefore, it was difficult to implement the program with consistency without all hiring administrators being trained in the program.

Another administrator stated most school administrators only use Ventures for Excellence during hiring seasons, and consistency with scoring across the district is lost due to infrequency of use. An administrator stated,

Even though you go through all that training, the problem is you go through the training and it may be months before you use it again so you get a little rusty and out of touch. It takes a little while to get back into the routine. (D. Stocks, personal communication, August 2, 2013)

Question 5 asked school administrators if Ventures for Excellence should be continued in the district. Results for those administrators who stated yes are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9

Key Words and Phrases Reported for Yes, the Program Should be Continued

Strong	Sufficient	Weak
Quality teachers have been hired		Consistent leadership of the program is needed The program is researched based The hiring process needs to be streamlined

Results for administrators who responded no to Question 5 are summarized below in Table 10.

Table 10

Key Words and Phrases Reported for No, the Program Should Not Be Continued

Strong	Sufficient	Weak
Cost effectiveness of the program Lack of administrator time		Disadvantage for new teacher graduates

During focus-group interviews, school administrators reported that the Ventures for Excellence program should be continued as a hiring instrument for the district, while others reported it should not. Administrators who felt the program should be continued based their reasoning around four main points. The strongest reason was the program had assisted in hiring quality teachers. One principal stated, “I think it’s extremely effective. I have made good decisions I feel like on new hires with it” (R. McCreary, personal communication, August 2, 2013). Another point expressed was the interview

rubric was research based. Other comments expressed by school administrators who felt the program should be continued related to the implementation of the program. These administrators felt like the current hiring process in the district should be more streamlined and needs consistent leadership in the district. One principal stated,

It's not had one leadership in the time to see it through for more than one year since we put it into place. It's changed over the course of the past 3 years anyway so consistency is a lacking element. (D. Stocks, personal communication, August 2, 2013)

During focus-group interviews, some school administrators reported the Ventures for Excellence program should not be continued as a hiring instrument for the district. Administrators stated that they do not have the necessary time it takes to complete Ventures for Excellence interviews as vacancies are available at their schools. Many administrators questioned cost effectiveness of implementing Ventures for Excellence in the district. Administrators stated that in times of deep budget cuts funds used to continue the program might be better served for another purpose if the amount required to continue the program is significant. One administrator stated,

I did like the process that we use, but that's money that we may need to be used a different way. I think you have to look at the amount of money that is being spent and if it's a significant amount, I would say no. (S. Shoupe, personal communication, August 1, 2013)

According to the human resources director at the time of district implementation, the cost per individual trained in Ventures for Excellence was \$1,500. Currently, the district employs 37 principals and assistant principals for an investment cost of \$55,000. This does not include district-level administrators who have been trained or the cost to train

new school administrators.

One administrator indicated that the 30-question interview rubric puts new hire teachers straight out of college at a disadvantage because they do not have experiences required to do well on the interview rubric.

Research Question 2. How has the implementation of Ventures for Excellence impacted the hiring of high-quality teachers in this school district?

Teacher EVAAS reports for 2010, 2011, and 2012 were reviewed for teachers hired using the Ventures for Excellence instrument. The EVAAS used in North Carolina (and developed by SAS in Cary, NC) is based on a value-added model of assessment comparing the relative performance of students between two grade levels on the North Carolina EOG tests. Three comparisons of EVAAS data were conducted to provide a measure of teacher quality as indicated by North Carolina EVAAS scores. It is important to note not all teachers hired with the Ventures for Excellence instrument had an EVAAS score. Only teachers who taught a course that has an EOG or EOC test received an EVAAS score.

In the first measure, EVAAS value-added teacher effect score reports were analyzed and broken down into 3 school years: 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012. The percentage of teachers who scored in the categories of NDD, below, and above for the 3 school years were summarized for teachers hired with the Ventures for Excellence process as noted in Table 11.

Table 11

Percent of Teachers Labeled Above, NDD, and Below

Year	Above	NDD	Below
2010	20% (1)	40% (2)	40% (2)
2011	0% (0)	65% (11)	35% (6)
2012	9% (2)	79% (18)	12% (3)

When compared to the state average, a teacher who is eligible for an EVAAS score can receive a rating of above, below, or NDD. The above, below, and NDD designations are based on the teacher effect on student growth from 1 year to another. The value is a conservative estimate of how effective teachers have been in the selected test and subject compared to teachers across the State of North Carolina. To be labeled above, a teacher must have an effect score two standard errors above the standard academic growth state average. Likewise, to be labeled below, a teacher must have an effect score two standard errors below the standard academic growth state average. Effects within two standard errors of the standard academic growth state average are labeled NDD (SAS Institute Inc., 2008).

As a second measure, comparisons of teachers hired with the Ventures for Excellence instrument versus those hired not with the Ventures for Excellence instrument were conducted. The comparison compared mean EVAAS teacher value-added teacher effect scores of those teachers hired with Ventures for Excellence versus an equal random sample of teachers in the district who were hired not with the Ventures for Excellence instrument. Random EVAAS teacher value-added effect scores were collected by using a computerized random sample selection generator. The comparison was made for the

years 2011 and 2012. Only five teachers were hired using Ventures for Excellence during the year 2009-2010; therefore, this year was not included in the comparison.

A further analysis of means was conducted by using a t test. According to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006), a t test is used to determine whether two means are significantly different at a selected probability level. In determining significance, the t test makes adjustments for the difference in sample sizes. The strategy of a t test is to compare the actual mean difference observed with the difference expected by chance. Sample sizes and variation within groups are associated with greater random differences between groups. The t test determines if the observed difference is solely because of chance. In conducting a t test, a null hypothesis is generated, making the assumption that both means are equal. A t value is generated that indicates if the null hypothesis should be rejected based on a specific probability. If the null hypothesis is rejected, there is essentially no significant difference in the means, and the difference is due to chance (Gay, Mills, & Airasian).

Table 12 indicates the results of teachers hired using the Ventures for Excellence instrument compared to a random selection of teachers in the district who were hired not using the instrument for the school year 2010-2011.

Table 12

2011 Mean, Standard Deviation, and t Tests, Ventures Teachers vs Random Sample Group

Score	Ventures Hired	Non-Ventures Hired	T
M	-0.841	-0.694	.2259*
SD	1.493	2.230	

Note. N = 17, *p>.05, **p<.05

Teacher effect scores of 17 teachers from the Ventures hired group and a random sample of teachers hired not with the Ventures instrument were analyzed. Examination of the means indicated that during the 2010-2011 school year, a teacher hired not with the Ventures for Excellence instrument had a teacher effect score that was an average of .147 scale score point higher than a teacher hired with the Ventures for Excellence instrument. A t test comparing the two groups ($\alpha = .05$) indicated essentially no difference between the groups. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating both means are essentially the same is supported. The standard deviation of teachers hired not with the Ventures for Excellence group indicates a greater distribution in teacher effect scores.

Table 13 indicates the results of teachers hired using the Ventures for Excellence instrument compared to a random selection of teachers in the district hired not using the instrument for the school year 2011-2012.

Table 13

2012 Mean, Standard Deviation, and t Tests, Ventures Teachers vs Random Sample Group

Score	Ventures Hired	Non-Ventures Hired	t
M	.0413	0.778	.4293*
SD	2.646	3.107	

Note. $N = 23$, * $p > .05$, ** $p < .05$

Teacher effect scores of 23 teachers from the Ventures for Excellence hired group and a random sample of teachers hired not with the Ventures for Excellence instrument were analyzed. Examination of the means indicated that during the 2011-2012 school year, a teacher hired not with the Ventures for Excellence instrument had a teacher effect score that was an average of .7367 scale score point higher than a teacher hired with the

Ventures for Excellence instrument. A t test comparing the two groups ($\alpha = .05$) indicated essentially no difference between the groups. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that both means are essentially the same is supported. The standard deviation of teachers hired not with the Ventures for Excellence group indicates a greater distribution in teacher effect scores.

As a third measure, an overall comparison of elementary, middle, and high school teachers hired with the Ventures for Excellence was conducted. The analysis was generated for the 3 reporting years of 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012. There were no middle or high school teachers hired with the Ventures for Excellence instrument during the 2009-2010 school year according to data collected from the district human resources office. Further analysis of 2010-2011 elementary and secondary teacher effect scores indicated a total of 11 elementary teacher scores and six secondary teacher scores. Analysis of 2011-2012 North Carolina EVAAS teacher effect scores reported a total of 20 elementary teacher scores and three secondary teacher scores. Differences in means of elementary and secondary teacher effect scores could not be interpreted by a t-test analysis due to a substantially low number of scores to consider.

Likert scale surveys were given to principal administrators. A Likert scale is a psychometric response scale primarily used in questionnaires to obtain participant preferences or degree of agreement with a statement or set of statements (Bertram, n.d.). The purposes of the surveys were to determine how qualities of teachers hired with the Ventures for Excellence program compare to the qualities of excellent teachers. The survey consisted of four sections and a total of 45 questions. The sections were teacher purpose, relationships, teaching and learning strategies, and specialty areas. Survey respondents had the option of choosing rarely, seldom, sometimes, often, and almost

always for each survey question. Individual responses are normally treated as ordinal data. Although the response levels have relative position, it cannot be presumed that participants perceive the difference between adjacent levels to be equal as in a requirement for interval data (Bertram, n.d.). Survey responses were expressed descriptively in the form of frequency, and percentages and were divided by topic. The survey produced a response rate of 75%.

The responses to the administrator survey related to teacher purpose were reviewed and are noted in Table 14.

Table 14

Administrator Survey, Teacher Purpose

Question	Rarely	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
1. Has a positive attitude toward students				6 (50%)	6 (50%)
2. Values students as important people				5 (42%)	7 (58%)
3. Helps students to like themselves better			1 (8%)	6 (50%)	5 (42%)
4. Helps students look at the good in difficult situations			2 (17%)	6 (50%)	4 (33%)
5. Searches for individual student talents and strengths				8 (67%)	4 (33%)
6. Shows a lot of excitement about student learning			3 (25%)	3 (25%)	6 (50%)
7. Helps students have a positive attitude in the classroom				7 (58%)	5 (42%)
8. Helps students become more self-responsible				7 (58%)	5 (58%)
9. Focuses upon the good qualities and strengths of students				7 (58%)	5 (42%)

Survey Questions 1-9 addressed teacher purpose. Overall, 100% of those surveyed indicated that a teacher hired using the Ventures for Excellence instrument either often or almost always demonstrated the qualities indicated in Questions 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, and 9. These qualities focused on the teacher's attitude, value of human worth, and his/her desire to help a student be self-responsible. Principals indicated by surveys that 92% help students to like themselves, 88% help students to see the good in difficult situations, and 75% show excitement about student learning. This figure was a combination of the percentage of respondents who answered often or almost always. The responses to the administrator survey related to teacher relationships were reviewed and are noted in Table 15.

Good teachers love their students, enjoy being around them, enjoy their energy, and enjoy helping them. Students refer to these teachers as being fun and exciting. Students simply mean that the teacher's enjoyment for the profession impacts the culture of the classroom. Excitement can also be compared to similar words such as enthusiasm, passion, energy, and devotion. Teacher excitement impacts student cooperation, which impacts the learning that takes place in the classroom (Urban, 2008).

Table 15

Administrator Survey, Teacher Relationships

Question	Rarely	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
10. Explains things in ways that are easy for students to understand			2 (17%)	7 (58%)	3 (25%)
11. Treats students as friends		3 (25%)	5 (42%)	1 (8%)	3 (25%)
12. Identifies with the feelings of students in the class			4 (33%)	3 (25%)	5 (42%)
13. Understands the thoughts and ideas of students			4 (33%)	4 (33%)	4 (33%)
14. Tries to get to know students personally			2 (17%)	4 (33%)	6 (50%)
15. Helps students appreciate and care for classmates			2 (17%)	6 (50%)	4 (33%)
16. Enjoys listening to what students have to say			3 (25%)	3 (25%)	6 (50%)
17. Is a person students really like			2 (17%)	4 (33%)	6 (50%)
18. Helps students to think through their feelings			3 (25%)	4 (33%)	5 (42%)

Questions 10-18 addressed building student relationships. Although survey responses were positive for this section of the questionnaire, more responses fell into the sometimes category. There were no questions from this section that had a 100% response in the often or almost always categories. Principals indicated by surveys that 75% explain things in ways that are easy for students to understand, 83% relate to the feelings of students in the classroom, 83% try to get to know students personally, 83% help students to appreciate and care for other classmates, 75% listen to students and what they have to say, 83% are really liked by students, and 75% assist in helping students think through their feelings. This figure was a combination of the percentage of respondents who answered often or almost always.

Many survey responses indicated a strong support for student relationships; however, Question 11 indicated that teachers hired with the Ventures for Excellence tool did not treat students as friends as indicated by participant responses. The responses to the administrator survey related to teaching and learning were reviewed and are noted in Table 16.

Table 16

Administrator Survey, Teaching and Learning Strategies

Question	Rarely	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
19. Knows what motivates students to learn			4 (33%)	3 (25%)	5 (42%)
20. Considers many viewpoints before making decisions in class			2 (17%)	4 (33%)	5 (42%)
21. Helps students learn in ways that are best for them			2 (17%)	6 (50%)	4 (33%)
22. Comes to class prepared to teach			2 (17%)	3 (25%)	7 (58%)
23. Helps students think through the reasons for learning the material			3 (25%)	5 (42%)	4 (33%)
24. Shows excitement about the curriculum			4 (33%)	3 (25%)	5 (42%)
25. Listens to all sides of the story when there is a problem between students			3 (25%)	1 (8%)	8 (67%)
26. Is open to new ideas to make learning exciting			3 (25%)	3 (25%)	6 (50%)
27. Will change a lesson when students struggle with learning			2 (17%)	4 (33%)	6 (50%)
28. Makes students learning practical to contemporary life now			2 (17%)	5 (42%)	5 (42%)
29. Asks for students ideas about how to make the class more interesting			3 (25%)	4 (33%)	5 (42%)
30. Helps students to see the many sides of an issue			3 (25%)	4 (33%)	5 (42%)
31. Looks for many different ways to teach the class			1 (8%)	5 (42%)	6 (50%)
32. Makes sure students understand each step of a lesson before moving on			1 (8%)	7 (58%)	4 (33%)
33. Helps students use their new learning in the classroom			3 (25%)	4 (33%)	5 (42%)

Questions 19-33 addressed the instructional skills of teachers hired with the

Ventures for Excellence instrument. Survey responses were positive for this section of the questionnaire. Some responses fell into the sometimes category. There were no questions from this section that had a 100% response in the often or almost always categories. Principals indicated by surveys that 75% consider multiple viewpoints of students, 83% help students to learn in ways that are best for them, 83% are prepared for instruction, 75% help students make connections of the importance for learning instructional material, 75% are open to new ideas to make learning exciting, 83% will adjust lessons for student learning, 84% connect learning to life experiences, 75% incorporate student ideas into instruction, 75% help students to see multiple sides of an issue, 92% incorporate multiple methods of instruction, and 92% make sure students understand the material at hand before moving forward with instruction. This figure was a combination of the percentage of respondents who answered often or almost always.

The responses to the administrator survey related to teacher specialty areas were reviewed and are noted in Table 17.

Table 17

Administrator Survey, Teacher Specialty Areas

Question	Rarely	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
34. Helps students appreciate differences among peers in class			4 (33%)	4 (33%)	4 (33%)
35. Feels bad if students do not do well on a test			3 (25%)	4 (33%)	5 (42%)
36. Is supportive of students when talking with other people			1 (8%)	5 (42%)	6 (50%)
37. Brings community members to class to help students learn		1 (8%)	4 (33%)	5 (42%)	2 (17%)
38. Supports the benefits of different races and cultures in the community			3 (25%)	4 (33%)	5 (42%)
39. Prepares students well for tests			2 (17%)	5 (42%)	5 (42%)
40. Will listen and take action on ideas from adults outside of school to help them learn			3 (25%)	5 (42%)	4 (33%)
41. Connects students with adults outside of school to help them learn		2 (17%)	1 (8%)	6 (50%)	3 (25%)
42. Stops put-downs between students			1 (8%)	3 (25%)	8 (67%)
43. Helps students understand the errors they make on tests			2 (17%)	4 (33%)	6 (50%)
44. Is open to suggestions from others on how to improve student learning			1 (8%)	5 (42%)	6 (50%)
45. Works collaboratively with adults at home to help students progress			2 (17%)	5 (42%)	5 (42%)

Questions 34-45 addressed the specialty areas of teachers hired with the Ventures

for Excellence instrument. Survey responses were positive for this section of the questionnaire. Some responses fell into the sometimes category. There were no questions from this section that had a 100% response in the often or almost always categories. Principals indicated by that 75% are concerned when students do not do well on an assessment, 92% are supportive of students when communicating with others, 75% promote diversity in the classroom, 84% prepare students well for test, 75% listen and take action to adults outside the school, 75% connect with adults outside the school, 92% stop put-downs between students, 83% help students to understand why they missed items on test, 92% are open to suggestions from others on how to improve student learning, and 84% work collaboratively with adults at home. This figure was a combination of the percentage of respondents who answered often or almost always.

Principals indicated by Likert scale surveys that teachers hired using Ventures for Excellence instrument, as part of the district hiring process, demonstrated qualities of excellent teachers as determined by the Ventures for Excellence survey. These qualities related to teacher purpose, relationships, student instruction, and teacher specialties. A future area of study would be to examine the qualities measured by Ventures for Excellence to determine which qualities of excellent teachers have the most impact on student achievement.

A district goal for Ventures for Excellence was to impact the hiring of high-quality teachers in this school district? Likert scale data determined that Ventures for Excellence has impacted the hiring of high-quality candidates as measured by qualities of excellent teachers.

Research Question 3: How have legal issues associated with hiring practices of this school district been affected by the implementation of Ventures for

Excellence? The human resources department of this school district was contacted in order to summarize the frequency of legal issues associated with hiring practices for 5 years prior to the implementation of Ventures for Excellence, 2004-2009. These data were compared to the frequency of legal issues associated with hiring practices from 2009-2012 as denoted in Table 18.

Table 18

Frequency of Legal Issues Related to Hiring Practices

	2004-2009	2009-2012
Frequency	0	0

Note. Source: (W. Hutchinson, personal communication, September 11, 2013)

According to data collected, there have been no legal challenges related to hiring practices in the district for the years 2009-2012, as indicated in Table 18. According to the current district associate superintendent of human resources, there is no record of any hiring-related legal issues prior to 2009. This includes complaints that might be made by an individual or an educator association such as the North Carolina Association of Educators.

Summary

Focus-group data analysis indicated strong support of identified themes. District principals understood the circumstances that gave rise to Ventures for Excellence being implemented in the school district. Themes identified were for the purpose of hiring quality applicants, providing a fair/consistent interview process, and to provide in-depth information concerning applicants. Principals identified that the amount of time required to complete the interview process has been extended along. Focus-group data indicated

the principals' opinions that the Ventures for Excellence interview is general and not job-specific. The database was the most effective component of the hiring process, while the applicant screener was the least effective component. The major difficulty with program implementation was finding the time to effectively implement the hiring process.

There was not an overall opinion from principal administrators as to if the program should be continued in the district.

When measuring teacher quality of new hires, there was no statistical difference between teachers hired using Ventures for Excellence when using North Carolina EVAAS scores as a measure of teacher quality. However, when measuring teacher quality based on demonstrated qualities of excellent teachers that new hires exhibit, results were positive.

Based on the data collected from the district human resources department that included legal challenges and complaints, the implementation of Ventures for Excellence into the hiring process of this district protected the district from any associated legal challenges related to the hiring process from 2009-2012.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of the program evaluation was to analyze the effects of Ventures for Excellence on the hiring process of a northwestern North Carolina school district.

Effective schools are able to attract and hire excellent teachers, which is one of the most important school-related factors found to facilitate student learning and likely explains differences in effectiveness across schools (Loeb, Kalogrides, & Beteille, 2011). School leaders can control the quality of the teaching force at their school by hiring high-quality teachers (Loeb et al., 2011). Excellent teachers are capable of inspiring significantly greater learning gains in their students (Sawchuk, 2011). Factors such as family background continue to impact student achievement, but teacher quality is the most important school-based factor affecting student achievement (Sawchuk, 2011).

Ventures for Excellence was implemented as a component of a district hiring process in order to meet district goals in the area of attracting and identifying teachers who are likely to be effective. The goals consisted of creating a hiring process that produced quality applicants, an efficient hiring process, and protection from legal challenges associated with hiring. The research questions guiding the study were:

1. How has the implementation of Ventures for Excellence impacted the efficiency of the hiring process in this school district?
2. How has the implementation of Ventures for Excellence impacted the hiring of high-quality teachers in this school district?
3. How have legal issues associated with hiring practices of this school district been affected by the implementation of Ventures for Excellence?

Data collected in this study were acquired from a variety of sources, including

1. Focus-group interviews conducted by proxy trained by the researcher to provide unbiased information,
2. Analysis of North Carolina EVAAS teacher effect scores for 2009-2012 as a measure of teacher quality,
3. Principal surveys administered to gather opinions of how the qualities of teachers hired with the Ventures for Excellence instrument compare to qualities of excellent teachers, and
4. Human resources department data that indicate the frequency of legal challenges in the district prior to implementation and since implementation of the program.

Conclusions

How has the implementation of Ventures for Excellence impacted the efficiency of the hiring process? Data from focus-group interviews indicated that school administrators agreed on the reasoning for implementing the Ventures for Excellence hiring instrument in the district. Data analysis indicated that the former human resources director had shared the vision of the program related to the research questions. This included providing a quality applicant pool, providing a consistent interview tool, creating a streamlined applicant process, and establishing core beliefs of the district.

The studied school district's hiring process consisted of several components to establish an efficient hiring process. These components consisted of a screener to create a quality applicant pool, processes to complete the Ventures for Excellence interview, and a method to communicate applicant information for hiring.

The researcher concluded that during initial implementation of the district hiring process, the applicant screener contributed to an efficient hiring process. The district had established hiring procedures that allowed the screener to be effective. This consisted of placing the screener on the district teacher application. Once an applicant was screened, the applicant was transferred to a Ventures for Excellence-trained school administrator for an interview. After 3 years of implementation, applicant interviews are no longer completed by random school administrators. Principals indicated during focus-group interviews that after 3 years of implementation, they found the applicant screener ineffective. This is because district principals, after advertising a vacancy, are implementing the applicant screener and interview at the school level. These data indicate a decline in the streamline of the district hiring process. Principals attributed this to the screener not providing enough information about an applicant prior to an interview.

The second major component of the district establishing an efficient hiring process was the use of a common interview rubric. Focus-group interview data implied that administrators of all levels were in support of the concept of using the Ventures for Excellence interview rubric. School administrators felt that the interview rubric gave an impression of an applicant's core values and beliefs. The researcher concluded that one identified obstacle for consistently using the interview rubric was the time required to complete a Ventures for Excellence interview. Data from focus-group interviews implied a consistent response that the amount of time required to fill a teacher vacancy has increased with the implementation of Ventures for Excellence with the average interview taking 45-60 minutes. It is important to note that the school district did not have a district-wide interview process recognized by school administrators prior to program implementation to make an accurate comparison of exactly how much the time

requirements have been increased. As stated earlier, after the study of data, it became evident that middle and high school principals were completing two applicant interviews. Principals reported that the reason for the second interview was to find out specific information about an applicant such as knowledge of subject matter, coaching interest, and background experiences that may contribute to the culture of the school. Completing a second interview was recommended in the Ventures for Excellence training materials. The researcher concluded that the use of a common interview rubric brought consistency to the district during initial implementation.

The researcher concluded that one of the most supported components of the district hiring process was the creation of a database for principals to reference applicant interview scores, certification areas, and demographic information. The district created an applicant database during the initial district-wide implementation of Ventures for Excellence in order to streamline the hiring process. At the time of implementation, database entries were completed by school-based hiring managers and the human resources director. The database has only had two interview score submissions since May 2011. This indicated a decline in the use of the Ventures for Excellence interview rubric or the decrease in the streamlining of the district process.

The researcher concluded that a lack of communication has contributed to a decline in maintaining a streamlined hiring process. During the 2012-2013 school year, a part-time employee was hired to conduct Ventures for Excellence interviews for the district. Focus-group interview data reported that school administrators supported this concept; however, the steps of using this resource from the district level have not been communicated. Principals were aware of the hired personnel and their roles; however, principals were not informed of how to make interview referrals or to review scores of

interviews conducted (S. Blackburn, personal communication, November 23, 2013).

The researcher concluded from focus-group interview data that many administrators had not used the district interview process in the hiring of recent candidates, contrary to district training and professional development. This would cause one to question the sustainability of the district training and professional development in the Ventures for Excellence hiring process. Focus-group data indicated that the Ventures for Excellence program is no longer used to fidelity and, therefore, does not have an efficient impact on district hiring. Data indicated that there has not been a consistent district-wide system in place to guide the Ventures for Excellence process since implementation. Principals in the district supported the program in the beginning but slowly decreased usage because of this reason. Since the beginning of the program implementation, only 67 teachers were hired for years 2009-2012 with the Ventures for Excellence program; however, the district hired a total of 175 teachers during these 3 years. This indicated that the district hiring process had not been used consistently throughout the district. More specifically, of the 67 teachers hired from 2009-2012, 16% were high school level, 7% were middle school level, and 77% were elementary level. This indicated more consistency and administrator support in the elementary level. Fifty percent of school administrators are in support of continuing the program, while 50% are also in support of not continuing the current district process.

The intent of Ventures for Excellence was to impact the efficiency of the district hiring process. The purpose of implementation was clear to district administrators. The hiring process provided a view of applicant core values and beliefs and provided a fair interview. The researcher concluded that foundational steps were put in place to begin to streamline the district hiring process but were not fully functional. District processes

lacked consistency and communication. It is recommended that an area of future study might include the research of interview process components that have the most impact on the efficiency of an organization's hiring process.

How has the implementation of Ventures for Excellence impacted the hiring of high-quality teachers in this school district? Data in Chapter 4 included analysis of North Carolina EVAAS data. When compared to the state average, a teacher who is eligible for an EVAAS score can receive a rating of above, below, or NDD. The above, below, and NDD designations are based on the teacher effect on student growth from 1 year to another. The value is a conservative estimate of how effective teachers have been in the selected test and subject compared to the established state standard academic growth average. The researcher concluded from 2009-2012 data analysis that 75% of teachers hired using the district process had teacher effect scores either in line with or above the state teacher effect score average. Data analysis indicated that during the combined report years of 2010, 2011, and 2012, 25% of teachers hired using Ventures for Excellence scored two standard errors of measure below the state expected academic growth average. Students of these teachers made substantially less progress than the state standard for academic growth. Essentially, a small percentage of teachers had a substantially higher teacher valued-added effect score compared to peer teachers in the state of North Carolina when using EVAAS as a measure of teacher quality.

A district goal for Ventures for Excellence was to impact the hiring of high-quality teachers in this school district. North Carolina EVAAS data determine the teacher effect on student growth. Positive teacher effect scores are correlated to teacher quality. The researcher determined from analysis of t-test data that there was no significant difference in teacher quality, as measured by EVAAS scores, for applicants

hired with Ventures for Excellence or applicants hired not with Ventures for Excellence. An area of future study would be to replicate North Carolina EVAAS analysis in a school district where Ventures for Excellence had been used in the hiring process for more than 3 years to determine if results are similar.

A district goal for Ventures for Excellence was to impact the hiring of high-quality teachers in this school district. Likert scale data determined that Ventures for Excellence has positively impacted the hiring of high-quality candidates as measured by qualities of excellent teachers. Data analysis indicates that the implementation of Ventures for Excellence has produced quality teachers based on teacher value-added scores. Principal survey data indicate that principals feel that candidates hired with Ventures for Excellence demonstrate qualities of excellent teachers. EVAAS data determined that these teachers overall showed no difference in student growth impact compared to teachers hired not with the instrument. Overall, students of these teachers did not make substantially more progress than expected growth with the highest percentage of scores being in line with the expected standard for academic growth.

How have legal issues associated with hiring practices of this school district been affected by the implementation of Ventures for Excellence? District data determined that there have been no legal challenges associated with the hiring process since the implementation of Ventures for Excellence. Focus-group data implied that the district is not implementing the program to fidelity. An area of future study might include determining the pitfalls of hiring processes that lead to legal issues associated with hiring processes in school districts.

Contextual Analysis

The mission of Ventures for Excellence was to provide the very best human resources selection and development approaches to those who utilize their services (Ventures for Excellence, 2004).

School officials want to hire good teachers and the direction districts take depends on district leadership. School officials should fund strategies that impact the hiring process (Lee, 2003; Levin & Quinn, 2003). Findings in this study indicate that the district vision was shared with hiring managers throughout the district. It is evident that this school district prioritized funding that led to district-wide training in Ventures for Excellence with all administrators being trained in the process upon initial implementation. School districts that hire effective teachers have screening and interviewing processes that discover qualities they are looking for in effective teachers. School districts should have processes in place that screen applicants; however, hiring managers should make the final selection (Behrstock & Coggshall, 2009; Things to Remember During the Teacher Hiring Season, 2005). The researcher determined that at the time of the initial program implementation, the studied school district had hiring processes in place to screen applicants and to discover qualities the district was looking for in applicants. This consisted of a screener and common interview rubric. A screener instrument was combined with the district application system and a standard interview rubric. The use of an applicant screener and common interview rubric aligned with the research of John Atha in 2009. Atha (2009), after studying teacher hiring processes across the state of Indiana, determined that the two main effective components of a teacher hiring process included an applicant screener and common interview rubric. Atha's research also rated applicant cover letters, resumes, and letters of recommendation

as very important components of the hiring process. The researcher determined that the majority of the focus in hiring teachers in this northwestern North Carolina school district was given solely to the teacher interview.

Things that can be determined by an interview include philosophy, objectives, ability to solve problems, commitment, job performance, background, willingness to accept criticism, and poise under pressure (Legal Issues in Employment Interviewing, n.d.). The researcher discovered from Likert scale survey data, focus-group interview data, and district training resources that the interview rubric used in this school district determined many of those applicant qualities; however, some could not be determined by the interview rubric alone. Such qualities included applicant background and previous job performance. The researcher discovered through focus-group interview data that school administrators were completing an additional interview at the school level to determine the background of an applicant and to determine how that applicant might align with the culture of the hiring school. Ventures for Excellence provided resources during training (Appendix F) that outlined appropriate interview process action steps. Data from the researched school district indicated that many of the Ventures for Excellence-recommended action steps have been implemented. The recommended action steps include inviting a candidate for a building-level interview after a Ventures for Excellence interview has been conducted. According to focus-group interview data, this action step was being completed by 50% of high school principals but was not promoted by the school district. The second interview was seen as beneficial by high school principals and aligned with the Ventures for Excellence philosophy. The time required to complete the second interview contributed to the idea of time being a major issue with program implementation as indicated by focus-group interview data. In Atha's (2009)

study of hiring practices, he concluded that common interview rubrics should only be used to narrow down the list of applicants who might be invited to participate in the next steps of a district hiring process, such as a second interview. The researcher of the studied school district determined that high school principals were using the Ventures for Excellence interview as a tool to narrow the applicant field, but this concept was not endorsed through training of the district process with principals making hiring decisions based on applicant interview scores only.

When school districts have no plan for hiring procedures, there is no way to determine if candidates have been evaluated appropriately (The Benefits of Effective Hiring Process Automation, 2010). The researcher determined that the studied school district established a district hiring process when Ventures for Excellence was initially implemented that aided in the appropriate evaluation of applicants. The researcher determined through focus-group interview data that not all school administrators are continuing to implement the established process. This is also evident by the number of teachers hired using Ventures for Excellence compared to the overall teachers hired during 2009-2012. Typical hiring processes end up with lots of resumes and hiring managers sorting through many resumes one by one to narrow the field (The Benefits of Effective Hiring Process Automation, 2010). The researcher found this to be true prior to the implementation of Ventures for Excellence. The researcher discovered that this typical process improved with the initial implementation, but the current state is unknown. School administrators indicated during focus-group data that the district is not following the district process to fidelity.

Applicant information should be stored in a database for principals and human resources to access (Behrstock & Cogshall, 2009). A central office database was a

stressed component of the Ventures for Excellence-recommended hiring process.

Ventures indicated that principals and supervisors should use this database as a pool for building-level interview selection. This assured that all candidates have met the district criteria and have the core values essential for success. According to focus-group data, the district hiring process has not included a maintained focus on this component. The component existed but has not been communicated and consistently maintained. School administrators indicated by focus-group interview data the benefits of having a communicated, maintained applicant database.

The signing of No Child Left Behind legislation in 2002 created more interest in the issue of teacher quality than any other act of legislation in recent history. Because of its requirement that all teachers of core academics be highly qualified, numerous articles have been written and much debate has occurred about the definition of a high-quality teacher. The No Child Left Behind Act defined a highly qualified teacher as one who has full certification, a bachelor's degree, and demonstrated competence in subject knowledge and teaching skills (Ventures for Excellence, 2004). According to Ventures for Excellence (2004), if these criteria were the only factors for success, every teacher should be able to help each student reach maximum levels of achievement. They also claim that there are certain characteristics that successful people possess that Stephen Covey, Tom Peters, Jim Collins, and others have identified. These qualities are the same or similar to the qualities of excellent teachers identified by Ventures for Excellence. Regardless of the style and personality of good teachers, there are degrees of similar inherent qualities that these teachers possess (Allington & Johnston, 2000). The studied school district was looking for applicants who possess these qualities. The researcher determined by examining Likert scale survey data that the school district overall hired

teachers using the Ventures for Excellence interview who demonstrated researched qualities of excellent teachers. There are many hiring systems that try to align teacher responses to questions with characteristics of good teachers. Most have found to be weakly correlated and these systems are only good when you have a large number of applicants (O'Brien, 2011). The researcher determined that the established interview process in the district did use an interview rubric that aligned teacher responses to qualities of excellent teachers; however, overall results conclude that quality teachers were hired using the interview rubric.

In a study by Davis (2001) of a Tennessee school district, the researcher determined that there is little association between the Ventures for Excellence interview scores and teacher value-added data. The researcher of the Tennessee school district implied that the use of the Ventures for Excellence interview rubric did not produce a higher quality of teacher. In the research of the studied northwestern North Carolina school district, it was determined that there was no difference in teacher value-added scores of those hired with the Ventures for Excellence interview rubric versus those who were hired not with the interview rubric. While North Carolina EVAAS data did not show a difference in teacher value-added scores between teachers hired using the Ventures for Excellence interview rubric versus a random sample of teachers hired not using the instrument, school administrators overall indicated by survey data that teachers hired using the district process demonstrated qualities of excellent teachers. This data contradicted the study of Clemmons in 2010. The research of Clemmons (2010) indicated no correlation between teachers hired by the Ventures for Excellence interview and the ability to be a successful teacher.

While discrimination lawsuits based on hiring processes are on the rise in the

United States, according to Legal Issues Regarding the Hiring Process (2011), the researcher determined that there were no legal challenges in the studied school district for the years 2009-2012.

Ventures for Excellence (2004) promoted that investing a teacher upfront will pay off in the long run. Focus-group interview data indicated that school administrators in this district share the same belief and believe quality teachers have been hired using the Ventures for Excellence process. Ventures for Excellence believed that by participating in their training workshops, leaders become increasingly effective in their basic understanding of excellence in employee performance and hiring.

Limitations

A primary limitation to the study was the number of applicants hired using the Ventures for Excellence program during the 2010, 2011, and 2012 school years who provided North Carolina EVAAS scores for data analysis. Some teachers hired did not teach a grade level that gave annual EOG or EOC assessments; therefore, EVAAS data were not available. In addition, over the course of 3 years in which data were collected, staff members may have moved out of the district, been dismissed, or resigned. There were major differences in the number of new hires for each of these years with a range of 18 new hires who have measurable North Carolina EVAAS scores. The lowest year was five (2009-2010) and the highest year was 23 (2011-2012). An associated limitation is the number of new hire data available used in the study concerning elementary, middle, and high school teachers. Some grade levels produced more participants than others.

Another primary limitation was the number of respondents during focus-group interviews. Focus-group attendance was high for all focus groups; however, participation varied for each.

Since the researcher was a district-level administrator in the district, there was a threat to the internal validity of the study. Principals may not have been completely candid during the focus-group interviews. Anonymity was protected by using a proxy researcher to conduct the focus-group interviews. During the three focus-group interviews, additional district-level administrators were in attendance along with school administrators which could have impacted the validity of the study.

Three additional limitations related to the principal survey. Although participation was high, three administrators chose not to participate in principal surveys regarding the measure of qualities of excellent teachers. Responses from these individuals could have impacted survey results. The final limitation of the principal survey is related to principal new hires. The district had one principal who began employment during the spring of 2013 and was not able to complete the principal survey due to lack of teacher knowledge related to the demonstration of excellent teacher qualities.

Recommendations

1. A program should be monitored on an annual basis (Stella, 2013). Based on program evaluation data, it is recommended that the school district reexamine district goals regarding the district hiring process to determine if goals have remained constant or have changed since the implementation of Ventures for Excellence. It is recommended that the district examine all components of the district hiring process and program evaluation data to determine which components of the district hiring process need to be maintained, modified, or removed.

2. It is recommended that the district confer with other school districts that have incorporated Ventures for Excellence as part of a district hiring process to determine

effective hiring strategies that correlate with determined district goals.

3. When beginning a new program, it is important to properly prepare for program implementation. Measures should be in place to successfully launch and evaluate the program at specific time indicators (Stella, 2013). Program evaluation data determined that the district hiring process needs to be reviewed with all current hiring administrators to bring consistency and fidelity to the program, along with establishing district expectations.

4. It is recommended that the district establish interview training and practice sessions during the nonhiring seasons to maintain consistency with scoring and interrater reliability.

Summary

Findings of this study indicated that principal administrators understood the circumstances that gave rise to the implementation of Ventures for Excellence into the district hiring process. This included providing a quality applicant pool, providing a consistent interview tool, creating a streamlined applicant process, and establishing core beliefs of the district. The study concluded that a streamlined application process was initially established that provided an applicant screener, interview rubric, and applicant database of information. Fidelity of the hiring process has decreased. The study concluded Ventures for Excellence produced quality teachers. Overall, teachers hired have demonstrated qualities of excellent teachers, and 75% of applicants hired have produced North Carolina teacher value-added growth scores that meet or exceed the standard expected growth scores. The study also reported no statistical difference in North Carolina EVAAS teacher effect scores of those hired using the district process compared to those hired not using the district process. Legal challenges associated with

the district process produced unchanged results with no legal challenges associated with the district hiring process reported.

The researcher gained from this study that input from stakeholders is important to the implementation of any program in order to create buy-in. Input should address the following: What is the current state of the problem; what would the ideal program to address the problem look like; what are the potential barriers that will be faced; and what are possible solutions for the problem faced? Commitment from stakeholders is important along with program leadership. Program leadership provides consistency, communication, and fidelity to implementation. The researcher also discovered that an effective hiring process consists of many research-based components all working together to support a hiring decision. Such components are reference checks, observations, and building-level interviews. The researcher gained from this study that teacher quality can be measured in multiple ways, both quantitative and qualitative, with quality teachers sharing many commonalities.

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Appendix A

District Applicant Database Screenshot

COMPLETED INTERVIEWS BY LICENSE AREA AND RANK

SELECT LICENSE AREA: All

SELECT SUBJECT AREA: All

* to left of name indicates duplicate survey

Total of + and +/W	Name	Sub Area(s)	Hired?	Interviewer	LicArea(s)
High School					
20	[REDACTED]	Business Ed	No	[REDACTED]	High School
					Status: Complete
Special Area K-12 (EC, Art, Music, etc.)					
15	[REDACTED]		No	[REDACTED]	Special Area K-12 (EC, Art,
					Select
					Status: Complete

Appendix B

Permission to Conduct Research

[Home](#)[Community](#)[School](#)**Wilkes****County****Schools****Superintendent**
Marty T. Hemric, Ed. D.**Associate Superintendent**
Wanda P. Hutchinson, Ed. D.**Assistant Superintendent**
Anna R. Lankford

August 19, 2013

Mr. Westley Wood
324 Turnwood Lane
Millers Creek, NC 28651

Mr. Wood:

Thank you for your written request to conduct research in the Wilkes County Schools. I understand your research is connected to your dissertation project required by the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program of Gardner-Webb University. I have learned that your proposal has been approved by Gardner-Webb University and you are now ready to collect data related to the effectiveness of Ventures for Excellence in the Wilkes County Schools.

I grant full permission for your Ventures for Excellence program evaluation research. I believe our research will provide valuable information for our system. Please proceed with data collections, interviews, etc... as presented in your proposal.

Thank you for your interest in conducting the program evaluation in the Wilkes County Schools. I wish you the very best as you complete your study and satisfy this doctoral requirement. Please contact me if I may be of any further assistance in the process of your study.

Sincerely,



Marty T. Hemric, Ed.D
Superintendent

Appendix C

Conducting a Focus Group

Conducting a Focus Group

What are Focus Groups?

A focus group is a way to reach out to potential users for feedback and comment.

Organizations generally use focus groups in planning, marketing, or evaluation.

Specifically, a focus group session concentrates on:

- Gathering opinion, beliefs, and attitudes about issues of interest to an organization
- Encouraging discussion about a particular topic
- Building excitement from spontaneous combination of participants' comments
- Providing an opportunity to learn more about a topic or issue

Before the Focus Group

1. Define the purpose of the focus group. This has to be clear and specific. The more defined the objective, the easier the rest of the process.
2. Establish a timeline. A focus group cannot be developed overnight. Planning should take place several weeks ahead of the actual session. Participants should be identified, questions should be developed, a site for the session should be identified, and materials gathered.
3. Identify the participants. Determine how many participants you need and how many to invite. Secure names and contact information, finalize the list, and send invitations. Focus groups should consist of six to twelve participants.

Generate the Questions

Focus groups generally last for a little more than one to two hours. Time will allow for only four to seven questions. You may want to include one to two introductory or warm-up questions. To be effective, focus group questions should be open-ended and

move from the general to the specific. Once you have a list of questions, look at your purpose statement again. Keep questions that are really important and that qualify for your purpose. Eliminate as many questions as possible. Rewrite the questions with good editing. Order the questions that will be comfortable for the participants, i.e. moving from general to specific.

Develop a Script

Plan on a one to two hour time frame. A minimum of one hour is recommended because the process requires some time for opening and closing remarks as well as at least one or two questions. There are three parts to a focus group script:

1. The opening is the time for the facilitator to welcome the group, introduce the purpose and context of the focus group, explain what a focus group is and how it will flow, and make the introductions.
2. The question section is where you ask the questions that you designed.
3. The closing section wraps up the focus group. This includes thanking the participants, giving them an opportunity and avenue for further input, telling them how the data will be used, and explaining when the larger process will be completed.

Select a Facilitator

A focus group facilitator should be able to deal tactfully with outspoken group members, keep the discussion on track, and make sure every participant is heard. He or she can be a staff member, volunteer, or member of a committee or task force. Be wary of anything about the facilitator (or facilitators) that might make participants uncomfortable.

Choose the Location

You Need a setting which can accommodate the participants and where they

would feel comfortable expressing their opinions. When choosing a location, ask these questions:

- What message does the setting send? (Is it corporate, upscale, cozy, informal, sterile, inviting?)
- Does the setting encourage conversation?
- How will the setting affect the information gathered? Will the setting bias the information offered?
- Can the setting comfortably accommodate nine to fifteen people (six to twelve participants plus facilitators), where all can view each other?
- Is it easily accessible? (Consider access for people with disabilities, safety, transportation, parking, etc.)

Once decided, reserve the location if necessary.

Conduct the Focus Group

The facilitator should arrive before the participants, set out the refreshments, and arrange the room so all participants can view one another. As participants arrive, the facilitator should set the tone for a comfortable, enjoyable discussion by welcoming them just as would any gracious host. Introduce yourself and the co-facilitator, if used.

Explain the means to record the session. Carry out the focus group as per the plan and script. The facilitator should have some room for spontaneity, i.e., asking spontaneous questions that arise from the discussion, probing deeper into a topic. Attention to the following items will help ensure success:

1. Set the tone; participants should have fun and feel good about the session.
2. Make sure every participant is heard; draw out quieter group members.
3. Get full answers (not just "we need more money" but "we need more money to hire a

receptionist to answer phones").

4. Monitor time closely; don't exceed time limits.
5. Keep the discussion on track; try to answer all or most of the questions.
6. Head off exchanges of opinion about individual items.

After the Focus Group

Each focus group session should be reviewed with the facilitator. Each focus group session should be transcribed. Start by reviewing the focus group transcriptions, looking for trends (comments that appear repeatedly in the data) and surprises (unexpected comments worth noting). Context and tone are just as important as particular words. If a comment seems to be phrased negatively, elicit emotional responses, or trigger other comments, it would be worth noting. Finally, results and conclusions should be summarized. (Blank, 2002)

Appendix D

Focus Group Script and Questionnaire

Focus Group Script

Welcome:

Good (morning/afternoon) everyone. My name is _____. I will serve as a facilitator for our focus group today. A focus group is a form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards a product, service, concept, or idea. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members.

Ventures for Excellence is a teacher hiring instrument that this district began using in 2009. The purpose of this focus group is to examine the systems and processes of using the Ventures for Excellence instrument as it applies to this school district. I will ask a series of 5 questions. Each participant is encouraged to express their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes as the question is answered. It is important that you elaborate of your answers to provide as much detail as possible. Before answering a question or making comments toward an answer it is important that you state your first name for the record.

Begin focus group discussion

Closing:

I would like to thank everyone for participating in this focus group. I would also like to ask if anyone has any additional comments that you would like to make concerning Ventures for Excellence. The collected data will be used by the school district to make evaluate the processes and systems currently used to implement Ventures for Excellence. Thank you for your attendance.

Focus Group Questionnaire

Principal Level:

___ Elementary School

___ Middle School

___ High School

Number of Participants: _____

Date: _____

1. Explain the circumstances that gave rise to Ventures for Excellence being implemented in this school district.
2. How has Ventures for Excellence hiring process impacted the time you spend filling a vacant position?

3. The components of the Ventures for Excellence program include: applicant screener, Ventures 30-question interview, and applicant database managed by the district human resources department. Which components do you think are effective and which components do you feel are ineffective?
4. What are the main difficulties with implementing Ventures for Excellence?
5. Should the program be continued? Why or why not?

Appendix E

Ventures for Excellence Survey

Ventures for Excellence Teacher Survey

Purpose: The purpose of this survey is compare teachers hired with Ventures for Excellence to the qualities of an excellent teacher.

Instructions: These statements will be used to help you review hired teachers in comparison to qualities of excellent teachers. Your views are important, so please answer each item as accurately as you can. Please select the answer that best represents your understanding.

* Required

Purpose *

	Rarely	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
Has a positive attitude toward students					
Values students as important people					
Helps students to like themselves better					
Helps students look at the good in difficult situations					
Searches for individual student talents and strengths					
Shows a lot of excitement about student learning					
Helps students have a positive attitude in the classroom					
Helps students become more self-responsible					
Focuses upon the good qualities and strengths of students					

Relationships *

	Rarely	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
Explains things in ways that are easy for students to understand					
Treats students as friends					
Identifies with the feelings of students in the class					
Understands the thoughts and ideas of students					
Tries to get to know students personally					
Helps students					

appreciate and care
for classmates

Enjoys listening to
what students have to
say

Is a person students
really like

Helps students to
think through their
feelings

Teaching/Learning Strategies *

	Rarely	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
Knows what motivates students to learn					
Considers many viewpoints before making decisions in class					
Helps students learn in ways that are best for them					
Comes to class prepared to teach					
Helps students think through the reasons for learning the material					
Shows excitement about the curriculum					
Listens to all sides of the story when there is a problem between students					
Is open to new ideas to make learning exciting					
Will change a lesson when students struggle with learning					
Makes students learning practical to contemporary life now					
Asks for students ideas about how to make the class more interesting					
Helps students to see the many sides of an issue					
Looks for many different ways to teach the class					
Makes sure students understand each step of a lesson before					

moving on
Helps students use
their new learning in
the classroom

Speciality areas *

	Rarely	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
Helps students appreciate differences among peers in class					
Feels bad if students do not do well on a test					
Is supportive of students when talking with other people					
Brings community members to class to help students learn					
Supports the benefits of different races and cultures in the community					
Prepares students well for tests					
Will listen and take action on ideas from adults at home to help students learn					
Connects students with adults outside of school to help them learn					
Stops put-downs between students					
Helps students understand the errors they make on tests					
Is open to suggestions from others on how to improve student learning					
Works collaboratively with adults at home to help students progress					

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Appendix F

Recommended Sequence for Selection of Teachers

Ventures for Excellence Recommended Sequence for the Selection of Teachers

			Person(s) Responsible
Step 1	Define the specific teaching position.	1	
Step 2	Post the position internally.	2	
Step 3	Advertise the position regionally and nationally.	3	
Step 4	Acquire a formal application including resumé credential papers, references and other relevant information, gathered on paper or on-line.	4	
Step 5	Screen applicants using the Ventures for Excellence Teacher StyleProfile System or the Ventures for Excellence Teacher Screener Interview. Assess the quality of the responses and attach a numerical score.	5	
Step 6	Assess the completed application information along with screener information. Place the candidate in one of four categories: 1)High Predictability (HP); 2)Moderate Predictability (MP); 3)Low Predictability (LP); 4)Very Low Predictability (VLP).	6	
Step 7	Conduct a Ventures for Excellence Form B-22 or C-30 Interview (tape recorded by phone or videotaped in person). Be sure to ask all candidates all of the questions! Assess each response, assign a numerical score, immediately write a summary of the candidate , using the back side of the coding form. Categorize the candidate as a "HP," "MP," "LP" or "VLP."	7	
Step 8	Acquire reference checks from a minimum of three people using the Reference Check Form (page 44). Categorize "HP," "MP," "LP" or "VLP."	8	
Step 9	Also, if possible, observe the teacher's classroom and use the Classroom Observation Form as a means of assessment.	9	
Step 10	Put all the information in a Central Office Data Bank. Principals and supervisors select candidates for building level interviews from this pool. This assures that all candidates have met the district criteria and have the core values which the district believes are essential for success as facilitators of student growth and development.	10	
Step 11	Invite the candidate for a Building Level Interview. At this point, supervisors and others who may work directly with this candidate are involved in the process. This interview should include specific questions about content knowledge; instructional practice; follow-up questions to information acquired through the VE interview, etc. At this point, a decision is made about how this person "fits" with the current staff needs of the building. Do not give the final hiring decision to a building committee. <i>Remember: "He who doeth the firing, doeth the hiring."</i>	11	
Step 12	At this point, if an interviewer is trained and proficient in the use of an alternative interview (Form B or C), the finalist could be further interviewed. Assign a numerical score and categorize "HP," "MP," "LP" or "VLP."	12	

Step 13	Make recommendation to the appropriate hiring officials with evidence collected in Steps 4-12.	13	
Step 14	Offer and acquire a signed contract.	14	
Step 15	Affirm with the teacher the reasons for employing them and make a commitment to their continued professional growth.	15	
Step 16	Using the interview data, prepare a developmental plan with the new teacher which will be extended for the first year of employment. This plan should be shared with the mentor teacher and progress should be reviewed every 90 days.	16	
Step 17	Complete a first year action research assessment regarding the effectiveness of the new teacher. See Chapter X.	17	
Step 18	Celebrate the successes of the new teacher in multiple ways.	18	

The Ventures for Excellence Measurement Systems for Teacher Selection

Your System Must Include Measurable Criteria!

The Ventures for Excellence process includes systematic ways to measure excellence in teacher attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.

Attitudes and behaviors of effective teachers are measurable, observable, and predictable. I am now becoming more adept at identifying and