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Challenges for Teacher Preparation Programs: Measuring First Year Teacher Effectiveness for Program Improvement and National Accreditation

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Abstract:
Recent changes in teacher preparation program national accreditation standards recommend such programs demonstrate new teachers' effectiveness in their field of study, specifically measuring the impact first year teachers have on K-12 student learning during their first year of teaching. However, evidence from the K-12 schoolhouse that could help university faculty determine new teacher effectiveness is protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This mixed methods study focuses on the challenges faced by university faculty in determining their program graduate's (n=19) success at positively impacting student achievement during their first year of teaching. It focuses on new teacher perceptions of readiness to teach and school administrator evaluation scores during their first year of teaching. Findings revealed prominent themes related to flexible grouping, remediation, and navigating the office politics that new teacher's often face during their first professional work experience. These themes are often not explicit teachings in teacher preparation curriculums. Recommendations, as a result of this study, are focused on the commitment to continuous program improvement and the requirements found in the accreditation standards. Overall, the findings translate to concrete university faculty actions to improve teacher preparation program teachings, coursework, and field experiences, thus better preparing teachers.

Keywords: Data-Driven instruction, teacher preparation program, national accreditation, performance standards, first year teacher, teacher effectiveness, teacher observation evaluation, title i

1. Introduction

Effective K-12 teachers using classroom student performance data to guide instructional decisions has been widely promulgated by experts in the field (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005); (Darling- Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Vasquez-Heilig, 2005) and it's understood that the skill of using student performance data to guide teacher instructional decisions is a skill acquired through teacher preparation programs (Monk, 1994). However, a large number of teacher preparation programs are finding it challenging to practice what they teach when it comes to better preparing today's teachers.

Recommendations to improve the quality and effectiveness of teacher preparations programs has been the aim of many previous studies and with the onslaught of federal and state accountability systems, teacher preparation programs are taking steps to improve the way they go about preparing today's teachers. Federal and state governments have spent millions of dollars in the K-12 arena creating the infrastructure that data-driven instruction demands (NCTQ, 2012). Both Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) and Feiman-Nemser (2001) recommend university teacher preparation programs train pre-service teachers to develop and implement formative and summative assessments as well as teaching how to offer constructive and specific feedback to students they will soon be teaching. Classroom student performance data informing teacher instruction is what Neuman (2016) offered when he defined data-driven instruction as a theory of action where data collection can lead to more deliberate and systematic analysis of student work, which in turn can lead to more differentiated approaches to instruction that highlight individual students' strengths while working on their weaknesses, which can lead to greater student learning.

Teacher preparation program faculty use a variety of student performance data to make data-driven decisions to improve the way they prepare teachers. However almost all of this data is collected while the student matriculates a university program, e.g. GPA, course assessment scores. During this typical university data collection cycle, students are afforded a cadre of faculty support, university resources, and a myriad of rehearsal opportunities to ensure their success. However, newly revamped national accreditation standards are looking past this typical method of using program measures couched with university support. Teacher Preparation faculty are faced with determining measures of teacher effectiveness after students have completed their teacher preparation program and are gainfully employed as teachers.

The quandary for program faculty is the recommendation from accrediting agencies to produce evidence that first year teachers are "contributing to an expected level of student-learning growth" (CAEP, 2105). The evidence which could support university faculty in answering this question is more often than not off limits due to confidentiality concerns. To date, only a few states release data on how effective first year teachers are in the K-12 classroom (NCTQ, 2013). This reporting is a boon for university teacher preparation

program improvement efforts and that data usually takes the form of K-12 student performance related to state accountability measures. However, the majority of teacher preparation programs across the country do not have access to this type of data on their graduates. A2017 Virginia Supreme Court decision determined that student performance data was considered part of the teachers' personnel file and therefore confidential under state code. This decision will have teacher preparation programs looking for alternative methods to determine how effective their teachers are in the field. This study focuses on a teacher preparation program's efforts to capture first year teacher effectiveness data for program improvement purposes and national accreditation.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

More than 42% of first year teachers leave teaching within the first five years of entry into the profession, (Perda, 2013). Moreover, Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas (2016) suggested that in 2012, attrition of teachers was approximately 55% in high-poverty schools (i.e. Title I) than in lower-poverty schools (i.e. non-Title I). With mounting research documenting a widening attrition gap, (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2013), greater scrutiny has shifted away from K-12 school leadership as the attrition problem to now eyeing college and university programs who are tasked with equipping first year teachers with an effective teaching skillset. Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, and Darling-Hammond (2016) noted institutions of higher education prepare the largest proportion of beginning teachers, approximately 88% in 2009-2010 with 69% being prepared by traditional teacher preparation programs. Furthermore (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2013) suggested the type of college, degree, and certificate a teacher received often had little bearing on the likelihood of first year teachers leaving teaching after 1 year. However, research suggested teachers with more training in teaching methods and pedagogy were far less likely to leave teaching after their first year on the job (Ingersoll, R., Merrill, L., & May, H., 2014). This research supports that university teacher preparation programs area key factor in teacher retention and success and brings to light the need to continually improve teacher preparation programs.

National accreditation standards establish specifications and procedures of best practice. At issue with national accreditation standards is the recommendation that teacher preparation programs provide evidence of their program quality by providing K-12 schoolhouse data on the teachers they produce. This causes a dilemma for program faculty in several ways: 1.) data such as teacher evaluations that can determine teacher effectiveness are protected under FERPA; 2.)data such as student scores on standardized assessments linked to the teacher of record are protected by FERPA; 3.) publically available data are typically presented by subject and grade level across schools and are not disaggregated to the individual student or teacher; and 4.) tracking first year teacher employment after program completion is typically self-reported and has limitations. A gap exits in the literature of an effective means for university faculty to collect objective, third party data from the K-12 schoolhouse on how effective their teacher preparation program graduates are at positively impacting student achievement during their first year of teaching.

1.2. Definition of Terms

➢ Data-Driven Instruction- The use of quantifiable data obtained from observable and measurable goals.
➢ Teacher Preparation Program - The entity responsible for the preparation of educators including a nonprofit or for-profit institution of higher education, a school district, an organization, a corporation, or a governmental agency
➢ National Accreditation - A process for assessing and enhancing academic and educational quality through voluntary peer review.
➢ Performance Standards – Well-defined job expectations
➢ First Year Teacher – In-service probationary teacher contracted to teach for a period of one year
➢ Teacher Effectiveness - Adequacy to accomplish a purpose; producing the intended or expected result.
➢ Teacher Evaluation - A process for measuring and judging the quality of performance of a program, a process, or individuals.
➢ Title I – Part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that provides financial assistance to schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Continuous Program Improvement

The research has shown that quality teaching matters to student achievement. Teacher quality has been constantly identified as the most important classroom factor in student achievement (McCaffrey, Lockwood, Koretz, & Hamilton, 2003; Rowan, Correnti & Miller, 2002). Findings reported by Wenglinsky (2000) stated the importance of teacher quality in relation to student academic performance, both in mathematics and science, and that ultimately various aspects of teacher quality do have a substantial impact on test scores. Continuous efforts to improve teacher quality at the university level involve faculty analyzing data such as student scores on program assessments, e.g. Praxis II, and various institutionally created instruments used to capture a candidates' teaching proficiency during coursework and field experiences. These data are typically administered, collected, and analyzed while students matriculate a university program, making it to a large extent, easy for faculty to accomplish the task and make decisions based on student data. The decision-making that occurs at the program level for faulty is routinely documented for national accreditation purposes. In fact, accreditation organizations demand a culture of evidence for program improvement(CAEP Handbook, 2016).The improvements faculty undertake based on their student data might include changes to course content and curriculum, increasing community partnerships, and changes to program logistics. Ultimately these improvements have one purpose, to develop a more effective teacher.

2.2. Virginia Teacher Evaluation

Teacher evaluation matters because teaching matters (Stronge, J. H., 2006). Recent federal funding guidelines specifically include teacher evaluation as an important part of increasing teacher quality. As a result, states must ensure that their teacher evaluations are at least partially based on student achievement (Hightower et al, 2011). As noted in *Quality Counts 2010*, almost all states require teachers to be evaluated, with only seven states lacking such a provision. The National Council of Teacher Quality (NCTQ) reported that 43 states now provide criteria for school district-designed evaluation systems to take into account measures of student achievement when evaluating teachers (NCTQ, 2015). States and local school divisions are looking to identify areas of need by linking student achievement to the teacher of record and teacher evaluation continues to play an important role in this process. It is used to both accurately identify teachers across various levels of effectiveness and to provide actionable feedback to teachers about how to improve their practice, (TDE, 2015).

Teaching experts continue to put forth the belief that student achievement results and teacher performance may offer more information for teachers than formal credentials (Darling-Hammond & Haselkorn, 2009; Rockoff, Jacob, Kane, & Staiger, 2008). It is noted that there have been difficulties in the past when it comes to teacher evaluation that include: poor evaluation instruments, little school district guidance on the substance of teacher evaluations, the absence of high-quality feedback to teachers in the evaluation process, and few consequences (either positive or negative) attached to the evaluations (Donaldson, 2009; Donaldson & Peske, 2010).

New state and national accountability requirements are driving the need for changing traditional teacher evaluation (Hightower et al., 2011). In 2015, Virginia's Board of Education approved revamped teaching performance guidelines and overhauled the Standards for Professional Practice of Teachers (VDOE 2012) which serves to guide teacher evaluation with a focus on evidentiary student academic success. This retooled teacher evaluation guide stipulates that 40 percent of the overall teacher evaluation score is based on student achievement (Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers, 2012). These changes to Virginia teacher evaluation are in line with the accountability movement.

2.3. National Accreditation

Accreditation is a way of knowing the education provided has met standards set by both the government and experts in the field of post-secondary education (Alstete, 2004). In 2010 the boards of the National Council for Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) consolidated teacher education accreditation under a first year organization, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). This merger reshaped accreditation standards for teacher preparation programs and set a new course for teacher preparation program improvement. Recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE), CAEP goals are to raise the performance of candidates as practitioners in our nation's K-12 schools and to raise standards for the evidence used to improve educator preparation programs (CAEP, 2014). As a national accrediting body for teacher preparation, CAEP set a standard for program improvement. Five CAEP standards hold teacher preparation programs accountable, however, Standard 4holdsteacher preparation programs accountable for their graduates' impact on student achievement during their first year teaching in a K-12 classroom (CAEP, 2014). As one who recently completed attempts to gather this type of data, the researcher is keenly aware of the difficult road it is to gather this data due to confidentiality issues. Evidence of effective teaching is typically documented in teachers' performance evaluations conducted by the school administrator, and as such, is considered a personnel record protected under FERPA. Experts agree that teacher evaluation is often used both for the improvement of teaching and learning and for accountability purposes (Baratz-Snowden, 2009).

3. Methodology

This study was designed for two purposes. First, to acquire valid and reliable data in support of national accreditation and second, use the findings to improve a teacher education program. The overall intent was to discover how effective graduates of a teacher preparation program in Southeast Virginia were at positively impacting student achievement during their first year of teaching as determined by school administrator evaluations, personal interviews, and completion of an online survey.

With participant permission, the researcher reviewed summative teaching evaluations from the participant's first year of teaching during the 2015-2017 academic years to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses that might be linked to the university teacher preparation program. Merriam (1998) stated, in judging the value of a data source, one can ask whether it contains information or insight relevant to the research questions and whether it can be acquired in a reasonably practical yet systematic manner. If these two questions can be answered in the affirmative, there is no reason not to use a particular source of data (p.105).

3.1. Research Questions

The guiding questions for this study involved program improvement and national accreditation. The researcher sought to determine to what extent graduates felt prepared to teach based on their university preparation program and if first year summative teacher evaluations identified program areas of strength and need, especially in the area of positively impacting student achievement.

3.2. Population and Procedures

The population was a convenient sample that consisted of first year teachers who graduated from the same undergraduate teacher preparation initial licensure program at a university in Southeast Virginia during the 2014-2016 academic years. All of the graduates were working in elementary schools serving three neighboring cities in Southeast Virginia, including the city where the university is located. Fifteen graduates were employed in the largest school division the university program serves and two teachers each were employed at two neighboring school divisions. All graduates were employed in school divisions falling under the same state teacher licensure regulations and teacher performance standards.

Prior to graduation, students were invited to participate in the study which involved both qualitative and quantitative aspects. A total of 38 graduates were solicited to participate in the study and all participants who responded to the initial online Survey Monkey request (*n*=19) were graduates from an initial licensure program in elementary education (preK-6). All participants agreed to complete an online survey, share their first year summative teacher evaluation scores including administrator comments, and participate in an interview with the researcher. Knowing the sensitive nature of sharing evaluation scores with an outside source, the researcher took steps to ensure anonymity. The preparation program bias of the researcher was made known to all participants, as they were asked to be honest in all responses for the purpose of program improvement. A mixed-methods case study was conducted to systematically collect and analyze data.

3.3. Instruments
The researcher analyzed two quantitative instruments and one qualitative instrument germane to 19 first year teachers who were graduates of the same teacher preparation program. The first quantitative instrument was an integral part of the ongoing process of improving student outcomes and is currently used by the university's Alumni Office for surveying alumni from teacher licensure and educational leadership programs. The program level assessment helps students evaluate and reflect on their level of readiness for teaching and leading. The instrument sought to determine how well their teacher preparation program equipped them in the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) ten Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Model Core Teaching Standards developed in 2011. These standards are the focus of CAEP Standard 1 for national accreditation and widely accepted as best teacher practice (National Education Association, 2013).The survey was administered online in Survey Monkey form to determine student self-perceptions of program preparation in the 10 In TASC Standards. The method of scaling the questionnaire was a five point Likert– typescale{(Unsatisfactory) to(Exemplary)} for all 10 Standards. All 19 participants completed the survey.

The second set of quantitative instruments examined were summative teacher evaluations conducted by the participant's school administrator at the end of their first year of teaching. The most widely used form of teacher evaluation has traditionally been classroom observations that measure evident classroom processes, including specific teacher practices, interactions between teachers and students, or other holistic aspects of instruction (Goe, Bell, & Little 2008). Participants shared a copy of their first year summative evaluation results during the face-to-face interview with the researcher. Either a copy of the formal evaluation was provided to the researcher or the researcher transcribed participant summative scores and administrator comments provided by the participant to a blank evaluation form. Validity and reliability of the evaluation instrument by all three school divisions was supported by the VDOE's *The Research Base for the Uniform Performance Standards for Teachers (2015)* which highlights key findings drawn from relevant empirical studies over the last 25 years. Each of the three school divisions' evaluation instruments represented in this study contained the required VDOE Teacher Performance Standards (Table 1) with some slight variation in format and appearance. All instruments utilized VDOE's recommended unanchored Likert– type scale (Unsatisfactory) to(Exemplary)} for all 7 Standards (Table 2).

Two school divisions' summative teacher evaluation instruments contained the VDOE recommended Performance Indicators under each Performance Standard. These Performance Indicators are examples of the teacher work conducted in the performance of the standard. For example, under Performance Standard 3: Instructional Delivery, two school divisions provided a list of examples of indicators such as *Engages and maintains students in active learning* and *Builds upon students' existing knowledge and skills.* The VDOE provides many examples of teacher performance indicators for each Performance Standard. Allthree school divisions make available to teachers a separate Performance Appraisal Rubric which accompanies the evaluation instrument.

Summative evaluations are completed in compliance with the *Code of Virginia* and school division policy. Each school division represented in this study provided policy recommendations for school administrators in determining summative ratings for teachers and how to apply the rating for each of the seven performance expectations, with the most significant weight given to Standard 7 - *student academic progress*. School divisions' policy suggested that the weight of each of the first six standards is equal at 10 percent, and that Standard 7 account for 40 percent of the evaluation.

With the culture of accountability in today'sK-12 schools evidenced by the emphasis placed on Standard 7 by VDOE (40% of the overall evaluation score) and school divisions(Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005),of particular interest to the researcher were the evaluation scores and administrator comments for Standard 7. The standard is defined by VDOE as *the work of the teacher results in acceptable, measurable, and appropriate student academic progress* (VDOE, 2011). If Standard 7 is applied with fidelity by school administrators and with a preponderance of evidence from multiple data sources from the teacher and his/her students, the assigned score might be a trustworthy indicator of new teacher effectiveness.

1. Professional Knowledge	(10% of the overall evaluation score)
2. Instructional Planning	(10% of the overall evaluation score)
3. Instructional Delivery	(10% of the overall evaluation score)
4. Assessment of and for Student Learning	(10% of the overall evaluation score)
5. Learning Environment	(10% of the overall evaluation score)
6. Professionalism	(10% of the overall evaluation score)
7. Student Academic Progress	(40% of the overall evaluation score)

Table 1: VDOE Teacher Performance Standards

Exemplary	Proficient	Developing/Needs Improvement	Unacceptable
In addition to meeting the standard, the teacher creates a dynamic learning environment that maximizes learning opportunities and minimizes disruptions within an environment in which students self-monitor behavior.	The teacher uses resources, routines, and procedures to provide a respectful, positive, safe, student-centered environment that is conducive to learning.	The teacher is inconsistent in using resources, routines, and procedures and in providing a respectful, positive, safe, student-centered environment.	The teacher inadequately addresses student behavior, displays a harmful attitude with students, and/or ignores safety standards.

Table 2: VDOE Performance Appraisal Rubric
*Proficient is the expected level of performance

The qualitative component involved a face- to-face interview with the researcher at the participant's elementary school of employment and served to validate the quantitative results. Each participant was asked the same set of open-ended questions, reporting their perceptions of preparedness to teach and allowed participants to address matters that might not have been included in the survey or on their summative observation evaluation. A report from NCTQ (2014) on first year teacher effectiveness guided the interview question development. The researcher, being a faculty member in the teacher preparation program being studied, took steps to ensure participants felt comfortable being honest and open in their responses, even if answers were tied directly to the pedagogy or content of the researcher. The following questions served as the interviewers guide:

- How long did it take you to find a job?
- Did you feel prepared from the first day?
- What areas do you wish you had more training? (environment, instruction, analyzing and adjusting)
- In what areas do you feel fully prepared?
- How effective are you at positively impacting student achievement?
- What are your areas of strengths and areas of need as determined by your summative evaluation in the following Teacher Performance Standards?
    a. Professional Knowledge
    b. Instructional Planning
    c. Instructional Delivery
    d. Assessment of and for Student Learning
    e. Learning environment
    f. Professionalism
    g. Student Academic Progress

3.4. Limitations

The first limitation is that the respondents self-report their perceptions of preparedness in the 10 InTASC Standards and that survey data should be viewed in conjunction with other assessment results to determine the program's effectiveness in developing teachers. Merriam (1988) suggested that the strengths of case study outweigh its limitations, indicating that the case study is particularly appealing for applied fields such as education: "Educational processes, problems, and programs can be examined to bring about an understanding that in turn can affect and perhaps even improve practice" (p.32).

Merriam (2002) suggested that the researchers "explain their position vis-à-vis the topic being studied and what values or assumptions might affect data collection and analysis" (p. 26).

Reliability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated; it is problematic in the social sciences because human behavior is not static (Merriam, 2002). Validity and reliability ultimately depend upon the ethics of the researcher. The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1988). All observations and analyses are filtered through one's world view, values, and perspective. This atypical investigative role requires the researcher to disclose personal assumptions, biases, and values. Clearly related to this issue of bias is the inherently political nature of case study evaluations (Merriam 2002).

The researcher's interpretations and perceptions of teacher effectiveness and teacher observation evaluation have been shaped by his experiences as a school principal, he thus brings content and context knowledge as well as experience to the study. The researcher brings bias to the table as an advocate of public education, with an understanding that today's public school teachers have a dynamic, public, and often tenuous responsibility.

4. Results

4.1. Survey

The results provide useful data for decision making by program faculty concerning accreditation standards, as well as, program improvement initiatives. First year teachers rated InTASC Standard 2: *Understanding student differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning* as least prepared by their teacher preparation program to accomplish. A close second was

InTASC Standard 7: *Planning instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals*. *Understanding and using a variety of instructional strategies* (InTASCStandard 8) was rated third as least prepared by their teacher preparation program (Figure 1). Mining the data further revealed that 11 of the 19 respondents were employed at Title I schools, i.e., low income schools. After filtering the data further to exclude non-Title I schools, only data from respondents who were employed at Title I schools were analyzed. The intent was to determine if Title I school teachers face different challenges based on their preparation. Results revealed that InTASC Standard 2: *Understanding student differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning* as number one as least prepared to accomplish. Interestingly, this same group reported InTASC Standard 1:*Understanding how learners grow and develop* as the second least prepared area. The third area least prepared for this group was InTASCStandard 7: *Planning instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals*
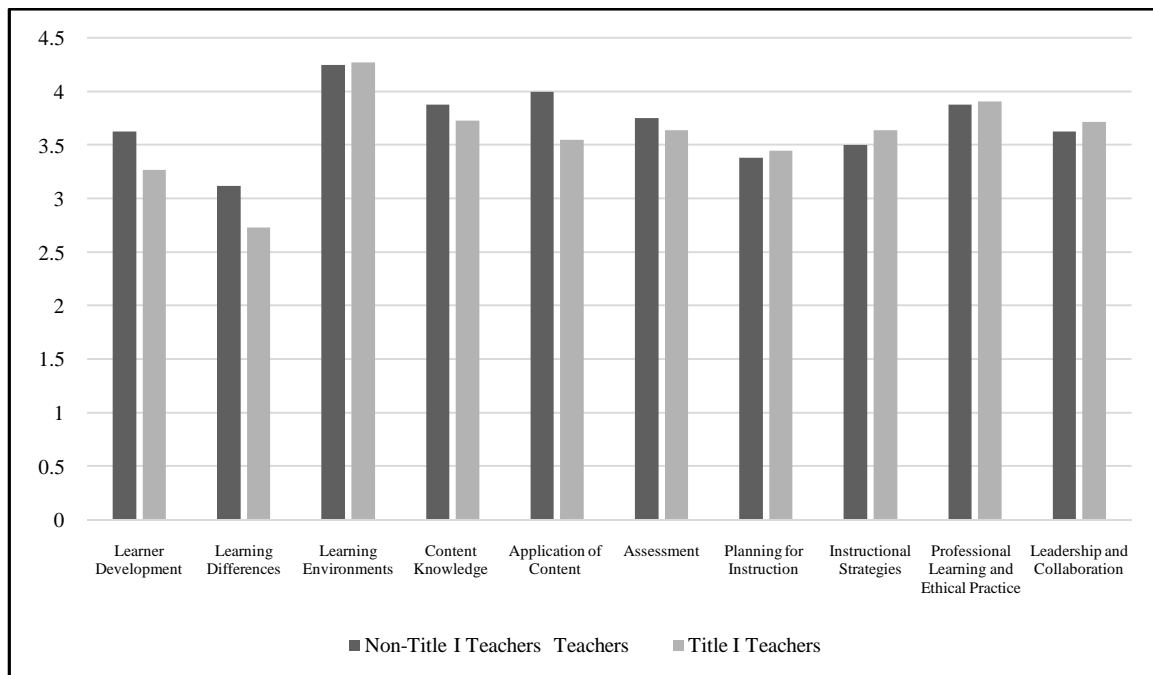

Figure 1: Teacher's Preparedness to Teach in the 10 InTASC Standards

Title I teachers (*N*=11) reported a higher mean consistency scores (*M* = 3.70; *SD*=.40). By comparison, the non-Title I teachers (*N*=8) reported a lower mean consistency scores (*M* = 3.59; *SD* = .40). To test the hypothesis that Title I and non-Title I teachers were associated with statistically significant different mean responses in the ten InTASC Standards, an independent samples *t*-test was performed. The ten InTASC standards were each treated as separate samples for the *t*-test. Only one standard reported statistically significant results; the InTASC Standard 5: *Application of Content*. There was a significant difference in the scores for Title 1 teachers (*M*=3.50, *SD*=.52) and non-Title I teachers (*M*=4.00, *SD*=.53) conditions; *t* (1.8) =, p = .040. Title I teachers reported that they felt less prepared in the standard *Application of Content* compared to non-Title I teachers their first year of teaching.

4.2. First Year Teacher Summative Evaluation Results
Evaluations based on careful classroom observations can identify effective teachers and teaching practices (Kane et al., 2011).Interestingly, almost 90% of the Teacher Performance Indicators scored by school administrators fell in the proficient rating on all seven VDOE Performance Standards, while no first year teacher was scored at the unacceptable rating on any standard (Figure 2). Findings reveal three areas of need with around 21% of the evaluator's scores falling in the Developing/Needs Improvement Performance Indicator for Instructional Planning, Instructional Delivery, and Learning Environment. Further data mining discovered that the Developing/Needs Improvement scores were related to the same four participants, all employed at Title I schools. Two participants were rated exemplary in Instructional Planning and Learning Environment. The researcher encountered one evaluation instrument where a school administrator used the terms *glows* and *grows* on the instrument instead of the VDOE Performance Indicators. All seven Performance Standards were scored as *glows*by the school administrator, which the researcher coded as "proficient" for this purposes of this study.
Administrator comments on the observation evaluations were largely vague and lacked specificity, but expected by the researcher due to the nature of summative evaluations and that data or information the administrator might have compiled during the school year on the new teacher was not available to the researcher. Interestingly, the majority of administrator comments were taken word-for-word from the VDOE examples of indicators. For example, five of the evaluations had the same administrator comments under Standard 1. Professional Knowledge: *Demonstrates ability to link present content with past and future learning experiences, other subject areas, and real-world experiences and applications.*

The researcher was unable to determine any systematic feedback provided by the school administrator from interim evaluation scores which are the basis for summative evaluations. In other words, no summative evaluation analyzed by the researcher had information or data that was linked to previous formative teacher evaluations. Having personal knowledge of the school divisions represented in this study and that all three school divisions have teacher evaluation systems that include interim reviews offirst year teachers, the researcher acknowledges that administrator pre and post teacher evaluation conferences were not addressed in this study.
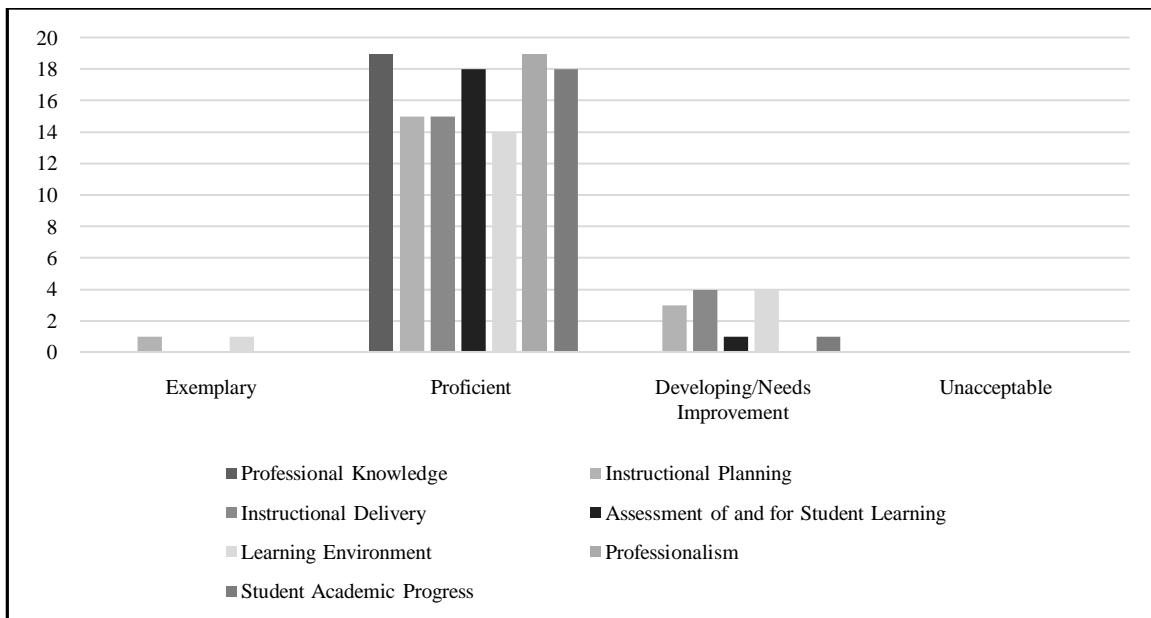

Figure 2: Almost 90% of Ratings Assigned by School Administrators fell in the Proficient Range

4.3. Open-Ended Results

The final data collection involved face-to-face interviews at the participant's elementary school. The intent was to collect a rich narrative and gain additional insights in areas not encompassed by the survey and teacher performance evaluations. Prevailing themes developed around interview questions.

How long to find a job. The average timeframe for participants to find a fulltime teaching position that they were trained for by their university program was 4 months. With second semester May graduates averaging less than 3 months and the maximum of nine months for a December graduate. Thirteen participants were employed at Title I elementary schools across three separate school divisions and six participants at non-Title I elementary schools.

Do you feel prepared form the first day? The majority of students (73%) answered no; that they were not prepared from the first day. However, almost all students couched their answers with "in some areas" and elaborated as to why they felt unprepared. The researcher further disaggregated the data based on Title I and non-Title I school teachers to see if there were different challenges Title I school teachers face. All Title I teachers answered no (100%), they were not prepared from the first day. Further investigation of Title I teachers revealed reoccurring themes during the interview of a lack of an understanding of student and community economic issues and a recognition of the lack of school resources to address these issues.

Areas of more training. With the majority of students not feeling fully prepared from the first day of teaching, several themes developed around skills in which they wish they had more training. The most common themefor new teachers (73%) was the lack of preparation to organize and conduct small flexible groupings of students based on classroom student performance data for remediation purposes. Simply put, using data to drive small group instruction was echoed by the majority of participants. Although participants could recall data discussions during their university program courses, new teachers indicated that they did not have sufficient exposure practice during their program. New teachers specifically mentioned they wish they had more training in collecting and analyzing student data in math and reading because of the daily student practice and data collection required by school divisions. This theme falls in line with what experts identify as an effective teacher skill that must be a curriculum component of teacher preparation programs(Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005); (Darling- Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Vasquez-Heilig, 2005).

Teachers noted that the remediation plans they had to develop for various groups of students in their classrooms were different form the traditional lesson plans they were trained to write during their university preparation programand that they had to learn how to develop these remediation plans on the job. Teachers reported that their on the job training was an informal endeavor, usually shared by a colleague. The proper coding of student progress and grouping of students based on achievement data for classroom reading groups was reported (63%) as the most difficult daily job to keep up with and one in which teachers said they were not trained for during their program. Teachers felt they did not have enough practice triaging students into groups based on student performance data from their first day on the job. An interesting theme that developed was the number of teachers(57%) who said that they were unprepared to learn all of the data and computer platforms school divisions use to collect, analyze, and track student data. New teachers noted that the learning the curve was severe when it came to using the various benchmarking programs school divisions

employed and that very little school division or site training was provided to them. Most new teachers stated they learned how to use the programs during the first opening weeks of school.

Dealing with student behavior was a reoccurring challenge for new teachers (53%), especially at Title I schools. However, Title I teachers referenced behavior concerns which stemmed from a student's special need and not the typical student misbehavior often associated with new teachers who have not yet developed a classroom "withitness". Interestingly, these teachers reported another obstacle linked to this student behavior issue that they had to manage; their difficulty as a new teacher in developing cooperative working relationships with special education teachers and support staff. Especially concerning to these new teachers was their lack of understanding of the job duties and expectations of other school personnel that they worked with and how best to hold them accountable for their job responsibilities. Teachers reported that they relied heavily on informal communication channels to address these situations and they reported that they did not involve the school's administration when such situations arouse.

Similarly, difficulties in communicating with parents and school administrators was mentioned from a small majority of students(53%), both by Title I and non-Title I teachers. A theme reported by new teachers was that they struggled inhow to begin conversations with parents, regardless of whether the news about a student was positive or negative. Whether picking up the phone to call a parent or conducting a face-to-face conference with a parent, teachers reported that they struggled with what to say and do during their first few attempts at parent-teacher conferences.

A number of new teachers (37%) wished they had more training in dealing with school administrators, especially administrators who were in charge of the discipline consequences of their students. New teachers said they felt helpless when they did not agree with the administrator's decision regarding the discipline consequence for a student. They reported that they did not feel secure in their position as a new teacher to question the administrator even if they had overwhelming evidence to the contrary of the administrator's decision. Teachers again reported that they resolved many of these issues through in formal channels.

Areas fully prepared. Teachers reported areas of lesson planning (84%), pedagogy, i.e., broadly categorized as instructional strategies; (73%), and building relationships with students (53%) as areas they felt fully prepared from day one. Many of the students referenced specific courses from their teacher preparation program that prepared them in these areas.

How effective are you at positively impacting student achievement? All of the participants (100%) answered that they felt they were effective at positively impacting student achievement to various degrees. Most teachers (73%) referenced their student's SOL, benchmark, or classroom formative assessments as evidence of student success in their classrooms. A theme of too much testing in school developed around this question. All of the elementary teachers made mentioned that they did not realize of the amount of testing that occurs in today's schools.

5. Findings

The findings from this study provide descriptions of the challenges faced by new teachers which can be used to determine teacher preparation program areas of need and strengths and thus can be used for program improvement and national accreditation. The researcher triangulated using multiple data sources in an investigation to produce an understanding of what is needed to improve a teacher preparation program. Therefore, the process ensured a rich and comprehensive account. Denzin (1978) suggested that a triangulation method helps elucidate complementary aspects of the same phenomenon and that the goal is not consensus, but understanding multiple ways of seeing data.

A Likert survey, open-ended interview, and performance evaluation data compared responses from participants. Interestingly, although the data from first year teacher summative evaluations were valuable to the researcher, the lack of written specificity on the documents regarding administrator comments, supporting evidence, i.e. that would help support the *proficiency* ratings or provide suggestions to improve *developing/needs improvement* in the Performance Standards were absent or vague. A 2015 report from the Texas Accountability and Intervention Strategies (TAIS) supported this finding by suggesting ratings such as "proficient" provides limited ongoing feedback for teachers to reflect on their practices and link those practices to student achievement.

Most striking was the lack of referenced student performance data, e.g. benchmark or other assessment data, to support a rating in Performance Standard 7 (40% of the overall evaluation score). The researcher did not observe SOL, benchmark, or other student performance data referenced or written to support Performance Standard 7 on observation evaluation instruments provided by participants. However, many school administrators noted reinforcement and refinement statements for teachers on the evaluation documents.

Are occurring theme throughout the Likert-style survey data and open-ended interviews exhibited an area of need for new teachers that was based on student diversity. Likert findings revealed that new teachers felt unprepared to understand and meet the needs of the diverse student population they taught. This finding corroborates the open-ended interview data suggesting that new teachers were not prepared for cultural and academic differences in today's classrooms.

6. Recommendations for Program Improvement and Accreditation Practices

Studies and suggested reform measures have generally focused more attention on the structure of teacher preparation programs — examining whether they are four or five years in length, graduate or undergraduate, and alternative or traditional certification pathways — than on the content of the programs (Hightower et al., 2011). Recommendations, as a result of this study, are focused on the commitment to continuous program improvement and the requirements found in the accreditation standards. A study by Levine (2006) stated that as teacher preparation programs sought to gain respect in the world of higher education, the focus was on academic research instead of classroom practice and as a result, prospective teachers are not trained in the strategies needed to be effective in an environment where student achievement is paramount.

Overall, the findings from the survey, teacher evaluations, and interviews gleaned several themes that translate to concrete actions to improve teacher preparation program teachings, coursework, and field placements, thus better preparing teachers. University faculty documentation of changes to programmatic features based on data collected and analyzed can be used as evidence for national accreditation. The evidenced used to support national accreditation requires university faculty to document the process that faculty used to appropriatly and purposefully institute program improvements based on internal and external data from various program measures. This gathering and documentation of evidence supports program faculty in making a case that a university program meets standards for national accreditation.

The themes of small group remediation and triaging students into groups based on student achievement data was echoed by the majority of participants. It's recommended that program faculty seek to structure such practices throughout teacher proportion program courses and curriculum. These skills should not be taught in isolation, but linked across teacher preparation program courses and content. Such practice should be implemented in all methods courses, i.e., math, reading, science. Teacher preparation program candidates should practice grading pseudo sets of student formative and summative assessments, analyze those same assessments to diagnose pseudo student needs, and triage students into remediation groups based on the data. Using the group data, program participants should be trained in developing remediation lesson plans to meet the needs of the students.

The process of using data to guide instruction is complex and dynamic and referenced in national and state performance standards as a best practice. The research indicated that student achievement was the majority weighted indicator on teacher evaluation instruments across many school divisions, therefore it is imperative teacher preparation programs meet the needs of their students by appropriately training teachers to use student data to guide instruction. It is recommended that university seek to multiple opportunities across program courses for students to practice these strategies and seek specific examples during the students' field experiences.

Themes concerning classroom management were multifaceted and typically not explicit curriculum for courses found in teacher preparation programs. These themes, related to school culture, professional relationships, and school leadership often fall outside the teacher licensure realm. However, university faculty can take a proactive approach to address these issues and incorporate assertiveness training for program students, high expectations for all school personnel, and role play scenarios regarding how to handle the hard to handle school personnel who might not be doing their part in the education of students. Training students in how to be a collaborative instructional team member and in how to agree to disagree in a professional manner when dealing with school administrators is essential for new teacher confidence. These social and at times discrete skills can be taught and demonstrated by university faculty across numerous courses and can help address the conversation starter theme which typically matures with teacher experience. Recommendations include university faculty working with field placement sites to ensure program students actively participate in parent-teacher conferences, school administrative and faculty meetings, and department or subject collaborative instructional planning sessions with professional teachers. Documenting these programmatic and course activities in course syllabi, learning objectives and outcomes, along with formal and informal Memorandums of Understanding with various partnership entities can provide necessary evidence to support national accreditation.

Ultimately, the majority of teachers felt unprepared to teach due to the lack of having an adequate understanding of the diversity in today's schools and communities. This key indicator sheds light on two issues that should be addressed by teacher preparation programs: 1.) the homogeneous nature of the typical elementary teacher preparation program student does not lend itself to diversity; 2.) teaching vacancies across the country are occurring more often at Title I schools, e.g. low income, especially schools deemed hard to staff by departments of education (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, & Darling-Hammond, 2016). Teacher preparation programs must be purposeful in teaching social justice issues, multicultural awareness, and seek opportunities for students to immerse themselves in communities and cultures different from their own. These actions might be in the form of thematic multicultural modules across many program courses or university-K-12 school partnerships that target at-risk and Title I schools with university field experiences.

Recommendations for program national accreditation involve conducting a similar case study when new teacher effectiveness indicators are not readily available to university faculty. A case study approach is supported by the CAEP (2015). Merriam (2002) suggested that since case studies involve purposeful sampling, statistical generalizations are not possible; however, the researcher stated, "If one thinks of what can be learned from an in-depth analysis of a particular situation or incident and how that knowledge can be transferred to another situation, generalizability in qualitative research becomes possible" (p. 28). This study's findings might not be applicable to all teacher preparation programs; however the outcomes of this study can be a guide for program improvement decision-making for other university teacher preparation programs.

7. References

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