

**A Review of Highly Effective Teachers In Hamilton County:  
Analysis of current trends and implications for improvement**

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## **A Review of Highly Effective Teachers In Hamilton County**

### **Abstract**

During an 18-month stint, researchers worked with approximately 100 teachers within Hamilton County. The teachers were qualified to participate in this study by their high TVAAS score or from their principals' nomination as a highly effective teacher. They participated by completing several surveys, inventories and questionnaires and were interviewed and observed. Information about their college coursework, certifications and degrees was also gathered from the participants' personnel records.

This paper examines the background data, educational philosophies, collegial experiences and coursework and professional development experiences of teachers defined as highly effective. We believe that a better understanding of the traits and characteristics of these teachers can be helpful in recruiting, selecting, hiring, supporting and retaining quality teachers. The research does not claim to answer the question completely but suggests some strong evidence of characteristics and themes common among a group of highly successful teachers identified and studied in Hamilton County, Tennessee.

## **A Review of Highly Effective Teachers In Hamilton County:**

### **Analysis of current trends and implications for improvement**

Of the 96 participants completing the study of highly effective teachers, 51 teachers (53%) were undergraduate alumni from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Other universities represented include: UTK, (6 or 6.3%); MTSU, (8 or 8.3%); other in-states excluding UTK and MTSU (11 or 11.5%); and out-of-state, (20 or 20.8%). Of the 65 that attended graduate school, 24 or 36.9% were graduates of UTC. Other universities graduating master students include: Trevecca (13 or 20%); Tusculum (13 or 20%); Middle Tennessee State University (2 or 3.1%); Tennessee Tech (4 or 6.2%); and out of state (4 or 6.2%) with five presently working on degrees.

Of the teachers participating in this study, 68 represent 32 elementary schools and 30 represent 12 middle schools across the county. Grade levels represented in the project are kindergarten through eighth grades with the largest populations in the fourth and fifth grades. Table 1 lists all grades represented.

Table 1. All grade levels represented in study.

Grade level	Frequency	Valid Percent
Kindergarten	4	4.1
First grade	3	3.1
Second grade	10	10.3
Third grade	12	12.4
Fourth grade	18	18.6
Fifth grade	21	21.6
Sixth grade	11	11.3
Seventh grade	4	4.1
Eighth grade	10	10.3
Six through Eighth grades	4	4.1
Total	97	100.0
Missing	3	
Total	100	

In a survey administered to all participants, researchers asked, “What was your first declared major?” Twenty-seven percent of the participants reported Elementary Education as their first

declared major. Another 17.4% declared first majors in Education K-8. All responses are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. First declared major.

Major	Frequency	Valid Percent
Education (K-8)	16	17.4
Elementary Education	25	27.2
Special Education	2	2.2
Early Childhood	1	1.1
English	7	7.6
Math	2	2.2
Fine Arts	3	3.3
Medical	9	9.8
Business	6	6.5
Social Sciences	3	3.3
Other education	13	14.1
Other majors	5	5.4
Total	92	100.0
Missing	8	
Total	100	

During this study, analyses were conducted on the participants' college transcripts. Researchers reviewed transcripts and collected data on college courses considered to be core courses for any major. These courses include English Composition I and II, World Civilization, Science I and II, Math and Speech. Grades from the courses Human Growth and Development, Education in the US, and Teaching Reading were also collected. Averages of the grades reported are given in Table 3, along with the percentage of participants that made an A or B in the course and the percentage that made an A. The scale for the averages is 1=D; 2=C; 3=B and 4=A.

Table 3. Grades on college courses.

Subject	Participants average	UTC A or B (%)	UTC A (%)
Comp I	2.82	60.7	23.8
Comp II	2.85	64.5	25.3
World Civilization	2.33	37.5	10.4
Human Growth	3.22	80.8	42.6
Ed in US	3.05	75.8	30.3
Reading	3.46	89.8	56.5
Speech	3.14	74.2	39.7
Science I	2.49	44	19.8
Science II	2.64	52.4	23.3
Math	2.83	59.3	30.9

Cumulative undergraduate grade point average for the participants is 2.987. Forty-six percent have a grade point average of 3.0 or better and 52% have a grade point average of 2.0 or better. While reviewing transcripts, the number of math courses taken by a participant was also recorded. Researchers were careful not to include any remedial math courses in this reporting. Participants averaged 2.71 math courses in undergraduate school. Seventy-six percent completed more than two courses with 44.5% having taken three or more math courses.

Eighty-four teachers hold professional licenses while seven have apprentice licenses and two hold out of state licenses. Forty-nine teachers have Career Ladder I, four at Career Ladder II and 12 have Career Ladder III status. Six teachers have beginning administrative licensure and two have professional administrative licensure.

Undergraduate degrees held by the participants are listed in Table 4. Categories have been created for the numerous similar undergraduate degrees. Education (non-specific) addressed participants with “Education” (*and nothing*) else listed as their degree. PreK-elementary was a category created to address individuals with degrees in PreK-2, early childhood and other degrees that were specific to elementary or younger children, limited to grades 5 and below. Elementary was a category of teachers with degrees in elementary education without any grades given. If Education K-8 or 1-9 was listed as a degree, they were included in the category elementary-middle. These degrees encompassed certification for both elementary and middle grades. Middle school category was for the participant with a middle school specific degree. Two individuals were certified with a degree that spanned K-12. The other category includes degrees in school counseling, art, Spanish, and music.

Table 4. Undergraduate degrees represented in study.

Undergraduate degrees	Frequency	Valid Percent
Education	50	54.3
PreK-elementary	4	4.3
Elementary	4	4.3
Elementary-Middle	4	4.3
Middle	2	2.2
K-12	2	2.2

Math/Science	2	2.2
English	2	2.2
Social Science	5	5.4
Fine Arts	2	2.2
Secondary Education	3	3.3
Other	8	8.7
Not specified	4	4.3
Total	92	100.0
Missing	8	
Total	100	

Sixty-five of the participants did not report holding a graduate degree. Seventeen have graduate degrees in education, one has a subject specific degree, four have administrative degrees and four did not specify the degree.

Three questions about college courses were also included in the survey. Participants were asked to list a college course they found particularly helpful, a college course they found to be least helpful and a college course they would develop to prepare college students to become teachers. Of the participants responding, the college courses found to be particularly helpful were methods courses, student teaching and a course in children's literature. Methods courses were sometimes described generically and other times specific course names (i.e. all methods courses, elementary math methods, etc.) Researchers also included the professional development schools' activities with student teaching to emphasize actual classroom teaching experience. Contradictory to this finding, respondents also reported methods courses to be the least helpful college course. Other courses listed as least helpful included history of education, various subject specific courses and none of the courses prepared them for the classroom.

When asked to develop a college course that would prepare college students to become teachers the answers mainly revolved around the theme of a course that deals with the basics of everyday school life. Answers sometimes came with titles such as Survival 101, Teaching is not as pretty as it looks, and Education 101. All of the responses suggested prospective teachers need more time in the classroom dealing with the everyday chores and tasks that teachers face.

Participants were asked to list three characteristics of exceptional teachers. These lists were reduced to several themes representing the many responses of the participants. Top responses reported in table 5 suggest that exceptional teachers be flexible and adaptable and have excellent management skills.

Table 5. Top five themes for exceptional teachers

Themes of exceptional teachers	Responses
Flexible, adaptable, will search for what works	33
Excellent management skills, organized, discipline issues, etc.	28
Caring, compassionate	20
Love working with children, love children	19
Believe all children can learn at high levels, high expectations	17

A congruence scale was administered to capture the perceptions participants have about highly effective teachers as compared to those perceptions found among community members. The top themes given by community members as traits of highly effective teachers through focus group meetings were identified and recorded. These top twenty themes were given to the participants of the study in the form of a rating scale. Participants were asked to give five themes a score of 1, five themes a score of 2, five themes a score of 3 and five themes a score of 4. The rating scale was 1=marginally important; 2= moderately important; 3= important but less than essential; and 4=essential. The results of the top themes are given for the participants in Table 6 along with the theme receiving the lowest average. The first column reports the average score of the theme, the second column reports the percentage reported as important to essential and the third column shows the percentage reported as essential. The need to be broadly educated received the lowest rating.

Table 6. Ratings on the Community Congruence Scale

Community themes	average	important to essential (%)	essential (%)
has enthusiasm and passion for teaching	3.35	85.5	56.3
shows children respect and love	3.20	71.8	51.0
sets a high standard	3.07	65.6	50.0
is a lifelong learner	2.88	66.3	33.7
loves what they do	2.79	62.8	32.3
can keep children interested	2.72	64.2	22.1
needs to be broadly educated	1.41	10.4	3.1

Participants were also asked to list two strengths and a weakness they possess. The results were given in an open-ended format and responses were sorted into themes. Strengths of the participants included having classroom management skills and organization; being “hard-working” and dedicated; possessing excellent communication skills; being enthusiastic and energetic; and being caring and kind. Weaknesses included poor time management, being impatient, and being a perfectionist or being too hard on oneself.

Teachers were asked to complete a rating scale concerning professional experiences. Teachers rated the following experiences: help from peers, mentors, and consultants; personal and system provided professional development; student teaching and college courses. The rating scale was 1=poor; 2=fair; 3=good; and 4=excellent. The experience receiving the best rating was “help from peers.” Participants reported this experience on average to be 3.62 with 99 participants responding. The lowest rated experience was system provided professional development (2.70) with 98 participants responding. Table 7 presents these professional experiences, the average ratings and the number of responses for each.

Table 7. Ratings for professional experiences.

Professional experience	Average	Responses
Help from peers	3.62	99
Help from mentor	3.31	65
Personal professional development	3.34	95
Student teaching	3.17	96
College courses	3.00	99
Help from consultants	2.83	94
System professional development	2.70	98

The survey also asked a few questions involving professional development. Participants were asked to rate several professional development events. Conferences received the highest rating with 47% of the participants finding this event most valuable followed by workshops with 43% finding this event most valuable. The scale for the rating was 1=least valuable; 2=not so valuable; 3=somewhat valuable; 4=more valuable; and 5=most valuable. All events were listed

at minimum as somewhat valuable with in-service receiving the lowest average rating. All events, averages and the majority response are listed in Table 8.

Table 8. Rating of professional development events.

Professional development events	average	majority response
Conference	4.15	47.1% most valuable
Workshops	3.86	43.5% more valuable
Mentors	3.91	37.7% most valuable
College courses	3.18	34.6% somewhat valuable
In-service	3.13	38.5% somewhat valuable

Another aspect of professional development studied was the number of days spent in professional development on a yearly basis. Participants were asked how many days they spend a year on professional development other than that provided or mandated by the district. Organized professional development was defined as university courses, seminars or trainings at the Public Education Foundation and other organizations and consulting teacher and standards support teacher training. Self-identified or self-directed professional development was defined as reading professional journals, Internet education-based chat rooms or websites and visiting other classrooms or schools. The results are given in Table 9.

Table 9. Number of days of non-district mandated extra professional development.

Number of days	Organized PD number of responses	Self-identified PD number of responses
0 days	3	4
1-3 days	14	30
4-9 days	36	36
10-19 days	31	17
20 + days	7	3

Participants also answered questions about other capacities in which they serve at their school. The participants marked all appropriate positions. Most, 74%, reported serving in the capacity of mentor. Sixty-one percent reported serving as committee chairpersons while 53% serve as grade chairpersons. Thirty-seven percent are team leaders in their schools and 47% reported serving in

other capacities including positions on school improvement teams representing various school reform initiatives and the local education association.

A 30 to 45 minute observation was conducted on each participant. During this time, attention was given to three areas: content and lesson design, teacher behavior and classroom management and environment. Within these areas, behaviors were listed and observers noted the frequency of appearance of each trait. Observers reported the occurrence of each behavior: 1=not observed; 2=rarely observed; 3=occasionally observed; and 4=frequently observed. The averages of the observers' responses are provided in Table 10.

Table 10. Observation results.

Behaviors	Average
Manages classroom procedures	3.83
Creates an environment conducive to learning	3.81
Demonstrates creativeness in instruction	3.80
Manages (corrects/redirects) student behavior as needed.	3.78
Creates an environment of respect and rapport	3.74

At the time of the observation, participants were asked to provide a copy of their TVAAS scores. These scores were not reviewed until the observation was completed. Averages of the participants' TVAAS scores per subject and the total number of participants with that subject score are listed in Table 11.

Table 11. TVAAS scores.

Subject	Participant average	Total N
Math	131.741	37
Reading	126.206	32
Language Arts	104.585	34
Science	128.758	31
Social Studies	121.880	30

Each participant took a personality inventory that was administered on-line. Results were analyzed and participants were then categorized into four types: artisans, guardians, idealists and rationals. Artisans are characterized as “adaptable, artistic, know what’s going on, are ever on the lookout for workable compromises, and are able to see the needs of the moment.” Guardians

are characterized as “consistent, dependable, detailed, hardworking, painstaking, patient, persevering, sensible, stable, and thorough.” To the guardian, change “can be enormously creative in seeing to it that the right personnel have the right supplies in the right place at the right time to get the job done.” Idealists are characterized as “creative, enthusiastic and like to feel good about themselves and getting along with others.” They are “naturally good at influencing the growth and maturation of others and teaching and tutoring come easy to the idealist.” Rationals are characterized as “abstract, analytical, competent, curious, efficient and logical. Rationals are problem solvers and insist that they have a rationale for everything they do.” (Please Understand Me II by David Keirsey, 1998, provides the summarizations of the four temperaments.) Table 12 reports a comparison of the four personality types between the general population and the percentage of participants listed for that particular personality type.

Table 12. Keirsey personality inventory.

Keirsey traits	General Population (%)	Participants (%)
Artisan	35-40	4
Guardian	40-45	60
Idealist	8-10	31
Rational	5-7	5

Questions were developed for interviews with the participants. Three researchers analyzed the transcriptions and formed themes out of the many responses. Listed below are the questions, as asked of the participants, and the top themes found by the researchers. Quotes given by participants are sometimes interjected for clarification of themes.

“When did you first become aware that you wanted to become a teacher?”

- 23.9% decided in college
- 22.9% elementary school (6-12 years old)
- 18.8% high school (16-18 years old)
- 16.6% very young (less than 6 years old)

“Are there other members of your family that are or have been teachers?”

- 99% responded yes.
- Responses included parents, grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins, siblings and a few great grandparents and great aunts/uncles.

“In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an excellent teacher?”

50% compassion, empathy, care, understanding, nurture

*“Children don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”*

40% loves children

*“...loves what she does...She loves the children she does it with.”*

38% enthusiastic about teaching, energetic

*“...love the excitement of learning...enjoy learning yourself...”*

38% flexible, versatile

*“...fresh, flexible...Don’t be afraid to try something new.”*

33% perseverance, hard working, dedicated

*“...very determined...not easily dissuaded.”*

*“...dedicated...[teaching] what you want to do in life.”*

*“One who is dedicated to the profession, who’s there at the crack of dawn and leaves at dusk.”*

“What do you do to refine/develop/improve your teacher skills?”

49% reflection, daily revision

*“daily revision and attempt to improve what I’m doing...”*

*“I consistently challenge myself to look at how I teach, how other good teachers teach, and make changes.”*

*“I go back and I look at everything I’ve done...think about what works, what didn’t work, ...a lot of reflection.”*

58% talking, sharing, listen with other teachers/professionals

*“I get my best ideas from other teachers.”*

*“I can learn so much from other people who have already been where I’ve been or walked in my shoes. They’ve already figured it out and I just think it seems smart to learn from them.”*

51% workshops/conferences

*“...go to different workshops...choose things that interest me”*

*“...lots of extra training...take advantage of everything that is offered.”*

38% read

*“Reading...self awareness of what’s out there to change and then just doing it on your own.”*

33% look around the building, observe

*“...watch other effective teachers.”*

*“What I like best is talking to other teachers and seeing what they are doing.”*

*“...seeing what other [teachers] are doing.”*

*“Check with other teachers and see what they’re doing.”*

*“...sneak in other teachers’ rooms [observe].”*

“What are the most difficult obstacles that highly effective teachers must overcome?”

38% lack of time

*“...Time to teach everything that they want.”*

*“Time...mountain of daily little tasks.”*

*“Really choosing what it is that you need to focus on.”*

*“...lack of time to just spend focused on planning.”*

32% parents who do not support education

*"...children who come from homes where education is not important."*

*"Parent relations...hard to find where they are living and its hard to find a working [phone] number."*

28% problems kids bring to school

*"...taking children home at night in your mind...worrying about the home life and what you can do..."*

*"All the baggage they bring with them..."*

*"It's hard to make a safe place for them even at school because the world crowds in so hard, and they bring so much with them, that making a place they're free to explore and free to learn is the hardest."*

27% self-induced personal pressure

*"...not being able to do more is probably the hardest obstacle to overcome..."*

*"I wish I could do more than I can..."*

22% bureaucracy

*"Politics in the school...contractual things."*

*"Things that get in the way of your day, that eat up your time rather than focusing on those 7 hours you have in the classroom."*

"Given the opportunity, what steps would you initiate to improve the effectiveness of teachers in your school?"

39% more social/collaborative time

*"...have more time to actually get together...a day to get together and actually talk about what we do in class...we're teaching the same subject...[then]I know exactly what to tell my 8<sup>th</sup> graders to expect in 9<sup>th</sup> grade."*

*"...give the teachers opportunity to get together...retreats...discussion type faculty meetings..."*

*"...use each other to become more effective resources."*

*"...collaborate with each other...on all grade levels."*

22% time for teachers to get together

*"...give some points in casual conversation..."*

*"I think we are real willing to help [each other] and you think of projects and you come up with great ideas when you are just talking..."*

*"...more time to share that we're working toward the same goal and how each one is doing that."*

21% make sure teachers are valued/appreciated/empowered

*"...let teachers know their value..."*

18% have teachers observe other teachers/schools

*"...give them opportunities to observe other teachers."*

*"...given the opportunity by our principal...to go around to different schools."*

17% improve attitude towards kids/motivate

*"...make teachers aware that the initial impressions are not always correct...once they make a decision about a child, that's what they think of that child."*

*"...teachers who are somewhat negative...those are the teachers that I would like to reach in some way."*

*"...talk to them about how to build relationships with students."*

17% provide more class time/prep time

*“...give them more time to work as team members to plan within the school day”*

*“...uninterrupted academic time.”*

“In your opinion, discuss whether the Terra Nova and value-added scores reasonably measure achievement and gain in your classroom.”

47% Terra Nova is sound, useful for measuring growth and achievement

40% Terra Nova is not a sound assessment device

29% Terra Nova should not be the only measure of success

29% Too much emphasis

24% if students are motivated to try

24% Terra Nova is sound but a lot of things are not measured

“How should teachers help students succeed in school?”

45% know the child individually

35% use multiple learning styles, address all ways of learning, use many strategies

29% let them know you are interested in them

24% create an environment for learning

23% high expectations

*“I do think it has to do with the children knowing that they are valued and respected. I think that makes all the difference so I think most definitely regardless of how knowledgeable I might be, if I cannot administer those with respect and love then I probably won't get very far...It takes both.”*

*“We're all created different, we all have different abilities, but I think every child can succeed if you take them where they are and work forward.”*

*“...When a child comes into a classroom they are wanting the teacher to accept them for who they are, not for what they have... They want to be accepted for the kind of person they are. I think that if a teacher loves the child unconditionally, believes in that child and the child knows that a the teacher cares about them... they're going to do everything they can to show the teacher 'yes, I know I'm smart and you have made me feel that way.' I just think that's what every child needs.”*

*“You can't teach them if you can't reach them.”*

“How should you measure the success of a teacher?”

48% success of students' accomplishments

*“...by what my students have learned.”*

*“quality of the students, by the way the students turn out.”*

*“...proof in the product.”*

- 42% know what the teacher is doing in the classroom, observation  
*"...got to know what the teacher is doing in the classroom."*  
*"I've had principals that just step in the room several times during the week, and I think they can tell the teachers better from that than a formal evaluation."*
- 30% TVAAS and similar tests  
*"...measuring success is by student achievement."*  
*"...needs to be a variety [of tests]"*
- 28% kids' informed feedback, ask the kids  
*"If you have a child come back and say, you made all the difference."*  
*"...student comments."*  
*"...by what students say about the teacher."*
- 27% happiness of kids with school/class  
*"...I think for me it has to do with children enjoying learning."*  
*"...walking into the classroom and seeing children's hands up or movements and smiling faces."*
- 23% the climate in the classroom  
*"I think if I walk into a teacher's classroom who is an effective teacher, you're going to know whether or not that teacher's being successful just by the way the kids are interacting with each other and the way she is interacting with the students."*  
*"...look at her class...a very happy or pleasant atmosphere in the classroom."*

"How can a principal help a teacher to become more effective?"

- 60% be supportive/be there for the teacher/support staff with what they need  
*"...being supportive...just like teachers are with the children, principals have to do some of those same things with teachers."*
- 40% help struggling teachers/give advice/identify strengths and weaknesses  
*"...principal needs to have a real understanding of what my strengths and weaknesses are and to help me build upon the strengths that I have."*
- 28% provide staff development opportunities/opportunities to learn  
*"...provide them with the resources to get the job done."*  
*"...offer teachers lots of opportunities...in-service, mentoring, visitations, peer observations."*
- 32% constructive criticism and feedback  
*"Encourage them. Give them suggestions"*  
*"...notice what a teacher is doing well"*  
*"...be open and honest...offer constructive criticism."*
- 28% must visit classrooms  
*"...spend time in the classrooms."*  
*"...needs to be in a classroom and needs to see what's going on and not on a one-shot basis."*
- 26% be very aware of what is going on in the building, be visible  
*"...got to be out in the building and they've got to know what's going on."*  
*"One who does not sit in his office and read the newspaper. One who is out in the hallway meeting the children."*  
*"...needs to be visible...Observe also between classes and observe the interaction"*

*of teachers and students.”*

24% allow teacher to model off of others

*“...having a teacher go to a classroom of an effective teacher.”*

*“...give examples or be an example to that teacher.”*

*“...letting her see effective teachers, coming in and teaching some classes for her.”*

“What are the most important outcomes/goals of schooling?”

64% successful citizen, make better citizens

*“...to create successful citizens.”*

*“...make the children better citizens, to make them contributing [members] of their society.”*

63% to feel successful in some area/cope and succeed when they graduate

*“...give you a good self-concept and you’re able to go on and know that feeling of success...to feel successful in some area.”*

*“...leave the education system with the skills that they need to achieve their hopes and their dreams...find a place in society where they can function and be a responsible member of society.”*

41% learn to learn, lifelong learner

*“...encourage them to be learners for life. Independent learners for life.”*

*“...instill that love of learning in children.”*

*“...real important that they know that learning doesn’t stop at the school...that they always be looking to learn new things.”*

36% enough knowledge to pursue college or vocation

*“...prepare kids for every day life after high school or college...give them the tools that they need to be successful in life.”*

*“...that [they] would have the knowledge that they need to function in life.”*

30% well rounded for the world

*“...well rounded individual that can meet the demands of society.”*

*“...well rounded, well educated person.”*

Implications and recommendations.

The findings of this study can be used by the district to examine how to recruit, train and support highly effective teachers. Suggestions for recruitment and training/support will be discussed below. The following statements are only suggestions and in no way claim to be the only ways in which to address the issue of providing highly effective teachers in Hamilton County’s schools.

Further analysis is not only recommended but is necessary to deepen the understanding of many facets of quality teachers and teaching. This report is a surface look at the characteristics found among a group of teachers identified to be highly effective. Other research needs to be

conducted to examine characteristics of a cross section of Hamilton County's teachers to produce a more accurate snapshot of what is truly happening with the county's highest achieving teachers. Once these determinants are known, districts and universities can begin to work with the issue of quality teachers in every classroom; how to find them, how to support them and ultimately how to retain them.

#### RECRUITMENT (SELECTION AND HIRING)

- majority are graduates of in-state high school and college
- little correlation with teacher effectiveness and college courses
- responses to first declared majors, deciding to become teachers and family members as educators
- perceptions from the community congruence scale and interview

In attracting highly effective teachers to Hamilton County, one should look at the institutions from which these highly effective teachers graduate. Most are graduates of Tennessee universities. In this study, over half of the participants are graduates from the local university, the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC). Examination into the number of UTC graduates that become teachers in Hamilton County and the number who are highly effective is suggested in considering a strong recruitment effort at this university. UTC also has received a report on the results of these graduates. Efforts to enhance the university's curriculum to reflect the findings of this research were encouraged in that report. Hopes are that the university will use the findings to select and train more highly effective teachers who will remain in the Hamilton County district.

When college transcripts are reviewed, grades received by the teachers in general core college courses show little correlation with teacher effectiveness in regards to TVAAS scores. An exception to this is the college course Human Growth and Development. High grade point averages show a statistically significant correlation with high TVAAS reading scores. This finding verifies that teachers need to know the developmental appropriateness of students. Other courses show little or no significance with TVAAS subject scores. A relationship is shown between the math grade point average and the TVAAS scores. Those with higher grade point averages in math also have higher TVAAS math scores. Teachers taking more math courses in

college also have the high TVAAS math gains. Neither relationship is statistically significant. The cumulative grade point average of participants is 2.987.

Determining first declared majors of possible candidates during in the interview process may prove useful in that this research reports 27% declaring Education as a first major with another 35% reporting other educational areas as first majors. When deciding to become teachers, most knew before entering college that they wanted to become teachers. Ninety-nine percent of the teachers in the research study report having other members of their family in the field of education.

The teachers participating in the research with the community congruence scale and the interview questions report the importance of showing compassion and caring for students. Other qualities important to excellent teachers include a love of working with children, flexibility, excellent management skills and enthusiasm. These are traits that, if not a part of the prospective teachers' philosophies must be nurtured for success in the classroom. They can be observed in an individual's behavior and can be discovered through carefully structured interview or survey questions.

#### TRAINING AND SUPPORT

- nurture characteristics of excellent teachers
- train teachers to handle the daily chores of the classroom teacher
- suggest ways to deal with time management, parents and problems student bring to school with them
- train teachers in multiple ways of addressing learning styles and various strategies of instruction
- suggest to principals to be supportive of all teachers
- teach excellent management techniques (time management and organization)
- provide appropriate professional development with choice and opportunity for self-improvement
- suggest teachers learn from other teachers

As mentioned in the recruitment and selection section, characteristics of excellence are important traits that need to be nurtured in teachers entering the workforce. This group of highly effective teachers report in several stages of the research the following qualities of excellent teachers: flexibility and adaptability; excellent management and organizational skills; caring and compassion; love of children and working with them; and belief that children can perform at

high levels and having high expectations for them. These are areas that can be supported and nurtured in a quality school environment.

The highly effective teachers in the descriptions of college courses they would create suggest the need for teachers to have help with the daily chores of classroom teaching. From the information gathered in this study, the highly effective teachers suggest that new teachers need someone to show them how to manage the routines and procedures associated with their new classrooms.

Obstacles affecting highly effective teachers include the lack of parental support and the problems the students bring to school each day. Efforts should be made to provide support for teachers in dealing with parents and the dilemmas of students. Both the lack of time and dealing with problems of parents and students contribute to another obstacle of these teachers: self-induced pressure. These teachers feel that they must solve the problems of their students and make things work with the families.

In the interviews teachers were asked how they help students succeed. The majority of answers revolve around the affective domains of teaching: knowing the child, showing them interest and having high expectations. This question could be restated to be asked of administrators about teachers. Knowing the teacher, showing interest in them and in what they are teaching and having high expectations for them will help teachers succeed.

Teachers reported the importance of understanding the individual child and the importance of meeting that child “where they are” are moving them forward. The teachers’ ability to have multiple ways of addressing learning styles and various strategies of instruction are helpful and could be nurtured and supported through proper professional development.

When asked about how a principal could help, the overwhelming response was “be supportive.” The importance of principal support to these highly effective teachers is very important. Several teachers mentioned that they as well as the students, needed to see the administrators in the halls and in the classroom participating in instruction.

Excellent management techniques can be taught and administrators can suggest ways to help teachers become better managers and organizers of time, schedules and procedures. Being caring and compassionate, loving children and loving working with them are traits that are not easily taught. Modeling these characteristics and expecting teachers to adhere to them will improve the effectiveness of communication with the students. Good communication facilitates learning. By holding the teachers to high standards and having high expectations for them, it is hoped that the teachers also will hold their students to high standards of excellence.

These teachers suggest the need for time to talk, share and listen to/with other teachers and professionals. These conversations are described as both informal and formal gatherings. Teachers mention repeatedly that most of the things they learn that help them in the classroom are learned from other teachers. The opportunities to “look around the building,” observe other teachers and read also are given by these highly effective teachers as ways they improve their teaching skills. As a district, allowing time for teachers to have such opportunities for self-improvement would be beneficial to effective teaching.

The district can use information obtained in the review of the strengths and weaknesses of these highly effective teachers to benefit other teachers and to provide appropriate professional development. The strengths identified by these teachers include effective classroom management skills and organization, dedication, having excellent communication skills, and being enthusiastic and caring. These strengths can be used with new teachers in professional development. The areas of weakness reported by these teachers included poor time management, self-directed criticism and being impatient. Professional development from other sources can be provided for these teachers to help them become better time managers. Using time more effectively may promote patience and minimize self-criticism.

It is important to support highly effective teachers once they are employed in the county. Frustration and burnout can send teachers to other areas to where they think the “grass is greener.” It is important to support these teachers with the proper training and professional experiences that will allow them to continue to grow and be more effective.

The importance of appropriate professional development cannot be overly emphasized. The highly effective teachers in this study reported that professional development that was “chosen” or that responded to their specific needs was very beneficial but professional development that was put in a “one size fits all” category was not useful to them. Because time is such a priority to the highly effective teachers, professional development that they find to be unrelated to their specific needs is often described as “not beneficial.”

Highly effective teachers suggested ways they would help other teachers in their school to become more effective. Providing time for “help from peers and mentors” was a suggestion. Collaborative time is a recurring theme throughout the study of this group of highly effective teachers. Opportunities for teachers to work together and observe each other are important in improving effectiveness. These teachers suggest providing more uninterrupted instructional class time and additional lesson preparation opportunities. The teachers also suggested that they needed to feel appreciated and valued by their administrators. They also feel the need for the principal to give advice with constructive criticism and feedback, respond to strengths and weaknesses to help struggling teachers and be visible both in the classroom and in the building. Feeling valued will foster improved attitudes towards students.

### **Conclusions**

Findings from this research are not “earth shattering” but provide evidence of previously formulated opinions. Teachers need training, nurturing, and support in order to be effective in the classroom. Those responsible for developing and supporting teachers must step up to the plate and realize the importance of effective training and professional development. New teachers are especially vulnerable to bad habits and inadequate practices if not shown the correct manner in which to teach. With proper training and support from peers, mentors and administration, new teachers can be equipped with the tools necessary to allow them to become effective and quality teachers.

Several preliminary results of this study prompt attention to more research. Such areas include the lack of correlation of core subjects with the TVAAS scores of these individuals. Suggestions for further research would offer that researchers look at not only core subjects but include all subjects with special attention being given to the education courses. Another area of consideration is the comparisons of perceptions and philosophies of teachers with various levels of TVAAS scores. Because this study only examines fourth quartile teachers, much could be learned by studying a group of teachers with varying levels of TVAAS scores. Further study in the professional development habits of these teachers would provide more insight into the types of professional development that are most beneficial. Attention given to this area would not only provide more effective professional development but could save districts money on professional development that does not cater to the needs of the teachers.

The above-mentioned suggestions are but a few from this project that have sparked interest of the researchers. What has been discovered up to this point is that teacher quality is an important avenue to travel in the journey to provide a quality education for all students.