

Public Abstract

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Title:Rural Missouri High School Principals' Perceptions of Highly Effective Teachers: Does it Align with National Research?

The purpose of this case study was to discover what rural Missouri high school principals perceive as the characteristics of highly effective teachers to compare to the national research on highly effective teachers. High school principals carry a great deal of responsibility for identifying and placing highly effective teachers in all classrooms and it is important to know if they are truly looking at the same characteristics as is identified in the extant literature. For the purpose of this study, the definition of a highly effective teacher is someone who has strong pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and subject content knowledge to reach and teach all students.

The design of this study was as a qualitative case study of eight rural Missouri high schools within a forty-mile radius. The average 9-12th grade student-body population of the schools was 365, with an average of 98% of the student body population identified as Caucasian. Eight rural Missouri high school principals participated in semi-structured interviews to identify their perceptions of the characteristics of highly effective teachers.

The results of this study identify that rural Missouri high school principals focus on pedagogical skills, like classroom management and relationships, as well as pedagogical content skills, like lesson planning and student engagement, to identify highly effective teachers. There is little if any perception of teacher subject content knowledge by the principals as they observe current teachers and interview prospective teachers to hire. This oversight could be detrimental to identifying and placing highly effective teachers in every classroom. Highly effective teachers according to research have strong pedagogical skill, pedagogical content knowledge, as well as strong subject content knowledge.