PREDICTIVE MEASURES TO IDENTIFY TARGET SKILL SETS NECESSARY FOR COMPLETION OF FUTURE TEACHERS IN TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

PREDICTIVE MEASURES TO IDENTIFY
TARGET SKILL SETS NECESSARY FOR
COMPLETION OF FUTURE TEACHERS IN
TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM

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a candidate for the degree of doctor education and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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ACADEMIC ABSTRACT

Effective teachers are those who can create a classroom climate which meets the needs of the students (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Hart & Hodsen, 2004). In an attempt to identify preservice teachers who can create this type of classroom, Missouri added a workplace inventory, the Missouri Educator Profile (MEP), to their required battery of teacher preparation program (TPP) entrance assessments between the years of 2013 and 2018. Theoretically, students who scored similarly to the normed teacher group would perform similarly to those proficient teachers in the classroom during practicum as well. While the MEP is still available for TPP use, it is no longer a requirement. The purpose of this mixed methods study is to examine the perceptions of the constructs of quality teachers through the lens of current practicing educators in a Missouri Teacher Preparation Program and to discover if indicators on the MEP are predictive of performance evaluation scores. The results of this study may have the potential to either persuade or dissuade Missouri TPPs to utilize the MEP.

Section One: Introduction

Predictive measures to identify target skill sets necessary for completion of future teachers in teacher preparation programs

Statement of the Problem

Teacher preparation programs (TPP) have ways of tracking content knowledge (Klassen & Kim, 2019; Sternberg, 2012). First, teacher candidates must pass a series of content assessments to gain entrance into a TPP. Teacher candidates must then maintain a certain grade point average, show continued growth in content knowledge through course work, and then pass another series of state-mandated content assessments before beginning a student teaching practicum (Pearson, 2018). A major piece of what it means to be a teacher has been left out of the equation: soft skills. According to Pachauri and Yadav (2014), "…soft skills refer to personality traits, social gracefulness, fluency in language, personal habits, friendliness and optimism that mark to varying degrees" (p. 22). While soft skills, which have little to do with knowledge or expertise, and can be developed, they are much more difficult to cultivate than hard, or static, skills (Chaitanya, 2018; Hadiyanto, Mukminin, Failasofah, Arif, Fajaryani, & Habibi, 2017; Meeks, 2017; Schultz, 2008). When considering the differentiation of hard and soft skills, they can be likened to elementary mathematics and spelling rules. In basic mathematics when adding one plus one, whether adding beads, cupcakes, or two-dimensional numerals, the answer will always be two. Hard skills act in the same manner. These are skills which are constant, they do not change from one circumstance to another (Chaitanya, 2018; Meeks, 2017) such as the ability to speak a second language fluently, memorize material easily, or type at a certain speed. While these skills can be improved upon through education, these are concrete skills that remain the same despite the environment or audience.

Consider the English grammar rule utilized to determine when to position the vowels "i" and "e" in sequence. While one plus one will always equal two, the rule for words using "i" and "e" is more complicated. Many in the United States grew up learning the rhyme, "i before e

except after c". However, the actual rule of this dueling vowel combination is a bit more complex. Merriam-Webster (2019) defined the rule for this vowel combination as follows:

> *I before e, except after c*
> *Or when sounded as 'a' as in 'neighbor' and 'weigh'*
> *Unless the 'c' is part of a 'sh' sound as in 'glacier'*
> *Or it appears in comparatives and superlatives like 'fancier'*
> *And also except when the vowels are sounded as 'e' as in 'seize'*
> *Or 'i' as in 'height'*
> *Or also in '-ing' inflections ending in '-e' as in 'cueing'*
> *Or in compound words as in 'albeit'*
> *Or occasionally in technical words with strong etymological links to their parent languages as in 'cuneiform'*
> *Or in other numerous and random exceptions such as 'science', 'forfeit', and 'weird'.*

The words "except" and "unless" are essential for understanding the difference of hard and soft skills. Just as the placement of the "i" is determined by the presence of a "c" or a certain sound of a variety of letters, a soft skill may be different based on an individual's environment while a hard skill will remain constant.

People communicate in a variety of ways as determined by the social situation in which they find themselves. Soft skills are malleable, they can squish and bend to shape circumstantial need. Balcar (2016) looked closely at the soft skill of effective communication. Much like how the ability to pronounce written words differs from reading comprehension, Balcar explained how the hard skill of the ability to communicate, or the ability to formulate words orally or written, is much different than the ability to communicate. Just because you have the ability to formulate a thought and express it with words does not mean you are able to express your thoughts in a manner in which they will be understood by the listener. Hart and Hodson (2004) discuss how teacher communication with students is driven by the teachers' view of the students as people. Teachers who view their students as individuals with unique "…thoughts, feelings,

needs, interests, and gifts to share…" (p. 26), are more likely to happily engage and communicate in a relational way with the students (Hart & Hodson, 2004). To communicate effectively, the communicator should be able to, among other things, explain complex information with limited bias and on a level that the audience can comprehend and embrace. An example of effective communication in the classroom can be seen in a young teacher whose name has been changed; for this paper, she will be referred to as Maggie. Maggie taught third through eighth grade, all in the same day for two years. One hour she would have a large group of prepubescent eighth graders and the next she taught wide-eyed innocent third graders. Darling-Hammond (2005) explains that "[e]ffective teachers are able to figure out not only what they want to teach, but also how to do so in a way that students can understand and use the new information and skills" (88). Maggie understood this well. She said she would have to quickly and completely change her teaching persona between class periods in order to effectively communicate to each diverse group of students. If Maggie were to communicate with her eighth graders like she did the third graders, the eighth graders would think they were being treated like babies and not respected; they would not respond well to Maggie's teaching. Contrarily, if she communicated with the third graders like she did the eighth graders, the third graders could feel like Maggie was mean or strict, and they would not respond well to her instruction. Each grade level required a unique method of communication to gain the desired response. However, like the "i before e except after c" example, the grade level was not the only determiner. Every year, classes consist of completely new and unique combinations of students and personalities which required new and unique communication strategies. Other considerations include, but are not limited to, the time of year, the weather, assembly days, fire drills, and what may have been for lunch that day. Soft skills are malleable, they can squish and

bend to shape circumstantial need. If Maggie did not have a strong ability to effectively communicate with a variety of age groups, she may not have had a positive impact in the classrooms in which she was teaching.

By contrast, Molly gives us an example of poor, or ineffective, communication skills in the classroom. Molly was a teacher candidate student teaching in a Missouri first grade classroom. Molly was teaching a routine morning lesson known as "calendar time." In an early childhood classroom, it is important for teachers to understand where the children are in their development in order to effectively teach them (Darling-Hammond, 2005). First graders need to feel important and hear praise from their teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2005). While there were multiple opportunities for Molly to praise, or even smile at her students while they sat on the large rug in front of her, this did not happen. Within two minutes of the lesson, she lost full engagement of the classroom. The students were looking around the room, playing with their fingers, hair, each other's hair, or shoes. She reminded the students, in a dry, monotone voice, to "pay attention" eleven times in a seven-minute block of time; the students continued to be disengaged. After the calendar time lesson, she transitioned the students to their desks to an individual assignment. Molly showed the students the front and back of a worksheet and gave a series of ten verbal directions. There were no picture clues given; it was not broken into sections and there were multiple directions. She asked the students to give her a thumbs up if they understood all the directions; they all gave her a thumbs up, as first graders tend to do whether they understand or not. For the remainder of the lesson, Molly roamed from seat to seat helping the students who were trying to do the assignment while the majority of the class was completely disengaged; upside-down in their chairs, flicking papers at each other, coloring on the paper, or talking to each other. While Molly had the ability to communicate (hard skill), she did not have

the ability to effectively communicate (soft skill). Molly did not graduate with a teaching degree. In fact, she was asked to leave the district building after that lesson (which was only one example of an ineffective lesson she had taught). Soft skills are so critical to teachers, Young (2018) states, "Knowing your students is more important than knowing your subject. There is no disputing that the foundational skills required of today's effective teachers are soft skills" (p. 1). Molly knew the content she was teaching, just not how to effectively communicate it.

School districts are looking to hire teachers who are leaders, good collaborators, and pleasant to work with (Bulluck, 2015). These are not skills hiring school districts are likely to ascertain from content assessment scores. The problem is soft skills are a major cause of issues in student teaching (Bullock, 2015; Ngang, Yunus, & Hashim, 2015; Schempp, 1985), but TPPs have no way to predict these skills. Ngang, Yunus, and Hishim (2015) claim that not only are soft skills necessary in classroom teachers, they are not addressed in teacher preparation programs. What data can TPPs obtain to identify people who lack the requisite soft skills required for success in the classroom?

Of the entrance examinations students must have taken between the years 2013-2018 to gain entrance into a Missouri teacher preparation program (reading comprehension, mathematics, science and social studies, writing, and the workplace inventory), the workstyle inventory is truly a test of a different nature as was the only assessment which was not content-related. However, there is currently no known evidence of a workstyle inventory's ability to foretell the outcomes of student teacher performance at practicum. The workplace inventory, (the MEP), was normed on practicing teachers whom the Missouri State's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) considered high-performing (G. Hairston, personal communication, April 14, 2017). Logic predicted that the students who scored similarly to the practicing teachers would

perform well when teaching in the classroom. However, due to the lack of research, this is unknown. As stated, the MEP was mandated in 2013 then retracted in 2018, both decisions lacked supportive data analysis. The MEP is currently available as an optional tool for Missouri teacher preparation programs to utilize.

The desire to attempt to assess soft skills in potential teachers is not a novel concept. The Gallup organization has been creating and analyzing assessments of this type since the company's beginning in 1958 (Grant, 2001). Many school districts require potential new hires to take a personality assessment as part of the interview process. According to Goldhaber, Grout, and Huntington-Klein (2014), a popular assessment of soft skills among school districts in the United States is the Gallup Teacher Perceiver Instrument (TPI). Much like the MEP, the TPI claims to identify teacher candidates who possess similar workplace values and dispositions as highly-effective teachers (Goldhaber, et al, 2014; Metzger & Wu, 2008). This instrument considers:

Mission: The teacher's goal is to make a significant contribution to student growth.

Empathy: The teacher responds to the individual student's feelings and thoughts.

Rapport: The teacher likes students and promotes warm, accepting relationships.

Perception: The teacher considers the interests and needs of each student.

Listening: The teacher listens to students' feelings with responsiveness and acceptance.

Investment: Teacher satisfaction comes from the learner's response, not teacher performance.

Input: The teacher searches for new ideas and experiences to share with students.

Activation:	The teacher motivates students to think, respond, and feel in order to learn.
Innovation:	The teacher is determined to implement creative new ideas and techniques.
Gestalt:	The teacher tends toward perfectionism but works from individual to structure.
Objectivity:	The teacher responds to the total situation rather than reacting impulsively.
Focus:	The teacher has models and goals and selects activities in terms of these goals.

The Gallup organization identifies each of the indicators, which represent skills other than content knowledge through research (Grant, 2001).

The graduate institution program, in which the researcher writing this dissertation attended, utilized another instrument developed by the Gallup organization, the Clifton StrengthsFinder (Rath & Conchie, 2009). The program administers this instrument during the first semester of doctoral work. Every academic endeavor in which the graduate students participated during the first semester utilized the results of the StrengthsFinder. Students were grouped together into teams of five based on their varied strengths. Assignments were created, reflected upon, and referred to individual and team strengths. To begin, each student answered a computerized sequence of questions, all recorded in a Likert scale. The results provided each student a list of their top five out of thirty-four strengths (Rath, 2007). Additionally, this researcher's top five strengths, according to the StrengthsFinder assessment, were: achiever, learner, positivity, includer, and arranger. The assessment results then provided information for each of the five identified areas of strength, including how the person could use these strengths to help lead as well as the negative aspects that can emerge due to these strengths. For example, the results suggest people who score high in the achiever category are extremely driven and feel

the need to achieve something each day. While this drive could be positively utilized, the results provide a warning that people with this tendency should make their goals attainable or they could find themselves in a slope of depression. When working with groups, the results suggest a person with the achiever trait may make a good group leader, as they are driven to not only complete a task, but do it well. The results also suggest the achiever be mindful to allow others in the group to have ownership of the projects as well. This is an example of one of the thirty-four traits offered by the StrengthsFinder report, as well as how an institution is currently utilizing a soft-skill assessment in their curriculum.

Assessing and analyzing soft skills is utilized in other arenas as well. High schools, colleges, and universities in the United States often require students to take an interest or career assessment with the purpose of assisting students in choosing their career path (Loffredo, 2017). The university where this study was conducted utilizes a variety of assessments including the Focus 2 program (A Missouri University, 2019). According to the university website, "This tool is an online, interactive career, and education planning system that combines self-assessment, career exploration, and decision making into one comprehensive program. It will help you map out a career path and select a major area of study to support your career goals." The assessment, much like the MEP, asks the student to respond using a Likert scale to a series of computerized questions and scenarios. The results, available immediately following the assessment, provide information concerning the optimal occupation(s) for which the student seems to be pre-dispositioned.

The other soft-skill assessments available for students at this particular university focus on the evaluation of their personal strengths and weaknesses. The assessments suggested are the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) Interest Profiler, Keirsey Temperament Sorter,

Skills Worksheet, Work and Lifestyle Values Worksheet, 16 Personalities, and The Big Five Personality Test. The university Career Services webpage provides a link to each assessment, which has between ten and twenty-five personality questions, and uses a Likert scale. A full listing of the results is offered for four of the instruments; the remaining instruments give a sneak preview of the results with the option to pay a fee of twenty-five to fifty dollars for the full reports. The researcher spent approximately an hour and a half taking the entire battery of assessments. The results provided were extremely similar. Each report suggested the researcher would do well in a career in education or health and human services, which happens to be the profession in which the researcher worked for the last twenty-five years.

There is little question that soft-skills remain important to consider in a multitude of arenas, including learning to be an educational leader in a doctoral program, hiring an employee, or choosing a career. The overriding problem concerning the MEP is the lack of research and the impact of the instrument in education. Pearson, the testing company who created and implements the assessment, tested the validity of the MEP with some occupations, but teaching was not among them, according to the Technical Manual (Pearson, 2013). The Technical Manual alluded to the premise that the MEP, or Workplace Personality Inventory (WPI-II), is an instrument which should validly illustrate how potential employee personalities relate to highly-effective employees within the same line of business (Pearson, 2013). While the Technical Manual shows data points to success in several business occupations, the manual does not indicate a relation between college students and highly-effective practicing teachers. Authors of the Workplace Inventory II correlated workstyle personality traits to successes in other occupations, assuming it would have the same result in education. However, this is still an unknown as research has not been conducted.

According to Maslow (1989), an assessment is valid if it does what it is claiming to do. The purpose of the MEP, according to a slideshow created by the Pearson Company (2014), is to assist the students in increasing their self-awareness in respect to highly-performing classroom teachers. On slide twenty-two, the Pearson Company (2014) states that the student scores "are based on how [they] responded to the occupational group in which [they] were compared." The assessment is not simply showing students their own score in the workstyle inventory, they are scores which are directly correlated to the norming group. The occupational group mentioned are teachers. According to the Missouri State's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) (G. Hairston, personal communication, April 14, 2017), the workstyle inventory was normed on highly-effective practicing teachers from the Missouri school districts. To date, no studies have confirmed that this instrument accurately predicts future teachers' performance. TPPs do not yet have data to validate that the MEP is able to accurately do what it was designed to do.

If the instrument proved effective in predicting teacher success, a TPP that chose to ignore the workstyle inventory data by not utilizing it to redirect students in a different career path or offer intervention in the identified areas could be considered institutional malpractice (Gjalten, 2018). Consider the true story of Molly, the teacher candidate who could not effectively communicate with her first-grade students and, ultimately failed student teaching. In order for her to be removed from the classroom, she had to demonstrate ineffective teaching methods with the students in the classroom. Time spent teaching in any classroom is precious (Darling-Hammond, 2005). Molly wasted several hours of this priceless time with her mentor teacher's students. After the lesson, the mentor teacher told the Director of Field from the university and Molly's university supervisor that she could not leave her classroom students

alone with Molly for even a half-day without serious detriments to her students' education and overall wellbeing. The mentor was frustrated and said it would be a long time before she or her fellow teachers in the building would allow another teacher candidate to practice teaching in their classrooms. TPPs depend on their school district partnerships. Without these essential partnerships, TPPs would not have a place for their teacher candidates to put pedagogy into practice. Molly's TPP had to work hard to attempt to mend the relationship that was injured due to her inability to effectively communicate. If the workplace inventory was able to effectively show an area of concern in terms of soft skills in teacher candidates, that information could help TPPs protect their valuable partners in education, the school districts, by keeping those who do not belong in the classroom out, like Molly. However, if the MEP does not show predictive validity, then Missouri teacher preparation programs may have used a tool that was providing substandard information. Either way, the MEP is still available for TPPs to utilize, if they chose to do so.

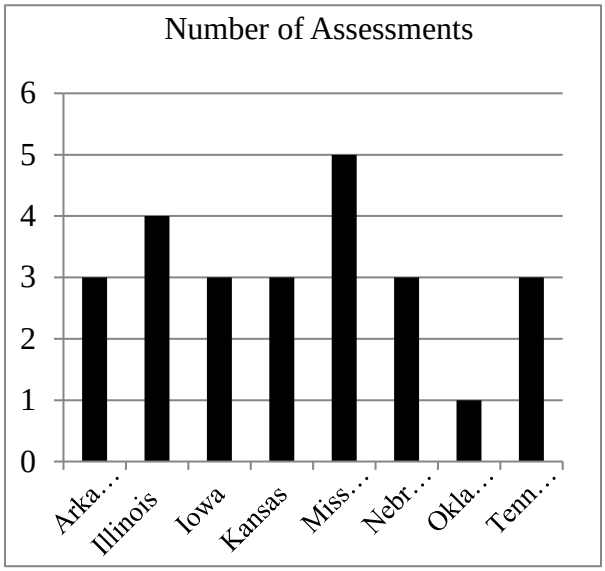
The building administrator from the school where Molly was removed, asked the Director of Field many questions about how this teacher candidate was allowed to progress to student teaching and what would be done to ensure this situation would not occur again. She inquired about the processes teacher candidates went through leading up to their culminating field experience: student teaching. Questions led the researcher to consider how colleges chose students for their teacher preparation programs (TPP). In particular, the TPP entrance examinations, that is, the tests students must pass to continue pursuing a teaching degree are examined. College entrance examinations should promote the value of learning, standards of teaching, and serve as a platform for knowledge (Kiany, Shayestefar, Samar, & Akbari, 2013, &

Pearson, 2018). Students completing education degrees are tested with instruments that concentrate solely on content such as reading, writing, and mathematics (ETS Praxis, 2018).

Linda Darling-Hammond (2005) discusses the need for several soft skills concerning the development of teachers; the mental transfer that must occur in education students in order for them to mature into a teacher role. The developmental teaching stages from being self-centered to student-centered, as well as learning to work in a collaborative community, are key components in teacher development. The MEP is a workplace inventory which focuses on many of the aspects Darling-Hammond (2005) discusses, such as collaboration. If the MEP is an instrument which can correctly inform teacher candidates and TPPs of their developmental level in these critical areas, the results could offer teacher candidates and TPPs useful information to permit the exit of students unfit for teaching, thus pointing them into other lines of work.

Between the years 2013-2018, a group of nine contiguous states, chosen because of their proximity to one another, Missouri, Oklahoma, Iowa, Nebraska, Arkansas, Illinois, Tennessee, Kansas, and Kentucky, and their teacher preparatory programs' entrance examinations are reflected in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The number of required assessments for entrance into a college of education on the first attempt in given states from 2013-2018.



All information gathered from each state's Department of Education webpages, 2017.

All the represented states required at least one assessment, with Missouri requiring more than its surrounding states. While all states included assessments in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics, one combined the subjects into one assessment, and another added the additional criteria of a combined science and social studies assessment as well as a workstyle inventory, the MEP, required in Missouri until June 1, 2018. The MEP remains as an optional assessment for TPPs to utilize, if they so choose.

As previously discussed, Missouri had two more assessment requirements than its contiguous states. One of those assessments was the workstyle inventory, required until 2018. This assessment was unique as it did not consider content knowledge, but rather work-related personality traits. The workstyle inventory was also distinctive as students did not need to achieve a particular score; they had to simply complete it. These distinctions, as well as

experiences with teachers and teacher candidates like Maggie and Molly, led to the consideration of questions concerning the workstyle inventory. In particular, how did pre-education majors' work-related personality traits compare with the traits of high-performing practicing teachers? As the only entrance examination focused on workstyle rather than content, the workstyle inventory deserved further investigation. The Missouri Educator Profile (MEP) is a 192 question nonconsequential workstyle inventory assessment. The relevancy of this study lies in its ability to help TPPs better utilize this assessment tool.

The MEP "…consists of questions that represent statements of preference on a 4-point rating scale representing Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), and Strongly Agree (4), respectively" (Yao, Pagnani, Thomas, Abellan-Pagnani, & Buchanan, 2017). The other four Missouri TPP gateway assessments focus on the comprehension of content, which are taken under certain testing conditions, and programs determined what constitutes a passing score. Alternatively, the MEP is considered a "pajama test" (A Missouri TPP, 2017), which means there were no setting requirements for taking the assessment, and there was no cut score; the program required the student only to take and pay for the MEP. This study will look deeper into the workstyle inventory, in particular, the Missouri Educator Profile, its purpose, impact, and possible predictiveness with teacher candidate classroom performance at practicum.

Since the MEP was normed on highly-efficient classroom teachers, logic would hold that teacher candidates who scored similarly to the normed group would demonstrate high proficiency results in their classroom teaching evaluations during student teaching. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) mandates all TPPs within the state utilize an authentic, or performance, assessment during student teaching or practicum (Memo from the Assistant Commissioner from Missouri's DESE, January 5, 2016). Missouri

teacher preparation programs have been utilizing the MEES since 2011. According to DESE (2013), "The Missouri Educator Evaluation System was created, field-tested and piloted, and refined by hundreds of educators across the state" (p. 4). It was developed directly from the Missouri Teacher Standards (DESE, 2011). Teacher candidates are evaluated with the same type of instrument as practicing teachers. The standards assessed include the following: content knowledge aligned with appropriate instruction, student learning growth and development, curriculum implementation, critical thinking, positive classroom environment, effective communication, student assessment and data analysis, professionalism, and professional collaboration. While there are nine standards, a total of thirty-six indicators define those standards; sixteen of the standards were formally assessed during student teaching practicum at the time of the study. Table 1 highlights each of the standards and indicators addressed at practicum, as defined by DESE (2013). This is the vetted instrument which was utilized to ascertain the effectiveness of teacher candidate performance during student teaching practicum.

Table 1: MEES standards assessed during student teaching practicum with indicators and descriptors

MEES Standards	Indicator with Descriptor
1. Content Knowledge Aligned with Appropriate Instruction	**1.1Content Knowledge and Academic Language**: o the candidate is well prepared to guide students to a deeper understanding of content consistently in performance o the candidate's instruction reflects accuracy of content knowledge consistently in performance **1.2 Student Engagement in Subject Matter** o the candidate uses engagement strategies consistently in performance to maintain student interest o the students are consistently interested and engaged in the content
2. Student Learning Growth and Development	**2.4 Differentiated Lesson Design:** o the candidate designs differentiated lessons and activities based on the unique needs of students consistently o the candidate can consistently articulate important characteristics and needs of students as they apply to learning o the students appear to exhibit positive rapport with the teacher and are consistently motivated to learn
3. Curriculum Implementation	**3.1 Implementation of Curriculum Standards** o the candidate selects and creates learning experiences that are appropriate for district curriculum o the candidate demonstrates a clear understanding of district curriculum and how to incorporate them into learning activities **3.2 Lessons for Diverse Learners:** o activities are present in lessons that recognize needs of diverse learners and variations in learning styles and performance o students perceive that their learning needs are recognized
4. Critical Thinking	**4.1 Student Engagement in Critical Thinking** o the candidate demonstrates use of various instructional strategies and appropriate resources for critical thinking o students are engaged in active learning that promotes the development of critical thinking

5	**Positive Classroom Environment**	**5.1Classroom Management Techniques** o classroom artifacts (posted rules and protocols) support effective techniques o the candidate engages in techniques to manage behavior in the classroom o student misbehavior is effectively addressed **5.2 Management of Time, Space, Transitions, and Activities** o the candidate designs routines that support effective management of time, space, transitions and activities o the candidate demonstrates a basic understanding of the value of managing time, space, transitions, and activities to increase student engagement and self-direction o students are engaged and somewhat responsive to the teacher's classroom management strategies **5.3 Classroom, School, and Community Culture** o the candidate engages in practices to learn the culture of the school and community o the teacher candidate has a positive student, colleague, and community relationship
6	**Effective Communication**	**6.1 Verbal, Nonverbal Communication** o the candidate's non-verbal communication is effective and correct o the candidate demonstrates a basic level of effective verbal and non-verbal communication
7	**Student Assessment and Data Analysis**	**7.1 Effective use of Assessments** o the candidate can identify and construct valid formal and informal assessments o the candidate creates and demonstrates the use of formal and informal student assessments which address specific learning goals and modifications **7.2 Assessment Data to Improve Learning** o the candidate collects data information and assessment results for instructional planning and decision-making o the students are engaged in learning goals that advance mastery of content based from assessment results **7.5 Communication of Student Progress and Maintaining Records** o student records are in order and up-to-date o the candidate maintains confidential records of student work and performance to use when communicating student status and progress
8	**Professionalism**	**8.1 Self-Assessment & Improvement** o the candidate has professional development plan documents, self-assessments, and reflection strategies o the candidate engages in self-assessment and problem solving on improving their overall impact on student learning

9	**Professional Collaboration**	**9.1 Induction & Collegial Activities** o the candidate documents support and growth and other notes in logs and/or journals specific to the clinical experience o the candidate meets regularly with the cooperating mentor teacher and clinical supervisor and fully participates throughout the clinical experience **9.2 Cooperative Partnerships in Support of Student Learning** o the candidate engages in opportunities to develop relationships with colleagues, students, families and the community and works to understand concerns and needs regarding student learning and well-being

All information gathered from Missouri state's Department of Education webpage, 2017.

Rationale

No Child Left Behind mandated that every classroom be staffed by a certified and content-trained "highly-qualified" teacher (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001). The simple credentialing of teachers, through content assessment alone, does not guarantee that a teacher is suited to serve students in the classroom. While content knowledge is a key component to teaching, there is potential that soft skills should also be considered. In fact, mere academic credentialing shows little predictive value in identifying teachers who will be successful in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Hanushek & Rivikin, 2004; Pianta & Allen, 2008; Ripski, Casale-Crouch, & Decker, 2011). These finding create a rationale for the research questions explored in this study.

Purpose

A workstyle inventory that predicts teaching performance could assist teacher preparation programs in determining those who would be more successful in a classroom setting in terms of the nine standards that teacher candidates are assessed during practicum with the Missouri Educator Evaluation System. Additionally, such a tool possesses value during student advisement as opposed to a gateway test. It also has the potential to have a direct effect on the

children's learning in the pre-kindergarten thru high school (Pk-12) classes. Poor performing teacher candidates have the potential to damage students in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2008; Borman & Limball, 2005). Should a teacher candidate have poor communication skills, as indicated by the MEES *Standard 6*, Communication, the students in the classroom may not understand what they are supposed to be learning, thus causing the students to lose critical time in their educational journeys. Broman and Limball (2005) discuss how students who scored below the national average were more likely to be taught by teachers who had lower than average administrative evaluation scores. If there were a way to predict which college students were likely to have these lower than average evaluation scores, it would bode well for the students in the Pk-12 classroom (Browman & Limball, 2005).

The purpose of this mixed methods study is to examine the perceptions of quality teachers through the lens of educators in Missouri as well as to discover if indicators on a workplace inventory, such as the MEP, are predictive of the scores on a performance evaluation, such as the MEES, at one Missouri University's TPP between the years 2013-2018. The results of this study have the potential to either persuade or dissuade teacher preparation programs to utilize the results a workplace inventory such as the MEP.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are:

RQ1: Do educators in Missouri find the attributes identified in Glasser's (1998) choice theory valuable in classroom teachers??

a) Do Missouri classroom teachers value soft skills over hard skills in peer classroom teachers?

RQ2: Can a workplace personality inventory be used to predict effectiveness in student teaching practicum as measured by the MEES?

RQ3: Are MEP indicators predictive of teacher candidate performance in student teaching practicum as measured by the MEES?

a) Does the MEP *Achievement* (1) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?
    - Null Hypothesis: The MEP *Achievement* (1) has no predictability of MEES indicators.

b) Does the MEP *Social Influence* (2) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?
    - Null Hypothesis: The MEP *Social Influence* (2) has no predictability of MEES indicators.

c) Does the MEP *Interpersonal* (3) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?
    - Null Hypothesis: The MEP *Interpersonal* (3) has no predictability of MEES indicators.

d) Does the MEP *Self Adjustment* (4) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?
    - Null Hypothesis: The MEP *Self Adjustment* (4) has no predictability of MEES indicators.

e) Does the MEP *Conscientiousness* (5) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?
    - Null Hypothesis: The MEP *Conscientiousness* (5) has no predictability of MEES indicators.

f) Does the MEP *Practical Intelligence* (6) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?
    - Null Hypothesis: The MEP *Practical Intelligence* (6) has no predictability of MEES indicators.

These questions are framed by the educational framework of choice theory that has grown over time which considered how teacher personalities influence student interest in learning. Using Glasser's (1998) choice theory, educator interviews, regression in a workplace

inventory (the MEP), and summative evaluation data (the MEES), the answer to the above questions will be addressed.

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework of this study was based on Glasser's choice theory as it is related to teacher influence in student learning. The conceptual framework established the importance of relationship building within the classroom to establish optimal student learning. Teachers who work to make sure student classroom activities are designed to satisfy the students' needs have experienced more productivity and greater connections with students and more productivity from students (Lynch, 2016; William Glasser Institute–US, 2010). According to Glasser (1998), everyone is prewired with and driven by five basic needs: survival, love/belonging, power, freedom, and fun. While these five basic needs are genetic, "they cannot be satisfied directly but met indirectly by individuals attempting to reduce the gap between what they truly wanted and what they perceived they were getting" (Lujan, 2005). The impulses for these needs are so significant, they have been shown to be the driving force behind all decisions making, including if students want to learn in a classroom or not (Glasser, 1998). This could be likened to Johnny Depp's character, Captain Jack Sparrow, in Disney's Pirates of the Caribbean film series. In the films, Captain Jack has a compass that does not point north, but instead in the direction of what the traveler truly desires. According to Glasser (1998), while people have freewill over their actions, everyone has an internal compass of the Captain Jack Sparrow type which leads, or motivates, choices and behaviors. People do what they do because they are searching for survival, love/belonging, power, freedom, and fun; in that order (Blance, 2004; Glasser, 1998; Wubbolding, 2015).

Effective teachers are those who ensure their classroom environments are conducive to meeting the needs of their students as outlined by Glasser (1998) (Blance, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2006). When students feel safe, wanted, and a sense of power over the direction of their own education, they are much more likely to desire to be in the classroom. Research Question 1 will look to determine if the educators in the physical location of this research project locally support Glasser's choice theory: What attributes do educators in Missouri find the most valuable in classroom teachers?

The concept of choice theory was appropriate for this study as it considers not the content knowledge of teachers, but rather the teachers' ability to relate to the students; to meet the innate needs of the students in the classroom. This could also be considered the teachers' workstyle personality inventory. This being the case, a thorough examination of one such workplace inventory, the Missouri Educator Profile (MEP), as it relates to classroom teaching performance, as measured by the Missouri Educator Evaluation System (MEES), is warranted. This led to research questions 2 and 3.

The Missouri Educator Profile was formed from the Workplace Personality Inventory (WPI-II) (Talentlens, 2013), which was created from models such as the five factor model. Studies of personalities and work performance began as early as the 1930s (Barrick & Mount, 1991). The studies of the five identified personality characteristics (extraversion, emotional stability, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and culture) have been vetted through study replication multiple times over the past eighty years (Henry, Campbell, Thompson, Patricia, Luterbach, Lys, & Covington, 2013; Henry et al., 2012; Komarraju, Karau, & Schmeck, 2009). However, while these studies focused on the top five personalities of those who work

well in current professional positions, they were not considering the predictive nature of someone pursuing a teaching position.

While the MEP holds its base in the five factor model, it has six identifiable personality performance measures: achievement, social influence, interpersonal, self-adjustment, conscientiousness, and practical intelligence. This study will consider the subcategories of these six traits, as represented in Table 2, and how they predict the performance of teacher candidates in the classroom at practicum.

Table 2: The MEP indicators with descriptors

MEP Indicator	Descriptor
1 Achievement	**1. Achievement/Effort:** Considers how the candidate "establishes and exerts extensive effort toward achieving challenging work goals." **2. Persistence:** Considers "persistence on the job, even when faced with obstacles or difficulties." Does not procrastinate. "Pushes self to achieve quality results." **3. Initiative:** Considers the candidates drive for "taking on new or additional work responsibilities and challenges." Doesn't give up on challenges easily; hard working and has a positive outlook.
2 Social Influence	**1. Leadership Orientation:** The candidate is "quick to take charge, lead others, and offer options; (very high scores may be overly assertive at times)." **2. Social Orientation:** The candidate "enjoys working with others; actively seeks out personal connections with colleagues; (very high scores may not be comfortable working alone)" They have a strong network of colleagues.
3 Interpersonal	**1. Cooperation:** The candidate is "likely to be seen by others as good-natured, approachable, and quick to help others." **2. Concern for Others:** The candidate is empathetic and "viewed by others as perceptive and caring, able to discern other peoples' feelings and needs." **3. Collaborative**
4 Self-Adjustment	**1. Self-Control:** The candidate "keeps emotions even in difficult situations", "manages emotions productively." **2. Stress Tolerance:** The candidate "remains calm in high pressure situations; accepts criticism." **3. Adaptability/Flexibility:** The candidate enjoys change and variety in the school setting; is comfortable with ambiguity."

5 Conscientiousness	1. **Dependability:** The candidate "seeks to consistently fulfill obligations with quality performance", "Completes work on a timely basis as promised." 2. **Attention to Detail:** The candidate is "likely to excel at tasks requiring a strong focus on details and thoroughness", "thorough in checking the quality of their work." 3. **Rule Following:** The candidate "strictly adheres to rules and regulations; does things 'by the book'", "follow rules and protocol with great care and consistency."
6 Practical Intelligence	1. **Innovation:** The candidate "enjoys producing new or creative ideas to address job-related issues or problems." They "peruse different or new ways to approach problems." 2. **Analytical Thinking:** The candidate "enjoys analyzing complex issues in depth and using logic to address job-related issues or problems." They "are prone to use a logical problem-solving and decision-making approach." 3. **Independence:** The candidate "prefers freedom to guide self with little or no supervision; develops own way of doing things; deals comfortably with ambiguity."

Note: Information taken from TalentLens, 2013.

The Pearson Testing Company, in conjunction with Missouri's DESE, normed the MEP with over 900 practicing teachers whom DESE deemed to be high performing. These included Missouri teachers of the year nominees, Missouri Select Teachers as Regional Resources (STARR) Teachers, Missouri National Board Certified teachers, as well as those who worked in the top 25% of schools whose students were accelerating on the state standardized tests (Memo from the Associate Commissioner of Missouri's DESE & G. Hairston, personal communication, April 14, 2017). According to the Technical Manual, this is the same model utilized when the WPI-II, the instrument the MEP was created from, was normed with other professions such as nursing (Talentlens, 2013). However, while the other professions in the manual were researched after the norming process, this has not been done with the MEP.

The MEP was designed to show correlations between the work-related personality traits of the test taker and those who are proficient in a particular profession (Pearson, 2013). Theoretically, students who score similarly to the high performing teachers who normed

the assessment should receive high-performance scores on the summative performance instrument. For example, one of the descriptors under the MEP indicator of Achievement is initiative, which considers the candidate's drive for "taking on new or additional work responsibilities and challenges" (Pearson, 2013, p. 3). This MEP indicator aligns with Missouri state universities' and the state's summative performance assessment indicator 8.1, "Self-assessment and improvement" (A Missouri University, 2013). In the case of this study, the proxy summative assessment is the Missouri Educator Evaluation System (MEES). Presuming the two instruments are valid, a student with a MEP score in the Achievement category similar to the normed group should score high on the summative performance assessment form in the Initiative and Effort to improve teaching-related skills and knowledge categories. To ascertain if there is a relationship between the work related personality traits of teacher candidates upon entrance into a TPP and their performance at practicum, a full body of analysis between each of the instruments' indicators ensued.

Study Design

Setting

The organization, a Missouri institution of higher learning began as a teacher's college, or a Normal School, in 1873. The institution has grown to include five colleges. The institution, as a whole, contains approximately 13,000 students, with roughly 1,200 of those in the COE (A Missouri University, 2018). It is a National Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation (CAEP) and state DESE accredited college.

Participants

For the quantitative portion of this study, teacher preparation program MEP and MEES records from students enrolled from 2013 – 2018 were utilized. During the 2013 – 2018

window, all TPP students were required to complete the MEP. Teacher preparation students took the MEP as part of their entrance examination into the TPP and were evaluated by the MEES during their student teaching practicum. Because the researcher had access to the relevant test information, the sample was one of convenience. The data is shared in the aggregate; no names are used in any of the findings.

Qualitatively, a convenience sample of a variety of educators was chosen. When contemplating who to choose to interview, diversity was a major source of consideration. It was important to interview teachers from many professional education perspectives in order to truly grasp an overarching view of answers to the interview questions. The researcher chose to interview representatives from urban, rural, and suburban school districts, representatives from elementary, special, and secondary education, as well as a school district central office representative and two university teacher candidate supervisors. This data is also shared in the aggregate.

Data Collection Practices

MEP data, which was housed in the education preparation program's assessment office, was requested for this study. The data is secured on a password-protected computer in a locked office. The summative performance assessment, the Missouri Educator Evaluation System (MEES), data is currently secured on the researcher's computer and will remain there for the duration of the study through dissertation defense approval. This study used a mixed methods approach which utilized the Excel statistics program for the quantitative portion of the study. Qualitatively, the interviews were transcribed on a secure computer in the researcher's office and scrubbed of all identifiers. The names of the interviewees and their school districts were

removed from this paper. Each interviewee was labeled and referred to as Educators One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Six, and Seven.

A manuscript for approval was submitted to an Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure that the data analysis of the relationship and predictability between the MEP and MEES as well as the interview data did not infringe on the ethical rights of the students or interviewees of whom the data is connected. As the researcher intends to utilize the student's institutional numbers as opposed to names and has no plans of disclosing any identifiers in the research or results, ethical issues did not come into play within this research.

Data Analysis

A mixed methods approach was taken for this study. This first section focuses on the qualitative aspect of the research. According to Yamey (2017), "Qualitative research … seeks to understand a given research problem from the perspective of the local population it involves" (p.10). Exploratory interviews were conducted to decipher if educators from the target region were on the same page theoretically as those who follow Glasser's (1998) choice theory. To do this, a convenience sample of a variety of educators was chosen. Face-to face semi-structured interviews were considered the most suitable data collection tool for exploration of the questions. Each of the participants signed an informed consent form. The interviews took place in June 2019.

The study consisted of seven educators from a Missouri region. Educators were recruited through convenience. The researcher is an educator in the region with multiple contacts due to the professional position held as Director of Field and Clinical at the local university from 2013-2018. The researcher contacted each of the interviewees by phone to set up interview sessions. When contemplating who to choose to interview, teachers at different levels of practice was a

major source of consideration. It was important to interview teachers from many professional education perspectives in order to truly grasp an overarching view of answers to the interview questions. The researcher chose to interview individuals in order to have a representative sample from urban, rural, and suburban school districts, representatives from elementary, special, and secondary education, as well as a school district central office representative and two university teacher candidate supervisors. The names of the interviewees and their school districts have been removed from this paper.

The research centered on possible predictability of performance between the MEP and MEES data during practicum, data analysis was conducted utilizing a regression analysis. The MEP data is ordinal with a range of zero to ten based upon percentile ranks. However, according to the MEP's Technical Manual (Pearson, 2013), scores of a nine or ten should be considered with caution. the Pearson Company (2013) states, "The [workstyle inventory] should be interpreted in light of the Unlikely Virtues score. Extremely high scores (90%) on Unlikely Virtues suggest overly positive self-representation and as such, all subsequent results should be interpreted with extreme caution" (38). As the Pearson Company (2013) believed scores of a nine or ten to be considered with caution, the researcher removed those scores from the data and eight was the highest score and zero the lowest.

The performance evaluation, MEES, is also ordinal with a range of zero to four. While mentor teachers and university supervisors each provided summative data for the teacher candidates, this study only utilized the scores of the university supervisors as they had completed interrater reliability scoring expectations for the instrument (A Missouri University, 2017). In this manner, the scores for each of the instruments were compared for a total of ninety-six points

of analysis in order to discover if the MEP indicators predicted student performance in their practicum experience.

Limitations, Assumptions, and Design Controls

As Director of Field and Clinical Experiences, the researcher had several years' experience working with teacher candidates. One of the job responsibilities was to remove teacher candidates from school districts when the school was unsatisfied with the candidates' performance. This was a difficult and time consuming task. The researcher would first need to investigate the problem thoroughly. This was typically done by reading the teacher candidate's evaluations, journal entries, and past emails as well as discussing the situation from the point of view of the teacher candidate, supervisor, mentor teacher, and sometimes the building and/or district administrators as well. The information would then be shared with the university department Chair and Associate Dean, and, depending on the situation, the Dean of the TPP, to determine the action to take. The researcher would then take the time to create an improvement plan or remove the teacher candidate from the school site. Typically, the researcher would take the time to reassure the teacher candidate and mentor teacher. Then, the researcher would reassure the principal by discussing how instances like these were atypical. Once the researcher would return to the office, the process of an improvement plan or removal would be documented in detail and emailed to the university Department Chair, Associate Dean, Dean, and teacher candidate. If the teacher candidate chose to appeal the actions that took place, continued meetings would ensue and more paperwork was created and shared. While several hundred teacher candidates have participated in the TPP, the researcher is keenly aware of the names and performances of the few who were terminated from their student teaching field experience at practicum due to the amount of time spent working with those individuals. Therefore, it was

essential that the names of those particular teacher candidates were removed from the data prior to any investigation.

Another limitation worth noting pertains to the scores teacher candidates earn on the MEES during practicum. While teacher candidates earn scores from both the mentor teachers and university supervisors, only the university supervisor scores were utilized in this study as they participated in interrater reliability training with the instrument each semester, while the mentor teachers did not.

In addition, while the MEP and MEES were utilized by all TPPs in Missouri between the years 2013 and 2018, data from only one of these institutions was collected and analyzed during this initial study. The researcher may choose to collect a larger sample once this initial study has been defended.

Definitions of Key Terms

- Field experience: Teacher candidates in the institution in which the study took place practice their teaching skills directly in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade classrooms, depending on the type of education degree they are seeking. The classrooms are in school districts which have partnered with the university for this purpose. Teacher candidates begin their field experiences during either their fifth or sixth semester, depending on their desired certification. Teacher candidates spend between 227 and 309 hours in the field, in classrooms, prior to their practicum field experience.
- Practicum is the final field experience prior to graduating. In the institution in which the study took place, practicum consists of sixteen consecutive weeks teaching in the classroom; five days a week, full days.

- Teacher candidates are university students who are seeking teaching degrees within the TPP.
- University supervisors, in the institution in which the study took place, are the adjunct faculty assigned to mentoring and evaluating the teacher candidates at practicum.

Significance of the Study

This study has the potential to impact teacher preparation programs in A Missouri state. Should a significant relationship exists between the MEP and MEES, a workplace personality inventory, like the MEP, could become a valuable tool used to identify those who may make exceptional classroom teachers once they complete the required coursework in a teacher preparation program. TPPs could utilize the results to either steer students toward another productive career path, or cultivate specific work characteristics that increase teaching effectiveness in the classroom. Teacher preparation programs may also consider working with their partnering school districts to help identify high school students who would be potential high-performing teachers and help to steer them toward the path of teaching.

However, if there is no significant relationship between the MEP and MEES, this study's findings could provide regression data to support justifying the elimination of a workplace personality inventory requirement altogether, or the need for the use of an alternative instrument and data analysis. Alternatively, the findings may suggest that the MEP needs further refinement in order to be of worth to teacher candidates and teacher preparation programs. Additionally, this study's findings may assist in giving guidance in how a workplace personality inventory should be used in student advisory settings.

The research questions proposed in this study are unique; the data is currently fresh and untried. The time for research within this subject area is ripe and the results, however they

emerge, will be substantial for Missouri teacher preparation programs and all teacher candidates interested in pursuing a teaching degree.

Summary

States need good teachers, teachers who can relate to students, make them feel valued and want to learn (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Glasser, 1998). This is likely not something which can be determined by a content assessment. Missouri, among its contiguous states, was the only state which is attempted to use an instrument which reached beyond content alone and into the workplace personality skills required for teacher effectiveness, the workplace inventory, the MEP. While the potential value of the data created by an assessment of this sort is great, currently the predictive validity of the instrument is unknown in terms of its possible connection to summative performance evaluation.

Interviews were conducted to gain diverse educator perspectives of what it means to be an effective teacher. MEP indicators were quantifiably analyzed to see if the MEP was predictive of teacher candidate performance. If the study is able to show predictability, the MEP, as well as other workplace inventories, could be considered a valuable resource by teacher preparation programs when determining who should or should not be continuing in the program. If no predictability emerged, there may be cause for removal of this type of assessment or a call for further research. In either case, whether the instrument is predictive or not, the data is fresh and untested; now is the perfect time to begin asking questions concerning the use of workplace inventories in teacher education.

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Section Two: Practitioner Setting for the Study

Introduction

History of the Organization

The Missouri institute of higher learning in which this study is being conducted began as a teacher's college in 1873. The university has grown to include five colleges, one of those remaining as a Teacher Preparation Program. The institution has approximately 13,000 students, with about 1,200 of those in the TPP (A Missouri University, 2018).

The institution is in a small town of approximately 40,000 residents. The median household income is approximately $40,000 per year. According to Data USA (2018), nursing, retail, and trucking are reported as the top occupations in the area. It is a family-friendly town with twenty-four out-door parks, including a dog park and a free outdoor fitness facility (A Missouri City, 2018).

Organizational Analysis

The college of the Missouri university, like the other colleges within the university, is led by a Dean. As illustrated in Table 3, the Dean has several leaders who report directly to them including the Chairs of the seven major departments focusing on early childhood, elementary, special, middle, secondary, and graduate education, nursing, communication disorders, psychology, and counseling. Each department Chair leads the faculty and adjunct faculty within their respective departments. One department of education consists of twenty faculty and adjunct faculty, another department of education consists of five faculty and adjunct faculty, and a third department of education consists of thirteen faculty and adjunct faculty (A Missouri University, 2018). The Associate Dean, who also reports to the Dean of the particular college, has two offices which report to him: the Office of Accreditation, and the Office of Field and

Clinical Experiences. The key investigator in this study was the Director of the Office of Field and Clinical Experiences from 2013 – 2018.

Table 3: Visual Organizational Analysis of the respective College of Education

Dean of the Missouri College							
Chair of Department One Faculty Adjunct Faculty	Chair of Department Two Faculty Adjunct Faculty	Chair of Department Three Faculty Adjunct Faculty	Chair of Department Four Faculty Adjunct Faculty	Chair of Department Five Faculty Adjunct Faculty	Chair of Department Six Faculty Adjunct Faculty	Chair of Department Seven Faculty Adjunct Faculty	Associate Dean of the College Accreditation Officer Director of Field and Clinical Experiences

Note: A Missouri University, 2018

Leadership Analysis

As the former Director of Field and Clinical Experiences, the researcher was the leader of several supervisors, whose job was to mentor the teacher candidates during their student teaching semester. It was the researcher's job, among other things, to mentor the supervisors, making sure they understood their roles and had the tools they needed to successfully assist the candidates. As a leader, the researcher was always looking for opportunities to make positive change. When the researcher began the position of Director of Field and Clinical Experiences, the researcher inherited a dysfunctional team of field supervisors. They had little direction or support from the university and showed signs of frustration. The researcher knew from experience, and Burns & DiPaola (2013) reiterated, the better you feel about your job, the more productive you will be. This group needed to feel valued. The researcher knew it was her job, as the leader, to reshape the climate of the team (Burns & DiPaola, 2013; Levi, 2014; Mintzberg, 1979/2005). To begin this process, the researcher made sure to listen to each supervisor. The first meeting the researcher had with the supervisors was a windstorm of heated questions, accusations, and confusion. It was quite eye opening. The researcher allowed herself to be seen as vulnerable

(Burns & DiPaola, 2013) in taking responsibility as the leader of the group for all of its dysfunction. She listened to each team member and physically took notes about their concerns. The researcher made sure to validate the supervisors' positions as the official evaluators and support for teacher candidates in their culminating field experience (Levi, 2014).

The next time the team met was much different. The researcher made sure to have an agenda that covered all of the concerns that were addressed at the previous meeting, focused on the positive changes that were taking place, asked for input for continued improvement, and gave everyone an opportunity for input (Janis, 2005; Bolman & Deal, 2013). As one of the main issues the supervisors had was feeling valued by the university—feeling like their voice and position was valued, The researcher made sure the team was able to reach consensus with each topic before moving on to the next (Levi, 2014). The researcher also made sure to reiterate that all of the changes taking place were happening because of their feedback and direction (Burns & DiPaola, 2013).

The supervisors willingly did twice the work, if not more, than what was expected of them, and based on their feedback, they were happier than they were before the researcher began the position. Should the supervisors recognize an issue with their teacher candidates and/or mentor teachers which they could not remedy, the researcher was alerted and would intervene. Several times each semester, student and/or mentor issues caused the researcher to have to physically enter a school to address a situation. There was a protocol followed in the *Student Teaching Handbook* (A Missouri University, 2018), to ensure all parties were fully represented in the debacle. First, the researcher looked at the student's past field mentor evaluations, journal entries, evaluation scores and feedback, work progress report, and any other evaluation materials the researcher had access to, including email and text messages. The researcher then discussed

the situation with the Chair of the Department representing the student as well as the Associate Dean. Next, the researcher contacted the university supervisor and scheduled a meeting at the school. The researcher would meet with the mentor, candidate, and supervisor separately and then together. Depending on the situation, the researcher would meet with the principal as well. Next, a decision needed to be made; this was dependent upon the situation. If the school personnel felt the candidate was harming the students in the classroom in any way, including the Pre-kindergarten thru high school (Pk-12) students falling behind in coursework because of the actions of the candidate, the candidate was removed from the placement, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Student Teaching Issues vs. Dismissals per Semester

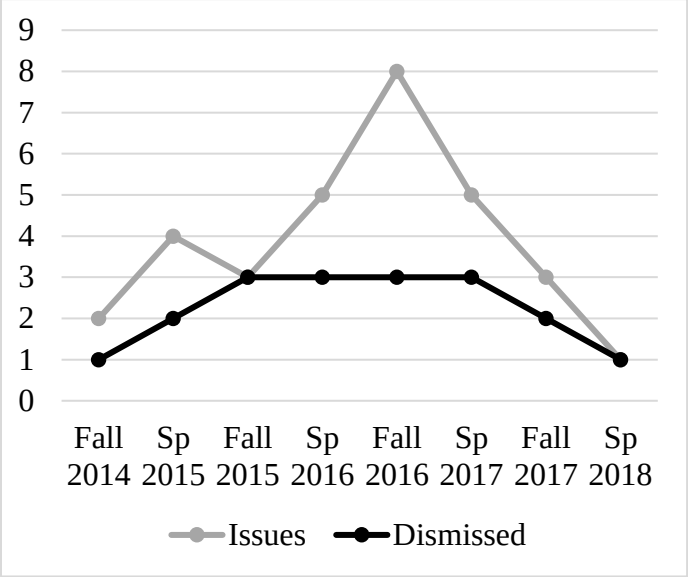
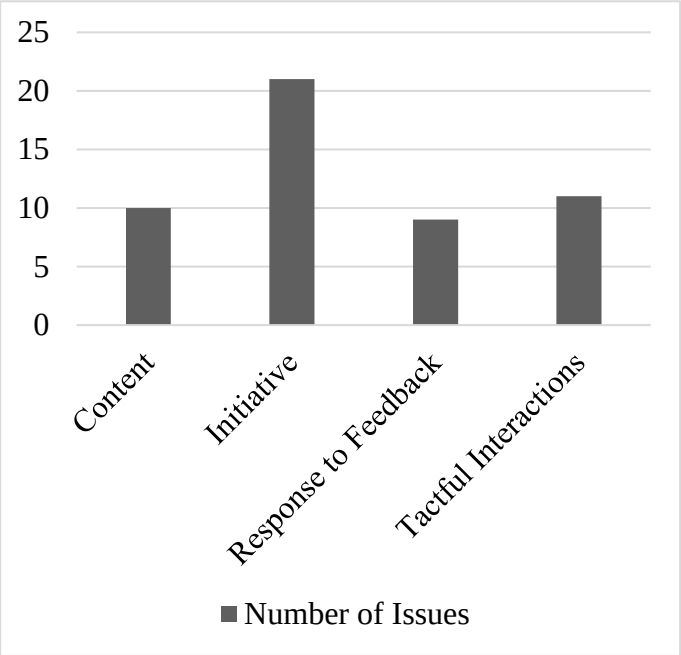


Figure 3: Total Issues disaggregated by Disposition



The majority of the candidates removed from their placements were due to workstyle issues, such as initiative, response to feedback, and tactful interactions, as shown in Figure 3 (Data collected from a Missouri Field and Clinical Office, 2014-2018). Understanding that the MEP was designed to compare the personality and workstyle beliefs and behaviors of teacher candidates with practicing teachers, out of curiosity, the researcher checked the MEP scores of the teacher candidates who had problems in one of these areas to see if the MEP predicted correctly. Anecdotally, it usually did.

The example of the teacher candidate, Molly, mentioned in Section One, is one such student whose MEP scores matched her teaching performance. Under the MEP indicator of Achievement is the indicator of Initiative. Molly received a MEP score of a one for this indicator indicating that she did not compare well with proficient practicing teachers in the area of initiative. Molly's classroom performance evaluations during student reflected this as well. However, individual analysis was only done out of curiosity for the small number of students

who were exhibiting trouble performing during the student teaching semester. The MEP scores of these teacher candidates were shown to be anecdotally correct. This was an informal study with a sample size too small to statistically analyze. However, it was enough to prompt the investigation for this study.

Implications for Research in the Practitioner Setting

The initial quantitative data was collected and assessed in a non-scientific manner to see if there was a set of work related personality traits the candidates possessed, as indicated on the candidates' MEP scores, which may have predicted professional success or failure in classroom performance. To be definitively answered, a scientific study of all the data was conducted. Should a correlation emerge from the data, this study has the potential to place more emphasis on the MEP outcomes; the TPP Dean, Chairs, and Faculty would have reason to pay close attention to the MEP scores and possibly create some changes of policy. Should the results of the study show no correlation, the TPP may want to reevaluate instituting an alternative workplace inventory such as the MEP upon entrance to the TPP.

Summary

If there is an instrument, such as a workplace inventory, which could accurately predict the likelihood of a candidate's teaching performance during student teaching practicum, the data from the instrument would be beneficial for teacher candidates, TPPs and school districts. Teacher candidates could use the data as guidance for improvement in the areas that needed refined, TPPs could use the data to assist the teacher candidates in their growth of soft skills or guide them toward a career that would fit the teacher candidate's workstyle. In this manner, the school districts could be less likely to have problems with teacher candidates during student teaching practicum. As the formal Director of Field and Clinical, the researcher would fully

support an instrument of this kind. If TPPs could counsel or redirect teacher candidates early in their teacher preparation, there could be less problems in the field, less burden on the Office of Field and Clinical, and the possibility of a lower first-year teacher turnover rate.

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Section Three: Scholarly Review for the Study

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Introduction

The following review was conducted to investigate concepts related to soft skills and how they relate to teaching practices: choice theory, teacher self-efficacy, effective teaching, teacher preparation, and workplace inventories. The review was conducted utilizing the terms soft skills in teacher education, choice theory, teacher self-efficacy, effective assessment, effective teaching, workplace inventories, and perception of preservice teacher preparation. Each of these terms pertain to the concept of soft skills in relation to teaching effectiveness. In addition, an earnest effort was conducted to ascertain any research on how soft skill assessments are viewed by hiring school districts. To search for literature sources, the two local libraries as well as the following search engines were utilized: Discover@MU, ERIC, and Google Scholar. The topics included in the review are teacher preparation program entrance examinations, choice theory and teacher effectiveness, and workstyle inventories in education.

Teacher Preparation Program Entrance Examinations

Teacher preparation has been in a constant state of scrutiny in the past decade (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Goldhaber & Cowan, 2014). There are several listed reasons for this in abundant educational research studies. The lack of college students choosing teaching as a career (Torres, 2012; Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, & Felser, 2010; Zhang & Zeller, 2016), the journey taken to become a teacher (Donaldson & Johnson, 2010; Goldhaber & Cowan, 2014; Zhang & Zeller, 2016), and the assessments necessary to enter and complete teacher education programs (Angrist & Guryan, 2007; Bastian, Henry, Pan, & Lys, 2016; Libman, 2009; Neumann, 2016) are some of the reasons for the attention. This research focuses

on two of the measures of assessment necessary for entry and completion of TPP in a regional Missouri university.

National trends in TPP include the use of multiple measures to ensure that prospective students are qualified to enter the teacher preparation programs and are well equipped to become highly-effective teachers when they graduate from the programs. Teacher preparation programs can use a combination of content- and performance-based evaluations (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Goldhaber & Cowan, 2014; Gitomer, Brown & Bonett, 2011; Libman, 2009). In their research on TPP, Henry, Kershaw, Zulli, and Smith (2012) discuss the difficulty states have in determining which evaluations truly measure teacher effectiveness. This difficulty is compounded as states are pushing for accountability according to federal mandates. To this end, Henry et al. (2012) recommended criteria to consider as states estimate effectiveness. These criteria include accuracy, fairness, transparency, and inclusiveness.

Studies have been conducted to determine if relationships exist between combinations of content- and performance-based requirements. Gitomer et al. (2011) hypothesized that basic skills tests required before students can enter a TPP have a "disparate impact for particular groups of individuals" (p. 431). They contend that content alone does not paint the full picture of the education candidates. Angrist and Guryan (2008) and Libman (2009) included this concern in their research about teacher licensing assessments. These authors discuss the idea that TPP selectivity does not determine teacher quality. Use of basic skills tests would certainly affect the criteria of inclusiveness and fairness (Henry et al., 2012). Stone (2012) discussed how the distributions are "at the heart of policy controversies" (p. 39). Despite efforts made to create assessments free from bias, the assessment world is still a far cry from having a biased free evaluation instrument. Personalities, personal strengths, should be a part of the equation.

Universities using skills tests as requirements to enter TPPs should consider equity (Yao, Pagnani, Thomas, Abellan-Pagnani, & Buchanan, 2017).

In addition to content and performance, disposition, about classroom performance should be analyzed (Thorton, 2013). Thorton states, "If teacher preparation has standards for and works to cultivate specific dispositions, it is important to investigate what happens to these dispositions once novice teachers enter the real world of the classroom" (p. 1). In the case of this study, how the dispositional comparisons on the novice teachers to the practicing teachers, by way of the MEP, compare to the real world student teaching practicum performance evaluations.

Looking for relationships between students' scores on the entrance and exit exams can help inform policy discussions when universities make evaluation decisions, keeping in mind all groups of individuals (Goldhaber & Cowan, 2014; Libman, 2009). TPPs in Missouri are aligned with the national trend among their TPPs and, as demonstrated in Figure 1, use multiple measures of evaluations. This study examined one of them, the Missouri Educator Profile.

Choice Theory and Teacher Effectiveness

Students learn best when they feel they have a positive relationship with their teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Hart & Hodsen, 2004; Suplicz, 2009; Thorton, 2013). Studies of student's perceptions of what makes a "good" or "bad" teacher overwhelmingly point to the dispositional behaviors of the teachers, as opposed to the content knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Herrmann, & Regner, 2015; Suplicz, 2009; Raufelder, Nitsche, Breitmeyer, Kebler,). In these studies, the researchers surveyed students to see how they perceive what made a teachers positive or negative. As the results all came back to disposition, or work-related personality criteria, such as a desire to meet the needs of the students and interpersonal skills,

Glasser's (1998) choice theory provides substantial information in the relationship between teacher disposition and the students' desire to learn.

Glasser (1998) theorizes that every decision, everything a person does, from getting up in the morning, every action taken throughout the day, to when and where sleep occurs, is an individual choice. All choices or actions are intrinsically motivated by, what Glasser identifies as five basic needs: survival, love/belonging, power, freedom, and fun. One may say, "I had to get up because I had to go to work. It wasn't a choice…." According to Glasser, getting up with the purpose of going to work is a choice. In order to survive in the current western civilization, money is a requirement. Money is needed to provide the basic essentials to survival like food, housing, clothing, and etc. While money "Can't buy me love" (The Beetles, 1964), it can provide a means of supporting love/belonging and fun by way of paying for outings with friends, family, and/or a significant other. The workplace, depending on the situation, may offer a since of belonging or power to the individual. If the individual chose to stay in bed rather than get up to go to work they were, essentially, choosing to deprive themselves of their basic needs. Like a positive magnetic force is naturally attracted and drawn to a negative magnetic force, people, according to Glasser (1998), are instinctively attracted and drawn to that which meet their basic needs (Blance, 2004; Wubbolding, 2015).

Glasser's choice theory is essential to learning motivation. No one can make a person do something. However, people can be influenced to act in a certain way. Teachers have the power to create learning environments which encourage or discourage students' desire to learn. Glasser states that the first essential need of all humans is that of survival. Feeling safe is a large component of the survival need. Sousa and Tomlinson (2018) back this statement through the educator lens when they state, "Students must feel physically safe and emotionally secure before

they can focus on the curriculum" (p. 20). Sousa and Tomlinson discuss at length the neurological reactions to learning in a safe verses unsafe environment. Student who do not feel safe create a chemical called cortisol that inhibits learning from taking place; this is a body's natural reaction to stressful situations, also known as "fight or flight". Contrarily, students who feel safe in their learning environment, safe from ridicule, physical safety, and safe to fail and try again, can stimulate their frontal lobe in the brain to allow for learning to occur. Hart and Hodson (2004) state that while physical safety in schools is important, it is rare to have a classroom in which children are not physically safe. They contest, and Sousa and Tomlinson (2018) agree, that emotional safety is the main concern, with seventy-five percent of students stating they have been bullied at school. Hart and Hodson (2004) contend that the bullying occurs because the students sense of hopelessness and frustration in the classroom, or their need of safety not being met. This lack of emotional safety causes the students choose to lash out at other students, which makes other students feel unsafe. It is a vicious cycle. Safety is the foundation to learning, and the safe classroom environment begins with the teacher and their ability to forge relationships (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Hart & Hodson, 2004; Sousa & Tomlinson, 2018).

The basis for effective classroom learning lies within the relationship between the teacher and student(s) (Csaszar, Curry, & Lastrapes, 2018; Glasser, 1986; Darling-Hammond, 2009; Palmer, 2017). Hart and Hodson (2004) describe the four relational interactions within the classroom: Teacher to self, teacher to student, student to student, and student to self and their learning process. While all four of the relational interactions are important, the first two are the focus in this paper. First, teachers must create lessons in which students enjoy, providing the teachers the intrinsic motivation to teach the lesson with enthusiasm. "…good teachers share

one trait: a strong sense of personal identity infused in their work" (Palmer, 2017, p. 11). If the lessons are teacher created, Glasser's (1998) identified needs of power and freedom, and possibly fun, could be met by the teachers, as they have the power and freedom to be creative in their lesson planning. Also, the need of love or belonging could be met by the teachers creating lessons they know the students will enjoy and appreciate. This leads to the teacher to student relationship. According to Palmer (2017), "…teachers possess the power to create conditions that can help students learn a great deal—or keep them from learning much at all. Teaching is the intentional act of creating those conditions" (p. 7). Hart and Hudson (2004) state that, "If [teachers] want [their] students to think for themselves, to be honest and authentic, [teachers] need to be reflective, honest, and authentic [themselves]" (p. 25). To build a meaningful relationship, effective teachers must make their students believe they are genuinely happy the students are in the classroom, they themselves are convinced the students can and will positively contribute to the class learning, and that they, overall, candidly care about the students (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Hart & Hudson, 2004; Henley, 2010). Building this type of classroom environment requires teachers who have the relational capability, empathy, and a strong work ethic.

Effective teachers are leaders in the classroom, not managers. Leadership qualities, according to Northouse (2016), flow directly in line with Glasser's (1998) choice theory. Northouse (2016) distinguished leaders as, "…motivating intrinsically, creative thinking, strategic planning, tolerance of ambiguity, and being able to read people…" whereas managers were distinguished by "rule orientation, short-term planning, motivating extrinsically, orderliness, safety concerns, and timeliness" (p. 15). Where management is needed, leadership in the classroom is the key to motivating students to learn (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Glasser,

1998; Naderi, Baezzat, & Motaghedifard, 2015). Relationships are built on trust and respect (Glasser, 1998; Henley, 2010; Naderi, Baezzat, & Motaghedifard, 2015; Northouse, 2016); leaders are those who are motivated and able to create the essential relationships in the classrooms. Naderi, Baezzat, and Motaghedifard (2015) state that classroom leaders rely on

> cooperation, not authority, encouragement, not punishment. Relationships are based on trust and respect. He/she says, "We," not "I. Allows for quality decision-making on the part of the students with a definite positive effect on the creativity of the students (p. 43).

The effective teacher creates a classroom which fully embraces Glasser's (1998) five attributes of human needs: survival, love/belonging, power, freedom, and fun.

Workstyle Inventory and Education

Teacher preparation programs (TPP) desire to use assessment measures which are valid and reliable; assessments that produce outcomes which can provide information to help guide students in their pursuit of a teaching degree (Brabeck, Dwyer, Geisinger, Marx, Noell. Pianta, Subotnik, & Worrell, 2016). Of the five entrance examinations students must have taken between 2013 and 2018 to gain entrance into a Missouri TPP, the workplace inventory is different from all other entrance assessments. While four of the assessments focused on content knowledge, the workplace inventory considered the work-related personality traits of the students and how they compared to practicing teachers. In theory, students who scored similarly to the normed practicing teachers on the workplace inventory would also be able to exhibit summative student teaching performance evaluation competence when teaching in the classroom. However, there is no evidence this is true as the first group of students who took the workplace inventory in 2013 recently completed their culminating student teaching experience.

If TPP's require students to take an assessment, it is worth investigating to ensure it, in fact, is a valid and reliable instrument which has the desired outcome it was designed for.

The overriding problem concerning the workplace inventory, in this case, the MEP, is the lack of research regarding the impact in teaching performance. Pearson, the testing company who created and implements the assessment, which is still available today as an option for colleges to adopt, tested the validity of the MEP with several occupations. Two examples of these include nursing and business directors. Teaching was not among the occupations tested for validity, according to the Technical Manual (Pearson, 2013; Yao, Pagnani, Thomas, Abellan-Pagnani, & Buchanan, 2017). The Technical Manual discusses the premise in which the MEP should validly show how potential employee personalities relate to highly-effective employees within the same line of business. While the Technical Manual (Pearson, 2013) shows data of how this instrument has been successful in several business occupations, it does not show a relation to college students and highly-effective practicing teachers.

According to Missouri's Department of Secondary and Elementary Education (DESE) (G. Hairston, personal communication, April 14, 2017), the MEP was normed to highly-effective practicing teachers from school districts within a Missouri state. However, while a norming process took place, the assessment was only mandated between 2013 and 2018. To date, no data exists as to the validity of the instrument's ability to effectively predict the classroom effectiveness of those entering a Missouri teacher preparation program and how they performed in the classroom.

As stated before, for a student to enter a Missouri TPP between 2013 and 2018, they must have completed a battery of assessments which included a workstyle inventory. A workplace inventory is a measure of work-related traits and how they compare to practicing educators. The

use of comparative workstyle personality measures in teacher preparation is not a novel idea, but there has been a comeback in recent years (Decker & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008). The renewed interest in workstyle personality could be the current shortage of teachers and the need to fill the vacancies, which could lead TPPs to look for candidates teachers, if connection exists between personality and effective teacher performance (Decker & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008; Rushton, Morgan, & Richard, 2007; Wiens & Ruday, 2014). Komarraju, Karau, & Schmeck (2009) discussed the support for the importance of personality when analyzing motivation and achievement in academic endeavors, but this retorts to the research discussions of academic skills being predictors of effective teaching (Gitomer et al., 2011; Henry, Campbell, Thompson, Patricia, Luterbach, Lys, & Covington, 2013; Henry et al., 2012). Because Missouri used a workstyle inventory, this research examined the theories surrounding work-related personality traits and how they related to teacher performance.

For several decades, the use of workstyle inventories, as means to determine employee quality, was dismissed by academics. The reason for this perception was due to the lack of valid and reliable data concerning the predictability of personality assessment and workplace performance (Donovan & Hurtz, 2001; Barrick & Mount, 1991). However, in the early 1990s, new research from Barrick and Mount claimed there were five distinct personality traits which could be identified and used to compare personality to job performance (1991, 2013). Their Five Factor model was developed as:

> A new integrative theory that explicates the way specific personality traits lead to personal agendas that in turn interacts with specific job characteristics to jointly influence the experienced meaningfulness at

> work, which serves as the key driver of employee motivated behaviors (Barrick, Mount & Li, 2013, pp. 31).

The Five-Factor theory is one of the essential components in personality assessments such as the Workplace Personality Inventory (MEP) assessment, developed by the Pearson Education Corporation (Pearson, 2013). The MEP assesses the work-related personality traits of individuals based on six categories which make up a teacher candidate's' workstyle (Pearson, 2013). The Pearson Testing Company, in conjunction with Missouri's DESE, normed the MEP (at the time, known as the WP003) with over 900 practicing teachers whom DESE determined to be high performing. The qualifications included: Missouri teachers of the year nominees, Missouri Select Teachers as Regional Resources (STARR) Teachers, Missouri National Board Certified teachers, as well as those who worked in the top 25% schools whose students were accelerating on the state standardized tests (Memo from Missouri's DESE, personal communication, April 14, 2017). According to the Technical Manual, this is the same model utilized when the WPI-II was normed with other professions (Talentlens, 2013). However, while the other professions in the manual were researched after the norming process, this has not yet occurred with the MEP.

Once the MEP was completed, teacher candidates received an eleven-page document with the first six pages describing how the candidates scored compared to the normed group. Scores are between one and ten for each personality trait or indicator, with ten being the highest score. Not only did the MEP inform the teacher candidates of their work-related personality traits, but it also provided the student and their institution a comparison of how their workplace personality compared to the practicing teachers deemed effective by Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE, 2013).

Whereas the MEP scores teacher candidates' work-related personality traits, the MEES evaluates the candidate's summative performance. The candidate's performance summative is scored by their university supervisor and mentor teacher during student teaching practicum, before graduation from the TPP. A standardized rubric is utilized to generate the performance scores. The rubric measures the candidates' performance on a scale of zero to three with a zero being the least desirable score.

The MEP was designed to show if the work-related personality traits of the test taker matched the work-related personality traits of those who are proficient in a particular profession (DESE, 2013). Theoretically, students who score similarly to the high performing teachers who normed the assessment should receive high-performance scores on the MEES instrument. For example, one of the descriptors under the MEP indicator of Achievement is initiative, which considers the candidate's drive for "taking on new or additional work responsibilities and challenges" (Pearson, 2013). This aligns with MEES indicator 9.1, "Induction and Collegial Activities" as this standard demonstrates the expectation of the teacher candidate to take initiative to, "Actively engage in relationship building efforts in the school, district and community and contribute and share knowledge and expertise in order to assist in the collective improvement of professional practice" (DESE, 2013, pp. 80). Presuming the two instruments are valid, a student who has a MEP score in the Achievement category similar to the normed group should score high on the MEES form, 9.1.\

Summary

Teacher preparation programs want those graduating with teaching degrees to be impactful and effective teachers. Does personality play a role in teaching effectiveness? Many scholars believe so (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Glasser, 1998; Hart & Hodsen, 2004; Palmer, 2017; Sousa & Tomlinson, 2017; Suplicz, 2009; Thorton, 2013) and have embraced Glasser's (1998) choice theory as a means of creating a positive classroom environment in which learning takes place when the basic needs of survival, love/belonging, power, freedom, and fun are met. However, not all teacher personalities are the same. There are some personality types that are better equipped to meet these essential student and classroom needs. One way to find these personality indicators is through workplace assessments. One such workstyle inventory, the MEP, was adopted and mandated in Missouri between 2013 and 2018.

Looking for relationships between teacher candidates' scores on the entrance and exit exams can help inform policy discussions when universities make evaluation decisions (Goldhaber & Cowan, 2014; Libman, 2009). The MEP draws upon the work of Barrick and Mount (1991) to assess teacher candidate work-related personality traits and compare them to experienced educators. The MEES provides an assessment of teacher candidates work performance scored by experienced educators. Therefore, it is plausible to explore the relationship between the students' scores on the two exams. The Five Factor theory assumes that the closer to the normed score a candidate receives on the MEP, the more likely the candidate is to experience meaningfulness and motivation in the work environment. This relationship should result in a higher MEES score, suggesting that a workplace inventory, such as the MEP, is a predictor of a candidate's classroom performance. Given the vast research on work-related personality traits, the impact on professions in general, and the TPPs desire to improve teacher

education with assessments which are valid and reliable, it is worth investigating the workplace inventory and it is predictiveness to teacher candidate classroom performance.

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Section Four: Contribution to Practice

A White Paper

To MEP or not to MEP: What does the data suggest?

To MEP or not to MEP: What does the data suggest?

Introduction

In 2013, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in Missouri required students seeking a degree in Teacher Preparation Programs (TPP) to take a series of assessments, one of which was a workplace inventory (DESE, 2013). The workplace inventory utilized from 2013-2018 was the Missouri Educator Profile (MEP).

According to the Pearson Company (2014), the workplace inventory requirement encouraged "self-awareness and development (p. 2)" of the teacher candidates. The assessment was normed by approximately 900 practicing teachers DESE considered to be highly qualified (Missouri DESE representative, personal communication, April 14, 2017). In theory, teacher candidates who scored comparably to these practicing teachers would perform similarly in the classroom. It remains unclear if the MEP predicts teacher candidate performance in the classroom.

In 2018, the Assistant Commissioner at DESE in Missouri, released a memo stating that:

> The Missouri Educator Profile [MEP] will no longer be required as of June 1, 2018. The Department highly recommends a disposition tool be in place in each Educator Preparation Program (EPP). Information regarding EPP created disposition tools will be available on the DESE Educator Preparation website. DESE discontinued the mandate of using the particular instrument, the MEP, for the following reason:
>
> 1. The Missouri Standards for the Preparation of Educators, Standard 2.A. states, "Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) may establish their own valid and reliable assessment tools that provide additional measure(s) of

> the growth and development of their candidates." This standard allows for other disposition assessments to be used by EPPs. (p. 1)

DESE further stated, "EPPs also have the option of contracting with the Pearson Company if they wish to continue to use the MEP" (Missouri DESE representative, personal communication, July 5, 2018). While the MEP is no longer required, it is highly recommended that EPPs continue to utilize it or an instrument similar in nature.

A workplace inventory was required by the state for teacher candidates in Missouri for a five-year period with no data to show if it was predictive of teacher candidate performance at practicum. Although the state no longer requires students entering TPPs to take the MEP, the assessment remains an option. Several TPPs are requiring their students to take the MEP as a part of their entrance examinations. This study will analyze the workplace inventory, which was implemented between 2013 and 2018, the MEP, and its predictability of teacher candidates at practicum.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are:

RQ1: Do educators in Missouri find the attributes identified in Glasser's (1998) choice theory valuable in classroom teachers?

b) Do Missouri classroom teachers value soft skills over hard skills in peer classroom teachers?

RQ2: Can a workplace personality inventory be used to predict effectiveness in student teaching practicum as measured by the MEES?

RQ3: Are MEP indicators predictive of teacher candidate performance in student teaching practicum as measured by the MEES?

a) Does the MEP *Achievement* (1) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?

- Null Hypothesis: The MEP *Achievement* (1) has no predictability of MEES indicators.

b) Does the MEP *Social Influence* (2) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?
   - Null Hypothesis: The MEP *Social Influence* (2) has no predictability of MEES indicators.

c) Does the MEP *Interpersonal* (3) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?
   - Null Hypothesis: The MEP *Interpersonal* (3) has no predictability of MEES indicators.

d) Does the MEP *Self Adjustment* (4) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?
   - Null Hypothesis: The MEP *Self Adjustment* (4) has no predictability of MEES indicators.

e) Does the MEP *Conscientiousness* (5) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?
   - Null Hypothesis: The MEP *Conscientiousness* (5) has no predictability of MEES indicators.

f) Does the MEP *Practical Intelligence* (6) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?
   - Null Hypothesis: The MEP *Practical Intelligence* (6) has no predictability of MEES indicators.

These questions are framed by Glasser's (1998) choice theory, an educational framework that has grown over time which considered how teacher personalities influence student interest in learning. This study will explore if Glasser's (1998) choice theory aligns with regional Missouri educators' ideals of teacher impact. In addition, the study will consider if scores on one type of instrument, the MEP, which rates the types of skills discussed in Glasser's (1998) choice theory,

are a predictor of the effectiveness of teacher candidates' classroom teaching performance at practicum, as measured by scores from the MEES.

Methods of Research

Qualitative Study Results

A mixed methods approach was taken for this study. This first section will focus on the qualitative aspect of the research. According to Yamey (2017), "Qualitative research … seeks to understand a given research problem from the perspective of the local population it involves" (p.10). Interviews were conducted to decipher if educators from Missouri's southern region were on the same page theoretically as those who follow Glasser's (1998) choice theory. A convenience sample of educators with a variety of focused expertise was chosen: an elementary teacher in a small rural community with twenty-two years' teaching experience, an elementary teacher from a large urban community with six years' experience, a special education teacher from a mid-sized suburban community with six years' experience, a secondary teacher from a mid-sized suburban community with eleven years' experience, a deputy superintendent from a mid-sized suburban community with sixteen years' experience, and two student teacher supervisors from the regional university who have a total of fifty-one years' experience in education. The researcher is an educator in the region with multiple contacts due to the professional position held as Director of field and Clinical at the local university from 2013-2018. Face-to face semi-structured interviews were conducted.

The study consisted of a convenience sample of seven educators from Missouri. Educators were recruited through convenience. The researcher contacted each of the interviewees by phone to set up interview sessions. When contemplating the sample, diversity in

teaching position, such as elementary, secondary, and special education, and community size warranted consideration. It was important to interview teachers from many professional education perspectives in order to truly grasp overarching views to the interview questions. The researcher chose to interview representatives from urban, rural, and suburban school districts, representatives from elementary, special, and secondary education, as well as a school district central office representative and two university teacher candidate supervisors. The names of the interviewees and their school districts have been removed from this paper. Each interviewee was labeled and referred to as Educators One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Six, and Seven.

A relaxed, unstressed mind is better equipped to respond to questions (Sousa & Tomlinson, 2011). In an effort to keep the climate casual to allow the interviewee to relax while answering the questions, the researcher did not take notes during the actual interview; each interview was recorded on the researcher's iPad with a sound recording app. See Appendix A for a list of the interview questions.

Teaching is much more than sharing content, it encompasses organization, collaboration, empathy, creativity, and knowledge of child development (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Glasser, 1998; Sousa & Tomlinson, 2011). By asking the first four questions, the interviewees had an opportunity to consider the complex intermingling's of the teaching profession prior to answering the main question of this qualitative portion of research: What do you believe are the most valuable attributes for classroom teachers to possess?

The data was transcribed and saved to a secure office computer. With the transcriptions complete, the researcher, focusing on one question at a time, looked for themes within the transcriptions by identifying common words or phrases. This process was completed three times

on three different days by the researcher to endure a constant comparison rigor of the identified themes. These recorded themes can be viewed in Appendix B.

A manuscript for approval was submitted and approved prior to the investigation to an Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure that the analysis and reporting of the interview data did not infringe on the ethical rights of the participants from this study. In addition, each interviewee was given a pseudonym and all possible personal and school district identifiers were removed from the data. To ensure the participants were not in distress during the interviews, each participant chose the location of the interview, and the researcher abstained from taking physical notes during the interview, making the interview more like a conversation. Each participant signed a form of consent, as seen in Appendix A.

Qualitative Findings

Many educational researchers contend the foundation of classroom learning can be found in the relational, or soft skills, of the classroom teacher with his/her students (Blance, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Glasser, 1998; Hart & Hodsen, 2004; Wubbolding, 2015). Glasser (1998) argues that, while one person cannot force another person to make a particular choice, it is possible for one person to create a scenario which can persuade another to choose a certain behavior.

In the instance of this study, the behavior discussed is student learning as related to teacher influence. Teachers cannot force students to learn content, try as they may. However, by meeting the students' basic needs within the classroom, such as positive relationships, or love/belonging, as Glasser (1998) describes, the students could be drawn to learn; the teacher has the power to create an environment in which students desire to learn (Hart & Hodsen, 2004).

However, for teachers to be able to create a secure positive learning environment for the students, their needs must be met as well (Waterford, 2019).

Survival is the first of Glasser's (1998) list of basic human needs. The answers to the first interview question, what was your greatest challenge your first three years of teaching, mainly focused on survival; learning the curriculum of content, to be exact. If a teacher is going to teach certain content, they must first know that content themselves (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). For example, a teacher cannot assist children learning personification if the teacher does not know his/herself what personification is and how/why it is used. Hand-in-hand with understanding the curriculum, in order for teachers to "survive" in the classroom, they must have a secure foundation of classroom management (Sayeski & Brown, 2014). The participants would mention classroom management as a challenge their first few years of teaching, and that is not surprising. Sayeski and Brown (2014) discuss, effective classroom management is a skill that takes time to develop.

Teacher collaboration with fellow teachers within the building/district is a mainstay in education today (Ronfeldt, Farmer, McQueen, & Grissom, 2015). It was community building which led to the second and third questions in the interviews. When choosing a teaching partner, the interviewees expressed a need for trust, creativity, and the ability to share materials and ideas. In official collaboration meetings, the participants uniformly agreed for the meetings to be organized and for each collaborator to have a strong mutual respect for each member in the group. Each of the skills mentioned by the interviewees, such as the ability to actively listen and present a positive tone, could be considered "soft skills". When collaborating, or sharing thoughts and ideas, participants identified their desire for their own basic needs, according to

Glasser's (1998) choice theory, to be met. The need for trust and sharing, or as noted in choice theory, belonging, was repeated several times throughout the interviews.

When asking the participants about their favorite teacher and the attributes that made them the favorite, all but one used the word "fun". Fun is another soft skill. Educator Five's response was the most interesting. She said that this particular question was one they always ask potential teachers in their district's hiring procedures. When asked why, she stated that,

> Sometimes it's to find out why they became a teacher. Other than to hear them say, 'I love it when you see the light bulb come on' ...or... 'I like kids'. [These] may be...reasons, but... not the only reason(s) you became a teacher, right?" She continued, "You do need to have some significant content knowledge to teach,…[but] I can't teach somebody how to truly have relationships with kids. ...that is where that question came from. We ask a lot more relationship questions now than we used to. We used to say, 'Describe your classroom management style.' Well that didn't tell us anything. We'd get the theoretically based pedagogy answers."

She said she is looking for interviewees to answer that they "truly want to make that classroom special for every kid sitting in that room; ... people who can just momma kids into behaving." It was interesting hearing a person who has interviewed hundreds of teachers talk mainly about the need to hire people who are relationally rather than content strong. In her interview, she mentioned the word "content" six times while "personality" was mentioned eight times and "relationship with [students/peers]" was referred to ten times. In addition, when "content" was used, it was used as a side note, or that of less importance than "relationship" or

"personality". This education professional, based on the interview, seems to place more value in hiring teachers who have the soft skills necessary to meet student basic needs, than core content knowledge.

In response to the final question, what do you believe are the most valuable attributes for classroom teachers to possess, the interviewees communicated that passion, empathy, flexibility, and personality are the most important attributes for teachers to possess in the classroom; all of which flow in line with Glasser's (1998) choice theory. Fundamentally, choice theory in education means that if educators create a classroom climate that meets the basic needs of the students, those students are going to want to be there and participate in the learning process; not because of the subject matter, but because of the relationships within the room. The following are quotes from each interviewee pertaining to this final question:

- An effective classroom is like "…a family." (Educator One)
- An effective teacher is "…able to adapt to every child's needs." (Educator Two)
- Effective teachers are "flexible and passionate." (Educator Three)
- Effective teachers should be able "…to be empathetic to [students] you are working with [and] the situations you are given." (Educator Four)
- "Personality is like the …complex web holding education together." (Educator Five)
- Effective teachers "…are passionate about the students in [their] classroom." (Educator Seven)

Educator Six described in depth one teacher candidate he considered to be the best teacher he has witnessed in all his years in education. The attribute that made this particular teacher candidate excellent was, according to Educator Six, his ability to relate to the students.

Educator Six explained with enthusiasm how students, parents, administrators, and other teachers in the building would contact him to discuss their admiration of this teacher candidate; they would share stories of how the teacher candidate would go out of his way to make sure the students felt a sense of belonging and ownership of the lessons. During the interview, Educator Six said of this teacher candidate that

> …every class he called himself the lead scientist and all the students in the class were the scientists and everything he did was arranged that way. It was one of the greatest things. Parents were asking for him to be their kids' teacher and, he was great! …Oh! As good as I've seen.

The teacher candidate was able to make an impact with the students in his classroom, creating a safe and fun classroom environment in which the students felt a sense of power, freedom, and belonging; all of which fall into line with Glasser's (1998) choice theory. The exceptional classroom climate, built through powerful relationships, was so pungent, other teachers, administrators, students, and parents were contacting Educator Six to tell him how wonderful the teacher candidate was and how they want that teacher candidate to be their children's official teacher. Built on a foundation of relationship, this particular teacher candidate was able to make his students excited to learn the necessary content, because of his particular soft skills he brought into his classroom.

Quantitative Study Results

The research centered on possible predictability of performance between the MEP and MEES data during practicum, quantitative data analysis was conducted utilizing a regression analysis. The MEP data is ordinal with a range of zero to ten based upon percentile ranks. However, according to the MEP's Technical Manual (Pearson, 2013), scores of a nine or ten

should be considered with caution as they "suggest overly positive self-representation" (38). the Pearson Company (2013) advises that scores above the ninetieth percentile should be disregarded because, at that point, the instrument loses its usefulness. Therefore, those scores were removed from the data, leaving eight as the highest score and zero the lowest.

The performance evaluation, MEES, is also ordinal with a range of zero to four. While mentor teachers and university supervisors each provided summative data for the teacher candidates, this study only utilized the scores of the university supervisors as they completed interrater reliability scoring expectations for the instrument (A Missouri University, 2017). This training took place each semester and was mandatory for university supervisors but simply suggested for mentor teachers. As mentor teachers are employees of the school districts, the university could not mandate this training, only suggest. The training included supervisors, in an in-person meeting environment, watching a video of a teacher candidate teaching a lesson and using the instrument, the MEES, to rate that candidate's teaching effectiveness. The supervisors would share how they scored the teacher candidate with justification from the scoring rubric. This practice was repeated three or four times, each time evoking discussion of expectation and interpretation of the rubric. Given the justification for utilizing the scores from the MEES and MEP, the scores for each of the instruments were compared for a total of ninety-six points of analysis to discover if the MEP indicators predicted student performance in their practicum experience.

The researcher collected MEES and MEP scores from a database within the institution in which the study took place. Student names were not used in the study. Student identification numbers were used to pair the two assessment results. The data for the study was collected over a five-year period, 2013 – 2018.

A multiple regression analysis was then used to analyze the data. The MEP data was the independent variable, as the research is looking to see if the MEP is predictive of teacher candidate performance at practicum, via the MEES scores.

Quantitative Findings

Tables 4-9 illustrate the results of the multiple regression data analysis conducted for each MEP standard. Tables 4 and 7 show the MEP indicators of Achievement and Self Adjustment had a total of three points of significance. Tables 5, 6, 8, and 9 show no points of significance when regressed with the data from each of the MEES indicators. To gain a better view of the significant values from the data (the p-values), a crosswalk between the two instruments, the MEES and MEP was created.

Table 4:RQ3(a): Does the MEP Achievement (1) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?

	Coefficients	*Standard Error*	*t Stat*	*P-value*
Intercept	4.26	0.54	7.84	1.51
1.1 MEES	-0.29	0.36	-0.81	0.41
1.2 MEES	-0.17	0.35	-0.50	0.61
2.4 MEES	-0.63	0.38	-1.63	0.10
3.1 MEES	-0.14	0.35	-0.41	0.68
3.2 MEES	0.83	0.37	2.25	**0.02***
4.1 MEES	0.27	0.34	0.78	0.43
5.1 MEES	0.07	0.33	0.23	0.81
5.2 MEES	-0.35	0.35	-0.99	0.31
5.3MEES	0.31	0.44	0.69	0.48
6.1 MEES	0.56	0.36	1.54	0.12
7.1 MEES	0.03	0.39	0.08	0.93
7.2 MEES	-0.24	0.43	-0.57	0.56
7.5 MEES	-0.09	0.37	-0.24	0.80
8.1 MEES	0.26	0.42	0.61	0.53
9.1 MEES	0.01	0.42	0.04	0.96
9.2 MEES	0.02	0.47	0.05	0.95

Note. N = 254. * Significant at the $p<0.05$ level.

At a 0.05 statistical confidence level, significance was shown in MEP standard 1, Achievement and MEES indicator 3.2, Lessons for Diverse Learners. No other points of significance emerged from the statistical analysis for MEP standard 1.

Table 5: RQ3 (b): Does the MEP Social Influence (2) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?

	Coefficients	*Standard Error*	*t Stat*	*P-value*
Intercept	4.58	0.58	7.87	1.37
1.1 MEES	0.18	0.37	0.50	0.61
1.2 MEES	0.30	0.36	0.82	0.40
2.4 MEES	-0.52	0.40	-1.29	0.19
3.1 MEES	-0.31	0.36	-0.87	0.38
3.2 MEES	0.44	0.40	1.09	0.27
4.1 MEES	-0.004	0.35	-0.01	0.99
5.1 MEES	0.62	0.33	1.85	0.06
5.2 MEES	-0.60	0.35	-1.70	0.08
5.3MEES	-0.26	0.44	-0.60	0.54
6.1 MEES	0.59	0.37	1.58	0.11
7.1 MEES	0.19	0.41	0.48	0.62
7.2 MEES	0.60	0.44	1.36	0.17
7.5 MEES	-0.51	0.39	-1.28	0.19
8.1 MEES	0.01	0.41	0.04	0.96
9.1 MEES	0.35	0.41	0.84	0.39
9.2 MEES	-0.69	0.47	-1.45	0.14

Note. $N = 244$. Significant at the $p<0.05$ level.

At a 0.05 statistical confidence level, significance was not shown between MEP standard 2, Social Influence, and any of the MEES indicators. No points of significance emerged from the statistical analysis for MEP standard 2, thus indicating the null hypothesis was accepted.

Table 6: RQ3(c): Does the MEP Interpersonal (3) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?

	Coefficients	*Standard Error*	*t Stat*	*P-value*
Intercept	6.54	0.46	14.12	8.48
1.1 MEES	-0.35	0.32	-1.07	0.28
1.2 MEES	0.12	0.30	0.39	0.69
2.4 MEES	-0.39	0.33	-1.17	0.24
3.1 MEES	-0.31	0.29	-1.07	0.28
3.2 MEES	0.14	0.31	0.44	0.65
4.1 MEES	0.20	0.29	0.68	0.49
5.1 MEES	0.17	0.28	0.61	0.54
5.2 MEES	-0.17	0.30	-0.57	0.56
5.3MEES	-0.46	0.40	-1.15	0.25
6.1 MEES	0.53	0.30	1.73	0.08
7.1 MEES	0.06	0.34	0.18	0.84
7.2 MEES	-0.36	0.37	-0.97	0.33
7.5 MEES	-0.51	0.34	-1.49	0.13
8.1 MEES	0.46	0.39	1.19	0.23
9.1 MEES	0.41	0.36	1.11	0.26
9.2 MEES	0.27	0.43	0.62	0.52

Note. $N = 240$. Significant at the $p<0.05$ level.

At a 0.05 statistical confidence level, significance was not shown in MEP standard 3, Interpersonal, and any of the MEES indicators. No points of significance emerged from the statistical analysis for MEP standard 3, thus indicating the null hypothesis was accepted.

Table 7: RQ3(d): Does the MEP Self Adjustment (4) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?

	Coefficients	*Standard Error*	*t Stat*	*P-value*
Intercept	5.385656	0.54	9.82	3.03
1.1 MEES	0.42	0.39	1.06	0.28
1.2 MEES	0.51	0.38	1.33	0.18
2.4 MEES	-0.71	0.42	-1.67	0.09
3.1 MEES	-0.70	0.37	-1.90	**0.05***
3.2 MEES	0.03	0.41	0.09	0.92
4.1 MEES	0.04	0.37	0.12	0.89
5.1 MEES	0.43	0.35	1.22	0.22
5.2 MEES	0.02	0.36	0.06	0.94
5.3MEES	0.02	0.46	0.04	0.96
6.1 MEES	0.03	0.38	0.09	0.92
7.1 MEES	-1.03	0.44	-2.32	**0.02***
7.2 MEES	0.52	0.49	1.07	0.28
7.5 MEES	0.31	0.42	0.74	0.45
8.1 MEES	0.07	0.44	0.17	0.86
9.1 MEES	0.29	0.45	0.64	0.51
9.2 MEES	-0.21	0.49	-0.43	0.66

Note. $N = 246$. * Significant at the $p<0.05$ level.

At a 0.05 statistical confidence level, significance was shown in MEP standard 4, Self-Adjustment and MEES indicators 3.1, Implementation of Curriculum standards, and 7.1, Effective Use of Assessments. No other points of significance emerged from the statistical analysis for MEP standard 4. Of the six MEP standards, standard 4, Self-Adjustment, showed the most significance with thirteen percent, or two of the sixteen points of data analysis, emerging as significant.

Table 8: RQ3(e): Does the MEP Conscientiousness (5) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?

	Coefficients	*Standard Error*	*t Stat*	*P-value*
Intercept	4.72	0.55	8.45	3.38
1.1 MEES	0.13	0.39	0.34	0.72
1.2 MEES	-0.43	0.36	-1.17	0.24
2.4 MEES	0.37	0.42	0.87	0.37
3.1 MEES	0.07	0.36	0.19	0.84
3.2 MEES	0.07	0.39	0.18	0.85
4.1 MEES	0.16	0.35	0.46	0.64
5.1 MEES	0.15	0.35	0.44	0.65
5.2 MEES	-0.64	0.36	-1.79	0.07
5.3MEES	0.12	0.45	0.28	0.77
6.1 MEES	0.43	0.38	1.15	0.25
7.1 MEES	-0.14	0.41	-0.35	0.72
7.2 MEES	-0.22	0.45	-0.48	0.62
7.5 MEES	0.25	0.40	0.63	0.52
8.1 MEES	-0.17	0.44	-0.38	0.70
9.1 MEES	-0.40	0.46	-0.86	0.38
9.2 MEES	0.57	0.50	1.13	0.25

Note. N = 245. Significant at the $p<0.05$ level.

At a 0.05 statistical confidence level, significance was not shown in MEP standard 5, Conscientiousness, and any of the MEES indicators. No points of significance emerged from the statistical analysis for MEP standard 5, thus indicating the null hypothesis was accepted.

Table 9: RQ3(f): Does the MEP Practical Intelligence (6) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?

	Coefficients	*Standard Error*	*t Stat*	*P-value*
Intercept	5.29	0.46	11.30	2.85
1.1 MEES	0.33	0.34	0.99	0.32
1.2 MEES	-0.53	0.33	-1.57	0.11
2.4 MEES	-0.44	0.36	-1.20	0.22
3.1 MEES	-0.24	0.32	-0.74	0.45
3.2 MEES	0.57	0.34	1.68	0.09
4.1 MEES	-0.08	0.32	-0.26	0.79
5.1 MEES	0.02	0.31	0.08	0.93
5.2 MEES	-0.20	0.32	-0.63	0.52
5.3MEES	-0.03	0.41	-0.08	0.93
6.1 MEES	0.36	0.33	1.08	0.27
7.1 MEES	-0.16	0.37	-0.44	0.65
7.2 MEES	0.21	0.41	0.52	0.59
7.5 MEES	-0.32	0.36	-0.89	0.37
8.1 MEES	0.10	0.39	0.27	0.78
9.1 MEES	0.54	0.38	1.39	0.16
9.2 MEES	-0.26	0.44	-0.59	0.55

Note. N = 270. Significant at the $p<0.05$ level.

At a 0.05 statistical confidence level, significance was not shown in MEP standard 6, Practical Intelligence, and any of the MEES indicators. No points of significance emerged from the statistical analysis for MEP standard 6, thus indicating the null hypothesis was accepted.

Table 10: Crosswalk for the statistical significance (p-values) between the MEP and MEES scores as determined through regression analysis.

MEP: Horizontal MEES: Vertical	Achievement	Social Influence	Inter-personal	Self-Adjustment	Consciousness	Practical Intelligence
1.1Content knowledge and academic language	0.41	1.37	0.28	0.28	0.72	0.32
1.2 Student engagement in subject matter	0.61	0.61	0.69	0.18	0.24	0.11
2.4 Differentiated lesson design	0.10	0.40	0.24	0.09	0.37	0.22
3.1 Implementation of curriculum standards	0.68	0.19	0.28	**0.05***	0.84	0.45
3.2 Lessons for diverse learners	**0.02***	0.38	0.65	0.92	0.85	0.09
4.1 Student engagement in critical thinking	0.43	0.27	0.49	0.89	0.64	0.79
5.1 Classroom management techniques	0.81	0.99	0.54	0.22	0.65	0.93
5.2 Management of time, space, transitions, and activities	0.31	0.065	0.56	0.94	0.073	0.52
5.3 Classroom, school & community culture	0.48	0.08	0.25	0.96	0.77	0.93
6.1 Verbal, nonverbal communication	0.12	0.54	0.08	0.92	0.25	0.27
7.1 Effective use of assessments	0.93	0.11	0.84	**0.02***	0.72	0.65
7.2 Assessment data to improve learning	0.56	0.62	0.33	0.28	0.62	0.59

7.5 Communication of student progress and maintaining records	0.80	0.17	0.13	0.45	0.52	0.37
8.1 Self-assessment & improvement	0.53	0.19	0.23	0.86	0.70	0.78
9.1 Induction & collegial activities	0.96	0.96	0.26	0.51	0.38	0.16
9.2 Cooperative Partnerships in Support of Student Learning	0.95	0.39	0.52	0.66	0.25	0.55

Note. * Significant at the $p<0.05$ level.

Discussion

Palmer (2017), when asking students from around the country to describe the components of a good teacher, synthesized the responses as:

> People who have some sort of connective capacity, who connect themselves to their students, their students to each other, and everyone to the subject being studied…The connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts…the place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge (p. 31).

This mindset of teachers utilizing soft skills to make connections with their students in order to create a classroom environment conducive to optimal learning is directly correlated to the framework of this study, Glasser's (1998) choice theory. According to Glasser (1998), teachers who create learning environments which meet the needs of the students in the classroom,

survival, love/belonging, power, freedom, and fun, are more likely to be effective teachers; their students are going to choose to learn (Blance, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2009; Glasser, 1998; Wubbolding, 2015).

The educators interviewed in this study, according to their responses, overwhelmingly concur with Glasser's (1998) choice theory. All of those interviewed, when asked what they believed were the most valuable attributes for classroom teachers to possess, responded with non-content answers, or soft skills. Adverbs such as "passionate," "empathetic," and "flexible" dominated the responses as well as nouns such as "personality" and "family." While content knowledge, or understanding the curriculum in order to survive, described the overall theme of the first question pertaining to what the participants felt was their greatest challenge during their first years of teaching, the topic of content, for the most part, ended there. When discussing the remaining questions, the responses centered on soft skills such as trust, communication skills, fun, caring, and interactive. No one can argue that content is important in schools, after all, that is why we send our children there. However, if teachers are going to get that content into children's brains, they need to make sure they are meeting the children's basic needs in accordance to Glasser's (1998) choice theory; creating an environment in which the children are choosing to learn.

The qualitative data from this study reinforces the broader educational research of those like Darling-Hammond (2010), Hope and Hodsen (2004), Palmer (2017), and Naderi, Baezzat, and Motaghedifard (2015), who stress the need for teachers to create learning environments based on the needs as outlined in Glasser's (1998) choice theory. The purpose of interviewing the participants was to gain a regional view of educator perceptions as pertaining to the elements

that make an effective educator. This portion of the study created an added validity to the need for an instrument to assess soft skills in those who desire to enter the education profession.

Considering research question 2, can a workplace personality inventory be used to predict effectiveness in student teaching practicum according to data drawn from one institution over a five year period; the answer is a limited yes, as only for three of the ninety-six indicators showed to be predictive. For example, while the workplace inventory standard of Achievement proved to be predictive of teacher candidate classroom performance on the MEES indicator 3.2 of differentiated instruction, there were fifteen other MEES indicators in which that workplace inventory standard did not predict. The only two workplace indicators which were shown to be predictive of teacher candidate performance at practicum were Achievement and Self-Adjustment. The remaining four indicators, Social Influence, Interpersonal, Consciousness, and Practical Intelligence, showed no predictive validity. Therefore, while the workplace inventory did show some predictive validity within this research, the results were limited when compared to the MEES.

Considering the third research question, are MEP indicators predictive of teacher candidate performance in student teaching practicum as measured by the MEES, the answer, once again, is a limited yes. However, only three of the ninety-six, three percent, and possible points of predictability showed statistical significance. According to Thompson, Moss, and Applegate (2014) for an assessment to be considered useful, it must be valid. They state that "[t]he process of validation involves accumulating evidence to provide a sound scientific basis for the proposed score interpretation.2" (p. 137). Messlic (1989) explains that for an assessment instrument to be valid, it must be appropriate, meaningful, and useful. He states that the assessment must do what it claims to do. According to the Pearson Company (2018), the MEP is

intended to be "used to support the development of effective educator work habits" (p. 1). According to a Pearson Company webcast (2014), "The MEP measures work-relevant attitudes and behaviors that contribute to or impede job performance in a school setting. The scores reflect how someone is likely to approach their work or interact with others in a work setting" (slide 22). This particular workstyle inventory, based on the results of this study, does not do what it claims to do.

Figure 4 was created to take a closer look at the two MEP standards which did have statistical predictive validity. This table shows the definitions of the MEP standards and possible statistical predictiveness with their corresponding MEES indicators.

Figure 4: A side-by-side look at the definitions of the MEP standards and MEES indicators which showed statistical significance

MEP standard 1; Achievement	MEES indicator 3.2; Lessons for Diverse Learners
How the teacher candidate "establishes and exerts extensive effort toward achieving challenging work goals," has "persistence on the job, even when faced with obstacles or difficulties", and "Doesn't give up on challenges easily; hard working and has a positive outlook" (3).	The candidate has "activities [which] are present in lessons that recognize needs of diverse learners and variations in learning styles and performance; students perceive that their learning needs are recognized" (7).
MEP standard 4; Self Adjustment	MEES indicator 3.1; Implementation of Curriculum Standards
How the teacher candidate "Keeps emotions in check even in difficult situations," "Remains calm in high pressure situations; accepts criticism," and is "comfortable with ambiguity" (6).	The candidate, "Demonstrates awareness of the need to build learning experiences that are appropriate and directly linked to district curriculum and assessments and state and national standards in conversational and/or written content" (6).
MEP standard 4; Self Adjustment	MEES indicator 7.1; Effective use of Assessments
How the teacher candidate "Keeps emotions in check even in difficult situations," "Remains calm in high pressure situations; accepts criticism," and is "comfortable with ambiguity" (6).	The candidates is "knowledgeable of various types of formal and informal assessments in communication and/or written commentary, [and can] identify and construct valid assessments" (13).

Note: Information gathered from the Pearson Company (2013) and DESE (2015)

Research questions 2b, 2c, 2e, and 2f posed the questions; do the MEP *Social Influence* (2), *Interpersonal* (3), *Conscientiousness* (5), and *Practical Intelligence* (6) standards predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators at practicum? The static analysis of the given data suggests these standards are not predictive of teacher candidate performance at practicum.

Effective teachers are those who can cultivate a classroom which meets the needs of all students within that classroom (Glasser, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 2009). In order for teachers to

create this type of environment, they should consider their personal soft skills, or dispositions (Thorton, 2013; Hart & Hodsen, 2004). According to Palmer (2017), effective "…teachers possess the power to create conditions that can help students learn a great deal—or keep them from learning much at all. Teaching is the intentional act of creating those conditions" (p. 7). Building an effective classroom environment requires teachers who have relational capability, empathy, and a strong work ethic. These are aspects which could be measured in the MEP.

With ninety-seven percent of the data showing no statistical significance, the results of this study suggest the MEP workplace inventory shows limited correlation to the MEES. These results are limited, however, as the study was conducted with only one teacher preparation program in Missouri. Although DESE does not require the use of a workplace inventory, they highly suggest the use of one. Also, TPPs still have the option of contracting with the testing company, Pearson, if they desire to continue to utilize the MEP (Missouri DESE representative, personal communication, July 5, 2018). Based on the results of this data, it is suggested that further research be conducted with the MEP. The data analysis performed in the study is limited to only one of forty-two TPPs in Missouri (DESE, 2018). It would be interesting to see this study conducted on a state-wide scale.

Limitations

This was a limited sample of seven regional educators. While an effort for educational professional diversity was made by including representatives from urban, rural, and suburban school districts, representatives from elementary, special, and secondary education, as well as a school district central office representative and two university teacher candidate supervisors, each of the representatives were single participants chosen from convenience. In addition, all of the participants were Caucasian and only two of the seven participants were not a female; race,

economics, and gender was not diversified. Another limitation concerned the researcher's scope while interviewing. While an effort was made to be unbiased throughout the interview and transcription process, the researcher is aware that potential bias may have seeped in. With twenty-plus years actively involved in the education profession, fully putting aside bias is difficult. In addition, the analysis was limited to a small scope of students from a singular institution of higher learning.

Conclusion: A Triangulation of the Data

Students learn best when they feel they have a positive relationship with their teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Hart & Hodsen, 2004; Suplicz, 2009; Thorton, 2013). Studies of student perceptions of what makes a "good" or "bad" teacher overwhelmingly point to the dispositional behaviors of the teachers, as opposed to the content knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Suplicz, 2009; Raufelder, Nitsche, Breitmeyer, Kebler, Herrmann, & Regner, 2015). In an effort to address this, Missouri required a dispositional, or soft skill, assessment for preservice teachers between the years of 2013-2018. "…it is important to investigate what happens to these dispositions once novice teachers enter the real world of the classroom" (Thorton, 2013; p. 1).

A series of interviews with educators in Missouri found that most participants agreed with Darling-Hammond (2019), that students learn best in classroom climates that meet the students' basic needs, as defined by Gassler (1998). The overwhelming answer was, yes, teacher soft skills were the main determiner of what made a good or bad teacher. In conjunction, the MEP was analyzed to see if it, a workplace inventory which addresses these essential soft skills as they relate to practicing teachers, was a predictor of teacher candidate performance during student teaching practicum. If the instrument was able to show predictive, TPPs would be able

to use the MEP as a precursor of which candidates are more likely to become effective teachers; TPP's could utilize the data to assist those who may be lacking in skills or help them to choose careers which better fit their disposition. However, the study, through regression analysis, found limited correlation of the MEP indicators to the performance evaluation, or MEES, indicators.

Research suggests that effective teachers are those who have the ability, or the soft skills, to create a classroom environment conducive to meeting the needs of students, as outlined by Glasser's (1998) choice theory (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Herrmann, & Regner, 2015; Suplicz, 2009; Raufelder, Nitsche, Breitmeyer, Kebler, Palmer, 2017). Considering this, having teacher candidates take an assessment to ascertain soft skills would be considered good practice. However, if TPPs are going to have teacher candidates take an assessment, it is essential that the assessment do what it was created to do (Frey, 2014; Maslow, 1989). The MEP was both made a requirement and then an encouragement without any data to show the instrument's predictive validity. This study, although limited to one TPP, is a first step in offering TPPs concrete data to use when considering the use of an assessment of this sort.

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Section Five: Contribution to Scholarship

Reaching beyond content alone: A mixed methods look into one state's attempt to consider teacher soft skills in teacher preparation education

Reaching beyond content alone: A look into one state's attempt to consider teacher soft skills in teacher preparation education

Abstract

Effective teachers are those who create a classroom climate which meets the needs of the students (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Hart & Hodsen, 2004). In an attempt to identify preservice teachers who can create this type of classroom, Missouri added a workplace inventory, the Missouri Educator Profile (MEP), to their required battery of teacher preparation (TPP) entrance assessments between the years of 2013 and 2018. Theoretically, students who scored similarly to the normed teacher group would perform similarly to those proficient teachers in the classroom. While the MEP is still available, it is no longer a requirement. The purpose of this mixed methods study is to examine the perceptions of quality teachers through the lens of educators in Missouri and to discover if indicators on the MEP are predictive of performance evaluation scores. The results of this study have the potential to either persuade or dissuade TPPs to utilize the MEP.

Key Words: workplace inventory, soft skills, hard skills, teacher candidates, Glasser's (1998) choice theory

June, July, and August

When I graduated with a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Ohio University, one of my graduation gifts was a wall plaque that read, "Three reasons to teach: June, July, and August," implying an extended vacation. It instantly infuriated me. Fresh out of college, I couldn't wait to jump into my new role as a teacher; the prospect of writing meaningful lesson plans and making learning fun and engaging for my students thrilled me! Education, in my opinion, was the foundation of everything, and it all began with good teachers…

In my twenty-plus years in the education profession, I have witnessed great and poor teaching, orderly silent classrooms, classrooms in complete chaos, and classrooms with orderly chaos. I have analyzed countless data reports of student progress, sat through, participated in, and presented innumerable professional development and collaboration meetings in school districts and teacher preparation programs (TPP) around the country focused on increasing student engagement and bringing test scores up. Could student engagement and learning be contributed to the classroom teacher's perception of the profession, or their reaction to the phrase, "Three reasons to teach: June, July, and August"? What role does teacher personality take in student learning? Is there a means to measure this?

Background

Students learn best when they feel they have a positive relationship with their teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Hart & Hodsen, 2004; Suplicz, 2009; Thorton, 2013). Studies of student's perceptions of what makes a "good" or "bad" teacher overwhelmingly point to the dispositional behaviors of the teachers, as opposed to the content knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Suplicz, 2009; Raufelder, Nitsche, Breitmeyer, Kebler, Herrmann, & Regner, 2015). In these studies, the researchers surveyed students to see how they perceive what made

teachers positive or negative. As the results all came back to work-related personality criteria, such as a desire to meet the needs of the students and interpersonal skills, or soft skills, Glasser's (1998) choice theory provides substantial information in the relationship between teacher disposition and the students' desire to learn.

Glasser's (1998) theory considers that every decision, everything a person does, from getting up in the morning, every action taken throughout the day. All choices or actions are intrinsically motivated by, what Glasser identifies as five basic needs: survival, love/belonging, power, freedom, and fun. Glasser's choice theory is essential to learning motivation. No one can make a person do something. However, people can be influenced to act in a certain way. Teachers have the power to create learning environments which encourage or discourage students' desire to learn. Glasser states that the first essential need of all humans is that of survival. Feeling safe is a large component of the survival need. Sousa and Tomlinson (2018) back this statement through the educator lens when they state, "Students must feel physically safe and emotionally secure before they can focus on the curriculum" (p. 20). Sousa and Tomlinson discuss at length the neurological reactions to learning in a safe verses unsafe environment. Students who do not feel safe actually create a chemical called cortisol that inhibits learning from taking place; this is a body's natural reaction to stressful situations, also known as "fight or flight". Students who feel safe in their learning environment, safe from ridicule, physical safety, and safe to fail and try again, are able to stimulate their frontal lobe in the brain to allow for learning to occur. Hart and Hodson (2004) state that while physical safety in schools is important, it is rare to have a classroom in which children are not physically safe. Sousa and Tomlinson (2018) agree, that emotional safety is the main concern, with seventy-five percent of students stating they have been verbally, as opposed to physically, bullied at school.

Hart and Hodson (2004) contend that the bullying occurs because the students sense of hopelessness and frustration in the classroom, or their need of safety not being met. This lack of emotional safety causes the students choose to lash out at other students, which makes other students feel unsafe. The basis for effective classroom learning lies within the relationship between the teacher and student(s) (Csaszar, Curry, & Lastrapes, 2018; Glasser, 1986; Darling-Hammond, 2009; Palmer, 2017); and this ties back to the teacher's perception and ability to meet the needs of the student in the classroom. According to Palmer (2017), "…teachers possess the power to create conditions that can help students learn a great deal—or keep them from learning much at all. Teaching is the intentional act of creating those conditions" (p. 7). Do all teachers have this predisposition naturally? Actions taken by TPPs could suggest that this is a possibility.

Assessing soft skills, or "personality traits, social gracefulness, fluency in language, personal habits, friendliness and optimism that mark to varying degrees" (Pachauri & Yadav; p. 22) in potential teachers is not a novel concept. The Gallup organization has been creating and analyzing assessments of this type since the companies beginning, 1958 (Grant, 2001). Many school districts require potential new hires to take a personality assessment as part of the interview process. According to Goldhaber, Grout, and Huntington-Klein (2014), a popular assessment of soft skills among school districts in the United States is the Gallup Teacher Perceiver Instrument (TPI). The TPI claims to identify teacher candidates who possess similar workplace values and dispositions as highly-effective teachers (Goldhaber, et al, 2014; Metzger & Wu, 2008). Each of the assessed indicators represent skills other than content knowledge in which the Gallup organization identified through research (Grant, 2001). In addition, high schools, colleges, and universities in the United often require students to take an interest or career assessment with the purpose of assisting students in choosing their career path (Loffredo,

2017). The university from which this study was conducted utilizes a variety of assessments including the Focus 2 program (A Missouri University, 2019). According to the university website, "This tool is an online, interactive career, and education planning system that combines self-assessment, career exploration, and decision making into one comprehensive program. It will help you map out a career path and select a major area of study to support your career goals." The assessment asks the student a series of computerized questions and scenarios to respond to on a Likert scale. The results, available immediately following the assessment, provide information concerning the optimal occupation(s) for which the students seem to be suited for.

The Missouri Educator Profile (MEP)

In an effort to address the non-content, or soft skills, Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) required all students entering TPPs to take a workplace inventory known as the Missouri Educator Profile (MEP). The MEP was formed from the Workplace Personality Inventory (WPI-II) (Talentlens, 2013), which was created from models such as the five factor model. Studies of personalities and work performance began as early as the 1930s (Barrick & Mount, 1991). The studies of the five identified personality characteristics (extraversion, emotional stability, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and culture) have been vetted through study replication multiple times over the past eighty years (Henry, Campbell, Thompson, Patricia, Luterbach, Lys, & Covington, 2013; Henry et al., 2012; Komarraju, Karau, & Schmeck). While the MEP holds its base in the five factor model, it has six identifiable personality performance measures: achievement, social influence, interpersonal, self-adjustment, conscientiousness, and practical intelligence. The MEP is a 192 question nonconsequential workstyle inventory assessment. According to the Pearson Company (2014),

the workplace inventory requirement encouraged "self-awareness and development (2)" of the teacher candidates. The assessment was normed by approximately 900 practicing teachers DESE considered to be highly qualified (Missouri's DESE representative, personal communication, April 14, 2017). In theory, teacher candidates who scored comparably to these practicing teachers would perform similarly in the classroom. While currently an optional assessment, the MEP was a required by DESE between 2013 and 2018. Missouri chose an instrument to assess the soft skills in teacher candidates, but what did the results of the assessment inform? Did the results assist TPPs in deciphering which teacher candidates would become the most effective teachers? This type of analysis was not done, which is the purpose for this study; to examine the perceptions of quality teachers through the lens of educators in Missouri and to discover if indicators on the MEP are predictive of performance evaluation scores. The results of this study have the potential to either persuade or dissuade TPPs to utilize the MEP. Can an instrument, such as the MEP, be utilized to predict the effectiveness of preservice teachers?

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are:

RQ1: Do educators in Missouri find the attributes identified in Glasser's (1998) choice theory valuable in classroom teachers??

a.) Do Missouri classroom teachers value soft skills over hard skills in peer classroom teachers?

RQ2: Can a workplace personality inventory be used to predict effectiveness in student teaching practicum as measured by the MEES?

RQ3: Are MEP indicators predictive of teacher candidate performance in student teaching practicum as measured by the MEES?

a) Does the MEP *Achievement* (1) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?

- Null Hypothesis: The MEP *Achievement* (1) has no predictability of MEES indicators.

b) Does the MEP *Social Influence* (2) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?
   - Null Hypothesis: The MEP *Social Influence* (2) has no predictability of MEES indicators.

c) Does the MEP *Interpersonal* (3) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?
   - Null Hypothesis: The MEP *Interpersonal* (3) has no predictability of MEES indicators.

d) Does the MEP *Self Adjustment* (4) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?
   - Null Hypothesis: The MEP *Self Adjustment* (4) has no predictability of MEES indicators.

e) Does the MEP *Conscientiousness* (5) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?
   - Null Hypothesis: The MEP *Conscientiousness* (5) has no predictability of MEES indicators.

f) Does the MEP *Practical Intelligence* (6) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?
   - Null Hypothesis: The MEP *Practical Intelligence* (6) has no predictability of MEES indicators.

These questions are framed by Glasser's (1998) choice theory, an educational framework that has grown over time which considered how teacher personalities influence student interest in learning. Regarding regression, this study will explore the possible predictability of classroom teaching performance by utilizing scores from a workplace inventory, the MEP, and a student teaching summative evaluation tool, the MEES, to answer the above questions.

Method

Mixed Methods

In an effort to "provide a more complete understanding of [the] research problem[s] than either [qualitative or quantitative] approaches alone" (Creswell, 2014, p. 4), a mixed methods approach, in particular, an exploratory sequential mixed methods design was conducted (Creswell, 2014). By utilizing the mixed methods approach, the research considered the perspectives of educators in the region in which the study took place, the qualitative data, which provided greater purpose for the for the quantitative data analysis. Had the study consisted solely on the regression analysis of the MEP and MEES, the reader may be left with a, "So what; why does this matter?" question. By beginning the study determining the qualitative opinions of the educators in the region of the study, the "So what; why does this matter?" is explained.

Qualitative

An exploratory sequential mixed methods design (Creswell, 2014) approach was applied to this study. In following this method design, this first section focused on the qualitative aspect of the research. According to Yamey (2017), "Qualitative research … seeks to understand a given research problem from the perspective of the local population it involves" (p.10). As the research took place in a particular Missouri region, interviews were conducted to decipher if educators from that region were on the same page theoretically as those who follow Glasser's (1998) choice theory. To do this, a convenience sample was chosen. Face-to face semi-structured interviews were considered the most suitable data collection tool for exploration of the questions. Each of the participants signed an informed consent form. The interviews took place in June, 2019.

The study consisted of seven educators from the certain Missouri region. Educators were recruited through convenience; being an educator in the region with multiple contacts due to the variety of educational professional positions held. Each of the interviewees was contacted by

phone to set up interview sessions. When contemplating who to choose to interview, diversity was a major source of consideration. It was important to interview teachers from many professional education perspectives in order to truly grasp an overarching view of answers to the interview questions. The researcher chose to interview representatives from urban, rural, and suburban school districts, representatives from elementary, special, and secondary education, as well as a school district central office representative and two university teacher candidate supervisors. The names of the interviewees and their school districts have been removed from this paper. Each interviewee was labeled and will be referred to as Educators One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Six, and Seven.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in locations suggested by the interviewees. Locations included the interviewee's office, local restaurants, and the local pool. The interviews lasted between eight and forty-two minutes. A relaxed, unstressed mind is better equipped to respond to questions (Sousa & Tomlinson, 2011). In an effort to keep the climate casual to allow the interviewee to relax while answering the questions, the researcher did not take notes during the actual interview; each interview was recorded on the researcher's iPad with a sound recording app. The semi-structured interview questions included:

i. What was your greatest challenge your first three years of teaching?
ii. What do you look for in a teaching partner?
iii. What is most important in collaboration meetings?
iv. Think back to your favorite grade school teacher. What skills made them your favorite?
v. What do you believe are the most valuable attributes for classroom teachers to possess?

The first four questions in setting the stage for the final question.. The researcher desired to put the interviewees in the mindset of the entirety of the teaching profession, not just the content lecturing view. Teaching is much more than sharing content, it encompasses organization, collaboration, empathy, creativity, and knowledge of child development (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Glasser, 1998; Sousa & Tomlinson, 2011). By asking the first four questions, the interviewees had an opportunity to consider the complex intermingling's of the teaching profession prior to answering the main question of this qualitative portion of research: What do you believe are the most valuable attributes for classroom teachers to possess?

The data was transcribed by the researcher, without the aid of transcription software, on the researcher's secure office computer. With the transcriptions complete, the researcher, focusing on one question at a time, looked for themes within the transcriptions by identifying common words or phrases. This process was completed three times on three different days by the researcher to ensure a constant comparison rigor of the identified themes.

A manuscript for approval was submitted to an Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure that the analysis and reporting of the interview data does not infringe on the ethical rights of the participants from this study. In addition, each interviewee was given a pseudonym and all possible personal and school district identifiers were removed from the data.

Qualitative Findings

Many educational researchers contend the foundation of classroom learning can be found in the relational, or soft skills, of the classroom teacher with his/her students (Blance, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2009; Glasser, 1998; Hart & Hodsen, 2004; Wubbolding, 2015). Glasser (1998) argues that, while one person cannot force another person to make a particular choice, it is possible for one person to create a scenario which can persuade another to choose a certain

behavior. In the instance of this study, the behavior discussed is student learning as related to teacher influence. Teachers cannot force students to learn content, try as they may. However, by meeting, as Glasser (1998) describes, the students' basic needs within the classroom, the students could be drawn to learn; the teacher has the power to create an environment in which the students desire to learn (Hart & Hodsen, 2004).

Survival is the first of Glasser's (1998) list of basic human needs. The answers to the first interview question, what was your greatest challenge your first three years of teaching, mainly focused on survival; learning the curriculum of content, to be exact. If a teacher is going to teach certain content, they must first know that content themselves (Darling-Hammond, 2005). For example, a teacher cannot assist children learning personification if the teacher does not know his/herself what personification is and how/why it is used. Hand-in-hand with understanding the curriculum, in order for teachers to "survive" in the classroom, they must have a secure foundation of classroom management (Sayeski & Brown, 2014). That the participants would mention classroom management as a challenge their first few years of teaching is not surprising, as Sayeski and Brown (2014) discuss, effective classroom management is a skill that takes time to develop.

Collaboration with fellow teachers within the building/district is a mainstay in education today (Ronfeldt, Farmer, McQueen, & Grissom, 2015). It was this which led to the second and third questions in the interviews. When choosing a teaching partner, the interviewees expressed a need for trust, creativity, and the ability to share materials and ideas. In official collaboration meetings, the participants uniformly agreed for the meetings to be organized and for each collaborator to have a strong mutual respect for each member in the group. Each of the skills mentioned by the interviewees could be considered "soft skills". When collaborating, or sharing

thoughts and ideas, participants identified their desire for their own basic needs, according to Glasser's (1998) choice theory. The need for trust and sharing, or as noted in choice theory, belonging, was repeated several times throughout the interviews.

When asking the participants about their favorite teacher and the attributes that made them the favorite, all but one used the word "fun". Fun is a soft skill. Educator Five's response was the most interesting. She said that this particular question was one they always ask potential teachers in their district's hiring procedures. When asked why, she stated that,

> Sometimes it's to find out why they became a teacher. Other than to hear them say, 'I love it when you see the light bulb come on' ...or... 'I like kids'. [These] may be...reasons, but... not the only reason(s) you became a teacher, right?" She continued, "You do need to have some significant content knowledge to teach,…[but] I can't teach somebody how to truly have relationships with kids. ...that is where that question came from. We ask a lot more relationship questions now than we used to. We used to say, 'Describe your classroom management style.' Well that didn't tell us anything. We'd get the theoretically based pedagogy answers."

She said she is looking for someone to answer that they "truly want to make that classroom special for every kid sitting in that room; ... people who can just momma kids into behaving." It was interesting hearing a person who has interviewed hundreds of teachers talk mainly about the need to hire people who are relationally rather than content strong. In her interview, she mentioned the word "content" six times while "personality" was mentioned eight times and "relationship with [students/peers]" was referred to ten times. In addition, when "content" was used, it was used as a side note, or that of less importance than "relationship" or "personality".

The question, What do you believe are the most valuable attributes for classroom teachers to possess, was the main question asked in this qualitative portion of the study. Overwhelmingly, the interviewees communicated that passion, empathy, flexibility, and personality are the most important attributes for teachers to possess in the classroom; all of which flow in line with Glasser's (1998) choice theory. Fundamentally, choice theory in education means that if educators create a classroom climate that meets the basic needs of the students, those students are going to want to be there and participate in the learning process; not because of the subject matter, but because of the relationships within the room. Collectively, the participants responded in accordance with Glasser's (1998) choice theory, that the effective teacher is able to provide students with learning environments which successfully meet the students' needs through flexible and passionate teaching practices, and positive relationships with the students.

Educator Six described in depth one teacher candidate who he considered to be the best teacher he has witnessed in all his years in education. The attribute that made this particular teacher candidate excellent was, according to Educator Six, his ability to relate to the students. Educator Six explained with enthusiasm how students, parents, administrators, and other teachers in the building would contact him to discuss their admiration of this teacher candidate; they would share stories of how the teacher candidate would go out of his way to make sure the students felt a sense of belonging and ownership of the lessons. During the interview, Educator said of this teacher candidate, who was placed in a rural middle school science classroom, that

> …every class he called himself the lead scientist and all the students in the class were the scientists and everything he did was arranged that way. It was one of the

greatest things. Parents were asking for him to be their kids' teacher and, he was great! …Oh! As good as I've seen.

The teacher candidate was able to make an impact with the students in his classroom, creating a safe and fun classroom environment in which the students felt a sense of power, freedom, and belonging; all of which fall into line with Glasser's (1998) choice theory. The exceptional classroom climate, built through powerful relationships, was so pungent, other teachers, administrators, students, and parents were contacting Educator Six to tell him how wonderful the teacher candidate was and how they want him to be their children's official teacher. Built on a foundation of relationship, this particular teacher candidate was able to make a make his students excited to learn the necessary content, because of his particular soft skills he brought into his classroom.

Quantitative

As the research centered on possible predictability of performance between the MEP and MEES data during practicum, quantitative data analysis was conducted utilizing a regression analysis. The MEP data is ordinal with a range of zero to ten based upon percentile ranks. However, according to the MEP's Technical Manual (Pearson, 2013), scores of a nine or ten should be considered with caution as they "suggest overly positive self-representation" (38). The Pearson Company (2013) advises that scores above the ninetieth percentile should be disregarded because, at that point, the instrument loses its usefulness. Therefore, those scores were removed from the data, leaving eight as the highest score and zero the lowest.

The performance evaluation, MEES, is also ordinal with a range of zero to four. While mentor teachers and university supervisors each provided summative data for the teacher candidates, this study only utilized the scores of the university supervisors as they completed

interrater reliability scoring expectations for the instrument (A Missouri University, 2017). In this manner, the scores for each of the instruments were compared for a total of ninety-six points of analysis to discover if the MEP indicators predict student performance in their practicum experience.

The researcher collected MEES and MEP scores from a database within the institution in which the study took place. Student names were not used in the study. Student identification numbers were used to pair the two assessment results. The data for the study was collected over a five-year period, 2013 – 2018.

As mentioned, MEP scores of nine or ten are considered by the testing company, Pearson, to be considered with caution (Pearson, 2013). Therefore, teacher candidates with scores of either a nine or ten on the assessment were exempt from the statistical analysis for each indicator.

As multiple sets of data were utilized to look for comparative predictable possibilities, multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the data. The MEP data was the independent variable, as the research is looking to see if the MEP is predictive of teacher candidate performance at practicum, via the MEES scores.

Quantitative Findings

Table 1 illustrates is an example of the results of the multiple regression data analysis conducted for each MEP standard.

Table 1
RQ3(a): Does the MEP Achievement (1) indicator predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators during practicum?

	Coefficients	*Standard Error*	*t Stat*	*P-value*
Intercept	4.26	0.54	7.84	1.51
1.1 MEES	-0.29	0.36	-0.81	0.41
1.2 MEES	-0.17	0.35	-0.50	0.61
2.4 MEES	-0.63	0.38	-1.63	0.10
3.1 MEES	-0.14	0.35	-0.41	0.68
3.2 MEES	0.83	0.37	2.25	0.02*
4.1 MEES	0.27	0.34	0.78	0.43
5.1 MEES	0.07	0.33	0.23	0.81
5.2 MEES	-0.35	0.35	-0.99	0.31
5.3MEES	0.31	0.44	0.69	0.48
6.1 MEES	0.56	0.36	1.54	0.12
7.1 MEES	0.03	0.39	0.08	0.93
7.2 MEES	-0.24	0.43	-0.57	0.56
7.5 MEES	-0.09	0.37	-0.24	0.80
8.1 MEES	0.26	0.42	0.61	0.53
9.1 MEES	0.01	0.42	0.04	0.96
9.2 MEES	0.02	0.47	0.05	0.95

Note. $N = 254$. * Significant at the $p<0.05$ level.

To gain a better view of the significant values from the data (the p-values), a crosswalk between the two instruments, the MEES and MEP was created; Table 2.

At a 0.05 statistical confidence level, significance was shown in MEP standard 1, Achievement and MEES indicator 3.2, Lessons for Diverse Learners. No other points of significance emerged from the statistical analysis for MEP standard 1.

Discussion

Palmer (2017), when asking students from around the country to describe the components of a good teacher, synthesized the responses as:

> People who have some sort of connective capacity, who connect themselves to their students, their students to each other, and everyone to the subject being studied…The connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts…the place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge.

This mindset of teachers utilizing soft skills to make connections with their students in order to create a classroom environment conducive to optimal learning is directly correlated to the framework of this study, Glasser's (1998) choice theory. According to Glasser (1998), teachers who create learning environments which meet the needs of the students in the classroom, survival, love/belonging, power, freedom, and fun, are more likely to be effective teachers; their students are going to choose to learn (Blance, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2009; Glasser, 1998; Wubbolding, 2015). The educators interviewed in this study, according to their responses, overwhelmingly concur with Glasser's (1998) choice theory. All of those interviewed, when asked what they believed were the most valuable attributes for classroom teachers to possess, responded with non-content answers, or soft skills. Adjectives such as "passionate," "empathetic," and "flexible" dominated the responses as well as nouns such as "personality" and "family." While content knowledge, or understanding the curriculum in order to survive, described the overall theme of the first question pertaining to what the participants felt was their greatest challenge during their first years of teaching, the topic of content, for the most part, ended there. When discussing the remaining questions, the responses centered on soft skills such

as trust, communication skills, fun, caring, and interactive. No one can argue that content is important in schools, after all, that's why we send our children there. However, if teachers are going to get that content into our children's brains, they need to make sure they are meeting the children's basic needs in accordance to Glasser's (1998) choice theory; creating an environment in which the children are choosing to learn.

The qualitative data from this sample reinforced the broader educational research of those like Darling-Hammond (2010), Hope and Hodsen (2004), Palmer (2017), and Naderi, Baezzat, and Motaghedifard (2015), who stress the need for teachers to be able to create learning environments based on the needs as outlined in Glasser's (1998) choice theory. The purpose of interviewing the participants was to gain a regional view of educator perceptions as pertaining to the elements that make an effective educator. This analysis added validity to the need for an instrument to assess soft skills in those who desire to enter the education profession.

Considering research question 2, can a workplace personality inventory be used to predict effectiveness in student teaching practicum according to data drawn from one institution over a five year period; the answer is a limited yes, as only for three of the ninety-six indicators showed to be predictive. For example, while the workplace inventory standard of Achievement proved to be predictive of teacher candidate classroom performance on the MEES indicator 3.2 of differentiated instruction, there were fifteen other MEES indicators in which that workplace inventory standard did not predict. The only two workplace indicators which were shown to be predictive of teacher candidate performance at practicum were Achievement and Self-Adjustment. The remaining four indicators, Social Influence, Interpersonal, Consciousness, and Practical Intelligence, showed no predictive validity. Therefore, while the workplace inventory

did show some predictive validity within this research, the results were limited when compared to the MEES.

Considering the third research question, are MEP indicators predictive of teacher candidate performance in student teaching practicum as measured by the MEES, the answer once again is a limited yes. However, only three of the ninety-six, three percent, possible points of predictability showed statistical significance. According to Thompson, Moss, and Applegate (2014) for an assessment to be considered useful, it must be valid. They state that "[t]he process of validation involves accumulating evidence to provide a sound scientific basis for the proposed score interpretation.2" (p. 137). Messlic (1989) explains that an assessment instrument to be valid, it must be appropriate, meaningful, and useful. He states that the assessment must do what it claims to do. According to the Pearson Company (2018), the MEP is intended to be "used to support the development of effective educator work habits" (p. 1). According to a Pearson webcast (2014), "The MEP measures work-relevant attitudes and behaviors that contribute to or impede job performance in a school setting. The scores reflect how someone is likely to approach their work or interact with others in a work setting" (slide 22). This particular workstyle inventory, based on the results of this study, does not do what it claims to do.

Figure 1 was created to take a closer look at the two MEP standards which did have statistical predictive validity. This table shows the definitions of the MEP standards and possible statistical predictiveness with their corresponding MEES indicators.

Research questions 2b, 2c, 2e, and 2f posed the questions; do the MEP *Social Influence* (2), *Interpersonal* (3), *Conscientiousness* (5), and *Practical Intelligence* (6) standards predict the teacher candidate MEES indicators at practicum? The statistical analysis of the given data suggests these standards are not predictive of teacher candidate performance at practicum.

Effective teachers are those who can cultivate a classroom which meets the needs of all students within that classroom (Glasser, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 2009). In order for teachers to create this type of environment, they should consider their personal soft skills, or dispositions (Thorton, 2013; Hart & Hodsen, 2004). According to Palmer (2017), effective "…teachers possess the power to create conditions that can help students learn a great deal—or keep them from learning much at all. Teaching is the intentional act of creating those conditions" (p. 7). Building and effective classroom environment requires teachers who have relational capability, empathy, and a strong work ethic. These are aspects which could be measured in the MEP.

Figure 5: A side-by-side look at the definitions of the MEP standards and MEES indicators which showed statistical significance

MEP standard 1; Achievement	MEES indicator 3.2; Lessons for Diverse Learners
How the teacher candidate "establishes and exerts extensive effort toward achieving challenging work goals," has "persistence on the job, even when faced with obstacles or difficulties", and "Doesn't give up on challenges easily; hard working and has a positive outlook" (3).	The candidate has "activities [which] are present in lessons that recognize needs of diverse learners and variations in learning styles and performance; students perceive that their learning needs are recognized" (7).
MEP standard 4; Self Adjustment	MEES indicator 3.1; Implementation of Curriculum Standards
How the teacher candidate "Keeps emotions in check even in difficult situations," "Remains calm in high pressure situations; accepts criticism," and is "comfortable with ambiguity" (6).	The candidate, "Demonstrates awareness of the need to build learning experiences that are appropriate and directly linked to district curriculum and assessments and state and national standards in conversational and/or written content" (6).
MEP standard 4; Self Adjustment	MEES indicator 7.1; Effective use of Assessments
How the teacher candidate "Keeps emotions in check even in difficult situations," "Remains calm in high pressure situations; accepts criticism," and is "comfortable with ambiguity" (6).	The candidates is "knowledgeable of various types of formal and informal assessments in communication and/or written commentary, [and can] identify and construct valid assessments" (13).

Note: Information gathered from Pearson (2013) and DESE (2015)

With ninety-seven percent of the data showing no statistical significance, the results of this study suggest the MEP workplace inventory shows limited correlation to the MEES. These results are limited, however, as the study was conducted with only one teacher preparation program in Missouri. Although DESE does not require the use of a workplace inventory, they highly suggest the use of one. Also, TPPs still have the option of contracting with the testing

company, Pearson, if they desire to continue to utilize the MEP (Missouri's DESE representative, personal communication, July 5, 2018). Based on the results of this data, it is suggested that further research be conducted on the MEP. The data analysis performed in the study is limited to only one of forty-two TPPs in Missouri (DESE, 2018). It would be interesting to see this study conducted on a state-wide scale.

Students learn best when they feel they have a positive relationship with their teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Hart & Hodsen, 2004; Suplicz, 2009; Thorton, 2013). Studies of student's perceptions of what makes a "good" or "bad" teacher overwhelmingly point to the dispositional behaviors of the teachers, as opposed to the content knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Raufelder, Nitsche, Breitmeyer, Kebler, Herrmann, & Regner, 2015; Suplicz, 2009). In an effort to address this, Missouri required a dispositional, or soft skill, assessment for preservice teachers between the years of 2013-2018. "…it is important to investigate what happens to these dispositions once novice teachers enter the real world of the classroom" (Thorton, 2013; p. 1).

In a series of interviews with educators in Missouri, an investigation, limited to one TPP, took place to ascertain if the educators of that region were in agreement with those like Darling-Hammond (2019), that students learn best in classroom climates that meet the students' basic needs, as defined by Gassler's (1998) choice theory. The overwhelming answer was, yes, teacher soft skills were the main determiner of what made a good or bad teacher. Understanding the need for teachers who possess the soft skills necessary to create a nurturing educational environment, Missouri determined to implement an assessment, the MEP, between 2013 and 2018, with the idea that this assessment might provide feedback pertaining to those desired soft skills. The MEP was analyzed to see if it, a workplace inventory which addresses these essential

soft skills as they relate to practicing teachers, was a predictor of teacher candidate performance during student teaching practicum. If the instrument was able to show predictive, TPPs would be able to use the MEP as a precursor of which candidates are more likely to become effective teachers; TPP's could utilize the data to assist those who may be lacking in skills or assist them in choosing careers which better fit their disposition. However, the study, through regression analysis, found limited correlation of the MEP indicators to the performance evaluation, or MEES, indicators.

Limitations

While an effort for diversity was made by including representatives from urban, rural, and suburban school districts, representatives from elementary, special, and secondary education, as well as a school district central office representative and two university teacher candidate supervisors, each of the representatives were single participants chosen from convenience. In addition, all of the participants were Caucasian. A more ethnically diverse sample should be utilized for future analysis. Another limitation concerns the researcher's scope while interviewing. While an effort was made to be unbiased throughout the interview and transcription process, the researcher is aware that potential bias may have seeped in. With twenty-plus years actively involved in the education profession, fully putting aside bias is difficult.

Conclusion

There is abundant research suggesting that effective teachers are those who have the ability, or the soft skills, to create a classroom environment conducive to meeting the needs of students, as outlined by Glasser's (1998) choice theory (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Suplicz, 2009; Raufelder, Nitsche, Breitmeyer, Kebler, Herrmann, & Regner, 2015; Palmer, 2017). The

qualitative research conducted in this mixed methods study found educators, in the region in which the analysis took place, agreed with the consensus found in the literature; that effective teachers are those who have the ability to relate and empathize with their students. Considering this, having teacher candidates take an assessment to highlight those soft skills would be considered good practice. In Missouri's case, the instrument they chose, between 2013 and 2018, to determine these essential qualities in teachers was the MEP. However, how do we know if the MEP is an instrument which can correctly indicate if teacher candidates actually have the skills necessary to succeed in the classroom**?** To do this, a regression analysis of data from the MEP was conducted to discover if the instrument predicted teacher candidate performance in the classroom via the MEES. The results determined that the MEP was not predictive of teacher candidate performance. Thus, the MEP was not shown, in this limited study, to be a reliable assessment to determine if a teacher candidate possesses the necessary soft skills required to effectively meet the needs of students in a classroom as defined by Glasser's (1998) choice theory.

If TPPs are going to have teacher candidates take an assessment, it is essential that the assessment do what it was created to do (Frey, 2014; Maslow, 1989). The MEP was both made a requirement and then an encouragement without any data to show the instrument's predictive validity. This study, although limited to one TPP, is a first step in offering TPPs concrete data to utilize when considering the use of an assessment of this sort. The researcher suggests the study expand to multiple TPPs in the Midwest United States before concrete conclusions concerning the predictive validity of the MEP are made.

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Section Six: Scholarly Practitioner Reflection

Section Six: Scholarly Practitioner Reflection

How the Dissertation Process has Influenced my Educational Leadership

The dissertation process has influenced my practice as an educational leader in two main ways: communication and writing ability. The first thing discussed and studied prior to research, APA, or any other topic was communication. Learning the importance of a wide variety of views and how to communicate effectively in a group setting was the first task of summer one. The skills learned from that summer have been engrained into my personal and professional life. While I am sure I still have much to learn, I believe I have improved much in the area of communication thanks to this program.

When I began this program, I had only ever encountered APA on one occasion, then writing my Master's thesis. Writing has never come easy for me. I remember a college professor from my undergraduate program shaking her head and laughing at my lack of typing skills. She said, "Well, once you start having to type more papers, maybe your fingers will be able to type without your looking at them." While I still look at the keyboard when typing, I believe my actual ability to write has improved dramatically. Considering word choices, sentence length, what I want to say and how it can be said and understood…there is so much to writing something that it worth reading. I am so thankful to those who did not hold back when editing the draft papers. It was their scrutiny that helped me grow the most in my writing ability.

How the Dissertation Process has Influenced me as a Scholar

When I began this program, I was concerned there would be nothing left to write about; all the good ideas would be taken. That idea is now comical to me. I now know there are more topics to be researched than could ever actually be done. I was surprised to find I had difficulty choosing just one topic to research for this dissertation.

I am looking forward to working with peers in future research endeavors. This program focused greatly on collaboration, a skill that is essential in today's world. Collaborative teams are more capable of taking a holistic approach to problems or issues; the more points of view and personal strengths there are, the more the team will be able to compensate for one another (Levi, 2014 & Bolman & Deal, 2013). I have already been approached by a few faculty members asking to work on research projects with them. Once the dissertation process has come to a close, I am looking forward to putting what was learned in the EdD program concerning collaborative teams and research to serious use.

Dr. Watkins (2015) once said, with passion in his eyes, "You will not leave this program the same as you entered it. This program will change you for the better." He was right. I have changed, and I'm thankful for it!

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Appendix A

The semi-structured interview questions included:

i. What was your greatest challenge your first three years of teaching?

ii. What do you look for in a teaching partner and/or professional collaborator?

iii. What is most important in collaboration meetings?

iv. Think back to your favorite grade school teacher. What skills made them your favorite?

v. What do you believe are the most valuable attributes for classroom teachers to possess?

Appendix B

Themes emerged from transcribed interviews

Question	Interviewee	Transcribed response
What was your greatest challenge your first three years of teaching?	Educator 1:	Understanding standards
	Educator 2:	Curriculum and ELL
	Educator 3:	The co-teaching part (working with regular education teachers)
	Educator 4:	Classroom management
	Educator 5:	How to build relationships with students, classroom management (how to pick your battles), and learning the curriculum
	Educator 6:	Curriculum
	Educator 7:	Classroom Management
What do you look for in a teaching partner and/or professional collaborator?	Educator 1:	Creative, active
	Educator 2:	New teachers to mentor (she didn't have a mentor)
	Educator 3:	Someone who is willing to "be open" and share materials and ideas for the good of the students. (referring to regular

		education teachers who do not want to work with special education teachers)
	Educator 4:	Sharing of materials and ideas
	Educator 5:	Someone you can trust, bounce ideas off and vent to
	Educator 6:	Trust
	Educator 7:	Open to new ideas
What is most important in collaboration meetings?	Educator 1:	Organized, self-control (knowing one's place)
	Educator 2:	Being prepared, personalities of the people you work with (know strengths and weaknesses), Norms, leadership team's input/guiding questions
	Educator 3:	More time and how to manage that time more efficiently
	Educator 4:	Able to actively listen, able to build on each other's ideas
	Educator 5:	Good conversations—respectful conversations where the participants can agree and agree to disagree. "Those are the most productive." Strong mutual respect to each member in the group.
	Educator 6:	Respectful conversations

	Educator 7:	Allowing everyone to share their ideas and take them seriously
Think back to your favorite grade school teacher. What skills made them your favorite?	Educator 1:	Music, pretty, fun, had a good time
	Educator 2:	Fun, passion for teaching and the subject
	Educator 3:	Not strict. Allowed students to pursue their own reading passions
	Educator 4:	Excited about what they were teaching, believed it was important, made the information seem relevant. They cared for the students and the subject matter
	Educator 5:	"for me, and for 95% of the candidates who answer this question, it's about the relationships and…the engagement." Ability to make the students feel they have ownership of the curriculum.
	Educator 6:	He made learning fun
	Educator 7:	She cared about me; I didn't know it at the time, but she was in communication with my parents, keeping tabs on a particular difficult time my family and I was going through.
What do you believe are the most	Educator 1:	Passion, love (students believe you care)

valuable attributes for classroom teachers to possess?	Educator 2:	Patience, able to adapt
	Educator 3:	Flexibility and passion
	Educator 4:	Organization, empathy, open to learning new things, a person who likes to continuously learn
	Educator 5:	The personality of the candidates. They have to have personalities that work well in the environment the principal has created within the building as well as with the teacher grade level team they will be working.
	Educator 6:	Promptness and willing to respond to supervision. (Story of excellent student)
	Educator 7:	Patience, flexibility, passion

VITA

Brandy Lee Hepler was born in Columbus, Ohio in the year 1974 to William and Terry Seacrist. With her two loving parents and one younger sister, she attended the Canal Winchester School District kindergarten thru twelfth grade. She graduated with honors from Ohio University with a Bachelor of Science in Education in 1999. Working across the hall from her favorite teacher, Mrs. Paulus, she proceeded to teach fourth grade math and science for eight years in her hometown of Canal Winchester. During that time, Brandy discovered the joys of motherhood with her four boys; Grant, Elijah, Addison, and Wesley.

Moving to Missouri to be closer to her parents, Brandy took great joy in working two years in a small school in Altenburg, Missouri teaching third thru eighth grade math and science. She then taught five years in the Jackson School District in Missouri in fifth grade, all subjects. While teaching in Jackson, Brandy worked toward and earned her Master's Degree in Educational Leadership at Southeast Missouri State University (SEMO). With a passion to make the greatest impact in education, Brandy moved professionally to work at SEMO as the Director of Field and Clinical for five years. Brandy is currently an instructor in the Department of Elementary, Early Childhood, and Special Education at SEMO.

All this being said, Brandy's greatest accomplishments and joys center on her husband, Josh, and their combined faith and family. Together, Josh and Brandy have raised/are raising six children while both working full time and advancing academically. Their relational endurance, faith, and stability when faced with constant stress and adversity are a testament that they make a fantastic team.