What Makes a Good Teacher? Exploring Student and Teacher Beliefs on Good Teaching

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Abstract: A good teacher is more than just an educator, the characteristics that make a teacher good are complex and extensive. As an aspiring teacher, I want to know what students and teachers believe is a good teacher so I have a set of criteria to work towards. In this study, 4th graders and teachers at a school in St. Mary's County answered the question "what makes a good teacher" in the form of an open- ended questionnaire. The results of this questionnaire were compiled into a rating scale of importance, which the students then completed. This study found that students identified personality characteristics such as "helpful" and "kind" while teachers identified relational and ability qualities such as "flexible" and "caring" when describing a good teacher. This suggests that there are differences between student and teacher beliefs. When presented with characteristics students identified ability, personality and relational characteristics as important, which suggests what makes a good teacher truly is complex. These findings are the start to a set of criteria that will help shape my own teaching practice

Introduction

When I entered the MAT program a year ago, I knew I wanted to be a good teacher, and sought a set of criteria to guide my developing teaching practice. I started to list qualities and traits, and began to realize the complexity of my question: What makes a good teacher?

By definition a good teacher is a "high quality teacher" (Merriam- Webster). Under No Child Left Behind a good teacher is one that is highly qualified with at least a bachelor's degree, state certification and passing scores on core curriculum tests (Norman, 2010). In school systems, good teaching is often defined based on behaviors linked to successful student outcomes and test scores (Cochran- Smith & Fries, 2010). However, these answers did not really answer my question. It was during my first placement I realized that the answers to my question could be found in the classroom.

I was already studying to become a good teacher and was learning good teaching practice from mentor teachers, education professors and my peers. I also had ideas based on my own experiences of what I believed makes a good teacher. The gap in my good teacher education lay in learning from my students. Students' ideas should be heard because they have the most experience with teachers, and are directly affected by good and bad teaching (Follman, 1995). I realized I should also use the perceptions of experienced teachers as a resource because they provide insights on the identity of good teachers that could guide the project (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000). Based on these conclusions, I

decided to research what makes a good teacher by examining the beliefs of my 4th graders my school site, and the beliefs of teachers at my school site. My students and colleagues would provide a set of criteria that answer my question: What makes a good teacher? And I could use this set of criteria to shape my future teaching practice.

In this project I explored five research questions, 1) What characteristics are used by students to describe a good teacher?; 2) What characteristics are used by teachers to describe a good teacher?; 3) How does existing research describe a good teacher?; 4) What are the similarities and differences between teachers and students' perceptions on good teaching?; 5) What characteristics do students identify as most important when describing a good teacher?

Literature Review

Good Teaching

This study seeks to compile a list of characteristics that describe a good teacher. This is not a new idea, educational researchers have developed lists of characteristics describing a "good teacher", which in research is also referred to as an "ideal teacher" (Aksoy, 1998; Arnon & Reichel, 2007). In support of these lists, Arnon and Reichel (2007) assert that an "ideal teacher" can be defined by qualities that create a general prototype which can be applied to any teacher, and to which any teacher can aspire. These lists relate to teacher personalities, behaviors, abilities, and relational skills, and are often times extensive and complex (Aksoy, 1998; Devine, Fahie, & McGillicuddy, 2013). Researchers have proposed views or factors into which these characteristics can be categorized, so components of a good teacher can be easily seen (Arnon & Reichel, 2007).

Throughout the literature, a couple of major views have emerged, as a way to organize good teacher characteristics. Beizhuizen, Hof, van Putten, Bouwmeester and Asscher (2001) identified the personality view and the ability view, while Arnon and Reichel (2007) identified the components of appropriate personality and professional knowledge. Although different in name, both systems similarly organize good teacher characteristics. Alternately, Sahin and Cokadar (2009) identified themes of general personal, affective roles towards students and professional roles. Ciascai and Vlad (2014) proposed aspects of education activity, function in social group and social responsibility. Devine, Fahie and McGillicuddy (2013), determined five factors of passion for teaching and learning, the social and moral dimension, reflective practice, effective planning and management, and love of children. After reviewing this research, three major themes emerged. Good teaching characteristics relate to a teacher's ability, personality and relationship with students.

Ability View. According to the ability view, a good teacher is defined by skills, knowledge and experience (Beizhuizen et al., 2001). This aligns with content and pedagogical knowledge, which according to Shulman (1987) is a teacher's understanding of the concepts being taught and skills needed to communicate and assess students. Based on this view, a good teacher is described as able to keep order and give clear instructions (Beishuizen et al., 2001; Murphy et al., 2004). Aksoy (1998) classified concepts under the theme instruction, and identified good teachers as those able to clearly explain tasks and information. A good teacher must present material in an organized and engaging way and

use creative teaching approaches (White, 2009; Duarte, 2013; Samples & Copeland, 2013). Experience, skill and understanding of what methods work are characteristics of a good teachers under the ability perspective. Green (2014) asserts that it is challenging to teach knowledge or ability, knowledge and ability must be learned through experience. This view implies, to some degree that good teachers are made, not born.

Personality View. The personality view emphasizes a good teacher's balanced and mature personality with characteristics such as kindness and enthusiasm (Beizhuizen et al., 2001). Good teachers are identified as kind, friendly, helpful and patient under this view (Aksoy, 1998; Arnon & Reichel, 2007). Similarly, good teaching was defined by characteristics such as caring, patient, not boring and polite (Murphy et al., 2004). The personality perspective defines a good teacher based on characteristics and traits, rather than by knowledge or ability. This view implies, to some degree that good teachers are born, not made.

Teacher- Student Relationship. Teacher- student relationship is related to the teacher's ability to functioning in a social group and take on the social responsibility of a teacher (Ciascai & Vlad, 2014). Under this view good teachers treat all students equally, listen and care about student problems and get to know each student as an individual (Aksoy, 1998; Arnon & Reichel, 2007). This view could be associated with "Teacher Student Relationship Quality" or TSRQ, which when strong can influence student motivation, engagement and performance (Hughes, 2011).

These views on good teaching are based on characteristics and constructs collected from multiple research studies on good teaching. These studies have explored the beliefs of teachers (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000; Sahin & Cokadar, 2009), student teachers (Arnon & Reichel, 2007), grade school aged students (Aksoy, 1998; Beishuizen et al., 2001; Cook- Sather, 2002) and university students (Cook- Slather, 2002; Gurung & Vespia, 2004). These characteristics also stem from studies conducted around the world, including Canada (Vander Kloet & Chugh, 2012; Ciascai & Vlad, 2014), Turkey (Sahin & Cokadar, 2009), United States (Cook- Sather, 2002; Arnon, 2007), The Netherlands (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000; Beishuizen et al., 2001) and Australia (Duarte, 2013). The review of the research shows the question of what makes a good teacher has been explored in different contexts. The present study is based on existing research about student and teacher beliefs on good teaching based on the Ability, Personality and Teacher- Student Relationship views.

Student Beliefs

Student beliefs on good teaching characteristics are an important consideration because students see teachers on a daily basis and are able to comment on teaching in both good and adverse situations. This can help guide teacher behavior in the classroom and allow teachers to better understand their student's realities.

When student opinions are considered, ideas related to instruction, teacher personality and student teacher relationships emerge. There are inconsistencies in the importance of different good teacher characteristics between studies. Turkish elementary

students responded that teacher- student relationship was most important in a good teacher, more so than teacher personality and instruction (Aksoy, 1998). Alternately, primary school students in The Netherlands defined good teachers as competent instructors more so than using relational characteristics (Beizhuizen et al., 2001). In a study in Australia, high school students rated ability to explain well and engagement in lesson content as important aspects of good teaching (White, 2009). Students also discussed the importance of classroom management, student teacher relationships and listening to student input (Cook- Slather, 2002). These findings show that different student groups rate importance of certain characteristics differently. There is no consistent view to which previous findings fit; however the ability, personality and teacher- student relationship views all emerge, just with varying importance.

Findings show that importance of certain good teaching characteristics change with age. Beizhuizen et al. (2001) found that older students used relational characteristics to describe good teachers while primary school students describe them as competent instructors. This was similar to findings by Kutnick & Jules (1993), where young students highlighted ability to teach over relational aspects. Studies that explored university students, found that it was important for good teachers to motivate students through relevance, teaching approaches and evoking of emotion (Duarte, 2003). In a study by Ciascai & Vlad (2014), high school students emphasize that a good teacher encourages self-initiative and involves students out of school, while university students emphasize content knowledge help and communication of expectations. It appears younger students tend to take the ability view towards good teaching, while older students tend to take the relational view.

There is also evidence that what student's value in an ideal teacher can be predicted by differences in student academic self- concept and motivation (Komarraju, 2013).This suggests that beliefs on good teaching could be individual. Similarly, student personality differences can predict preference for traits in good teachers. In general, students like open and agreeable lecturers who are smart, emotionally adjusted and hard-working (Furnham & Chamorro- Premuzic, 2005).

Although similar constructs emerge from studies about student beliefs on good teaching, the importance of certain characteristics is dependent on student background. Kutnick & Jules (1993) assert that student perceptions are individual and subjective based on student age, background and experiences and this is supported by more current research (Furnham & Chamorro, Premuzic, 2005; Komarraju, 2013). The gap in the research is that the existing criteria for good teachers are broad and importance is not based on my own student's beliefs. For this project, the good teacher characteristics that I want to discover are those that are of most importance to my own students. For this reason, I will ask for my student's beliefs on good teaching and have them rate characteristics by importance.

Teacher Beliefs

There is evidence that experience in the classroom has an effect on characteristics teachers identify as important to good teaching, which is why their beliefs about good teaching should be considered as well. Arnon and Reichel (2007) explored students of education and new teacher's perceptions on qualities of a good teacher. The study found that all teachers acknowledged good personality as an important characteristic of an "ideal

teacher", but the importance of professional knowledge increased with experience in the classroom (Arnon & Reichel, 2007). Sahin and Cokadar (2009) found that more experienced teachers moved away from a content view towards a more constructivist view related to reflection and social relationships. This study also found that experienced teachers put more emphasis on personal characteristics in comparison to professional and affective roles. This suggests that experience does play a role in how a teacher defines good teaching.

Some research also shows that teacher's perceptions on characteristics that define a good teacher vary from those of students. Beizhuizen et al. (2001) found that teachers displayed a majority personality view on good teaching which contrasted with student's majority ability view. This finding aligns with those of Murphy, Delli and Edwards (2004) in the sense that teachers in their study agreed that good teachers needed to be caring, not boring and polite, which are personality traits. Teachers may provide insights into good teaching characteristics that students might not realize until presented to them. My project will explore this point, by having students rate the importance of characteristics that they identified in addition to characteristics identified by teachers.

Murphy et al. (2004) assert that teacher beliefs are formed based on experience both in the classroom as a teacher and as a student. Early formed beliefs are strong and resistant to change, which means what someone believes is good teaching could be based in childhood experiences. The resulting beliefs held by experienced teachers are often subjective (Murphy et al., 2004). I want to explore what my colleagues believe makes a good teacher because I will be directly working with them and my teaching practice is affected by theirs. Similar to that of student beliefs, the gap in the research is that existing research does not answer my question on a personal level. Existing information on what characteristics teachers believe makes a good teacher is expansive and well researched, but is also dependent on the context of the study where it was found (Murphy et al., 2004). For this project, the good teacher characteristics that I want to discover are those that are identified by teachers working in my school site.

Instruments (Existing Methods)

Educational researchers have developed lists of characteristics to answer the question, what makes a good teacher. The characteristics and concepts contained in these lists were collected using a variety of instruments (Aksoy, 1998).

The majority of studies used open – ended questions where participants write about set number characteristics they associate with good teaching (Sahin & Cokadar, 2009) or unlimited amount of characteristics (Aksoy, 1998; Beishuizen et al., 2001; Arnon & Reichel, 2007) about what they think makes a good teacher. These data are analyzed for frequency of constructs identified. This methodology provided researchers with many clearly defined characteristics that were produced from the populations they were surveying. One limitation to these measures are that importance of characteristics was dependent on frequency of mention, rather than a more quantitative measure such as a questionnaire where participants rated for importance on a scale. A benefit of open- ended responses is that it provides a multi- layered and deep set of data can offer insight into participant's thoughts (Duarte, 2013).

Another method used in past research is questionnaires where participants rate, rank or select characteristics of importance when describing a good teacher. These

questionnaires are based on pre- existing research (Furnham, 2005), inventories such as the Teacher Behavior Inventory (Ciascai & Vlad, 2014) or Teacher Behaviors Checklist (Keeley, Smith, & Buskist, 2006; Komarraju, 2013), or constructs of interest in the particular study (Gurung, 2007). This method is strong because researchers have explicit number data showing which characteristics participants ranked or rated higher. This allows for a more direct comparison. A limitation to this method is that participants are given constructs to rate, and might have other ideas that are not measured. Kutnick & Jules (1993) reiterate that student perceptions are individual and subjective based on student age, background and experiences. This means that normative studies that provide students with pre-set criteria to rate might provide less insight, while interpretive studies which ask students to express constructs based on own experiences, allows for a more accurate pool of constructs.

Devine et al. (2013) used a mixed methods design that is similar to the design used in this study. Teachers had an open discussion about characteristics that they associated with "good teaching" and then rank ordered their views on a scale from 1 to 10. These findings were used to create a 65 item Good Teacher Questionnaire, in the form of 7 point Likert type questions, which was then re- administered to the teacher participants. This design is strong because participants produce their own constructs and the rating questionnaire is designed based on qualitative data produced in the same study. This way researchers get a multi- layered insight (Duarte, 2013) from the open- ended questionnaire and at the same time, participants are not limited by pre- written constructs. In addition, researchers are able to see importance ratings from Likert- type questions rather than from qualitative frequency measures. A gap in Levine et al. (2013) is that it only researched teacher beliefs on good teaching, and did not look at student beliefs.

Methods

Description of Context and Participants

The goal of this study was to better understand student and teacher beliefs on good teaching, and then also explore how student's rate the importance of concepts identified by both students and teachers. The current study was conducted at a public elementary school in St. Mary's County, Maryland. Two groups of participants, student and teacher, were drawn from convenience samples. Student participants were members of a fourth-grade class. There were 21 student participants whose ages ranged from 9-10 years of age. There were 6 female students and 15 male students in the class. Of the student participants 8 were White, 9 were African American, 2 were Latino, and 2 were of Middle Eastern descent. In the class 8 students are pulled out for special education services and 2 students are English Language Learners (ELLs). The study was conducted during class time, so all students had the opportunity to participate, and student participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any time. The teacher participants volunteered to participate in the study. As of 2013, 35.3% of the teachers at this elementary school were Standard Professionals, and 55.9% of teachers were Advanced Professionals, with 3 years' experience and a Master degree or equivalent credits. Teacher participants remained anonymous and only completed the initial questionnaire.

Methodological Approach

This study was mixed-methods design, with both qualitative and quantitative components. With this approach, I was able to explore several aspects of this issue. Specifically, this study analyzed concepts identified by teachers and students as qualities in a good teacher, which are qualitative data. Then students completed a questionnaire rating the importance of good teacher qualities identified by the students and teachers participating in the study. The questionnaire that rates the importance of different teacher qualities provided me with quantitative data. This portion of my study involved 20 Likert type questions, where students rated the importance of concepts on a 5- point scale.

Data Collection and Analysis

In the first stage of this study I collected data about student beliefs on qualities or concepts that define a good teacher. Student participants were given 10 minutes (more if necessary) to free write their responses to the following prompt: *What is a good teacher to you? What makes a good teacher? Identify qualities or ideas that describe what you think is a good teacher.* Students worked independently at their desks, they could write words, phrases or complete sentences. Students were instructed that this writing piece is not for a grade, and that their responses are going to be used to help inform teachers on good practice. Students were told not to include their name on their response, so their responses would remain anonymous (See Appendix A).

Teacher beliefs on qualities or concepts that define a good teacher were also collected. I created an anonymous questionnaire that was placed in every teacher's mailbox in the Park Hall work room. In addition, a consent form was placed in each teacher's mailbox. The questionnaire included the following question: *What is a good teacher to you? What makes a good teacher? Identify qualities or ideas that describe what you think is a good teacher* (See Appendix B). Teachers were instructed to respond in words, phrases or complete sentences. To protect teacher anonymity, there was an envelope in the work room for teachers to return their questionnaires and a separate envelope for teachers to return consent forms (See Appendix C). Teachers were told not to put any form of identification on their responses. The questionnaires and consent forms were placed in mailboxes on a Monday, and the questionnaire response envelope was collected two weeks later. Six consent forms were collected, and six completed questionnaires were collected. I assumed that each consent form matched with a completed questionnaire.

The data from the first two stages of the study (student and teacher questionnaire) were collected and analyzed. Concepts identified by students and teachers were organized into categories or themes, and also by frequency in both student and teacher responses. I read through all responses to get a general sense of the constructs presented by teachers and students. Then I read through the student responses and wrote down characteristics that were mentioned. Each characteristic was given a column in an Excel spreadsheet, and repeating characteristics were sorted into each column. As new characteristics were read, they were given a column. This process was repeated until all student responses had been read through. Similar characteristics were combined into one column to create more general constructs. This same procedure was repeated for teacher responses. Both sets of data were aligned with the ability, personality and teacher- student relationship view to see if there was one view that emerged most frequently.

An Excel spreadsheet was created with two columns, teacher and student. Constructs presented by students were put in the student column and constructs identified by teachers were put in the teacher column. Similar constructs between the two groups were highlighted to show constructs identified by both groups. I identified 20 frequently mentioned concepts from both student and teacher responses and created a follow- up questionnaire for students to complete. Concepts or themes pulled out from the open ended questionnaire were turned into Likert type questions where students were asked to rate concepts based on importance in describing a good teacher. This questionnaire was administered to just student participants at the end of the study term. The rating system was a five- point Likert type scale, ranging from 1 (*Not important*) to 5 (*The Most Important*). For example, if "patient" was identified as a concept that defines a good teacher, the following question was created (See Appendix D):

1. How important is it for a good teacher to be patient?

1	2	3	4	5
Not Important	Slightly Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	The most Important

The questionnaire was read by another student intern from the 4th grade and a 4trh grade mentor teacher to check for appropriate word choice. The consulting student intern and mentor teacher confirmed that 4th grade students would be able to understand the questions and Likert- type scale.

The same student participants were presented with the follow- up questionnaire during class time and were given ample time to complete the questionnaire. The questions were read aloud to the entire class to ensure understanding by all students. The follow- up questionnaire produced quantitative data which was analyzed through descriptive statistics. In addition, I compared the data to the ability, personality and teacher- student relationship view to see if characteristics in one view were rated most important by students.

Teacher participants did not complete the follow-up questionnaire because teacher beliefs were not in the original proposal of this project and I lacked IRB approval.

Table 1: *Research Questions and Data Sources*

Research Questions	Student Belief Questionnaire	Teacher Belief Questionnaire	Follow- up Questionnaire
1. What concepts are used by students to describe a good teacher?	✖		
2. What concepts are used by teachers to describe a good teacher?		✖	

3. What are similarities and differences between teachers and students perceptions on good teachers?	✖	✖	
4. What concepts are identified by students as most important when describing a good teacher?			✖

Validity Concerns

      Triangulation was used to attend to the validity of the measures (see Table 1). The initial questionnaire had students respond to an open- ended question and measured a student's beliefs on concepts that define a good teacher. The same measure was used on teachers to measure teacher's beliefs on concepts that define a good teacher. To check student beliefs on good teaching a follow- up questionnaire was used. This questionnaire also measured student beliefs on good teaching, and had students' rate concepts that they might not have initially provided. The follow- up questionnaire indicated whether concepts presented by teachers and other students were also important to individual students. It also provided data on the importance of certain concepts for students. This data could be compared to characteristics originally present by students in the open- ended questionnaire.

Findings and interpretations

What characteristics are used by students to describe a good teacher?

      When asked what makes a good teacher, students identified lists of characteristics to answer the question. Characteristics related to technological skills, content knowledge and engaging lessons were written in student's qualitative responses. Under technological skills, students said that good teachers let students "play with Smart Board", use "math games on cool math" and that good teachers "make great PowerPoints for us [students] to learn". These responses suggest that students enjoy using technology. Under content knowledge, students said that good teachers "can teach me and give me good education", "teaches a class", "teach on time" and "knows a lot". Based on these responses, it is important to my students that a good teacher, knows what she is teaching and actually teaches the class. Under the engagement category, students reported that good teachers "teach when everyone is alert", use "Great Power Points", and "makes good worksheets, make math and science fun". These responses suggest that my student's believe that good teachers use engaging materials. All student responses under the ability view can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2
Characteristics identified by students under ability view

Characteristic	Example of Student Response	Frequency
Technology	"play with Smart Board"	3
	"math games on cool math"	
	"makes great PowerPoints for us to learn"	
Content Knowledge	"can teach me give me good education"	8
	"Teach on time"	
	"Knows a lot"	
Engaging Lessons	"Teach when everyone is alert"	4
	"Great Power Points"	
	"Makes good worksheets make math and science fun"	

Students also identified characteristics under the personality view which define good teachers based on characteristics and traits, rather than by knowledge or ability (Beizhuizen et al., 2001). Descriptions related to patient, helpful, kind, funny and positive were provided by my students. Students said that good teachers "does not get mad understands when we make mistakes", "doesn't yell if someone did not hear what you said don't assume they weren't paying attention" and "doesn't yell a lot" which was all coded under the patience characteristic. Students also said that good teachers "go over work", "answers someone's question and is respectful of it" and is a "helping hand". These descriptors were categorized under the characteristic helpful. Students also reported that good teachers are "made out of being nice" and "is funny" which relate to character traits of kind and funny. All student responses under the personality view can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3
Characteristics identified by students under personality view

Characteristic	Example of Student Response	Frequency
Patient	"Does not get mad understands when we make mistakes"	5
	"doesn't yell"	

	"If someone did not hear what you said don't assume they weren't paying attention"	
Helpful	" help me with my test" "goes over work" "encourageable to others" "help me when I don't think I need help" "helps out everyone"	11
Kind	"nice teacher" "that is kind" "polite"	12
Funny	"is funny" "makes jokes"	6
Positive	"good attitude when teaching" "fun"	3

Students also identified characteristics under the Teacher- Student Relationship view which is related to a teacher's ability to function in a social group and take on the social responsibility of a teacher (Ciascai & Vlad, 2014). Students wrote that a good teacher creates a safe classroom environment, in that a good teacher "keeps me safe", "respectful, responsible, peaceful" and "welcomes me to class and makes everyone else in the class comfortable". Students similarly wrote that good teachers listen, trust students and have high expectations. In a different way, students also wrote that good teachers give students less work and more free time. All student responses under the student- teacher relationship view can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4
Characteristics identified by students under Student- Teacher Relationship

Characteristic	Example of Student Response	Frequency

Safe Environment	"keeps me safe"	6
	"respectful, responsible, peaceful"	
	"welcomes me to class and makes everyone else in class feel comfortable"	
Listens	"listens to students to hear what they are trying to say"	5
	"someone I can talk to if I am having a bad day"	
Less Work/ More Free Time	"gives us minimal amount of homework"	8
	"more recess"	
	"lets us play games"	
Trusts Students	"Trusts students"	3
	"respectful, lets students earn behavior back"	
High Expectations	"Makes sure everyone go to college"	1

When defining what makes a good teacher, students identified characteristics that are connected to ability, personality and student- teacher relationships. This is consistent with previous research. Students identified three ability- related characteristics and mentioned ability characteristics 15 times. This is the good teacher theme that was least frequently mentioned by my students which is consistent with Kutnick & Jules (1993) and Beizhuizen et al. (2001). In relation to the personality view, students identified 5 characteristics and mentioned them 37 times. This was the theme most frequently mentioned by students, which suggests it is of some importance to them. Students also responded with characteristics under the student- teacher relationship view, and 5 characteristics were mentioned. Students mentioned these characteristics 23 times. Students took the personality view when defining good teaching. This could be because they see a good teacher as someone who cares for them, helps them and is kind to them. Maybe younger students look for a more caring role in a teacher, rather than a content driven role. One explanation for this finding could be student understanding of characteristics. I taught my class a lesson on character traits, so they had vocabulary they used to describe a person or character. When describing a good teacher my students may have used these descriptors. These descriptors tend to be personality- related rather than ability related.

What characteristics are used by teachers to describe a good teacher?

   Teachers were also asked to identify characteristics they believe make a good teacher. Teachers identified characteristics such as prepared, organized, engaging, flexible, content knowledge, continual learner and creative related to the ability view. Teachers responded that good teachers "are prepared", "punctual with schedule, lessons and paperwork" and "ready for the day when they get to school each morning". Similarly, teachers wrote that good teachers are "organized" and "good with time management". For the characteristic of engaging teachers said that good teachers "engage students", make learning fun and relevant" and "explains to class why they are learning about a particular topic". Teachers also mentioned good teachers are "knowledgeable about content" and "will improve upon their own knowledge as teachers, always evaluating their instruction". All teacher responses about what makes a good teacher under the ability view can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5
Characteristics identified by teachers under Ability View

Characteristic	Example Teacher Responses	Frequency
Prepared	"punctual with schedule, lessons, and paper work" "ready for the day when they get to school each morning"	5
Organized	"are organized"	3
Engaging	"Makes learning fun and relevant" "explains to class why they are learning about a particular topic"	4
Flexible	"flexible with changes" "willing to adapt or enhance instruction to make success possible" "able to adapt and take a lesson where it might lead"	8
Content Knowledge	"knowledgeable about content"	3
Continual Learner	"lifelong learner"	9

	"knows you learn more that you teach in this career"	
	"willing to improve upon their own knowledge as teachers"	
Creative	"willing to try new things"	7
	"inventive and creative"	
	"makes lessons and materials accessible to all"	

Teachers also identified characteristics that are encompassed in the personality view of good teacher characteristics. Teachers identified characteristics such as firm, positive, patient, passionate and dependable. Teachers responded that good teachers are "someone who keeps coming back" and "sets clear expectations and is consistent and follows through". Good teachers are passionate and "love what they do regardless of the challenges faced" and are "willing to go the extra mile". Good teachers are "patient" and "willing to give students a fresh start when they make mistakes". In addition teachers reported that good teachers are "positive", "cheerful" and "willing to put a smile on even after the roughest night in March (when the end seems so far)". Teachers also reported that good teachers are firm. All teacher responses about what makes a good teacher under the personality view can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6
Characteristics identified by teacher under the personality view

Characteristic	Example of Teacher Responses	Frequency
Firm	"Firm"	1
Positive	"Willing to put a smile on…"	5
	"Happy person"	
	"Cheerful"	
Patient	"Patient person with an open mind"	6
	"willing to give students a fresh start when they make mistakes"	
	"let's stuff go"	

Passionate	"loves what they do regardless of challenges faced"	4
	"true passion for the minds and learning of children"	
Dependable	" someone who keeps coming back"	2
	"sets clear expectations and is consistent and follows through"	

Teachers also identified characteristics that are encompassed in the student-teacher relationship view. Teachers reported that good teachers have high expectations of students, "want students to achieve their potential", "believes all students can learn". Also, good teachers must form strong relationships with other teachers, students and parents. Good teachers also need to show students that they care, are understanding and create a safe environment. Teachers responded that good teachers "makes time with students safe and productive", "understands difficulties students face academically and emotionally", "works well with others big and small" and collaborate so they can improve their own knowledge as teachers". All teacher responses about what makes a good teacher under student- teacher relationships can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7
Characteristics identified by teachers under student- teacher relationships

Characteristic	Example of Teacher Responses	Frequency
Create safe environment	"makes her time with that student a safe and productive environment"	2
	"provide safe place for their students to learn"	
Understanding	"understands difficulties students face academically and emotionally"	2
	"can separate child from behavior"	
Team Player	" works will with others"	7
	"wishing to build relationships for better	

	communication and learning"	
	"communicates well with colleagues and administration"	
Communicates with Parents	"communicate frequently with parents"	4
	"gains rapport with parents"	
Shows they care	"show that they care about them"	10
	"cares about each student"	
Forms strong relationships	"forms strong relationships with students"	8
	"works well with big and small"	
High expectations	"encourages students to do the best they can"	7
	"helps each student reach their potential"	

When defining what makes a good teacher, teachers at my school site responded with characteristics related to ability, personality and student- teacher relationships. Teachers identified 7 characteristics under the ability view and mentioned these characteristics 39 times. Teachers at my school site believed that ability (content/skills) is important in a good teacher based on frequency of characteristics mentioned. Teachers then identified 5 characteristics under the personality view and mentioned personality characteristics 18 times. This theme was mentioned least frequently by teachers, which might indicate they believe it is of less importance in a good teacher. Teachers identified 7 characteristics concerning teacher- student relationships and mentioned these characteristics 40 times. The teachers at my school site identified ability and relational characteristics most frequently.   This suggests that teachers believe good teaching is about forming relationships with students and that understanding content and growing as a professional is more important than personality.

What are the similarities and differences between teachers and students' perceptions on good teaching?

The qualitative data from teachers and students about what makes a good teacher allows for comparison between student and teachers on important good teaching characteristics. Both teachers and students mentioned characteristics that fall under the ability view on good teaching. Students and teachers both mentioned "engaging lesson" and "content knowledge" as characteristics of good teachers. Students mentioned "technology

use", while teachers mentioned "prepared", "organized", "flexible", "continual learning" and "creativity". Teachers identified ability characteristics more frequently than students. 40.2% of characteristics identified by teachers were ability related while only 20% of characteristics identified by students were ability related. For a breakdown of the comparison see Table 8.

Table 8
Comparison of student and teacher perceptions on good teaching: Comparing constructs mentioned by teachers, students and both. Comparison by frequency of mention, student percent and teacher percent

View	Teacher constructs	Similar Constructs	Student constructs	Student %	Teacher %
Ability	Prepared Organized Continual learner Creative	Engaging Lessons Content Knowledge	Technology	20%	40.2%
Personality	Firm Passionate Dependable	Positive Patient	Helpful Kind Funny	49.3%*	18.5%
Relational	Understanding Team Player Parental Communication Shows they care Strong relationships High expectations	Safe environment High expectations	Listens Less work/free time Trust students High Expectations	30.6%	41.2%*

Note: * indicates highest frequency of mention by view.

Students and teachers also both mentioned personality characteristics. Teachers and students identified characteristics related to "positive" and "patient", while only students mentioned "helpful", "kind" and "funny", and only teachers mentioned "firm", "passionate" and "dependable". 49.3% of characteristics mentioned by students related to personality which was the highest percentage of characteristics. Only 18.5% of

characteristics mentioned by teachers were related to personality. For a breakdown of the comparison see Table 8.

Students and teachers also mentioned characteristics related to relationships, primarily student- teacher relationships. Both students and teachers identified "safe environment" and "high expectations" as characteristics of good teachers. However, only students mentioned "listens", "less work/more free time" and "trusts students". Only teachers mentioned "understanding", "team player", "parental communication", "shows they care", and "strong relationships". 30.6% of the characteristics mentioned by students to describe a good teacher were related to relationships which made it the second most frequently mentioned theme. While 41.2% of characteristics mentioned by teachers related to relationships when describing a good teacher. Relationships were the most frequently mentioned characteristic group for teachers. For a breakdown of the comparison see Table 8.

The data shows that there were similarities and differences between student and teacher beliefs on good teaching, particularly that teachers mentioned relationship characteristics more, while students mentioned personality characteristics more. For a breakdown of the comparison see Table 8. From this finding I can infer that students and teachers have different views on good teaching. 4th grade students view a good teacher as someone who is kind to them and is funny in class. On the other hand teachers view good teaching as being about to connect to students and relate content to them. Students might not understand the complexities behind good teaching and all the work that goes into a lesson. This difference between student and teachers indicates that teachers work for a connection with students and students look for kind person who helps them.

What characteristics do students identify as most important when describing a good teacher?

When analyzing the results of the second questionnaire, which required students to rate the qualities generated in the initial questionnaires, various findings emerged. When presented with 20 characteristics to describe a good teacher, students rated "caring" (M = 4.77, SD = .428), "content knowledge" (M = 4.72, SD = .461), "safe environment" (M = 4.73, SD = .462), "dependable" (M = 4.67, SD = .49), "prepared" (M = 4.67, SD = .70) and "teacher-student relationships" (M = 4.56, SD = .51) as most important on average. The characteristics that received the most rating of 5, *The Most Important* are "caring" (n = *.778*), "content knowledge" (n = *.722*), "safe environment" (n = *.722*), "dependable" (n = .667) and "prepared" (n = .667). These two measures suggest that students identify these characteristics as most important when describing a good teacher. This finding suggests that characteristics under the ability view, personality view and teacher- student relationship view are all important to students. The characteristics of "content knowledge" and "prepared", both of which were rated as important by student fall under the ability view. These characteristics suggest that students want teachers who are prepared for every day and know about what they are teaching. The characteristics of "dependable" and "caring" fall under the personality view. These characteristics show that students want a teacher who is consistent and shows that they care about student's well- being. The characteristics of "safe environment" and "teacher- student- relationships" fall under the teacher- student relationship view. These characteristic indicate that it is important to students that teachers create a safe learning environment and work towards creating a

personal bond with students. Each view, ability, personality and teacher- student relationship had two characteristics that were highly rated by students. See Table 9 for descriptive statistics of all 20 good teacher characteristics.

Table 9
Descriptive Statistics of all 20 character traits.
Note. * indicates a high score, showing importance of the characteristic

Characteristic	Mean	Standard Deviation	% rating of 5
Patient	4.17	0.79	39
Flexible	1.82	1.13	6
Content Knowledge*	4.72*	0.46	72*
Team Player	3.78	0.81	17
Creative	3.33	1.03	17
Passionate	4.17	0.92	44
Safe Environment*	4.72*	0.46	72*
Dependable*	4.67*	0.49	67*
Understanding	4.44	0.51	44
Positive	4.17	0.62	28
Engaging	3.67	0.97	28
Continual Learner	4.22	1.06	56
Strict	4	0.84	28
Parent Communicate	4.22	0.65	33
Show they care*	4.78*	0.43	78*
Strong relationship*	4.56*	0.51	56
Organized	4.47	0.72	56
Prepared*	4.56*	0.70	67*
High Expectations	4.33	0.59	39
Use Technology	3.28	0.75	6

Discussion of Results

Overall, this study helped to answer my question, what makes a good teacher. I was able to explore the view of teachers and students at my school, through both qualitative and quantitative measures. The qualitative analysis of my student's open- ended responses revealed characteristics related to ability, personality and student- teacher relationship quality when describing a good teacher. Some research predicted that age affects student's beliefs on good teaching. Beizhuizen et al., (2001) found that primary school students tend to describe good teachers based on competency. This finding contradicts the current findings. My students described good teaching using personality and relational characteristics more often than ability characteristics. An explanation for this inconsistency could be the students in my study. I am in a class that is high need and student success is dependent on help from teachers and the small group relationships. This could have an effect on what my students look for in a good teacher because my students need a teacher who is willing to work with them and help them succeed. My student might not have

consistent support at home, and turn to teachers for strong relationship and also kindness. My students sometimes act up, and when they get in trouble might associate good teaching with someone who is patient and forgiving. These human factors might outweigh the importance of ability factors in my students' eyes.

The qualitative analysis of the teachers' open ended responses revealed characteristics related to ability, personality and student- teacher relationship quality when describing a good teacher. For teachers in my study, characteristics related to teacher- student relationships and ability was most often mentioned. This suggests that teachers at my school site concentrate on relational aspects of a good teacher rather than ability. Past research found that teachers tend to display majority personality view on good teaching (Beizhuizen et al., 2001; Murphy et al., 2004). These findings differ from my findings. However, past research does show that importance of professional knowledge and relationships increases with teaching experience (Arnon & Reichel, 2007; Sahin & Cokadar, 2009). Experience level of teachers was not measured in this study, but experience could explain the discrepancy between this study and past research. As mentioned early the school where this study took place was Title 1. Students in my class come from diverse backgrounds, where there is sometimes limited parental support. Many students come into school with emotional and behavioral baggage that teachers have to work with. These factors might contribute to the teacher- student relationship view taken by teachers. Teachers at my school might feel that they need to connect to every student to provide support, consistency and care that might not always be provided outside the school building. Many teachers seek to create a safe learning environment inside the classroom, which is a home for students during the day.

Based on the open- ended responses of my students and teachers at my school site, there are differences in student and teacher beliefs about good teaching. Students and teachers identified similar characteristics but the frequency of these characteristics varied between groups. Students tended to describe good teachers using personality characteristics such as kind or helpful, while teachers tended to describe good teachers with ability descriptors such as "continual learner" and "flexible". Both students and teachers in this study used student- teacher relationship characteristics when describing a good teacher, but teachers tended to use these characteristics more often. These findings suggest that students believe a good teacher is someone who is kind and helpful, while teachers view a good teacher as someone who can relate to students.

Conclusion

This year in the MAT I have learned good teaching practice from mentor teachers, education professors and my peers. I have gained classroom experience and learned about teaching using new curriculum and data- driven practice. I have gained all the tools I need to be a good teacher. But aside from experience and preparation, I still wonder what makes a good teacher?

This project has helped me start to answer this question, but has also shown me that what makes a good teacher is dependent on context and the beliefs of the individual to whom the question was asked. My study asked my 4th grade students and teachers at my

school site to answer the question, and their answers are helping to shape my own beliefs on good teaching.

My students wrote that a good teacher is patient, helpful, kind, funny and positive. To be a good teacher in my student's eyes I need to understand when they make mistakes and help them when they need it. In my daily lessons I should try to add humor and always be positive in the classroom. These responses from my students show that the little things count for them when they are describing a good teacher. The day to day interactions and teachers' attitude towards students are what make a good teacher.

Teachers at my school site, who have more experience than me emphasized the importance of building strong relationships. According to these teachers, a good teacher forms strong relationships with students, shows they care and is a team player. These characteristics reveal the importance of relationships in teaching. Good teachers need to know their students, as well as the environment around them (colleagues, administrators, parents). The responses by teachers at my school site could reflect the push for student-centered learning where students are at the center of teaching rather than teachers. Teachers at my school site also emphasized the importance of being a continual learner, creative and flexible as a good teacher. A good teacher "knows you learn more than you teach in this career". What makes a good teacher is someone who is willing to still be a student and constantly "improve upon their own knowledge". A good teacher must also be flexible, "willing to adapt instruction" and "take a lesson where it might lead". These two points reveal to me that good teaching isn't definite or stagnate; a good teacher needs to be creative and "willing to try new things". These findings show that there is a discrepancy between student and teacher beliefs about good teaching but that student- teacher relationship is important to both groups.

My students then rated the importance of characteristics identified by themselves and also the teachers at their school. My fourth graders rated caring, content knowledge, safe environment, dependable, prepared and a teacher- student relationship as most important when describing what makes a good teacher. These characteristics reveal that my students believe that a good teacher is not just an educator but rather someone who can connect with them personally while also teaching. The description of a good teacher by my students is not simple, but complex. Although only 6 characteristics are highlighted as most important, they describe a complicated job.

There are some limitations to my study. The sample size in my study was small which means that beliefs were not looked at from a wide or diverse population. This does limit the generalizability of my study, but also the purpose of this study was not to be generalized but rather for personal education. The coding of the qualitative data was conducted by one person, which means that there could be bias in naming or identifying the characteristics written by students and teachers. The scale that was used to measure student ratings of importance was researcher- created and so the wording on some questions might have affected the data. Question 2 read "*How important is it for a good teacher to be flexible*" was not clear and many students thought flexible meant physically flexible. Confusions such as these might cause errors in the data collection. Finally, many students in the class were unable to write what they wanted because of ability constraints. Student interviews or scribing might help get more accurate responses from students.

The implications for my study are mostly personal. My study adds to the existing body of research showing that ability, personality and student- teacher relationships

encompass characteristics that describe good teaching. This study also adds to the research showing that student and teacher beliefs on good teaching are dependent on context and the individual. On a personal level I will use my findings to shape my teaching practice and as a set of criteria to strive for as I grow as a teacher. My students are looking for someone who can teacher them content and also build relationships for them. As I prepare for my first year of teaching, I need to remain a student, learning what I need to educate my students. In my future classroom, I need to build a strong classroom community so my students feel safe to learn and grow. I know that there is not one factor that "makes a good teacher", but rather a complex combination of factors. I hope to continue to research what my students and colleagues believe is a good teacher.

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Appendix A

What is a good teacher to you? What makes a good teacher? Identify qualities or ideas that describe what you think is a good teacher (please feel free to answer in words, phrases or sentences). You may respond in a bulleted list or an essay form, whatever you are more comfortable with.

Appendix B

What is a good teacher to you? What makes a good teacher? Identify qualities or ideas that describe what you think is a good teacher (please feel free to answer in words, phrases or sentences). You may respond in a bulleted list or an essay form, whatever you are more comfortable with.

Appendix C

Teacher Questionnaire 1

Hello Park Hall Teachers,

My name is Mia Bullock and I am a student at St. Mary's College of Maryland. I currently have a placement here at Park Hall in Fourth Grade. For my Master's research project, I am exploring what students believe defines a good teacher. I hope to ask students and teachers about concepts they believe define a good teacher, and then have students rank these concepts by importance.

I am reaching out to you, because I would love to hear from you! I really love the community and teachers here at Park Hall, and want to hear from the teachers at this school. I hope to use the results from my research to inform my own teaching practice and feel that I can learn a lot from the teachers at this school. If you wouldn't mind, I included a one question, questionnaire for you to fill out. This is entirely on a volunteer basis and your responses will be kept anonymous.

This questionnaire should take no more than 10 minutes and there are no foreseeable risks associated with participation.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at (240) 863-4775 or msbullock@smcm.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study please contact the chair of the institutional review board at St. Mary's College of Maryland, Anna Han, at irb@smcm.edu, or 131 Goodpaster Hall, Department of Psychology, 18952 E. Fisher Rd., St. Mary's City, MD 20686.

Questionnaires can be returned to the envelope in the teacher work room, and will be collected on _____. Return of the questionnaire and this sheet will be considered consent to participate in the study. I consent to participation in this study. Please follow the following directions:

1. Read and answer the question on the attached sheet

2. Return this packet to the folder in the teacher mailroom by _____

3. By signing below, I consent for my responses to be used in the study entitled "What Makes a Good Teacher: Exploring Student and Teacher Beliefs on Good Teaching"

_____

Thank you and I hope you have great day!

Mia Bullock

Appendix D

Explain your answer.

1. How important is it for a good teacher to be **patient**?	Not Important	Slightly Important	Somewhat important	Very important	The most important	
	1	2	3	4	5	

2. How important is it for a good teacher to be **flexible**?	Not Important	Slightly Important	Somewhat important	Very important	The most important	
	1	2	3	4	5	

3. How important is it for a good teacher to **understand what she is teaching** (content knowledge)?	Not Important	Slightly Important	Somewhat important	Very important	The most important	
	1	2	3	4	5	

4. How important is it for a good teacher to be a **team player** and work with other teachers?	Not Important	Slightly Important	Somewhat important	Very important	The most important	
	1	2	3	4	5	

5. How important is it for a good teacher to be **creative** when planning lessons?	Not Important	Slightly Important	Somewhat important	Very important	The most important	
	1	2	3	4	5	

6. How important is it for a good teacher to be **passionate about teaching,** or really love teaching?	Not Important	Slightly Important	Somewhat important	Very important	The most important	
	1	2	3	4	5	

7. How important is it for a good teacher to create a **safe learning environment**, where students feel safe and comfortable?	Not Important	Slightly Important	Somewhat important	Very important	The most important	
	1	2	3	4	5	

Explain your answer.

	Not Important	Slightly Important	Somewhat important	Very important	The most important	
8. How important is it for a good teacher to be **dependable**, or always there for her students?	Not Important 1	Slightly Important 2	Somewhat important 3	Very important 4	The most important 5	
9. How important is it for a good teacher to be **understanding**?	Not Important 1	Slightly Important 2	Somewhat important 3	Very important 4	The most important 5	
10. How important is it for a good teacher to be **positive**?	Not Important 1	Slightly Important 2	Somewhat important 3	Very important 4	The most important 5	
11. How important is it for a good teacher to be **engaging**?	Not Important 1	Slightly Important 2	Somewhat important 3	Very important 4	The most important 5	
12. How important is it for a good teacher to **continue to learn** and grow as a teacher?	Not Important 1	Slightly Important 2	Somewhat important 3	Very important 4	The most important 5	
13. How important is it for a good teacher to be strict or firm with her students?	Not Important 1	Slightly Important 2	Somewhat important 3	Very important 4	The most important 5	
14. How important is it for a good teacher to communicate with parents?	Not Important 1	Slightly Important 2	Somewhat important 3	Very important 4	The most important 5	
15. How important is it for a good teacher to **show they care** about students?	Not Important 1	Slightly Important 2	Somewhat important 3	Very important 4	The most important 5	

Explain your answer.

16. How important is it for a good teacher to build a **strong relationship with students?**

Not Important	Slightly Important	Somewhat important	Very important	The most important
1	2	3	4	5

17. How important is it for a good teacher to be **organized?**

Not Important	Slightly Important	Somewhat important	Very important	The most important
1	2	3	4	5

18. How important is it for a good teacher to be **prepared** for class every day?

Not Important	Slightly Important	Somewhat important	Very important	The most important
1	2	3	4	5

19. How important is it for a good teacher to have **high expectations** of all students?

Not Important	Slightly Important	Somewhat important	Very important	The most important
1	2	3	4	5

20. How important is it for good teachers to use **technology** in the classroom?

Not Important	Slightly Important	Somewhat important	Very important	The most important
1	2	3	4	5