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A Comparative Study of Novice and Veteran Teachers in Response to
High-Stakes Testing Preparation
by

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Contents

Abstract

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 mandated both assessment and accountability across all the states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. NCLB's high-stakes accountability system rewards or punishes school districts, schools, and teachers for the academic performance of their students (Dworkin, 2005). Rewards include school funding and job security while punishments can be as severe as the closing of an entire school. The high-stakes tests, which begin in third grade, require plenty of preparation from both teachers and students.

The purpose of this study was to explore the different literacy test preparation approaches both novice and veteran 3rd, 4th and 5th grade teachers of one school used in their classrooms and to examine whether and how they shared these approaches. The study also analyzed teachers' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of these practices and how they were able to bridge the generational gap between novice and veteran teachers in order to professionally collaborate with one another and create a positive school culture. Results indicate that although professional collaboration was evident, novice and veteran teachers possessed different perceptions on test preparation and utilized different practices in their classrooms. These practices were directly related to both their perceptions of accountability and years of experience within the field.

Conceptual Framework

Over the last decade, education in the United States has undergone one of its most significant transformations.The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 mandated both assessment and accountability across all the states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. NCLB's high-stakes accountability system attaches considerable consequences to standardized tests including rewards or punishments of school districts, schools, and teachers for the academic performance of their students (Dworkin, 2005).

It also mandated the use of tests for influencing how and what teachers would teach and how and what students would learn (Nichols, Glass, & Berliner, 2012). The general rationale behind the accountability measure was that both teachers and students would inevitably be encouraged to work harder and learn more. Passing scores would result in positive school reviews, bonuses and funding, while failing scores would result in terminations, school closures or student retention (Nichols, et. al, 2012). Despite the increasing literature documenting that high-stakes testing has had negative effects on teaching practices and student motivation, policy makers continue to argue for its effectiveness. Most research fails to support the contention that high-stakes testing increases student learning, which makes educators doubt the relationship of high-stakes testing policies as a positive force in student achievement (Nichols, et. al, 2012).

Teachers live with these accountability circumstances whether they agree with them or not. Those opposed to testing must ask themselves how to prepare their students to pass the exam while not compromising their beliefs about constructivist learning. This dilemma may pose a struggle for teachers because research shows that teachers become less likely to use innovative instructional practices such as cooperative learning, whole language and higher order thinking activities due to their fear of losing control over the test preparation (Sutton, 2004). The

discouragement from using these practices is oftentimes a result of feeling the need to teach to the test. In simplistic terms, teaching to the test is when a teacher focuses every day on test taking skills and content that is guaranteed to appear on the test. By using such practices, teachers promote heightened test taking skills without actual learning of content (Sutton, 2004). Although some teachers consider instruction in test taking skills and practicing with the same form of a test to be appropriate, others do not.

Teachers early in their careers themselves were schooled under this major testing and accountability reform. Meanwhile, later career teachers were most likely watching the change take place within their own classrooms. Novice teachers learned about NCLB and all of its legalities before entering the teaching force, while veteran teachers may have had to compromise their practices as a result of this reform. Since these two groups experienced these reforms at different stages of their professional careers it is possible that they have different perceptions, attitudes and/or outlooks on the law. These perceptions may affect the way they approach test preparation and the effectiveness of their approaches. The study will analyze these two groups' views on the strengths and weaknesses of test preparation approaches and how and whether they are able to bridge any generational gaps among faculty in order to professionally collaborate with one another to create a positive school culture.

Trust and school culture are relevant to test preparation approaches because every day social exchanges between veteran and novice teachers in the testing grades can impact student learning. Social exchanges, sharing of information and collaboration between the two groups greatly affect a schools culture and can influence the effectiveness of test preparation across an entire school. Such exchanges may seem minor; however, sometimes a school is molded by specific professional cultures developed through affect teachers' interactions.

Recent research shows that social trust among teachers and school leaders improves much of the routine work of schools, builds effective education communities, and improves student achievement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). The concept of social trust and sharing information can vary in every school building depending on the cooperation and relationships between teachers, administrators, and students. According to Bryk and Schneider (2002), this trust is grounded in the social respect that comes from the kinds of social discourse that take place in a school community and contains a set of mutual dependencies that are embedded within the social exchanges in this community. This phenomenon is especially pertinent to veteran and novice teachers due to a generational and/or experiential gap. This gap may create different perceptions about change and reform, resulting in a lack of relational trust between the two groups. When relational trust is evident, reform initiatives are more likely to diffuse broadly across an entire school because trust reduces the sense of risk associated with change. If teachers trust one another, they sense support and feel safe to experiment with new practices and embrace change (Bryk and Schneider, 2002).

When reform is implemented both risks and organizational conflict can occur. Teachers will attempt new practices and begin to question these practices (Bryk and Schneider, 2002). This question of "why should we do this" resonates in countless school buildings when the topic of standardized testing comes up. However, reform happens in every profession, and often times, is beyond our direct control. The only thing educators do have guaranteed control of is their efforts in creating a positive school culture. In the study conducted by Bryk and Schneider (2002), it is no surprise that elementary schools with high relational trust were more likely to show marked improvements in student learning while a school with low relational trust had a much lower chance of improving academic productivity. Trust grows through exchanges and

interpersonal respect. Even through disagreements, individuals can feel valued because others are respecting their opinions. Without this respect, relational trust and social exchanges will cease, and conflict may erupt (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Studies show that three types of professional cultures are seen throughout school buildings; the first is known as a veteran-oriented professional culture. Here, the norms of professional practices are determined by and aimed to serve veteran faculty members. A veteran-oriented culture is usually seen in schools where the majority of teachers have been teaching for more than three years and display independent patterns of work. On the other side of the spectrum, there is the novice-oriented professional culture where youth prevails. This culture is usually seen within school sites that are largely staffed with new recruits, which typically a start-up school or an urban school. However, both of the cultures mentioned above are dominated by one group and are hard to come by. The culture that seems to take precedence over the other two is known as an integrated professional culture where both novice and veteran teachers are present and ongoing professional exchange across experience level is encouraged. In a school that values this type of culture, teamwork and collaboration are portrayed. These three cultures are rooted from teacher-teacher trust and are vital to the success of students in the testing grades (Colley, 2002; Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Olebe, 2005).

As schools across the country face ongoing pressure to raise test scores and bring students to high standards, increased attention is being paid to school improvement within the context of teacher-teacher trust, as Sebring and Bryk (2000) note:

> In schools that are improving, where trust and cooperative adult efforts are strong, students report that they feel safe, sense that teachers care about them, and experience greater academic challenge. In contrast, in schools with flat or declining test scores, teachers are more likely to state that they do not trust one another. (p. 5)

Relationships among veteran and novice teachers are important indicators of a school's readiness to reform and their chances at academic success. The more interaction the parties have over time, the easier it will be to begin to trust one another. Tschannen-Moran (2001) conducted a study in which she analyzed the relationships between the level of collaboration in a school and the level of trust. The results showed that teacher to teacher collaboration is an important mechanism to address problems within schools, and trust is necessary for schools to obtain the benefits from this collaboration. Trust among educators can lower the sense of vulnerability as teachers either begin or approach the end of their career in this high-stakes-testing society.

Although trust may seem easy to come by, often there are obstacles to developing healthy social school environments such as the generational gaps between novice and veteran teachers and teacher isolation. According to Birkeland and Johnson (2002), the climate of the school is critical in the way new teachers are embraced as members of an existing faculty. Barth (2002) notes that in many schools, feelings of disillusionment among veteran teachers are so embedded in the school setting that sometimes a sense of hopelessness occurs. These are the types of settings where novice teachers may begin to feel discouraged and want to leave the profession. According to Olebe (2005), the manner in which a school operates dictates the degree of a new teacher's success and in turn affects the teacher attrition and migration rates. Studies show that many new teachers leave the profession within the first 3-5 years, and much of the professions exodus is due to the circumstances these novices find themselves in. It is vital for a school to create a positive school culture because giving teachers a supportive environment allows novice educators to acquire the expertise from interactions with veteran educators, helping them to become strong classroom instructors (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Blasé and Blasé (2001) note that

creating this positive school culture stems from collective collaboration: "it happens when a school is carefully and systematically structured to encourage authentic collaboration" (p.42).

Every school is filled with teachers with different qualities, from different content specialties to years' experience. Developing successful collaboration and relational trust across these differences will not happen through a single workshop. There must be day to day activities that all teachers, regardless of their differences experience. This study will explore one possible venue for developing relational trust: how novice and veteran teachers approach test preparation, the strategies they deem positive, and the degree to which those approaches are shared. This degree of sharing directly affects school culture because novice and veteran teachers may have different views that may or may not promote a social trust amongst one another. It is possible that the generational gap actually helps these collaborative efforts by incorporating two different levels of knowledge and their experience on the same topic. It may also have the opposite effect creating tension or a clash of opinions between the two groups of educators. This study will explore what test preparation approaches are being used, their effectiveness and whether or not they are being implemented across the grade level or are particular to either a novice or veteran teacher.

The concepts behind this research are important because they directly affect student achievement. High-stakes testing is here to stay for the foreseeable future; therefore, testing needs to be managed effectively by both novice and veteran teachers in ways that positively impact student learning and the culture of a school. School culture itself is a vital component of a high performing school and one of the biggest factors that classifies a school as high performing is the students' standardized test grades. The interdependence of school culture and

student achievement makes it critically important that teachers work across differences to support students and each other in these high-stakes environments.

This study specifically looked at the literacy test preparation strategies of the 3rd, 4th and 5th grade teachers across one school. The study also analyzed their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches and how they were able to bridge the generational gap in order to professionally collaborate with one another. The research questions associated with this study were:

- What similarities and differences among test preparation practices exist between novice and veteran teachers?

- To what degree do teachers share practices with colleagues?

- How does collaboration impact school culture?

Literature Review
Accountability as a Major Component of the No Child Left Behind Act

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 mandated both assessment and accountability across all the states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The purpose of the Act was to guarantee that all children have an equal and significant opportunity to acquire a high-quality education by reaching proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and assessments (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001). NCLB included numerous components. First, it sought high-quality academic assessment systems, accountability systems, teacher preparation, curriculum and instructional materials. These all should align with challenging state standards and enable measurement of progress against common expectations (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001).

NCLB also intended to meet educational needs of low-achieving children, limited English proficient children, migratory children, children with disabilities, Indian children, neglected or delinquent children, and young children in need of reading assistance, ultimately seeks to close the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, including the achievement gaps between minority and non-minority students, and between disadvantaged children and advantaged children (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001).

Arguably the most controversial component of NCLB involved holding schools, local educational agencies, and states accountable for improving the academic achievement of all students. The reasoning behind this accountability was to identify and turn around low-performing schools that have failed to provide a high-quality education to their students, while providing alternatives to students in such schools to enable the students to receive a high-quality education. (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001). NCLB was intended to improve and strengthen accountability, teaching, and learning by using State assessment systems. These systems are

designed to guarantee that students are meeting challenging State academic achievement and content standards. It also provided greater decisionmaking, authority, and flexibility to schools and teachers for student achievement, while also providing children with an enriched and accelerated educational program, including the use of school-wide programs or additional services that increase the amount of instructional time (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001).

NCLB also intended to significantly elevate the quality of instruction by providing the staff with significant opportunities for professional development and coordinating services under all parts of the Act. Lastly, it intended to give parents substantial and meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children. Although these purposes and goals seem beneficial, they were all fueled by a commitment to high-stakes accountability, which often times is looked at in a negative light.

Critics of accountability systems involving high-stakes testing believe that these tests narrow the curricula to what is being tested. However, the main components of NCLB are not new in the education system; school accountability began following the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Ever since this document was circulated, the entire nation had its mind fixated on the failures of American school systems in both domestic performance and international competition; therefore, this idea of improving school systems is not new. However, it is just controversial due to its "one-size-fits-all" being imposed on all students except those who meet some severe exclusion. Further, the high stakes that NCLB brought are new.

The rationale to attaching high-stakes accountability to standardized testing was simple: teachers and students would inevitably work harder to pass tests and as a result, learn more. However, according to a review of literature by Nichols, Glass, & Berliner (2012),

> In spite of growing literature indicating that high-stakes testing has had a deleterious effect on teaching practices and student motivation; policymakers continue to argue for its effectiveness in increasing student learning as evidenced in newer proposals and recommendations for the reauthorization of NCLB. (p.4)

In fact, most of the research surrounding NCLB provides little support for the effectiveness of high-stakes tests in increasing student achievement or graduation rates, even though studies have varied widely in scope and design, makes it difficult to reach a single conclusion about high stakes testing on student achievement (Nichols, 2007). Studies that consider performance on NAEP suggest that high-stakes testing does not lead to real learning gains but rather artificial ones that are likely the result of paying more attention to tested material (Nichols, 2007). Therefore, teaching becomes counterproductive when academic activities are geared towards tested materials and the "teaching to the test" phenomenon becomes a reality. According to a study conducted by Lipman (2002), test preparation practices varied across Chicago schools and there was a more intense focus on test preparation and raising standardized test scores in low achieving schools due to the fear of accountability consequences. This shift from traditional teaching practices to test preparation practices is occurring in schools all over the United States. The change can affect the way teachers view their practice and impact their interaction with one another, ultimately changing the culture of a school.

School Culture

Recent research shows that social trust among teachers, parents, and school leaders improves routine work and is a key resource for reform (Bryk and Schneider, 2002). Perhaps the largest and most well-known study on trust in schools is Bryk and Schneider's 2002 study in relational trust and student achievement within schools. Bryk and Schnedier's interest on relational trust grew from their intensive field study in the early 1990's of Chicago's school decentralization reform, focusing on the micropolitcal dynamics of twelve school communities.

The research explored areas of relational trust and the quality of adult relationships in a school community. As a result, they decided to pursue in-depth analysis of three Chicago elementary schools chosen because they captured much of the diversity in reform implementation found in all the initially studied sites (Bryk and Schneider, 2002).

According to Bryk and Schneider, relational trust can be defined as the interpersonal social exchanges that take place in a school community. These exchanges can take place in a variety of ways, such as teacher to teacher, principal to teacher, teacher to student, principal to paren,t and/or teacher to parent. Bryk and Schneider (2002) note that relational trust is built on four criteria; respect, competence, personal regard for others and integrity. They emphasize that if there is a strong, trusting feeling between individuals with different roles in a school community, the school will be more successful in educating the students. In order to determine whether or not their hypothesis was accurate, Bryk and Schneider examined the relational trust that existed in each of the schools by observing school meetings and events, conducting interviews, and observing classroom instruction. They conducted complex statistical analyses that broke down the variability in teachers' survey responses. They also examined the effects and implications of relational trust on increased student learning by conducting a seven-year survey based on data from four hundred elementary schools.

Overall, Bryk and Schneider were able to establish a connection between the level of trust in a school and student learning. They emphasized that trust in and of itself does not directly affect student learning but that "trust fosters a set of organizational conditions, some structural and others social-psychological, that makes it more conducive for individuals to initiate and sustain the kinds of activities necessary to affect productivity improvements"(p.116). The study also concluded that trust among educators lowers their sense of vulnerability as they engage in

unfamiliar tasks, facilitates problem-solving, allows members of a school to understand their own and others' roles, and "constitutes a moral resource for school improvement"(p.34). For example, the absence of trust in one school created sustained controversy around solving simple problems, while schools that built trust were able to diffuse reform initiation broadly because trust reduced the sense of risk often associated with change. Further, they determined that when school professionals trusted one another, they felt safe to experiment with new practices.

Not surprisingly, results also indicated that elementary schools with high relational trust were more likely to demonstrate marked improvements in student learning. Schools with low scores of relational trust at the end of the study had only one in seven chance of demonstrating improved academic productivity. On the other hand, schools that scored high on relational trust were considered to be a part of the improved group and recorded increases in student learning of 8 percent in reading and 20 percent in mathematics over a five year period (Bryk and Schneider, 2002).

Tschannen-Moran (2001) also conducted a study on relationships between the level of collaboration and trust in a school. Tschannen-Moran (2001) believed collaboration to be a vital aspect in the management of schools. Schools and teachers are continuously undergoing changes that influence their effectiveness. According to Tschannen-Moran (2001), in order for teachers to successfully adapt their teaching practices to meet the changing expectations of various reform initiatives, they must have opportunity to participate in dialogue with other teachers to support and challenge one another. This collaboration creates a mutual respect, but also encourages a productive level of debate, which has the potential to stimulate teaching. By engaging with one another, collaboration supports risk taking and reduces the struggle often associated with chances especially in the era of high-stakes testing.

The purpose of Tschannen-Moran's study was to build upon the empirical evidence that links collaboration and trust to the context of schools. It focused on the relationship between collaboration and trust and teachers perceptions of the level of collaboration and trust in schools through a trust survey and a collaboration survey. The results indicated a significant link between teachers' collaboration with colleagues and trust in colleagues. The study demonstrated the vital link between collaboration and trust, finding that in schools where trust was evident, there tended to be a greater level of collaboration. When trust was absent, collaboration was difficult because people were hesitant to work together (Tshannen-Moran, 2001).

Megan Tshannen-Moran published additional work on the issue of trust with Wayne K. Hoy. They developed a Trust Scale to measure the level of trust in schools. They then examined the interrelationships of faculty trust in their students, teachers, principals and parents (Hoy & Tschannen- Moran, 2003). Findings suggest that when there was a greater perceived level of trust in a school, teachers had a better sense of efficiency. They also found that trust tended to be universal, meaning that when teachers trusted their principals they were more likely to trust one another, their students and parents. These results have been used to develop a self-assessment tool to measure the level of trust in schools.

In a much earlier study of 24 schools, Louis, Marks, and Kruse (1996) used interviews and surveys of teachers as well as observations to collect data on the value of teacher collaboration. Their results show that sites that had a school culture conducive to supporting all teachers were more likely to utilize collaborative practices to enhance student learning. Barth (2002) agrees with this finding, contending that the culture of a school is perpetuated through the collaboration that takes place between faculty members.

Novice and Veteran Teachers as Constituents of School Culture

A school culture that is characterized by the active participation of both novice and veteran teachers in relation to instruction, policy-making and the growth of students can be defined as an integrated professional culture (Johnson and Kardos, 2002). Novice teachers are characterized as having three or less years of classroom experience, while veteran teachers are said to have three or more years of classroom experience (Brock and Grady, 2001). When looking at a dysfunctional school culture, novices are not welcomed as important members of the staff. Johnsons and Kardos (2002) suggest that oftentimes, novice teachers find themselves in what is called a veteran-oriented professional culture. This culture is fueled by veteran teachers and the norms of professional practice are determined by experienced faculty members. According to Barth (2002), the initial enthusiasm expressed by novice teachers as they enter the profession is diminished by a school that fails to meet their needs and include them in collaborative planning. Colley (2002) suggests that relying on novice teachers to be responsible for their own professional growth and not having the support system of their colleagues can lead to increased turnover rates. Blasé and Blasé (2001) suggest that collective efforts in changing the school culture take more than a principal's decision; rather, collective want happens when a school is structured to encourage authentic collaboration.

In a survey of 571 elementary teachers, Hausman and Goldring (2001) found that teachers were more committed to their work if they were part of a support system that allowed them to work with colleagues in developing their skills. The study also suggests that teachers were more likely to increase student achievement if they felt a sense of support and are given opportunities to learn through them. Also, in sample of 248 Chicago elementary schools, Bryk, Camburn, and Louis (1999) found that novice and veteran teachers began to create trusting

relationships when participating in work that helped students succeed. The common goal of

student success allowed these teachers to come together and create trusting relations. This idea

was believed to be true by Dewey (1997), expressing that when individuals understand the

boundaries and expectations of the work to be accomplished, all participation would be

beneficial, and the collaborative effort would fuel individuals to become engaged in the work of

the larger community.

　　　　According to Bryk and Schneider (2002), trust within a faculty comes from a common

understanding about what students should learn, how they should be taught, and how students

and teachers should behave towards one another. It is not uncommon for new teachers to be over

looked when making important educational decisions; therefore, authentic relationships must be

fostered by personal conversations, shared work and shared responsibilities of veteran and

novice teachers. According to Vygotsky's (1986) socio-cultural theory, the development of an

individual relies on the interactions brought by others in a social learning experience. These

collaborative practices can ultimately improve each teacher self- efficacy as classroom

instructors and create a positive school culture.

Novice and Veteran Perceptions on High-Stakes Test Taking

　　　　Much of what has been written by teaching professionals on the topic of accountability

and testing have been negative, reactive and emotional (Mulevenon, Stegman & Ritter, 2005).

The elimination of creative teaching, the concept of teaching to the test, and the increased time

spent on test preparation have been concerns of teachers even before the passage of NCLB

(Mulevenon, Stegman & Ritter, 2005, Paris, 1992; Shepard, 1991). Additional effects of NCLB

mentioned by teachers include the effects testing has on student anxiety, the neglect of higher

order thinking, decreased student motivation, and reduced student creativity (Mulevenon,

Stegman & Ritter, 2005). Research suggests that the greatest anxiety over testing is reported by teachers due to the accountability circumstances attached to it (Mulevenon, Stegman & Ritter, 2005). Teachers also express negative perceptions about standardized testing in general. Barth (2001) wrote "every moment of a teacher's day is being scrutinized by others to discover what changes might raise students' scores" (p.446). It is no surprise that an increasing amount of teachers have negative feelings towards test preparation due to the attachment of accountability. Hoyle and Slater (2001) outlined some negative effects the stress standardized testing places on school personnel, stating that the accountability consequences place educators in an uncomfortable situation where they may resort to unethical measures to avoid embarrassment.

A study conducted by Lai and Waltman (2008) analyzed questionnaire and interview data on teachers' perceptions and practices in regards to test preparation. Results showed that most teachers thought that constantly practicing with the same test questions was deemed unethical. On the other hand, most teachers thought "it was ethical to review content and skill areas prior to testing and to use practice tests" (p.38). The differences between perceptions were seen mostly in the use of practice tests, finding that elementary teachers were more likely to perceive their use as ethical but practicing with last year questions as unethical.

Perceptions also vary between novice and veteran teachers. Since novice teachers are relatively new to the field, they oftentimes enter the career with an open mind and eagerness to teach. However, these new teachers are usually mentored by or working in close quarters with veteran teachers who have been educators for years. Veterans have seen a huge transition in the teaching field and are very familiar with the practices before NCLB and after NCLB. According to Hoyle and Slater (2001), veteran teachers often lose their motivation and feel trapped in a career with no possibility of change. Their loss of enthusiasm may result in decreased energy and

an increase in teaching to the test. This mindset can affect new teachers, leaving them with feelings of uncertainty. Research shows that some new teachers are "lost at sea" because of insufficient and negative guidance of what to teach and how to teach it (Kauffman, Johnson, Kardos, Liu, & Peske, 2002). According to Costigan and Crocco (2004), new teachers are often times resilient in finding ways to deal with the challenge of teaching in the age of accountability. However, research proves that curriculum narrowing and teaching to the test has had a negative effect on beginning teachers' perceptions as well as veteran teachers' perceptions and has fostered unsatisfactory attitude towards teaching (Boote, 2006).

Methodology
Overview

This study looked at the different test preparation approaches of five novice and five veteran 3rd, 4th and 5th grade teachers in a K-5 elementary school and analyzed their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches. It also explored how teachers over time have met challenges of test preparation and how they were able to bridge the generational gap in order to professionally collaborate with one another in order to create a positive school culture. By looking at their practices of, procedures for and perceptions about test preparation, the study explored whether they were embracing or resisting change and determined whether there was a drastic difference between the two groups.

The study analyzed these perceptions and asked about "teaching to the test." It is possible that this phenomenon may only affect some teachers and not others. On the other hand, it also has the potential to shape an entire school. Therefore, the study looked inside one elementary school that regularly performs well on their yearly assessments. By focusing on one school, the study was able to analyze whether or not the test preparation practices were consistent across all testing grades or if they differed. It looked at the teachers in the testing grades and explored whether or not the similarities and/or differences were related to teachers' years of experience. It also analyzed the degree to which they shared these practices and if the sharing was consistent among both novice and veteran teachers and how it affected the school's culture.

The research was conducted through instructional observations and a taped interview with each individual teacher. The taped interviews were transcribed and uploaded into the qualitative software analysis program ATLAS ti. Since this study was exploratory and qualitative, the analyses searched for common themes across all respondents and separated veteran teachers' data from novice teachers' data.

Site Selection

As a graduate student in the Education Department at Wagner College, I had connections at several public schools on Staten Island. I chose a K-5 public elementary school with which I was familiar and where I had worked with the Principal and Assistant Principal during my undergraduate studies. The student population consisted of 519 students comprised of 50.67% males and 49.33% females. The school regularly performs well on their yearly progress report with either an A or B score. Their 2011-2012 overall score was a B and overall percentile was a 68, meaning that the school's score performs at the 68th percentile mark of elementary schools in the city, solidly above average. The progress report is comprised of four quantitative components including, student progress, student performance, school environment, and closing the achievement gap. Data informing the scores came from student performance measures on the state tests in English and Math, as well as student attendance and a survey of the school community about safety, respect, communication, and engagement. In 2012, the school received Bs in every category except school environment, in which they received an A.

Research Procedure

I began my study by sending proposals to the Wagner College Human Experimentation Review Board (HERB) and to the New York City Department of Education Institutional Review Board (IRB). Both my HERB and IRB proposals were approved (see appendix). I set up a meeting with the Administrative Principal at the identified school in order to discuss the study and determine whether or not it was feasible to conduct the research in the building. Once approved by school leadership, I asked if it is easier to meet with all of the 3rd, 4th and 5th grade teachers together or separately. I was told to set up individual times with each of them during their free periods. She created a list of the teachers with whom I would be meeting with and told me whether or not they were veteran or novice teachers, using a five-year and under criterion.

When I met with the teachers I introduced myself as a Wagner College Graduate Student and explained my study in detail to them. If they were interested I handed them the informed consent form and allowed them to take some time to read it over. If they agreed and signed the form I asked them how many years of teaching experience they had and noted it at the top. Given the range of experience I selected all ten of the teachers and set up both an observation and, when possible, an interview time and day with them.

In order to obtain context and a better understanding of the teachers' instructional practices, I observed each teacher for one class period of literacy instruction. I began observations in February 2013. During the observation I watched and listened to the lesson, taking notes to understand the teachers' process and get a better contextual understanding of their teaching. I referred back to these notes during the interview if I needed clarification or an explanation on something. After the lesson I met with the teacher and confirmed or set up a time and date for the interview. Most of the teachers chose to do their interview immediately following the observation, while three scheduled a future time.

During each interview I read the interview introduction and made the participants feel as comfortable as possible. As I asked the interview questions the subjects' responses were being recorded by consent. I was also able to look through test preparation booklets and other test preparation activities that they used in their classrooms. After the interview I thanked them for their time and participation in my study and asked if they would like a copy of the transcript and the opportunity to offer any corrections or redactions. None of the teachers requested a copy of the transcript. All observations and interviews concluded in March 2013.

The taped interviews were transcribed and uploaded into the qualitative software analysis program, ATLAS ti. Since this study is exploratory and qualitative, the analyses searched for

common themes across all respondents and separated veteran teachers' data from novice teachers' data. Tapes and transcripts were destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

Instruments

The interview was used as the main data gathering instrument in this study. The qualitative data gathering method was chosen because it provided rich and detailed descriptions and explanations on this subject matter. The interview questions touched upon the topics of test preparation practices, perceptions of test preparation, collaboration with co-workers and the strengths and weaknesses of various test preparation approaches. The protocol follows:

1. If I were a student in your class, how might I describe to my parents the way we prepare for standardized tests?
   o Prompts for follow-up in the event the respondent does not address these topics: time of day, frequency and duration.
2. Let's say I am a new student teacher placed specifically with you to learn how to plan lessons to improve student achievement. What would you share?
   o Prompts: whole language vs. phonics and higher order thinking skills vs. discrete knowledge.
3. Some teachers use test preparation booklets. How, if at all, do you use them and why do you choose them?
   o Prompts: benefits/drawbacks of these booklets, differences in the cognitive demands and the students' response in comparison to other test preparation strategies.
4. Tell me your best and worst story about test preparation.

5. If I were a new teacher in your grade and asked you what people mean by the saying "teaching to the test" how would you describe it? Do you think your colleagues would describe it the same way?

6. Do you think children are receiving a different kind of education today due to these tests? If so, how do you feel about this change?

7. In what ways do tests influence the professional culture (teacher-teacher, teacher-principal) and interactions in the school?

8. Is there anything else you would like to share about how you and your school address literacy test preparation?

Data Processing and Analysis

After completing the general observations and interviews, the data were transcribed for each respondent. The transcripts were uploaded onto the qualitative software analysis program, ATLAS ti, which was used to analyze themes across all respondents and to separate the veteran teachers' data from the novice teachers' data. Common codes included but were not limited to: critical thinking, higher order thinking, restrictive teaching, constructivist teaching, differentiation, teaching to the test, and collaboration. The novice responses were then separated from the veteran responses and analyzed holistically in order to understand the major themes from a larger perspective. The data were also analyzed for similarities and differences between the two groups. The transcripts were destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

Results

Teaching to the Test

A common theme expressed by all respondents related to "teaching to the test." This term was used to describe when teachers focused their teaching practices on preparing students for standardized tests. This practice was described in a variety of ways ranging from practice test preparation strategies for one period a day to completely integrating it throughout daily lessons. Negative attitudes on this topic stemmed from the increased time spent on test preparation and the decreased time spent on innovative and creative teaching. Both groups had similar responses when describing their thoughts on teaching to the test, and all suggested that it is something that, as one respondent said, "unfortunately has to be done to ensure student achievement." Their major concerns were focused around their students' progression to the next grade. When accountability was mentioned in regards to their own jobs, they all agreed that although lack of job security is stressful, such security was not their priority. As one novice respondent said, "although keeping my job would be ideal, you never know what group of students you are going to get and how they will react to testing; therefore, it is my duty to provide them with the skills they will need to successfully pass these exams, and I will worry about my job or the grade our school receives later."

Although these teachers indicated that student achievement was their main priority, it did not mean they were happy about the high-stakes achievement environment. One veteran respondent said "Yes, I teach to the test, and, no, I do not like it but it is something I have to do to ensure that my students are confident and feel good about themselves on that day." Both groups had similar responses in all conversation regarding this topic. They all agreed that education for children has drastically changed and that teaching to the test was diminishing the authentic learning process. However, it was viewed something that had to be done. Veteran

teachers were more passionate on the topic, expressing that they wished things were the way they used to be. While, novice teachers expressed how, although they sometimes find themselves teaching to the test, they try not to by utilizing different strategies during test preparation such as incorporating games or creative strategies to assist in the grueling process.

Test Preparation Strategies

Although novice and veteran teachers all expressed similar perspectives and reactions on teaching to the test, how they "taught to the test" differed between the two. The first type of preparation the interview asked about was using the standardized test preparation booklets. These booklets usually contain sample questions from previous tests and replicate what the actual standardized test is going to look like. Both novice and veteran teachers used these booklets but to different degrees. Veteran teachers indicated that they have been using these booklets for years and they work for several reasons. Firstly, they were beneficial because they expose students to what the actual test is going to look like. They were able to review questions that are formatted and worded just as they would be on the actual test. Being that many of these questions are from previous exams, they truly give students a realistic experience of what they will be presented with the day of the test. Veteran teachers also indicated that they practice with these booklets for one period a day directly after the winter vacation. One veteran teacher also expressed how they are constantly preparing their students for standardized tests even before they receive the booklets by integrating test preparation into their daily lessons. For example, one veteran teacher indicated that every time she does a read aloud she has the students write down the main idea and discuss it. They all mentioned doing something of this sort in order to familiarize the students with these skills and to make the test less intimidating for them.

Veteran teachers also mentioned how the test booklets are a beneficial way to practice with the actual format of the test. For example, one teacher talked about the simplicity of bubbling in a scantron, but how it may not be simple if the first time a student is exposed to it is the day of the test. "At the end of the day, the most you can do for your students is make them feel confident and comfortable" expressed one veteran teacher when talking about using the test booklets. Another veteran respondent also indicated that as much as it makes more sense to integrate test preparation into daily lessons, it can also be a drawback because integration can cover up the real thing. She also said, "A student can become extremely confident finding the main idea with his classmates after a read aloud, but what happens when he has to pick the best answer out of four very good answers, this is the type of skill we need to teach them in order to succeed with these tests, and unfortunately that is also known as teaching to the test."

When asked about the frequency, length, and implications of using test booklets, veteran teachers responded differently from novice teachers once again. Veteran teachers all indicated that they utilized the booklets during a set period each and every day, two months prior to the test date. They also indicated that this period ranges from forty to fifty minutes long and is instituted as independent work. At the end of the period the answers are reviewed as a whole group. Additionally, they also assign booklet pages for homework if they do not get to it in class or if they feel there is more to cover. When asked if they ever do these test questions as a group, they all mentioned that although they do on occasion, they try not to in order to give students the opportunity to use their own knowledge to take the practice tests just as they would on the day of the actual test.

On the other side of the spectrum, novice teachers had a different outlook on this process. First, they did indicate that they used test booklets as a source of test preparation in their

classroom but sporadically and in varied ways. For example, a novice teacher expressed how she

and her novice co-worker came up with the idea of "test buddies," meaning that the students

were paired with a classmate while working in these booklets and were able to work together to

find the answers. She also said that if they were working independently in these booklets, they

were able to check their answers with their test buddy at the conclusion of the period. She

expressed that the students thoroughly enjoyed this practice because they were able to

communicate with their classmates and collaborate on something they regularly find boring. The

teacher said, "If the students are required to take these tests and succeed on them, the least I can

do is make the preparation enjoyable for them." She also indicated how student collaboration

was vital for increasing their critical thinking skills; accordingly she and allows them to work

together in a way where they will have to display their knowledge and understanding of the

topic. The novice teachers all agreed that although the booklets have their benefits, it is more

important to vary the ways in which they are utilized. As one novice participant noted, "no child

looks forward to forty five minutes of answering multiple choice questions, but they can look

forward to how they do it."

The major difference between veteran and novice teachers on the topic of test booklets

was not the question of using them in the classroom; it was the question of how and when to use

them. This difference was also expressed through the construction of classroom tests. Three of

the novice teachers indicated that they create classroom quizzes on read aloud books, replicating

standardized test question types. They believe this practice to be beneficial because it gives

students an opportunity to answer multiple choice literacy skills questions using books that are

familiar to them, not just the dry material often found in standardized tests. All five of the novice

teachers also specified that they spend a period at the beginning of the test preparation season to

teach their students "test taking skills." For example, one teacher talked about how she taught her students to cross out the two answers that absolutely cannot be correct so they do not focus their energy on them. Another teacher expressed how she teaches her students the different types of questions they will see in a test booklet and how the questions are organized. For example, the first question following a passage is often times a "right there" question, meaning that the answer is right in the passage and can be underlined. However, there are also going to be questions that require critical thinking such as a question about a theme or main idea. For these questions, the teachers taught their students to underline clues and facts throughout the passage. Sometimes, taking the time out to teach the actual skill can make or break how a student performs on a standardized test. They may be extremely intelligent in the classroom, but when it comes to test question terminology such as the word "identify," they may become confused and perform poorly on a question they would have regularly performed well on.

Veteran teachers did not mention creating teacher-made assessments to replicate standardized test questions, and when asked about this practice, they generally said the same thing: "That's why we are provided with test booklets." They felt it was more important to test students on the knowledge they were learning in the classroom and not try to trick them with nuanced answers. However, novice teachers argued that if they are retaining the knowledge taught in the classroom then they will be able to decipher between two answers and not only express their comprehension but practice a common test taking skill.

Attitudes on Standardized Testing

Personal attitudes also differed between novice and veteran teachers on the topic of test preparation and testing in general. Both novice and veteran teachers agreed that standardized tests and the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 drastically changed

education and how students are learning. However, all but one novice teacher responded in a surprisingly positive manner, stating that they didn't mind test preparation and used their creativity to make it more enjoyable and engaging for children. One novice teacher said, "Testing is not going to just vanish with a blink of an eye so instead of retaliating against it, embrace it." Another novice teacher indicated the same concept by expressing that her students would feel the negative energy if she were opposed to something. She felt that if the teacher has a negative perspective on something then so will the students, resulting in poor test scores and a lack of self-confidence. These novice teachers were just as stressed out as students from the multitude of accountability requirements but they saw it as their job to provide students with the necessary skills to pass these exams. They did not believe they could succeed if the students were deterred due to a teachers' bad attitude or non-encouraging environment. Although these teachers did not necessarily like the idea of standardized tests, they decided not to be publically negative about them and remained positive for the children's sake.

Three novice teachers noted how they tried to create a comfortable test preparation environment for their students, whether it was through the use of test buddies or collaborating with another class in the same grade. One teacher spoke about her own test preparation experiences in elementary school and how she dreaded it so much that she promised herself to make it enjoyable when she became a teacher. This was an interesting point because some of these teachers were so young that they were still in school when the No Child Left Behind Act was implemented, which drastically differs from veteran teachers who was most likely already well into their careers when NCLB was enacted.

The only novice teacher who thoroughly dreaded and expressed negative attitudes about testing was the special education teacher. She felt as though the tests were too advanced for her

students and it was thus virtually impossible to successfully prepare them to pass. She mentioned the "one size fits" concept and how that idea just did not work for her group of students. She mentioned differentiating instruction and how she tries to differentiate the test preparation for her students by breaking down the questions, but at the end of the day they would still be presented with the same test as everyone else. However, she indicated she did collaborate with her co-workers and allowed for students in other classes to come and work with her students on test preparation during extended day. This practice seemed to help the students and allowed them to work together on different levels to achieve a common goal.

As for the veteran teachers, their attitudes and feelings were nothing close to positive. These teachers have been teaching in the field for over a decade and had watched the education system and daily teaching practices transform. This transformation was not a positive one in their eyes, and feelings of resentment and discouragement radiated through each of their responses. They talked about the years when this test obsession was nonexistent and how they were able to watch their students grow and learn in a non-threatening environment. They also talked about universal learning and how before the teaching to the test phenomenon they would have time to teach a variety of subjects and give their students the freedom to learn in a creative and authentic way. One veteran teacher said "these are our children, our future, and instead of successfully providing them with a well-rounded variety of skills, we are limiting them to four answers." They expressed how children used to be well-rounded because they were given the opportunity to learn about different subjects and spend time utilizing their skills in a variety of ways. "One day I was mixing primary colors with my students and the next day my shelf of paints was replaced with test booklets," said one veteran teacher. It is no surprise that veteran teachers generally possess a negative attitude on this topic because they were able to see these drastic

changes take place right within the walls of their own classrooms. If they entered the field prior to 2001, then they were blindsided with the implications that No Child Left Behind brought to the table. On the other hand, novice teachers entered the field and for some even their pre-service schooling after the passing of NCLB; therefore, it is to no surprise that they are more accepting of it.

Both novice and veteran teachers expressed feelings of stress when it came to standardized testing, mostly due to the accountability implications for both teachers and students. They noted the testing season to be one of the most stressful times in their school building, and the tense energy is felt on every level. They all mentioned parents' frustration and additional stress during this time and how parents continuously turn to the teachers for support. However, due to the visibility of frustration and uncertainty, students increasingly begin to feel stressed. One novice teacher said that their students were well aware of the fact that if they didn't do well on the test then their teachers' job would be in jeopardy. She assumed they found this out through media, but it was negatively affecting their self-confidence and greatly increasing the stress level within the classroom. According to one teacher, students are too young to carry all this pressure on their backs. Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to completely hide this information from children due to the constant discussions and publicity test scores receive through media. Teachers felt this excess attention on testing puts children under unnecessary pressure and negatively affects the energy in the classroom.

Collaboration

Sine novice and veteran teachers differ in numerous ways, the study sought to explore the question of whether or not they share knowledge with one another. Both novice and veteran teachers indicated that collaboration is vital in their school building and that each grade works

together to effectively plan together. They also reported that they hold monthly meetings in order to plan units and projects while still meeting with one another weekly to review lesson plans. Novice teachers indicated that they were welcomed by veteran teachers upon entering the school and were paired with a veteran teacher to work with for their first year in the profession. One novice teacher expressed her feelings on the positive relationships the faculty had with one another stating, "We are all one big family here, constantly bouncing ideas of each other and lending a helping hand whenever we can." Veteran teachers also mentioned having positive relationships with all the teachers in the school regardless of their years of experience.

Although both groups indicated that they collaborated with one another on a daily basis, they did not specify if this collaboration was in at all relation to test preparation strategies. When asked about their specific test preparation routines and practices, novice and veteran teachers differed in their responses. While they all reported implementing test preparation strategies daily, using the test booklets and assigning homework review, there was an evident difference in the way novice teachers approached test preparation compared to the way veteran teachers did. For instance, four of the five interviewed novice teachers not only said they enjoyed test preparation, but also expressed various strategies they utilized to make it more enjoyable for the students. The "test buddies" mentioned, along with trivia games, group work, and daily integration into the content areas were all strategy examples mentioned by novice teachers. On the other side of the spectrum, veteran teachers failed to mention any creative strategies related to the integration of test preparation into daily lesson plans.

When asked about sharing test preparation strategies, the only veteran teacher in the fourth grade indicated that she was aware of what her novice colleagues were doing in their classrooms and though it was a wonderful idea; however, she stuck with her traditional methods

because "they have never failed." As for the novice teachers in that grade, they responded quite differently by stating "we started using these strategies to differentiate test preparation. No two learners are the same, and, therefore, we came up with different and enjoyable ways for our students to prepare for these tests." According to both novice and veteran teachers, there was no mandated way that test preparation has to be offered; rather, it just had to be offered. Teachers had the freedom to prepare their students for standardized tests in whichever way they see fit, resulting in considerable differences between the two groups of teachers.

As for professional culture such as principal-teacher interactions and teacher-teacher interactions regarding test preparation, each respondent clarified that there is an evident support system in the school. Novice and veteran teachers said they supported one another's practices and reiterated that the support system in the school building is immense. One novice teacher said, "when it comes to testing, we are all in the same boat and faced with the same hardships; therefore, we work together to try and ensure the academic success of our students." Both novice and veteran teachers also indicated that they continuously interacted, being that they have something as major as standardized testing in common. This commonality allowed them to collaborate more often than they would have without the tests. They also felt that the principal and vice principal was supportive in their efforts while also giving them freedom to teach the way they wanted to.

Changes in Education

The high-stakes testing phenomenon has been a topic of debate since the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001. Now, in 2013, the question still remains as to whether or not these tests have fundamentally changed the type of education students receive within the walls of their everyday classrooms. When the novice and veteran teachers were asked about this, the

general consensus was that indeed tests have changed education. However, responses varied as to if this change was positive or negative. Four out of the five novice teachers agreed that tests have changed the type of education students are receiving by taking time out of the day to conduct test preparation. However, they did not believe that this effect was negative. They expressed that test preparation was simply an additional assessment of topics they were already covering in the classroom, and if they let preparation consume their days, they would not be teaching for the well-being of the students. Two veteran teachers also indicated a response similar to that of the novices and added that test preparation should not change one's daily routine or your teaching practices; preparation should be carefully incorporated into lessons and activities to meet the needs of the students.

On the other side of the spectrum, the remaining veteran teachers and one novice teacher disagreed. They talked about things such as the elimination of creativity, higher order thinking, and constructivist teaching. When asked for further explanation on these topics, they expressed that once the students return to school after the winter break, they are programmed to enter test preparation mode. The veteran teachers reflected on their daily teaching experiences prior to this testing phenomenon and explained that if they had an extra period they would catch themselves conducting a read-aloud and asking higher order thinking questions or allowing the students to participate in creative writing and express their thoughts and/or feelings through personal or fictional writing pieces. However, now this extra time is devoted to test preparation. One veteran teacher expressed her thoughts on this sudden switch to heavy test preparation by saying, "Come January, a switch is flipped and all the students in the testing grades are constantly preparing for their upcoming tests and subjects such as social studies or anything in the arts are pushed to the side completely." They talked about how students don't even worry about excelling in other

subjects or activities because they are well aware of the high-stakes consequences attached to these tests and focus all of their energy on getting the review questions correct. Another veteran teacher expressed, "We do not complain because it is extra work for us because in reality it is not; we complain because we became teachers with the intention to educate children and help their minds develop, not program their minds." Being that this change is occurring in schools all around the country, it is no surprise that teachers have questionable and negative feelings towards it. Although the majority of novice teachers did not think it was an entirely negative component of education, they did say that it is sometimes difficult to flawlessly integrate test preparation into daily lessons that contain higher order thinking or creativity without making it obvious; however, that is the chance they are willing to take in order to avoid the standard forty-five minute period of answering test questions out of a "dreaded booklet."

Both novice and veteran teachers also talked about how the classroom atmosphere has drastically changed and how creating a comfortable environment is increasingly more difficult. They both agreed that regardless of how the students are receiving the test preparation, they are still not thrilled to be participating in it. After observing each class, it was evident which classes absolutely dreaded test preparation and which ones did not; however, all teachers noted that the second half of the school year is pretty much devoted to preparing students for these tests, making it difficult to create a positive classroom environment. This challenge had a lot to do with the stress factors attached to high-stakes testing as well as the accountability factors for both teachers and students. Additionally, test preparation leaves little room for other subjects or activities that students may enjoy or excel in, creating a resentful feeling towards participating in test preparation in general.

Differentiation

A common topic that was discussed during the interviews was differentiation in the classroom. Both novice and veteran teachers talked about the importance of differentiation in every classroom because no two students learn exactly the same. Differentiation was mentioned because several teachers indicated that high-stakes tests are a "one-size-fits-all" model, and all students, regardless of their learning needs, are expected to perform well on them. Being that teachers cannot change the actual test content, they try to differentiate the way they prepare students to tackle the tests. Novice and veteran teachers discussed this differentiation challenge differently. The majority of veteran teachers indicated that although they provided individualized instruction to learners in need, they found it difficult to differentiate the process of test preparation because at the end of the day, the format provided in the test booklets was the format of the actual test.

Novice teachers talked about differentiation in a different light, indicating that they tried their best to differentiate the way they presented and executed test preparation to not only reach every type of learner, but also make it enjoyable for the students. For example, a novice teacher highlighted the testing buddies and how the students thoroughly enjoyed working together and debating answers. Another novice teacher provided her students with highlighters, colored pens, and colored index cards to aid in their reading of passages. She expressed how they enjoyed using these manipulatives because they helped them read fluently, identify the main points, and highlight the answers if they could be found in the booklet. However, when a veteran teacher was asked about such strategies she said that providing students with tools that they will not be able to use on the day of the actual test would only inhibit their performance and inefficiently prepare them. Novice teachers disagreed, expressing that it was vital to help students learn in a

variety of ways, and that after modeling and constant review; students would grasp the concept and be able to use the strategies on the day of the test regardless of what tools they were provided with.

Manipulatives aside, novice teachers expressed that simply switching the type of test preparation could enhance a student's performance and increase motivation. For example, providing a variety of grouping opportunities for the students was one way they varied instruction. Although veteran teachers agreed with providing opportunities to collaborate, they believed it to be more important to give students them adequate time to work independently. Independent work was emphasized because it mirrors the reality of taking tests alone. One veteran teacher said, "We model things for our students by being precise and accurate; it would be an inaccurate representation of high-stakes tests if we continuously enforced collaborative strategies." The teacher believed collaboration to be an inaccurate representation of high stakes testing because on the day of the test, the students would be asked to sit far from other students and work silently, which could intimidate a child who was used to constantly reviewing questions with peers.

Student Attitudes

Students' attitudes came up in conversation during the interview process. Both novice and veteran teachers noted that, regardless of the strategy, children are not thrilled to participate in test preparation. The two novice teachers that started the "testing buddies" were aware of their students' interests and wanted to provide meaningful test preparation experiences for them: "We would look at our students' faces as we passed out the test booklets and knew we had to do something." This urgency to modify classroom instruction to best fit the needs and interests of the child was a vital goal for many of the novice teachers. They expressed the desire to make test

preparation enjoyable while also providing the students with structured strategies to successfully take the test.

Veteran teachers also indicated that their students were not pleased with the amount of time spent on test preparation or the constant review out of test booklets. Although they integrated concepts of test preparation into their lessons throughout the year, it was not until the students saw the booklets that their attitudes drastically changed. When asked about the possibility of making test preparation enjoyable, the general consensus was that making that connection between enjoyment and test preparation is was not possible. They believed that this preparation was specific in nature, and changing it in any way could possibly affect students' performance on test day. They also mentioned the amount of stress their students were feeling and that they tried to make it very clear to students that this was just a test, students needed to try their best but not worry about any implications. Said one veteran teacher, "I think that this constant reminder of it being just a test relaxes students and gives them the motivation to try harder for themselves and not for the absurd accountability consequences." When asked whether any teachers in the school building let their students know the severity of the consequences of the test, participants said no. One novice teacher indicated that it would be cruel for any one of them to bombard children with unnecessary stress; it would just be selfish of teachers. However, just because teachers did not expressively tell students did not mean they were unaware. A novice teacher expressed how one of her students asked her if a former teacher was fired due to their class's performance on the standardized test from the prior year. "These children know what they are up against, and it is up to us to break down this wall of intimidation and reassure them that trying their best is all we can ask."

Ofcourse, teachers are not the only source of information about tests that students have. Both novice and veteran teachers expressed how parents can be a child's worst enemy when it comes to their stress level. They expressed how most parents are very supportive of their children and encourage them to try their best and worry less. However, there are some parents that are so nervous for the future of their children that they actually intimidate them by telling the child that if they do not pass they will be left behind and there is a possibility that their teacher could be fired. Oftentimes, this creates feelings of resentment and fear for a young child. Research shows that this level of stress can negatively affect a student's performance on standardized tests and decrease their test scores drastically (Mulvenon, Stegman & Ritter, 2005).

Literacy Instruction

How test preparation affected literacy instruction was similar for both novice and veteran teachers. Neither novice nor veteran teachers think that testing affects instruction profoundly, but it does restrict teaching in some ways and limits creative teaching. They indicated that they follow their workshop models for literacy up until the very last day of school and provide their students with countless opportunities to engage in meaningful literacy activities. However, they also said that as the tests get closer, the window for creativity slowly closes. One veteran teacher expressed her thoughts on this topic saying, "It is not that we stop teaching literacy, because we do not. The amount of time spent on meaningful discussion and engagement in creative activities diminishes, and those are the aspects of literacy most important to many children." When asked why these aspects begin to dissipate, the general response was simple: time constraints. Both groups indicated that there is not enough time in a school day to effectively implement both test preparation and creative teaching. Although there were some days that both were possible, such instruction was not on a regular basis. Many teachers were concerned about the elimination of

creativity because they felt it is vital for a child's growth. For example, one veteran teacher indicated that her students had trouble with writing but when asked to free write in a journal they were less intimidated and their writing skills enhanced. However, if there is minimal time for this kind of activity then these children were forced to utilize their writing skills in only restrictive ways. Such constraints may make students feel uncomfortable within the walls of their own classroom and diminish the opportunity for them to excel.

Conclusions

What are the implications for education?

Education has undergone many changes since the passing of No Child Left Behind in 2001 and the subsequent implementation of high-stakes testing. Preparing for these tests has taken the place of other learning experiences that were, at one time, prevalent in every classroom. In order for students to be adequately prepared for these tests, teachers must devote both time and energy into review. As the literature on high stakes testing demonstrates, there is an increased level of stress in the testing grades for both teachers and students. This stress can negatively affect a child's educational growth and development within a content area. Therefore, more and more teachers are beginning to move away from the traditional test preparation period and integrating preparation within daily lessons. Although this type of instruction is more appealing to students, there are no studies proving that more varied test preparation approaches increase test scores. As a result, many teachers, predominately veteran, retain traditional test preparation practices because they have consistently worked for their students in the past.

These teachers may also be sticking to their traditional practices due to their student population. Oftentimes, the teachers with the most years of experience are given the highest performing class, which is sometimes considered "honors." This study included three honors classes, one for each of the testing grades, and all three of the teachers were veteran with over twenty years' experience. Therefore, it is possible that these teachers know their students will perform well on the test regardless of preparation instruction and do not place much emphasis on it. These teachers even reported spending less time than other classes on test preparation; however, the time they did spend on it was not aligned with students' interests at all. Novice teachers seemed to take their students' interests into account when planning test preparation practice with the intention to motivate them. This motivation is vital for children because often,

they are not eager to participate in test preparation. These teachers also provide a variety of test preparation opportunities in order to differentiate their instruction, increase comprehension, and create an enjoyable learning environment for students who may struggle with tests.

Since veteran and novice teachers have different approaches to test preparation, the amounts of professional collaboration test preparation might foster should be explained. This study in particular discovered that the professional collaboration within the school building was both prevalent and positive. Regardless of the differences between practices, the teachers were still diffusing knowledge and ideas with one another. However, the decision of whether or not to utilize these various practices was solely up to the individual teacher, therefore, creating differences between classrooms. Bryk and Schneider (2002) were able to establish a connection between the level of trust in a school and student learning, this study corroborated their findings to some degree, since trust was evident and test scores were positive.

Although there visible differences between novice and veteran practices, a positive school culture always remained evident. This leaves hope for a veteran or novice oriented school building in which it seems impossible to work together. As an aspiring novice teacher, it is very important to work with veteran teachers in order to learn more about the field and key in on specific practices. Oftentimes, novice teachers are paired with a veteran teacher for their first year of teaching in the form of a mentorship. This mentorship can create countless learning experiences for both the novice and veteran teacher and truly impact the way they interact with their colleagues in the future.

Positive collaboration is also obvious to students, creating a comforting classroom environment. However, a classroom environment can change at any given moment and will take on the attitudes and emotions of the people in it. This study affirmed that novice teachers

embrace the practice of test preparation more than veteran teachers, and this embracement can be a result of their age and experience. Novice teachers were not in the field long enough to fully understand what education use to be like; therefore, they had nothing to compare the new testing requirements to. As a result, they jumped right into test preparation with an open mind and creative energy. On the other hand, veteran teachers who have been in the profession prior to the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act demonstrated a different attitude towards test preparation and frowned upon it. These feelings oftentimes stemmed from the absence of creative practices in which they once engaged and the dissipation of their original definition for teaching. The study revealed that many veteran teachers would have not pursued a career in teaching if they had been aware of these implications, which leads them to feel frustrated and worn out. On the other hand, novice teachers were well aware of these implications and chose the career regardless. This decision resulted in a positive attitude and eagerness to make a change. Often times, these teachers make the best of every situation presented to them because everything is new and unfamiliar to them. On the other hand, veteran teachers were more resentful to these changes because they were familiar with the field before the changes occurred.

What do we make of this?

Between previous research and the current data presented in this study, we can only observe that there are considerable differences between novice and veteran teachers in both practices and perceptions. These differences correlate with their past experiences, years in the field, and placement within a school building. More than likely, these differences will dissipate over time being that the veteran teachers in twenty plus years will be teachers from the No Child Left Behind era. However, that does not mean all disparities between the two groups should be covered up.

This study made it clear that veteran and novice teachers are indeed collaborating, but using individual practices as a result. The development of collaboration is vital for a novice teacher entering a school building because without it, there may be strife between the two groups. The key to switching teacher poor attitudes on subjects such as test preparation is to allow them to collaborate with teachers who possess a positive attitude. Constant collaboration and the sharing of ideas can result in a positive school culture and classroom environment. If children feel a positive energy from their teachers and see everyone working together, research affirms that student achievement will increase. Therefore, it is both novice and veteran teacher duty to protect their students from the frustration and negative attitudes often associated with test preparation.

What are the next steps?

Further research could be very beneficial for both teachers and students on this topic. This can be done by analyzing the students' test scores as a result of these different practices. It would be interesting to see how the students from the novice teachers' classroom perform on the test after receiving different variations of test preparation instruction. Students test scores in a veteran classroom would also be analyzed after receiving a more structured and traditional type of test preparation. The study can also look at the amount of time using the test booklets affects the students test scores negatively or positively. This type of additional research would be beneficial to all parties involved because it could help teachers make positive instructional decisions when it comes to test preparation, as well as give teachers a better insight as to what is working and what is not working in correlation to higher test scores. This could also result in a school-based decision to promote specific types of test preparation instruction in each and every classroom so no class is stripped of beneficial practices. Additionally, it allows future

practitioners to talk with teachers about their practices and ideologies, giving them a deeper look into the field and quality knowledge to learn from.

This additional research could eliminate the guessing game of what works and what does not and could provide concrete information as to what practices are best for student achievement. If this information were then paired with a student survey, we could learn what test preparation practices students enjoy and whether or not they work. If students were selecting practices that indeed are improving their achievement, they would ultimately not only be pleased with their results on the test but also enjoy the preparation process as well, therefore making the test preparation experience better for all.

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Appendix

NYC

Department of Education

Dennis M. Walcott, Chancellor

Institutional Review Board

52 Chambers Street, Room 309

New York, NY 10007

January 29, 2013
Ms Amanda R Dalessio
76 Harvey Avenue
Staten Island, NY 10314

Dear Ms Dalessio:

I am happy to inform you that the New York City Department of Education Institutional Review Board (NYCDOE IRB) has approved your research proposal, "How do novice and veteran teachers handle the challenge of literacy test preparation?." The NYCDOE IRB has assigned your study the file number of 313. Please make certain that all correspondence regarding this project references this number. The IRB has determined that the study poses minimal risk to participants. The approval is for a period of one year:

Approval Date: January 16, 2013
Expiration Date: January 15, 2014
Responsibilities of Principal Investigators: Please find below a list of responsibilities of Principal Investigators who have DOE IRB approval to conduct research in New York City public schools.

- Approval by this office does not guarantee access to any particular school, individual or data. You are responsible for making appropriate contacts and getting the required permissions and consents before initiating the study.
- When requesting permission to conduct research, submit a letter to the school principal summarizing your research design and methodology along with this IRB Approval letter. Each principal agreeing to participate must sign the enclosed Approval to Conduct Research in Schools/Districts form. *A completed and signed form for every school included in your research must be emailed to* IRB@schools.nyc.gov . Principals may also ask you to show them the receipt issued by the NYC Department of Education at the time of your fingerprinting.
- You are responsible for ensuring that all researchers on your team conducting research in NYC public schools are fingerprinted by the NYC Department of

Education. Please note: This rule applies to all research in schools conducted with students and/or staff. See the attached fingerprinting materials. For additional information click here. Fingerprinting staff will ask you for your identification and social security number and for your DOE IRB approval letter. You must be fingerprinted during the school year in which the letter is issued Please provide a list of their names and social security numbers to the NYC Department of Education Research and Policy Support Group for tracking their eligibility and security clearance. The cost of fingerprinting is $115. *A copy of the fingerprinting receipt must be emailed to* IRB@schools.nyc.gov

- You are responsible for ensuring that the research is conducted in accordance with your research proposal as approved by the DOE IRB and for the actions of all coinvestigators and research staff involved with the research.
- You are responsible for informing all participants (e.g., administrators, teachers, parents, and students) that their participation is strictly voluntary and that there are no consequences for non-participation or withdrawal at any time during the study.
- Researchers must: use the consent forms approved by the DOE IRB; provide all research subjects with copies of their signed forms; maintain signed forms in a secure place for a period of at least three years after study completion; and destroy the forms in accordance with the data disposal plan approved by the IRB.

Mandatory Reporting to the IRB: The principal investigator must report to the Research and Policy Support Group, within five business days, any serious problem, adverse effect, or outcome that occurs with frequency or degree of severity greater than that anticipated. In addition, the principal investigator must report any event or series of events that prompt the temporary or permanent suspension of a research project involving human subjects or any deviations from the approved protocol.

Amendments/Modifications: All amendments/modification of protocols involving human subjects must have prior IRB approval, except those involving the prevention of immediate harm to a subject, which must be reported within 24 hours to the NYC Department of Education IRB.

Continuation of your research: It is your responsibility to insure that an application for continuing review approval is submitted six weeks before the expiration date noted above. If you do not receive approval before the expiration date, all study activities must stop until you receive a new approval letter.

Research findings: We require a copy of the report of findings from the research. Interim reports may also be requested for multi-year studies. Your report should not include identification of the superintendency, district, any school, student, or staff member. Please send an electronic copy of the final report to: irb@schools.nyc.gov.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Mary Mattis at 212.374.3913.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,
Mary C. Mattis, PhD
Chair, Institutional Review Board

January 17, 2013

Dear Ms. D'Alessio:

Your research proposal submitted to the Human Experimentation Review Board (HERB) on December 14, 2012 entitled "How do novice and veteran teachers handle the challenge of literacy test preparation?" (HERB #F12-14) was considered under the expedited review procedure (as defined in the HERB Policies & Procedures) and approved contingent on the following change being made.

In Part A of the proposal you indicate that you will not provide a copy of the consent form to the participant. However, no justification for this is provided and I can see no reason for it given the nature of the study. Therefore, please provide the participant with a copy of the consent form in addition to the one you keep for your records. If, for some reason, this is not a reasonable condition, please reply with a detailed rationale.

As described in the proposal (with the condition above), the project complies with all of the requirements of HERB for the protection of human participants in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after the approval date.

1. A project status report (available on the HERB website as Part C of application packet) must be returned to HERB within one year.

2. Any significant change in the experimental procedure must be reported to HERB immediately prior to altering the project.

3. Any injury to a participant because of the research procedure must be reported to HERB immediately.

4. The investigator must keep all signed consent forms on file for 3 years past completion of the project.

5. HERB must be informed of the addition of new investigators not named in the original application.

Best wishes,

Laurence Nolan

Acting Vice-Chair, Human Experimentation Review Board.

Wagner College

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<u>High-Stakes Testing Preparation</u>

Department: <u>Education</u>

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Signed _Amanda D'Alessio_ Date <u>08/21/13</u>