

VALUE ADDED MODEL OF TEACHER EVALUATION: AN EXAMINATION OF
ADMINISTRATORS' LEADERSHIP

by

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment
of
The Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Education

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Date: _____ Summer Semester 2018
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Leadership

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Doctor of Philosophy at George Mason University

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Dedication

This is dedicated to my loving wife Kirsten and my four wonderful children Emily, Sophia, Clara, and David.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the many friends, relatives, and supporters who have made this happen. My loving wife, Kirsten, provided consistent encouragement and editorial advice and my father consultation. Dr. Smith with his unwavering support and the other members of my committee were of invaluable help.

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List of Abbreviations

Achievement Network.....	ANET
Assistant Principal.....	AP
Bowl Championship Series.....	BCS
Collaborative Learning Community.....	CLC
Common Core.....	CC
Director of Strategy and Logistics.....	DSL
District of Columbia Public Schools.....	DCPS
Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills.....	DIBELS
Early Childhood Education.....	ECE
Elementary and Secondary Education Act.....	ESEA
English Language Arts.....	ELA
English Language Learner.....	ELL
Every School Succeeds Act.....	ESSA
Extended School Year.....	ESY
Individual Value Added.....	IVA
Instructional Coach.....	IC
Leadership Initiative for Teachers.....	LIFT
Learning Together to Advance Practice.....	LEAP
Master Educator.....	ME
No Child Left Behind.....	NCLB
Professional Development.....	PD
Professional Learning Community.....	PLC
Professional Performance Evaluation Program.....	PPEP
Response To Intervention.....	RTI
School Performance Index.....	SPI
Strategic Reading Inventory.....	SRI
Teacher Assessment System.....	TAS
Teacher Leader Initiative.....	TLI
Teaching and Learning Framework.....	TLF
The New Teacher Project.....	TNTP
The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers.....	PARCC
The Reading Comprehension.....	TRC
Value Added Model.....	VAM
Value Added.....	VA

Abstract

VALUE ADDED MODEL OF TEACHER EVALUATION: AN EXAMINATION OF ADMINISTRATORS' LEADERSHIP

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George Mason University, 2018

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This mixed methods study explores how principals are managing and leading their school sites in ways that retain effective teachers, in the context of the value-added approach to teacher evaluation. There is a great deal of research that identifies reasons for teachers leaving the profession. However, there is little research that reviews strategies administrators are utilizing to resolve the problem, especially in the context of the nascent value-added approach. This study looks at the unique situation that is created by the somewhat controversial adoption of the value-added approach to teacher evaluation. School sites were identified through an analysis of retention data and overall test score data to select sites that represent high performance with high and low retention rates and low performance with high and low retention rates. Some of the themes that emerged through semi-structured interviews conducted with principals and teachers were: the importance of a supportive principal in addressing issues relating to retention, the unintended consequences associated with implementation and the impact on school

climate. The interview responses provided evidence supporting a finding of the importance of the role of the principal in supporting teachers in the climate of the value-added (VA) evaluations and the overall importance of administrator leadership in retaining teachers in the context of this approach to evaluation. Additionally, the principals' role in mitigating negative aspects of VA on the overall school climate emerged. These findings have implications for school districts in terms of training for principals and for policymakers in the development and implementation of policies that support the retention efforts.

Chapter One: Introduction

Background of the Study

This study seeks to understand the principals' role in the retention of teachers under the conditions created by the value-added approach to teacher evaluation, specifically; the influence administrators have on teacher retention in this context. What strategies do administrators employ or actions do they take in retaining teachers under the conditions created by the value-added approach? This section sets out to provide a context for this approach to teacher evaluation and describes how this study will contribute to an overall understanding of the administrator's role in the retention of teachers. The unique setting created by value added will be explained along with the policies that promote the adoption of this approach to evaluation and some of the implications for the school site. Finally, a description of the unintended consequences of this approach to evaluation will be presented.

Background: Value added as a reform policy. Value added is an approach to teacher evaluation that relies on student test score growth. Under this system, teachers are essentially held accountable for their students' growth as measured by end-of-year standardized tests. The idea behind this approach to evaluation is that we can control all factors that have the potential to impact a student's academic growth through the mathematical model and then isolate the teacher's contributions to a specific student's

learning growth. Models are developed that purport to control for such factors as socioeconomic status, special education, second language learners' status and peer composition effects. The value added by the teacher is typically determined by using the high stakes test that is given each year to evaluate the district and schools on their levels of student achievement. A student's growth can be calculated using the previous year's score and the average rate of growth for a student with similar characteristics. All growth above the average rate, or conversely regression, is then attributed to the teacher. Therefore, a growth model such as value added is measuring the teacher's contributions to what we value most, student achievement. As a result of the use of this approach, we can, in theory, identify teachers that are contributing the most to student achievement. This controversial approach (Darling Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel & Rothstein, 2012) to teacher evaluation was promoted by the Obama administration. The release of teachers' value-added ratings by the Los Angeles School District and their public display in the Los Angeles Times (Felch & Song, 2010) shed a national light and critique on this approach to evaluation. Policymakers and school districts were going to hold teachers accountable, not only for instructing a classroom of students, but also for achieving a level of growth for each student. The Obama administration developed policies that supported this approach to evaluation through the United States Department of Education. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan promoted the use of test score growth in teacher evaluations through the Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waivers. States had to agree to utilize Value Added Models (VAM) in teacher evaluation in order to be considered for an RTTT grant

or be granted a waiver from the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements. In 2014, Washington state lost its waiver as a result of not implementing a student growth measure into teachers' evaluations (Wong, 2015). Districts across the country have developed their own growth measures or have contracted with outside research organizations, such as Mathematica (DCPS, IMPACT, 2012), to determine how to measure student progress. The waivers, which were desperately needed by most states as relief from the more punitive aspects of NCLB, serve as a blueprint for the administration's approach to education reform. Many of the 50 states' departments of education were implicit supporters of the ESEA waiver because of their need for an alternative to the NCLB deadlines of 100% proficiency for all students. In July 2014, 45 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Bureau of Indian Education submitted requests for ESEA flexibility; 43 States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico were approved for ESEA flexibility (see United States Department of Education, February 2015, for complete data).

Prominent education researchers, such as Eric Hanushek (2006) and Douglas Harris (2009), are seemingly proponents of aspects of the ESEA waiver, particularly as relating to the emphasis on the development of growth models in evaluation. They see this approach as a viable method for isolating the effects of a teacher on the academic achievement of their students. The Gates Foundation, an influential organization in promoting education reform, is also a proponent of the growth measure aspect of education reform as one component of multiple measures of teaching effectiveness, which was identified through the MET Project, (Kane & Staiger, 2010). The Gates

Foundation committed funds to research and support implementation of new approaches to evaluation that included a reliance on growth models. These education reform enthusiasts supported the ESEA waiver because, among other aspects, it promoted an approach to evaluation that presumably rewards the best teaching practice and effectively illustrates the effects of good teaching.

There were some prominent education scholars in vehement opposition to aspects of the ESEA waiver, such as Diane Ravitch (Jehlen, 2012) and Linda Darling-Hammond (2012). These two scholars objected specifically to those components that endorsed growth models in teacher evaluation. New York City principals, the National Education Association (NEA) and other national organizations also voiced opposition to the waivers. They cited research that illustrated flaws in the value-added model in developing arguments against this approach to education reform. They saw the policy as having severely detrimental effects on teachers and the overall climate of education. Interestingly, despite the fact that there appears to be more and more compelling evidence against it, the growth model aspect of the ESEA waiver has maintained its popularity as an accepted approach to reform of teacher evaluation.

Several studies have questioned the fairness of the model in terms of its ability to assess what it claims to be evaluating and have pointed out problems with the model on the basis of how it addresses regression (Smith & Smith, 2005), controls for student background (Ballou, Sanders, & Wright, 2004 & Newton, Darling-Hammond, Haertel, & Thomas, 2010), and how the scores should be interpreted (Hill, 2009). Additionally, many critics question the degree to which the model is able to account for the many

variables that impact on student achievement. Berliner (2014), for example, notes the following variables: “peer and compositional effects of classrooms and schools, curriculum effects, school leadership effects, school climate effects, technology integration and usage effects, district leadership effects, per pupil expenditure effects, professional development activity effects and so on (p. 3).”

These studies call into question whether the model is able to effectively and fairly determine the degree to which students’ growth should be attributed to the teacher or other factors. The model must be able to account for a range of confounding variables if the results of the application are the basis for the assessment of a teacher’s ability. There are questions regarding its validity and reliability as a measure in addressing these countless variables (Berliner, 2014), based on regression to the mean (Smith, & Smith, 2005), test scaling (Ballou, 2009), sorting and bias (Rothstein, 2009), variability of scoring over time (Newton, Darling-Hammond, Haertel & Thomas, 2010; Konstantopolous 2014) and even sensitivity to ceiling effects (Koedel & Betts, 2009). The measure has been shown to be unreliable in the sense that from one year to the next sizeable proportions of teachers’ rankings moved from the top to bottom decile (Newton et al., 2010). Still, some researchers argue that it is an effective and fair tool, at least compared to current methods, for evaluating teachers and incentivizing them to improve their practice (Harris 2009) or for identifying teachers needing to be replaced (Gordon, Kane & Staiger, 2006).

Statement of the Problem

Several studies have cited unintended consequences of the implementation of a

value-added approach to teacher evaluation. Whether related to the tool or the implementation of the evaluation system, some of the unintended consequences of this approach to evaluation can be seen through the impact on important aspects of teaching and factors that contribute significantly to teacher retention, such as teacher collaboration, autonomy in terms of subject matter, creativity, innovation, professional development or continuous learning. Effective teachers are increasingly seen as those who are able to work collaboratively with colleagues in teams (Dufour & Marzano, 2011). Effective teachers are creative, look for innovative ways to reach their students and finally, they seek professional development opportunities and are always looking for new ways to improve their instructional techniques. Teachers that collaborate with colleagues and take advantage of opportunities to be creative and innovative in their approach, in addition to consistently engaging in professional learning, will have the greatest likelihood of improving their teaching practice. The use of VAMs with an emphasis on improving test scores has the potential to alienate teachers through excessive competition that discourages the sharing of ideas (Amrein-Beardsley & Collins, 2012). Innovation and creativity are not as valued when teachers are under pressure to cover all the material that may be tested. Teachers are not encouraged, nor do they necessarily have time to stray from the defined concepts of this “narrowed” curriculum. Additionally, there is the problem of teachers that will attempt to “game” the system through an inordinate focus on concepts they believe will be on the test at the expense of other aspects of the curriculum or by coaching students on aspects of the test (Hill, 2009). Particularly, in this culture of accountability that is focused on rewards and sanctions,

teachers may feel compelled to consider trying to manipulate the results; as illustrated by educators from the Atlanta school district who received harsh sentences for their roles in a cheating scandal (Mitchell, 2014). As a result of this approach, teachers are under a great deal of stress and pressure and are looking for relief, often in the form of moving out of the testing grades, leaving the classroom for a different role, or leaving teaching entirely. The above examples have demonstrated some concerns with VA and the unintended consequences of the approach that can affect retention.

Significance of the Study

Research that addresses some of the aspects of the value-added evaluation that contributes to the difficulties surrounding its implementation for principals has been highlighted. However, there is little research that delves into how administrators are navigating this complex environment of teacher evaluation. Administrators are tasked with providing feedback for teachers and ensuring that they are developing to their fullest potential. In the climate created by value added with unintended consequences affecting teachers' growth and their students' learning, principals must find ways to not only ensure their teachers' professional development but prevent them from leaving the district, the testing grades or their profession.

School administration and policymakers would benefit from an understanding of this environment at the school level and insights into the strategies principals employ to retain their effective teachers in this context. This study helps to not only illuminate the issues surrounding value-added approaches but also provides school leaders with insights into important aspects of leadership related to school climate and teacher growth.

Purpose of the Study

Several researchers have noted the importance of retaining good teachers and the costs associated with losing them (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014). The purpose of this study is to add to the existing literature on teacher retention in this unique context. The impact of value-added evaluation on teacher retention will be illuminated and means for mitigating the potential negative impact of this policy will be revealed. This study makes contributions to the knowledge base surrounding teacher retention and principal leadership. Also, the study evaluates the impact on school climate of this specific education reform initiative that ties a percentage of teacher evaluation to student test score growth.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are principals doing to ensure retention of their teachers in the context of a value-added approach to evaluation?
2. What strategies/approaches are utilized by principals in schools with high retention rates and high student performance versus those with low retention and low performance?
3. How are principals managing the evaluation system and their overall school climate in schools with low retention and high performance and alternatively schools with high retention and low performance?

A qualitative approach was deemed the most appropriate in attempting to identify the intimate aspects of the impact on the overall school climate. Understanding how

principals lead in the unique context adds to the overall understanding of and implications for teacher retention. Gaining a thorough understanding of the context of the school environment was deemed of critical importance to the goals of this study. Qualitative research provided firsthand accounts from principals leading in this particular context. Rich and detailed information was garnered through interviews with administrators directly affected by these phenomena (Patton, 2002).

Limitations

The study was limited to schools that met the prescribed criteria and were situated in only one school system, using a particular form of value-added evaluation. Though the context of the study was of critical importance, the results cannot necessarily be generalized to other schools or school districts and leaders.

Overview of the Methodology

My study seeks to understand how administrators are working within this complex and controversial approach to evaluation and specifically their impact on teacher retention. My study builds on prior studies that helped to identify the unintended consequences of this approach, such as Amrein-Beardsley and Collins (2012). Additionally, the study explores the impact of VA on retention, as did Winters and Cohen (2013). Specifically, this study provides insight into the actions of school leaders to ensure that they are not losing some of their most effective teachers as a result of this approach to evaluation. A mixed methods study provides rich and detailed insights into the aspects of concern. As stated by Greene (2007), the “greatest potential of mixed methods inquiry is the generative possibilities that accompany different ways of

knowing” (p. 118). The quantitative analysis of retention rates and school performance identified sites for a more in-depth analysis. The “ground level” view at these sites yielded relevant insights into the particular situation.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter One provides a background of the study and its significance. Chapter Two places the study in the context of relevant research regarding retention and value added. Chapter Three details the methodology used and the data collection and analysis. Chapter Four summarizes the implications of the study and the findings that resulted from the data collection. Finally, Chapter Five finishes with the summary and the implications for future research and recommendations for practitioners and policymakers.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

History of Value Added

The idea of using student scores to evaluate teachers has been explored by many education researchers, such as Hanushek and Rivkin (2010) and Darling-Hammond (2015). The value-added approach is credited to William Sanders, a statistician, who initially invented the approach while working in the field of agricultural genetics. He subsequently developed the approach to evaluate school districts in the 1990's in Tennessee, the Tennessee Value Added Assessment System (TVAAS) (Sanders, Saxton, & Horn, 1997). This controversial approach to teacher evaluation has been adopted by several states and the District of Columbia and was promoted through national policy initiatives, RTT and the ESEA waiver.

Proponents of value added. Several studies in recent years have highlighted the importance of teachers in improving students' achievement. Hanushek (2011) has estimated that annually dismissing the least effective teachers and replacing them with average teachers will significantly improve overall student performance. Policymakers and education researchers have suggested that VAMs will help identify the highest performing teachers and those that are ineffective. Milanowski (2004) found a relationship between teacher evaluation performance and student achievement using results from a study of teachers in Cincinnati. Also, Harris (2009) sees value added as a

viable approach, given the accountability context, when comparing it to the potential alternatives. Harris, Ingle and Rutledge (2014) also promote the idea that some teachers' evaluations may be distorted by principals' preferences, and the value-added scores may not be as influential a measure in a system that uses multiple measures. He purports that some "lone wolves" that score well on value-added systems may not be as favored by principals. Winters and Cohen (2013) argue that value-added measurement, given a specific policy design, has the potential to identify teacher quality and can be used to remove teachers who are not improving student achievement. These proponents of VAMs feel that an accountability measure that encourages a focus on improvement in test scores will help, better than current procedures, to identify the most effective teachers and thereby the most effective practices. Some of the aspects cited by proponents of value-added are listed below.

Accountability. Policymakers and some educational researchers have suggested that value added is a natural result of our education priorities. We are all seeking ways to close the achievement gap and to ensure academic growth for all of our students. Value added holds teachers accountable for this growth, using our existing high stakes assessment as a means to measure overall improvement.

Competition. Competition drives growth and improvement in other aspects of our society, so why not apply an element of this to education and the teaching profession. The idea that teachers should be able to "move" their students as measured by these tests that we have established to determine mastery is a natural application of the "business" model. We want to be able to identify the teachers that are doing what we value most,

ensuring growth on the high stakes tests. Another seemingly natural extension of this concept is that teachers who are able to engender growth should be rewarded with bonuses and salary increases.

Test score growth. Presumably, this approach to evaluation will lead to growth of test scores. Teachers unable to ensure growth will be removed through the evaluation process. We are essentially evaluating teachers' ability to accomplish one of the things we value most in education through a significant portion of a teacher's evaluation.

Opposition to value added. There are some prominent education scholars in vehement opposition to aspects of the ESEA waiver, such as Diane Ravitch (Jehlen, 2012) and Linda Darling-Hammond (2012). Ravitch and Darling-Hammond have opposed aspects of the policy, specifically, those components that endorse growth models in teacher evaluation. New York City principals, the NEA, and other national organizations have voiced opposition to the waivers. They have cited research that illustrates flaws in the value-added model in developing arguments against this approach to education reform. They see the policy as having severely detrimental effects on teachers and the overall climate of education. Aspects of value added that concern many education experts are listed below.

Validity and reliability. Several research studies have questioned value added based on the reliability and validity of the approach as a measure of teacher effectiveness. Some of these studies question whether students' test score growth can be attributed to the effects of a specific teacher or whether other factors, such as background characteristics, socioeconomic status, home environment or even previous strong teachers

are more influential. Researchers such as Berliner (2014) have noted the many variables that can influence academic achievement that are not accounted for by value added models. There is a great deal of literature that evaluates the validity and reliability of the value added approach as a measurement of student achievement growth. Studies have questioned it on the basis of how it addresses regression (Smith & Smith, 2005), how it controls for student background (Ballou, Sanders, & Wright, 2004) and student characteristics (Newton, Darling-Hammond, & Haertel, 2010), how the scores should be interpreted (Hill, 2009) and even sensitivity to ceiling effects (Koedel & Betts, 2009).

Also, researchers, such as Berliner (2014), argue that the impact of the nonrandomized placement of students cannot be overlooked as having a significant impact on student learning. In other words, because students are not randomly assigned to classrooms, the classroom composition itself may impact the learning of students and ultimately their overall academic growth. Paulfer and Amrein-Beardsley (2014) caution that without random assignment of students to classrooms, which her research found to be lacking, we need to be aware of the implications of this fact in the use of value added scores. Some researchers have questioned the real importance of value added as a measure and have suggested that because it can only be used to evaluate a limited number of teachers, it should not be given the same amount of attention as other factors such as observation data (Corcoran, 2010).

Unintended negative consequences. Researchers, such as Amrein-Beardsley (2012), Darling-Hammond & Rustique-Forrester (2005), Scherrer (2011) and Papay (2012) have identified various unintended consequences of this approach to evaluation,

such as decreasing teacher retention, narrowing of the curriculum, negative impacts on teacher collaboration (excessive competition), targeting of students, decreasing creativity and innovation, a lack of meaningful feedback designed to improve teacher practice and even cheating.

Narrowing curriculum. A teacher might focus only on the subject matter being tested at the expense of a well-rounded curriculum. Value added is often based on the student growth as measured by end-of-year high stakes assessments measuring specific reading and math standards. Presumably, by focusing only on the material tested by that end-of-year assessment a teacher would increase his/her chances of demonstrating improvement. This focus could be at the expense of a broader and richer curriculum. In an effort to improve their scores, schools and/or teachers in testing grades will focus on tested subjects to the exclusion of all other aspects of the curriculum. Principals need to ensure that they are producing well-rounded students and avoid neglecting critical non-tested subjects, such as social studies and science.

Targeting students. In addition, teachers might focus on specific students based on their potential for test score growth. Students with special needs, second language learners and those far below the cut off score may not get the support they need because they are less likely to demonstrate significant growth. Essentially, these students are ignored in favor of students that are “on the cusp” of moving to a higher level of proficiency. Teachers are encouraged to spend time and effort on “borderline” students that they can move to higher levels (Amrein, 2002).

Lack of professional growth. Teachers are given a numerical evaluation score based on all the mathematical calculations. This score, because of the timing of testing, is often received after the school year is over and, in some cases, as stipulated in the ESEA waiver and RTTT, represents a significant portion of the teacher's overall evaluation. As opposed to an evaluation that is observational and emphasizes teacher practice, this form of evaluation provides no specific feedback or any opportunity to analyze specific teaching practice. Studies, such as Papay's (2011), have shown that over the years VA scores are not stable, fluctuating significantly for the same teacher from one year to the next. The teacher cannot be assured that a specific approach and/or teaching practice has contributed to his or her VA score. The feedback provided by this assessment is not specific, formative, or in some cases, even relevant. The school leader needs to ensure that his or her teachers are receiving the kind of feedback that will support their growth as educators and positively impact their overall practice (Firestone, 2014). Darling-Hammond (2005) and Papay (2012) note concerns related to the provision of meaningful feedback in developing a teacher's overall practice. The value-added approach uses the end-of-year test score data, which in the case of the district in question, is not even available until months after the end of the school year.

Decrease in creativity and innovation. Teachers, due to the pressures to address all of the tested material, are less inclined to engage in innovative or creative lessons or practices. They feel "under the gun" to cover all the tested standards and are looking for the most efficient and effective means of imparting the material. Often, test-taking skills must be taught in order to assure that the students are able to accurately represent what

they have learned. Ingersoll, Merrill and May (2012) have indicated the importance of pedagogy in stemming the tide of teachers leaving the profession. Teachers may have content knowledge but lack the necessary teaching skills or autonomy to be effective instructors. Teachers provided with the autonomy to teach in a way they find most effective are more likely to remain in the profession. Additionally, some of the teaching practices that are better suited to mastery of standardized tests, i.e. “drill and kill,” do not promote creative and innovative teaching.

Excessive competition. Because a component of the value added score calculation involves the averaging of “like” students, teachers across the hall from each other are in direct competition. An average growth for a student of given characteristics is calculated and then the growth a student makes or does not make is then attributed to the teacher as value added. As noted by Scherrer (2011), school leaders will need to avoid the potentially overly competitive school environment that engenders a lack of sharing and an individualized approach to teaching. The recent proliferation of Professional Learning Communities or PLCs points to the importance of teamwork in education and principals are charged with establishing a climate that is conducive to this collegiality. This competitive aspect of the approach can have a negative impact on the collaboration and sharing that has become a hallmark of education improvement. PLCs have been touted (Dufour and Dufour, 2008) as a means to improve the quality of instruction. Teachers are not as inclined to share “trade secrets” if they are essentially giving up a potential competitive advantage.

Cheating. Finally, as dramatically illustrated by the recent scandal in Atlanta (Mitchell, 2014), some teachers and administrators have taken extreme measures in an attempt to ensure their students' growth. In some cases, teachers' overall evaluation, bonuses, salary steps and promotions are closely linked to this test score growth.

The previously described unintended consequences contribute to teacher retention concerns. Some of these unintended consequences have a direct impact on some of the more appealing aspects of teaching, such as collaboration, creativity and autonomy. The figure below demonstrates how some of the underlying goals of the value added approach, such as competition and accountability, create unintended consequences, which lead to retention issues. This study will provide examples of how some administrators are managing their schools and retaining teachers in the environment created by this approach.

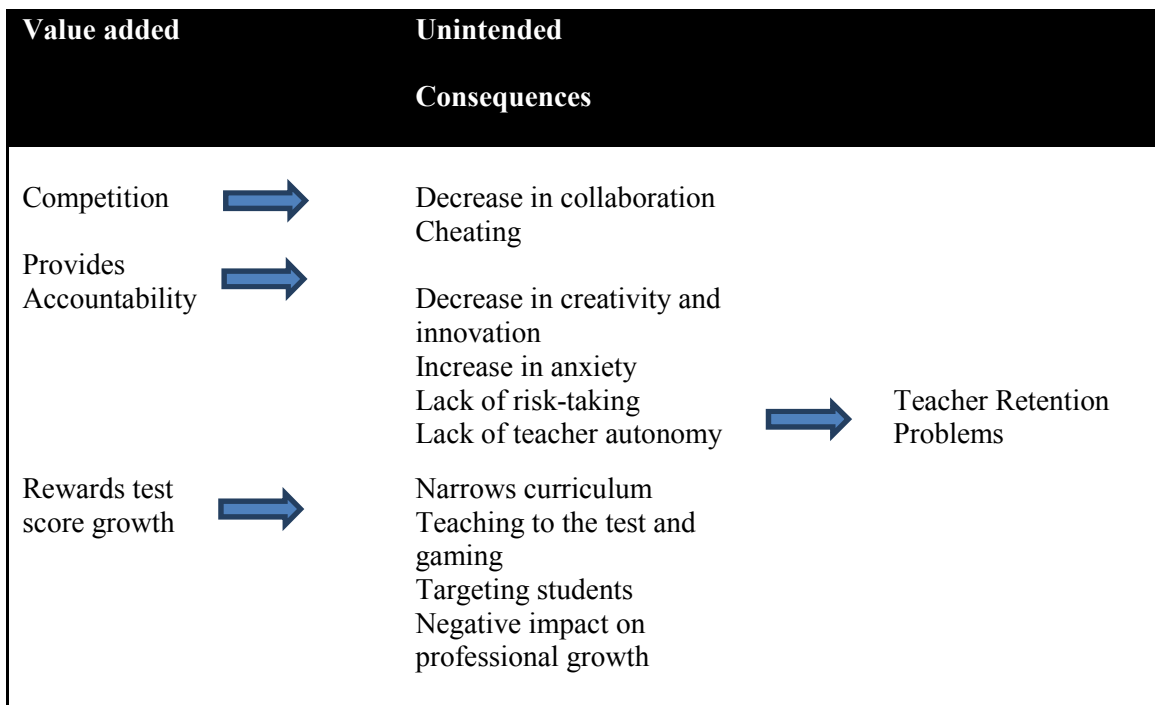


Figure 1. Unintended Consequences

This study focuses on mitigating the negative consequence of the loss of effective teachers. All of the previously mentioned factors contribute to the difficulty of retaining teachers, especially in the testing grades. How are leaders overcoming the potential negative unintended consequences of this approach to evaluation that can lead to difficulty in retaining teachers?

Teacher Retention

Retention has been a topic of concern among many researchers in recent years. Ingersoll (2001) and others have tried to understand the elements of teaching that lead to such short tenure. Ingersoll et al. (2014) found that nearly half of beginning teachers (42%) were leaving within their first five years of teaching and they pointed out that the problem of teacher shortage is not one of recruitment, but retention. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) identified job dissatisfaction as one of the primary reasons for teacher departure and lack of administrative support as one of the primary causes of the dissatisfaction. High turnover can ensue when teachers feel overwhelmed with extra duties and disciplinary issues and are not receiving enough support from leadership. The value-added approach to evaluation, which compounds the complex problem of teacher retention, has been compared to a forced distribution model (Lavigne, 2014). This business model, applied to education, is designed to consistently remove the lowest performers. This model not only has significant impact on teacher morale, but also on the overall teaching climate as seen through the aforementioned unintended consequences. Some research has begun to address elements of this climate and its impact on teacher retention. Researchers such as Boyd, Lankford, Loeb and Wycoff

(2008) studied the likelihood that value added would have a negative impact on the retention of teachers in the testing grades. With the added pressures of the test and the lack of control over all the inputs, teachers are reluctant to take on positions in the tested grades and/or are seeking other assignments. We have seen a shift from an interest in what teachers do that influences student outcomes to an interest in how much teachers influence student outcomes (Lavigne, 2014).

Job dissatisfaction is commonly cited as a significant reason for teachers leaving the profession. One of the causes often cited for this dissatisfaction is lack of administrative support. Consistently, lower levels of teacher attrition and migration have been found in schools with more administrative support (Berry, Noblit, & Hare, 1985; Ingersoll, 2001; Odell, & Ferraro, 1992). There are several studies that relate administrative support to teacher retention. Ladd (2011) found that teachers' perceptions of school leadership are more predictive of their intent to stay than their perception of any other working condition. Specifically, school leadership was cited as the most salient aspect of working conditions. A number of studies demonstrate the relationship between leadership and school working conditions. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) find the average effect size of school leadership on student achievement to be .25. Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson and Wahlstorm (2004) and Hallinger (2005) have conducted reviews of literature on the impact of school leadership and leaders' impact through their influence on school staff and structure. School leaders exert an important impact on the overall school atmosphere and the climate is seen to have a significant impact on teacher retention.

These studies demonstrate the importance of school leadership in establishing a climate of support that will contribute significantly to the retention of teachers. This study illuminates what some administrators are doing to retain highly effective teachers in the testing grades in the context of the highly charged climate caused by the use of VAMs in teacher evaluation. This study builds on previous research through the identification of specific strategies and aspects of leadership being utilized by school administrators to mitigate the previously described unintended consequences.

Conceptual Framework

The idea of viewing evaluation through the distributed perspective is an intriguing concept and there are many elements of this theoretical frame that resonate with education leaders. For instance, the importance of viewing leadership practice within a specific situation or context is relevant (Spillane, 2001). The distributed perspective provides the opportunity to view evaluation in an appropriate setting, at the school level, taking into account the specific situation and acknowledging the proper context.

The distributed perspective, which is built on activity theory, recognizes the importance of situating leadership in the context of interactions and the specific situation. Leadership practice is not seen as an individual's agency, but "as the activities engaged in by leaders, in interaction with others in particular contexts around specific tasks" (Spillane et al, 2004, p. 5). In this sense, leadership is conceptualized as a "practice stretched over the social and situational contexts of the school" (Spillane et al, 2004, p.5). This perspective focuses on leaders' thoughts and actions in the context of a specific setting, "the interaction of leaders, followers, and their situation in the execution of

particular leadership tasks” (Spillane et al, 2004, p.10). The aspects of this theory that are most appropriate to my research are found in the emphasis on context. Analysis of any specific aspect of schools or education outside of the situation or context in a way that allows for generalization and the application of broad theoretical concepts to something as contextualized as teacher evaluation is very difficult. Through the distributed perspective theoretical framework, something as complex and contextually situated as a teacher evaluation could be analyzed in a different light than our current accountability frame. In our education context, starting with NCLB in 2001, there is an emphasis on holding educators accountable. Specifically, there is an increased importance given to student achievement as measured by high stakes testing. The evaluation of a teacher in this context is potentially more focused on student test score gains than on pedagogical improvements. In this environment, education leaders’ and teachers’ actions are significantly impacted by the results of high stakes testing versus other important indicators of teaching and learning.

Through the distributive perspective, an evaluation system can be seen as an “artifact” or a “defining element” of a leadership practice (Spillane, 2001). This perspective allows us to analyze the impact of the artifact in the context of the leadership practice. The degree to which the evaluation instrument influences the focus of the assessment of the teacher and the aspects of the teaching situation that are addressed can be understood through this lens. This conceptual framework can be used as a lens for viewing the value added approach to teacher evaluation. As an "artifact", how does this model impact administrators’ retention strategies? Through the lens of the distributive

perspective, one focused on situation, interaction and context, what are principals doing to ensure retention of their teachers? The value added approach creates, as evidenced by the unintended consequences, a unique and potentially difficult context for interactions between leaders (principals) and followers (teachers). Do principals' strategies and approaches differ depending on the school's teacher retention rate and student performance? The distributive perspective encourages this in-depth contextualized understanding.

The strengths in the distributive perspective can be found in the focus on the complexity of leadership in education. This theoretical lens recognizes the importance of the interaction of leaders and followers in the context of a specific situation (Spillane et al, 2004). The distributive perspective has the potential to situate theories and ideas in specific contexts. This approach could encourage reflection and inform action (Spillane, 2001). The weakness of the approach is the lack of ability to generalize. With a focus on context and specific situations, it is difficult to make generalizations to a broader population. Additionally, this theory will not necessarily afford the researcher the ability to determine the "correct" method because of the contextual limitations. With the school as the primary unit of analysis, this perspective has a limited scope of influence.

Additionally, this study is concerned with the impact that the value-added approach has on the overall school climate. The interview data consistently demonstrate how the value-added approach to evaluation affects the climate of the school. Research on school climate and specifically, trust in schools, provides a useful framework. Hoy, Tarter and Woolfolk Hoy (2006) identify a construct, academic optimism, which is

composed of: academic emphasis, collective efficacy, and faculty trust. This research is used to frame the effects of the teacher evaluation program on the school site. School climate is often cited as a mitigating factor in teacher retention research (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009). If teachers are not comfortable in their climate they are unlikely to stay.

Chapter Three: Method

Purpose and Research Questions

Teacher retention is a significant challenge for school leaders and strategies must be utilized to ensure that the most qualified and strongest teachers are present in our classrooms. Teacher retention has long been an issue in education. Over one third of public school teachers leave the profession within the first three years (Ingersoll et al., 2014). Recent research has dramatically increased our understanding of teacher retention (e.g., Boyd et al., 2011; Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin, 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Loeb & Darling-Hammond, 2005). The controversial approach to teacher evaluation, VAM, adds to the complex situation of teacher retention. The value added approach to evaluation has gained acceptance in recent years and has been promoted by federal policies, such as the Race to the Top initiative and the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Waiver (see United States Department of Education, April 2012).

Researchers, such as Amrein-Beardsley (2012), Darling-Hammond (2005), Scherrer (2011) and Papay (2012) have identified various unintended consequences of this approach to evaluation, such as those related to teacher retention, narrowing of the curriculum, negative impacts on teacher collaboration and lack of meaningful feedback designed to improve teacher practice. In order to address this issue of retention, it is necessary to know more about the impact this approach to evaluation has on the teacher and administrator.

The purpose of this study is to identify strategies or approaches employed by schools and specifically administrators that they perceive may contribute to the retention of teachers in the context of VAMs. Through interviews with teachers and principals at specifically identified sites, factors that contribute to teacher retention are revealed. The goal of employing a qualitative design is to provide a greater depth of understanding regarding educators' perceptions, opinions and feeling as they relate to the overall context of the value added approach, specifically, a better understanding of administrator leadership and practice in this unique context. Data were gathered to answer the following questions:

- What are principals doing to ensure retention of their teachers in the context of a value added approach to evaluation?
- What strategies/approaches are utilized by principals in schools with high retention rates and high student performance versus those with low retention and low performance?
- How are principals managing the evaluation system and their overall school climate in schools with low retention and high performance and alternatively schools with high retention and low performance?

General Perspective

Qualitative inquiry allows for “thick” description of the phenomena being studied. The intent of the qualitative approach is to gather data from within this unique context. Data were gathered, interpreted and described from human participants' thoughts,

opinions, and perceptions. This approach allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the specific elements contributing to principals’ challenges relating to teacher retention.

Research Context

This mixed methods study relies on quantitative data analysis to identify school sites for deeper analysis through qualitative procedures. Schools were identified as appropriate “cases” for more thorough research on the basis of retention rates and the overall school performance index (see Figure 2 below), which is a composite index of school test score results.

		Performance	
		High	Low
R e t e n t i o n	High		
	Low		

Figure 2: Purposeful sample based on levels of performance and retention

Using three years of retention data for effective and highly effective teachers and the most recent composite test score results or school performance index ratings, schools were identified and categorized based on their retention and performance (DCPS, 2014). The school performance index ratings are categorized as Focus and Priority on the low performing end and Reward or Rising on the high performing end. Schools categorized as Developing were trending up, but essentially in the middle. In summary, the categories indicating lowest to highest performing schools, based on test results were as follows: lowest beginning with Priority, then Focus, moving to Developing, Rising and highest as Reward. The schools were categorized low or high retention rate schools if the average retention rate over the last three years was lower or higher than the overall average by at least one standard deviation (See Table 1 below). Schools within low and high retention groups were excluded if the principal or teachers in the testing grades had fewer than two years tenure. This helped ensure that the administrators or teachers had fully experienced the conditions and the performance that have been described. Schools were selected within the groups to cover the range of school index scores. The focus of the study is retention of teachers in the context of VAMs. For the district in question, Individual Value Added (IVA) can only be used in testing grades, which for elementary are 3rd, 4th and 5th. However, because the baseline score is the index score from the previous year, in elementary grades, only the 4th and 5th grade teachers are eligible for IVA. To determine how teachers and administrators are navigating this complex environment, the study was intended to identify schools with teachers that had been in the 4th and/or 5th grades for the previous two years. These teachers could presumably

describe the factors that led to their continued participation. Recognizing the impact of principals and the overall organization on teacher retention (Ingersoll, 2001), consistent leadership was ensured by limiting consideration only to the schools that had an administrator in place for the previous two years as well. The administrator was interviewed to provide more data on the school site efforts at retention.

Table 1
Retention and School Performance Data

School Name	School Performance Index 2013-2014	School Performance Category	Principal Tenure (Years)	Retention of Effective and Highly Effective Teachers			
				SY11-12	SY12-13	SY13-14	Average
Elementary School 1		Priority (1)	0	36%	N/A	58%	47%
Elementary School 2		Rising (4)	2	69%	N/A	77%	73%
Elementary School 3		Rising (4)		79%	69%		74%
Elementary School 4		Focus (2)		73%	73%	80%	75%
Elementary School 5		Priority (1)	2	71%		80%	76%
Elementary School 6		Rising (4)	0	69%	78%	82%	76%
Elementary School 7		Focus (2)	2	78%	78%	75%	77%
Elementary School 8		Focus (2)	2	88%		67%	77%
Elementary School 9		Priority (1)	0	93%	92%	48%	78%
Elementary School 10				67%		90%	79%
Elementary School 17	37	Focus (2)	2	93%			93%
Elementary School 18	91	Reward (5)	2	96%	100%	85%	94%
Elementary School 19	45	Rising (4)	2	94%	94%		94%
Elementary School 20	39	Developing (3)	2	100%	100%	83%	94%
Elementary School 21	58	Rising (4)		93%	96%	97%	95%
Elementary School 22	54	Rising (4)	0	100%	100%	88%	96%
Elementary School 23	23	Priority (1)		100%	88%	100%	96%
Elementary School 24	25	Priority (1)	2	100%		92%	96%
Elementary School 25			2	100%	100%	93%	98%
Overall Average Retention of Effective and Highly Effective Teachers over three years (59 Elementary Schools)							86%
Overall Average Retention minus one standard deviation (cutoff for Below Average Retention)							79%
Overall Average Retention plus one standard deviation (cutoff for Above Average Retention)							93%

Schools that met these criteria were “cases” for more in-depth study. An emphasis on “what is really going on” (Maxwell, 2013), could potentially lead to understanding more nuanced elements of retention, such as the retention of teachers from higher performing versus lower performing schools.

Methodological Approaches

The study utilizes a mixed methods approach. The quantitative aspects of the study identified school sites for qualitative research. The intent in using a mixed method approach was to enable a layered analysis using different methods, which was appropriate for the research question at hand. A mixed methods study provides a combination of broader more generalizable data analysis with context-specific insights. System-wide evaluation data identified school sites representing a range of teacher retention rates. The identified school sites then served as cases to be analyzed through interviews. These qualitative interviews illuminated “what is going on” from the perspective of school leaders and teachers (see Appendices A & B). The use of multiple methods allows the researcher to gain information about different aspects of the phenomena and/or different phenomena and provides for the opportunity to triangulate data or have different methods as a check on one another (Maxwell, 2013). The purposeful selection of schools based on performance levels and retention was done in an effort to illuminate potential differences in these seemingly extreme cases. Essentially, were there differences in the impact (in terms of teacher retention and or principal strategies) as a result of the school environment, i.e. high performing/high retention versus low performing/low retention? As Maxwell (2013) states, “purposeful selection

can be to establish comparisons to illuminate the reasons for differences between settings (p. 98).”

Research Setting/Participants

The research setting is elementary schools in a large mid -Atlantic urban school system. The research participants included a purposely-selected sample of school sites’ teachers and principals determined through a quantitative analysis of retention and school performance rates. An overall district-wide analysis of school performance data in combination with a district-wide analysis of teacher retention data revealed the sites to be studied (Table 1). These schools served as sites for the deeper qualitative research. Principals and teachers at these schools were interviewed to obtain their perspectives on the value-added approach and its impact on retention. Open-ended semi-structured interviews at these sites helped illuminate the school leaders’ strategies and overall approach. Interviewees included at least two school sites representing each of the four quadrants identified. There were two schools represented in all quadrants and three schools were interviewed in the low/low quadrant (see Table 2 below). The intent of the study was to interview the principal and two teachers from each of the identified schools. However, it was difficult in some cases to gain access to teachers. For this reason, an additional principal and teacher were interviewed for the low /low quadrant. Only the high /high quadrant met the original design of the principal and two teachers for each site (Table 2). Principals that were interviewed from the sample pool of schools are listed in bold with the number of teachers from their school in parentheses next to the name. There were nine principals interviewed, two from each quadrant, one additional from the

Table 2

Identified Principals/Schools

		Performance	
		High	Low
R e t e n t i o n	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary School 21-Rising-95% (2 teachers) • Elementary School 19-Rising-94% (2 teachers) • Elementary School 18-Reward-94%* • Elementary School 15-Rising-92% • Elementary School 14-Reward-92% • Elementary School 13-Rising-91% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary School 24-Priority-96%* • Elementary School 17-Focus-93%* • Elementary School 16-Focus-93% • Elementary School 12-Focus-91% (1 teacher)
	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary School 6-Rising-76% (1 teacher) • Elementary School 3-Rising-74% (2 teachers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary School 7-Focus-77% • Elementary School 8-Focus-77% • Elementary School 10-Developing -79% (1 teacher) • Elementary School 11-Developing-80%

Note. Principals’ names and schools names have been removed for purpose of maintaining confidentiality. Principals at schools highlighted with a * only have one year of value added evaluation from school year 2013-14.

low retention/low performing quadrant and nine teachers were interviewed, each representing one quadrant; four from the high retention/high performing quadrant, three from low retention/high performing and one each from the others. Principals and

therefore schools were identified for the study based on representing the extreme value of their quadrant, with an emphasis on principals that have the most experience with value added, meaning they would have worked under it for at least one year but preferably two years. For example, schools with the highest retention rates in the high/high quadrant were selected, while schools with the lowest retention rates in the low/low quadrant were also selected. The intent was that “extreme cases may illuminate what is going on in a way that representative cases cannot” (Maxwell, 2013, p.98). The research included the principal of each school site and teachers that met the criteria, having taught in an upper grade (4th or 5th grade classroom) for at least two years. Unfortunately, only the high/high quadrant met the original design of the study. It was particularly difficult to find eligible teachers for the low/high and the low/low quadrants. An additional school, principal and teacher, needed to be added in order to get the teacher’s perspective in the low/low quadrant. The teachers were made available by the principal of the school site. The principals provided confirmation that their teacher met the criteria of the study, having worked under the evaluation program for at least 2 years. These interviews and observations revealed the strategies utilized by the school administration to address and/or mitigate the negative aspects of this approach to teacher evaluation.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is familiar with the teacher evaluation process in the district in question and the challenges associated with teacher retention. I am a colleague of my principal participants. For this reason, I benefitted from the ability to easily establish rapport and to create a ‘safe space’ for sharing authentic experiences. The teachers

interviewed were introduced to me and given the opportunity to interview by their principals. For these interviews, establishing rapport and reassuring that everything they said would be confidential was more challenging. The teachers did appear to become comfortable and were able to speak freely about their experiences with their principals in the context of the value-added approach. My goal through the interviews was to obtain data that would explicate the ways principals were navigating the environment created by this approach to evaluation and specifically, retaining their teachers.

I realize there are many factors that influence teacher retention. In an effort to avoid any bias, data collected from the participants were recorded and transcribed verbatim, member and code checked to ensure accuracy. The consistent themes that were raised by both principals and teachers reinforced and strengthened the findings.

Data Collection

There were two main sources of data, which included the quantitative systemwide data (teacher retention and school performance data) and the qualitative data from the teacher and principal interviews. The initial quantitative analysis involved system-wide effective and highly effective teacher retention and student achievement data from 78 elementary schools analyzed to identify school sites. Secondly, semi-structured interviews (Appendices A & B) conducted at these sites with administrators and teachers provided relevant data illuminating the impact of this evaluation approach on retention and the strategies administrators used to mitigate the negative impact. The semi-structured and open-ended interviews gave access to the thinking of the participants regarding the environment created by this approach to evaluation (Kvale & Brinkman,

2009). The teachers relayed their perspective and insights into how their administrators have supported them. The interviews yielded relevant information regarding strategies that helped to mitigate the effects of the unintended consequences. Additionally, the multiple sources served to validate the findings (Creswell, 2008), through triangulation or “corroborating evidence from different individuals” (p.266).

Interviews. The interview questions were tested through pilot interviews with three principals and two teachers. After the “test” interviews were held, the questions were slightly revised. Generally, the mock interviews previewed the significant level of response elicited by the interviewees, which in fact occurred in the data collection. Essentially, once the interview got into a flow many of the subsequent questions would be addressed by the subject, the principal or teacher. Despite reassurances regarding confidentiality, some of the interviewees expressed concern over whether they could say something. However, even those participants that showed some initial hesitation became comfortable and shared their thoughts freely. The semi-structured interviews elicited the more nuanced viewpoints of the administrators and teachers. An interview guide was used to provide a framework for the questioning, but also the flexibility to pursue avenues of discussion that were divulged by the interviewee (Appendix A). The intent was to have the interviewee authentically reveal the strategies they have developed as a result of the aforementioned circumstances. The interviews provided the informants with an opportunity to authentically discuss the situation and all aspects of it. After the interviews were transcribed and checked, they were reviewed to identify the relevant themes. Additionally, the interview transcripts were provided to the interviewees as a

member check ensuring the accuracy of the participants' account (Creswell, 2008). Only one interviewee made adjustments that addressed grammatical aspects but nothing related to content.

Data Analysis

The data for analysis included both quantitative and qualitative sources. The quantitative data involved 3 years of systemwide retention data for all 78 elementary schools and performance data for all schools. These, data were analyzed to identify the school sites for more in depth study through interviews. The qualitative data for analysis came from 18 total interviews: 9 principal interviews and 9 teacher interviews. The interviews were coded and as a result the findings of the study were developed.

Method for identifying School sites. School sites were identified in four different quadrants. Schools were categorized based on their level of retention and their overall school performance. A selected school could represent High retention and High performance (H, H), Low retention and High performance (L, H), High retention and Low performance (H, L) and finally Low retention and Low performance (L, L). There were requirements that each school would have to meet to represent one of the quadrants. Using internal District-provided retention data for effective and highly effective teachers, schools one standard deviation above or below the average retention rate for three years from 2012-2014 were identified. Schools that were one standard deviation below the average retention rate were deemed as having a low retention rate and schools one standard deviation above the average retention rate were determined to have a high rate of teacher retention.

Of the 78 elementary schools in the District, 25 schools or 32% were one standard deviation above or below the average retention rate. Of the eligible schools 12 schools (15%) were one standard deviation below the average for retention, qualifying them as low retention schools and 13 schools (17%) were one standard deviation above the average qualifying them as a high retention school.

The 25 schools that qualified as having high or low retention rates were then categorized based on their most recent school performance data, using their school report card data for the year 2014. Schools that were categorized at the highest levels of performance, either Reward or Rising, were categorized as high performing and schools at the lowest levels of Focus or Priority were determined to be low performing. Of the 25 schools, 8 schools performed at the highest level, either Reward or Rising and 16 schools were in the low performing categories of Developing, Focus, or Priority (1 school served students only through 2nd grade and therefore did not receive an accountability status). In addition to categorizing schools by retention and performance, they needed to meet the threshold of having a principal that worked for two years under value added with at least one teacher having taught in the testing grades during that time. In the High retention, High performing (H,H) category there were 6 schools, 4 were High retention, Low performing (H, L), 2 were Low retention, High performing (L,H) and 4 were Low performing, Low retention (L, L).

Principal interviews. Principals at the respective sites were interviewed to gain their insights and feedback with respect to leadership strategies around retention in the context of the value-added evaluation approach. In order to qualify for an interview, the

principal would have to have been at the site for the 2012-2014 school years, having worked as a principal in the context of the value added environment for at least two years and have at least one teacher eligible to be interviewed who worked at that time. Most of the principals (6 of the 9) met this requirement, however three were unable to provide a teacher that was eligible to be interviewed. Rapport with the principals was quickly established, contributing to authentic and detailed summaries of their experiences and the strategies they employed in his unique setting.

Teacher Interviews. Teachers were eligible based on having taught in a testing grade (4th or 5th) and having been evaluated using the value-added approach. Principals identified teachers eligible for interviews based on their experience with value added. The teachers needed to have been evaluated using the system for at least two years. Identifying and setting up interviews with the teachers was much more difficult than the principals. In some cases, teachers having worked under value added were no longer available at the school. Teacher rapport was not as easily established, but once they became engaged they were able to offer excellent insights and corroborate the principal's strategies.

Coding. The interview and observation data collected at each school site were read and reread to identify codes and then a review of the codes revealed patterns or categories used to identify overarching themes of administrators' leadership in this context. Themes and patterns emerged and then were analyzed for trends that provide insight into strategies used by the administration. These qualitative data revealed insights into effective leadership strategies. Through the process of thematic analysis, the

main themes can be organized into networks. This process allows for a systematized approach to analyzing the interview data (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The development of the themes and patterns through the repeated in-depth review of the transcripts or constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) proved to be effective in identifying principal strategies for retention. The interview transcripts were analyzed multiple times to identify themes and patterns from the conversations. In order to minimize the presence of bias and act as another level of triangulation, code checking (Miles and Huberman, 1994) was utilized. The language and phraseology used by the participants were coded consistently to determine overall themes and provide data that supported potential findings. The coding assisted in revealing the overall narrative of the administrators and teachers in identifying the strategies they had developed.

Limitations

The sample was from schools in a specific district limiting the generalizability. Also, there were difficulties in meeting the original intent of the study, in terms of the number of participants and in meeting the initial structure of the represented quadrants. Only the high retention/high performing quadrant had 2 principals and 2 teachers that were available to interview. However, the quantitative analysis provided a purposeful sample of participants, in an effort to research the extreme cases within the overall district and diversify the data.

Validity

My involvement as a colleague of the principals could be seen as a validity threat. Additionally, my role as a principal or evaluator of teachers may have impacted the

teacher interviews. With respect to researcher bias and reactivity, I attempted to be as consistent as possible with my interviewing approach and I recorded verbatim all of the interviews. This resulted in rich and detailed data from each participant. I was able to quickly establish a rapport with my interviewees that allowed for the authentic and candid responses that provided the rich data sources. Also, my consistent approach and the participant's responses across the varied groups contributed to the reliability of the data. The use of member checking, the provision of the transcripts to the participants to check for accuracy and the review of transcripts by a code checker to compare and refine the identification of codes improved the reliability of my findings (Creswell, 2008). I utilized member checks by providing my respondents with a copy of the complete transcript of our interview. Only one of the respondents made changes to the transcript, which was only grammar based. I had a peer read through the transcripts as a code check on my observations. Through triangulation, collecting interviews from both principals and teachers, I hoped to mitigate the impact of a potentially biased viewpoint. Also, the structure of the study, the use of extreme cases as points of comparison was intended to assist in eliminating any question regarding the validity of the data.

Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter will summarize the collected data and answer the research questions set out in this study.

1. What are principals doing to ensure retention of their teachers in the context of a value added approach to evaluation?
2. What strategies/approaches are utilized by principals in schools with high retention rates and high student performance versus those with low retention and low performance?
3. How are principals managing the evaluation system and their overall school climate in schools with low retention and high performance and alternatively schools with high retention and low performance?

The eighteen interviews, nine of teachers and nine of principals, across the four quadrants, proved to be an excellent source of rich data helping to explicate the nuances of the environment created by this approach to evaluation. The intent of the study was to interview the principal and two teachers from each of the identified schools for a total of twenty-four interviews, six in each quadrant. However, it was difficult in some cases to gain access to teachers, in part because many had moved on and were no longer at the school site. For this reason, an additional principal and teacher were interviewed for the Low/Low quadrant. Only the High/High quadrant met the original design of the principal and two teachers for each site. The interviews yielded a great deal of information

regarding aspects of retention in the value-added environment. Both principals and teachers described strategies for retention. Additionally, insight was provided into the overall context created by the value added approach to evaluation and the implications for not only retention but also the overall teaching and learning environment.

The data reveal strategies, which will be explained in greater detail, employed by principals in retaining teachers; however, there did not appear to be significant differences as a result of the situated context, regarding high or low performing schools or schools with high or low retention rates.

Principals

The principals in this study eagerly participated and provided relevant insights into the study. Throughout the interviews, principals referenced a variety of teacher retention strategies related to or directly encompassing the following components (see Figure 3):



Figure 3: Principal strategies

the provision of leadership opportunities within the school, professional development,

resource allocation, voice/ownership, emphasis on teaming, coaching, relationships, feedback/praise, the importance of conversations and an emphasis on other data. The strategies are reinforced and further explicated through this analysis with firsthand quotes of the interviews.

Aspects of VA were praised by principals and some aspects decried. The interviews demonstrated the principals' recognition of the impact of VA on their school environment and an intentional effort to overcome and/or mitigate the deleterious effects. At the same time, there was an *almost* universal lack of understanding of the technical aspects of this approach to evaluation, which created some confusion particularly when attempting to explain how specific outcomes are achieved and comparing the evaluation to other approaches or against an ideal. Quotes such as, "I think finding some way to connect students' outcomes to teacher performance would be a valuable piece. I think that is what IVA is trying to get at" and "I like IVA as far as I can understand it" illustrate the confusion school leaders have with this integral evaluation component. Also of relevance were the principals' references to their approach to the climate created by this emphasis on testing in teacher evaluation. These strategies will be explored as well.

Teachers

The teachers in this study were energetic participants; they provided heartfelt and intuitive perceptions regarding their experiences working with this controversial aspect of evaluation. They confirmed many of the strategies presented by the administrators; the opportunities for growth, particularly in leadership, professional development, the additional resources provided, their sense of "voice", teamwork, coaching, the

importance of relationships, feedback/praise, conversations and the emphasis on other pieces of data to evaluate the teaching. The teachers could be categorized into two different camps; those who tolerated VA, maybe even recognized the significance of its emphasis on growth and did what they felt was appropriate and necessary for their students; and those that competitively relished the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to achieve success through the VA approach. The latter boasted of their VA scores and noted their overall lack of concern with the approach. These teachers could be seen in stark contrast to the teachers that lamented the lack of control or understanding associated with the VA approach and its impact not only on their evaluation but also their psyche. As one principal aptly noted, “No one is going to say they want to teach an upper grade...it is the testing grades. [Most teachers] would rather teach first or second...it takes a certain kind of *swashbuckler* to teach in the testing grades.” These swashbucklers appreciated, even treasured, the opportunity to access the bonuses that would come with their high IVA scores.

In addition to reinforcing the importance of the retention strategies, the teachers noted the impact this approach to evaluation placed on the overall school environment. In some cases, the teachers discussed wanting to be moved out of testing grades and all mentioned the feelings of stress and pressure associated with teaching in the testing grades generally and more specifically under the VA approach. The teachers in testing grades felt that they carried “the weight of the school.”

Principal Retention Strategies

Several insights into the first research question regarding principals’ efforts to

ensure retention of their teachers in the context of a value added approach are provided in this section. Recent research on student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000, Rockoff, 2004, Harris & Sass, 2011, & Stronge, Ward, Tucker & Hindman, 2007) illuminates the importance of the teacher in improving students' outcomes. Research (Haycock, 1998) has demonstrated the significant impact of having an effective teacher on closing the achievement gap. The focus on the importance of good teachers and teaching has brought into the forefront the importance of retaining good teachers. Teacher retention (Spillane et al, 2004) has become a topic of great concern in leadership research. School leaders are consistently looking for ways to retain their teachers because of the positive impact on the overall school program (Boyd et al, 2009). While the context of this study is unique, many of the retention strategies identified are very familiar in the literature. As previously mentioned, the retention strategies identified through this study can be incorporated within or directly encompass the following categories and are viewed through the distributed leadership perspective, as leadership practices involving the interaction of school leaders, followers and the situation (Spillane et al, 2004).

Leadership opportunities. Throughout the study, principals mentioned that they provide teachers with leadership opportunities in an effort to retain them in their schools. Spillane (2005) notes how the “heroics of leadership” genre distorts the importance of an individual leader. The emphasis the leaders in this study placed on the importance of developing leadership within their schools was evident. “Everybody here leads us in something. I try to make it so... the teachers know that without your expertise in this particular item, we just cannot function and work properly without you.” Or as another

principal put it, “I believe in shared leadership, so all teachers, they make a lot of decisions: we make decisions in collaboration.” In response to ensuring retention, this principal did not hesitate, ‘Give them leadership roles, that’s probably number one” and when describing her program, “we try to be a very consensus and collaboratively driven organization. Try to do very flat leadership.” Principals cited the desire by their teachers to have greater input into the overall program and teachers’ interest in having a sense of ownership, “giving a lot of leadership positions out there, a lot of voice.” One principal detailed her overall program’s approach to a more distributed leadership model:

Just back to that leadership piece, though. We have next year, it’ll be four full coaches, four half time coaches, all in house. Then we have, because we’re an EC[Education Campus], we have three chairpersons. They love that role. I don’t know why. I think they get \$2,000. For that little bit of money, they do a lot of work. Then, we have a lead teacher on every grade level. We meet every Thursday morning at 7:30. All these folks come together. They have a big voice. I don’t [have] to facilitate it. One of the coaches actually facilitates that meeting, so they have a lot of say in how the school runs.

In the context of VA, teachers in some cases moved out of the classroom into other teaching positions or roles such as coaching that gave them more leadership and into roles which were not evaluated under VA. In reference to a teacher that moved out of a testing grade, a principal noted, “Prime example is that third grade teacher who went to first grade. Who comes in singing every day now? I mean just happy.” Some teachers were on a track to become school leaders and others were looking for greater

responsibility and the opportunity to be more impactful. As one teacher described her principal, “Always giving teachers the voice and making them feel empowered. She’s always pushing people to do other types of leadership roles. Even having teachers lead PD’s [professional development].” In the context of the VA teacher evaluation program these leaders, as Spillane et al. (2004) has described, could be seen as distributing their leadership, through their provision of leadership opportunities, across leaders and followers in a way that ensured their sense of contribution and belonging.

Professional development. In his research, Spillane et al (2004, p.13) identified several functions of instructional leadership, including the support of teacher growth and development. In the context of the value added evaluation program this could be considered a leadership task, through which the principal attempts to mitigate the potential negative effects. The interviews revealed principals frequently referencing the professional development opportunities they provided for their teachers. The teachers interviewed were grateful for the opportunity to learn and ultimately improve their practice, “I feel like I’m constantly growing. I’m constantly learning, and the times that I’m happiest are when I feel like I’m being challenged. I’m also being equally supported in that growth, and I’m part of a team that has a common vision and mission.” This component may have helped “buffer’ the teachers’ feelings of stress and pressure around student achievement. This principal’s quote typifies the thinking:

Another thing is that I provide professional development and feedback to teachers consistently to help shape their practice, so that they will be supported and feel when it’s an evaluation that counts towards their [name of overall evaluation

program]...as if during the process it's not punitive because 'you [the principal] have supported me along the way to improve my instruction.'

Presumably, through application of research-based and advanced techniques the teachers would feel more confident about their ability to improve student outcomes.

Resource allocation. Another function of instructional leadership, according to Spillane et al (2004), involves the distribution of resources. In the context of value added this leadership task is one through which principals are able to address the potential inequity of this approach to evaluation. The interviews yielded some interesting anecdotes around resource allocation. One school went as far as modifying its entire schedule so that the upper grades (testing grades), could teach the core subjects (math and reading) in the morning with all the specialists (reading, math, ELL, and specialized instruction) available to support the classrooms and students.

So one major thing that we did that was different for their testing grade and this is year 2 of it, students in grade 3, 4, and 5, I started their day earlier. They start at 8, and they go until 1. All my testing teachers are finished at 1 o'clock, so they have no duty. They can take a lunch, then they can meet with their counterpart every single day if they need. I have time to meet with them individually or as a grade level team, they have the rest of their afternoon to grade their papers, plan for the next day and leave at 3:30. I encourage that aspect because you guys [the teachers] are under a lot of pressure and I'm not delusional. I know that you could only be on certain grade levels for a certain amount of time before I start losing you [testing grade teachers].

Principals often referred to their efforts to ensure that teachers in the testing grades had all they needed in terms of curriculum, technology and specialist support. One of the teachers described how her principal helped support her as a valued added teacher by providing specific software support programs,

I think with the different, having the interventions that we have for both math and reading, implementing the blended learning programs that are research based, intended to improve their scores, like ST Math [Spatial-temporal math, software program]. Finding money to allocate to those programs to ensure that our students are prepared.

These supports and others were provided to ensure that every student would have the opportunity to do well on the assessment. These extra benefits were provided, seemingly, to offset the stress and pressure on the teachers and in recognition of the important work they were doing for the school. The oft repeated “weight of the world” was potentially eased with the support of additional specialists and materials.

Voice/ownership. Similar to the aspect of retention relating to leadership opportunities, teachers want to feel as though they have some control over their environment and a say in the decision-making process. This leadership practice takes form “in the interaction of leaders, followers and their situation in the execution of particular leadership tasks (Spillane et al, 2004, p.10).” As the principal of a low performing school put it, “It's really about voice and opportunity to lead. I think that's what keeps great teachers in the building.” In this practice, leaders are providing teachers

the opportunity to assist in leading a component of the school program and essentially the chance to “be heard.” As one teacher explained,

There's the ability to have a voice in local decision-making and being a part of a community that works together to do what's best for children and to improve student achievement to obtain the chancellor's commitment goals. That's the reason that I enjoy working here. That's the reason that I've stayed here.

The opportunity to have a “voice” in the program seemed to be a critical component contributing to teachers’ willingness to remain at their school despite their concerns with the evaluation approach. The teachers appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback to the administration as one teacher described, “She has this vision. She wants to move the school from here to here. She's going to make sure she gets there. She makes sure that she always asks for feedback.” This contributed to this teacher’s feeling of commitment to the program, “This is what I [the administrator] see, you [teacher] tell me what you see. Let's come to some type of consensus on what it is that we're trying to aim for. Always giving teachers the voice and making them feel empowered.” This retention strategy may not be specific to the VA environment, but again follows the theme of granting some sense of control to the teachers in an environment that can appear to be “out of their hands.” This teacher summed it up when describing her relationship with her principal,

A lot of the way that she leads is with distributed leadership, so people in the teaching role or the coaching role can have a lot of input into what's happening. You don't feel like you're just working in some vacuum, and what you're doing has no larger implication.

Emphasis on team. Many of the principals and teachers discussed the importance of their teams and the team-like setting created by their leadership. The idea that distributed leadership can be viewed as stretched across individuals or teams supports the notion that teamwork is a relevant and necessary aspect. Teachers took comfort in knowing they had the support of their colleagues and the idea that they were not working in a silo and everything did not just fall on “their shoulders.” Ingersoll and Smith (2003) discuss the importance of retention in solving the teacher shortage problem as opposed to increasing the teacher supply. They argue for better induction and mentoring programs (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004) particularly for new teachers. They stress the importance of the collaborative approach and retaining teachers. Through these additional supports as one principal put it, “I think working together as a collaborative group is the best means possible.” A couple of principals mentioned a desire to have all teachers held accountable by VA to ensure their commitment to the overall school’s scores,

I'm for it, I just think it should be 100%. I think everybody should have a value added. I think it takes a school-wide effort to get there, so I think it's unfair for it to only be on the testing grade teachers. I think everybody should have value added, the way it used to be.

Another principal described their teams approach,

Yeah, yeah. Everybody should be held accountable to get that. When you have to say, "All right, we're going to modify the schedule because we're testing," or, “We need to pull the computers [from the rest of the school] because we've got kids

that are testing," instead of people mumbling and grumbling because they're losing their computers, they should be like, "Well, I'm going to make sure they're in good shape because the kids are testing. Let me modify my recess schedule so it's a quiet environment because we're testing." We pretty much have that kind of buy in anyway now. Another example [of how our team works together] is we do Saturday Academies over the course of the year. It used to be that our early childhood and kindergarten teachers would come and they would babysit staff members' kids so that they could tutor their kids for getting ready for the DC CAS. That was their contribution, because it was IVA and they were like, "Oh, let me come and pitch in here." We don't really see that anymore. We don't really ask for it either, but I think when everybody's accountable for it ... Our custodians used to talk about it [school value added scores on evaluation] knowing that they were accountable for it and wanted to make sure that everything was ready for test day. Light bulbs were in.

Additionally, one principal lamented how the approach contributed to a “segregated school” of teachers working under the pressure of VA and those that were not. The differences in perception, in terms of climate, were dramatic; teachers without VA cheerily coming to work every day and those working under the approach with their heads down focused on getting through the tested standards. These principals recognized the importance of working against this dynamic by emphasizing that all teachers owned the scores and some mentioned trying to diminish the stressful situation by downplaying the importance of scores and not really addressing VA. A principal

emphatically stated, “Teamwork makes the dream work.” One of the teachers dramatically described the importance of the team aspect,

I enjoy working with the team. I feel like from the minute I came to Elementary School 3 in 2005, it's been like my second family. These are people that you sweat with, these are the people that you cry with, these are the people that you fight with. There's a lot of emotion involved in those three things. We are connected to each other. I think that's what's kept me here.

Coaching. In addition to professional development opportunities, principals cited their coaches and coaching as strong levers in the retention arena. The coaches were referenced as a prominent resource in helping develop teachers’ practice and providing them with the resources and direct instructional support that would help to ensure their students’ growth. This instructional support and leadership practice could be seen in stark contrast to the VA approach, which emphasized outcomes versus ongoing and formative feedback. A school leader posited, “Instead of hiring another assistant principal, we hired another coach. Teachers don't need another hammer.”

Relationships. The importance of relationships is critical in the interaction between leader and follower in the school-based situation. This element of leadership practice was cited consistently by both school leaders and teachers as one that contributed significantly to retention. All of the teachers and principals acknowledged that having a strong relationship with their administration was an important factor in their remaining at their respective schools. A teacher summed it up this way,

The parents are just asking me to stay around and the relationships ... I feel like last year when I was considering leaving, I have a pretty good silent relationship with my principal, very good professionally and I like the trajectory that she has me on. Just being honest, I think that's really important for you to have a good professional relationship with your administration. I like straight shooters and she's a straight shooter, she tells me [relating to teaching] where I'm weak at and where I'm strong and what I need to do. That's what kept me here between the parents and the principal.

Additionally, all of the principals mentioned relationship building as a critical leadership task in retaining their teachers. Principals spoke of the importance of making a connection in particular with their VA teachers to ensure that they understood that their efforts and overall teaching were valued. For instance, this principal explained her approach,

Build really strong relationships, it's not just in the building, but really supporting teachers when they're having personal crises, when they're feeling like they're not effective, really just trying to always find other professional development [ways to support instruction]. We've traveled together as teachers to conferences outside of the district, so I've invested a lot in them professionally and sometimes I think that I was going overboard because we were always reading [professional literature].

For teachers, the relationships helped them to overcome some of the inconsistencies present in the VA approach to evaluation. They felt validated by their administrator's

individual feedback regarding their teaching and overall impact on the program.

Additionally, teachers appreciated the personal attention and connection, as evidenced by this quote, “Oh yeah, definitely. Just creating a strong personal relationship with me. She's bent over backwards. I was nursing my daughter, and she let me come in her office every day, twice a day, for breast pumping.”

Feedback/praise. Principals recognized the importance of providing their teachers with positive feedback and public praise. This leadership practice helped serve to insulate teachers from the lack of feedback and potentially negative results of the VA evaluation. As one principal put it, “At monthly meetings, we spend the first 10 minutes giving kudos. I promote and let everyone know that they are appreciated and valued.” For teachers, the consistent praise and encouragement served to reassure them in the feedback void left by the VA approach, “I love the way she gives, and the entire administrative team gives, constructive criticism. Always trying to help teachers and leaders grow as individuals.” This lack of feedback was manifested in the reality that teachers typically would not receive their VA score until the middle of the summer, leaving a significant portion of their evaluation unknown until much later than their colleagues without VA. The feedback that they received from their supervisor was critical in providing teachers with an evaluation of their performance. One teacher described it this way, “Just to constantly remind you, keep doing what you're doing. Giving that positive reinforcement, of don't let that weigh you down. I would say the positive reinforcement on a daily basis.” The principal's reassurance helped address any concerns with self-esteem or any doubt they might have in their ability. One school

leader proclaimed, “I think the key is, honestly, holding up great teachers is important, or showing them respect. If you're a great teacher, people need to know you're great.”

Conversations. Interestingly, most of the principals mentioned having conversations with their teachers in response to whether they had specific strategies for retention. This aspect of leadership practice was uniquely prevalent in the analysis of the interviews. “We try to retain them [teachers], even [by] having conversations or [asking the teachers] how could you be supported or what kind of professional development will you need.” In some ways, these conversations probably encompassed aspects of several of the aforementioned retention factors: relationships, feedback/praise, teaming, “voice”/ownership and perhaps even coaching. One principal spoke of, “keeping the focus on what is best for kids” and “everything else will fall into place.” The principals clearly used conversations as a means to connect with their teachers in a meaningful way, trying to validate and hear their teachers’ concerns while providing necessary verbal support. As one of the teachers explained, “At the same time, he tries to mitigate it by making sure he has good relational connections with his staff and supporting us.” One principal expounded on how he reconciled the seeming lack of control regarding the value added evaluation,

I feel like with IVA that’s a piece that I don’t own or control because I don’t even look at the test, I’m not grading it, this is like a mystery. You don’t know how the scoring is [done]; it’s kind of out of my hands. As a principal, we like to be in control of things, that’s a piece that I don’t own, I don’t control. I generally feel like it reflects good teaching but not always. I’ve had good teachers who have had

low IVA scores. That can be frustrating. I end up having a lot of conversations with teachers about growth. Teachers worry when they have kids that are ... especially at our school we're going to have kids that are really low [performing].

Emphasis on other data for evaluation. One additional strategy that was mentioned related to the treatment principals gave to other aspects of the evaluation, knowing that a significant portion would be governed by VA. One of the principals suggested that he might "soften the blow" by considering other aspects of the evaluation in a more positive light for the teacher in question. For instance, the observation data would not be as critical for a teacher that was working under VA.

Other principals stressed other measures of student achievement, such as formative assessments,

I think I've enjoyed using TRC and DIBELS [Text Reading and Comprehension and Dynamic Indicator of Early Literacy Skills, formative reading assessments], actually. I think they [the assessments] are very unifying. I think they are very empowering for teachers, because it's powerful for tracking, because using more formative assessments is more empowering for teachers. Summative assessments are disempowering for teachers. Either way. I've done the post mortems for standardized tests. They tend to be like, shit or hooray. They're never really a powerful lever to reflect on how well we did things.

The school leaders were able to provide teachers with opportunities to realize growth objectives with their students on an ongoing basis. Through this practice, the leaders would be able to mitigate the results of the high stakes end of year assessment and

essentially provide more formative feedback through emphasizing these alternative assessments.

Impact on School Climate

Aspects of the third research question regarding principals managing the evaluation system and their overall school climate in schools with low retention and high performance and alternatively schools with high retention and low performance are addressed in the following section. The interviews revealed the extent to which the VA approach to evaluation impacted the overall school environment. These factors will be discussed in the context of school climate and student achievement. Researchers have sought to identify constructs to evaluate school climate. Collegial leadership, teacher professionalism, internal press, and external press were identified as elements of a positive school climate by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998). Research studies such as those of Cohen et al. (2009) have cited the importance of school climate in not only retaining teachers, but also ensuring academic achievement, school success, effective violence prevention and students' healthy development. In addition to aspects of school climate, researchers have sought to identify school characteristics that have an impact on student achievement. Academic optimism (Hoy, et al., 2006), which is composed of academic emphasis, collective efficacy and faculty trust, was identified as a construct for explaining student achievement. The researchers found that academic optimism made a significant contribution to student achievement after controlling for other variables, such as demographics and previous achievement. Academic optimism provides a useful construct for considering the climate created by the use of the valued added teacher

evaluation. The organizational properties of academic optimism contribute to the kind of positive, growth-oriented environment that allows students, teachers and staff to thrive. In the interviews, the teachers and principals referenced aspects of the VA approach that had both, from their perspectives, positive and negative effects on the school climate. Generally, the positive aspects were related to those that would be lauded from an overall district's perspective, an extra focus on student outcomes. Essentially, the VA approach would hold teachers accountable for their students' test scores and ensured that teachers were focused on teaching the standards, which barring any unintended consequences would in theory ensure that students gain mastery in the academic skills that have been vetted as the most important. Some educators would argue that this focus or approach leads to some of the unintended consequences, which will be described later. This "positive" effect could be seen in the principal's language which referred to holding teachers accountable for their students' growth in mastery of skills and the teachers' acknowledgement of the importance of focusing on student achievement and their students' acquisition of skills as measured by the standardized assessment. The negative effects refer to the unintended consequences the VA approach can have on staff morale, creativity and innovation and the overall collaborative environment. Some strategies to counter these negative effects were revealed in the data analysis.

“Positive” effects. Several principals discussed the increased focus in terms of teaching and planning displayed by teachers working under VA. As one principal put it “her planning is spot on” and “she has a laser like focus on the standards.” Presumably, the VA approach would contribute to this press for academic achievement discussed by

Hoy et al. (2006). This increased focus on student achievement fits well with the academic emphasis (Hoy et al., 2006) discussed with respect to successful school characteristics. This approach to evaluation could be used as a means to leverage teachers to ensure their focus on the tested standards and improved student outcomes as measured by the end of year assessment. A couple of the principals discussed the potential benefits of all teachers being held accountable through VA. The idea being that everyone would have the extra focus on and “own” the school’s results. In this way, all staff would be enlisted in this academic emphasis and ensure that all their students achieved mastery on the identified standards. The value added approach, because it is a part of the teachers’ evaluation and tied to bonuses and salary steps could be seen as a motivational tool in ensuring teachers were focused on teaching and having their students demonstrate achievement of the standards.

Accountability. The reform and accountability movements are cited by Hoy et al. (2006) as having promoted this academic press or emphasis on student achievement. Attaching a significant percentage of a teacher’s overall evaluation score to their students’ performance on the end of year high stakes test is a means for holding the teacher accountable for their students’ performance. Even teachers in the non-tested grades administer benchmark and or summative tests, but these are not necessarily tied to their evaluation. In a way, school districts and principals are leveraging their students’ outcomes and the teacher’s performance through VA by holding them accountable for the students’ test scores. As one school leader put it,

The individual value (added) helps us. I would say the scope and sequence as far as our curriculum; they're pretty much aligned to the assessments that students are administered. That, to me, lets us know if the teachers really are doing what they're supposed to, versus, like I said, an evaluation. Looking at that test data gives me more of a picture versus an evaluation.

The teachers also referenced the importance of this aspect of their evaluation, "I think student achievement is absolutely an integral and important part of teachers being evaluated. That's our job, to make sure that our students are learning, and that's ultimately where we need to be held accountable."

Some principals felt this was a necessary step in ensuring that their teachers understood the importance of the tests and their students' outcomes. The "swashbucklers" seemed to readily accept this additional responsibility as a necessary aspect of their teaching role, as one teacher put it, "I always hit my VA."

Focus on growth. As opposed to teachers in non-tested grades, that do not have that level of accountability, teachers under VA are acutely aware of the importance of their students' test scores and not only the degree to which their students' master the test (i.e. proficiency), but also the extent to which their students demonstrate improvement over previous year's scores. This focus on student growth can have positive effects on how teachers approach their classroom instruction. As one teacher put it, the value added approach ensures that teachers have a strong instructional base,

But, unfortunately, we're in a career in a day and age where testing is essential.

So, I think you have some teachers who can create a great climate, but sometimes

their pedagogy is not that strong, and those test scores reflect it, year after year after year. They might be the best person to build relationships but might not be the best teacher pedagogy-wise.

Even the principals that struggled to completely understand the VA approach acknowledged the importance of its intent to measure students' test score growth. One principal indicated the necessity for the approach and the emphasis on test score growth in terms of ensuring a priority on student achievement.

I am for high-stakes testing. I think that without it, we return back to a culture of low expectations where schools get to decide what proficiency is. That would be great if everybody had a growth mindset and if everybody focused on actual teaching and learning standards and not just about making kids feel good, so I'm definitely for high-stakes testing. I think it's just a lot of pressure. I mean it's a lot of pressure for me as an administrator of an urban school, but we've been able to do some good things here at Elementary School 3, especially in comparison to other [area] schools. Yeah, I agree with high-stakes testing. I just think it ... I guess I grapple with how do you make it not anxiety-driven, because [the approach creates] anxiety for administrators. It's anxiety for teachers. Nobody really likes it. I'm not championing for it like, "Yes, more testing! More IVA!" But it's necessary for us to get the data we need on student progress.

Laser-like focus. When describing their teachers working under VA, several principals mentioned their teachers' intentionality or "laser-like focus" with respect to addressing the standards. One principal discussed her VA teachers' unit planning,

Their unit planning is more detailed and usually more spot on than the other grades. We have every grade level from kindergarten through fifth grade post their unit plans outside of their door. Let's just say, the fourth and fifth graders [teachers] are usually on it. This is what they're doing [lessons they are teaching] on that day where the other ones [other grade level teachers] may be a day or two behind.

Another principal assessed the impact of the approach this way,

I just think it [value added] helps them stay focused. The goals have been obtainable. They've made their goals by and large. Not every year every time, but they've made it, I think ... For example, a math teacher, she had 86% of her kids pass the DC CAS and [I] was like, 'you just closed the gap.' It made it a very tangible thing that she brought... kids to that degree of success. I think that has actually helped build morale when kids do well and they show what they know.

Teachers working under the VA approach recognized the importance of addressing all the standards to improve their students' performance on the end of year assessment.

Principals and teachers referred to "no time for fluff" and both described limiting extras [extracurriculars], like field trips, in pursuit of addressing all aspects of the curriculum.

Presumably, the VA approach contributes to this attention on the standards and the overall environment of academic emphasis.

Negative effects. The VA approach was seen by all interviewees as having significant negative consequences for the overall school climate. Principals lamented retaining teachers in the testing grades and teachers referenced the prevailing stress

associated with the evaluation approach. Principals and teachers sought means to mitigate these aspects and described their efforts to work against the issues that arose regarding school climate, morale and their instructional approach. As previously noted, academic optimism will serve as a relevant construct for evaluating the unintended consequences of this approach to evaluation.

Retention in testing grades. The principals consistently lamented the challenges associated with keeping good teachers in the testing grades. Viewed through the lens of academic optimism (Hoy et al., 2006), the use of VA contributes to challenges in developing all three of the primary characteristics: academic emphasis, collective efficacy and trust. In the following examples and quotes, teachers are seen to be struggling with their sense of efficacy and trust. Teachers do not feel that they will be able to execute the actions necessary to be successful and they lack trust in the students' ability to perform to a level that will ensure their success. This lack of self-efficacy and trust is rooted more in the mistrust of the form of evaluation than the teachers' own personal positive sense of efficacy or trust in their students' abilities. One principal basically acknowledged hiring teachers knowing they would only stay for a year or two. Some principals were able to retain their teachers at the school by moving them out of the testing grades, to lower grades or into coaching or specialist positions. With the exception of the "swashbucklers", teachers generally resisted the assignment to teach in testing grades under VA. One teacher put it graphically, "I am leaving because next year is the worst class ever and with IVA I am f***ed." Another teacher discussed reasons teachers may ask to leave the testing grades,

I have mixed feelings about this. My first year here, I was slated to teach science, and then in November [my] 5th grade class [was] split, and [I was moved] to teach ELA and math. I never taught ELA in my life. I mean, we teach it every day, but ... That was a little challenging, and unfortunately my value added that year for ELA was really low, but my math was fine. That caused me to get developing [low evaluation score], which is really frustrating. I mean, I put [in] all this time [and] effort, and thought I was doing a good job. That piece particularly is, I think, frustrating [for] teachers. I understand why they leave [the testing grades].

Also, principals discussed the challenges of keeping teachers in the testing grades,

Last year I had one teacher, she was brand new to us from North Carolina and she was like, "I don't know if could teach [in the testing grades]." She came in as a 4th grade teacher, and she was just losing it. She was like, "You know, I don't know if I can continue [teaching] on testing [upper grades] levels." I think in the back of her mind she thought the IVA would come back. I said to her, "I'll remove you off of that level [grade]," and she agreed to stay for another year and I was really thankful, and that made a difference.

Another principal shared his concerns with retention in the testing grades, not only teachers wanting to move out of testing grades into lower grades, but also with the perception of some teachers that moving to a higher performing school would make achieving higher VA scores easier,

I have teachers who would be phenomenal in the testing grades who do not want to teach testing grades. On a yearly basis, we have teachers who are lobbying to teach non-testing grades, and it becomes a train wreck because they're assuming that, "Okay. [If] I teach the little ones, it's going to be a lot easier." When they quickly find out it's a lot more difficult [teaching younger students] that becomes a problem with staffing. It also becomes an issue with attracting the best talent, if they know that you're not a [high] performing school currently. You're only given a year or two, in certain circumstances, to perform on a certain level or you're gone. People aren't necessarily going to jeopardize their career [risk having low test scores and evaluations]. Especially if you can go somewhere [higher performing school] and achieve a certain financial bonus and there's not so much work to do. It creates those types of problems. It definitely creates a staffing issue with us here.

There are clear negative implications for collegiality between teachers, especially those of different grade levels, which have an impact on both collective efficacy and faculty trust. Additionally, there are negative effects on professionalism and teachers' willingness to move out of their area of expertise, upper elementary, in order to avoid the impact of working under VA, both signaling problems with collective efficacy and trust. Finally, issues of trust relating to the overall school due to performance levels and perceptions that teachers at high performing schools are able to achieve higher value added scores.

Fear/stress. Throughout the interviews, particularly with the teachers, but also with principals, there was an overarching sense of fear regarding the impact of VA. Viewed through the lens of academic optimism, this sense of fear erodes the trust, so important in achieving the positive aspects of this construct and fear causes the primary stakeholders to question their efficacy and to move from the academic emphasis to the base instinct of survival. For principals, the test scores were generally of great concern, and particularly the VA scores and the impact they might have on the teachers.

It takes time for schools to get stability... principals come in, it's their first or second year, and they're terrified because most likely in your first or second year, if you're coming into a reformed school, you're not going to have good scores. Also, with the bonus riding on the overall evaluation and the high percentage of the evaluation based on VA, the teachers were concerned about their financial well-being. Comments such as "I need a down payment on my house" or "this is my livelihood" illustrated the level of importance associated with the VA approach. The following quotes by teachers illustrate the fear and anxiety associated with principal performance,

I don't really know the conversations that happen between the chancellor and the principals, or the superintendent and principals, but my feeling is that sometimes there's not enough of a long view, "This is our five-year plan, this is what we expect your benchmarks to look like over these five years." It's more like, "If you don't get everything done in this year, then you're going to be axed.

I know that [for] ____ they've changed over to a three-year contract for her, so I know they're thinking about this, but I think that culture of fear trickles down to

teachers, and probably students. "If you don't pass your test..." That's not the point. The point is being ready for the next step and making progress. I also think, what is good enough? Because I think there are principals who are getting heart attacks. Our work is really serious, but our work shouldn't be killing people. It's funny, but it's...

Teachers spoke of the feeling of having the expectations of the entire school riding on their shoulders. Ultimately, they feared for their job (scores tied to evaluation, academic emphasis), not getting a bonus (not high enough scores, collective efficacy) and letting their school down (students' scores, trust). All factors that would significantly negatively impact the primary elements of academic optimism. Also, as was mentioned by principals and teachers alike, teachers feared that the VA scores would not accurately reflect their teaching ability. One principal described a teacher that eventually left the profession because his scores were low and he had directly associated them with his teaching ability, thus severely impacting his sense of efficacy.

Innovation: Lack of flexibility. Apparent in the teacher interviews was an underlying lack of autonomy when teaching in a VA setting. Teachers felt an overwhelming need to adhere to teaching only standards or risk their students' performance and their VA score on the end of year high stakes assessment. In addition to not wanting to stray from the standards, there was a sense that the teachers had to apply a strict pedagogy to achieve them and that there was limited, if any, room for creativity in their instructional approach. For this reason, teachers resisted the urge to "try something new" or move from the prescribed curriculum. This unintended consequence of

implementation had the negative effect on teacher's professionalism, their sense of autonomy or control over their approach to instruction and their willingness to be "open" to new approaches or 'take risks' with respect to their instructional approach. The lack of autonomy and the resistance to innovation disrupts the critical components of collective efficacy and trust, necessary for achieving academic optimism. The following teachers' statements exemplify this challenge.

You move children in the best way that you can. You set your routines and procedures up. You stick to it. You don't deviate from it. It's no flexibility when you have the value added because you have to have every minute planned towards obtaining the student achievement that you're desiring ...and so it makes it so rigid. I wonder what's going to happen next year. If it's just like, "Oh, we're back to IVA." Is the noose going to get tight again? Are teachers going to revert back to, "I'm just going to do what they told me to do. That's all I'm going to do." I hope that's not the case. To me, the beauty of education is when teachers experiment and grow along with the kids.

Another teacher,

You think about having IVA and you're making this big shift. How do you cultivate innovation while still knowing you're going to be judged upon these certain parameters? It [teaching under IVA] didn't really allow a lot of room to foster innovation, to promote creativity. A lot of teachers either left or said, "I'm going to stay in this box and continue to do what I do, because at the end of the day if I've had success I want to continue to have success." My last two years [I]

was spiteful because I thought we're building up to make this big infrastructure change [in approach to evaluation].

Principals also noted the negative impact on teachers in the form of a lack of risk taking:

I also feel that, I think what it [evaluation] shouldn't do is it shouldn't make teachers afraid to try things out. I think that's where we are right now. I feel the things that it makes harder in my job are risk-taking.”

Based on the interviews, schools struggled to deal with the pervasive feeling that there was no room for attempting new approaches or innovating for fear of straying from the assigned approach that would lead to student test score achievement and then a higher IVA score.

Teaching to the test. A principal described needing to “go after the low hanging fruit”, meaning the need to identify students with the best opportunity to achieve on the test and provide them with additional supports to move their scores. By focusing on these “bubble” students, teachers would in theory achieve the greatest gains in terms of growth and an improved IVA score. Teachers used every bit of available instructional time addressing the standards and not “wasting” time on field trips or extracurricular activities. One principal noted, “With high stakes testing, you run the risk of teachers sometimes making decisions that may not be instructionally best practices in order to make sure their students score well on tests.” These examples illustrate the negative impact on academic optimism, academic emphasis is narrowed by the teacher’s focus and the potential gaming of the system negatively impacts trust. The collective efficacy is eroded by the perception of teachers only doing what is related to the test and not

necessarily addressing all aspects of the student’s academic growth, teaching the “whole child.” In some cases, the coverage of all potentially tested material becomes more important than the depth of understanding, leading to an instructional approach that emphasizes low level thinking skills, such as description and understanding vs. analysis and synthesis. In this instance, we can see the lack of authenticity of teachers.

Additionally, this aspect can have an impact on all the elements of a positive school climate: the teacher professionalism that comes from co-planning and grade level events, such as field trips is negatively impacted; and the “openness” associated with that teacher professionalism is limited by needing to stay within the scope and sequence of standards that will be tested. One principal described the situation as follows,

I think there's definitely more of a focus on teaching to the test. Yeah, and "Am I really getting the kids ready for the test?" is always a question mark in their head. Versus, "We're going to have a strong, engaging lesson today." In the back of their mind it's always that, "Wow, how are they going to perform based on what I've done for this lesson." Which is really good teaching, but the impetus for it [the approach] come(s) from...ultimately, this is my evaluation.

Another added, “Absolutely. It impacts their approach in the terms of the instructional decisions that they make, teaching to a test.” A teacher described the impact in the following way, demonstrating how some highly touted teaching methods are decided against.

You still need accountability and oversight with that, but oftentimes when PARCC is such a big piece of it [the evaluation], teachers then start just teaching

in that way, and I think other things like having more project-based learning, students really writing to authentic audiences, doing more expeditionary learning ... I think [those other teaching approaches] get bypassed because you're focused so much on this 50% of your evaluation, but that's not necessarily the only thing that your students need. That's my worry there.

This emphasis on the test and its impact on the teachers' instructional decisions clearly had a negative effect on the overall school program.

Morale. The interviews provided ample evidence of the how teacher morale was negatively impacted by the evaluation approach and the greater effect this had on the overall school climate and teacher professionalism. Clearly, low morale has a negative influence on academic optimism. Academic emphasis, collective efficacy and trust are all difficult to sustain in an environment where the primary stakeholders, in this case school faculty, lack confidence. The evaluation and the bonus that comes as a result caused, in some cases, resentment among colleagues and lowered self-confidence. Both teachers and principals felt the climate was negatively impacted by the evaluation approach. Principals described a “segregated school” when speaking about the difference between teachers working under VA and the rest of the school faculty. The majority of principals interviewed cited fear and pressure on their teachers in the testing grades versus the rest of the school. Also, the much greater amount of bonus money available to VA as opposed to non-VA teachers contributed to tensions, as exemplified in this principal's quote,

I think, in the past couple of years, as a matter of fact since we've started the bonus pay, I've watched school culture just decline, because if you're in an environment where everyone's not successful, and you might have pockets of it, it breeds a lot of envy. It breeds a lot of distrust, and it starts a lot of conflict. I've definitely seen that, and even at Elementary School 7. We had one teacher, she got the Milken Award, and then she got the (districtwide) Teacher Award. She probably netted like forty thousand on top of her regular paycheck. I'm listening to people say, "She's not all that," and it's really sad that those dynamics come about from there, but it is what it is. When you're dealing with money, that's what it is. Now, if they said, "Hey. You get a free vacation," or, "Here's a Groupon to Chipotle," people are like, "Hey. Great for you," and probably be a little bit more happy, but when you're receiving money off of it, you're like-

While in most cases the bonus offered to successful VA teachers was much more substantial, it was also more elusive, than that available for the other classroom teachers. In some cases, teachers appeared reluctant to collaborate and share resources with colleagues with whom they were essentially in direct competition regarding average growth scores. Additionally, as represented in this principal's interview, teachers' self-esteem was adversely impacted,

I would say more so on teacher morale. Some of my stronger teachers, when their students didn't perform at a certain level, and their TLF might've said that they were highly effective or effective, by the time the value added was factored in, it dropped into developing or minimally effective, and it crushed a lot of my

teachers' self-esteem, and how they saw themselves. I know one of my teachers who is still in the building but he's doing a different role, he posted on his Facebook page when he got his score back, "I'm minimally effective." It was like a self-fulfilling prophecy, because that year when he was minimally effective, everything about his teacher practice crumbled. It was like a scaffold that was just ... It just fell. He was like; "I just can't do this anymore."

Cheating. Principals cited the real potential for problems stemming from climate created by VA. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1997) in discussing school climate reference the importance of the school being able to maintain "the educational integrity of its programs (p.343)." Quotes such as, "test scores can breed a culture of cheating because it's tied to their evaluation and livelihood" reveal the pressure that can lead to nefarious practices. Hoy et al. (2006) reference how "more competitive grading and greater punishment for failure could undermine the development of trust among teachers, students, and parents (p.442)." A lack of collective efficacy and trust can lead to this unfortunate means to an end. One principal attempted to summarize the issue,

I try to keep in mind what's the best for all of our kids but the pressure is huge. That's why in districts we end up with cheating scandals. To be frank the pressure ... If your job is on the line and you know that's a huge incentive and obviously cheating isn't in the best interests of kids, but that's what people stoop to because they felt like there was no other way for them to keep their job. The pressure has forced people to do some stuff that's not always in the best interests of kids.

Teachers begin to look for whatever “edge” they can find in addressing this critical aspect of their evaluation. Another principal summed it up in this way,

With high stakes testing, you run the risk of teachers sometimes making decisions that may not be instructional best practices in order to make sure their students score well on the test. One thing that I had to instill in my teachers is that we understand what our end goal is, but we don't want to compromise in doing what we know is best for children.

Another put it this way,

Again, I think that it [value added] has an undue level of anxiety for some of the best teachers, and for teachers who are not good, I think it, honestly, for people who just lack integrity, breed(s) a culture of possibly cheating, because they know that [the test scores] are tied to their evaluation and tied to their livelihood of teaching.

Another administrator commented, “I see the potential for high stakes testing to persuade people to do things that aren't' right. We have lots of conversations about that, what's not acceptable. Don't lose your teaching license over test scores.” There was understandable fear exhibited by principals when discussing the potential for fraud. They recognize the pressure and the impact on teachers that are working in this circumstance and are keen to the reality of their teachers' potential for taking inappropriate measures to achieve growth scores.

Principal Strategies

Principals and teachers noted the impact the VA approach and testing in general had on the overall school climate. There was a prevailing sense of stress and fear referenced throughout the interviews to describe the general atmosphere. School leaders worked against this environmental effect in a variety of ways. The strategies utilized by principals would appear to attempt to address the elements of academic optimism, as defined by Hoy et al. (2006), collective efficacy through the teamwork/ownership, academic press through emphasis on more formative assessments, and trust through the focused support. Finally, the swashbucklers were a potential product of the academic press, teachers that relished the idea of taking on the challenging role of addressing standards and being held accountable to an end of year high stakes assessment. As Hoy et al. (2006) describe, a school creates the conditions, “in which teachers believe they are up to the task and so are their students (p.441).”

Team/ownership. One of the principals lamented the fact that not all teachers were under VA. This principal felt that all the teachers should be held accountable for students’ achievement and this would ensure everyone’s buy-in or ownership. Other school leaders used their bully pulpit to message that “we all own the scores” and their approach was more of a team effort. “What we've done here is, every kid is owned by many hands. As long as we collectively own achievement, I think it makes it a little less daunting [being held accountable for students’ scores].” They acknowledged the challenge associated with having a small segment of their team having the added stress/pressure of their evaluation tied to the test scores. Also, teachers shared what their

principals did to encourage a sense of teamwork, “He tries social programs, outings, things like that to keep the spirits high within the building because there is this high demand and there is this expectation.” Principals recognized the importance of collegiality on the overall school climate and worked to ensure that was an element of their schools. The schools worked “to model success and persuade teachers to believe in themselves”, thus improving collective efficacy and enhancing academic optimism (Bandura, 1997; Goddard, Hoy et al., 2004).”

Deemphasize the test. Some of the school leaders and teachers cited a certain apathy as a way of addressing the stress/pressure. They felt that there was nothing they could do about the situation, so it was better not to discuss VA or the testing. The idea was to normalize the environment by deemphasizing the VA approach and the overall testing situation. “We just don’t talk about VA or the test” because “There is nothing we can do about it, it will always be there, and I understand why, but nobody needs the extra stress.” Also, principals chose to emphasize other aspects of the program to provide feedback to their teachers, “It’s a part of what they do and it’s a part of the evaluation process and system for them. But we don’t really [emphasize it]. We are a little bit more intense on task [instructional approaches] as opposed to IVA.” In this way, principals could ensure the academic emphasis with aspects of the curriculum that were considered to be more in their control. Hoy et al. (2006) note research such as Peterson (2000) that found that “optimism is thwarted by stress (p. 442)” revealing the importance of mitigating this component. One principal described trying to demystify the evaluation approach,

I don't know. Mitigating the stress, I think it's ... As long as everything, if you're back to knowing what the expectations is, what the outcome ... If you try to demystify it as much as possible, you're clear on what your outcomes are, and then you're putting the supports into place, and things are streamlined as much as possible, I think that's probably the best thing you can do to release stress. As long as everyone's rowing the same direction.

There was support for the assessment combined with a desire to diminish the overall impact it had, particularly on the climate. Several principals struggled with the feeling of a lack of control and sought ways to minimize the overall impact of the approach,

I do agree that there has to be a value-add measure, like, "What is your value that you're adding, and how can we assess it?" I wonder if there's a more holistic way to look at it, so not just focusing on one test or one snapshot. Is there a more holistic way that we can look at value-added, but I understand that for an evaluation system, that's the easiest way to do it, right? I mean honestly, there's nothing that I can do as a principal, because the IVA wasn't created by me. It's a system-wide thing. You can just assure teachers that you value their work, even if their IVA score is not what they think it should be. I think that's real important, to validate, have other measures of success to be able to speak to outside of the IVA measures that they see on their evaluation, because then, even if teachers say that they don't need it, teachers want to hear from their administrator that they're doing a good job. They do.

Focused support. Through provision of resources that directly supported teachers in the testing grades principals attempted to proactively support teachers. “Reaching out to the various departments, trainings and professional development, I'm big on sending people out there.” This support demonstrated the extra level of assistance needed to get their teachers through the stress and pressure associated with the VA and overall testing environment. It also, significantly built the teachers level of trust with administration and facilitated the development of trust between faculty, students and parents. Administrators were able to demonstrate their commitment to their teachers and build strong relationships. As represented in many of the previous quotes, principals used professional development, feedback and resource allocation to ensure that teachers felt supported.

Principals cited revamped schedules that supported upper grade teachers' planning and allocation of funds for extra curriculum supports. One of the leaders summed it up, “I think definitely resource allocation is really important for the IVA teachers, because they bear a lot of weight on their shoulders, to be quite honest.” The administrators wanted to keep their internal focus on academics, while at the same time addressing the specific needs of their teachers in achieving student academic growth. Additionally, some detailed their specialist resources to provide extra supports for the students in need. All this contributed toward building the kind of trust between faculty and students that would alleviate some of the negative unintended consequences associated with the VA approach.

“Swashbucklers”. Some principals discussed the effort to identify teachers that would thrive in the environment created by VA. These teachers, referred to by one principal as “swashbucklers”, would be enlisted by principals as individuals that would heartily embrace the challenges associated with VA in exchange for the potential bonuses. One of the teachers described his role,

Honestly, I don't think too much about it. I mean, because this is like ... I mean, as a requirement, I knew to do my job well I have to hit all parts of that pie [teacher evaluation chart that represents the percentage of each component of the evaluation] to [get] a specific score. I have IVA, so instead of whining and complaining about it, I just have to figure out how to work it out and do well. I mean, I think I've done that well.

In this regard, the negative impact on the overall school environment would be mitigated by the fact that the teachers are essentially signing up for the differentiated treatment and understood the overall implications for their role in the building. The previous teacher discussed his thinking with respect to the evaluation and the challenges associated with value added,

My principal always does this to me. I'm more of an outlaw, compared to everybody else, in how people think of evaluation and testing, because I'm just like, "Look, this is what we're going to have to do." People will complain and bicker and moan everyday if you let them. I'm just like "Oh well, I'll lose my job doing that”.

Generally, the teachers that fit this description appeared to be individualistic and not as concerned about teaming or collaboration. Also, they seemed to take pride in their role and being able to have success, as noted by this principal,

Only in the sense that we set goals and people worked towards the goals. Whether that's really IVA or just the fact that we're a goal driven organization ... I know people here love to make their bonuses. I know when we go to Standing Ovation [a districtwide awards ceremony], it's a really fun night out. We go as a team, and people are really happy to be part of that. When you talk to _____, she's been here and has had it [a highly effective recognition]. I know she likes to make her bonus every year. There's some swagger to that, even when we go to conferences and we talk to other districts, and they're like, "Oh man, we got bank [making more money than others]."

These strategies directed toward addressing aspects of school climate, along with those related to individuals, were used by principals to counteract the unintended consequences associated with the VA approach to evaluation and to increase the likelihood of retaining effective teachers. Principals used all the above to varying degrees depending on their perceived need and the ability to counter the negative effects of the policies. Next, the discussion of any differences associated with the school's categorization based on their rate of retention and overall academic performance will be addressed.

Analysis of schools representing the four quadrants

The second and third research questions seek to understand if there are differences in the administrators' approach as a result of specific conditions relating to performance and retention. The four different quadrants were established in order to determine if schools experiencing success in academic performance and retention or alternatively struggling in those areas had different experiences with the VA evaluation. Using districtwide retention and performance data, several schools were identified as representative of each specific quadrant: High Performing /High Retention, High Performing/Low Retention and Low Performing/High Retention and Low Performing/Low Retention. Generally, there were not significant differences among the different quadrants with respect to the overall findings surrounding retention and climate caused by the VA approach to evaluation. Principals and teachers across the 4 quadrants indicated similar challenges with the VA approach to evaluation. The conclusion of this chapter provides theories to attempt to explain this apparent counter-intuitive finding.

High Retention/High Performing. The teachers interviewed in this category were somewhat distinctive in their complaints of a lack of opportunity to be creative and innovative. Comments in reference to the VA approach, such as “stunts creativity” and “there’s no flexibility” highlight the pervasive feeling of the test’s overall impact on the teacher’s approach. At the same time, there appeared to be a feeling among the administrators that the additional pressure and emphasis created by VA was positive in ensuring the focus and accountability of their teachers. The general feeling was that the accountability was necessary to ensure performance.

Low Retention/Low Performing. The administrators in this category were more adamant regarding the difficulty in hiring teachers in the testing grades. To the degree that one principal lamented that he hired some middle school teachers, particularly math, knowing that they would only be there a year. The one teacher from this quadrant filled the description set forth by one of the principals from their quadrant as a “swashbuckler.” There was also the appearance that the bonus pay had a negative impact on the schools representing this sector. One principal spoke of the “corrupting” bonuses and the overall impact this aspect of evaluation had on the overall programs.

High Retention/Low Performing. Some of the interesting aspects of this component are related to the administrators’ desire to have all teachers held accountable with VA. There was a suggestion that it would help to improve effort across the board and act as a motivating force for all the staff members. Additionally, there was a perceived “swashbuckler” representing the teachers from this group, one that relished the opportunity to have his instruction validated by his students’ test scores.

Low Retention/High Performing. One of the most compelling aspects of this category was one school principal’s focus on the early childhood or primary grades in addressing the growth of students and the performance in later grades. With comments like, “The early childhood teachers own the test scores just like everyone else” the administrator demonstrated her emphasis on the teaching of primary students in accounting for the students’ performance even in later years.

Overall, the quadrants revealed primarily that issues related to teacher retention and climate were consistent throughout the schools that were interviewed. All interviews

cited some positive aspects of accountability and a focus on student growth, while at the same time pointing out the unintended negative aspects that adversely affected retention and climate. The quadrants were established to determine if there were differences in principal behaviors vis a vis retention in each of the conditions. The finding that principals displayed basically the same behaviors and some had low retention and low performance would appear to be counter-intuitive. The following are some possible explanations for this aberrant finding:

- The unintended consequences related to the value added approach to evaluation were consistent across the quadrants and the approach to mitigating them by principals was also consistent. Either some principals were more effective in their approach, for a variety of reasons or there were factors outside of the unintended consequences for the evaluation implementation that had a significant impact on teacher retention, such as those related to the challenges associated with teaching classes of predominantly at-risk students.
- Even a high performing school, one with high retention and high performing students, may have achieved growth, but not enough to raise the teachers' IVA scores. Essentially, these schools could be doing very well in terms of proficiency rates, yet their teachers may not have commensurate evaluation scores due to their students' growth rate. For this reason, principals would be utilizing similar retention strategies as other schools and working against the negative consequences of the evaluation approach.

- In terms of retention, the high performing/high retention schools may have had access to more personnel resources, coaches/ specialists and been better (had more opportunity to move) at moving their teachers into these different roles outside the testing grades, thus retaining them, despite the challenges with their evaluation. Potentially, low retention/low performing schools were not as well-resourced and allocated their funding in different ways to address their school's needs. Therefore, they would have lower retention rates because they were not able to move teachers outside of the testing grades.
- There were references from administrators regarding teachers moving on to different settings. Generally, these principals were referring to teachers that chose to move from their location to schools that were not dealing with aspects of poverty. Students in some schools arrive with a range of needs and from environments that might require different levels of support. These outside factors could have disproportionate strain on the teachers and school climate and lead to retention issues. Teachers would potentially leave these environments despite the efforts of the principals and their ability to mitigate the unintended negative consequences related to the VA approach to evaluation.

Finally, the results could have been impacted by the inability of the researcher to meet the initial structure for the sample. The teachers for each quadrant were difficult to access, potentially a circumstance related to the study in question. Generally, few teachers remain in the testing grades, which came up frequently in the principal

interviews. The data seem to support the idea that the use of the value-added model has an indiscriminate impact on teachers and school environments.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

Conclusions and Discussion

The intent of this study is to reveal the strategies administrators are using to address the issue of lower teacher retention as a result of the use of a teacher evaluation approach, which has become a standard accountability measure across the country. Individual value added has become an accepted measure of teacher performance and despite some controversy that has accompanied this reform effort it has maintained traction and continues to be endorsed by school districts. According to the NCTQ report (Doherty & Jacobs, 2015) 17 states used IVA as a significant component of their evaluation up from 4 in the previous year. Also, 43 states require that student growth and achievement be considered in teacher evaluations. It would appear that this somewhat controversial approach will be an important component of the teacher evaluation process in the near future. As evidenced by this study, there are elements of this approach's unintended consequences that have an impact on teacher retention and school climate, which need to be addressed by school leaders. This study makes an effort to not only define some of these concerns, but also provide some potential strategies that can be employed by school leaders in mitigating the negative effects. Future research will need to delve further into the issues created by this approach to evaluation and how those concerns can be effectively addressed by school administration.

Teacher Retention

Teacher retention is a widely studied phenomenon, with over a quarter of teachers (thirty three percent) leaving the profession within the first three years (Brill & McCartney, 2008). There has been considerable effort to remedy this situation, either through changes in teacher preparation programs, such as mentoring, ongoing professional development and bonuses. The climate of a school has a considerable impact on the retention of teachers. This study has demonstrated the negative effect the value added approach to evaluation has on school climate. In addition to illuminating the impact on school climate, strategies that are utilized to address concerns of retention related specifically to teachers working in the context of the individual value added approach to evaluation are identified. The interviews of principals and teachers across the four quadrants revealed challenges with respect to teacher retention in this specific situation. Several of the interviewees were retained at their school as a result of being moved from the upper grade position they had held. The interviews consistently highlighted the concerns from the standpoint of both teacher and principal regarding the stress placed on the teachers. The interviews revealed that most teachers, even those that stayed in the testing grades, were looking for and or requesting to move into a role not requiring VA. Of course, as has been noted, there were exceptions, represented here as “swashbucklers.” The context of the VA approach to evaluation did appear to create the need for a unique set of circumstances and strategies related to teacher retention. Most of the principals seemed to struggle with specifically what they were doing to mitigate the

negative impact of the approach on their staff, but there were relevant strategies that emerged from the interviews.

Effective strategies. The strategies identified by this study were discussed in detail in the previous section. The following strategies that principals employed to retain their teachers emerged from the interviews: leadership opportunities, professional development, resource allocation, voice /ownership, emphasis on team, coaching, relationships, feedback/praise, conversations and emphasis on other evaluation data. All of these strategies require significant leadership from the school administrator.

Implications for leadership. The principals all spoke of the importance of students' growth and holding schools and teachers accountable for student achievement. While some argued with aspects of implementation or indicated a lack of understanding, all principals agreed with the overall intent of value added. The challenge for administrators becomes balancing the district's reform effort with the specific impact on the teachers at the school level. The interviews revealed that despite their best efforts some principals were not able to retain their teachers and, as indicated, some of the teachers they did retain were no longer in the testing grades. Several of the administrators admitted the frustration that comes with the aspects of the evaluation that were outside their control. Often these principals indicated that they just tried not to emphasize the VA aspect of the evaluation. Ultimately, while it is clear that specific aspects of leadership are required, the types of teacher, "swashbuckler" or more "traditional" and the overall context of the school, contributed to the principals' approach. Many principals applied similar strategies, but most importantly understood the

importance of providing some level of additional support, even if only through conversations, to mitigate the impact of the approach to evaluation.

School climate

The overall impact on the school climate was evident throughout the interviews. The primary manner in which principals worked against the negative impact of VA was through “setting the tone.” Principals mentioned the effect of creating a “segregated school” where there are teachers working under VA and those that are not. Throughout the interviews, administrators discussed how they stressed to the staff the idea of ownership; all staff are responsible for the scores, while at the same time trying to counter the effects of the stress and pressure associated with the assessment and its implications for specific teachers’ evaluation scores and in some cases employment security. There is seemingly a push/pull situation of wanting to have everyone share responsibility for the all-important scores and at the same time trying to deemphasize their importance to mitigate the stress and pressure associated with their impact on the school and on specific teachers’ evaluations.

Effective strategies for mitigating negative impact. Administrators seemed to find most success with the emphasis on team that everyone played a role in the success of the students. As previously mentioned, a couple of principals advocated for all staff members being evaluated under VA as a way to leverage everyone’s “buy –in.” Additionally, principals tried to “move past” the fear and stress associated with the tests and their impact on teachers’ evaluations by focusing more on other aspects of education that were under their direct control, such as students’ progress as measured by formative

assessments or the socio-emotional impact a teacher had on their students. Also, school climate was positively impacted by the focused support of the school administrator, through resource allocation. Finally, some administrators resorted to recruiting the “swashbucklers” to fill those hard to staff roles.

Implications for leadership. Recent research (Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, & Wycoff, 2009) has emphasized the importance of leadership on school climate. The value added approach to evaluation has created unintended consequences which have to varying degrees negatively impacted the school environment. Principals must be prepared to address these negative influences, by finding ways to ensure that everyone understands how they contribute to all students’ achievement and alternatively lowering the stress and pressure by emphasizing other aspects of the school program. In order to effectively navigate this climate, the principal needs to know when to seek buy –in and ownership and when to deemphasize or emphasize other aspects of the school program.

Recommendations for Practice

Clearly there are implications for leadership practice and professional development as a result of the environment created by this approach to evaluation. The importance of providing teachers with opportunities for growth: through additional leadership roles and or professional development are crucial. The allocation of resources and the opportunities for engagement and having a ‘voice’ in the overall program were found to be effective. Also, by focusing on teaming and coaching aspects, principals were able to ensure a sense of belonging. Additionally, the impact of developing a strong relationship with teachers, providing positive feedback, and having critical conversations

around their evaluation and overall impact on students' achievement are pertinent along with an emphasis on other relevant aspects of data. Much can be said about, and this study has revealed, the importance of leaders having 'a pulse' on the climate of their schools. Do they need, and/or to what extent do they need, to counteract any potentially negative forces associated with the VA approach? This study has demonstrated that principals are working to address these consequences in many different ways to ensure the retention of their teachers and to maintain a positive school climate.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research study is limited in its overall scope. The nature of the approach and the limited number of principals and teachers involved does not support generalizations beyond this sample set. More research on a greater number of schools could yield more significant findings that could be generalizable. Additionally, modifications to the VA approach have been made since the inception of this study. More districts, including the one represented in this study are moving toward using multiple measures to address the question of equity in the evaluation. Perhaps, this will have an effect on some of the unintended negative consequences. Also, research on the use of standardized tests as the primary measure of value added could prove fruitful in addressing some of its most deleterious effects. The use of end of year standardized assessment tends to add to the anxiety and stress that pervade the VA evaluation. Additionally, the practice of tying high stakes incentives to the end of year assessment, including bonus money, tends to add to the overall controversy. Studies that focus on some of these other aspects of implementation may lead to even more changes to this approach that will make it more

amenable to teachers and have less impact on retention. Finally, as was evident throughout my study, the lack of transparency of the model should be addressed. An evaluation tool should not be so complicated that those being held accountable to it and those presumably in charge of administering it are not capable of adequately describing how it works and what one needs to do to improve.

It would appear that principal leadership in the context of value added is a critical aspect of teacher retention. Principal leadership and the use of strategies to address the retention of effective teachers is of critical importance and research should continue to add to this critical database. Ultimately more research should address how leaders are engaging with their teachers and attempting to affect their school climates to ensure retention.

Appendix A
Interview Questions

Research Questions:

1. What are principals doing to ensure retention of their teachers in the context of a value-added approach to evaluation?
2. What strategies/approaches are utilized by principals in schools with high retention rates and high student performance versus those with low retention and low performance?
3. How are principals managing the evaluation system and their overall school climate in schools with low retention and high performance and alternatively schools with high retention and low performance?

Purpose: The interview questions will generate data revealing how principals are navigating the complex environment created by this approach to evaluation and how principals manage their personnel in this context.

Interview Questions:

1. How long have you been working as an administrator? How long have you been working at your current school site?

2. What is your biggest challenge in leadership? What is the biggest challenge as a leader when it comes to helping teachers grow in the profession?

3. What is the most difficult aspect of leadership at your school site?

4. Describe how you approach teacher evaluation?

What is your role in teacher evaluation?

What are the evaluation requirements at your school, how do you approach your role in teacher evaluation?

How do you deal with teachers in light of the evaluations? What steps do you follow?

5. How do you feel about the District's approach to evaluation in the testing grades?

What is your opinion of the district's approach?

6. Does the District's evaluation system present any challenges for you or your school?

If yes, how do you deal with these challenges?

7. Please describe the ideal approach to teacher evaluation in your opinion. What changes would you make to the District's evaluation system to fit your ideal?

8. How should an effective teacher evaluation help you do your job leading the school site?
9. Do you realize any of these goals through your current teacher evaluation process?
10. How does your personal view point of teacher evaluation compare to IVA? How do you reconcile your own ideas about teacher evaluation with IVA?
11. What do you see as the greatest challenge to teacher evaluation? How have you handled this challenge?
12. How would you describe the climate of your school?
13. What is the impact of the IVA approach to teacher evaluation on the school site as a whole? How do you feel the climate of your school has been impacted by IVA?
14. How do you feel about the emphasis on testing in education?
15. Do you think that teachers in the testing grades feel more pressure than other teachers regarding their evaluation? Please explain and give some examples.

16. How does the IVA accountability affect the upper grade teachers' approach to education? Do you feel a need to become more involved with these teachers' approaches given the increased accountability?

17. As the leader of your program, how has the focus on test scores and specifically their role in evaluation affected your ability to lead?

18. Is there anything else you would like to share about your leadership with regards to teacher evaluation?

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Research Questions:

1. What are principals doing to ensure retention of their teachers in the context of a Value added approach to evaluation?
2. What strategies/approaches are utilized by principals in schools with high retention rates and high student performance versus those with low retention and low performance?
3. How are principals managing the evaluation system and their overall school climate in schools with low retention and high performance and alternatively schools with high retention and low performance?

Purpose: The interview questions will generate data revealing how principals are navigating the complex environment created by this approach to evaluation and how principals manage their personnel in this context from the perspective of their teacher.

Interview Questions:

1. How long have you been a teacher? How long have you been working at your current school site, with your principal?
2. What is your biggest challenge in teaching? What is the biggest challenge in terms of your professional development?
3. What is the most difficult aspect of teaching at your school site?

4. Describe your evaluation?

What is your principal's role in the evaluation?

What are the evaluation requirements at your school, how you does your principal approach his/her role in teacher evaluation?

How does your principal work with you in the context of evaluation? What steps are followed?

5. How do you feel about the District's approach to evaluation in the testing grades?

What is you opinion of the district's approach?

6. Does the District's evaluation system present any challenges for you or your school?

If yes, how do you deal with these challenges?

7. Please describe the ideal approach to teacher evaluation in your opinion. What changes would you make to the District's evaluation system to fit your ideal?

8. How should an effective teacher evaluation help you do your job?

9. Do you realize any of these goals through your current teacher evaluation process?

10. How does your personal view point of teacher evaluation compare to IVA? How do you reconcile your own ideas about teacher evaluation with IVA?

11. What do you see as the greatest challenge to teacher evaluation? How have would you handle this challenge?

12. How would you describe the climate of your school?

13. How do you feel the climate of your school has been impacted by IVA?

14. How do you feel about the emphasis on testing in education?

15. Do you think that teachers in the testing grades feel more pressure than other teachers regarding their evaluation? Please explain and give some examples.

16. How does the IVA accountability affect the upper grade teachers' approach to education? Is your administrator more involved given the increased accountability?

17. How has the focus on test scores and specifically their role in evaluation affected your school/ school leaders?

18. Is there anything else you would like to share about teacher evaluation and your administrator's approach?

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Biography

David Landeryou began his education career in 1994 as a third and fourth grade teacher in California. He served as an assistant principal with Fairfax County Public Schools for two years before becoming principal at Key Elementary School in the District of Columbia Public Schools. Since assuming leadership of Key Elementary School in 2001, Mr. Landeryou has led the school to consistently high levels of student achievement. In 2008, Key was the only public, private, or charter school in the District of Columbia to be recognized as a United States Department of Education National Blue Ribbon School. The following year, DCPS also acknowledged the school's continued achievement by granting it autonomous status. Additionally, under Mr. Landeryou's leadership Key was recognized by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education as an Outstanding Gold Ribbon school in 2014. In 2012, Mr. Landeryou was awarded the Rubenstein Award for Outstanding Leadership. Additionally, he was named a "Highly Effective Leader" by DCPS in 2015, 2016 and 2017. Mr. Landeryou holds a bachelor's degree from Kalamazoo College, a master's degree in educational leadership from American University, and a doctorate in education from George Mason University.

**Informed Consent Form
George Mason University
PhD in Education Leadership**

Value added Model Teacher Evaluation: An Examination of Administrator's leadership

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This research is being conducted to add to the knowledge base of understanding an administrator's leadership in the context of a specific approach to teacher evaluation. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in formal and informal interviews, fill out surveys and provide relevant materials and documents for review.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.

BENEFITS

The benefits to you include your reflection on effective leadership practice and the information gained to support teacher retention. The study will be of most benefit to school leaders and district level personnel.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data in this study will be confidential. Your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way and only the researchers will know your identity. Your name will not be included on the surveys and other collected data; a code will be placed on the survey and other collected data; through the use of an identification key, the researcher will be able to link your survey to your identity; and only the researcher will have access to the identification key.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

CONTACT

This research is being conducted by David Landeryou, graduate student at George Mason University. He may be reached at (703) 472-9931 for questions or to report a research-related problem. You may contact the George Mason University Office of Research Subject Protections at (703) 993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONSENT

I have read this form and agree to participate in this study

Name

Date of Signature
