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IDENTIFYING TALENTS IN PRIMARY READING TEACHERS IN RURAL EAST
IDAHO SCHOOLS

by

David D. Marotz

A dissertation
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
Doctor of Education-Education Administration
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Sincerely,

Ralph Baergen, PhD, MPH, CIP
Human Subjects Chair

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my beloved wife and family.

Thank you Misty, Coleman, Andrea, Audrey, and Allison.

Without your patience, love, and support throughout the years,

none of this would not have been possible.

I could not have done it alone.

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Next, I wish to recognize those teachers and administrators who participated in this study. I hope that they have gained a better understanding of their talents and can use this knowledge to make their respective schools and classrooms more effective and better meet the individual needs of their students.

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ABSTRACT

IDENTIFYING TALENTS IN PRIMARY READING TEACHERS IN RURAL EAST IDAHO SCHOOLS

Dissertation Abstract—Idaho State University (2016)

Decreasing funding for staff and increasing expectations for teachers place additional pressure on schools to hire and retain the highest quality teachers. Recent studies have identified effective strategies for teaching, but little research has been conducted to identify those innate characteristics or talents unique to effective teachers. The purpose of this quantitative descriptive study was to use the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 (CSF 2.0) to determine which talents appeared most frequently in a sample of primary reading teachers from rural schools in east Idaho. This study also determined which talents appeared most frequently in teachers whose classes performed higher than the state average proficiency levels on the winter administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI).

The researcher created a homogeneous purposeful sample by compiling a randomized list of all elementary schools in east Idaho, contacting the building principals, and requesting that the teachers participate in the study by taking the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 and reporting their top five signature themes. A sample of 55 respondents from six rural elementary schools completed the assessment and reported the results, including student achievement on the winter administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI). The researcher compiled the data, identified nineteen teachers whose students performed higher than the State median on the IRI, and analyzed the signature themes. The results suggested that primary elementary teachers reported certain signature

themes more or less frequently than the general population. The signature themes reported by teachers of higher achieving reading classes were also different than the general population and varied slightly from the sample of primary teachers.

After analyzing the results, the researcher identified a list of expectations for teachers that may be unrealistic given their individual innate talents. From this foundational research, a list of recommendations for future inquiry and research was developed that could lead to potential applications for using the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 in schools to develop a strengths-based organization.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

More than a century ago, George Bernard Shaw (2008) penned the adage “He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches” (p. 10). Such a generalized statement oversimplifies the complexities and challenges of the teaching profession and sends the message that anyone with a modicum of intelligence can be a successful classroom teacher. However, as a case in point, consider the story of Dan Brown.

On September 8, 2003, Dan Brown (2012) stepped into his classroom on his first day as a 4th grade teacher in a high-needs elementary school in New York. He had recently graduated with exceptional grades from a prestigious university and had qualified for an alternative teacher certification through the New York City Teaching Fellows program. He believed that hard work, intelligence, and a love of working with people were sufficient to make him a successful teacher. After experiencing what he described as a perpetually uphill battle to gain command of the class, Brown resigned from the profession after his first year. After much reflection on his early teaching experiences and research into more effective teaching methods, he later returned to the teaching profession where he currently teaches 11th and 12th grade English at a public charter school in Washington, DC. Brown explained, “I had bought into the fallacy—propagated by the marketing for my alternative certification program—that basically anybody smart and willing can jump in and do this” (p. 26).

Since the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 2001, more frequently referred to as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), states that

receive federal funding for education are required to place increased emphasis on recruiting and hiring highly-qualified teachers for schools (Public Law 107-110, 2002). In a speech to the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan (2011) expressed concerns with the quality of instruction in the classroom and the level of teacher preparedness to be able to help students to perform at high levels in college, especially in mathematics.

While expectations for student achievement and college preparedness continue to increase, decreased tax revenues and shrinking budgets have forced at least thirty-four states to reduce funding to K-12 education (Johnson, Oliff, & Williams, 2011). In a speech to the National Press Club, Secretary of Education Duncan (2012) announced that an estimated 300,000 teachers lost their jobs due to budget cuts in the past two years alone. As a result of the decreased revenue, schools and school districts must become more efficient at utilizing their limited funds. School administrators and local school boards must decide whether to invest in textbooks, classroom technology, programs, or personnel. It has become both a moral and fiscal imperative that school districts employ the best, most highly-qualified teachers for their classrooms, regardless of whether or not the teacher has completed a traditional teacher certification program. NCLB provides a number of alternatives for highly-skilled and knowledgeable individuals to become certified to teach through alternative certification programs (Public Law 107-110, 2002).

Founded in 2001 via a grant from the United States Department of Education, the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) is among the growing list of organizations that provide alternative routes to teacher certification. According to their mission statement, “ABCTE recruits, prepares, certifies and supports dedicated

professionals to improve student achievement through quality teaching” (About ABCTE, para. 3). ABCTE also claims a retention rate of 85% for those teacher candidates who obtain certification through their alternate certification program compared to 67% for those teacher candidates who follow a traditional teacher certification program (American Board for Certification of Teaching Excellence, n.d.).

In a study comparing the quality of teacher candidates who obtained certification through alternative routes with those who followed the traditional university-based teacher preparation programs, Sass (2011) claimed, “Alternatively certified teachers have stronger pre-service academic skills, as evidenced by higher initial pass rates on certification exams and higher college entrance exam scores than traditionally prepared teachers” (p. 20). Sass’s study also suggested that students in classrooms with alternatively certified teachers performed slightly higher on standardized tests, especially in mathematics. However, Sass found large discrepancies between the results from various alternative teacher certification programs. Consequently, Sass’s research did not support the claim that alternatively certified teachers performed statistically significantly better as a whole than traditionally trained teachers. He concluded, “Given the opportunity cost of a four-year degree in education, this implies that allowing some low-cost portals into the teaching profession would appear to be an efficient mechanism for increasing the supply of teachers” (p. 21).

If the general method of training and certification alone (i.e., alternative or traditional) does not have a statistically significant impact on the quality of the classroom teacher and student achievement, other contributing factors must be considered. In a meta-analysis of effective instruction, Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001) identified

nine instructional strategies that have been found to have a strong effect on student achievement. These strategies can be implemented to help any teacher become more effective; however, these strategies did not identify characteristics of highly effective teachers. Marzano (2007) later expanded this research “to identify specific characteristics of effective teachers” (p. 2).

I have promoted the notion that effective teaching is part art and part science. The science part of effective teaching is founded on decades of research that has provided guidance for the general categories of effective behaviors that constitute effective teaching and for the specific techniques that can be employed within those general categories. The art part of teaching is founded on the dual realizations that research cannot provide answers for every student in every situation and that the same behaviors can be employed in a different order and fashion by two different teachers with equally beneficial results. (Marzano, 2007, p. 191)

In a prior study of effective, research-based classroom management strategies, Marzano (2003) identified an individual’s mental set as having the largest effect size on improving classroom behavior. In a seminal study of effective classroom management, Kounin (1970) found that certain teachers had a disposition that allowed them to quickly and accurately identify potential problems and act on them immediately. He referred to this disposition as “withitness” (p. 80). Teachers who demonstrated high levels of withitness were consistently able to identify potentially deviant acts or behaviors in students, determine the probability that the deviant acts might escalate into more serious behavior problems, and select the correct teacher interventions to prevent behaviors from

escalating. Though Kounin (1970) found that a teacher's withitness may improve slightly with experience, he found no significant correlation between experience and withitness.

Expanding on Kounin's research, Elliott and Stemler (2008) suggested that experienced teachers may appear to have higher levels of withitness than novice teachers, because their experience with other aspects of teaching (i.e., framing questions, explaining difficult concepts, managing simple classroom procedures, etc.) allow them to focus more attention on predicting potential student behaviors. "As teachers become more experienced, they typically need to expend less mental effort as many of their procedures become increasingly automatized. The novice, however, is overloaded by having to devote much of his or her energy towards consideration of pedagogical and procedural aspects" (Elliott & Stemler, 2008, p. 83). Elliott and Stemler concluded that although most teachers can improve their skills in managing student behavior with sufficient time and experience, many teachers seem to possess higher levels of withitness without extensive training.

In much the same way as certain teachers have the innate ability or disposition to recognize and identify potential discipline problems, other teachers have similar innate talents to present material to students in a manner that significantly increases their ability to learn in the most efficient and effective manner. These teachers possess "talents for teaching-natural abilities that require cultivation and hard work to master" (Liesveld & Miller, 2005, p. 19). Hence, an interesting question emerges, do highly successful teachers possess specific talents, and if so, what are those specific talents?

During the past two decades, advances in technology have made possible dramatic increases in the ability of scientists to study the structures and functions of the

human brain. Powerful new brain imaging devices allow scientists to map the biochemical circuitry of one of the most complex organs in the human body. New discoveries have led to alternative treatments for many diseases and disorders afflicting millions of individuals world-wide. Perceiving the dramatic impact of the new research, the United States Congress passed House Joint Resolution 174, providing additional funding and support for brain research. In an official Presidential Proclamation, President George H. W. Bush designated the decade that began on January 1, 1990 as the “Decade of the Brain” (Bush, 1990).

Many researchers now believe that the majority of brain neurons develop prior to birth (Koehler, 2003). An estimated 100 billion neurons exist in the human brain at birth; however, relatively few actual connections are thought to exist at this early stage of life. Over the course of the next few years, the neurons begin to connect as the child grows, develops, and learns. In order to protect itself from sensory overload, the average brain begins to reinforce certain synaptic connections while allowing others to wither away (Koehler, 2003).

Dr. Harry Chugani, a professor of neurology at Wayne State University Medical School, compared this process to a highway system. “Roads with the most traffic get widened. The ones that are rarely used fall into disrepair” (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999, p. 81). By the time one reaches the early teen-age years, most of the major neurological pathways are well-established, suggesting that individuals will have developed noticeable aptitudes in certain areas where a high number of synaptic connections exist and deficiencies on areas where low concentrations of connections have

been made (Driscoll, 2005). These naturally developing aptitudes may be referred to as talents (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999).

Statement of the Problem

Given the recent changes in the economy, educational systems today are required to make numerous decisions that significantly impact classroom instruction. Decreasing funding for staff, coupled with increasing expectations for teachers, places additional pressure on schools to hire and retain the highest quality and most effective teachers. Though recent studies have identified more effective strategies for teaching that could be implemented by any teacher, little research has actually been conducted to identify those innate characteristics or talents unique to effective teachers. In light of recent research into brain development and the ability to identify specific talents in individuals, it would seem plausible that research could help identify those talents that may differentiate effective teachers from the general population.

The purpose of quantitative descriptive study was to use the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 (CSF 2.0) to determine which talents appeared most frequently in a sample of primary reading teachers from rural schools in east Idaho. This study also determined which talents appeared most frequently in teachers whose classes performed higher than the state average proficiency levels on the winter administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI).

Research Questions. The following questions guided this inquiry:

1. Which of the thirty-four talents identified by the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 (CSF 2.0) appeared most frequently in a random sample of primary reading teachers in rural east Idaho schools?

2. Which of the thirty-four talents identified by the CSF 2.0 appeared more frequently in primary reading teachers of classes in rural east Idaho schools that performed higher than the state average proficient level on the winter administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI)?

Definitions

The following definitions are important in understanding the purpose of this study:

Benchmark level on the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI). For the purpose of this study, benchmark level on the Idaho Reading Indicator was defined as an individual student assessment score that met the minimum grade-level achievement for letter-naming fluency, letter-sound fluency, and/or reading curriculum-based measure as established by the Idaho State Department of Education. Benchmark scores have been established for students in grades kindergarten through third grade for both fall and spring administrations of the Idaho Reading Indicator. For winter testing, student scores are evaluated using the spring benchmark levels to determine reading proficiency (IRI Testing Quick Guide, 2012).

East Idaho schools. For the purpose of this study, east Idaho schools were defined as those schools located in the counties in District 6 as identified by the Idaho Department of Transportation. District 6 encompasses the counties of Bonneville, Butte, Clark, Custer, Fremont, Jefferson, Lemhi, Madison, and Teton (Idaho Transportation Department, 2012).

Elementary school. For the purpose of this study, an elementary school has been defined by Idaho Code 33-1001 as a school that “serves grades one (1) through six (6)

inclusive, or any combination thereof” (LexisNexis, 2015, p. 277). For the purpose of this study, kindergarten grades were also included in the list of grades served by elementary schools. In the event that a school includes grades beyond grade six, the entire school was classified based on the majority of grades served. For example, a school that serves grades five, six, and seven was considered an elementary school.

Experience. For the purpose of this study, experience has been defined as the total number of years of completed certificated public or private accredited school experience (P-12) in Idaho or another state (State of Idaho Department of Education, 2015).

General population. For the purpose of this study, the general population has been defined as the 11.8 million individuals have completed the 177 question Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 assessment (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012).

Knowledge. Buckingham and Clifton (2001) defined knowledge as the facts and lessons learned by an individual. They identified two distinct types of knowledge: factual and experiential. The first consists of content learned by an individual. Experiential knowledge comprises all understandings that one acquires throughout the course of life. One of the distinct characteristics of knowledge is that is transferrable from one person to another; however, knowledge is often situation specific (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999).

Primary teacher. For the purpose of this study, a primary teacher was defined as a teacher who, according to the Rules Governing Thoroughness from the Idaho State Board of Education, possesses a Standard Elementary Certificate and is thereby eligible to teach kindergarten through eighth grade (LexisNexis, 2015) and currently teaches in

grades kindergarten through third grade in an elementary school in east Idaho (Jacobs G. M., 2001; Department of Defense Education Activity, 2015).

Proficient level on the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI). For the purpose of this study, proficient level on the Idaho Reading Indicator refers to those classes in which a specified percent of students in a classroom score at the benchmark level on the winter Idaho Reading Indicator. The following proficiency level targets have been identified by the Idaho State Department of Education: 60% for kindergarten, 70% for first grade, 80% for second grade, and 85% for third grade (IRI Targets, 2014).

Rural. The United States Census Bureau (2010) defined an urbanized area as a densely settled core of properties or blocks that meets the minimum population requirement of 50,000 people. An urban area also includes the adjacent territories containing non-residential land. All population, housing, and territory that is not included in an urban area has been classified by the Bureau as rural (United States Census Bureau).

Signature theme. For the purpose of this study, a signature theme was defined as one of the five most dominant themes of talent identified for each individual respondent by the CSF 2.0. “Each theme is a recurring pattern of thought, feeling, or behavior—the promise of a strength” (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001, p. 79). Upon completing the CSF 2.0, each respondent’s responses to the questions were analyzed within the online assessment, and a signature themes report was generated that identified the individual’s top five most dominant themes. The CSF 2.0 identifies talent themes though the talents may not have been developed into strengths (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001).

Skill. For the purpose of this study, a skill was identified as “the ability to perform the basic steps of an activity” (Liesveld & Miller, 2005, p. 56). Buckingham and Clifton (2001) further described skills as a formalized “sequence of steps that, if followed, will lead to performance—not necessarily great performance, but acceptable performance” (p. 45). Skills may improve over time with repeated use. Skills may be taught, but not all people can learn or obtain them (Liesveld & Miller, 2005).

Strength. For the purpose of this study, a strength was defined as “consistent, near perfect performance in an activity” (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001, p. 25). “A strength is mastery created when one’s most powerful talents are refined with practice and combined with acquired relevant skills and knowledge” (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012, p. 6). Strengths develop when talent, knowledge, and skill are combined (Liesveld & Miller, 2005).

Talent. For the purpose of this study, a talent was defined as “naturally recurring patterns of thought, feeling, or behavior” (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001, p. 29). According to Liesveld and Miller (2005), “Each individual person has unique, innate tendencies to think, feel, and behave in certain ways most of the time” (p. 44). Talents are most easily identified and characterized by spontaneous reactions, yearnings, rapid learning, and satisfactions. Talents are transferrable from one situation to another. Though individual talents are unique, they may be identified and categorized (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999).

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

Assumptions. For the purpose of this study, the researcher made the following assumptions:

1. Based on recent developments and current understanding of the brain, an individual's innate talents are identifiable. The Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 has been developed to identify talents.
2. The relative frequency distribution of signature themes identified by the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 for the 11.8 million respondents world-wide reflects the relative frequency distribution of those talents for the general population.
3. Respondents to this study were able to read and respond to the questions in the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 assessment.
4. Respondents to this study accurately submitted their demographic information and top five signature themes to the researcher.
5. The primary teachers who responded to this study accurately represented the target population of primary teachers.
6. Class reading proficiency scores were reported to the researcher accurately.
7. Classes whose student IRI results were included in the study had similar demographics, ability levels, and reading achievement levels on the fall administration of the IRI.

Limitations. For this study, the researcher identified limitations which may impact the generalizability of the findings.

1. The Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 identifies strengths through a series of self-selected responses; therefore, the accuracy of the results depends upon the ability and willingness of the subject to respond and report their results accurately.

2. The researcher did not attempt to control the demographics of the subject population beyond the basic sampling requirements and, therefore, had no method to control for information such as the number of years teaching experience, education level, gender, and age of the subjects. Consequently, the sample may not accurately reflect the demographics of the target population of teachers and may influence the generalizability of the findings to the larger population.
3. The researcher did not attempt to control the demographics and achievement levels of the students whose reading achievement levels on the winter administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator were included in the study. The results may not accurately reflect comparable student populations and may influence the generalizability of the findings to the larger population.

Delimitations. For this study, the researcher identified delimitations which may impact the interpretation of the findings.

1. Participation in this study was delimited to those teachers who taught reading in grades K-3 in public elementary schools in region 6 of east Idaho during the 2015-2016 school year.
2. Only the results from those teachers from randomly selected public schools who agreed to participate and complete the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 were included in the study.

Significance of the Study

According to Kouzes and Posner (2007), the role of an exemplary leader is to serve as a catalyst for change by inspiring and strengthening others. One of the greatest

challenges that leaders face is trying to maximize employee output and efficiency given the limited availability of resource. Even when the most valuable resource within an organization is human capital, the challenge remains the same. Collins (2001) described this process as first getting “the right people on the bus (and the wrong people off the bus) and then [figure] out where to drive it” (p. 41). Individuals who have the opportunity to use their talents at work on a daily basis achieve better results, are much more productive, and reach higher levels of self-efficacy (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999).

The Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 (CSF 2.0) is an online measure of personal talent that was designed to identify areas where an individual’s greatest potential for building strengths exists. The CSF 2.0 is frequently used in a variety of settings by both individuals and groups as a starting point for self-discovery and to encourage personal growth and development. Though not designed or validated for use in employee selection or mental health screening, the CSF 2.0 can provide valuable insights as individuals make plans for their careers (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012).

Using their work on the CSF 2.0 as a foundation, Clifton and Badal (2014) identified ten talents that appeared more frequently in those who have been identified as successful entrepreneurs. This laid the foundation for additional studies to identify talents that may occur more frequently within certain populations or professions, including education.

According to Gall, Borg, and Gall (2007), the first step in affecting change in education is to generate an accurate description of an educational phenomenon as it exists. This study will provide foundation research in the use of a strengths-based leadership approach in education by striving to identify talents that may occur most

frequently in primary teachers. Though the CSF 2.0 has not been identified as a screening tool to discourage individuals from pursuing a career, it can provide information to assist in academic advising for students in high school and college by steering them towards careers most suited to their talents. For pre-service teachers, this information may help determine which content areas or grade levels are the best match given the individual's innate talents. Time, energy, and resources that might previously have been spent in exploration of potential areas of study could be repurposed and used to maximize those talents by providing training designed to develop talents into strengths by emphasizing the requisite knowledge and skills for the position.

For currently practicing teachers and administrators, the identification of talents may provide information that will help ensure that teachers are placed in positions that allow them to maximize their unique individual talents. Rather than spending countless hours or dollars in professional development programs to remediate struggling teachers, administrators could invest their time in identifying the most effective use of the individual's talents. Furthermore, planned professional development activities could shift from generalized group instruction to specialized training to maximize and develop individual talents into strengths. Teacher evaluations and individual improvement plans could truly become personalized as administrators and teachers work together to identify and build strengths.

Summary

During the past decade, policy-makers at various levels have placed additional requirements on classroom teachers in an effort to improve the quality of instruction and to increase student achievement. The increased expectations for student achievement,

coupled with a decrease in available financial resources, have exerted even more pressure on school district leadership to place teachers in situations which provide the greatest opportunity to capitalize on their unique and innate strengths to benefit the learners assigned to their classes. Though new avenues for teacher certification have been created that allow highly trained professionals to enter the classroom, those who do so face the same challenges and frustrations as teachers who completed a traditional university teacher-preparation program. If content and pedagogy training are insufficient to ensure that one has the ability to teach effectively, then true greatness in the classroom must have deeper roots than knowledge and skill alone. Even studies on the impact of teacher experience on student achievement suggest no significant relationship between the number of years a teacher has taught and the level of student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Clearly, additional factors must contribute to teacher effectiveness.

Recent studies on the development and functioning of the human brain have led to new insights into how individuals learn and develop. Researchers have mapped large portions of the brain and have identified the source of many cognitive processes. Starting at birth, the human brain begins to devote more cortical space to functions that are used more frequently by an individual and reduces the space devoted to those activities performed occasionally (Begley, 2007). By the time one reaches adolescence, certain neuro-pathways are used consistently more frequently than others. Buckingham and Coffman (1999) described the highly used pathways to super highways while the seldom used paths become unmaintained trails. These neural super highways serve as the physiological basis behind the innate talents of an individual. Furthermore, by acquiring

more knowledge and consciously improving those skills related to an innate talent, one can develop the talent into a personal strength.

For more than thirty years, Donald O. Clifton focused his research on identifying individual talents (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012). In the 1990s, he teamed with the Gallup Organization to develop an objective measure of personal talents called the Clifton StrengthsFinder. During the subsequent years, the CSF has been repeatedly assessed for reliability and validity, resulting in a few minor changes to the test items and the test protocol. The newly revised version of the measure was released in 2006 as the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0. More than 11.8 million individuals have completed the 177 question assessment (Gallup, Inc., 2015). The result of this research is an instrument that accurately identifies the unique and innate talents of individuals. This information can then be used to help facilitate the personal development of individuals in a variety of settings.

If a sample of currently practicing primary teachers in rural east Idaho schools was given the opportunity to take the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0, the individuals would be able to identify their unique talents. This descriptive study, utilizing a quantitative approach, used the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 (CSF 2.0) to determine which talents were identified most frequently in a sample of primary reading teachers in rural east Idaho schools. This study also determined which talents appeared most frequently in teachers whose classes performed higher than the state average proficiency levels on the winter administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI).

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This quantitative descriptive study used the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 (CSF 2.0) to determine which talents were identified most frequently in a sample of east Idaho primary reading teachers. This study also determined which talents appeared most frequently in teachers whose classes performed higher than the state average proficiency levels on the winter administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI).

This study was guided by the following questions:

1. Which of the thirty-four talents identified by the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 (CSF 2.0) appeared most frequently in a random sample of primary reading teachers in rural east Idaho schools?
2. Which of the thirty-four talents identified by the CSF 2.0 appeared more frequently in primary reading teachers of classes in rural east Idaho schools that performed higher than the state average proficient level on the winter administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI)?

The literature review addresses the origins of the strengths movement and the development of the Clifton StrengthsFinder. Subsequently, the chapter will discuss strengths assessment in action and the use of strengths assessment in education. The review concludes with an overview of research related to primary reading instruction and the impact of teacher experience on student achievement.

The Strengths Movement

Starting in the mid-1970s, the Gallup Organization, already well-known for its scientific polling techniques, began conducting research to determine those practices that

differentiated highly effective and successful business organizations from average or unsuccessful ones. Gallup started by surveying more than one million employees from various businesses around the world which “yielded many discoveries, but the most powerful was this: Talented employees need great managers” (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999, p. 11).

Gallup then refocused its survey efforts on a second study designed to learn how the world’s greatest managers find, focus, and retain talented employees. For the next twenty-five years, teams of Gallup researchers interviewed more than 80,000 managers, ranging from mid-level to executive leadership in small companies, larger corporations, private businesses, and public sector organizations. From the recordings and subsequent transcriptions of each one and one-half hour interview, the researchers sifted through the data until they finally settled on their conclusions. They discovered that the measurement of the strength of the workplace can be simplified in the twelve following questions:

1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
2. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?
3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
4. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for doing good work?
5. Does my supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about me as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?
7. At work, do my opinions seem to count?
8. Does the mission/purpose of my company make me feel my job is important?
9. Are my co-workers committed to doing quality work?
10. Do I have a best friend at work?

11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to me about my progress?
12. This last year, have I had opportunities at work to learn and grow?

(Buckingham & Coffman, 1999, p. 28)

The researchers then designed a study to validate this data by conducting a meta-analysis of over 2,500 businesses with more than 105,000 employees. Buckingham and Coffman (1999) found that “those employees who responded more positively to the twelve questions also worked in business units with higher levels of productivity, profit, retention, and customer satisfaction” (pp. 31-32). They further explained that the order of the questions was important and compared implementing changes based on the questions to mountain climbing: The first two of the twelve questions, referred to as *Base Camp*, are focused primarily on what the individual employee receives from his/her role in the organization. The next four questions are called *Camp 1*. They address individual self-esteem and worth as it pertains to an individual’s overall contributions to the organization. *Camp 2*, comprising questions seven through ten, asks the employee to determine whether his/her fundamental values align to the overall mission and vision of the organization. Finally, the last two questions (*Camp 3*) suggest that only after climbing through the other camps can organizations truly innovate effectively. In other words, only by answering positively to all twelve questions can organizations reach the summit. Buckingham and Coffman (1999) warned that too many managers become impatient or fail to understand their employees, so they attempt to skip steps in the process:

Mission statements, diversity training, self-directed work teams—all try to help employees feel they belong (*Camp 2*). Total quality management, reengineering, continuous improvement, learning organizations—all address the need for employees to innovate, to challenge cozy assumptions and rebuild them afresh,

every day (*Camp 3*). All of these initiatives were very well conceived. Many of them were well executed. But almost all of them have withered. . . . An important kernel of truth lay at the heart of all of these initiatives, but none of them lasted. Why? An epidemic of mountain sickness. They aimed too high, too fast. Great managers take aim at *Base Camp* and *Camp 1*. (pp. 47-48)

Once Buckingham and Coffman identified the characteristics of effective organizations, they tried to discover the characteristics, behaviors, and actions of effective managers.

What great managers know and do. Through thousands of personal interviews, Buckingham and Coffman (1999) found that the primary key to effective management is to treat each person as a unique individual. Effective managers learn about their employees as individuals and study their personal styles. Great managers learn to accept the fact that each individual is true to his/her nature; each is motivated differently, has a unique way of thinking, and relates differently to others.

“Your employees will differ in terms of how they think, how they build relationships, how they learn, how altruistic they are, how patient, how much of an expert they need to be, how prepared they need to feel, what drives them, what challenges them, and what their goals are.” (Buckingham, 2005, p. 83)

Great managers also realize that they have limited room to remold individuals to fix differences. Instead, they focus on differences and capitalize on them. In short, great managers and leaders followed the following philosophy:

People don't change that much.

Don't waste time trying to put in what was left out.

Try to draw out what was left in; that is hard enough. (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999, p. 57)

Great managers do not believe that all employees have unlimited potential.

Buckingham and Coffman (1999) recommend that managers focus on four key activities:

(1) select a person based on talent, not experience, intelligence, or determination, (2) set expectations by defining outcomes, not specific steps to complete a task, (3) motivate the person by focusing on strengths instead of weaknesses, and (4) develop the person by helping them find the right fit.

Fundamental philosophies behind the strengths movement. At the core of the strengths movement is the fundamental philosophy that great managers hire for talent (Buckingham, 2005). They focus on what is right with people, not what is wrong. They realize that hard work, determination, and experience may be valuable attributes in an employee, but these alone cannot compensate for a lack of talent. Managers can then focus on building on an individual's strengths while managing around his/her weaknesses. The vast majority of the time, employers recruit for a job based on function and tend to ignore an individual's unique strengths. When employers do look at strengths, they generally try to match the need to the strengths of the manager (Rath & Conchie, 2008). Collins (2001) explained that the first challenge in developing a truly great organization is to "get the right people on the bus (and the wrong people off), then decide where to drive it" (p. 42). Further, "effective leaders surround themselves with the right people and build on each person's strengths" (Rath & Conchie, 2008, p. 21). Employees who have the opportunity to do what they are good at on a daily basis are much more satisfied with their employment experience (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). When managers select for talent, problems associated with motivation are dramatically minimized.

Buckingham and Clifton (2001) argued that the greatest room for growth in individuals and organizations lies with those entities' strengths, not in their weaknesses. Buckingham and Coffman (1999) cautioned that too many managers spend their time, money, and other resources trying to fix the weaknesses in the employees they have hired. Managers have to develop extensive policy and procedure manuals to guide employees through daily activities. These managers spend a lot of time trying to fill holes in employee skills or competencies. In these organizations, promotions are based on simple skill acquisition not on demonstrations to true achievement and talent (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001).

For many organizations, managing with strengths is extremely difficult for two reasons: (1) most organizations have formalized processes and detailed lists of competencies that are not individualized, and (2) managing these processes is much more time consuming for the manager (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001). Though many people in the organization become impatient or criticize expending excessive time on individuals, Buckingham (2005) argued, "When it comes to building the right team, time is a non-negotiable" (p. 74).

A study of 469 organizations in which mid- and upper-level managers have completed strengths-based training showed a 14.9% decrease in employee turnover when compared with similar organizations that have not completed strengths-based training. Those businesses that received strengths-based training also showed increases of 12.5% in productivity and 8.9% greater profitability (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012). In these organizations, management used individual strengths data to facilitate the development of individuals across dozens of roles including: executive, student, teacher, manager, customer service representative, salesperson, administrative assistant, nurse,

lawyer, pastor, leader, and school administrator (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012).

Identifying strengths. The first step in developing individual strengths is to identify specific areas in which possible strengths exist. Buckingham and Clifton (2001) recommend that individuals who are interested in identifying strengths carefully and consciously monitor their spontaneous reactions to situations they encounter. The “top-of-mind” reactions prove the best indicators of potential talents, because they reveal the location of strong mental connections. Spontaneous reactions, yearnings early in life, areas of rapid learning, and sources of satisfaction are all key indicators of possible talents (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001, p. 67). The most effective method for pinpointing talents is to monitor behavior and feelings over an extended period of time, paying close attention to clues. Though this process may be highly effective in identifying strengths, few individuals have sufficient time to devote to such an extensive study. Many attempts to develop shorter assessments that efficiently build a personal profile and identify talents have been pursued with varying levels of success. Working with the Gallup Organization, Donald O. Clifton spent nearly a decade developing the Clifton StrengthsFinder for precisely that purpose (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001).

Development of the Clifton StrengthsFinder

The contributions of Donald Clifton. In the mid-1950s, Dr. Donald Clifton worked at the University of Nebraska as an educational psychologist. One of his first assignments was to select and train freshman students in the school counseling program. He studied the effectiveness of different counselors and found that those who were most successful seemed to have similar patterns of thought, behavior, and feeling. He

assembled a team of researchers to study this phenomenon in more detail (Liesveld & Miller, 2005).

The following question guided Clifton's research for nearly fifty years and serves as the foundational philosophy behind the strengths movement: "What would happen if we studied what was right with people?" (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012). Underlying this question is the belief that individuals are able to gain far more when they expend effort to build on their greatest talents than when they spend comparable amount of effort to remediate their weaknesses (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). Clifton's fifty-year career at the University of Nebraska, Selection Research Incorporated, and Gallup Organization studying *frames of reference*, teacher-student rapport, management, and success across a wide variety of domains in business and education, ultimately led to the belief that talents could be operationalized, studied, and capitalized upon in work and academic settings. He believed that talents could be identified and characterized by yearnings, rapid learning, satisfactions, and timelessness, and that these talents were the products of normal healthy development and successful experiences throughout childhood and adolescence (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012).

In preliminary studies designed to identify talent areas that were referred to as themes, Clifton interviewed thousands of individuals and first identified more than one hundred common themes. He then revised the interviews and, working with the Gallup Organization, administered the interview to more than two million individuals. In the 1990s, Gallup continued to work with Clifton to develop the Clifton StrengthsFinder (CSF) as an objective measure of personal talent that could be administered online in less than one hour. The researchers started with more than 5,000 sample test items and gradually narrowed the list to 180 items that identified 34 unique themes. They released

this first version of the Clifton StrengthsFinder (CSF) in 1999 (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012).

Purpose of the test. Though labeled the StrengthsFinder, the instrument developed by Clifton and the Gallup Organization actually measures the talents that serve as the foundations for strength development. The StrengthsFinder identifies areas where an individual's greatest potential for building strengths exists by identifying one's top themes of talent. Buckingham and Clifton (2001) explained, "StrengthsFinder's purpose is not to anoint you with strengths but to find where you have the greatest potential for a strength" (p. 78).

The primary intended application of the CSF is as an evaluation that initiates a strengths-based development process in work and academic settings. The CSF is designed to measure the raw talents that can serve as the foundation of strengths and provide an individual with suggested areas of emphasis for personal and professional development. It is not designed or validated for use in employee selection or mental health screening (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012).

Versions of the test. In 1999, the first official version of the Clifton StrengthsFinder (CSF) was launched. It consisted of 180 assessment items that evaluated 34 themes. The assessment has been translated into more than 20 languages and was modified to address individuals with disabilities. More than 5.9 million individuals have taken the CSF (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012).

Gallup conducted a validity study in 2005 and began an extensive comprehensive review of the CSF in 2006. Numerous confirmation studies assessed the validity and reliability of the CSF. In the course of reviewing more than one million cases, a number of possible improvements in theme validities and reliabilities were identified, resulting in

a reduction in the number of assessment items from 180 to 177 and minor changes to the theme descriptions. The revised assessment was released as the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 (Rath, 2007). The Gallup Organization has continued to conduct validity and reliability studies on a regular basis. The Gallup Organization has published technical reports on the StrengthsFinder 2.0 in 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2012 (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012).

Signature themes report. After a respondent completes the StrengthsFinder assessment, the computer displays a *Signature Themes Report* that lists the respondent's top five most dominant themes. Given the 34 unique themes, more than 33 million combinations of the top five signature themes are possible (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001). The Signature Theme Report lists the top five themes in rank order (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012). The results are presented as an ordinal scale because the data are mutually exclusive, have a logical order, and are scaled according to the results; however, the differences between each item on the scale are not uniformly distributed (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2003).

Though the order is significant to the respondent from a technical standpoint, Buckingham and Clifton (2001) advised that individuals should not place too much emphasis on the order of the signature themes. They argued that the actual difference between the number one theme and number five theme, and those in between, may be "infinitesimally small" (p. 134). For an additional fee of \$89.00, respondents may request a comprehensive list of all 34 themes in rank order (Gallup, Inc., 2015).

In later research, Rath and Conchie (2008) found that the 34 signature themes naturally clustered into four domains of leadership strength based on a statistical factor

analysis and a clinical evaluation by Gallup's top scientists. The four leadership domains are Executing, Influencing, Relationship Building, and Strategic Thinking (see Table 1).

Table 1

34 Signature Themes Grouped into Domains

Executing	Influencing	Relationship Building	Strategic Thinking
Achiever	Activator	Adaptability	Analytical
Arranger	Command	Developer	Context
Belief	Communication	Connectedness	Futuristic
Consistency	Competition	Empathy	Ideation
Deliberative	Maximizer	Harmony	Input
Discipline	Self-Assurance	Includer	Intellection
Focus	Significance	Individualization	Learner
Responsibility	Woo	Positivity	Strategic
Restorative		Relator	

Strengths Assessment in Action

By February 2011, nearly 5.9 million people had discovered their strengths by completing the Clifton StrengthsFinder and receiving a report of their top five signature themes (Asplund, 2011). By April 2015, the Gallup Strengths Center reported that this number had increased to more than 11.8 million (Gallup, Inc., 2015). The CSF has been used by executives, students, teachers, managers, customer service representatives, salespersons, nurses, lawyers, pastors, and other leaders in various academic, faith-based, major businesses, and other organizations to help facilitate the development of individuals (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012).

Putting strengths to use. Buckingham and Clifton (2001) wrote, "The real tragedy of life is not that each of us doesn't have enough strengths, it's that we fail to use the ones we have" (p. 12). The process of identifying one's most likely areas of talent is just the starting point for self-discovery (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012).

Those who complete the StrengthsFinder assessment are encouraged to study each of the themes on the Signature Themes Report. However, Buckingham and Clifton (2001) discouraged individuals from examining each of the themes in isolation. Instead, they recommended carefully studying how each theme modifies the others. It is in the combined effects of one's strengths that lies the secret to self-awareness.

Schreiner (2006) suggested that the most effective use of the StrengthsFinder data was in personal development and individual growth planning. Individuals are encouraged to select one talent, as identified by the StrengthsFinder, and seek to develop it into a strength by adding the relevant knowledge and skills. This process is neither simple nor quick. "To polish even one theme so that it becomes a true strength will test your self-awareness and your resourcefulness. To hone all five is the work of a lifetime" (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001, p. 133).

Though the StrengthsFinder may reveal one's signature themes, and while these themes may suggest certain directions for one's career, they are not intended to determine career aspirations. Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, and Harter (2012) also cautioned against using the CSF in screening applicants. "The CSF is not designed or validated for use in employee selection or mental health screening" (p. 3). In their research, Buckingham and Clifton (2001) found no linear relationships between individual themes and specific fields of employment. Nevertheless, they did find that people who excel in the same or similar roles do possess some similar themes. For example, they discovered that doctors, regardless of specialty, tend to have similar themes. They also found "thousands of teachers with themes such as Developer, Empathy, and Individualization who presumably used these talents to great effect in helping each student learn" (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001, p. 164). Furthermore, additional Gallup Organization research suggests that the

most effective and successful entrepreneurs possess identifiable innate traits that make them successful. “Entrepreneurs are born, they learn to use their innate talents, and then they succeed” (Clifton & Badal, 2014, p. 23).

Various Gallup Press publications provide practical guidance for each of the signature themes. Buckingham and Clifton (2001) provided detailed descriptions of each theme and quotes from individuals who possess the theme. Liesveld and Miller (2005) described each theme, listed several action items as suggestions for developing the theme, and listed quotes from teachers with the theme. Rath and Conchie (2008) outlined how individuals with each theme can leverage their talents to build trust, show compassion, provide stability, and create hope within an organization. Rath and Conchie also described how to lead others who have each of the themes.

Due to the extremely private and sometimes sensitive nature of one's talents, individuals are strongly discouraged against making comparisons or judging others based on their strengths profiles. The primary challenge, as presented by Buckingham and Coffman (1999) is to ensure that individuals have the opportunity to do what they are best at every day.

Managing around weaknesses. For many years, conventional wisdom and leadership practices have promoted a number of assumptions:

1. Select a person ... based on his experience, intelligence, and determination;
2. Set expectations ... by defining the right steps;
3. Motivate the person ... by helping him identify and overcome his weaknesses;
4. Develop the person ... by helping him learn and get promoted. (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999, p. 66)

These assumptions suggest that anyone is fully capable of completing any assignment, given sufficient time, direction, and determination. Leaders who espouse this philosophy often spend the majority of their time striving to develop their personal or their employees' weaknesses. Rath and Conchie (2008) suggested that those who strive to develop employees who are competent in all areas actually become the least effective. "If you spend your life trying to be good at everything, you will never be great at anything" (p. 7).

While our society encourages us to be well-rounded, this approach inadvertently leads to mediocrity" (Rath & Conchie, 2008, p. 7). Buckingham and Coffman (1999) suggested, "If you want to turn talent into performance, you have to position each person so that you are paying her to do what she is naturally wired to do" (p. 148). This approach requires focusing on an individual's strengths, not his or her personal weaknesses. Buckingham and Clifton (2001) argued that too many people are obsessed by their weaknesses rather than their strengths. Buckingham and Clifton's advice is to find ways to manage around one's weaknesses.

In order to best understand how to manage weaknesses, it is best to define weakness. "Our definition of a weakness is anything that gets in the way of excellent performance" (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001, p. 148). The first step in managing around a weakness is to determine if it is a skills weakness, a knowledge weakness, or a talent weakness. Both skills and knowledge weaknesses can be resolved through training. In many cases, employees fail to perform successfully due to a lack of appropriate training which can be addressed through professional development programs. In some cases, the failure to perform is caused by a manager who fails to motivate an individual adequately or correctly. In these instances, experimenting with different motivation techniques will

result in the employee's true talent bursting out (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). When weakness is not resolved through training or changes in motivation efforts, it is most likely a talent issue.

Buckingham and Clifton (2001) offered five suggestions for managing around weaknesses:

1. Get a little better at it through practice.
2. Design a support system.
3. Use one of your strongest themes to overwhelm your weakness.
4. Find a partner who may have a talent in your weakness area.
5. Just stop doing it and see if anyone else notices. (pp. 150-159)

In many instances, managing around weaknesses proves more difficult than anticipated. There are some individuals for whom nothing seems to work. "Poor performance must be confronted head-on, if it is not to degenerate into a dangerously unproductive situation" (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999, p. 164). In such cases, the challenge often falls on the leader or manager to find the employee an alternative assignment within the organization in which the employee's strengths can be utilized.

Effective leaders learn how to manage around the weaknesses of each and every employee. There are times, however, when leaders find themselves spending the majority of their time managing around those weaknesses. This is a sign of a casting error in which the wrong people are expected to perform the wrong assignments. "At this point it is time to fix the casting error and to stop trying to fix the person" (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999, p. 174). Jim Collins (2001) explained, it is a matter of getting "the right people on the bus, the right people in the right seats, and the wrong people off the bus" (p. 41).

Building a strengths-based organization. Buckingham and Coffman (1999) wrote, "You succeed by finding ways to capitalize on who you are, not by trying to fix who you aren't" (p. 171). They found that the most successful businesses and organizations found ways for their employees to maximize their individual talents on a regular, if not daily, basis.

The first step in building a successful organization is to identify leaders and managers who support and practice strengths-based philosophies and principles. Only when leaders truly understand the value of developing their own individual strengths will they be effective in helping to develop the strengths in others. Rath and Conchie (2008) explained,

A leader needs to know his strengths as a carpenter knows his tools, or as a physician knows the instruments at her disposal. What great leaders have in common is that each truly knows his or her strengths—and can call on the right strength at the right time. This explains why there is no definitive list of characteristics that describes all leaders. (p. 13)

The second step in building a strengths-based organization is to develop an employee selection system that emphasizes hiring for talents. According to Buckingham and Clifton (2001), such a system should be based on an instrument that is designed for measuring talent. The instrument must be psychometrically sound and rely on objective scoring. The instrument would then be calibrated by studying the best performers in each key role and administering the instrument to all employees in the role in question. Ideally, the scores would be used to identify a study group of fifty or more of the most effective employees in a given role and fifty or more of the least effective employees. "The net result is an instrument calibrated for the role and an understanding of some of the

dominant talents necessary for excellence in the role" (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001, p. 220).

Next, the organization needs to teach the concept of strength and talents to all employees within the organization. A strengths-based organization relies upon skilled leaders who have a vested interest in the success of unique individuals and qualified employees who are operating within their greatest areas of talent. Vacancies are filled by searching for individuals with identified talents as opposed to specific skills, knowledge, or years of experience (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001). Advancements within the organization are determined on talents, not tenure (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). In essence, the organization has the right people on the bus, sitting in the correct seats, and has identified a destination (Collins, 2001).

The final step in building and maintaining a strengths-based organization is to objectively study the links between identified, measured talent and subsequent performance. Summarizing a number of studies of business and schools that have implemented strengths-based initiatives, Clifton and Harter (2003) suggested, "A strengths-based focus on development relates to gains in the form of outcomes such as employee engagement, school achievement, attendance, productivity, and hope" (p. 9). Hodges and Clifton (2004) reviewed several other studies in education, healthcare, and the workplace that also illustrated similar significant improvements in subject well-being and confidence. The majority of these studies, however, measured only short-term gains as the lengths of the study was insufficient to monitor and collect longitudinal data. Both Clifton and Harter and Hodges and Clifton called for additional research into strengths-based organizational development.

With more than 11 million people around the world who have taken the CSF 2.0, countless organizations have benefited from implementing a strength-based personnel development model (Gallup, Inc., 2015). Compared to traditional management models, Stairs (2005) claimed that strengths-based organizations experienced a significant increase in the quality of the employees and increased productivity that can be attributed to better levels of employee engagement. Page and Vella-Brodrick (2009) found that employee well-being improved and staff turnover decreased with a strengths-based approach.

Success at building a strength-based organization is not limited to businesses. A number of American churches that had been struggling with what they referred to as “a power shortage” have turned to the CSF 2.0 in efforts to better engage their congregations in meaningful, fulfilling activities (Winseman, Clifton, & Liesveld, 2004). In the fields of psychology and counseling, increasing numbers of individuals in drug treatment centers are taught to use their signature themes to assist with career planning (Lask, 2010). Seita (2004) noted an increase in the quality of services provided and a notable decrease in staff turnover after implementing a strengths-based learning program in welfare programs. In supervision of nurses in clinical placements, Cederbaum and Klusaritz (2009) found, “The strengths perspective can provide an innovative framework for working with nursing students, one that emphasizes student empowerment, collaborative learning, and mutual growth by discovering, affirming, and enhancing the capabilities, interests, knowledge, resources, goals, and objectives of individuals” (p. 422).

In response to the overwhelming demand for professional and personal development related to strengths, the Gallup Organization has developed and marketed a

number of programs tied to the CSF and the CSF 2.0. Through the Gallup Strengths Center, individuals or organizations can access the CSF 2.0, enroll in courses to develop a strengths-based culture, or register to become a certified strengths coach (Gallup, Inc., 2015).

Strengths Assessment in Education

Strengths in higher education. Shortly after the introduction the strengths-based model in business, educational institutions across the nation began implementing a variety of strengths-based programs. Murphy, Gilbertson, Smith, and Olson (2010) promoted a 3D approach based on strengths: discovering, developing, and drawing out strengths that relied on the use of the CSF 2.0 to identify strengths of incoming students. They claimed, “As we help our students and colleagues maximize their potential through discovering, developing and drawing out their individual strengths, team and organizational success inevitably follows” (Murphy et al., 2010, p. 5). Steger, Mankin, and Jewell (2011) recommended using strengths assessment to determine team assignments for real life problem-based learning projects in college business classes. They argued that instructors need to have a sound understanding of the innate talents and abilities of students to assign teams and recommended using CSF 2.0 as a basis for identifying those talents.

In a research study conducted in a university speech department, researchers administered the CSF 2.0 at the beginning of the semester to determine the impact of the knowledge of a student’s strengths on his/her engagement in the course. In comparison to the control groups who did not participate in the CSF 2.0 at the beginning of class, the researchers identified significant differences in the depth and quality of in-class conversations and discussion. They noted significantly better discipline levels, and they

found that students who were aware of their individual strengths asked three times more questions in class (Cantwell, 2006).

As a writing teacher at Hagley College, Hawthorne (2009) has been using the CSF 2.0 at the beginning of class to identify talents as part of the Year 13 Leadership Laboratory. Hawthorne argued,

I feel it is critical knowledge for every student to recognize what they are good at. It is crucial because it leads to them developing these talents into strengths and when strengths are developed and exercised, this leads to success and success leads to confidence, motivation, participation and more success. (p. 7)

After conducting an extensive review of university programs and observing strengths-based programs in action, He (2009) recommended using a strengths-based model for pre-service teacher education and mentoring in which college students are placed with practicing teacher mentors with similar strengths. By identifying student strengths using the CSF and pairing students with teachers with similar strengths, He observed that pre-service teachers learned skills more rapidly and made a smoother transition into the classroom once their teacher preparation was completed.

For more than a decade, Azusa Pacific University has been on the leading edge of implementing a strengths-based program by using the CSF for college advising.

Strengths-based advising is proposed as a new lens for higher education, one that enables advisors to see diverse groups of students fulfill their potential and achieve excellence. Based on research from social work, positive psychology, and the business world, this approach enables advisors to identify and build on the inherent talents students bring with them into the college and university setting, teaching students to develop and apply their strengths to new and challenging

learning tasks. This explicit focus on students' natural talents builds the confidence and motivation necessary for achievement and persistence in college. We contend that this approach to advising represents a much-needed paradigm shift within higher education. (Schreiner & Anderson, 2005, p. 20)

To further promote a strengths-based leadership and education, Azusa Pacific University (APU) has developed the Noel Academy with a goal to further the research and dissemination of strengths-based approaches to teaching, learning, and leading. With the support of APU and private donors, the academy serves as a resource for research, consultation, and workshops to advance the strengths movement in higher education. The academy has conducted research on the effectiveness of strengths-based approaches to first-year seminars, academic advising, general education courses, and professional development programs.

The academy also serves as a clearinghouse for research conducted on strengths approaches. Fueled by graduate research assistants and faculty scholars, the academy conducts numerous research projects each year, provides oversight to strengths research projects conducted on other campuses, and regularly collects and archives articles related to the strengths movement in education. (Azusa Pacific University, n.d.)

In 2002, Gallup introduced the StrengthsQuest program as a resource for prospective and current students, academic advisors, career counselors, and residence hall directors to help with college preparation. In several studies, researchers identified significant increases in academic success for students who participated in the StrengthsQuest program when compared to similar students who did not (Hodges & Harter, 2005). As a part of Gallup's Educational Practice, StrengthsQuest is used at more

than 600 schools and universities in North America. More than 1 million people have used StrengthsQuest to gain insights into how to use their talents to achieve academic success, to explore careers, and promote leadership development. Among the most notable institutions that utilize the StrengthsQuest program and the CSF are Azusa Pacific University, Baylor University, Kansas State University, Oregon State University, Southern Methodist University, Texas Christian University, Texas Tech University, The Ohio State University, the University of Chicago University of Minnesota, and the University of Missouri (Gallup, Inc., 2013).

Uses in K-12 education. Though the strengths movement has increased in popularity in higher education institutions, Clifton and Harter (2003) called for additional research in the value of strength-based instruction in K-12 education. One study on school accreditation found that teachers who knew their strengths and had opportunities for professional development in their area of strength engaged more effectively in collaboration activities (Witmer, 2008). Henderson (2005) used teacher strengths to identify the most appropriate levels of students to teach and to ascertain which teachers would work most effectively with at-risk students. She also used the analysis of her own strengths to develop appropriate lesson plans that fit her personality and strengths.

Prior to becoming a principal, Norwood (2005) personally used the CSF 2.0 to identify school administration as a possible career option. Shortly after being hired as a principal, she implemented a strengths-based program with the teachers in her school. The staff used the aggregated strengths reports to plan and conduct effective professional development activities.

Looking back on my own life, I see clearly how my talents have always been present. But until I took the Clifton StrengthsFinder, I couldn't put a name on

them, and until I could put a name on them I couldn't develop and apply them.

Now, I consciously use my strengths daily to foster excellence in my staff, my students, and myself in a way that would not have been possible previously. (p. 206)

Clabaugh (2005) noted that once student and teacher strengths are identified, traditional teaching methods and school structures may need to change to address a new instructional pedagogy. In the traditional classroom, teachers spend the majority of their time identifying and working on student weaknesses rather than building on their strengths. Friesen (2005) identified significantly greater self-esteem and satisfaction in school among students who were given the CSF 2.0 at the beginning of the school year compared to students in the same school who were not. Anderson (2004) observed that students who knew their strengths were more effective at setting realistic goals for personal improvement while those who did not know their strengths tended to have unreasonably high and unattainable expectations for themselves. He recommended a paradigm shift from deficit reduction teaching to strengths-based teaching in schools.

Onishi (2005) observed a mandatory freshman seminar that used Gallup's StrengthsQuest portal to access the students' strengths reports. The students and staff reported that understanding their own strengths and the strengths in others was valuable for helping students transition into high school and learning how to apply their strengths in academics.

In a similar study, Austin (2006) observed 255 freshman students enrolled in a Freshman Seminar course in which half were given the CSF 2.0 to identify their strengths. He identified a significant impact on the positive academic behavior of the students who were given the CSF 2.0. Students who were aware of their strengths were

more willing to engage with the teacher and other students and had an attendance rate 1.5% higher than those who did not know their strengths. Rainey and Cannell (2008) recommended that all students would similarly benefit from taking the StrengthsFinder.

Special education. In conjunction with major advances in brain research, Armstrong (2012) suggested a need for greater emphasis on neurodiversity in the classroom, especially with students who qualify for special education services. In a traditional school setting, evaluators identify a student's weaknesses, and an individualized education program (IEP) team develops a plan to help the student improve in those areas. In this model, the student spends the rest of his/her academic life focused on improving the identified weaknesses. In contrast, Armstrong proposed that teams change how they address special needs students by addressing their strengths rather than focusing on their disabilities or disorders. He noted significant improvements in academic functioning and behaviors in students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism, intellectual disabilities, and emotional/behavior disorders when teams focused on strength development. Armstrong identified greater strengths awareness, enhanced human resources, better use of learning strategies, and affirmative career aspirations.

Weishaar (2010) recommended twelve ways to incorporate strengths-based planning into the IEP process. He suggested involving the students and parents more in the process by asking them to be prepared for meetings by bringing lists of student strengths, interests, and aspirations. This will also assist with transition service planning by focusing attention on what the student is capable of doing, not on those tasks the student struggles to complete. In another study, Griffith, Hurley, Trout, Synhorst, Epstein, and Allen (2010) used the Preschool Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale

(PreBERS) to assess Head Start kindergarten students' strengths. The results helped practitioners more effectively identify important emotional and behavioral competencies for young children.

Teaching with your strengths. After talking to thousands of teachers, the Gallup Organization (2006) found that the best ones do not always “do the right thing.” Often, the most effective teachers break the rules, because they know doing so is the most appropriate way to behave in the situation.

Great teachers don't set out to be unorthodox; they don't “do wrong” for fun.

They do it because, at times, doing what conventional wisdom considers the right thing is actually doing the worst thing: betraying the education of a child. (p. 172)

Great teachers' methods and intuitions are different from other teachers. Great teachers subconsciously rely more on instinct than they are aware, often having worked out the strategies and approaches that succeed for them in reaching different students long before instruction begins (Liesveld & Miller, 2005).

All great teachers are alike in a key way—they use their natural talents to the utmost, whether they are aware of it or not. What's more, great teachers don't waste time on their weaknesses if those weaknesses don't interfere with their teaching, although they do manage weaknesses if they must” (Liesveld & Miller, 2005, p. 11).

They further explained that effective teaching depends on possessing a talent for teaching, possessing a natural ability that requires cultivation and hard work to master. Liesveld and Miller argued, “Assuming that anyone can teach breeds mediocrity” (p. 19). “Great teachers don't teach all their classes the same way, and they don't teach each individual class the same way every day” (p. 33).

After discovering one's signature themes by taking the StrengthsFinder test, Liesveld and Miller (2005) challenged teachers to put their strengths to work. They provided a detailed description of each strength as it relates to instruction and teaching and listed the recommended actions to help develop the talent into a strength. They concluded:

Knowing your talents and using them as a basis for strength development will make you a better teacher, and our education system needs more great teachers. Our society cannot afford to lose one more great teacher or pass over good teachers who could be great if they just made the most of their innate abilities. Great teachers want more than anything to have a significant impact on students' lives. They have to leave a mark, not only on students one by one, but also on the entire society. Embracing the idea that talents are the basis of strengths enhances lives, of course, but it also helps teachers leave that mark. (p. 177)

Fox (2008) described how student interactions with their teachers and parents would become more meaningful if all respondents were focused on developing strengths rather than attempting to resolve deficiencies. Parent-teacher conferences could become an occasion to look forward to when they are viewed as prime opportunities to talk with teachers about a child's strengths.

Fox (2008) summarized the value of living in an environment that emphasized strengths versus weaknesses:

Imagine waking up one day and having everyone you encounter understand the ways in which you are unique and extraordinary. What if everyone viewed the things you did as needed contributions, and rather than looking for what is wrong with you, people pointed out what is right with you? If that happened, you would

be super-charged. You would feel free and released from the burden of having to defend yourself. You would be psyched to jump out of bed and get to work. You would feel, well, strong. Wouldn't it be nice if just one day of your life could be like that? (p. 71)

Primary Reading Instruction

Literacy is an essential skill needed to participate in today's world (Honig, Diamond, & Gutlohn, 2013). Whether one is reading a ballot, a map, a train schedule, a driver's test, a job application, a text message, a label on a medicine container, or a textbook, the ability to read and comprehend is required to fully function in society (Honig, Diamond, & Gutlohn, 2013). Ravitch (2014) wrote, "A citizen of a democratic society must be able to read critically, listen carefully, evaluate competing claims, weigh evidence, and come to a thoughtful judgment" (p. 238). One of the key requirements of the Common Core State Standards for reading is that all students must be able to comprehend texts of steadily increasing complexity and in multiple forms as they progress through school (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

Despite the changes in standards and the increasing demand on teachers to improve the quality of instruction and depth of thinking required of students, Jacobs (2010) argued that little critical thinking and problem solving actually takes place during school. He called for an upgraded curriculum to prepare students for the 21st century skills that will be in high demand in the workplace. The most important skill to develop is the ability to read a variety of texts. "Reading is *the* skill. Teaching students to unlock the full meaning of the texts they read is the single most powerful outcome a teacher can foster" (Lemov, 2010, p. 249).

“Unfortunately, an enormous proportion of young citizens struggle to read well enough to adequately function in society or to expand their knowledge about the world” (Honig, Diamond, & Gutlohn, 2013, p. 2). This situation is especially disconcerting, because recent research suggests that the majority of students can learn to read regardless of their backgrounds. The focus on learning to read has never been greater (Honig, Diamond, & Gutlohn, 2013).

Ripley (2013) concluded that while elementary students performed reasonably well on international tests, especially in reading, recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results indicate that fourth- and eighth-grade reading scores are abysmally low. According to the achievement-level results in reading, 68 percent of fourth graders and 68 percent of eighth graders scored at or below the basic level of reading achievement.

Given the increased focus on reading and education the past decade, one might expect significant increases in student achievement. Research suggests that more effective teaching methods and instructional strategies can be identified and implemented by teachers of varying skill and experience levels (Marzano, 2007; Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001; Danielson, 2007; Lemov, 2010). Even though extensive research clearly suggests that implementation of specific strategies will result in increased achievement, many teachers are reluctant to implement new skills. For example, Honig, Diamond, and Gutlohn (2013) concluded that students, regardless of their learning difficulties, reach higher achievement levels faster with systematic and explicit instruction. Unfortunately, this type of instruction is still not always used. They also suggest that reading failure is preventable, and advances in brain research suggest a need for a thorough, more balanced approach to teaching reading. Honig, Diamond, and

Gutlohn (2013) identified the factors that most significantly influence reading development:

1. Development of phonemic awareness and of the alphabetic principle.
2. Ability to decode words.
3. Automaticity with enough words.
4. Acquisition of vocabulary along with the application of reading comprehension strategies.
5. Extensive reading of both narrative and expository texts.
6. Maintaining the motivation to learn.
7. Adequate teacher preparation and materials. (p.11)

In addition to identifying the most effective instructional strategies and most critical factors in reading development, researchers have found that the earlier the students begin reading, the better they will perform academically. “In the best classrooms I visited as a reporter, children were reading and writing by kindergarten” (Green, 2014). Ravitch (2014) stated, “By itself, early childhood education cannot completely close the gaps caused by inequality of wealth and inequality of opportunity, but researchers have concluded that it is more successful in narrowing the gap than most other interventions” (p. 230). Honig, Diamond, and Gutlohn (2013) found that first graders should be reading independently by the end of the school year. “Students who are not reading at grade level by the end of first grade have a 1 in 8 chance of ever catching up to grade level without extraordinary and costly interventions” (p. 13).

Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Plan. In 1999, the Idaho State Board of Education approved the Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Plan with a focus on grades K-3 supporting the goal of addressing at-risk students immediately, because future reading

problems are best avoided by early intervention. The initiative requires schools to assess all kindergarten through third-grade public school students at least twice yearly using the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) to identify students reading below grade level. Schools must offer a minimum of 40-hours of additional instruction time beyond the regular school day to K-3 students identified as below grade level on the IRI reading assessment. All teachers and administrators responsible for K-8 reading programs must complete a three-credit comprehensive literacy course as part of renewing their professional certificate. Finally, all pre-service teachers will pass an assessment that measures their knowledge of language structure and literacy before receiving their certificate (IRI Testing Quick Guide, 2012).

Since 2009, the Idaho State Department of Education has used specific benchmark probes as the IRI for K-3 assessment. The kindergarten assessments focus on reading readiness and phonological awareness. Grades one through three are assessed on reading fluency and accuracy. The IRI helps to identify the reading skills of each K-3 student. Though not intended to serve as a comprehensive or complete reading diagnostic tool, the IRI serves as a primary screening tool to evaluate student reading performance in order for school personnel to provide the necessary interventions to improve students' reading skills (IRI Testing Quick Guide, 2012). After each assessment, student scores are aggregated at the local building level and are reported to the State Department of Education as part of the school's accountability measures (LexisNexis, 2015).

With good instruction and motivation, most students will continue to read and become strong readers. Understanding the nature of reading, how proficient readers read, and how to teach student to read will help teachers face the challenge of meeting the needs of diverse populations of students.

The solution to our present predicament is for all schools to implement balanced and comprehensive literacy programs for all students. This approach requires understanding which skills need to be developed at which points and shifting the curricular emphasis over time. (Honig, Diamond, & Gutlohn, 2013, p. 16)

Teacher Experience

In many occupations, an employee's years of experience is often a critical factor in human resource policies and decisions, including compensation systems, benefits packages, and promotions. The underlying premise is that experience gained over time improves the knowledge, skills, and productivity of an employee. In education, the underlying assumption is that experience promotes effectiveness in the classroom. On the contrary, Rice (2010) concluded that while experience in education does matter, more is not always better.

Danielson (2007) found that expertise in teaching appears to consist of at least two distinct, though related, characteristics: automaticity in their work and more insightful observations. Expert teachers establish routines early in the school year and know what to expect in certain situations. They no longer have to think consciously about the details, so they are able to devote more of their conscious attention to other matters than is possible for novices. Expert teachers also know what typical patterns are within the classroom and can quickly notice discrepancies. "Expert teachers (like experts in all fields) are also adept at noticing exceptions to the general rule" (Danielson, 2007, p. 38).

Marzano (2003) identified three teacher level factors that most significantly impacted student achievement: instructional strategies, classroom management, and classroom curriculum design. "I believe that mastery of the three teacher-level factors will certainly render a teacher at least average (and probably well above average)"

(Marzano, 2003, p. 75). Though Marzano found a positive correlation between the number of years of experience and the number of strategies or skills mastered, the research did not support the notion that experience automatically leads to effectiveness in teaching.

Drawing on other fields, Danielson (2007) proposed that it is now possible to describe, with some certainty, which classroom practices improve with experience and how expertise in teaching is acquired. Danielson noted that expertise is not the same thing as experience. Not all experienced teachers are experts; however, experience is necessary for the acquisition of expertise. “If experience in other professions can guide educators, teachers should expect to need at least five years to exhibit proficient performance in all areas, and longer to develop the skills described at the highest level” (Danielson, 2007, p. 38). Danielson concluded that although experience is necessary, it alone is not sufficient for the development of expertise by teachers.

It can be disappointing to find out that seniority doesn’t necessarily equal excellence, but it’s true nonetheless. Experience doesn’t translate into exceptional job performance in teaching or in any other field. There’s a reason for that—the positive effects of experience on job performance wear off pretty quickly. In fact, in most professions, they wear off in five years. (Liesveld & Miller, 2005, p. 23)

Teachers show the greatest productivity gains during their first few years on the job, after which their performance tends to level off (Rice, 2010). Ravitch (2014) concluded, “Experience matters, but beyond a certain point it’s not possible to weigh and calibrate the value of more than a few years of experience. Gray hair in and of itself is not a virtue” (p. 130). A teacher who has been teaching for six years has all the benefits of experience,

as they relate to job performance, that a 30-year teaching veteran possesses (Liesveld & Miller, 2005).

The findings that, in some cases, veteran teachers may be less effective than their less-experienced counterparts and that teacher effectiveness may plateau much earlier in their careers suggest that school administrators, researchers, and policymakers should consider strategies to encourage high performance and professional development well into a teacher's career (Rice, 2010, p. 4).

Literature Review Summary

In many occupations, employers have a tendency to seek out and hire individuals with more experience or who demonstrate a willingness to work hard. Traditional hiring methods make the assumption that most individuals can perform most tasks effectively, given sufficient time, training, and motivation (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). Recent advances in brain research have allowed scientists to identify the source of individual talents. Rather than slipping into a mind-set of striving to fix or simply mitigate an employee's weaknesses, employers and managers should focus on leveraging and maximizing individual strengths (Lemov, 2010).

Although the process of discovering one's strengths often requires months or even years of careful attention and observation, Dr. Donald Clifton developed and eventually fine-tuned the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 (CSF 2.0) to quickly and accurately identify potential talents (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012). By encouraging individuals to discover their talents and develop them into strengths, many organizations, including businesses, higher education institutions, and public schools, are achieving higher levels of productivity and are experiencing greater employee satisfaction (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999).

In education, one of the greatest challenges facing the nation is the need to recruit highly-skilled teachers and to prepare them for the classroom. Although researchers have identified instructional strategies and techniques that may lead to higher levels of student achievement, the need for trained teachers with the innate ability to apply the correct strategies in the most effective manner continues to increase (Liesveld & Miller, 2005). Though teaching experience may positively influence student achievement during the first few years, research suggests that the impact of experience levels off after only a few years (Rice, 2010). In light of recent research into brain development and the ability to identify specific talents in individuals using instruments like the CSF 2.0, it would seem plausible that research could help identify those talents that may differentiate effective teachers from the general population.

This quantitative descriptive study used the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 (CSF 2.0) to identify those strengths that appeared most frequently in a sample of primary reading teachers in rural east Idaho schools. This study also determined which talents appeared most frequently in teachers whose classes performed higher than the state average proficiency levels on the winter administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI).

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of this quantitative descriptive study was to determine which talents were identified most frequently in a sample of primary reading teachers in rural east Idaho schools. This study also determined which talents appeared most frequently in teachers whose classes performed higher than the state average proficiency levels on the winter administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI).

This study was guided by the following questions:

1. Which of the thirty-four talents identified by the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 (CSF 2.0) appeared most frequently in a random sample of primary reading teachers in rural east Idaho schools?
2. Which of the thirty-four talents identified by the CSF 2.0 appeared more frequently in primary reading teachers of classes in rural east Idaho schools that performed higher than the state average proficient level on the winter administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI)?

This chapter on methodology describes the participants and sampling, instrumentation, procedures, and design and analysis as they apply to the purpose of this study. This study was a quantitative descriptive study conducted in two phases. The first phase identified respondents to take the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 (CSF 2.0) and report their results. For the second phase, the researcher identified those respondent whose classes scored higher than the state averages on the winter administration of the IRI. The

most frequently occurring strengths from this sample were identified and compared to both the population and the entire sample of primary reading teachers.

Participants and Sampling

The target population for this study was primary reading teachers in rural schools in east Idaho. The researcher strived to create a homogeneous purposeful sample (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2007) by first compiling lists of all elementary schools in east Idaho using the data from the Idaho Transportation Department list of counties, school districts, and elementary schools (2012). The researcher then randomized the sample by processing the list of elementary schools using an online list randomizer (List Randomizer, 2010).

Starting with the first school on the randomized list, the researcher looked up the directory information for each school on the Idaho State Department of Education website (2015) and contacted the principal of each school via telephone. The researcher read the researcher telephone script (see Appendix A), providing a concise overview of the study and asking if the principal was willing to invite primary reading teachers in the school to participate in this study. An overview of the study and the participation consent form (see Appendix B) was emailed to the principals. The principals were asked to consult with K-3 teachers to verify their willingness to voluntarily participate in this research.

The researcher contacted school principals, starting with the top of the randomized list, until a minimum of 50 primary reading teachers agreed to participate in the study, complete the Clifton StrengthsFinder, and submit their results.

Instrumentation

Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0. This study employed the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 (CSF 2.0) to identify the top five talents of each of the respondents. The CSF 2.0 is an online assessment in which each respondent is presented with 177 paired items linked on opposing ends of a five-point scale, with the center being neutral. “From that pair, the respondent is asked to choose the statement that best describes him or her, and also the extent to which that chosen option is descriptive of him or her” (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012, p. 3). The respondent is given twenty seconds to respond to each pair of items. The CSF 2.0 is available in more than twenty languages and has been modified to accommodate individuals with disabilities. The paired items were designed for individuals with a reading level of 10th grade or higher (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012).

After responding to all 177 items, the respondent is presented with a ranked ordering of signature themes listing the five highest scoring themes. The developers of the CSF 2.0 have identified thirty-four distinct themes. By 2009, more than 3.9 million individuals had taken the CSF 2.0 (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012), by February 2011, there were nearly 5.9 million respondents (Asplund, 2011), and by April 2015, more than 11.8 million individuals had completed the CSF 2.0 (Gallup, Inc., 2015).

Test administration. Access to the CSF 2.0 requires each respondent to have a unique, one-time use code that can only be obtained by purchasing select Gallup Press strengths publications. The researcher provided each respondent with a new copy of *StrengthsFinder 2.0* (Rath, 2007). They were asked to use the code within the book to

complete the StrengthsFinder 2.0 test. Afterward, the respondents were allowed to keep their personal copies of *StrengthsFinder 2.0* for review and future reference.

Initially, respondents created an account on the Strengths website (Gallup, Inc., 2015). After logging into the secure website, the respondent entered the one-time access code from the book to obtain permission to begin the strengths-finder test. The respondents read the instructions at the beginning of the test prior to proceeding. Each respondent was presented with each of the 177 test items. Each item listed a pair of potential self-descriptors, placed at polar ends of a continuum. The respondent chose the statement in each pair which best described him or her and the extent to which the chosen option was descriptive of them. The respondent had 20 seconds to respond to each statement (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012).

After responding to each of the 177 test items, the assessment was completed. The Gallup computer analyzed the responses and calculated scores based on the mean of the intensity of self-description using a proprietary formula. The results were then recorded in the Gallup database as theme means, standard scores, and percentiles (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012). Each respondent's top five signature strengths were presented on the computer screen. Each respondent was asked to print a copy of their Strengths-finder results to provide to the researcher and include these top five signature themes on the respondent data collection form. Each respondent will be able to access these results in the future by logging into their account on the Strengths website (Gallup, Inc., 2015).

Reliability studies. Since it was first released in 1999, the CSF has been carefully scrutinized and evaluated for reliability. Technical reports describing the reliability and validity of the CSF have been released in 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2012 (Asplund, Lopez,

Hodges, & Harter, 2012). To evaluate the internal consistency of test items in order to assure that similar test items produced similar results, the designers of the StrengthsFinder test randomly sampled 46,902 respondents. The resulting reliability coefficients for each of the 34 signature themes ranged from 0.52 to 0.78. In a second sample of 2,219 respondents, the reliability coefficients ranged from 0.55 to 0.78. The researchers noted the high level of difficulty in obtaining high reliability coefficients for an instrument designed to measure 34 different dimensions. Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, and Harter (2012) explained, “Because the goal of the CSF was to create an efficient assessment that optimized validity, efforts to increase the reliability coefficients could potentially be detrimental to the purpose of the CSF” (p. 12).

In 2008, Gallup conducted another study involving the 2,219 respondents in the internal consistency study to evaluate the test-retest reliability of the CSF. These respondents were administered the CSF initially and were subsequently assigned to one of three retest periods: (1) one month ($n = 538$), (2) three months ($n = 390$), and (3) six months ($n = 376$).

Respondents in these reliability studies were not allowed to see the results from their initial test. They were also not informed that they were participating in a test-retest reliability study of the CSF. The researchers conducted a Chi-Square test of independence on each theme and found that 33 of the 34 themes had significant results, indicating that the presence of a theme in the top five on the pre-test was significantly related to the presence in the top five on the post-test (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012). The researchers also noted that the only theme that did not have significant results was Self-assurance, the least commonly reported theme.

Validity studies. By definition, content validity refers to the degree to which the results of a test adequately represent the content that the scores are meant to measure (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2007). Asplund, Lopez, Hodges and Harter (2012) described the challenge of evaluating content validity of the CSF due to the difficulty of assuring that the assessment measures all possible aspects of personality types. Nevertheless, Donald Clifton spent over 30 years studying individual traits as he developed the first list of signature themes that were originally tested on over 2 million individuals.

Due to the paired-statement design of the CSF, limited options for determining construct validity are available. Asplund, Lopez, Hodges and Harter (2012) analyzed the themes in pairs using a hierarchical cluster analysis on a sample of 472,850 respondents. Using a validity level of 70%, less than 2% of the theme pairs failed to meet the validity requirements and the vast majority of the theme pairs scored above the 80% level. Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, and Harter concluded, “From a validity standpoint, the CSF looks very strong. That is, it seems to measure what it is supposed to measure” (p. 14).

Idaho Reading Indicator. According to Idaho Code 33-1614 (LexisNexis, 2015), all kindergarten through third-grade public school students will take the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) at least twice yearly to identify students reading below grade level. Since 2009, the Idaho State Department of Education has contracted with NCS Pearson, Inc. to use AIMSweb® to provide Idaho-specific benchmark probes for K-3 assessment (IRI Testing Quick Guide, 2012). Though not intended to serve as a comprehensive or complete reading diagnostic tool, the IRI serves as a primary screening tool to evaluate student reading performance in order for school personnel to provide the necessary interventions to improve students’ reading skills (IRI Testing Quick Guide, 2012).

Test administration. During specified testing windows established by the Idaho State Department of Education, all K-3 students in Idaho are to be tested twice annually, once in the fall and once in the spring. Though an optional third administration may be conducted in the winter, the Idaho State Department of Education does not require Idaho schools to participate. The IRI tests are administered by proctors (other than the classroom teacher) who have been trained by their district in the administration of the tests. Each assessment is given individually or in small groups of students and requires less than ten minutes to administer.

Because the academic ability of a student changes throughout the course of the school year, the material that is appropriate for each student to work on also changes. The IRI assesses the skills that each student is expected to know at the time of testing. These skills build successively as a student develops his/her ability to decode text (i.e. concepts in phonics, phonemic awareness) and reads with proper accuracy and rate (i.e. reading fluency). Students in kindergarten must complete two tests, letter naming fluency (LNF) and letter sound fluency (LSF). LNF is a measure of reading readiness, and LSF measures basic skills with phonics. First graders are assessed on letter sound fluency (LSF) and reading curriculum-based measures (R-CBM). Second and third graders are assessed solely on their R-CBM scores. An R-CBM refers to a reading passage, which students read aloud for one minute from meaningful, connected, and graded text that has been written to represent general curriculum. The students read three separate, one-minute passages orally, while the test proctor calculates the number of words read correctly and the number of errors. The median score is recorded by the proctor and is reported to the State of Idaho Department of Education (IRI Testing Quick Guide, 2012).

Once the students are tested, proctors and/or district testing coordinators are instructed to report individual student test scores by entering the subtest scores into the Idaho Reading Indicator Web Application (Idaho State Department of Education, 2015). The raw scores are then analyzed and compared to state-established benchmark levels based on grade-level performance on each test (see Appendix I). The students are then given an overall test score:

- 3 = Benchmark – Indicating mastery of the skills
- 2 = Strategic – Indicating partial mastery of some or all skills
- 1 = Intensive – Indicating a lack of mastery of some or all skills

Within the IRI Web Application, student scores can be aggregated at the local building level and are reported to the State Department of Education as part of the school's accountability measures (LexisNexis, 2015).

Reliability studies. Starting in 2001, AIMSweb® began an extensive project of developing and testing R-CBM (reading curriculum based measure) probes. In the most recent alternate-form reliability study from 2010, the average reliability of single R-CBM probes for first grade through eighth grade on the fall, winter, and spring administrations had a mean correlation of .94. In a similar evaluation of the reliability of the mean score on three probes during a single administration using five simulated samples of 1000 cases each, the resulting average reliability of the median score was .97. The long-term test reliability for screening K-8 students four months apart ranged from .91 to .96 with a mean of .94 (Pearson Education, Inc., 2012).

A synthesis of the scientific research on reading (Honig, Diamond, & Gutlohn, 2013) indicated some critical reading skills that should be assessed in kindergarten and

early in Grade 1, including phonemic awareness and elements of phonics such as letter names, letter sounds, and the ability to read non-real (nonsense) words. Consisting of tests in Letter Naming Fluency (LNF), Letter Sound Fluency (LSF), Phonemic Segmentation Fluency (PSF), and Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF), the AIMSweb® Test of Early Literacy (TEL) assesses these skills (Shinn, 2012). Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) has been frequently identified as the best single indicator of potential reading failure, and Letter Sound Fluency (LSF) has also been found to be a good predictor of reading success.

In reliability studies on Letter Naming Fluency, Letter Sound Fluency, and Phonemic Segmentation Fluency, 75 children at each of three schools in a Midwestern city were monitored in three testing sessions each two weeks apart. Students took alternate forms of each measure in the first and second sessions, and then took the same form in the third session as in the second session. In addition, 50 cases of each measure were independently scored by two scorers from audio recordings. Retest reliability scores for LNF were .90 while LSF were .83. Pearson Education (Pearson Education, Inc., 2012) conducted another study in 2008 that found reliability levels of .81 in LNF and .82 in retest reliability.

Validity studies. To evaluate the validity of AIMSweb® Reading-Curriculum Based Measures (R-CBM), five different studies were conducted between 2008 and 2010 that compared R-CBM scores to scores on other published screening assessments, including the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), the New England Common Assessment Program, and the TerraNova®. All of these studies yielded similar findings. When the interval between the R-CBM and the other criterion was one year or less,

correlations were approximately .70. For two-year intervals, the correlations were approximately .60 (Pearson Education, Inc., 2012).

To assess the validity of Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) and Letter Sound Fluency (LSF), testing was conducted during the spring of kindergarten, in three testing sessions each two weeks apart. Students took alternate forms of each measure in the first and second sessions, and then took the same form in the third session as in the second session. Students also took the Test of Phonological Awareness, the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery, and the Developing Skills Checklist, Pre-Reading Total Score. Reports of the correlations of each student's average score on the three administrations of each measure ranged from .50 - .75 for LNF and .58 - .72 for LSF. Overall, the results of the validity studies for those AIMSweb measures used for the Idaho Reading Indicator (i.e., Letter Naming Fluency, Letter Sound Fluency, and Reading-Curriculum Based Measures) indicated that each assessment measures what it is designed to measure (Pearson Education, Inc., 2012).

Procedures

Data collection. After securing permission from the Idaho State University Human Subjects Committee to conduct this study, the researcher purchased 60 copies of StrengthsFinder 2.0 (2007). The researcher numbered the books 1-60 to help maintain accurate records throughout the study. Using the list of east Idaho schools, the researcher entered the name of each elementary school into an online random list generator (List Randomizer, 2010) and created a randomized list of elementary schools in southeast Idaho.

Starting with the first school on the random list, the researcher contacted the administrator of the school via telephone and read the telephone script (see Appendix A). The researcher explained the purpose of the study and ascertained the administrator's willingness to permit K-3 teachers in the school to participate in the study. If the administrator was unwilling to allow teachers in the school to participate in the study, the researcher moved to the next school on the randomized list. For those administrators who were unable to speak at the time of the telephone call, a brief message and contact information was left. If the administrator did not return the call within two days, the researcher moved to the next school on the random list. Those who agreed to participate in the study were emailed an overview of the study (see Appendix B) and a copy of the informed consent process (see Appendix C) for the administrator to present to his/her teaching staff.

The researcher contacted the administrator via telephone to determine the number of K-3 teachers who agreed to participate in the study. During the conversation, a meeting date and time was scheduled to introduce the respondents to the study and complete the *StrengthsFinder 2.0* assessment. Administrators who wished to include other teachers or instructional staff in the process who were not teaching grades K-3 purchased additional copies of *StrengthsFinder 2.0* for those staff members. Each administrator was also given a copy of *StrengthsFinder 2.0* and was encouraged to participate in the process. Although their consent forms and data collection sheets were completed and collected, their responses were not included in the study.

The group meetings lasted approximately 45-60 minutes at each of the schools participating in the study. During the meeting, each teacher was provided with the

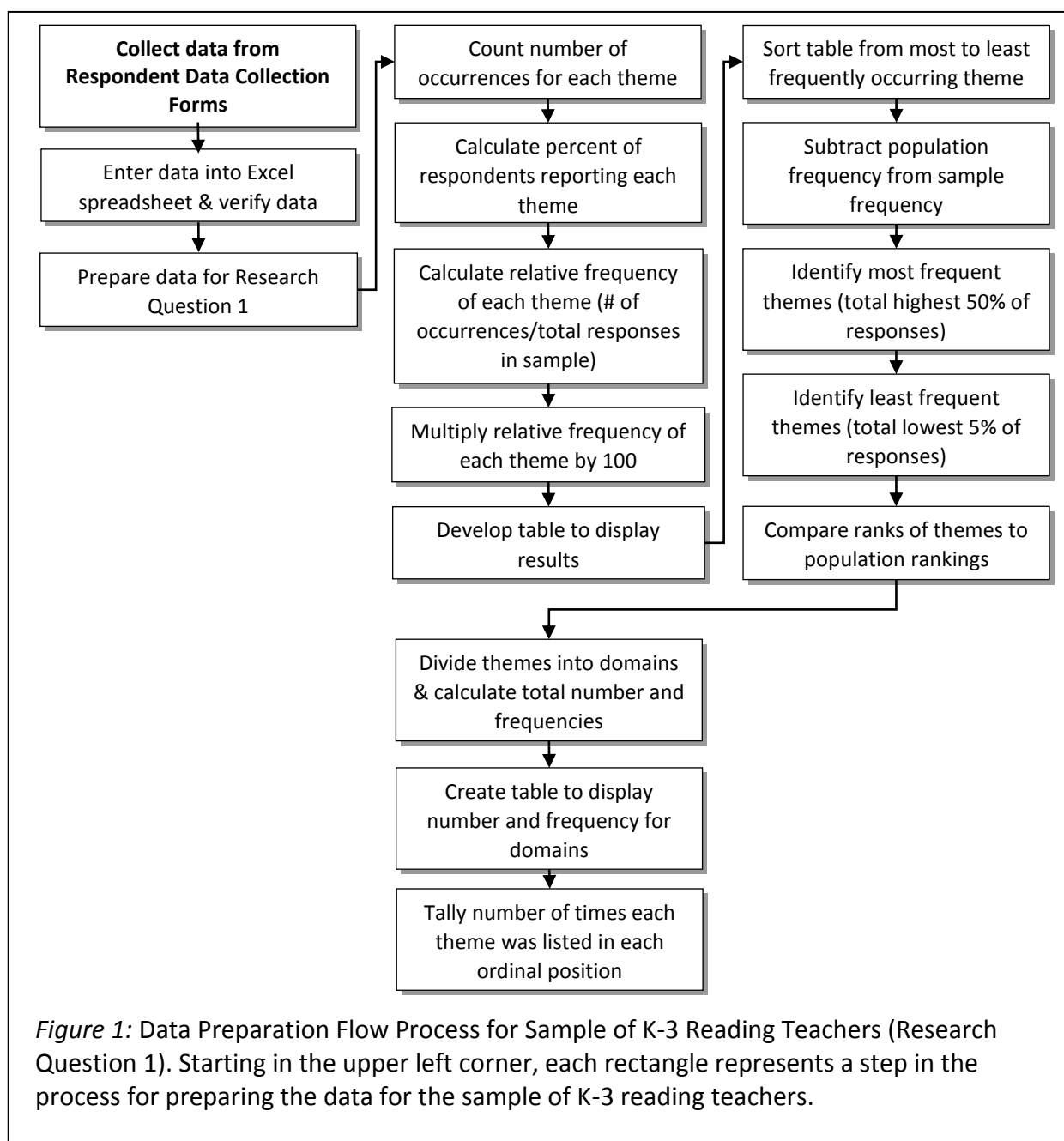
concise overview of the study and consent form (see Appendix B). Those who agreed to participate in the study completed and submitted the consent form to the researcher. They were given a copy of the respondent data collection form (see Appendix C) and asked to complete the demographic information section. The teachers were subsequently asked to complete the results section of the form by identifying the number of students from their classes that scored at the benchmark, strategic, and intensive levels on the winter 2016 administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI). The researcher subsequently verified the accuracy of the self-reported IRI scores with the building principal.

Respondents in this study were given a copy of *StrengthsFinder 2.0* (Rath, 2007) that contained a one-time use code to access the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 (CSF 2.0) assessment. Respondents were guided through the process of creating a personal profile and logging into the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 assessment. They completed the CSF 2.0 assessment individually and submitted their top five signature themes to the researcher using the respondent data collection form (see Appendix C).

The school selection process with the associated meeting was repeated until 55 completed tests and demographic survey forms from K-3 teachers in southeast Idaho were collected. Once the data was collected, the data preparation process was started. The completed respondent data collection forms were catalogued and kept in a locked file in the researcher's office for the duration of the study.

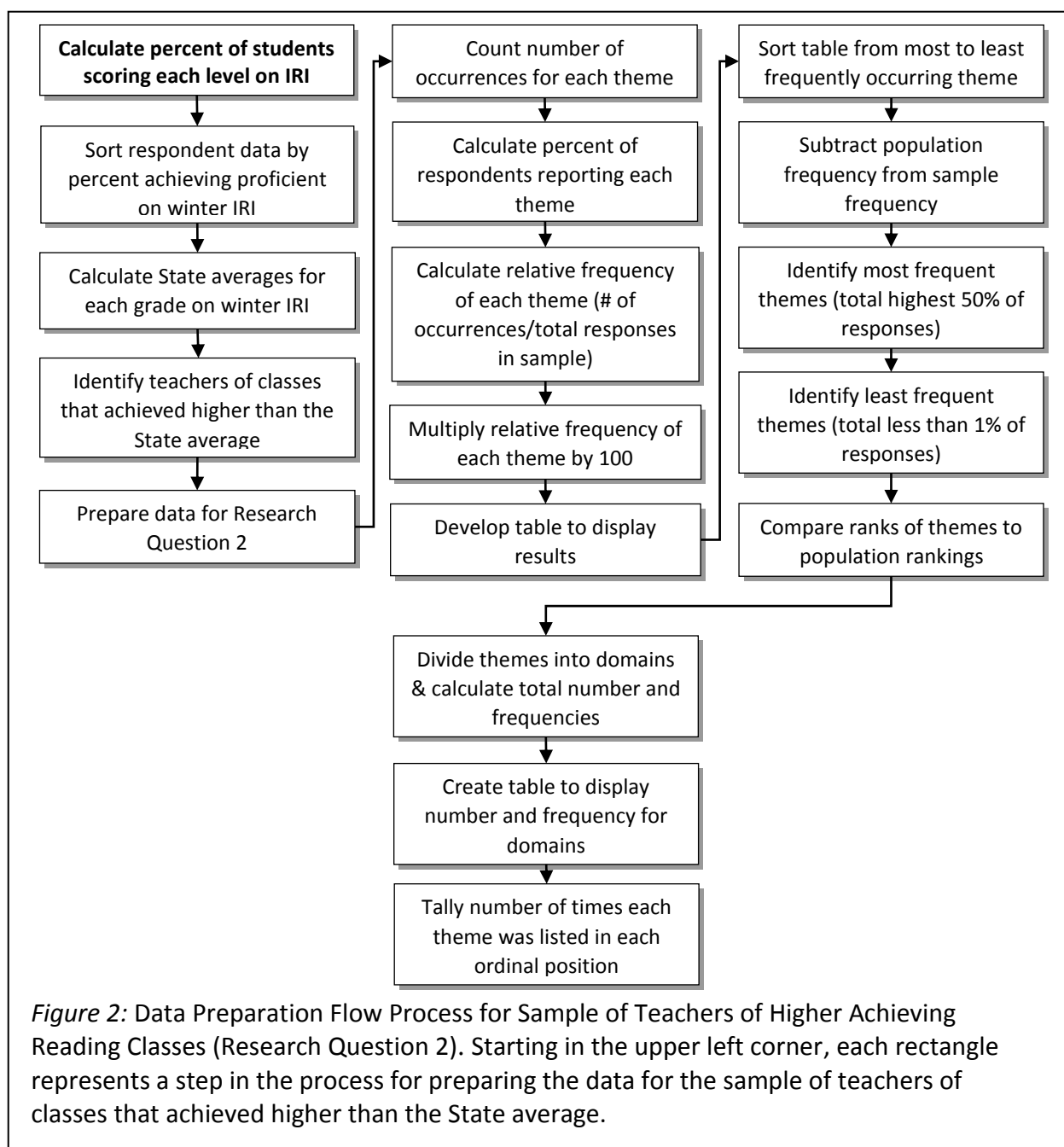
Data preparation. This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2007). The researcher created spreadsheets in Microsoft Excel to prepare the data to count the number of occurrences for each signature theme, calculate the percent of respondents reporting each theme, and calculate the relative

frequencies. A series of tables were developed to display the results. The process for preparing the data for Question 1 is displayed in Figure 1.



Next, the researcher prepared the data for Research Question 2 by calculating the percent of students who scored at the benchmark level on the winter IRI and identifying

those teachers whose classes scored higher than the average state proficiency levels. The researcher created another spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel to prepare the data to count the number of occurrences for each signature theme, calculate the percent of respondents reporting each theme, and calculate the relative frequencies. A series of tables were developed to display the results. The process for preparing the data for Question 2 is displayed in Figure 2.



After collecting the results, preparing the data, and creating the appropriate tables that displayed the data for each research question, the researcher then analyzed the data.

Analysis

Research Question 1 (Which of the thirty-four talents identified by the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 (CSF 2.0) appeared most frequently in a random sample of primary

reading teachers in rural east Idaho schools?) was analyzed by using Microsoft Excel to create a spreadsheet that reported the number of times each signature theme was reported in the sample. The spreadsheet calculated the percent of teachers who reported each signature theme and the observed relative frequencies for each of the signature themes from the sample of K-3 reading teachers. The researcher then compared those relative frequencies to the relative frequencies reported by Gallup (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012). The data was sorted from most to least frequently occurring signature theme in the K-3 sample. The researcher calculated the total relative frequency in the sample for each of the four signature theme domains and compared it to the total relative frequency for each domain as reported by Gallup (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012). Finally, the researcher tallied the number of times each signature theme was listed in each position on the signature themes report.

Research Question 2 (Which of the thirty-four talents identified by the CSF 2.0 appeared more frequently in primary reading teachers of classes in rural east Idaho schools that performed higher than the state average proficient level on the winter administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI)?) was analyzed by using Microsoft Excel to create a spreadsheet that reported the number of times each signature theme was reported in the sample of primary reading teachers whose classes performed higher than the state average proficiency levels. The researcher calculated the percent of teachers who reported each signature theme and the observed relative frequencies for each of the signature themes from the sample of more effective teachers. The researcher then compared those relative frequencies to the test population to the relative frequencies reported by Gallup (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2012). The data was sorted from

most to least frequently occurring signature theme in the sample of reading teachers of higher achieving classes as identified by the researcher. The total relative frequency in the sample was calculated for each of the four signature theme domains and compared to the total relative frequency for each domain in the population. Finally, the researcher tallied the number of times each signature theme was listed in each position on the signature themes report for the teachers in the sample of most effective reading teachers.

Methods Summary

In summary, this study employed a quantitative descriptive research design, using the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 as an instrument, to identify which, if any, talents appeared most frequently in a sample of K-3 reading teachers in rural east Idaho schools. By using a cluster sampling from randomized lists of elementary schools in east Idaho, the researcher recruited a minimum of 50 K-3 teachers as respondents to the CSF 2.0 survey. After taking the CSF 2.0 and receiving the report, a lists of talents from each respondent was compiled. The researcher then created multiple tables to illustrate the percent of teachers reporting each theme and the relative frequency distribution of the signature themes among the sample of K-3 reading teachers compared to the general population.

A sample of teachers whose classes achieved higher than the state average on the winter administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator was created from the sample of K-3 teachers. The percent and relative frequency distribution of signature themes from those respondents in the sample was calculated. The researcher developed multiple tables to illustrate those talents that occurred more or less frequently in the sample of teacher of

higher achieving classes. A description of the result of the data analysis are reported in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

Results

This chapter will present the results of the study. The purpose of this quantitative descriptive study was to use the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 (CSF 2.0) to determine which talents were identified most frequently in a sample of east Idaho primary reading teachers. This study also determined which talents appeared most frequently in teachers whose classes performed higher than the state average proficiency levels on the winter administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI).

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. Which of the thirty-four talents identified by the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 (CSF 2.0) appeared most frequently in a random sample of primary reading teachers in rural east Idaho schools?
2. Which of the thirty-four talents identified by the CSF 2.0 appeared more frequently in primary reading teachers of classes in rural east Idaho schools that performed higher than the state average proficient level on the winter administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI)?

The results chapter will provide a description of the participants. Following a description of the participants, a list the talents identified by the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 and reported by a sample of K-3 reading teachers and by a sample of teachers of higher achieving reading classes.

Participants

Participating schools. Starting with the first school on the randomized list, the researcher placed phone calls to the respective principals describing the scope of the

research study and requesting that elementary reading teachers in the school be permitted to participate. The principal of the first school, School A, agreed to participate in the study. The principal of School B did not respond to the telephone messages in sufficient time to participate. The principals of the third and fourth schools on the list, Schools C and D, also agreed to participate. Next on the list, the principal of School E did not respond to the telephone message. The principal of the sixth on the list, School F, agreed to participate. Appointments were set to administer the StrengthsFinder 2.0 assessment to participants at each of the participating schools.

A preliminary estimate of numbers of prospective respondents from the schools listed would have exceeded the fifty teachers required for the study. The researcher was subsequently approached by the principal of School G and the principal responsible for both Schools H and I, who each volunteered to participate after learning of the research study from the principal of School F. These results would have provided the researcher with approximately twenty-five additional respondents for the study.

After conferring with the school's leadership team, the principal of School D contacted the researcher to decline the offer to participate the morning prior to the appointment. The principal expressed concern that the staff was already feeling too overwhelmed to participate in another initiative. Nevertheless, fifty-five K-3 teachers from six elementary schools agreed to participate in the study, completed the StrengthsFinder 2.0 assessment, and submitted their results to the researcher.

Table 2 lists the number of respondents from each school, the percent of the sample that each school's respondents represented, and the order of each school on the random school list of schools.

Table 2

Respondents by School (n = 55)

Elementary School	Respondents	Percent of Sample	Order on Random List
A	14	25%	1
C	7	13%	3
F	18	33%	6
G	9	16%	12
H	3	5%	31
I	4	7%	60

Demographics. As part of the procedures for logging respondents into the StrengthsFinder 2.0 assessment and reporting the results, respondents were required to complete the respondent data collection form (Appendix C) and return the form to the researcher. The collection form asked for basic demographic information to help the researcher describe the sample.

In total, fifty-five teachers participated in the study (see Table 3). Nineteen

Table 3

Respondent Demographics-Gender & Age

Demographic Item	K-3 Sample (n=55)		Teachers of Higher Achieving Reading Classes (n=19)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Gender				
Female	50	91%	19	100%
Male	5	9%	0	0%
Age				
20-29	7	13%	1	5%
30-39	13	24%	5	26%
40-49	17	31%	6	32%
50-59-	13	24%	6	26%
60+	5	9%	2	11%

teachers within the sample were classified as teaching higher achieving classes, because their classes exceeded the median state benchmark scores for the winter administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator. The overall sample was predominantly female (91%) with ages relatively evenly distributed across the various levels.

As displayed in Table 4, most teachers had bachelor degrees (82%) and possessed standard elementary K-8 teacher credentials (80%). Seven were also certified in special

Table 4

<i>Respondent Demographics-Highest Degree Earned & Certificates and Endorsements</i>				
Demographic Item	K-3 Sample (n=55)		Teachers of Higher Achieving Reading Classes (n=19)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Highest Degree Earned				
Bachelor	45	82%	16	84%
Master	9	16%	3	16%
Specialist	1	2%	0	0%
Doctorate	0	0%	0	0%
Certifications and Endorsements				
Standard Elementary K-8	44	80%	17	89%
Standard Elementary K-8; SPED	7	12%	0	0%
Standard Elementary K-8; Reading	2	4%	2	11%
Other	2	4%	0	0%

education, and two had additional endorsements in reading. Only 18% of the respondents reported earning an advanced degree. Nearly half (49%) of the respondents had taught less than ten years, and only 16 (29%) had completed 20 or more years of teaching (see Table 5).

Table 5

Respondent Demographics-Years Teaching Experience Completed & Current Grade Level Assignment

Demographic Item	K-3 Sample (n=55)		Teachers of Higher Achieving Reading Classes (n=19)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Years Teaching Experience Completed				
0-4	17	31%	4	21%
5-9	10	18%	4	21%
10-14	7	13%	3	16%
15-19	5	9%	3	16%
20-24	10	18%	4	21%
25-29	4	7%	0	0%
30+	2	4%	1	5%
Current Grade Level Assignment				
Kindergarten (K)	8	15%	2	11%
1 st Grade	14	25%	5	32%
2 nd Grade	16	29%	6	32%
3 rd Grade	17	31%	5	26%

Talents Identified in a Sample of K-3 Reading Teachers

In response to research question 1 (Which of the thirty-four talents identified by the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 appeared most frequently in a random sample of primary reading teachers in east Idaho?), Table 6 displays the eight most frequently occurring signature themes and the seven least frequently occurring themes from the sample of K-3 teachers. The complete list of signature themes in order from most to least frequently occurring with relative frequency comparisons can be found in Appendix D.

Table 6

Most and Least Frequently Occurring Signature Themes in K-3 Sample (n = 55)

Signature Theme	Total Responses in K-3 Sample	Percent of Respondents with Each Theme	Relative Frequency in K-3 Sample	Relative Frequency in the General Population	Rank in the General Population
Most Frequently Occurring					
Empathy	21	38%	7.6	4.8	4 (T)
Achiever	17	31%	6.2	6.1	1 (T)
Consistency	16	29%	5.8	2.7	17 (T)
Responsibility	16	29%	5.8	6.1	1 (T)
Learner	15	27%	5.5	5.0	3
Developer	14	25%	5.1	3.0	14 (T)
Harmony	14	25%	5.1	4.1	7 (T)
Relator	14	25%	5.1	4.7	6
Least Frequently Occurring					
Activator	2	4%	0.7	1.8	28 (T)
Communication	2	4%	0.7	3.0	14 (T)
Futuristic	2	4%	0.7	2.4	21 (T)
Analytical	1	2%	0.4	2.0	25
Focus	1	2%	0.4	1.0	31 (T)
Ideation	0	0%	0.0	3.2	11 (T)
Self-Assurance	0	0%	0.0	1.0	31 (T)

Note. A (T) in the Rank in Population column indicates a tie in the rankings on the Relative Frequency Distribution Table in Appendix E.

From the sample of 55 K-3 reading teachers who reported their top five signature themes from the StrengthsFinder 2.0, a total of 275 possible responses were recorded and tallied by the researcher. The eight most frequently occurring themes accounted for 46.2% of all responses, while the seven least frequently occurring themes totaled less than 3% (2.9%) of the responses, with Ideation and Self-Assurance receiving no responses.

Empathy was identified as the highest ranking theme with a total of 21 responses (38% of respondents) from the K-3 sample. Empathy had a relative frequency of 7.6, 2.8

percentage points higher than in the general population (4.8). Achiever ranked second with 17 respondents (31% of the sample) reporting it as a signature theme.

Consistency (15 responses, 29% of respondents, 5.8 frequency) scored higher (3.1) compared to the general population (2.7). The Developer theme (14 responses, 25% of respondents, 5.1 frequency) also ranked higher (2.1) than in the general population (3.0). All other themes within the top eight (Achiever, Responsibility, Learner, Harmony, and Relator) scored between -.3 and +1.0 of population norms.

On the other end of the spectrum, the results suggest that teachers are least likely to have the signature talents in Self-assurance, Ideation, Focus, Analytical, Futuristic, Communication, and Activator. Receiving no responses from the K-3 teacher sample, Ideation was 3.2 percentage points lower than that identified in the general population. Communication (2 responses, 4% of respondents, 0.7 frequency) was 2.3 percentage points lower than the population (3.0), and Futuristic (2 responses, 0.7 frequency) was 1.7 percentage points lower than population (2.4). Analytical (1 response, 2% of respondents, 0.4 frequency) was 1.6 percentage points lower than population (2.0). The other low frequency themes of Activator (2 responses), Focus (1 response), and Self-assurance (0 responses) were between 0.6 and 1.1 percentage points lower than the general population norms. Appendix E includes a table that ranks of each theme in the general population.

After analyzing the relative frequency for each signature theme individually and dividing the list into the four domains identified by Rath and Conchie (2008), the researcher calculated the total number and relative frequency of responses that fell within each of the four domains (see Appendix F). The relative frequency of the signature themes by domain for the K-3 sample and a comparison of the results to the expected

results from relative frequency in the general population for each domain are found in Table 7.

Table 7				
<i>Frequency of Signature Themes by Domain in K-3 Sample</i>				
Domain	Total Responses in K-3 Sample	Total Relative Frequency in K-3 Sample	Relative Frequency in the General Population	Difference (Sample - Population)
Executing	96	34.9	27.0	7.9
Influencing	24	8.7	15.3	-6.6
Relationship Building	108	39.3	31.8	7.5
Strategic Thinking	47	17.1	25.9	-8.8

Finally, the researcher counted the number of times each signature theme was listed first, second, third, fourth, or fifth on the signature themes report for each respondent and developed a table to display the results. From the table displaying the order in which each signature theme was reported for each respondent, 13% (7 respondents) listed Achiever as their first signature theme. Consistency and empathy were reported as first signature themes on five reports each (9%). A total of thirteen themes were never listed as top themes on the signature themes reports. Empathy was listed fourth on the respondents' lists seven times (13%). Connectedness was listed six times in third place (11%). Consistency was listed six times in fourth place (11%).

Talents Identified in a Sample of Teachers of Higher Achieving Reading Classes

In response to research question 2 (Which of the thirty-four talents identified by the CSF 2.0 appeared more frequently in east Idaho primary reading teachers of classes that performed higher than the state average proficient level on the winter administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator?), the seven most frequently occurring signature themes

and the seven least frequently occurring themes from the sample of teachers of higher achieving reading classes are displayed in Table 8. The most frequently occurring themes

Table 8

Most and Least Frequently Occurring Signature Themes in the Sample of Teachers of Higher Achieving Reading Classes (n=19)

Signature Theme	Total Responses in Higher Achieving Reading Sample	Percent of Respondents with Each Theme	Relative Frequency in Higher Achieving Reading Sample	Relative Frequency in the General Population	Rank in the General Population
Most Frequently Occurring					
Responsibility	8	42%	8.4	6.1	1 (T)
Empathy	7	37%	7.4	4.8	4 (T)
Harmony	7	37%	7.4	4.1	7 (T)
Learner	7	37%	7.4	5.0	3
Developer	6	32%	6.3	3.0	14 (T)
Achiever	5	26%	5.3	6.1	1 (T)
Restorative	5	26%	5.3	3.1	13
Least Frequently Occurring					
Activator	0	0%	0.0	1.8	28 (T)
Analytical	0	0%	0.0	2.0	25 (T)
Communication	0	0%	0.0	3.0	14 (T)
Futuristic	0	0%	0.0	2.4	21 (T)
Ideation	0	0%	0.0	3.2	11 (T)
Self-Assurance	0	0%	0.0	1.0	31 (T)
Woo	0	0%	0.0	2.8	16

Note. A (T) in the Rank in Population column indicates a tie in the rankings on the Relative Frequency Distribution Table in Appendix E.

accounted for 47.5% of the 95 possible themes reported while the least frequent received no responses. Table 5 also lists the relative frequency for each of the themes and the ranking of each theme. For the sample of teachers of higher achieving reading classes, the complete list of themes in order can be found in Appendix G.

Responsibility was reported by 42% (8) of the respondents in the sample teachers of higher achieving reading classes. With a relative frequency of 8.4, it occurred 2.3 more frequently than in the overall population and 2.6 more frequently than in the K-3 sample

(see Table 3). Empathy, Harmony, and Learner were each reported by 37% (7) of the respondents. The relative frequency for Empathy (7.4) was slightly lower than in the K-3 sample (7.6), yet it was still 2.6 percentage points higher than in the overall population (4.8). The relative frequency for Harmony (7.4) was 2.3 points higher than the K-3 sample (5.1) and 3.3 percentage points higher than the overall population. Reported by seven respondents, Learner (7.4) was 1.9 percentage points higher than the K-3 sample (5.5) and 2.4 percentage points higher than in the general population (5.0). Developer (6.3) was 1.2 percentage points higher than the K-3 sample (5.1) and 3.3 percentage points higher than in the general population (3.0).

Though it remained in the top seven most frequently occurring themes in the sample of teachers of higher achieving reading classes, Achiever (5.3) was 0.9 percentage points lower than the K-3 sample (6.2) and 0.8 percentage points lower than in the general population (6.1). Ranked fourteenth in the K-3 sample, Restorative (5.3) moved into the top seven themes for the sample. It was 1.6 percentage points higher than the K-3 sample (3.6) and 2.2 percentage points higher than in the general population (3.1). The list of least frequently occurring themes for both the K-3 sample and the sample of teachers of higher achieving reading classes both contained Activator, Analytical, Communicator, Futuristic, Ideation, and Self-Assurance, with each failing to register a single signature theme report appearance among the sample. Woo also was not reported by teachers in the sample.

After analyzing the relative frequency for each signature theme individually and dividing the list into the four domains identified by Rath and Conchie (2008), the researcher calculated the total number and total relative frequency of responses that fell within each of the four domains for the sample of teachers of higher achieving reading

classes (see Appendix O). A list of the relative frequencies for each signature themes by domain for the sample of teachers of higher achieving reading classes compared to the results for the general population is found in Table 9.

Table 9

Frequency of Signature Themes by Domain in the Sample of Teachers of Higher Achieving Reading Classes (n=19)

Domain	Total Responses in Higher Achieving Reading Sample	Total Relative Frequency in Higher Achieving Reading Sample	Relative Frequency in Population	Difference (Sample - Population)
Executing	33	34.7	27.0	7.7
Influencing	5	5.3	15.3	-10.0
Relationship Building	39	41.1	31.8	9.3
Strategic Thinking	18	19.0	25.9	-7.0

Of the 95 signature themes reported by the 19 teachers of higher achieving reading classes, the Relationship Building domain had the highest number with 39, accounting for a total relative frequency of 41.1. This was 9.3 percentage points higher than the reported general population frequency of 31.8. With a total of 33 signature theme responses, the Executing domain had a combined relative frequency of 34.7, which was 7.7 percentage points higher than the expected frequency in the general population (27.0). Strategic thinking ranked third with a combined relative frequency of 19.0 (18 responses) which was 7.0 percentage points lower than the anticipated combine frequency within the population (25.9). The Influencing domain received a total of 5 responses (5.3 relative frequency) which was 10.0 percentage points lower than reported in the general population (15.3). In comparison to the combine relative frequency distribution for each domain in the K-3 sample, the relative frequencies for the sample of teachers of higher

achieving reading classes responses were 0.2 percentage points lower in the Executing theme, 3.5 percentage points lower in the Influencing theme, 1.8 percentage points higher in the Relationship Building theme, and 1.9 percentage points higher in the Strategic Thinking theme (see Table 10).

Table 10

Comparison of the Frequency of Signature Themes by Domain

Domain	Relative Frequency in Population	Relative Frequency in K-3 Sample	Relative Frequency in Higher Achieving Reading Sample	Difference (Reading Sample-K-3 Sample)
Executing	27.0	34.9	34.7	-0.2
Influencing	15.3	8.7	5.3	-3.4
Relationship Building	31.8	39.3	41.1	1.8
Strategic Thinking	25.9	17.1	19.0	1.9

Finally, the researcher developed a table to display the number of times each signature theme was listed first, second, third, fourth, or fifth on the signature themes report for each respondent in the sample of teachers of higher achieving reading classes. The Strategic theme was listed first on the respondents' lists three times. The Empathy theme was listed fourth on respondent lists a total of four times. The Responsibility theme was listed in second place three time. Twenty signature themes were never listed first within the sample. The sample only reported a total of five responses within the Influencing domain. None of these responses was listed first, second, or third on the signature themes reports.

Results Summary

This quantitative descriptive study used the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 to determine which talents were identified most frequently in a sample of east Idaho

primary reading teachers. The study sample consisted of 55 teachers from six different elementary schools in east Idaho. The lists of signature themes for each respondent were collected and analyzed to identify the most and least frequently occurring signature themes. The results were compared to the expected frequencies in the general population. The total responses in each of the four signature theme domains for the sample were calculated and compared to the population. The researcher then tallied the responses to determine which, if any, of the signature themes occurred more frequently in a specific order on the signature themes reports.

Then, the researcher used the assessment data from the winter administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator to identify teachers whose classes scored higher than the state median. Using this sample of the 19 teachers of classes that achieved higher in reading, the researcher identified the most and least frequently occurring signature themes, calculated the total responses for each of the four domains, and determined which of the themes occurred more frequently in a specific order on the signature themes report.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

This quantitative descriptive study used the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 (CSF 2.0) to determine those talents most frequently identified in a sample of east Idaho primary reading teachers. This study also determined which talents appeared most frequently in teachers whose classes performed higher than the state average proficiency levels on the winter administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI).

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Which of the thirty-four talents identified by the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 (CSF 2.0) appeared most frequently in a random sample of primary reading teachers in rural east Idaho schools?
2. Which of the thirty-four talents identified by the CSF 2.0 appeared more frequently in primary reading teachers of classes in rural east Idaho schools that performed higher than the state average proficient level on the winter administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI)?

This chapter presents a discussion of research findings for each of the research questions. The interpretation of the results provides a better understanding of teachers and a description of the expectations for teachers. The chapter concludes with considerations for future inquiry and potential applications in education.

Discussion of Research Findings

Talents Identified in Primary Reading Teachers. The results for the sample of primary reading teachers suggested that primary reading teachers were most likely to

have talents of Empathy, Achiever, Consistency, Responsibility, Learner, Developer, Harmony, and Relator. With Empathy as the most frequently occurring theme (38%), many teachers have the innate ability to sense the emotions of those around them and anticipate their specific needs. They view the world through the eyes of others and instinctually seek to understand their students.

By their very nature, teachers with Empathy have the ability to “hear the unvoiced questions” and anticipate the needs of others (Liesveld & Miller, 2005, p. 113). While they may not condone the behaviors or decisions of their students, they will seek to understand the reasons behind the actions. For these reasons, other people may be naturally drawn to teachers and will seek to confide in them. The strong relationships and personal ties associated with Empathy provide students with a safe learning environment in which they can feel comfortable taking risks.

Approximately one third (31%) of the teachers included in this study listed Achiever as one of their top five signature themes. Achieving teachers are driven by a strong desire to accomplish something meaningful every day, and they used that energy to work long hours without burning out. They have “an internal fire burning” (Liesveld & Miller, 2005, p. 67) that pushes them to do more and to achieve more. While the need to achieve can be temporarily satiated by completing a task or an assignment, the fire is quickly rekindled. Buckingham and Clifton (2001) summarized, “No matter how much you may feel you deserve a day of rest, if the day passes without some form of achievement, no matter how small, you will feel dissatisfied” (p. 83). Consequently, teachers with a talent in Achiever are often found working late at night and through weekends and holidays.

The third most frequently occurring signature theme (29%) was Consistency. These teachers were keenly aware of the need to treat people the same, no matter their station in life. They prefer an environment where the rules are clear and applied equally to everyone. They feel that a lack of consistency leads to selfishness and individualism, thereby creating an environment where some people gain an unfair advantage due to their connections, backgrounds, or circumstances. These teachers see themselves as guardians or protectors with a responsibility to ensure that all students have equity in opportunity. Consistency drives them to ensure that each student has an equal opportunity to show his or her worth (Liesveld & Miller, 2005).

Closely related to the Consistency theme, 16 (29%) teachers reported Responsibility as a top signature theme. These teachers take psychological ownership or responsibility for anything they commit to and feel emotionally bound to follow it through to completion. They exhibit a near obsession for doing things right. In combination with their impeccable ethics, they create a reputation for being “utterly dependable” (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001). When volunteers are needed to complete an assignment or meet a deadline, these teachers are often recruited. They may find themselves unable to decline, causing them to take on more than they should and often leading to burnout.

With 15 teachers reporting Learner as a signature theme (27%), it is not surprising to find that teachers are “energized by the steady and deliberate journey from ignorance to competence” (Rath, 2007, p. 133). They love to learn and are driven to seek out new opportunities to increase their knowledge and experience. They thrive in dynamic work environments where they are “asked to take on short project assignments and are

expected to learn a lot about the new subject matter in a short period of time and then move on to the next one” (Liesveld & Miller, 2005, p. 140). Learners are passionate about education. They love to teach primarily because they love to learn.

Next, the Developer talent (14 responses, 25%) brought these teachers strength and satisfaction as they devised interesting experiences to help others grow and experience success. They see the potential in others and view each student as a work in progress. The slightest, almost imperceptible improvement is viewed as potential being realized. Buckingham and Clifton (2001) noted,

For you these small increments—invisible to some—are clear signs of potential being realized. These signs of growth in others are your fuel. They bring you strength and satisfaction. Over time many will seek you out for help and encouragement because on some level they know that your helpfulness is both genuine and fulfilling to you. (p. 95)

Also reported 14 times (25%) by teachers in the sample, the Harmony signature theme drives teachers to avoid conflict and to seek for areas of agreement. Whether dealing with confrontations involving students, parents, administrators, or other teachers, they will strive to avoid conflicts and will try to steer people with differing views to common ground. They often will quietly keep their opinions to themselves while others prefer to argue or debate. They prefer to focus on practical, down-to-earth matters on which all can agree (Liesveld & Miller, 2005). These teachers intentionally avoid friction to steer others away from contention in order to move everyone forward.

Finally, the sample of teachers were motivated to develop deep and lasting relationships (Relator) with both students and other teachers with whom they worked.

They are comfortable with intimacy. They want to understand others' dreams, goals, aspirations, and fears, and they want others to understand their own feelings (Liesveld & Miller, 2005).

While the list of most frequently occurring signature themes in the sample of K-3 reading teachers offers some insight into the unique talents that teachers possess, the list of least frequently occurring signature themes are equally informative. The results of this study suggest that most K-3 teachers were less likely to exhibit high levels of Self-assurance (0 responses), consequently leaving them feeling insecure about taking personal risks, staking claims, or meeting new challenges. They may feel that they are unable to make decisions or judgements without guidance and direction from others. Furthermore, these teachers were not as fascinated with ideas or theory (Ideation), but preferred to focus on concrete learning. They do not revel in taking the world that they know and "turning it around so we can view it from a strange but strangely enlightening angle" (Liesveld & Miller, 2005, p. 125).

Only one teacher in the sample reported Focus as a signature theme. In contrast to those who had Focus as a talent, this group of K-3 teachers did not easily become impatient with delays, obstacles, or even tangents as they were constantly adapting to their classroom environments and the learning needs of their students. While those with Focus as a talent, may feel that any deviation from a lesson plan may be a waste of time, the teachers in the sample were more likely to demonstrate considerable flexibility and adaptability in order to help students learn.

Similarly, most teachers were driven by building relationships with others, not by objectively and dispassionately reviewing data (Analytical). They were not impatient for

action (Activator) and preferred to carefully plan and prepare rather than rush into something too hastily. However, teachers are not “the kind of person who loves to peer over the horizon” (Rath, 2007, p. 105) and dream of a better life, a better world, or a better product (Futuristic).

Finally, and most surprisingly, teachers did not often report Communication as a talent, suggesting that they did not feel a need to bring ideas to life, to energize them, or to make them exciting and vivid through careful explanations and descriptions. Communicators enjoy hosting, speaking in public, and writing as a means of turning events into stories that they practice with the intent to take “the dry idea and enliven it with images and examples and metaphors” (Liesveld & Miller, 2005, p. 88).

Though not listed in the high frequency themes, Deliberative (12 responses, 4.4 frequency) was 2.5 percentage points higher in frequency than the general population (1.9) and Includer (12 responses, 4.4 frequency) was 2.1 percentage points higher than the population norm (2.3). Both were tied for the ninth rank in the sample. This suggested that, in general, these teachers had a higher probability of being cautious and deliberative in nature. They were more likely to be serious people who approached life with a certain reserve, selected friends cautiously, and avoided taking unnecessary risks. At the same time, they were more likely to want to expand the group to involve as many new people as possible (Includer) and hated the sight of someone on the outside looking in (Rath, 2007).

Occurring seven times in the sample (2.6%), the Strategic theme was 2.3 percentage points lower than the general population (4.8). Those strong in the Strategic talent were able to sort through the clutter and find the best solution to a problem

(Liesveld & Miller, 2005, p. 164). This perspective allows one to see patterns where others may only see complexity. It is a skill that cannot be taught and is found considerably more frequently among those in the general population than among the sample of K-3 teachers participating in this study.

Likewise, Individualization (3 responses, 1.1% frequency) was 2.1 percentage points lower than occurred in the general population (3.2). This theme often leads individuals to be intrigued by the unique qualities of each person. These persons are impatient with generalized statement or judgements, because they do not want to obscure the unique or special qualities of each person. Instead, these individuals focus on the differences between individuals. As a keen observer of other people's strengths, these individuals can draw out the best in each person (Liesveld & Miller, 2005, p. 131). Overall, the sample of K-3 teachers in this study seldom reflected the Individualization theme.

In addition to evaluating the frequencies for each individual theme, a comparison of frequencies for each of the four identified domains provided valuable insights into the talents of teachers. The Relationship Building domain had the highest number of responses (108) of the possible 275, accounting for 39.3% of all responses. This response rate was 7.5% higher than that expected in the general population (31.8%). From the list of the eight most frequently occurring signature themes, four came from the Relationship Building domain (Empathy, Developer, Harmony, and Relator). This data suggests that teachers in this study were more skilled and place higher emphasis on building and developing relationships than did the general population, thereby validating the claims of Liesveld and Miller (2005):

Students are not prisoners or employees. Teachers with little talent for the job assume that they're working with a captive audience that must follow orders, but they're wrong. The state may require young people to attend school until the age of 16, but no one can force someone to learn. Students are essentially volunteers, and great teachers know that students must be emotionally engaged to learn effectively. (p. 17)

With a total of 96 signature theme responses from the 275 possible, the Executing domain ranked second among the four domains with three of the eight most frequently occurring themes (Achiever, Consistency, and Responsibility) and accounted for 34.9% of responses. That response percentage was 7.9% (or 21 responses) higher than the expected percent (27.0%) found in the general population and suggested that K-3 teachers in this study were more likely to be able to implement a solution and work tirelessly until the work is completed. In short, these teachers “know how to make things happen” (Rath & Conchie, 2008, p. 24).

The Strategic Thinking domain ranked third with 47 responses (17.1%) and only had one theme (Learner) in the top eight. This response percentage was 8.8 percentage points lower than the expected rate (25.9%) within the general population. Strategic thinkers are the ones who keep an organization focused on what could be. They are constantly absorbing and analyzing information and helping the team make better decisions (Rath & Conchie, 2008).

In the Influencing domain, the sample of K-3 teachers recorded a total of 24 responses (8.7%), which was 6.6% lower than the general population (15.3%). Those with strengths in this domain lead by influencing their team to reach a much broader

audience. They are consistently selling the team's ideas inside and outside of the organization. "When you need someone to take charge, speak up, and make sure your group is heard, look to someone with the strength to influence" (Rath & Conchie, 2008, p. 25). As a group, teachers in this study were not as effective in the Influencing domain.

Talents Identified in the Sample of Teachers of Higher Achieving Reading Classes. After analyzing the talents identified in a sample of K-3 reading teachers, the researcher created another sample of teachers whose students performed higher than the State average score on the winter administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator. Of the 55 respondents in the K-3 sample, 19 respondents taught reading classes whose winter IRI scores exceeded the State average scores.

The demographic profile of the sample of K-3 teachers and the sample of teachers from higher achieving classes demonstrated similar distributions for gender, age, highest degree earned, certificates and endorsements, years teach experience completed, and current grade level assigned. For example, though no males were included in the sample of higher achieving reading teachers, the overall sample was 91% female. It is, therefore, not remarkable to have no males included in the sample of higher achieving reading teachers. Interestingly, both of the respondents that possessed reading endorsements exceeded the State median scores while none of the respondents with special education endorsements did. Otherwise, the ages, degrees, certifications, and grade levels taught were comparable between samples.

Similarly, the distribution of the number of years of teaching experience among the reading sample was evenly divided between the five bands of teachers with 0-24 years of teaching experience. Only one teacher had 30 or more years of experience. These

numbers suggested that seniority did not necessarily equate to excellence in reading instruction. Liesveld and Miller (2005) noted, “Educator experience has less influence on students than simple good teaching” (p. 23).

The seven most frequently occurring signature themes for the group of teachers from higher achieving reading classes were Responsibility (8 responses, 42%), Empathy (7 responses, 37%), Harmony (7 responses, 37%), Learner (7 responses (37%), Developer (6 responses, 32%), Achiever (5 responses, 26%) and Restorative (5 responses, 26%). Though the first six themes were also identified as the most frequently occurring in the sample of K-3 teachers, the order and percent of responses for each changed slightly. Previously listed 4th in the K-3 sample (16 responses, 29%), Responsibility was the most frequently occurring theme in the new sample. Restorative was new to the list for the sample of teachers of higher achieving reading classes. Two themes, Consistency and Relator, from the first sample were not identified in the new sample. Though the list of most frequently occurring signature themes in both the K-3 sample of reading teachers and the sample of teachers of higher achieving reading classes are very similar, the order and frequencies of the themes suggest some intriguing differences.

First, the teachers from higher achieving classes accounted for 35% of the total respondents, yet they accounted for 50% of the reports for the Responsibility and Harmony themes but only 33% of the reports for Empathy. The results suggest that those whose classes achieved higher were less likely to make excuses for low student achievement (Responsibility). They take personal ownership for student learning and feel emotionally bound to ensure that the students are academically successful.

Second, higher achieving teachers demonstrated a higher frequency of Harmony. They perceive that effective education is not about the efforts of an individual student or teacher. They believe that the most effective learning environment is one in which the teachers and students collaborate. Teachers who demonstrate Harmony are also more likely to rely on qualified experts to provide guidance and recommendations for the most effective strategies to increase student achievement (Liesveld & Miller, 2005).

Finally, only four teachers in the sample reported Consistency as a signature theme compared to sixteen reports in the K-3 sample. This suggests that the higher achieving teachers were more concerned about taking responsibility for meeting individual student needs and striving to fully understand the unique circumstances for each student (Empathy) than they were about ensuring consistency. They were less focused on standardizing instruction and providing equal opportunity. Instead, they adopted flexible approach to teaching (Liesveld & Miller, 2005). The following signature themes were not listed on the reports for any of the teachers in the sample: Activator, Analytical, Communication, Futuristic, Ideation, Self-Assurance, and Woo.

In addition to evaluating the frequencies for each individual theme in the sample of teachers of higher achieving classes, a comparison of frequencies for each of the four identified domains provided valuable insights into the talents of the sample. As with the K-3 sample, the Relationship Building domain had the highest number of responses with 39 of the possible 95, accounting for 41.1% of all responses. This response rate was 9.3% higher than that expected in the general population (31.8%) and 1.8% higher than the K-3 sample, suggesting that these teachers place even more emphasis on the importance of relationship building as a means of increasing student achievement.

The Strategic Thinking domain (19.0%) was 7.0% lower than the general population (25.0%), but is was 1.9% higher than the K-3 sample (17.1%). Executing (34.7%) was comparable to the K-3 sample (34.9%). However, the sample reported only 5.3% (5 responses) in the Influencing domain. This was 10.0% lower than the general population and 3.5% lower than the K-3 sample, suggesting that higher achieving reading teachers are even less likely to possess talents in this domain. In fact, none of the five responses in this domain were listed in the top three themes for any individual (see Appendix P).

Implications

A Better Understanding of Teachers. Buckingham and Clifton (2001) stated “people who excel in the same role do possess some similar themes” (p. 164). Using the results from the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 from a sample of 55 primary reading teachers in east Idaho as a basis, a clearer picture of the innate talents of K-3 teachers comes into focus. Using an applied research approach during this study, the researcher identified findings that can be used to make practical decisions about or improvements in programs and practices to bring about immediate changes in education.

Primary elementary teachers are more effective in relationship building and executing than they are at influencing and strategic thinking. Although they may struggle to review data (Analytical) and turn abstract ideas into concrete plans for improvement (Ideation, Futuristic), this sample of teachers were highly motivated to learn new things. Teachers have a strong sense of fairness (Consistency) and were driven to complete those tasks that they had started (Responsibility). These teachers needed to have the opportunity to achieve on a daily basis (Achiever).

Ultimately, teachers understand that the greatest pathway to increasing student achievement is through building strong relationships with their students (Empathy, Developer, Harmony, and Relator). Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001) noted that individual teachers can have a profound influence on student learning even in schools that are relatively ineffective. “Students learn more from teachers who laugh with them, cheer with them, and sometimes, cry with them” (Liesveld & Miller, 2005, p. 35). The quality of the relationships teachers foster with their students is the keystone of effective classroom management and perhaps even the entirety of teaching (Marzano, 2007). Liesveld and Miller (2005) concluded, “Relationship are what make the learning experience go” (p. 23).

Expectations for Teachers. In an effort to comply with the myriad of policies, procedures, initiatives, and expectations for today’s schools, school administrators are driven to heap more and more requirements on teachers in addition to their regular teaching responsibilities. For example, teachers are expected to participate in monthly school improvement and strategic planning activities. They must meet weekly, if not daily, as department or grade level teams to plan fully integrated cross-curricular units of instruction. They are required to participate in weekly intervention team meetings. Teachers are also expected to differentiate instruction and develop a plan to accommodate for each student’s unique learning needs. Above all, they are required to collect and analyze data for each of these activities to determine their effectiveness and ability to increase student achievement.

The increased expectations often lead teachers to become frustrated and discouraged with the profession. Superficially, it may appear that teachers are resistant to

change or that they stubbornly adhere to outdated practices in an effort to ensure self-preservation. A close review of the talents identified in the sample of K-3 teachers may help shed light on this conundrum. Many teachers are required to engage in a variety of activities regardless of their innate talents.

First, teachers are expected to participate in professional learning communities (PLCs) to collect and analyze data in an effort to identify patterns and determine and develop plans for improvement. For those whose signature themes include Analytical, data provides an objective and dispassionate source of information to help establish patterns and interactions. Cause and effect relationships are more discernable, and precipitating events can be more easily identified. Only one respondent in the study identified Analytical as a signature theme. The data suggested that many teachers were not strong in the analytical skills that are required for understanding and processing data. This finding suggests that many teachers are not predisposed to analyze data and are actually uncomfortable doing this activity. This finding further suggests the challenges school administrators and many policy-makers face in expecting teachers to use data effectively to make informed curricular and instructional decisions.

Similarly, teachers are required to participate in school and district vision setting and strategic planning activities as required by law and policy. Idaho Code 33-320 states, “The board of trustees and the superintendent shall collaborate on the plan and engage students, parents, educators, and the community as appropriate” (LexisNexis, 2015, p. 227). The plans must include analysis of demographic data, student achievement and growth data, graduation rates, and college and career readiness. Clear and measurable targets based on student outcomes, key indicators for monitoring performance, and a

clearly defined and articulated vision and mission are also required. As part of the annual review process, teams must analyze the data from the prior year and develop a new strategic plan. As suggested by the study, primary reading teachers are, as a group, low in the strategic planning categories, especially Futuristic and Ideation. Including teachers who are low in the strategic planning categories of Futuristic and Ideation can result in increased levels of frustration for all participants and limited direction from the strategic planning group. Those responsible for selecting team members should select individuals with the appropriate skills for the defined task. Kotter (1996) recommended, “The first step in putting together the kind of team that can direct a change effort is to find the right membership” (p. 57).

Another aspect of the profession for which teachers are frequently criticized is their ability to proactively strive to improve public relations and to communicate more effectively with parents and the community. Most teachers in the study lacked talents in the Influencing domain. Teachers may be comfortable standing in front of a classroom and working directly with students, but they are often uncomfortable speaking in front of groups or promoting their own accomplishments (Communication). They prefer to recognize the accomplishments of their students and are fueled by the signs of growth in others (Developer). Misinterpreting the talents of teachers often leads to higher levels of frustration and a misguided conclusion that the skill of teaching young learners translates into effective adult communications.

Many school districts have adopted policies that require teachers to develop and adhere to an established curriculum with a regimented scope and sequence instead of being adaptable to needs of students at a particular point in time. Teachers scored

relatively high on Adaptability but were low in the Focus talent. They may easily adjust to the daily needs of the classroom, but they may struggle to see the purpose or end results. Bolman and Deal (2008) explained:

In the name of efficiency, many organizations spent much of the twentieth century trying to oust the human element by designing jobs to be simple, repetitive, and low skill. The analogue in education is “teacher-proof” curricula and prescribed teaching techniques. When such approaches dampen motivation and enthusiasm, managers and reformers habitually blame workers or teachers for being uncooperative. (p. 152)

Idaho Administrative Code 08.02.02.120 requires:

All certificated instructional employees, principals and superintendents must receive an evaluation in which at least thirty-three percent (33%) of the evaluation results are based on multiple objective measures of growth in student achievement as determined by the board of trustees and based upon research. (LexisNexis, 2015, p. 767)

Results from student performance on Idaho's statewide assessment for Federal accountability purposes must be included in the evaluation. Many teachers will not find these expectations to be fair (Consistency), because they are being evaluated based on factors that are out of the direct control of the teacher. They may be unable to understand or even identify areas for improvement (Analytical). Regardless, teachers will expend considerable energy and may become emotionally distraught attempting to meet the expectations (Responsibility). They may completely ignore their innate talents and fixate on their weaknesses. Kouzes and Posner (2007) cautioned, “People actually remember

down-beat comments far more often, in greater detail and with more intensity, than they do encouraging words” (p. 147).

Finally, teachers are required to participate in regimented intervention meetings that require extensive data analysis to identify the specific needs of individual students. As previously noted, few teachers in this study excelled at data analysis (Analytical). Designing interventions requires teachers to identify the unique qualities of each student. Individuals strong in Individualization “instinctively observe each person’s style, each person’s motivation, how each thinks, and how each builds relationships” (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001, p. 104). Only three respondents identified Individualization as a signature theme. The data suggests that primary teachers are more adept at building relationships that helping students feel that they belong (Includer) and treating students equitably (Consistency).

Each of these activities required of teachers have a valid and important place in the educational setting. Though each is critical in attaining higher student achievement, many teachers experience frustration or become discouraged when they feel they are unable to meet the expectations. In many cases, they may not even understand what is being required in each of the activities. Balancing the talents of teachers on cooperative teams and groups and placing teachers in situations that provide opportunity for them to capitalize and use their unique talents can pay extensive dividends to educationally-focused groups.

Considerations for Future Inquiry

The results of this study raise several questions that were not within the scope of this study. Participation in this study was delimited to those teachers who taught reading

in grades K-3 in public elementary schools in region 6 of east Idaho during the 2015-2016 school year. Only the results from those teachers from randomly selected public schools who agreed to participate and complete the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 were included in the study. Consequently, the sample may not accurately reflect the demographics of the target population of teachers and may influence the generalizability of the findings to the larger population. These concerns, along with other study results lead to the following questions that may be addressed through further study or at later dates:

- How would the results from a much larger sample of K-3 teachers compare to the results of the sample for this study?
- Would a larger sample allow for a more accurate statistical analysis of the frequency of each theme when compared to the general population?
- How do the talent frequencies of upper elementary (4-5), middle school (6-8), and high school (9-12) teachers compare to the K-3 sample and the general population?
- Which talents occur most frequently in a sample of specific content teachers (i.e., mathematics, science, language arts, social studies, etc.)? How do these compare to the general population?
- Which talents occur most frequently in school support personnel (i.e., counselors, special education teachers, school psychologists, etc.)? How do these compare to the general population?
- Which talents occur most frequently in public school administrators? How do these compare to the general population?

- What impact does the knowledge of one's strengths have on other aspects of education such as lesson planning and classroom instruction?
- How does knowledge of one's strengths impact student achievement and assessment results over time?
- How does knowledge on one's strengths influence a teacher's personal and professional development, sense of job satisfaction, and self-efficacy?
- How might an entire school culture and climate change as a result of the staff taking the StrengthsFinder 2.0?

Potential Applications. During the data collection process for this study, the researcher was contacted numerous times by those school administrators whose teachers had already been given the opportunity to participate in the study. Each time, the administrator requested to have additional teachers take the StrengthsFinder 2.0. The researcher returned to three of the schools multiple times during the subsequent weeks to deliver additional books and collect responses from other staff members and teachers. The majority of the new requests came from teachers who were encouraged by their colleagues or team members to take the test.

In four of the schools, all teachers, regardless of grade level or subject matter, took the test and shared the results with the researcher, though their results were not included in the analysis conducted for this study. Two schools purchased additional copies of the assessment for their support staff (i.e., paraprofessionals, counselors, specialists, etc.). One of the schools even included many classified staff members (i.e., office staff, library aides, kitchen managers, etc.). Administrators in each of the six buildings also completed the StrengthsFinder 2.0 and shared their results with their staff.

One of them took the assessment prior to his staff and subsequently recruited all of his teachers to participate. He also persuaded the principal and teachers from two other small schools to participate.

After the data was collected, the researcher was contacted by two of the principals who arranged staff meetings for the researcher to share their school results and discuss the implications. Through the unstructured dialogue and open discussion with the groups of teachers, a number of recommendations were made by the teachers.

First, each group of teachers recommended that all teachers and administrators should take the StrengthsFinder 2.0 assessment as a first step in building a strengths-based organization. Liesveld and Miller (2005) explained, “You’ll be able to maximize your talents—and your strengths will reach the highest level of effectiveness—in the environment that finds and celebrates the talents of everyone” (p. 172). The teachers also recommended that pre-service teachers should take the StrengthsFinder 2.0 to help them focus their teacher preparation activities. Though the knowledge of one’s signature themes is not intended to determine a specific career, the themes may suggest certain directions that may provide greater satisfaction and opportunities for personal growth. Buckingham and Clifton (2001) discovered:

From our research it is apparent that people who excel in the same role do possess some similar themes. We found thousands of teachers with themes such as Developer, Empathy, and Individualization who presumably use the talents to great effect in helping each student learn. (p. 164)

Second, administrators and human resource departments must focus more time and energy in recruiting and hiring based on the innate talents of candidates instead of

depending primarily on more traditional indicators. “You cannot build a great team simply by selecting people based on their experience, intelligence, and determination” (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999, p. 66). According to Bolman and Deal (2008), “Strong companies know the kinds of people they want and hire those who fit the mold” (p. 143). Truly effective administrators select for talent, no matter how simple the role. Their first instinct is to trust the people they have selected. A leader’s challenge is to help identify and capitalize on each person’s uniqueness and talents. Collins (2001) explained, “They first got the right people on the bus (and the wrong people off the bus) and then figured out where to drive it” (p. 41). Effective leaders also surround themselves with the right people and build on each person’s strengths, while others recruit for job function and practically ignore individual’s strengths (Rath & Conchie, 2008). Ultimately, the first step in building a strengths-based organization is to design the employee selection system around an instrument that measures talent. The second step is to calibrate the instrument by studying the best performers in each key role within the organization (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001).

After all staff have completed the StrengthsFinder 2.0, building faculty and staff should collectively review their talents on a regular basis and establish team assignments based on individual strengths. Teams that share their talents openly “become experts in the art of complementary partnering” (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001, p. 155). They can not only describe their own strengths and weaknesses in vivid detail but also identify someone else in the organization whose strengths matched their weaknesses. This allows the school to build a theme profile for the entire school that allows the teams to more

accurately align assignments and increase the probability of successful completion of tasks. Rath and Conchie (2008) concluded:

We found that it serves a team well to have a representation of strengths from each of these four domains. Instead of one dominant leader who tries to do everything or individuals who all have similar strengths, contributions from all four domains lead to a strong and cohesive team. Although individuals need not be well-rounded, teams should be. (p. 23)

The teachers also recommended that, whenever possible and practical, professional learning communities (PLCs), grade-level teams, intervention teams, and building leadership teams should include a careful balance of members with strengths representing each of the four Domains. Furthermore, administrators should carefully consider the strengths of both new teachers and current staff when assigning mentors. Buckingham and Coffman explained, “The speediest cure for a debilitating weakness is a support system” (p. 168).

Next, the teachers suggested that school leadership should make an effort to limit the number of current initiatives in the school at any given time. This will help keep the workload manageable and decrease the level of frustration that many teachers experience as a result of the combination of their Achiever, Consistency, and Responsibility themes. Kouzes and Posner (2007) noted, “The most effective change processes are incremental, not one giant leap” (p. 193). Fullan (2001) wrote, “The organization or leader who takes on the sheer most number of innovations is not the winner” (p. 35).

The teachers also agreed that, when necessary, administrators may be required to change individual teacher’s or staff member’s assignments or responsibilities in order to

maximize their strengths and manage around their weaknesses. “If we get the right people on the bus, the right people in the right seats, and the wrong people off the bus, then we’ll figure out how to take it someplace great” (Collins, 2001, p. 41). The most important reason people give for staying with an organization is that they like the work they are doing, that they find it challenging, meaningful, and purposeful (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). They have an opportunity to do what they do best every day. “You cannot capitalize on people’s strengths if you keep promoting them into roles that don’t fit their strengths” (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001, p. 239).

Once people are placed in assignments that give them the opportunity to develop and maximize their talents, it is critical that they have access to the resources they need. Ensuring that teachers have the necessary materials and equipment and that they have appropriate staff development opportunities will directly enhance their effectiveness in teaching (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Professional development activities should be planned to help provide the skills, practice, and experience for teachers to develop their individual talents into strengths.

Instead of relying upon a staff development committee or a school improvement plan to chart the course for staff development, teachers pilot individual and small-group efforts that target immediate instructional needs in an approach that is highly personalized. (Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004, p. 8)

Teachers who know their own talents and use them as the basis for personal strengths development will increase student achievement and find more personal satisfaction in the process (Liesveld & Miller, 2005).

Finally, the teachers recommended that teacher and staff evaluations should be individualized with a focus on collaborative goal setting involving the employee and the instructional leader as they work together to develop the teacher's unique talents into strengths. Buckingham and Coffman (1999) suggested, "Each person can and should take credit for cultivating his unique set of talents" (p. 93). The teachers suggested that every administrator should have a strengths discussion with each employee at least two or three times each year. According to Buckingham and Coffman (1999), "The primary focus of these discussions is to (1) identify a person's strengths, (2) define outcomes that play to those strengths, (3) find a way to count, rate, or rank those outcomes, and (4) then let the person run" (p. 137).

Idaho Administrative Code 08.02.02.120 requires that all certificated instructional employees must receive an evaluation in which at least sixty-seven percent (67%) of the evaluation results are based on professional practice. All measures included within the professional practice portion of the evaluation must be aligned to the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching (Danielson, 2007). District are required to develop a plan for ongoing training for evaluators/administrators and teachers on the district's evaluation standards, tool, and process. They are expected to provide professional development and training related to improving teacher quality. By carefully aligning a teacher's individual strengths profile with the corresponding standards from the Danielson Framework, administrators and teachers can collaborate to develop a truly meaningful individualized professional development plan in which the teacher can become personally vested. Buckingham and Clifton (2001) claimed, "A small shift in emphasis from one [strength] to another or a deepening of your knowledge in one particular [strength] is all you need to

help you make the leap from middling to excellent performance” (p. 132). “For an organization to remain vital and strong it should take each employee’s talents into account when deciding the moves that are appropriate for each employee” (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001, p. 224).

Liesveld and Miller (2005) stated, “Thousands of teachers are letting their greatest talents go to waste and busily attending to their weaknesses. As a result, generations of students are being taught by teachers who are struggling to be well-rounded instead of maximizing their talents” (p. 12). The responsibility of instruction leaders is to treat each teacher as a unique individual and work together to develop their talents, turning them into true strengths. Buckingham and Coffman (1999) emphasized the importance of hiring individuals based on their strengths, giving them opportunities to utilize their strengths, and managing around their weaknesses.

A rigid teaching protocol, curriculum map, or evaluation framework with unrealistic expectations for individuals is not the solution. Instructional leaders must be willing to create a more flexible teaching environment and allow teachers to maximize their individual strengths. “Though great teachers tend to be well-organized, they don’t always stick to the plan. They occasionally create new lessons on the fly. And they don’t treat every student the same way” (Liesveld & Miller, 2005, p. 33). Teachers are not much different from the students they teach. They must have a feeling that they are being provided guidance and control, both behaviorally and academically, yet they must have a sense that the teacher and the students (or instructional leader and the teacher) are a unified team working for the well-being of all participants (Marzano, 2007). A strengths-based approach to teaching and learning can provide the optimum learning environment.

Discussion Summary

During the past decade, policy-makers at various levels have placed additional requirements on schools in an effort to increase student achievement. The increased expectations for student achievement have placed additional pressure on teachers and administrators to improve the quality of instruction while using data to drive decision-making activities. For many administrators, the greatest challenge in improving schools is recruiting and retaining highly effective teachers. Research suggests that individuals who have an opportunity to maximize their strengths on a regular basis experience greater job satisfaction and increased self-efficacy (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). For instructional leaders, this means helping individual teachers identify their unique talents, placing the teachers in positions to utilize their talents, and providing opportunities for them to develop their talents into strengths. The StrengthsFinder 2.0 is an instrument specifically designed to help individuals identify their talents.

For this study, a sample of currently practicing primary teachers in east Idaho was given the opportunity to take the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 (CSF 2.0) to identify their unique talents. This quantitative descriptive study used the CSF 2.0 results to determine which talents were identified most frequently in a sample of primary reading teachers from schools in rural east Idaho. This study then determined which talents appeared most frequently in teachers whose classes performed higher than the state averages on the winter administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator. Though the results are neither definitive nor conclusive, they provide foundational research for additional studies into the utilization of a strengths-based approach to education.

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APPENDIX A

Researcher Telephone Script

My name is David Marotz. I am a doctoral student in Idaho State University's Educational Leadership program. I am also a practicing principal at South Fremont Junior High.

For my dissertation, I am conducting a research study using the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 to determine which strengths appear most frequently in a sample of east Idaho primary reading teachers. This study will determine which strengths appear most frequently in teachers who are identified as being more effective in providing reading instruction in the primary grades as identified by classroom scores on the Idaho Reading Indicator. Finally, I will provide email respondents with a link to a qualitative questionnaire that will evaluate the perceived impact of the knowledge of one's strengths on the teacher's interactions with students.

For this study, teachers and administrators who wish to participate will be given a copy of the book *StrengthsFinder 2.0* by Tom Rath. Each book contains an access code that allows the individual to create an online account and take the Clifton StrengthsFinder assessment. Through the responses to a series of questions, the assessment will identify an individual's top 5 "signature themes" or talents. The respondents may learn more about their talents by reading the book. The process of logging in and taking the assessment will take approximately 45 minutes.

Respondents are asked to fill out a basic demographic form and include the number of students who scored "benchmark," "strategic," and "intensive" on the most recent administration of the Idaho Reading Indicator. The respondents are also asked to include their top 5 "signature themes." After two or three weeks, respondents will receive a follow-up email asking to respond to a series of nine short-answer questions to evaluate the perceived impact of the knowledge of their talents/strengths on their interactions with students. This questionnaire will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete online.

If you and your staff would be willing to participate in this study, I will schedule and appointment to meet with you and your staff in your school to review the study, sign consent forms, distribute books, and help your staff log into and take the StrengthsFinder 2.0 test.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and your responses and data will remain confidential. I hope that you and your staff will take this opportunity to learn more about your individual strengths and perhaps use this experience to help identify areas for specific, focused, and personalized professional development activities.

Thank you for your consideration.

David Marotz

APPENDIX B

Research Study Overview

IDENTIFYING TALENTS IN PRIMARY READING TEACHERS IN EAST IDAHO

We are asking you to be in a research study.

You do not have to be in this study.

If you say yes, you may quit the study at any time.

Please take as much time as you want to make your choice.

Why is this study being done?

We want to learn more about those talents that may be more common among elementary teachers. We are asking people like you who are certified elementary teachers teaching in first through third grades to participate in the study.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in the study?

If you say yes, we will:

- Deliver a copy of the book *StrengthsFinder 2.0* by Tom Rath to you. You may keep the book as a reference after you complete the test.
- Help you log into the StrengthsFinder 2.0 website to create a personal account and take the StrengthsFinder 2.0 test.
- Ask you to submit the list of your top 5 signature themes from the report and the classroom level student achievement results from the 2015 Spring IRI to the researcher.
- Email a link to a follow-up questionnaire to you 2-3 weeks after you complete the assessment.

How long will the study take?

This study will take about 30-45 minutes to complete the StrengthsFinder 2.0 test and the IRI data collection. The follow-up questionnaire will take approximately 20-30 minutes.

Where will the study take place?

The study will take place in your school with the permission of your administration.

What happens if I say no, I do not want to be in the study?

No one will treat you any differently. You will not be penalized. While you would not get the benefit of being in this study, you would not lose any other benefits

What happens if I say yes, but change my mind later?

You may stop being in the study at any time. You will not be penalized. Your relationship with Idaho State University will not change.

Who will see my results?

The only people who will see your results will be the people who work on the study and those legally required to supervise our study. Your results and a copy of this document will be locked in our files. When we share the results of our study, we will not include your name. We will do our best to make sure no one outside the study will know that you are a part of the study.

Will it cost me anything to be in the study?

No.

Will being in this study help me in any way?

Being in this study will help you better understand your personal strengths and help you develop them into talents.

Will I be paid for my time?

No.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

Yes, there is a chance that:

- Someone could find out that you were in this study and learn something about you that you do not want them to know.
- We will do our best to protect your privacy.

What if I have questions?

Please call the head of the study David Marotz, (208) 709-7841 if you:

- Have questions about the study.
- Have questions about your rights.
- Feel you have been injured in any way by being in this study.

You can also call the Idaho State University Human Subjects Committee office at 208-282-2179 to ask questions about your rights as a research subject.

Do I have to sign this document?

No. You only sign this document if you want to be in the study.

What should I do if I want to be in the study?

You sign this document. We will give you a copy of this document to keep.

By signing this document, you are saying:

- You agree to be in the study.
- We talked with you about the information in this document and answered all your questions.

Your Name (please print)

Your Signature

Date

APPENDIX C

Respondent Data Collection Form

Name: _____ Book Number: _____

School: _____

Email: _____

DEMOGRAPHICS:

Gender (circle one): Male Female Age (circle one): 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60+

Highest Degree Earned (circle one): Bachelor Master Specialist Doctorate

Certifications and Endorsements (Standard Elementary K-8, Early Childhood, etc.):

Number of Years' Teaching Experience Completed: _____

Current Teaching Assignments (subject/grade level): _____

RESULTS:

Write the number of students in your class that scored in each category on the 2016 Winter IRI.

(3) Benchmark: _____ (2) Strategic: _____ (1) Intensive: _____

List your top 5 Signature Themes in order from the StrengthsFinder 2.0: (Attach copy of report from the website if possible.)

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

Please, return this completed form to the researcher when you are finished.

Thank you for your participation in this study. Within the next 2-3 week, you will receive an email from the researcher containing a link to an online questionnaire.

APPENDIX D

Data Summary (K-3 Sample)

Signature Theme	Total Responses in Sample	Percent of Sample with Each Theme	Relative Frequency in Sample	Relative Frequency in Population	Relative Frequency Difference (Sample-Population)
Empathy	21	38%	7.6	4.8	2.8
Achiever	17	31%	6.2	6.1	0.1
Consistency	16	29%	5.8	2.7	3.1
Responsibility	16	29%	5.8	6.1	-0.3
Learner	15	27%	5.5	5	0.5
Developer	14	25%	5.1	3	2.1
Harmony	14	25%	5.1	4.1	1.0
Relator	14	25%	5.1	4.7	0.4
Adaptability	12	22%	4.4	3.9	0.5
Deliberative	12	22%	4.4	1.9	2.5
Includer	12	22%	4.4	2.3	2.1
Belief	11	20%	4.0	2.6	1.4
Input	11	20%	4.0	4.1	-0.1
Connectedness	10	18%	3.6	2.4	1.2
Restorative	10	18%	3.6	3.1	0.5
Intellection	8	15%	2.9	2.6	0.3
Positivity	8	15%	2.9	3.4	-0.5
Discipline	7	13%	2.6	1.1	1.5
Maximizer	7	13%	2.6	2.7	-0.2
Strategic	7	13%	2.6	4.8	-2.3
Arranger	6	11%	2.2	2.4	-0.2
Significance	4	7%	1.5	1	0.5
Command	3	5%	1.1	1	0.1
Competition	3	5%	1.1	2	-0.9
Context	3	5%	1.1	1.8	-0.7
Individualization	3	5%	1.1	3.2	-2.1
Woo	3	5%	1.1	2.8	-1.7
Activator	2	4%	0.7	1.8	-1.1
Communication	2	4%	0.7	3	-2.3
Futuristic	2	4%	0.7	2.4	-1.7
Analytical	1	2%	0.4	2	-1.6
Focus	1	2%	0.4	1	-0.6
Ideation	0	0%	0.0	3.2	-3.2
Self-Assurance	0	0%	0.0	1	-1.0

APPENDIX E

Rank and Relative Frequency of the 34 Strengths in the Population

RANK	SIGNATURE THEME	RELATIVE FREQUENCY
1.	Responsibility	6.1
	Achiever	6.1
3.	Learner	5.0
4.	Strategic	4.8
	Empathy	4.8
6.	Relator	4.7
7.	Harmony	4.1
	Input	4.1
9.	Adaptability	3.9
10.	Positivity	3.4
11.	Ideation	3.2
	Individualization	3.2
13.	Restorative	3.1
14.	Developer	3.0
	Communication	3.0
16.	Woo	2.8
17.	Maximizer	2.7
	Consistency	2.7
19.	Belief	2.6
	Intellection	2.6
21.	Futuristic	2.4
	Arranger	2.4
	Connectedness	2.4
24.	Includer	2.3
25.	Competition	2.0
	Analytical	2.0
27.	Deliberative	1.9
28.	Activator	1.8
	Context	1.8
30.	Discipline	1.1
31.	Significance	1.0
	Focus	1.0
	Command	1.0
	Self-Assurance	1.0

APPENDIX F

Data Summary by Domain (K-3 Sample)

Domain	Signature Theme	Total Responses in Sample	Frequency in Sample	Frequency in Population	Frequency Difference (Sample-Population)
Executing	Achiever	17	6.2	6.1	0.1
	Arranger	6	2.2	2.4	-0.2
	Belief	11	4.0	2.6	1.4
	Consistency	16	5.8	2.7	3.1
	Deliberative	12	4.4	1.9	2.5
	Discipline	7	2.6	1.1	1.5
	Focus	1	0.4	1.0	-0.6
	Responsibility	16	5.8	6.1	-0.3
	Restorative	10	3.6	3.1	0.5
TOTAL		96	34.9	27.0	7.9

Domain	Signature Theme	Total Responses in Sample	Frequency in Sample	Frequency in Population	Frequency Difference (Sample-Population)
Influencing	Activator	2	0.7	1.8	-1.1
	Command	3	1.1	1.0	0.1
	Communication	2	0.7	3.0	-2.3
	Competition	3	1.1	2.0	-0.9
	Maximizer	7	2.6	2.7	-0.2
	Self-Assurance	0	0.0	1.0	-1.0
	Significance	4	1.5	1.0	0.5
	Woo	3	1.1	2.8	-1.7
TOTAL		24	8.7	15.3	-6.6

Domain	Signature Theme	Total Responses in Sample	Frequency in Sample	Frequency in Population	Frequency Difference (Sample-Population)
Relationship Building	Adaptability	12	4.4	3.9	0.5
	Connectedness	10	3.6	2.4	1.2
	Developer	14	5.1	3.0	2.1
	Empathy	21	7.6	4.8	2.8
	Harmony	14	5.1	4.1	1.0
	Includer	12	4.4	2.3	2.1
	Individualization	3	1.1	3.2	-2.1
	Positivity	8	2.9	3.4	-0.5
	Relator	14	5.1	4.7	0.4
TOTAL		108	39.3	31.8	7.5

Domain	Signature Theme	Total Responses in Sample	Frequency in Sample	Frequency in Population	Frequency Difference (Sample-Population)
Strategic Thinking	Analytical	1	0.4	2.0	-1.6
	Context	3	1.1	1.8	-0.7
	Futuristic	2	0.7	2.4	-1.7
	Ideation	0	0.0	3.2	-3.2
	Input	11	4.0	4.1	-0.1
	Intellection	8	2.9	2.6	0.3
	Learner	15	5.5	5.0	0.5
	Strategic	7	2.6	4.8	-2.3
TOTAL		47	17.1	25.9	-8.8

APPENDIX G

Data Summary (Sample of Teachers of Higher Achieving Reading Classes)

Signature Theme	Total Responses in Sample	Percent of Sample with Each Theme	Relative Frequency in Sample	Relative Frequency in Population	Relative Frequency Difference (Sample-Population)
Responsibility	8	42%	8.4	6.1	2.3
Empathy	7	37%	7.4	4.8	2.6
Harmony	7	37%	7.4	4.1	3.3
Learner	7	37%	7.4	5.0	2.4
Developer	6	32%	6.3	3.0	3.3
Achiever	5	26%	5.3	6.1	-0.8
Restorative	5	26%	5.3	3.1	2.2
Adaptability	4	21%	4.2	3.9	0.3
Consistency	4	21%	4.2	2.7	1.5
Deliberative	4	21%	4.2	1.9	2.3
Input	4	21%	4.2	4.1	0.1
Positivity	4	21%	4.2	3.4	0.8
Relator	4	21%	4.2	4.7	-0.5
Strategic	4	21%	4.2	4.8	-0.6
Belief	3	16%	3.2	2.6	0.6
Connectedness	3	16%	3.2	2.4	0.8
Includer	3	16%	3.2	2.3	0.9
Discipline	2	11%	2.1	1.1	1.0
Intellection	2	11%	2.1	2.6	-0.5
Significance	2	11%	2.1	1.0	1.1
Arranger	1	5%	1.1	2.4	-1.4
Command	1	5%	1.1	1.0	0.1
Competition	1	5%	1.1	2.0	-1.0
Context	1	5%	1.1	1.8	-0.8
Focus	1	5%	1.1	1.0	0.1
Individualization	1	5%	1.1	3.2	-2.2
Maximizer	1	5%	1.1	2.7	-1.7
Activator	0	0%	0.0	1.8	-1.8
Analytical	0	0%	0.0	2.0	-2.0
Communication	0	0%	0.0	3.0	-3.0
Futuristic	0	0%	0.0	2.4	-2.4
Ideation	0	0%	0.0	3.2	-3.2
Self-Assurance	0	0%	0.0	1.0	-1.0
Woo	0	0%	0.0	2.8	-2.8

APPENDIX H

Data Summary by Domain (Sample of Teachers of Higher Achieving Reading Classes)

Domain	Signature Theme	Total Responses in Higher Achieving Reading Sample	Frequency in Higher Achieving Reading Sample	Frequency in Population	Frequency Difference (Sample-Population)
Executing	Achiever	5	5.3	6.1	-0.8
	Arranger	1	1.1	2.4	-1.4
	Belief	3	3.2	2.6	0.6
	Consistency	4	4.2	2.7	1.5
	Deliberative	4	4.2	1.9	2.3
	Discipline	2	2.1	1.1	1.0
	Focus	1	1.1	1.0	0.1
	Responsibility	8	8.4	6.1	2.3
	Restorative	5	5.3	3.1	2.2
TOTAL		33	34.7	27.0	7.7

Domain	Signature Theme	Total Responses in Higher Achieving Reading Sample	Frequency in Higher Achieving Reading Sample	Frequency in Population	Frequency Difference (Sample-Population)
Influencing	Activator	0	0.0	1.8	-1.8
	Command	1	1.1	1.0	0.1
	Communication	0	0.0	3.0	-3.0
	Competition	1	1.1	2.0	-1.0
	Maximizer	1	1.1	2.7	-1.7
	Self-Assurance	0	0.0	1.0	-1.0
	Significance	2	2.1	1.0	1.1
	Woo	0	0.0	2.8	-2.8
TOTAL		5	5.3	15.3	-10.0

Domain	Signature Theme	Total Responses in Higher Achieving Reading Sample	Frequency in Higher Achieving Reading Sample	Frequency in Population	Frequency Difference (Sample-Population)
Relationship Building	Adaptability	4	4.2	3.9	0.3
	Connectedness	3	3.2	2.4	0.8
	Developer	6	6.3	3.0	3.3
	Empathy	7	7.4	4.8	2.6
	Harmony	7	7.4	4.1	3.3
	Includer	3	3.2	2.3	0.9
	Individualization	1	1.1	3.2	-2.2
	Positivity	4	4.2	3.4	0.8
	Relator	4	4.2	4.7	-0.5
TOTAL		39	41.1	31.8	9.3

Domain	Signature Theme	Total Responses in Higher Achieving Reading Sample	Frequency in Higher Achieving Reading Sample	Frequency in Population	Frequency Difference (Sample-Population)
Strategic Thinking	Analytical	0	0.0	2.0	-2.0
	Context	1	1.1	1.8	-0.8
	Futuristic	0	0.0	2.4	-2.4
	Ideation	0	0.0	3.2	-3.2
	Input	4	4.2	4.1	0.1
	Intellection	2	2.1	2.6	-0.5
	Learner	7	7.4	5.0	2.4
	Strategic	4	4.2	4.8	-0.6
TOTAL		18	19.0	25.9	-7.0