

Teacher Experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 and Gifted Students: A Descriptive
Study

Submitted by
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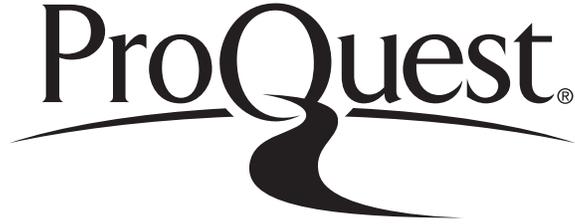
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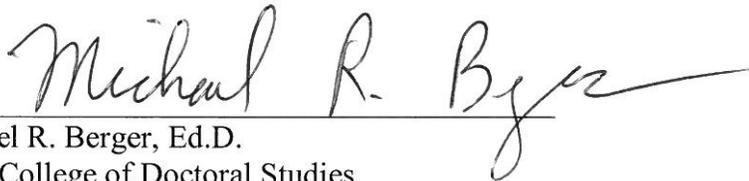
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Cathi A. Godfrey 7-1-2020
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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students. Using the theoretical perspective of interpretivism, the researcher documented the phenomena being explored by accurately recording experiences of northeastern Indiana middle school teachers. The research question that guided this study directly addressed this purpose and problem by asking how middle school teachers in grades 6-8 described their experiences with teaching gifted students. The researcher chose a qualitative descriptive design to interview northeastern Indiana middle school teachers about their classroom procedures and used their replies as the source of data within the study. Eventually, eleven individual teachers consented to participate in this study. These teachers were classroom, subject-specific (Mathematics, English Language Arts, Science or Social Studies) educators who worked in an Indiana middle school setting. All teachers who participated were evaluated and subjected to the rules governing teachers as required by Public Law 90. These data included the identification of the gifted child, differentiation, remediation of students, teaching with the standards, test preparation, any emphasis on evaluations, as well as their opinion about the law. Thematic analysis was used to identify relevant themes to answer the research question. Their responses indicated that most of the emphasis within schools where they taught was on the lower-level or bubble students. Most of the teachers were unaware of any gifted students in their classrooms and believed these students would be successful without any interventions due to being self-motivated.

Keywords: Gifted students, gifted education, Indiana Public Law 90.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all the public-school teachers in the state of Indiana who work diligently every day to educate the children who have been entrusted in their care. These teachers are some of the most competent and caring individuals in the world and truly show concern for their charges. They spend numerous unpaid hours to provide the best education they can to their students. Furthermore, these teachers often are not respected or appreciated for their work but continue in their chosen profession. While many teachers do not agree with the legislative endeavors mandated of public schools, they provide an education to the best of their ability to satisfy all the requirements of these legislative mandates.

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I would like to publicly acknowledge the support that my dissertation committee has provided to me as I endeavored to complete this goal. Without their guidance and encouragement, I would never have completed this task. They were the best of the best and I greatly appreciated their assistance.

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I also greatly appreciate the guiding hand of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. His gentle pushing and directions not only taught me patience, which I sorely lack, but also that He is with me every step of the way, even when there appears no possibility of going a specific direction.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	xii
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Background of the Study	2
Problem Statement	7
Purpose of the Study	9
Research Question	11
Advancing Scientific Knowledge and Significance of the Study.....	12
Rationale for Methodology.....	17
Nature of the Research Design for the Study.....	18
Definition of Terms.....	20
Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations	22
Assumptions.....	23
Limitations.....	23
Delimitations.....	23
Summary and Organization of the Remainder of the Study.....	24
Chapter 2: Literature Review	27
Introduction to the Chapter and Background to the Problem	27
Identification of the Gap	33
Theoretical Foundations and Conceptual Framework	36
Review of the Literature	38
History of the government in public education.	39
Indiana legislates change.	51

Educational theorists who contributed to gifted education.....	53
Giftedness theories and models.	56
Accountability and standards.....	59
Merit pay.....	62
Methodology and instrumentation/data sources/research materials.	66
Summary.....	69
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	74
Introduction.....	74
Statement of the Problem.....	75
Research Question.....	77
Research Methodology.....	78
Research Design.....	80
Population and Sample Selection.....	82
Sources of Data.....	86
Trustworthiness.....	88
Credibility.....	88
Transferability.....	90
Dependability.....	90
Confirmability.....	91
Data Collection and Management.....	91
Data Analysis Procedures.....	93
Ethical Considerations.....	95
Limitations and Delimitations.....	97
Assumptions.....	97

Limitations.....	97
Delimitations.....	98
Summary.....	98
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results.....	101
Introduction.....	101
Descriptive Findings.....	103
Data Analysis Procedures.....	105
Results.....	112
Gifted identification.....	115
Differentiation.....	119
Remediation.....	123
Teaching with the standards.....	126
Emphasis on evaluations.....	130
Test preparation.....	134
Opinion about public law 90.....	137
Summary.....	142
Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations.....	145
Introduction and Summary of Study.....	145
Summary of Findings and Conclusion.....	149
Implications.....	158
Theoretical implications.....	159
Practical implications.....	162
Future implications.....	163
Strengths and weaknesses of the study.....	165

Recommendations.....	169
Recommendations for future research.....	169
Recommendations for future practice.....	173
References.....	176
Appendix A. Site Authorization Letters	209
Appendix B. IRB Approval Letter.....	210
Appendix C. Informed Consent	213
Appendix D. Interview Protocol.....	218
Appendix E. Code Book	219
Appendix F. Coding Example.....	222

List of Tables

Table 1. Participant Information	105
Table 2. Theme One: Gifted Identification.....	119
Table 3. Theme Two: Differentiation	123
Table 4. Theme Three: Remediation	126
Table 5. Theme Four: Teaching with the Standards	130
Table 6. Theme Five: Evaluation Emphasis	134
Table 7. Theme Six: Test Preparation.....	137
Table 8. Theme Seven: Opinion about Public Law 90	141

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Gifted students are being overlooked in many classrooms in the United States (Sparks, 2018). This is in part due to current legislation and an insufficient amount of training in Colleges of Education (Rakow, 2012). In Indiana, additional legislation has recently been added which exacerbates this situation. Public Law 90 was passed in 2011 as a part of a broad educational reform package (Cole, Robinson, Ansaldo, Whiteman, & Spradlin, 2012). In order to meet the needs of gifted students within the classroom, teachers must be able to identify gifted students, if the district does not have a program in place that had already completed this procedure, and provide in-depth content, sophisticated resources, and differentiated educational approaches (Piske, Stoltz, Guérios, de Camargo, Vestena, de Freitas, de Oliveira Machado Barby, & Santinello, 2017). Concurrently, Indiana teachers must meet the evaluation and accountability requirements of Public Law 90 in order to keep their teaching position. While Indiana Public Law 90 has been studied from the perspectives of university faculty tasked with training primary and secondary teachers (Chesnut, Stewart, Ansaldo, & Sera, 2015) and with public school administrators tasked with evaluating their teachers (Harvey & Boyland, 2019), there has not been a study conducted since the enactment of this legislation seeking the experiences of the teachers themselves and, more specifically, of middle school teachers in a rural instructional setting. This deficiency provided the gap this study is investigating. Since the one-size-fits-all solution may not be applicable for teachers in the rural setting, it is critical to understand these teachers' experiences meeting the demands and expectations brought on by this legislation (Smith, 2019; VanGronigen & Meyers, 2017).

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students. Since it was important for teachers to meet the needs of all students in their classrooms, this study showed if gifted students were being ignored in the classrooms of teachers who were required to raise standardized test scores. This study also described how teachers were unintentionally striving to meet the requirements of employment at the expense of the students who were the brightest within their classrooms.

This chapter indicates the background of the study, the problem that was explored and the purpose of the study. It also indicates the rationale for the chosen methodology and the research design, as well as how the study will add to the body of knowledge information that was not considered when this law was legislated. Although there were limitations, delimitations and assumptions on this study, which are indicated in this first chapter, the study explored a gap, whether teachers meeting the requirements of the law are inadvertently not meeting the needs of gifted students.

Background of the Study

In any study of education, it is valuable to trace its history and evolution through the ages. Understanding the past and its influences allow the researcher to make comparisons with current trends and how gifted education was recognized by educators in the past. Since the gap this study is addressing is whether teachers are inadvertently not meeting the needs of the gifted students, it will also reveal whether teachers are cognizant about the needs of gifted students and their identification. If there is a lack of

understanding revealed within the study, this may need to be further addressed in future studies.

Although first mentioned in ancient Greek history, gifted education was credited with beginning in the late nineteenth century (Wakefield, & Pass, 2019). Two specific individuals, Lewis Terman and Leta Stetter Hollingsworth, were attributed as being the founders of gifted education within the current era (Klein, 2000). These individuals studied students with high ability in the 1920s and brought attention to the gifted child (Plucker & Callahan, 2014). Their contributions led to an eventual involvement of the United States government and multiple theories on giftedness over the next one hundred years (Plucker & Callahan, 2014). As evident, gifted education, as an area of study and focus, has been thoroughly vetted in the peer reviewed literature (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019; Stephens, 2019).

The involvement of the United States government in defining the gifted child's ability manifested itself in six distinct areas: intellectual ability, academic aptitude, creative thinking, leadership ability, visual and/or performing arts, and psychomotor ability (Phillips, 2019). With this shift from only dwelling on intellectual ability, many children now would qualify for additional training with their gift. Joseph Renzulli's three-ring model of giftedness, Sternberg's triarchic theory of intelligence, the wisdom, intelligence, creativity and synthesis (WICS) model of gifted leadership, Tannenbaum's star model, and the dynamic theory of giftedness are theories that had been presented and studied to determine giftedness in light of the government's new definition (Miller, 2012).

Through the years, a number of legislative initiatives have been presented and employed as law. Although some of these initiatives have been revamped, repealed, or revised, there were always new initiatives that took their place. The newest Federal initiative, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), attempted to consolidate the Federal Department of Education and provided funds as a giant block grant to the states (Klein, 2016). While this may assist states in enacting their own personal agendas, this does not mean that these personal agendas were beneficial in an educational setting. Indiana may be an example of this statement with the implementation of Public Law 90, also known as SEA 001, which was passed into law in 2011 (Cole et al., 2012). The law required annual evaluations of all teaching personnel, independent methods of student accomplishment and development, severe processes of efficiency, a four-level assessment score annually indicated on each teacher evaluation, an evaluator's recommendation for improvement as well as timeline for that improvement, and if an instructor negatively influenced a student's success, that educator could not be judged as effective (Cole, Murphy, Rogan, & Eckes, 2013). Legislation was passed by state legislatures that created a one-size-fits-all solution for all schools to follow, regardless of the communities' demographics, established programs, and school or district budgets (Smith, 2019; VanGronigen & Meyers, 2017). Indiana Public Law 90 has a significant impact on all teachers in the state of Indiana. Not only are there explicit expectations for teachers to meet, failure to do so will result in the termination of their employment (Sargent, 2014).

Although many states mandated specific educational classes for the gifted, others, like Indiana, do not (NAGC, 2018). This discrepancy among the states and their individual mandates has not benefitted gifted education nation-wide (Plucker, Glynn,

Healey, & Dettmer, 2018). Since there were no federal guidelines or federal standards to require gifted education, even if states did mandate gifted education classes, each school district has the right to determine what services were provided (Plucker, et al., 2018). Schools, which offer gifted education through the process of differentiation in the main-streamed classroom, often do not offer professional development for those teachers who had gifted students, and, as a result, had teachers who lacked adequate training to implement programs (Brulles, 2012). This laxity towards gifted programs contributed to this study.

Although the United States is an extremely diverse population with individuals of all races, ethnic groups, and abilities, the focus of public education policies has been on minimal competencies for all students due to legislative initiatives, which has harmed gifted students (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2014). This has resulted in gifted individuals being and falling into an achievement gap (Harris, 2014). Due to budget constraints, many school districts have eliminated inclusive gifted programs and placed these students in the main-streamed, general classroom (Shumway, 2019). Unfortunately, most general classroom teachers have limited insight and training in relation to the needs of gifted students (Petersen, 2018). State standards explicate requirements for the training of general pre-service teachers. In Indiana, these standards include instructional planning and delivery methods which include data-driven differentiated instruction that engages students, which would apply to the gifted or high-ability student (IDOE, 2014).

While there may have been a few token individual teachers who were asked for their opinion on Public Law 90, teachers as a group did not contribute to this legislation. According to U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy from Vermont: “The classroom – and classroom

teachers – are where theory meets practice. As we aim to close the achievement gap and enable our children to be fully prepared to take on the opportunities and challenges ahead of them, teachers must be part of the conversation” (NNSTOY, 2015). Public Law 90 was legislated without the benefit of teacher input. It was also legislated without the involvement of individuals cognizant of the needs of gifted students. This legislation may have contributed to gifted students not having their needs met in the classroom. The National Network of State Teachers of the Year (NNSTOY, 2015) stated that “educational policy results are better for students when policies are ... shaped ... by educators who know firsthand The reality is that when policy is made without teachers, the policies fail kids.” In order to determine if Public Law 90 has forced teachers to inadvertently not meet the needs of their students, this study will describe the experiences of teachers in the classroom.

Public Law 90 has had several studies conducted on its policies. However, these studies were conducted from the point of view of administrators or district managers. There was only one dissertation listed in the database at Grand Canyon University’s library webpage for dissertations and it studied Indiana administrator perceptions dealing with this law. Google Scholar listed several studies, but after viewing these dissertations, there were not any regarding Public Law 90 and its possible ramifications for the gifted students in the classroom. All of the studies listed in Google Scholar were mainly focused on the evaluation section of Public Law 90, but not on the experiences of the teachers in the classroom. This viewing provided an area for the researcher to explore: the experiences of the teachers within the classroom, which had not been studied in prior dissertations.

Problem Statement

Prior to this research, it was not known how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students. While Indiana Public Law 90 has been studied from the perspectives of university faculty tasked with training primary and secondary teachers (Chesnut, Stewart, Ansaldo, & Sera, 2015) and with public school administrators tasked with evaluating their teachers (Harvey & Boyland, 2019), there has not been a study conducted since the enactment of this legislation seeking the experiences of the teachers themselves and, more specifically, of middle school teachers in a rural instructional setting. Since the one-size-fits-all solution may not be applicable for teachers in the rural setting, it is critical to understand these teachers' experiences meeting the demands and expectations brought on by this legislation (Smith, 2019; VanGronigen & Meyers, 2017). As such, it was not known how northeastern Indiana teachers (grades 6-8) described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students. Educational apprehension concerning the initial implementation of this law was analyzed and evaluated as definitive concerns regarding this legislation (Murphy & Cole, 2017). An indication that this apprehension was lessened was apparent by an additional survey (Pies, Cole, & Murphy, 2017). Emphasis was given in many teacher situations to reach lower level students, so their test scores were higher (Morgan, 2016). With the target of many educational policies focusing on the standards, funding for gifted education has been cut (Hargrove, 2013). In a study by Chamberlin and Chamberlin of 275 pre-service teachers, 76% felt that gifted students would succeed regardless of the teaching curriculum (2010). This study

reinforced the attitudes of many individuals and their opinions concerning allotting finances for gifted education.

With attitudes and opinions such as the idea of students succeeding regardless of any specialized instruction prevalent among educators, gifted students were greatly influenced. These students endure an unchallenging curriculum, a slower pace of instruction, and unawareness from their general education instructors (Berman et al., 2012). A lack of awareness about the unchallenging curriculum and instructional pace was the most damaging effect on the gifted student. Teachers needed training and exposure to the standards available for gifted students from the National Association for Gifted Children, prior to entering the classroom to become more aware of the needs of gifted children (NAGC, 2013). These standards indicated a need for gifted students to become more independent learners, as well as the need to have a more advanced curriculum (Berman et al., 2012).

Revealing these standards and providing training during their teacher training and preparation at Colleges of Education enable teachers to be prepared to teach gifted students when they reach the classroom (Berman et al., 2012). This preparation will facilitate the teachers' instruction to meet gifted students' educational needs. Without this preparation, it will be difficult for teachers to meet the requirements a gifted student has so the child does not become bored and unmotivated in the general educational track.

Combining the lack of preparation of teachers and current legislation jeopardizes America's future (Hargrove, 2013). Chester Finn, a former United States assistant secretary of Education, believed the system currently in place had three systemic failures (Finn, 2012). These failures included the absence of identifying gifted students, the lack

of trained individuals in teaching the gifted child, and the scarcity of challenging classes designed for the gifted child (Finn, 2012). The emphasis that current legislation has on standardized test scores, as well as teacher accountability, evaluation, and employment based on these same test scores, has contributed to a lack of support in education for the gifted.

This study elucidated any situations that current middle school (grades 6-8) teachers have in addressing the needs of gifted children, while meeting the requirements of Public Law 90 in Indiana. Since this legislation had been studied through the lens of university faculty and school/district administrators, it was important to now capture the individual experiences of those on the frontline, classroom teachers. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students. The gap that this study addressed includes determining if teachers are inadvertently not meeting the needs of their gifted students in order to meet the requirements of the law. Educators described how this law influenced the teaching of the gifted student due to its emphasis on accountability using standardized tests, evaluation, and teacher employment requirements. Filling this gap in the theoretical knowledge base will provide a more developed understanding of the passed legislation as it is implemented in the instructional setting.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students. While research had

been conducted with other stakeholders, those on the frontline, the classroom teachers, have not yet shared their experiences with the implementation of Indiana Public Law 90 in the rural instructional setting with a gifted student population in grades 6-8. Education apprehension concerning the initial implementation of this law was analyzed and evaluated as definitive concerns regarding this legislation (Murphy & Cole, 2017). An indication that this apprehension was lessened was apparent by an additional survey (Pies, et al., 2017). These teachers may or may not be aware of gifted students in their care. Since it was important for teachers to meet the needs of all students in their schoolroom (Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2011), it was vital that their experiences were explored and investigated.

This study described northeastern Indiana middle school (grades 6-8) teacher's perspectives, thoughts, and experiences regarding gifted students in their classrooms, their experience of the state-mandated evaluation tool, the identification of gifted students in their classroom, and if they differentiated their lessons to meet the needs of all students, regardless of ability level, that they teach. The study of these phenomena, through the conveying of information from teachers who have experienced these situations, allowed the researcher to indicate whether the current law has negatively influenced those students who require a gifted curriculum.

This qualitative descriptive study portrayed how middle school (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 and how this law influenced the teaching of the gifted student due to its emphasis on accountability using standardized tests, evaluation, and teacher employment requirements by allowing the teachers to speak freely and anonymously in an open-ended interview format. An

interview allowed the interviewer to follow up on any response the teacher gave for clarification purposes, or to allow the teacher to expand on information that had been shared (Ellis, 2016). Furthermore, it was important to allow teachers being interviewed to express their experiences freely.

Research Question

In order to determine whether the needs of gifted students were being met within the middle school classroom of educators in school systems in northeastern Indiana, it was necessary to interview a sample of these teachers regarding their individual practices. According to research, cultivating the most intellectually promising and most creative or most athletic students, will benefit a society (Heuser, Wang, & Shahid, 2017). However, the research also indicated that there were many views on how this cultivation should occur (Heuser et al., 2017). This study employed questions in an interview format to middle school (grades 6-8) general education teachers in school corporations in northeastern Indiana to determine if Public Law 90 had forced these teachers to focus on students at the lower level, instead of the students who were gifted or high ability within their classroom in order to remain employed and pass their evaluations. The questions also probed the teachers' experiences concerning their opinion about gifted students and the identification of gifted students within the various school systems.

The educators within this study were asked questions to determine if their lessons were specifically designed to reach those students who were at risk of failing the state standardized test, a test that is given annually in grades 3-8, and grade 10 (IDOE, 2017). Since all students in grades 6-8 take this state mandated test, it allowed direct correlation for this study. Furthermore, these same educators were questioned regarding any attempts

they had made regarding the teaching of those students who have high ability or were gifted. The interview questions were designed to elicit the experiences of the teachers with Public Law 90 to determine if this law has influenced the lessons they provide to students within their classroom. These questions were evaluated by a panel of educational specialists at Grand Canyon University. Furthermore, additional questioning determined if the administration had placed any burden or pressure on the educators to assist students who were currently at risk of failing Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus (ISTEP+) or the newly renamed ILEARN, the state mandated standardized test, at the expense of those who were gifted or had higher ability.

The following research question guided this study:

RQ1: How do northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers describe their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they meet the needs of their gifted students?

This question allowed the researcher the opportunity to determine whether teachers were unaware of gifted students in their classes. It also allowed the researcher to address the gap that was identified for this study--whether teachers are inadvertently not meeting the needs of the gifted students as a result of Public Law 90 and whether teachers were cognizant about the needs of gifted students and their identification. The interview format enabled the researcher to view the situation through the lens of interpretivism to better understand what the teachers did in the classroom on a daily basis.

Advancing Scientific Knowledge and Significance of the Study

There have been several research studies conducted concerning Public Law 90, which was passed in Indiana in 2011; however, no research has been located where the impact of this law on gifted students has been studied. There is evidence in the literature

that the emphasis in America to raise the scores of lower level students was causing teachers to overlook gifted students (Warne, & Price, 2016). There have been studies in other states about this phenomenon (Cphoon, 2015), but not in Indiana since Public Law 90 was legislated. Since the gap this study was researching was whether or not teachers were inadvertently not meeting the needs of their gifted students by meeting the requirements of Public Law 90, it was important to investigate this topic. This study will advance scientific knowledge available about Public Law 90 in Indiana by elucidating this information. Furthermore, this information will give additional insight from the experiences of those on the frontline, the teachers in the classroom.

There have been many research studies concerning several components of the law. Accountability was a term that gained acceptance among legislators with the passage of the now repealed *No Child Left Behind* (Klein & Ujifusa, 2015). Public Law 90 required teachers to be accountable and responsible on how their students scored on the state standardized test (Cole et al., 2013). Research had manifested itself in several areas concerning accountability. One aspect of accountability research concerned itself with the design of the standardized tests used in conjunction with evaluations of teachers, without considering the impact of student characteristics (Warring, 2015). Additional research indicated that standardized tests were more important to the teachers than the students, which removed the punishment for failure factor for the student (Johnsen & Kaul, 2015). Without this penalty, students may not have placed as much emphasis on the need to do well on the test as they might have otherwise (William, 2010).

Another component of Public Law 90 that had been researched was the factor of pay for performance or merit pay (Cole et al., 2013). Public Law 90 required teachers be

evaluated as Highly Effective, Effective, Improvement Necessary, or Ineffective (IDOE, 2014). Educators may not receive any raises or additional compensation, such as increases for experience or bargained stipends, unless they were rated Highly Effective or Effective (IDOE, 2014). Research had shown that there were several adverse effects of merit pay, such as not having control of external factors, there was avoidable stress on employees, and strain may result between employees who did or did not receive pay raises (Arthur, 2013). Research had also shown that offering an increase in pay to teachers did not have any effect on student test scores (Arthur, 2013).

These two major components of Indiana Public Law 90 have had extensive research; however, this research had not been applied to the teachers of Indiana. This study adds to the body of knowledge information concerning these main topics, but also congruently on the impact to the gifted student within the classrooms of Indiana's teachers. This study elucidated any possibility that Public Law 90 was adversely influencing gifted students within this area of Indiana.

This study also added to the body of knowledge research on Indiana's Public Law 90. Although some educational policy briefs had been written, very little research had been conducted on the effects of this law. Any research or identified gaps that can be conducted on a public law, which influences individuals within the state, should be piloted and contribute to the knowledge of the citizens within that state. In Indiana, the gap that was studied was whether teachers meeting the requirements of Public Law 90 are inadvertently not meeting the needs of gifted students, as related to research-based teaching practices (Sargent, 2014). This specific area had not been studied by researchers in the state, and, as a result, there was very little information regarding any impact.

Exploring this gap allowed educators and policy makers the feedback that is needed to validate the need for the law or validate the need to disperse or rewrite this law. Evidence that was gathered through the interview process revealed the teaching strategies of educators within several school corporations in northeastern Indiana and was the first step of determination if Public Law 90 was detrimental to the gifted student. While it is necessary to hold additional studies in other school corporations within the state, this first step was necessary for the process to begin.

Indiana Public Law 90 had several components, which had been studied throughout the United States. The law's primary components were linking teacher performance to compensation, teacher evaluation, providing more educational options for students within Indiana, and measuring student achievement (Whiteman, Shi, & Plucker, 2011). Legislators from Indiana, and other states, had succumbed to the notion that public schools were the obstacle for all of the nation's predicaments and thus, more accountability was needed to solve these problems instead of individuals taking personal responsibility for their education (Stitzlein, 2015). Public Law 90, with accountability requirements, was one mode that legislators have used to shift the difficulties that Indiana faced onto the backs of the public schools (Stitzlein, 2015).

Since educators are the primary suppliers of information to students within the educational system, their function cannot be stressed too much. However, even though educators are in this position, they are rarely consulted about legislative policy within the political realm (Burnette & Bobo, 2010). The Indiana Evaluation model, RISE, was drafted by the Indiana Teacher Evaluation Cabinet, a group of hand-picked educators selected from across Indiana by then state superintendent of education, Tony Bennett

(IDOE, 2014). This study consisted of interviews to elucidate the experiences of educators currently teaching in the middle school (grades 6-8) classroom, and to clarify whether these experiences had negated meeting the needs of gifted students. This descriptive study unveiled and identified educator personal experiences in regard to the students within their classroom.

According to results from a national teacher survey, 32% of teachers felt that the academically advanced student was a low priority in their schools, with an additional 45% of teachers indicating they were unsure or believe these students were of a middle priority (Farkas & Duffett, 2008). Since this survey was conducted several years ago, it was necessary to determine if these priorities had changed, in light of Public Law 90 in Indiana.

Another focus of legislation, and an element of Public Law 90, was holding teachers accountable through the use of standardized testing (Galey, 2015). The pressure on teachers to encourage students on the lower spectrum of academic ability to pass these tests in order to keep their educational positions, or receive any financial bonuses was relevant in the fact that additional effort may not be placed on the high achiever. Through the examination of the literature, as presented in the Literature Review, accountability measures, which used student testing as a basis, continue to be problematic for many teachers. It was important this study gave a voice to teachers to explain the actual results of the accountability as required in Public Law 90. In Indiana, teachers who were rated as ineffective were at risk for losing their jobs, did not receive bonuses, and may lose seniority (IDOE, 2014). A major part of a teacher's evaluation was based on scores from the school grade, which was a score resulting from standardized testing. Furthermore,

even if an educator taught a subject which was not tested on the standardized testing program, that teacher was still held accountable for the school grade.

Using the theoretical perspective of Interpretivism, the researcher documented the phenomena that was explored by accurately recording the experiences of the middle school (grades 6-8) teachers involved. Interpretivism is based on the true to life method of data collection such as an interview (Dudovskiy, 2017). Interpretivism allows specific issues to be studied at a deeper level than many other methods, and also allows the researcher true and reliable data since the information comes directly from the subject (Dudovskiy, 2017). German sociologist Max Weber was given credit as the central influence of this particular theory, and both hermeneutics and phenomenology played a part in its design (Chowdhury, 2014). This perspective may indicate how Public Law 90 was influencing educators within the schools in Indiana.

Rationale for Methodology

A qualitative methodology was used for this study because this method allowed the researcher to give an account of how teachers saw their classroom from their point of view (Barnham, 2015). Qualitative research invites the researcher to study the experiences of the participants to describe their knowledge firsthand, from those who live it (Barnham, 2015). Data, which may be obtained using an interview format, allowed a more personal involvement for the researcher. Information was not obtained through a test, a database, or visual representation of ideals, but, instead, was gathered through the interaction of the researcher with the participants within the study. This particular study used an interview to determine the experiences of educators within the state of Indiana and it was vital they were able to answer, explain, and elucidate any information that was

given in a personal context. A qualitative study allowed the researcher access to personal experiences of the educators involved through the use of an interview (Madill & Gough, 2016).

This study was designed to determine the experiences of northeastern Indiana middle school classroom teachers, regarding the teaching of gifted students in light of the requirements of Public Law 90. Using the qualitative method of research allowed for further elucidation of events the teacher had experienced to be explored (Madill & Gough, 2016). Furthermore, a quantitative research study might limit the scope of the study for teachers would have not been able to further explain their responses. Quantitative responses are usually categorized by specific responses and a teacher might feel his/her responses were in need of more than a generic response.

Nature of the Research Design for the Study

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students. The purpose of using the qualitative descriptive design was to give a complete portrayal of the participants' experiences and inform the public about their insight of the phenomenon (Koopman, 2015). A major difference between phenomenology and descriptive research is its judgment of data; this study will present a description of events in which the teachers are engaged without that judgment. Descriptive research enables the researcher to portray the presented experiences precisely (Atmowardoyo, 2018). This recording of the daily experiences of a group of educators revealed whether teachers had been influenced by Public Law 90 in their lessons. The descriptive design allowed the

researcher to interview the teachers, where the teacher can describe their personal insight and experiences as a classroom teacher in a Public Law 90 school.

The descriptive research design was the best method for examining this information since it allowed the educators to guide the researcher through their description of the day to day routine of teaching (Salaria, 2012). Examining the experiences of teachers involved on a day to day basis with students, who teach in a Public Law 90 era, allowed discovery of information previously not researched. This process was very illuminating and provided essential information to complete this study.

The researcher interviewed eleven middle school teachers regarding the evaluation process mandated by Public Law 90, the methods of teaching currently being employed within the classrooms of these teachers, and the emphasis by several school corporations in northeastern Indiana on which students receive the most attention from the teacher during the class period. Teachers did not offer any opinions about political parties or politically biased motives. As a result, no teachers were found that were considered biased or compromised due to an underlying disdain for the current political system, a specific political party, or an administrator during this process; if an individual had been found with these biases, the information obtained from this individual would have been discarded. Only educators who taught in the middle school, general education subject track from school corporations in the northeastern area of Indiana took part in this study.

It was important for the researcher to plan to interview 10 to 15 middle school (grades 6-8) teachers within Indiana, as saturation required approximately 11 participants (Latham, 2013). According to Walker (2012), however, a researcher has enough

participants for research if there is sufficient material to duplicate the study if additional new information is attained. Further studies may be necessary with other Indiana school corporations in the future for this additional information to complete the picture of the entire state.

While some individuals may believe a case study would suffice for this research, it was the belief of this researcher an interview will be more appropriate to describe their situations. An interview is beneficial when the research is seeking to explore people's discernment and positions about a specific theme (Ellis, 2016). The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students. A case study would have been appropriate if the research consisted of items that were not easily relatable (Aczel, 2015). This study was relevant since Indiana public school teachers work in school systems that are accountable to the law. Furthermore, since the purpose of the research was to describe the experiences of teachers, an interview was the best method of extracting this information.

Definition of Terms

Certain terms were used throughout this study, which should be defined according to their context. Many individuals confused two specific terms—giftedness and high ability—which directly related to this study. This specific terminology concerning the definition and differences between these terms is clarified below. Furthermore, one specific method that relates to the teaching of students and is recommended by experts to use with the gifted student within the classroom is also defined below. It was important to

define these terms since teachers were questioned within the interview as to their understanding in using this terminology.

Additional terms have also been defined to avoid confusion about the phenomena that was studied. Although most educators in Indiana are familiar with accountability, merit pay, and the use of standardized tests, these terms are also defined since they are being studied as a part of the law. These phenomena, and the experiences of those educators who teach within the state, all influence the students and what they are taught.

Accountability: The idea of maintaining that educators and students are responsible for academic results (Editorial Projects, 2004). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed into federal law in December 2015, required states to hold schools accountable for student performance in English language arts and mathematics; as well as show growth in ELA and mathematics (Martin, Sargrad, Batel, & Center for American, 2016).

Differentiation: A method within education that strives to maximize each learner's development by identifying that scholars have diverse learning styles, interests, and methods of reacting to lessons while using those diverse methods to present information (Ravitch, 2010).

Giftedness: The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act defined gifted and talented students as students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities (NAGC, 2017).

High-ability: Indiana recognizes a student with high ability as one who had demonstrated the potential for executing at an exceptional level of achievement in at least one area when associated to other pupils of the same age, familiarity or situation; and was categorized by extraordinary gifts, capacities, motivation, or interests (Schmitt & Goebel, 2015).

Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus (ISTEP+): The ISTEP+ test is the annual standardized test that all students in grades 3-8, and grade 10 take in the state of Indiana (IDOE, 2017). This test was recently renamed I-Learn and the two may be used interchangeably.

Merit pay or performance-based compensation: Merit pay or performance-based compensation is an idea that believes that teacher efficiency will escalate because teachers will work more relentlessly for financial rewards and/or bonuses (Clabaugh, 2009).

Middle school teachers: In the middle school systems that are a part of this study in northeastern Indiana, middle school teachers are those who teach grades 6-8.

Public Law 90: Public Law 90 is legislation that was enacted in Indiana in 2011 (Cole et al., 2012). This educational legislation was enacted as an overhaul to Indiana's Public Education; it focused on accountability, standardized testing, and teacher evaluation (Cole et al., 2013).

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

As with any research study, there are often assumptions, limitations, and delimitations that occur within the realm of the study. While it was important to address as many of these factors as possible during the study, some are outside the control of the

researcher. It is important that any study that is undertaken view and acknowledge these items to make sure consideration is given to the results. It is with these factors, that the following has been taken into issue:

Assumptions.

1. This study was indicative of the population of the teachers in school districts located in the northeastern section of the state of Indiana. It was assumed the participants would answer the questions honestly and to their best of their knowledge. This assumption was based on the fact that anonymity and confidentiality have been and will be continuously preserved. It was also assumed that all participants had voluntarily chosen to participate in this study and could leave at any time at their own discretion without retribution by the researcher.

Limitations.

1. This study was limited by the number of individuals who could be interviewed, the interview process, and the reluctance of individuals to provide authentic responses to questions without exaggerated elaboration. Although these teachers were randomly selected based on their qualifications from the individuals willing to participate and were available, additional individuals may have provided greater insight into any problem. Meeting and interviewing individual teachers was time-consuming, but it was necessary to gather the data for this study. This process may be limited to these time constraints (Sewell, 2016).
2. It was also possible that some individuals were reluctant to share information due to a perceived fear of retribution on their evaluation. Although each individual signed a consent form and anonymity was guaranteed, there were some people who still might have been hesitant to speak freely about the subject. The interviewer identified each interviewee by using an alpha-numeric coding method and not their name or subject taught, which should have alleviated this fear and reassured all participants.

Delimitations.

1. The results of this study could be characteristic of public-school teachers in the state of Indiana who teach in the average school system. However, since this study was conducted in a densely populated county in northeastern Indiana, the study was restricted by experiences relevant to this area.
2. Furthermore, this study may be constrained by the fact that this particular area has a limited number of professional positions for employment—only 10.2% have a bachelor's degree or higher, and 19.9% of students live in poverty (Public Records, 2014).

3. Furthermore, this study was limited to teachers within the general education classroom. Teachers who are employed to teach in the Special Education department or who have training teaching and working with gifted students, were not a part of this study. It was important to have the average, non-specialized, teacher's experiences in order to determine if gifted students were having their needs met since there were not gifted services offered at the middle school level in many of the northeastern school districts of Indiana at this time.

Summary and Organization of the Remainder of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students. Classroom teachers were questioned about their experiences regarding their interaction and teaching of students within their classroom with a concentrated look at the gifted student. Classroom teachers also were questioned about whether Public Law 90 influenced how they teach, who they teach, and what they teach. Interviewing classroom teachers enabled the researcher to determine if a problem existed in this area as a result of current legislation, or if another cause was to be determined.

The researcher continued to research and search through the literature available in order to integrate information from other studies. Furthermore, the researcher had designed questions to be used within the interview that were neutrally applied to all situations that may exist (See Appendix D). These questions were approved by an Expert panel of educators, Dr. Jason Ward, Dr. Patricia D'Urso and Dr. Matthew Stimpson at Grand Canyon University. Questions were open-ended and stated such that no prejudices on the part of the interviewer was expressed or implied. Furthermore, an additional question was added to the interview protocol that allowed teachers to make any additional comments concerning Public Law 90 beyond the original stated questions.

Consent from several superintendents of the northeastern Indiana school districts within this study had taken place and been given (See Appendix B). Additionally, individual consents from individual teachers were obtained prior to the collection of any data. An explanation was given to each individual teacher if any teacher had questions regarding their rights and the actual consent form. This form had been adapted and developed by the researcher based on several other forms available on-line (See Appendix C).

Consent was also obtained by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and committee members, in order to fully complete all requirements to research. This researcher had obtained these permissions prior to any interviews taking place. After the interviews were conducted, and the transcript of the interviews had been analyzed by MaxQDA software, the remainder of the dissertation was written. Completion of the remaining chapters indicating the results of the analysis and further studies that could be conducted is given in Chapter 5.

Before any data was collected, however, it was important to review what had already been investigated in the past. Good research is based on prior research. The Literature Review that is presented in Chapter 2 is indicative of the information on which this study was based. Reviewing this information allowed the researcher to know where to continue in the future. The Literature Review shows an abbreviated history of education within the United States, as well as the involvement of the government in public education and its importance to the founding fathers. Chapter two continues with information regarding the concerns of those wanting education for the nation's brightest students, as well as educationalist theories about their practices. The Literature Review is

further continued with a review of current ideas, legislation, and practices of educational value. Since Public Law 90 in Indiana was based on government within the education system, legislative initiatives and ideas, and concern that was prevalent about the United States' standing in the world educationally, it was essential to have an understanding of this information before conducting additional research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction to the Chapter and Background to the Problem

The researcher used search terms that included gifted education, history of education in the United States, pay for performance, merit pay, accountability, standardized testing and its impact, Indiana educational law, ESEA, ESSA, and history of educational legislation in journal articles. These search terms enabled the researcher to find information from Ebscohost at the Grand Canyon University library, as well as items through the Indiana Department of Education, and INSPIRE, a journal database of articles provided by the Indiana State Library to all citizens of Indiana. The purpose of researching these search terms was to explore the foundations of the components of Public Law 90. These foundations directly related to the gap, whether teachers who were meeting the requirements of Public Law 90 were inadvertently not meeting the needs of their gifted students.

This chapter presents the conceptual framework for the study and develops the topic, a review of the literature concerning the specific research problem and its components, the research question, design elements, and a summary of this section. A review of the government's involvement in the educational system is presented from its inception to the current legislation within the United States and, in particular, Indiana. Furthermore, through the perusal of journal articles, studies, and other publications, this study explored the possible problems and complications of teaching gifted students in the average school today, while maintaining employment in a public school.

Due to current legislation and an insufficient amount of training in educational teacher training universities, many gifted students are being overlooked in classrooms

within the United States today (Rakow, 2012). In Indiana, legislation added in 2011 has exacerbated this situation. Public Law 90 was passed in Indiana as a part of a broad educational reform package (Cole et al., 2012). Teachers in Indiana must meet the evaluation and accountability requirements of Public Law 90 in order to keep their teaching positions, as well as provide a more concentrated curriculum for those students who are at risk for failing the state mandated minimum competency test. This law has resulted in many studies; however, a gap that has not been studied are the teacher's experiences in the classroom.

The emphasis in America to raise the scores of lower level students was causing teachers to overlook gifted students according to the literature (Warne, & Price, 2016). This phenomenon has been studied in a few other states (Cohoon, 2015), but not in Indiana since Public Law 90 was legislated. Since this study was researching whether or not teachers were inadvertently not meeting the needs of their gifted students by meeting the requirements of Public Law 90, it was important to investigate this topic for Indiana teachers and gifted students. This study will advance scientific knowledge available about Public Law 90 in Indiana by elucidating this information. Furthermore, this information will give additional insight from the experiences of those on the frontline, the teachers in the classroom.

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students. Since it was vital for teachers to meet the needs of all of the students in their classroom, this study determined whether or not gifted students were being ignored in the classrooms of teachers required

to raise standardized test scores. This study also determined if teachers were unintentionally striving to meet the requirements of employment at the expense of the students who were the brightest. Information from this study was garnered through the use of the open-ended interview in a private setting. A computer transcript was developed through the use of the Dragon transcription software in order to have an accurate portrayal of the conversation. A back-up recorder was also used in the event of mechanical failure.

Education and the involvement of the federal government has evolved in the United States from its founding to the present. When the United States was founded, the involvement of the government started with the Ordinances of 1785 and 1787, which granted federal lands to the states so they could establish public schools (Jennings, 2011). The founding fathers believed the public needed an education in order to preserve the new republic and prevent a relapse into tyranny (Taylor, 2016). Additional support was eventually added in the form of federal Enabling Acts that were written into specific statehood requirements, which also allowed states to use federal lands to help finance public education (Jennings, 2011).

After the initial few years of the young republic, New York became the first state outside of New England to espouse a comprehensive system to educate all children (Taylor, 2016). This program, and others like it, was further supported by tax code revisions that financially supported education (Jennings, 2011). This support was initiated by the federal government but was limited at that time to Caucasians (Taylor, 2016). Girls were allowed a public education; however, very few except the wealthy, were educated beyond primary school age (Taylor, 2016).

While most control of what was taught in local schools was under the control of the local community, most schools concentrated on teaching religious instruction, moral character, reading, and some arithmetic (Diorio, 2019). Although religious instruction was eventually deemed unconstitutional in the 1960's (Holscher, 2016), other changes were initiated over the years to change public education. Compulsory education laws became prominent during the mid-1850's, and by 1918 all states had compulsory attendance laws for children in their states (Diorio, 2019).

Although gifted education was first mentioned in ancient Greek history, it is credited with beginning in the late nineteenth century (Robinson & Jolly, 2014). Lewis Terman and Leta Stetter Hollingsworth were two individuals who brought attention to the quandary of gifted students with their studies (NAGC, 2015). Gifted education was eventually addressed by a special conference in 1958 (Jolly, 2014). This address, and the emphasis placed on education at the beginning of the Space Race in the early 1950's (NAGC, 2015), brought attention to the 3% to 5% of students who had formerly been overlooked (Ford, 2012).

In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to overhaul and improve education within the United States (Nelson, 2016). This piece of legislation funded disadvantaged schools and students, strengthened school libraries, and improved educational research (Nelson, 2016). This major piece of legislation was controversial since it removed control of who and what was taught in the local schools to a more equitable field (Baskin, 2017).

The first major piece of legislation for the gifted student was the Javits Act, which was passed by Congress in 1988 (Renzulli, Callahan, & Gubbins, 2014). This bill focused

on providing resources for identification and educating gifted students who had previously been underrepresented in a gifted program (Renzulli et al., 2014).

Furthermore, it funded the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented as well as research specifically designed to assist in working with the gifted child (NAGC, 2015).

Since that time, several major pieces of legislation have been enacted to assist in the educational process. However, the results of this legislation were often misguided and misleading. In 2001, President Bush signed into law an update of the original ESEA law, often referred to as *No Child Left Behind* (Baskin, 2017). One report, concerning the impact of this legislation, actually indicated that it hindered the ability of teachers to provide challenging curricular lessons for the high-ability student (Ford, 2012). This legislation pushed for accountability of teachers and schools through the use of standardized testing, penalties for failing schools, and school choice for parents (Diorio, 2019).

The latest federal initiative was a reauthorization of the ESEA, referred by the acronym ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) (Shoffner, 2016). The major change in this new legislation was the movement from federal control of guidelines to state and local control of student improvements (Whitehouse, 2016). While schools had a longer period of time to adjust and make changes to their programs, this process was scheduled to go into effect by the 2017-2018 school year (Whitehouse, 2016).

Indiana's Public Law 90 was enacted by the legislature in 2011, prior to the passing of ESSA (Cole et al., 2012). This law was initially based on the requirements of *No Child Left Behind* but had not been updated or revised to reflect new research. It directly linked teacher performance to salary (Cole et al., 2012). Furthermore, it also

required evaluation of teachers to use student scores to determine whether teachers remain employed by the school systems (IDOE, 2014). Failure to maintain an effective or highly effective result may result in termination of a teacher's contract (IDOE, 2014). Unfortunately, the use of standardized tests to determine teacher effectiveness was considered to be abstruse to many people due to the changing results from year to year for teacher's ratings (Amrein-Beardsley, Pivovarova, & Geiger, 2016). Teachers were rated as highly effective one year and ineffective the next based on the results of the students' scores, even if the teacher employed the same methods of presentation.

The situation was exacerbated for gifted students by administrators who instructed their teachers to specifically target those students who were on the lower level spectrum (Smith, 2016). As a result, gifted students nationwide often did not receive modified lessons, which were unchallenging to them (Ford, 2012). Since teachers were not commonly educated in teaching the gifted and talented student, it was essential that teachers learned that students can demonstrate any of the intelligences listed in Gardner's Theory of Intelligence, and still be considered gifted in one area, but average or below average in another area (Ford, 2012). Unfortunately, this training was not reinforced in the college training curriculum. This lack of training prevented teachers from reaching out to students who may be gifted in one subject but not be outstanding or gifted in their classroom, which was another subject area. These students were not provided more challenging lessons within the scope of their gift.

This situation had been the basis for this research. Using the theoretical perspective of Interpretivism, the researcher documented the phenomena being explored by accurately recording the experiences of the northeastern Indiana middle school

teachers involved. This perspective indicated exactly how Public Law 90 was influencing educators within the schools in Indiana.

The research question addressed in this study determined how northeastern Indiana teachers described their experiences teaching gifted students in a Public Law 90 school. Their experience with the identification of gifted students, remediation, differentiation, teaching with the standards, test preparation, emphasis on evaluation, and their opinions about Public Law 90 all became apparent during the interviews. These topics became the themes that assisted the researcher in answering the research question.

It was the intent of this study to explore the experiences of the individuals charged with teaching middle school students within school systems in northeastern Indiana to determine if the teaching of gifted students was a priority for these teachers. This determination of information explored the gap that had developed between legislation and the possible results of the legislation, which could harm the education of gifted students.

Identification of the Gap

Gifted education, as an area of study and focus, has been thoroughly vetted in the peer reviewed literature (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019; Stephens, 2019). Additionally, legislation was passed by state legislatures that created a one-size-fits-all solution for all schools to follow, regardless of the communities' demographics, established programs, and school or district budgets (Smith, 2019; VanGronigen & Meyers, 2017). Indiana Public Law 90 had a significant impact on all teachers in the state of Indiana. Not only were there explicit expectations for teachers to meet, failure to do so could result in the termination of their employment (Sargent, 2014). While Indiana Public Law 90 has been

studied from the perspectives of university faculty tasked with training primary and secondary teachers (Chesnut, Stewart, Ansaldo, & Sera, 2015) and with public school administrators tasked with evaluating their teachers (Harvey & Boyland, 2019), there has not been a study conducted since the enactment of this legislation seeking the experiences of the teachers themselves and, more specifically, of middle school teachers in an instructional setting. Since the one-size-fits-all solution may not be applicable for teachers in both metropolitan and rural settings, it is critical to understand these teachers' experiences meeting the demands and expectations brought on by this legislation (Smith, 2019; VanGronigen & Meyers, 2017). As such, it was not known how northeastern Indiana teachers (grades 6-8) described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students.

Research that had been conducted included the implementation of evaluations using Public Law 90 requirements (Disney, 2015), the evaluation of school principals under the requirements of the law (Andrews, 2015), and the identification and evaluation of research-based teaching methods as influenced by this law (Sargent, 2014). There were several additional dissertations found on Google Scholar, but these dissertations were either from an administrator's viewpoint of the evaluation process or dealing with Special Education teachers who worked with those with learning problems. There has been general research conducted on several of the components of this law, such as accountability, merit pay, and standardized testing; furthermore, there had also been three separate analyses of the law. Education apprehension concerning the initial implementation of this law was analyzed and evaluated as definitive concerns regarding

this legislation (Murphy & Cole, 2017). An indication that this apprehension was lessened was apparent by an additional survey (Pies, et al., 2017).

Public Law 90 was legislated without the benefit of teacher input. It was also legislated without the involvement of individuals cognizant of the needs of gifted students. This legislation may have contributed to gifted students not having their needs met in the classroom. The National Network of State Teachers of the Year (NNSTOY, 2015) stated that “educational policy results are better for students when policies are ... shaped ...by educators who know firsthand The reality is that when policy is made without teachers, the policies fail kids.” This study will describe the experiences of teachers in the classroom and determine if gifted students are being ignored in Indiana classrooms due to Public Law 90..

The specific gap that surfaced throughout all of the studies that were reviewed was whether teachers, while meeting the requirements of Public Law 90, were inadvertently not meeting the needs of their gifted students. There was evidence in the literature that the emphasis in America to raise the scores of lower level students was causing teachers to overlook gifted students (Warne, & Price, 2016). There had been studies in other states about this phenomenon (Cohoon, 2015), but not in Indiana since Public Law 90 was legislated. Exploring this gap allowed educators and policy makers the feedback that was needed to validate the need for the law or validate the need to dispense or rewrite this law. The interview process gathered evidence that revealed the teaching strategies of educators within these school corporations and were the first step of determination if Public Law 90 was detrimental to the gifted student. While it would be

necessary to hold additional studies in other school corporations within the state, this first step was necessary for the process to begin.

Theoretical Foundations and Conceptual Framework

Using the theoretical perspective of interpretivism, the researcher documented the phenomena being explored by accurately recording the experiences of the northeastern Indiana middle school teachers involved. This perspective indicated exactly how Public Law 90 was influencing educators within the schools in Indiana. Furthermore, using this model allowed the researcher the opportunity to explore the experiences as personally relayed. This method allowed the flexibility necessary to record the experiences of the teachers involved in educating middle school students.

Interpretivist theory is a method in which the researcher tries to understand how an individual reacts or conducts himself/herself by seeing the world through that individual's eyes (Weller, 2014). The interpretivist practice within a qualitative research study seeks to acquire admission to the experiences through interaction with the subject (Howson, 2019). This admission allowed the researcher the opportunity to experience the subject at hand from the viewpoint of the participant of the study. Using this theory allowed the researcher to enter the experience and understand the motives of the educators in this situation, as well as the reasoning behind the participant's decisions.

Additionally, *Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences* was applied to the responses of the participants during the interview process when discussing the evaluation of students within their classroom setting. Specifically, educators were questioned about the identification of any gifted students in their classroom to determine if these teachers were familiar with this theory. Gardner's theory indicates there are currently eight, an

update from his original number, competencies to investigate when considering the abilities of students. These eight competencies include Musical Intelligence, Bodily Kinesthetic Intelligence, Logical-Mathematical Intelligence, Linguistic Intelligence, Spatial Intelligence, Interpersonal Intelligence, Intrapersonal Intelligence, and Naturalistic Intelligence (Ford, 2012). An understanding of this theory, especially regarding students who are gifted, was essential to identifying gifted students.

The research question can best be answered by applying the aforementioned theories. Initially, it was important for teachers to be able to determine if gifted students were in their classroom, based on the observation by the teacher of the intelligences as related by Gardner. While some students may have been placed in Gifted and Talented pull-out programs in elementary school, most school systems in this area of Indiana do not relay that information to the middle school building teachers or have an active Gifted and Talented program at this level. Furthermore, students may be placed in advanced classes by their former elementary teachers, but those students could be gifted, high ability, or extremely motivated to do well—there was no distinction given to the classroom teachers.

Additionally, students may be overlooked in prior classrooms and misjudged as problem children who do not complete assignments, and be, in reality, gifted (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004). Betts and Neihart suggested that gifted students may fall within different profiles ranging from a potential school dropout to a discouraged, isolated individual (Wellisch & Brown, 2012). Motivation, as well, is considered to be one of the most influential factors on a high-achieving individual that may be altered in

the face of socioeconomic problems (Wellisch & Brown, 2012). All of these factors contributed to gifted students not reaching their potential.

With these possible factors, it was apparent to most individuals that students who are in classrooms with teachers, who are not specifically trained to identify and work with gifted students, were possibly not receiving the educational services they needed to reach their highest potential. Furthermore, with administrators who must raise test scores in order to receive a passing score for their schools under current legislation, most of the emphasis was being placed on those students who were at risk for not passing state mandated standardized tests (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019). Both of these situations may indicate that the students were not receiving lessons specifically designed for their ability level.

In order to determine if gifted or high ability students in northeastern Indiana are receiving a challenging curriculum, it was important to review how northeastern Indiana middle school teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 and how this law influenced the teaching of gifted students due to its emphasis on accountability using standardized tests, evaluation, and teacher employment requirements. This process determined if students within these schools were receiving a challenging educational experience or were being ignored due to the requirements of the state law and regulations.

Review of the Literature

Throughout the history of the United States, legislative initiatives and changes were adopted. Although there were both direct educational laws and general laws for the public regarding specific situations, many of these legislative endeavors changed public

education. Several of these changes were enacted by individuals who believed that citizens would make better, more informed decisions when they were educated, had improved rights, and had access to information to become better global citizens, as well as to improve the United States society as a whole.

History of the government in public education. Prior to the revolutionary war, schools were opened throughout the colonies. Many of these schools were held in homes and often served not only as a school but also as a daycare for young children (Diorio, 2019). In 1642, Massachusetts required all children to receive religious instruction as well as have lessons on the colony's laws (Diorio, 2019). Lawrence Cremin summarized that Puritan instruction was an important component of the legacy resettled (Owens, 2011). Education was essentially not a method to yield academics or residents who contributed to society; instead, it was the manner of enlightening the students about their own culture, a Christian education that influenced the future with the morals and beliefs of the Puritans (Owens, 2011).

When the United States was founded at the end of the Revolutionary War, the involvement of the government in education started with the Ordinances of 1785 and 1787, which granted federal lands to the states so they could establish public schools (Jennings, 2011). It was the primary purpose of these ordinances to hire surveyors to divide the newly acquired lands, which had been purchased from local native American tribes, into lots and townships and to make sure that each township had a public school for their citizens (Land Ordinance of 1785, 2017). According to these ordinances: lot N 16, in every township, was to be reserved for public schools for that township (Land

Ordinance of 1785, 2017). The founding fathers believed the public needed an education in order to preserve the new republic and prevent a relapse into tyranny (Taylor, 2016).

Public education in the United States evolved from the ideals of Thomas Jefferson and other founding fathers into the institution we have currently. Although Jefferson originally wanted education to form a new world order where all white children were educated through the primary grades, only the most competent males were able to advance to an academy and have an opportunity to attend a college at that time (Taylor, 2016). His purpose was simple—he wanted to avert the possibility of neighboring powers overtaking the new union by educating the populace and, also, removing the power of the local aristocrats who were formally educated (Taylor, 2016).

The founding fathers lived in a perilous world that was subjugated by wealthy aristocrats or dynasties who held on to their fortunes (Taylor, 2016). As a result of this background, the founding fathers were especially concerned about their young republic. They had learned of historical republics during their own educational experiences that had collapsed or failed and did not want their new republic to experience the same result (Taylor, 2016). It was this concern that supported their belief that education was vital in the newly formed republic.

Additional support was eventually added in the form of federal Enabling Acts that were written into specific statehood requirements, which also allowed states to use federal lands to help finance public education (Jennings, 2011). On April 30, 1802, the first Enabling Act was signed by President Jefferson, which established the rules for converting a territory into a state, and also included requirements as stated in the Ordinance of 1787 (Alexander, 2002). This first Enabling Act approved the Ohio territory

to begin the process of becoming a state, the first generated from the Northwest Territories, and to hold an assembly and outline a constitution (Alexander, 2002).

After the initial few years of the young republic, New York became the first state outside of New England to espouse a comprehensive system to educate all children (Taylor, 2016). Prior to 1795, many of the inhabitants of New York had evacuated this area due to it being the headquarters of the British Army (Boese & Harrison, 1869). After the surrender of the British army, the governor and legislature appropriated \$50,000 for a five-year educational plan to support public education in the state (Boese & Harrison, 1869). This program, and others like it, was further supported by tax code revisions that financially supported education (Jennings, 2011).

This support was initiated by the federal government due to ideas proposed by federal leaders but was still limited federally to Caucasians (Taylor, 2016). Girls were allowed a public education; however, very few except the wealthy, were educated beyond primary school age (Taylor, 2016). Many of the endeavors to educate both girls and free blacks were initiated by the Quakers at this time (Boese & Harrison, 1869). In 1834, the Quakers requested that their schools and an expansive holding of real estate was transferred to the Public-School Society which legislators authorized (Boese & Harrison, 1869).

The founding fathers were also concerned by tensions between the 13 states which could be exploited by external manipulations of other countries (Taylor, 2016). As stated before, education of free blacks was allowed in some areas in the north but was not allowed in others. With the knowledge of past republic failures from other political experiments, their concern was warranted. The new republic was fraught with differing

opinions, beliefs and distrust between the states which would eventually culminate in a civil war (Taylor, 2016).

Most schools concentrated on teaching religious instruction, moral character, reading, and some arithmetic (Diorio, 2019). The purpose of education at this time was to mold individuals into a specific form who would continue to balance society—society's needs were more important than those of an individual's (Owens, 2011). Compulsory education laws became prominent during the mid-1850's, and by 1918 all states had compulsory attendance laws for children in their states (Diorio, 2019). Although religious instruction was eventually deemed unconstitutional in the 1960's (Holscher, 2016), other changes were initiated over the years to change public education.

Although gifted education was first mentioned in ancient Greek history, it was credited with beginning in the late nineteenth century (Robinson & Jolly, 2014). William Torey Harris was the superintendent for public schools in St. Louis, Missouri in 1868 (Ford, 2012). He is credited with beginning the first gifted education classes in public schools in the United States (Ford, 2012). He approached education based on three distinct beliefs: democracy depended upon education, creation of an educated nation required impartiality applied to all individuals, and schools were only a first step because an education was not completed within the school building; it was his belief that education was a life-long process (Downs, 2017). His approach shaped education in ways that persist today with students receiving education in science, geography, history, music, art and learning foreign languages (Downs, 2017).

Francis Galton's book, *Hereditary Genius*, was published in 1869 (Ford, 2012). This book impacted many beliefs in this time period with its indication that intelligence

was passed through genetics as an inheritance to the next generation (Ford, 2012). Galton coined the phrase 'nature and nurture'; nature signified everything a human had intuitively whereas nurture expressed the influences that affected an individual after his birth (Chitty, 2013). He was greatly influenced by Charles Darwin's, his cousin, works and often based many of his ideals on the idea of supporting those with greater natural ability while denigrating those who had lesser natural ability (Chitty, 2013). His ideals concerning those who were gifted fell in line with his beliefs.

Another significant event occurred in the early 1900's. Henry Goddard traveled to France and studied with French researchers Binet and Simon (Ford, 2012). These researchers had developed an intelligence test that was used to identify children with inferior intelligence (Ford, 2012). After learning their techniques and processes, he returned to the United States, translated the test and began the process of disseminating the test to educational facilities throughout the country (NAGC, 2015). He ultimately founded the first research facility dedicated to the analysis of the intellectually challenged, and subsequently created and tested educational processes for their lessons (Irvine, 2014).

In 1918, Lulu Stedman began working with gifted children in an "opportunity room" at the University of California's southern branch (Ford, 2012). She considered providing educational prospects for gifted children as a requirement to assist these children in advancing their promising impact to the community in which they lived (Jolly, 2006). It was her belief that gifted students needed to be provided an enriching curriculum within their peer group which allowed independent lessons tailored to their ability levels (Jolly, 2006).

Lewis Terman and Leta Hollingsworth were two individuals who also brought attention to the quandary of gifted students with their studies (NAGC, 2015). Lewis Terman concluded that gifted students were genetically superior than their peers, but the environment in which these children lived contributed to whether or not these students reached their potential (Ford, 2012). Leta Hollingsworth was a psychologist and an educator who used her passion for the gifted to explore methods to assist them in reaching their potential (Klein, 2000). These individuals contributed greatly to the education of the gifted through their efforts. In 1921, Lewis Terman began the longest study of 1500 gifted students over a period of many years (NAGC, 2015). Leta Hollingsworth began the Special Opportunity Class in 1922 (Ford, 2012).

Gifted education was eventually addressed by a special conference in 1958 (Jolly, 2014). This address, and the emphasis placed on education at the beginning of the Space Race in the early 1950's (NAGC, 2015), brought attention to the 3% to 5% of students who had formerly been overlooked (Ford, 2012). Unfortunately, the enthusiasm for the emphasis on gifted education waned over a period of years.

In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to overhaul and improve education within the United States (Nelson, 2016). This piece of legislation funded disadvantaged schools and students, strengthened school libraries, and improved educational research (Nelson, 2016). This major piece of legislation was controversial since it removed control of who and what was taught in the local schools to a more equitable field (Baskin, 2017).

The first major piece of legislation for the gifted student was the Javits Act, which was passed by Congress in 1988 (Renzulli et al., 2014). This bill focused on providing

resources for identification and educating gifted students who had previously been underrepresented in a gifted program (Renzulli et al., 2014). Furthermore, it funded the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented as well as research specifically designed to assist in working with the gifted child (NAGC, 2015).

Since that time, several major pieces of legislation have been enacted to assist in the educational process. However, the results of this legislation were often misguided and misleading. In 2001, President Bush signed into law an update of the original ESEA law, often referred to as *No Child Left Behind* (Baskin, 2017). One report, concerning the impact of this legislation, actually indicated that it hindered the ability of teachers to provide challenging curricular lessons for the high-ability student (Ford, 2012). This legislation pushed for accountability of teachers and schools through the use of standardized testing, penalties for failing schools, and school choice for parents (Diorio, 2019).

The latest federal initiative was a reauthorization of the ESEA, referred by the acronym ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) (Shoffner, 2016). The major change in this new legislation was the movement from federal control of guidelines to state and local control of student improvements (Whitehouse, 2016). While schools had a longer period of time to adjust and make changes to their programs, this process was scheduled to go into effect by the 2017-2018 school year (Whitehouse, 2016).

Indiana's Public Law 90 was enacted by the legislature in 2011, prior to the passing of ESSA (Cole et al., 2012). This law was initially based on the requirements of *No Child Left Behind* but had not been updated or revised to reflect new research. It directly linked teacher performance to salary (Cole et al., 2012). Furthermore, it also

required evaluation of teachers to use student scores to determine whether teachers remain employed by the school systems (IDOE, 2014). Failure to maintain an effective or highly effective result may result in termination of a teacher's contract (IDOE, 2014). Unfortunately, the use of standardized tests to determine teacher effectiveness was considered to be abstruse to many people due to the changing results from year to year for teacher's ratings (Amrein-Beardsley, Pivovarova, & Geiger, 2016). Teachers were rated as highly effective one year and ineffective the next based on the results of the students' scores, even if the teacher employed the same methods of presentation.

The situation was exacerbated for gifted students by administrators who instructed their teachers to specifically target those students who were on the lower level spectrum (Smith, 2016). As a result, gifted students nationwide often did not receive modified lessons, which were unchallenging to them (Ford, 2012). Since teachers were not commonly educated in teaching the gifted and talented student, it was essential that teachers learned that students can demonstrate any of the intelligences listed in Gardner's Theory of Intelligence, and still be considered gifted in one area, but average or below average in another area (Ford, 2012). Unfortunately, this training was not reinforced in the college training curriculum. This lack of training prevented teachers from reaching out to students who may be gifted in one subject but not be outstanding or gifted in their classroom, which was another subject area. These students were not provided more challenging lessons within the scope of their gift.

This situation had been the basis for this research. Using the theoretical perspective of Interpretivism, the researcher documented the phenomena being explored by accurately recording the experiences of the northeastern Indiana middle school

teachers involved. This perspective indicated exactly how Public Law 90 was influencing educators within the schools in Indiana.

The research question addressed in this study determined how northeastern Indiana teachers described their experiences teaching gifted students in a Public Law 90 school. Their experience with the identification of gifted students, remediation, differentiation, teaching with the standards, test preparation, emphasis on evaluation, and their opinions about Public Law 90 all became apparent during the interviews. These topics became the themes that assisted the researcher in answering the research question.

It was the intent of this study to explore the experiences of the individuals charged with teaching middle school students within school systems in northeastern Indiana to determine if the teaching of gifted students was a priority for these teachers. This determination of information explored the gap that had developed between legislation and the possible results of the legislation, which could harm the education of gifted students.

Eventually, national standards for teachers and the formation of the National Teachers Association in 1857, eventually renamed the National Educator's Association, brought more uniformity into the public education schema (Diorio, 2019). The more developed the field of public education became, the more involvement of the government in legislating opportunity. By 1867, an act to establish the Department of Education was passed in the United States congress (Knowles et al., 2013). Its original purpose was to collect statistics on the progress of education (Knowles et al., 2013).

It was not until 1954, with the formation of the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) under Ann Isaacs, that gifted education was recognized as an area of

research beyond the experiences of Hollingsworth and Terman (Ford, 2012). This group began the process of advocating for the gifted child and provided much needed research on the training of these individuals. The NAGC has four main objectives for the educating of gifted children; these objectives include providing assistance to schools in teaching the gifted child, to assist parents in seeing the potential of their gifted child and add encouragement to the child's education, to encourage the gifted child to recognize and reach their personal potential, and to educate the public about the need to nurture the gifted child for the good of society (Robins & Jolly, 2013). This organization has continued throughout their history to provide resources and guidance to the gifted society.

Another major impact on education was the Supreme Court ruling of *Brown v. the Board of Education, Topeka, KS*. This landmark case officially ruled that separate, but equal was unconstitutional under the law, and the rights of black children in the United States had been violated through the segregation of schools (Ford, 2012). Although there had been several lawsuits through the years regarding segregation of students within the schools, *Brown v. the Board of Education, Topeka, KS* was the first to rule in favor of the plaintiff regarding the education of their children who were denied entry into the local white school (Chestnut, 2004).

Intervention for some students was initiated as a result of the *Space Race*. Approximately 200 individuals were invited to a conference to discuss the educating of America's gifted students (Jolly, 2014). The news that the Russians had launched a rocket into space before the Americans was considered an act of aggression by some due to the opinion that Americans held about their own abilities; this thought correlated with

the belief that teaching gifted individuals needed to be improved (Jolly, 2014). The conference discussed educating gifted students, as well as identification and their social well-being, but did not establish long term results.

A major piece of legislation that was passed in 1964, *The Civil Rights Act*, also impacted education (Ford, 2012). Title IV allowed the Attorney General of the United States to begin the process of desegregation of the schools, especially within the southern states (Wright, 2015). This process was reinforced with the passage of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) of 1965, which increased federal funding for schools that fulfilled its requirements (Wright, 2015). The ESEA redefined the federal government's role in education and strengthened the resolve that education needed to be provided equitably to all students (Nelson, 2016). Additionally, the ESEA pledged billions of dollars to increase school library holdings, strengthen each state's Department of Education, finance additional educational research, and, eventually aid bilingual education and assistance with students with disabilities (Nelson, 2016). These contributions have reshaped and influenced education over the past fifty years by contributing to the equity of education for all.

With all the advancements the ESEA enforced, students were still at risk for failure. A report initiated by President Ronald Reagan's administration, *A Nation at Risk*, indicated the schools were failing, students were illiterate, and teachers were not providing the appropriate lessons for the current society (Claudio, 2013). This report, however, ignored the plight of the impoverished minority student and politicalized education, which is still occurring today (Claudio, 2013). It was politics, and the

legislation that occurred because of those politics, that eventually initiated new reforms and requirements for education, some at the detriment of those who were most at risk.

Probably one of the most publicized reforms ever written for education was legislation that was supposed to update the original ESEA. This legislation, commonly referred to as *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), stated it was imperative that all students in the United States reach minimum competency levels in reading and mathematics by 2014 (Webley, 2012). NCLB originally was successful in exposing achievement gaps within the educational system among the underserved and poverty level student; however, this success was short-lived (Shoffner, 2016). NCLB proposed a simplified version for education that tested students regularly, and punished schools who had deficient results of these tests (Shoffner, 2016). Inadvertently, it also set impossibly high levels for schools to reach, and forced some schools to teach to the test, which narrowed the curriculum (Webley, 2012). NCLB centered on the concept of *Adequate Yearly Progress* (AYP), which was interpreted differently in each state (Heck, 2011). This allowed states to determine what was deemed as proficient based on their own interpretation (Heck, 2011). After several years of this policy, it was eventually replaced by the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) (Whitehouse, 2016).

ESSA strived to give more control of how accountability was determined, as well as which academic standards were set, to the states (Whitehouse, 2016). The main drive within ESSA was to provide states the flexibility they needed to develop their own school improvement plans based on their personal evidence instead of the strict, one-sided method employed by NCLB (Whitehouse, 2016). The most noteworthy change in ESSA

was the shift from a Washington DC decision-making process to a more state-controlled decision-making process (Shoffner, 2016).

Indiana legislates change. As a part of an educational reform package, the 2011 General Assembly in Indiana passed Public Law 90 (Cole et al., 2012). With the changes made to national educational policy, it was necessary to transition to a teacher evaluation system that was directly connected to teacher performance. Although many superintendents were skeptical about linking teacher evaluations to compensation, the law required this change (Cole et al., 2012). Public Law 90 required evaluating teachers annually by administrators, and the use of the state-mandated standardized test (IDOE, 2014).

Approximately 73.4% of the school corporations chose to use the state model, known as RISE, for their school corporation to use to evaluate teachers (Cole et al., 2012). This model was developed under the authority of then State Superintendent of Education Tony Bennett, along with members of the Indiana Teacher Evaluation Cabinet (IERC), a select group of educators from across Indiana (IDOE, 2014). The IERC members were appointed by the state school superintendent and served for a period of two years; their purpose was to give information and support teachers across the state (Local educator, 2012). However, since these individuals were appointees, the general belief was they were more likely to give the elected superintendent of schools exactly what he wanted without dissent.

Many teachers felt flummoxed as a result of this legislation, which caused many teachers to react dismally to it (Cole et al., 2012). Only 33% of a teacher's salary could reflect the years of experience or the additional degrees a teacher holds (IDOE, 2014). All

teachers within a school building received the same score as the tested components on ISTEP+, the state mandated standardized test, even if they did not teach the tested components (IDOE, 2014). The legislators' perceived purpose was the belief that all teachers in a building should be teaching the tested components, and not just the subject teacher. However, the idea of librarians, art teachers, and other specialty area teachers being evaluated through the use of the ISTEP+ test was, to many, disheartening.

Since the use of the ISTEP+ test was used in Indiana, it had the advantage to already being aligned to the state standards in English and Math (Cole et al., 2013). However, it also had a disadvantage of being used as a one-time measurement of a student's ability upon which all further growth was evaluated (Cole et al., 2013). Further measurement of a teacher's educational competence was to be evaluated with a minimum of two observations annually by a trained evaluator, such as a principal (RISE Handbook, 2017). One northeastern Indiana school system required all highly effective teachers to have one-forty minute and one-ten-minute observation each year (Jay Schools, 2016). Teachers who were effective, needed improvement, or ineffective were required to have more observations.

Some of the problems indicated by the state evaluation plan indicated that using a base line percentage to evaluate teachers does not take into account the fact that a student may have a highly effective teacher and still not raise their overall scores. According to Ravitch (2010), an educator may be able to teach a child information outside the realm of the standardized test, which greatly impacted the student's life, as well as an appreciation for the subject being taught, but could be deemed ineffective in our data-driven world. Furthermore, some standardized tests encountered challenges from parents who

prevented their children from taking tests due to resistance groups focused on over-testing (Rothman & Marion, 2016). Some of these students' scores could have raised the overall scores of their schools had their numbers been included.

Educational theorists who contributed to gifted education. Education became a more complex process as individuals who specialized in specific fields began research on methods to improve conditions for these groups. With the publishing of Francis Galton's work, *Hereditary Genius* in 1869, the belief that natural selection and heredity contributed to the ability levels of individuals was introduced (Ford, 2012). Galton was a first cousin of Darwin and was greatly influenced by his beliefs but was also a man who traveled extensively and recorded his observations of individuals throughout his travels (Jolly, 2006). Many of his studies were hotly debated by many individuals due to the premise of a disbelief in Darwin's philosophies; however, Galton's work continues to this day to influence education (Ford, 2012).

By the beginning of the twentieth century, several educational theories began to surface. The first notable theory was introduced by American psychologist and educator G. Stanley Hall. Hall introduced the relationship between adolescent development and education (Diorio, 2019). Furthermore, he believed in the idea of educating a child to the fullest of that child's ability due to his Darwinist belief to accept the child at the level that child was, and educate the child accordingly (Goodchild, 2012). He firmly believed that teachers must be competent in their teaching and relate lessons to the natural progression that nature itself displays (Goodchild, 2012). This relationship in teaching placed more emphasis on the child's natural ability and learning potential.

Another educational theory of this time was developed by Lewis Terman. His introduction of the use of the standardized test, which eventually became known as the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test, produced the foundation for the use of standardized testing that is being utilized to this day (Diorio, 2019). Terman is notable due to his studies of gifted students. In 1921, he began the longest study of gifted students ever to have been conducted (Ford, 2012). His most notable study was published in the *Genetic Studies of Genius* (1925), which included the differences of gifted students in contrast to the average student (Ford, 2012). Terman is regarded as one of the foremost pioneers of gifted education, who organized and sponsored some of the first extensively published studies of the gifted child (NAGC, 2015).

Another pioneer of the gifted child movement was Leta Hollingsworth. Hollingsworth promoted the idea of educating gifted students in a self-contained classroom that would allow a specialized curriculum for those students (VanTassel-Baska, 2014). Furthermore, she promoted the idea of having gifted students study role models in their area of interest, learn second languages at an early age, cross-curricular studies, engagement with intellectual peers, and advanced and challenging lessons beyond what was normally taught (VanTassel-Baska, 2014). Her life, with a personal interest due to her own gifted abilities, was a challenge due to the time she lived; she often struggled due to the fact she lived in a society that was often hostile to women, especially intellectual women (Klein, 2000). Her studies with students of high IQ, and gifted abilities, confirmed her belief that children had differentiated abilities, and should be taught differently as a result (Klein, 2000).

Another major educational theorist, John Dewey, encouraged a focus on the child's learning experience rather than instruction methods (Diorio, 2019). While this focus was compatible with theories of Hollingsworth, it reinforced the idea that a child should be encouraged to pursue his/her own interests, and as a result, will be educated to the fullest (Deweese-Boyd, 2015). The belief that a non-structured curriculum was best was considered to be utopian by many individuals, especially in today's society where standardized testing has become the norm and students must display their grasp of concepts they might not be interested in (Deweese-Boyd, 2015). Dewey did, however, give insight into the process of education.

Howard Gardner developed his *Theory of Multiple Intelligences* from his early research and later projects (Joneja, 2016). His belief was that human intelligence was based on the foundation of the neurobiological study of the brain and the relationship between intelligence and the context in which that intelligence was applied (Joneja, 2016). Gardner believed that students were limited by the environment in which the child was raised (Gibbon, 2017). Many teachers felt empowered due to his belief that children were influenced by the way they were raised, and their situation affected their learning (Gibbon, 2017).

Another educational theorist, E. D. Hirsch, was an advocate of early education that was fact-filled and orderly and included more nonfiction texts to compensate for a more equal education, regardless of the background of the parents or the socioeconomic situation a child finds him/herself in (Gibbon, 2017). He believed in charter schools or specialized schools that limited local control and promoted his ideas in order to combat the achievement gap recognized in today's educational system (Gibbon, 2017). Hirsch

was an avid supporter of the Common Core standards that 43 states have accepted, with the belief that students should have a set of curriculum skills all students should master in order to be educated (Stern, 2014).

Giftedness theories and models. There were several theories and models that were promoted which dealt entirely with the education of the gifted student. Some of the most prominent of these theories included Renzulli's *Three-Ring Model*, Sternberg's *Triarchic Theory of Intelligence*, WICS *Model of Gifted Leadership*, Tannenbaum's *Star Model*, Vygotsky's *Dynamic Theory of Giftedness*, as well as Gagné's *Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT)*. While some of these theories were interrelated, others were isolated based on the area of study within gifted education.

Renzulli's *Three-Ring Model* presented a belief that giftedness was a relationship between three specific traits: above-average ability, commitment to a task, and creativity (Miller, 2012). He believed that the first trait of a gifted student included the ability to think abstractly and recover information quickly by cataloging the pertinent information from the unconnected material (Young & Balli, 2014). Furthermore, he believed that it was essential that a student be motivated to work in order to determine a solution to any perplexing situation or problem and have the creativity necessary to think divergent thoughts in order to solve the problem (Young & Balli, 2014).

Sternberg's *Triarchic Theory of Intelligence* posits there were three different, but interconnected, facets of intellect: (a) analytic intelligence, (b) creative intelligence, and (c) practical intelligence. Individuals highly skilled in analytical intelligence were proficient at investigative thinking, which encompasses applying the mechanisms of thinking to abstract, and often theoretical, problems (Ekinici, 2014). Individuals who had

creative intellect were adept at discovering ideas or creating new methods to solve a problem, while individuals who have practical intelligence were able to implement any ideas that were considered (Ekinici, 2014). This particular theory rested with the idea that individuals may be gifted in one or more of these facets, while identifying different strengths and weaknesses that the individual displayed (Miller, 2012).

WICS (Wisdom, Intelligence, Creativity, Synthesized) *Model of Gifted Leadership*, also a theory by Sternberg, presented a belief that a blend of skills designed in detecting complications, developing resolutions, and unravelling problems in one individual produces true leadership (Sternberg, Bonney, Gabora, & Merrifield, 2012). It was the belief that utilizing assessments that test for these traits would present assets for colleges and universities in their admission process (Sternberg et al., 2012). Leadership traits may vary, but the most gifted individuals with leadership skills would benefit the colleges they attended and, in the future, the corporations or government offices they serve (Miller, 2012).

Tannenbaum's *Star Model* extended the definition of giftedness beyond the limits of intellectual ability or academic aptitude by redefining giftedness as the ability to develop or produce a type of work that enhances morale, physical, emotional, social, intellectual in human life (Blumen, 2015). This model extended the relationship between intellectual ability and environmental factors such as motivation, as well as any factors which inhibited the development of gifted attributes (Miller, 2012). He stressed that true giftedness would be acknowledged in adulthood with the results of the gift being utilized; however, it was possible for some individuals to never reach their potential due to factors that prevent that result (Blumen, 2015).

Vygotsky's *Dynamic Theory of Giftedness* was also an important contribution to the gifted field. Vygotsky alleged the societal characteristics of an individual's involvement in society played a prime function in the growth of giftedness (Miller, 2012). In other words, the theory referred to the discrepancy between what someone could do, unaided, and what she or he could do now, with suitable care and direction (Hopwood, 2015). Vygotsky argued that learning precedes development, which was the opposite of his contemporaries like Piaget (Hopwood, 2015). The result was that as an individual learned, that individual was able to overcome factors within his/her life that acted as a barrier, and when that individual did overcome that barrier, giftedness was manifested (Miller, 2012).

Gagné's differentiated model of giftedness and talent offered a new vision of giftedness that had previously not been explored. Gagné believed that all gifts or talents should be developed from their natural state and manipulated by outside influences (Gagné, 2018). The main domains of natural abilities, which Gagné believed were genetic, were intellectual, creative, socio-effective, and sensorimotor (Gagné, 2018). Gagné believed that in order to meet the optimal teaching conditions, one must first determine what needed to be learned (Kretchmar, 2015). After that, he also believed that it was important for the instructor to design activities to improve learning (Kretchmar, 2015). Gagné believed the following principles must be adhered to in order for learning to occur: gaining attention by arousing curiosity, informing the learner about the objectives for the lesson and achieving control of the situation by the teacher, helping the student recall previous lessons as a basis for a starting point for the lesson, presenting the new material with an emphasis on key features, providing guidance on cues to recall the

information presented, receiving a response from the learner to indicate learning, providing feedback and reinforcement concerning the response, assessing the information, and providing strategies to encourage recall of the information over a long period of time (Buscombe, 2013). These principles have been applied to the teaching practice over a period of many years to encourage learning (Buscombe, 2013).

Accountability and standards. Accountability was used by many politicians and in educational articles in today's world, but many believed that accountability was driven more by the money test developers received through the selling of standardized tests (Krise, 2016). As a result of this increased focus, where contributions were made to politicians' coffers, more testing and accountability resulted in the education field that was required by legislation (Krise, 2016). *ESSA* required accountability in any state model on education, but each state was allowed to develop their own method of how this accountability was measured (Klein & Ujifusa, 2015). Initially, seven states were allowed to pilot innovative methods to demonstrate accountability and determine success within a three-year period that could be implemented elsewhere (Rothman & Marion, 2016).

As a result of the emphasis on accountability, corporations and organizations have impacted the teacher training evaluation systems, instead of the control the universities and teacher organizations had in the past (Krise, 2016). These marketplace corporations saw an opportunity to increase their revenue by addressing the problems within the educational sphere (Krise, 2016). Since *NCLB* was legislated and presented to the states, the testing components required by this law opened new opportunities for development and these developed tests were sold to states to solve their educational requirements

(Rothman & Marion, 2016). Although alternatives have been sought by many states, these tests satisfied the requirements of this law (Rothman & Marion, 2016).

In December 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was passed to replace some components of NCLB (Rothman & Marion, 2016). Although this law allowed states to have more flexibility to develop accountability measures in addition to the tests, it still required regular testing (Rothman & Marion, 2016). ESSA eliminated standards from the national level and replaced these standards with those dictated by the states (Shoffner, 2016). It did provide more flexibility as promised, but still required accountability. Each state could determine their own standards and how that state wanted to hold those standards accountable (Shoffner, 2016).

To improve accountability measures, it was recommended that states adopt demanding and assessable standards students must meet in order to determine if their educational system was adequate according to a part of *A Nation at Risk* (ANAR) (Waldow, 2015). With those improved standards in place, ANAR also recommended the use of standardized testing in order to determine if all students were improving (Waldow, 2015). Eventually, a group of standards, commonly known as the Common Core Standards, was developed and adopted by 43 states in order to raise student learning (Peterson, Barrows, & Gift, 2016).

The Common Core standards were initially developed as a result of a meeting of the National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers in 2009 (Deas, 2018). With the assistance of some federal funding and a large financial incentive from the Gates Foundation, the Common Core standards were publicized and presented to politicians as the cure to public education problems (Deas, 2018).

Unfortunately, there was very little educator input into the actual development of these standards.

There were approximately 65 individuals who developed the Common Core standards but only one of these individuals was a K-12 educator (Deas, 2018). Without the valuable input of those within the classroom with their insight and experience, the Common Core Standards have been short-sighted in their development. Many of the challenges of this initiative result from this lapse. The teachers have the experience and knowledge of the needs of the local school system and its students and if certain criteria are not followed the adoption of these standards may lead to additional standardized testing (Deas, 2018).

Indiana originally adopted the common core standards, but in 2014, Governor Pence signed legislation that annulled Indiana's commitment to their adoption (Ujifusa, 2014). He stated during a press conference that Indiana would develop and adopt new standards written by Indiana residents for their children (Ujifusa, 2014). Many individuals in Indiana were concerned that Hoosier students would suffer since tests like the SAT and ACT were written based on the Common Core standards (Carden, 2014). The state of Indiana joined with two other states, Oklahoma and South Carolina, to completely withdraw from adoption of the standards, while one state, Minnesota, only adopted the English Language Arts standards, and four states, Alaska, Nebraska, Texas and Virginia, never adopted the Common Core standards (District Administration, 2016).

In opposition to standardized tests and the accountability movement were parents and students who were beginning to stand up to legislation that required testing. By the time the average student graduated, the average student had taken more than 113

standardized tests (Rizga & Hernandez, 2015). Students in the United States take more standardized tests than their peers throughout the world (Rizga & Hernandez, 2015). According to the 47th Annual PDK/Gallup Poll the survey indicated the public believed that too much emphasis had been placed on standardized testing in schools today and also believed there were better ways to measure student progress (Richardson & Bushaw, 2015). With these results, it was possible that the testing occurring in the public schools today may eventually change

Merit pay. One of the aspects of Indiana's Public Law 90 was the correlation of performance with compensation, or merit pay. Merit pay had been shown to have many negative effects. Efforts to force merit pay on teachers was a variable that had been shown to also be apparent in businesses: outside factors could influence the results of an individual's results (Arthur, 2013). Teacher's scores can be influenced by a student's lack of supervision at home, a lack of bedtime, a lack of food, a parent's work schedule, a parent's addiction, a parent's partner, and a lack of discipline. Another negative effect was the fact that many teachers did not work any harder than they did before when offered a large monetary stipend for improved scores (Arthur, 2013). Teachers have proven over the years that they did not enter the profession for money.

Pay for performance or merit pay has become more prevalent in school systems today due to an increase in its popularity among politicians, with even support from former United States Secretary of Education Arne Duncan prior to the passing of ESSA (Gratz, 2009). Unfortunately, Secretary Duncan was either unfamiliar or in denial about the history of merit pay in education when he urged teachers to support this option

(Gratz, 2009). Even though he urged teachers to accept this idea, 70% did not support the idea of merit pay according to surveys about this subject (Levin, 2011).

Merit pay was considered to be inappropriate for education for many reasons. These reasons included the idea that no other professional occupation was based on a measured outcome, pay that was solely based on student outcomes would eclipse other more important educational outcomes, few agreed what should be the basis of what was measured, there were too many inaccuracies that would affect the outcomes, the history of merit pay in other areas of the world showed negative consequences and very few individuals in the labor force were subjected to a merit pay salary (Levin, 2011). Without a consensus about the value of merit pay for educators and considering all of the aspects of using this format as stated above, it was inappropriate to utilize this in Public Law 90.

Merit pay, or pay for performance, was considered more beneficial to politicians than to education (Gratz, 2009). The historical inferences of pay for performance were imperative to ponder because they recommended that it was rarely ever effective in educational situations (Brewer, Myers, & Zhang, 2015). Most of the historical instances where merit pay was used in the United States have resulted in its discontinuation within a six-year period (Brewer et al., 2015). Merit pay had also been used in other countries in the past but was abandoned after numerous tries due to failure (Gratz, 2009).

In Britain, for example, merit pay's history began in the mid-1800', which used the results of student examinations as a basis for teacher's salaries as many school systems in the United States are currently doing (Gratz, 2009). While it took many years to actually overturn this decision, which resulted in cheating, cramming for exams, a flourishing testing establishment, and growing public disapproval, eventually the decision

to use merit pay was abolished and certified as a failure (Gratz, 1009). It would be prudent for the United States to learn from their allies and reevaluate the use of merit pay.

One major aspect of merit pay was the fact that outside factors that are independent of the control of teachers, would be used to determine a teacher's salary. Merit pay was intended to reward an individual for a positive output (Arthur, 2013). With Public Law 90, that positive output was not recognized; instead, a teacher was judged on the test results of an individual who may or may not have taken a test seriously. A study conducted by Vanderbilt University indicated that offering a \$15, 000 bonus to teachers did not have any effect on the results of student test scores (Arthur, 2013). These results indicated that teachers were not motivated to do their job by finances and merit pay would not produce any improved results.

Many individuals imply that merit pay could be defined by different forms and that teachers already had merit pay. Merit pay was considered by some experts as paying additional funds to teachers to mentor younger teachers, working in inner-city schools, serving in the capacity of department heads or on specific committees (Gratz, 2009). While this definition was not included in Public Law 90, this definition had been used to advance its proposal. Public Law 90 used the educational terminology used within the latest ESSA, which indicated student growth must be a significant factor in the evaluation process of teachers (Aguilar & Richerme, 2014).

Teachers across the United States have recently begun to rebel against merit pay. In Denver, Henry Roman, the president of the local teachers association, stated that the current merit pay system was instituting a revolving door of teacher turnover (Will, 2019). He added that it was essential to improve pay for quality teachers to stay in their

districts (Will, 2019). In Ohio, teachers' evaluations are based on two factors, which are both weighted at 50% (Willis & Ingle, 2018). Teacher observations by an administrator and student academic growth, which was determined by value-added scores, locally developed measures of student growth, or a state-approved standardized test from a vendor (Willis & Ingle, 2018). The results of these two factors determined their evaluation score and ultimately, their salary.

Another important point one teacher in a study pointed out indicated this teacher was offered a bonus of \$5,000 for having more AP students pass at a specific level than ever before, was the fact that teaching was a cumulative event (Arthur, 2013). One teacher should not get a bonus just because the results of a specific test was taken while enrolled in that teacher's classroom. Education was the result of years of teachers, counselors, librarians and parents working, contributing to the process, and assisting students to reach their potential (Hahn, 2014). Education was not the result of the influence of one teacher; it takes a village to teach a child.

Another area that had been affected by the use of merit pay or pay for performance was a teacher's enthusiasm for their work. In a study concerning union membership and job satisfaction, it was noted that fewer teachers were satisfied with their job as an educator if they were employed in a school system that used merit pay (Gius, 2013). Furthermore, this study also determined that these teachers were also more likely to transfer to another school (Gius, 2013). With the increasing inclusion of merit pay or pay for performance practices, these effects have significant consequences for school systems who are trying to retain highly effective teachers, or to hire teachers initially for their public schools.

Methodology and instrumentation/data sources/research materials. While there have not been many studies concerning Indiana's Public Law 90 since it is a fairly recent event, the few studies that have been located by this researcher indicated that it can be studied both quantitatively and qualitatively. Kelly Andrews utilized a mixed-method study on principal insights of RISE, which utilized a general survey with both Likert-style questions and open-ended questions (2015). Michael Steven Sargent's dissertation *on an investigation of research-based teaching practices through the teacher evaluations in Indiana public schools* used a quantitative design with a survey to collect information from Indiana principals' and teachers' preceding and after the Public Law 90 was legislated (Sargent, 2014). The last dissertation that was found by this researcher was written by Brian R. Disney in 2015. Disney's dissertation, titled *Demanding instructional leadership: Indiana high school assistant principals implementing high-stakes teacher evaluations*, used a mixed-method methodology using both a survey and an interview format to retrieve information for the study.

A few studies that had been conducted regarding some of the components within Public Law 90 had showed both quantitative and qualitative research, as well as mixed methods research. One study, *Assessment in the Kindergarten Classroom: An Empirical Study of Teachers' Assessment Approaches*, indicated an interview, with observations as an added measure, provided a qualitative study of kindergarten teachers in an accountability program. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students.

A study designed to describe the connection between special education policies and current accountability policies relied on interviews and an analysis of policy documents (Russell & Bray, 2013). This use of multiple instruments provided a much broader picture than just using an interview would. This study revealed there was often ambiguity between stated objectives from legislation and recommended teaching practices that required teachers to interpret how to implement policy from the government (Russell & Bray, 2013). This study accentuated the fact that some legislation may not fulfill its intentions when implemented. It also highlighted the possibility that certain policies may be detrimental to individuals within the school unintentionally.

There were a few dissertations written concerning teacher perceptions about their teaching. The first dissertation the researcher found was written by Joshua St. John in 2013 and was titled *the relationship between teachers' perceptions of the feedback they receive and their teaching efficacy in high-performing schools*. This study used a mixed-method design with both research on demographic data and the use of a survey, and an interview which included both closed and open-ended questions (St. John, 2013). Although some of the Indiana school systems in this study did not employ the use of the state evaluation model, RISE, they did use evaluation models that had the same components as RISE, as required by Public Law 90. Components of their evaluation plans were considered within the context of this study and determined self-efficacy, as well as teacher compliance to the law.

Another dissertation that was found by the researcher included one entitled, *Mixed-methods exploration of teacher perceptions: Background, practices, and attitudes related to student achievement*, by Deborah Isabell Faust in 2012. This dissertation

utilized both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data was gathered using vivid statistics, factor analysis, and structural equations (Faust, 2012). The qualitative case study data was collected through specific semi-structured interviews with the teachers, a separate administrative interview, classroom observations of educators' classes, and an evaluation of available class plans for teachers (Faust, 2012). Using these two methods together allowed the researcher to explain differences between data from standardized tests and the results of observation in the classroom.

Another dissertation was discovered by the researcher that concerned underrepresentation of minority males in the gifted and talented program. Roy D. Sermons conducted this study in 2016, which was entitled *Teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the underrepresentation of African-American males in gifted and talented education programs*. The phenomenological case study examined societal, traditional, and mental influences through interviews, member observations, and physical artifacts to collect data (Sermons, 2016). This study indicated that both society and the use of data that was available to teachers, was often not viewed by the teacher due to a misunderstanding about what was considered gifted, as well as misconceptions about the gifted student (Sermons, 2016). This information was gathered by the researcher through the use of observations, but also through the use of the interview, which appeared to be used unilaterally throughout the majority of the studies found by this researcher. With this information confirmed, it was apparent that an interview was the best method of obtaining information about teacher perceptions and those who were gifted.

While an assumption was made by the researcher that further studies may be produced and published in the future, at this time, these studies were the ones currently

published and available. With this limited amount of research currently available, it was imperative that additional studies, such as this researcher's current study, took place so supplementary information was available for individuals involved in the implementation of this law. Without additional study, and without feedback, this law may do more harm than good to Indiana students in the present and the near future.

Summary

It was necessary to view all of the components of the study in order to determine its importance. For that reason, the literature review presented the background to the problem to best review the current situation in light of history. Using the theoretical perspective of Interpretivism, the researcher documented the phenomena being explored by accurately recording the experiences of the northeastern Indiana middle school teachers involved in the study. This involvement allowed the researcher to view the situation from the eyes of the teachers involved in the study.

Investigating the history of the government's involvement in education from its inception to the present and presenting major legislative action the government had enacted over the years allowed the researcher to review what had been enacted prior to the legislation of Public Law 90 in Indiana, where Indiana legislators enacted change for the schools, teachers, and students in Indiana. While many individuals propose the idea that the government should not be involved in education, the history of the United States indicated that if it wasn't for government involvement, there would not be public education for all individuals.

With the review of information collected over the years that had been a basis of research from the beginning of public education in the United States, it was important to

determine what effect prior research had on public education today. Reviewing theorists from history and today allowed the study to reflect on what information had been proven and disproven over the years as effective methods of study. Reviewing these educational theories helped the researcher evaluate if current legislation supported or does not support current policy. With the emphasis on gifted education that this study included, researching theories that were from individuals who worked specifically with the gifted was equally important.

Public Law 90 from Indiana included accountability, standards, and merit pay. With those components involved in the law, special attention was paid to research that reflected whether these items together or separately were effective in an educational setting. The research indicated that merit pay was not an effective means to improve teaching in a school setting. Furthermore, the accountability movement had been more political than educational in nature. It is too soon to determine if the Common Core movement is going to be an effective measure of student performance, but with Indiana withdrawing from these standards, it will be more effective to evaluate the Indiana standards after they are fully implemented.

This researcher also examined different methods and instruments used in studies about Public Law 90 by other researchers. There were three prior published studies with aspects of Public Law 90 that were examined. These studies used both quantitative and qualitative methodologies with interviews and surveys to gather data. Since this study used a qualitative methodology with a descriptive design, it was in line with the other studies using the same procedures,

Indiana's Public Law 90 is a relatively new law with limited studies that have been published. Studies had been conducted on principal insights of RISE, research-based teaching practices through the teacher evaluations in Indiana public schools and implementing high-stakes teacher evaluations. However, no published dissertations had been conducted on the effect of the law on a specific sub-group of students, the gifted. Without the research on this topic, this effect will continue to be ignored, like many teachers have indicated was happening to the gifted student in the educational system of Indiana (Weller, 2014).

Using the theoretical perspective of Interpretivism, the researcher documented the phenomena being explored by accurately recording the experiences of the northeastern Indiana middle school teachers involved. This particular theory allowed the researcher to review information from the point of view of the participant, or in this case, the teacher. Since this was a qualitative study, retrieving data from the teacher was important in that it gave first-hand knowledge about what the educator was experiencing each day in the classroom. While some individuals may interpret information from a different perspective, looking at a situation from a teacher's view gave insight into a situation that a legislator may never have considered.

The researcher in this qualitative study used an interview to determine the experiences of northeastern Indiana middle school teachers in the classroom after the legislation passed Public Law 90. The purpose of using the interview design was to allow teachers to give their personal thoughts, opinions, and experiences regarding their experiences teaching in a public school after this law was passed. An interview allowed

the interviewer to follow up on any response the teacher gave for clarification purposes, or to allow the teacher to expand on information that had been shared.

This research built on the limited studies this law had produced. No published dissertations had been discovered by the researcher concerning the effect of this law on students, or the educators teaching in the classrooms of schools in Indiana. Any law that is passed in the United States should be evaluated for the effects it has on the citizens of the country. Both negative and positive effects should be evaluated in order to determine the benefits or detrimental results of that law. Without this review, legislators will not have the guidance that is needed to properly govern. The research question that evolved from this study reflected an evaluation procedure necessary to gather information from those who were directly involved—the teachers and students of Indiana.

The researcher had reviewed all information that was available in order to synthesize what was currently known about legislation, education, and the government involvement in education. It was the intention of the researcher to give an overview of all major government involvement in education, as well as a review of several education theorists involved in gifted education, as well as general education. This topic leads to the necessity of this information, since the government's involvement was paramount, and the educational theorists developed methods that should be followed to assist those students and teachers in the classroom. Furthermore, it was important to review educational trends such as accountability and merit pay as these items have a direct impact on education today.

With the information that has been presented, the background of the problem showed an evolving role for the government. In the beginning of the government's

involvement in education, the purpose of an education was stated as educating the public, so individuals could discern fact from fiction and not be taken advantage of by the learned individuals within or from another country. To educate the common man in reading, writing, some Latin, the Bible, and basic arithmetic was the goal of the founding fathers; that foundation has now been expanded to all citizens, both male and female, as well as those of any race. While the specific educational curriculum was decided by the individual schools in the beginning, it was only with the passage of ESSA that the control of what was taught has transitioned to the states. This transition may need additional input from research in order to bring education to the point it needs to become. Students who are gifted are the country's greatest resource. If recognition and training for the gifted does not become a primary goal for the country, it will possibly be the greatest waste we have ever encountered.

In order to begin this transition and address the gap, whether teachers meeting the requirements of Public Law 90 are inadvertently not meeting the needs of their gifted students, it was important to move beyond the history of this law and study the effects it has brought. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology this researcher used and how the data was collected. This chapter also discusses all ethical considerations as well as those teachers who were involved in the study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

According to research, gifted students are being overlooked in many classrooms in the United States (Sparks, 2018) Current legislation and an insufficient amount of training in educational teacher training universities has contributed to this problem (Rakow, 2012). In Indiana, additional legislation has recently been added which may exacerbate this situation. Public Law 90 was passed in 2011 as a part of a broad educational reform package (Cole, et al., 2012). In order to meet the needs of gifted students within the classroom, teachers must be able to identify gifted students, if the district does not have a program in place that has already completed this procedure, and provide in-depth content, sophisticated resources, and differentiated educational approaches (Rakow, 2012). Concurrently, Indiana teachers must meet the evaluation and accountability requirements of Public Law 90 in order to keep their teaching position.

The purpose of this descriptive qualitative research study was to describe the experiences of northeastern Indiana teachers, who have taught for a minimum of five years in a public school and currently are teaching, regarding the teaching of gifted students within their classroom, as well as any implications of Public Law 90 on their teaching. This study determined if gifted students were being ignored in the classrooms of teachers who were required to raise standardized test scores. This study also described how teachers unintentionally strived to meet the requirements of employment at the expense of the students who were the brightest within their classrooms. According to a study conducted in 2013 by professors at the University of Connecticut, it was possible that higher achievers suffered under the intimidation of school commands for not moving

students to reach minimum competence on state tests (Plucker, Hardesty, & Burroughs, 2013).

This chapter discusses the statement of the problem, the research question, the methodology used in the study, the research design, those involved in the study, ethical considerations, data collection and analysis, and limitations of this study. While any study requires these steps, it was important the researcher evaluate the study and continue to use the best possible methods to continue. The researcher will not only describe the aforementioned items, but also give explanations for their use or choice.

Statement of the Problem

Prior to this research, it was not known how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students. Although the gap, whether teachers who were meeting the requirements of Public Law 90 were inadvertently not meeting the needs of their gifted students, indicated a lack of empirical studies regarding this impact of the law, all educational laws should be evaluated regarding their impact within the classroom (Cole et al., 2013). Although three separate analyses have been conducted regarding perceptions of teachers, principals, and superintendents, studies had not been conducted regarding the impact this law had on the day to day teaching experiences of educators. Education apprehension concerning the initial implementation of this law was analyzed and evaluated as definitive concerns regarding this legislation (Murphy & Cole, 2017). An indication that this apprehension was lessened was apparent by an additional survey (Pies, et al., 2017). These teachers may or may not be aware of gifted students in their care. Since it was important for teachers to meet the needs of all students in their

schoolroom (Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2011), it was vital that their experiences were explored and investigated.

With attitudes and opinions such as the idea of students succeeding regardless of any specialized instruction prevalent among educators, gifted students could be greatly influenced. These students endure an unchallenging curriculum, a slower pace of instruction, and unawareness from their general education instructors (Berman et al., 2012). A lack of awareness about the unchallenging curriculum and instructional pace was the most damaging effect on the gifted student according to Brulles (2012). Teachers need training and exposure to the standards available for gifted students from the National Association for Gifted Children, prior to entering the classroom to become more aware of the needs of gifted children (NAGC, 2013). These standards indicate a need for gifted students to become more independent learners, as well as the need to have a more advanced curriculum (Berman et al., 2012).

Revealing these standards and providing training during their teacher training and preparation will enable teachers to be prepared to teach gifted students when they reach the classroom (Berman et al., 2012). This preparation will facilitate the teachers' instruction to meet gifted students' educational needs. Without this preparation, it will be difficult for teachers to meet the requirements a gifted student has so the child does not become bored and unmotivated in the general educational track.

A combination of the lack of preparation of teachers and current legislation jeopardizes America's future, according to some scholars (Hargrove, 2013). Chester Finn, a former United States assistant secretary of Education, believed the system currently in place had three systemic failures (Finn, 2012). These failures included the

absence of identifying gifted students, the lack of trained individuals in teaching the gifted child, and the scarcity of challenging classes designed for the gifted child (Finn, 2012). The emphasis that current legislation has on standardized test scores, as well as teacher accountability, evaluation, and employment based on these same test scores, may have contributed to a lack of support in education for the gifted.

Research Question

In order to determine whether teachers meeting the requirements of Public Law 90 inadvertently were not meeting the needs of gifted students within their middle school classroom in northeastern Indiana, it was necessary to interview a sample of these teachers regarding their individual practices. This study employed questions in an interview format to middle school (grades 6-8) general education teachers in rural school corporations in northeastern Indiana to determine if Public Law 90 had forced these teachers to focus on students at the lower level, instead of the students who were gifted or had high ability within their classroom in order to remain employed and pass their evaluations.

The educators within this study were asked questions to determine if their lessons were specifically designed to reach those students who were at risk of failing the state standardized test, a test that is given annually in grades 3-8, and grade 10 (IDOE, 2017). Since all students in grades 6-8 take this state mandated test, it allowed direct correlation for this study. Furthermore, these same educators were questioned regarding any attempts they had made regarding the teaching of those students who have high ability or were gifted. The questions were designed to determine how the evaluation plan, which is currently mandated under Public Law 90, had influenced the lessons they provided to

students within their classroom. Furthermore, additional questioning determined if the administration had placed any burden or pressure on the educators to assist students who were currently at risk of failing Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus (ISTEP+) or the newer state mandated test I-Learn, at the expense of those who were gifted or had higher ability.

The following research question guided this study:

RQ1: How do northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers describe their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they meet the needs of their gifted students?

Allowing these educators the opportunity to describe, in their own words, the requirements of Public Law 90 as well as the methods they utilize within the classroom will directly answer the information needed to address the gap. This gap, whether teachers meeting the requirements of Public Law 90 are inadvertently not meeting the needs of their gifted students, can be answered using this process. These teachers will explain, during their individual semi-structured interviews, what steps they are required to take each day as they work with students in their classroom. They also are able to describe the pressure, expectations, and requirements they endure each day to meet the obligations of Public Law 90.

Research Methodology

This researcher chose a qualitative methodology for this study because this method allowed her to determine data from interviewing individuals concerning the problem. Qualitative research invited the researcher to study the experiences of the participants to determine what had happened in their experiences firsthand. Data which was obtained using this qualitative research method also allowed a more personal

involvement for the researcher. Information was not obtained through a test, a database, or visual representation of ideals, but, instead, was gathered through the interaction of the researcher with the participants within the study. This particular study was used to determine the experiences of educators within the state of Indiana who have taught school for a minimum of five years and were currently teaching, and it was vital they were able to answer, explain, and elucidate any information that was given in a personal context. A quantitative methodology would have limited the study for the collection of data such as statistics and may miss contextual elements (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015) so it was necessary to use a qualitative methodology.

Qualitative research has been used more since 2008 as researchers delved into issues to provide more insight about the phenomena being studied (Mayer, 2015).

Qualitative research allowed the researcher to explain why or how an object was the way it was presented, instead of just stating that an object was (Mayer, 2015). This style of research provided more data than a simple positive or negative statistic. Quantitative research may provide data by using numerical statistics, but it does not allow transferability to another setting (Howson, 2019). Because of this, qualitative research unlocks more personal data about the situation that can be transferred to other individuals.

Qualitative research also allowed the researcher to study the subfields of societal and intellectual concerns about a situation (Dowling, Lloyd, & Suchet-Pearson, 2016). In a household where the belief system was more conservative-based, the responses a researcher may garner may differ from a more liberal-minded individual. This difference may be explained using a qualitative research method, while a quantitative research

method would be more concerned with the actual response. When exploring educational issues, it was important to have the explanations that qualitative research encourages.

This study was designed to determine the experiences of northeastern Indiana middle school classroom teachers and their self-efficacy in their classroom, regarding the teaching of gifted students in light of the requirements of Public Law 90. Using the qualitative method of research allowed for further elucidation of events the teacher had experienced to be explored. Furthermore, a quantitative research study might limit the scope of the study by teachers not being able to further explain their responses.

Quantitative responses are usually categorized by specific responses and a teacher might feel his/her responses was in need of more than a generic response.

Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers describe their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they meet the needs of their gifted students. The determinization of the epochē was examined by simply describing what was found in a specific subject as it appears, or was experienced, in everyday life (Englander, 2016). This recording of the daily experiences of educators revealed whether teachers had been influenced by Public Law 90 in their lessons. The purpose of using the descriptive survey design was to allow teachers to give their personal thoughts, opinions, and experiences regarding these concepts through an interview. An interview allowed the interviewer to hear the experiences of the teacher as well as follow up on any response the teacher gave for clarification purposes, or to allow the teacher to expand on information that had been shared, as well as their methods of meeting the needs of gifted students in their care.

The researcher interviewed eleven middle school teachers regarding their everyday lessons, their personal methods of teaching currently being employed within their classroom, and the emphasis by the school corporation on which students should receive the most attention from the teacher during the class period. Only educators who teach in the general, middle school education track took part in this study.

It was important for the researcher to interview 10 to 15 middle school (grades 6-8) teachers within the school systems of northeastern Indiana, as some researchers believe saturation requires approximately 11 participants (Latham, 2013). According to Walker (2012), however, a researcher had enough participants for research if there was sufficient material to duplicate the study if additional new information was attained. If the researcher had the commitment of 10 to 15 teachers at the beginning of the study, then their information would provide a snapshot of the situation for these teachers to determine if additional research was necessary about the effects of this law. Further studies are necessary with other school corporations throughout the state for additional information to further this study.

It was the belief of this researcher that using an interview would be an appropriate method of exploring the experiences of teachers. An interview was beneficial when the research was seeking to explore people's discernment and positions about a specific theme (Ellis, 2016). The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students. Furthermore, since only one source of data, the experiences of teachers, was explored, an interview was the best method of extracting this information.

A qualitative descriptive study was the best method for examining this information since it allowed experience without prior assumptions to guide the research (Phenomenology, 2016). According to Dr. Y. P. Aggarwal, the descriptive survey method was dedicated to garnering information concerning a specific circumstance, while interpreting or analyzing relationships among those who were involved (Salaria, 2012). Examining the experiences of teachers involved on a day to day basis with students, who teach in a Public Law 90 era, allowed discovery of information previously hidden from view in this world of data. The researcher began the process of interviewing ten to fifteen middle school (grades 6-8) teachers regarding their teaching experiences, the methods of teaching currently being employed within the classrooms of these teachers, and the emphasis by several school corporations in the northeastern section of Indiana on which students received the most attention from the teacher during the class period. Although no teachers were found to be biased, if a teacher had been considered biased or compromised due to an underlying disdain for the current political system, a specific political party, or an administrator during this process, the information obtained from this individual would have been discarded. Only educators who taught in the middle school, general education subject track from northeastern Indiana public school corporations took part in this study.

Population and Sample Selection

This study took place in northeastern Indiana. The researcher interviewed a total of eleven middle school (grades 6 -8) teachers, who had taught in a public school general subject classroom under the mandates of Public Law 90, from several school corporations in this area of Indiana. Any teachers who had taught less than five years who wished to

participate in this research were also interviewed and their information was contrasted with the more experienced teachers. The researcher utilized purposive sampling, a strategy that chooses participants founded on specific conditions (CIRT, 2018). More specifically, criterion sampling, which involved selecting instances that connect some fixed criterion of prominence (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006), were used to gather data. The researcher had received permission from several school systems in this area (see Appendix A).

In order to have enough participants, the researcher continued to reach out to school systems in the area. Due to attrition and a lack of teachers wanting to participate, the researcher employed many methods to be able to complete this study. The researcher began a Facebook group, Indiana Public School Teachers, to find participants. The researcher asked teachers personally to be involved in the study, as well as reaching out to school librarians throughout the state on social media to make the request of the teachers they worked with on a daily basis. Teachers were also asked through an email sent to their principals to distribute to school employees. It took approximately ten months to finally have enough participants for this study.

While the school systems in this area have special needs teachers, the target population of this study was limited to level sixth through eighth grade teachers who had taught over two years in a general education, subject specific classroom. All middle school teachers who teach in the general population, with at least two years' experience, were invited to participate in the study. Although the researcher wanted an equal number of participants from each grade, eventually seven teachers taught eighth grade, but only two taught in each the sixth or seventh grade level. Furthermore, only two male teachers

were willing to participate in the research, while the remaining teachers were female. These volunteers were selected by the researcher based on their volunteer date and time, with those who had volunteered first being placed on the top of the list. The researcher originally had the participation of fifteen individuals, but due to circumstances some were prevented from completing the study.

Written permission had been requested and obtained by the researcher from several rural school systems in northeastern Indiana to conduct research. School systems that gave written permission included the Jay School Corporation, South Adams School Corporation, Southern Wells School Corporation, and Blackford County School Corporation. These permission letters are reviewable in Appendix A. Additionally, two individuals who worked in a metropolitan area of the state, who were personally known by the researcher, also agreed to participate in the study.

In the request for permission to conduct research letter (see Appendix B), anonymous responses for the teachers were guaranteed to each superintendent. All responses were recorded using Dragon Software on the computer, as well as a backup recorder. Teachers were not identified during the interview or identified as to the subject they taught. Any reference that was accidentally mentioned during the course of the interview concerning these items was deleted from the transcript upon completion of the interview by the researcher. The researcher kept a list of alphanumeric codes, which were assigned to each interviewee prior to the interview but will not be made public. This list was retained by the researcher and stored in a secure, locked cabinet at the researcher's home. Teachers were also allowed to read the transcript of their responses, if they desired, after the interview to assure them that they worded their responses in a manner

that was satisfactory to them using the process of member checking to assure validity (Madill & Sullivan, 2017).

Interviews were conducted with the target population using open-ended questions and last a minimum of half an hour. Interviews were conducted in a private meeting room at the local public library or at a place the interviewee felt comfortable so that confidentiality was assured. The entire interview was recorded using the researcher's computer, which had Dragon software installed on it. Once transcribed, their responses completed approximately twenty-five pages of single-spaced notes for the researcher to analyze. Individuals were selected randomly from all middle schools based on interest in participating in the educational study. According to research practices, this geographical and physical homogeneity provided information from educators within the same circumstances (Robinson, 2014). Using this as a guideline, the information was consistent across the study since all had the same basic setting. As a result, this study was relevant as a sample for the general population of this area of the state.

Prior to beginning any interview, the target population individuals completed a consent form (see Appendix C), giving permission for their responses to be used in the study. Educators within the study were not identified; however, they were assigned an alphanumeric code to separate their responses from another's response. Men were identified with the letter M while women were identified with an F, the grade the individual primarily taught was identified as a number six through eight, and the individual was given a number to indicate where they fell in the participation group. The alphanumeric coding 12M6 would indicate that the twelfth individual who was interviewed was a man who taught primarily grade 6. No personal information was

included within this study to identify the interviewee, with the exception of an inclusion of grade level, to determine if this might be a factor in how responses were given.

Sources of Data

All data was gathered through the use of an interview. Questions were designed by the researcher using a semi-standardized or semi-structured interview, to allow flexibility within the interview process (Ryan, Coughlan, & Cronin, 2009). Using this method allowed for unforeseen replies and concerns to transpire through the practice of open-ended inquiry (Ryan et al., 2009). Using the theoretical perspective of interpretivism, the researcher documented the phenomena being explored by accurately recording the experiences of the northeastern Indiana middle school teachers involved. It was important to be able to understand what the teachers experienced in day-to-day encounters. This perspective indicated how Public Law 90 was influencing educators within the schools in Indiana and their interaction with gifted students in the classroom. Furthermore, using this model allowed the researcher the opportunity to explore the experiences as personally relayed.

The researcher had developed questions to begin the discussion regarding Public Law 90, accountability as required by the law, standardized testing, and the gifted students within their classrooms based on their experiences (See Appendix D); however, statements made by the interviewee may have necessitated the use of follow-up questions to allow individuals to further elucidate their experiences. Questions were asked that would allow the researcher to see the teacher's classroom through their eyes. They could present information about their procedures and practices that might not be given using another method. Since the purpose of the interview was to address the gap, whether

teachers meeting the requirements of Public Law 90 inadvertently did not meet the needs of their gifted students, it was important to hear about their practices in the classroom. All interview questions were approved by an Expert panel of trained educators at Grand Canyon University, Dr. Jason Ward, Dr. Patricia D'Urso, and Dr. Matthew Stimpson. The final sample included eleven participants who met the inclusion criteria for the study. Having eleven participants provided enough data to analyze and produce conclusive results.

The ability to encourage truthful, detailed, and specific testimonials was central for accurate research (Yii, Powell, & Guadagno, 2014), especially when researching the experiences of teachers within the classroom. Open-ended questions are defined as queries that do not propose specific facts or evidence and encourage detailed reactions (Yii et al., 2014). This form of interview allowed the teacher to have control of where the conversation headed and instilled confidence in the responses. While relinquishing control of how the interviewee answered, the researcher used the prepared questions to guide the conversation, but also allowed additional responses to complete the picture.

It was important for the researcher to make sure all participants in the study were comfortable during the interview. An interview will be more successful and accurate if a sense of rapport has been established (Poole, 2016). It was also important that non-verbal items such as smiling, encouraging stances, and attentive behavior was demonstrated by the researcher in order to make the interviewee less stressed or nervous (Poole, 2016). Interviews were not limited to a specific time period, so each interview was time specific to the interviewee.

Trustworthiness.

A method to ensure validity was used within the interview process. Validity was achieved through the anonymous nature of the interview, a lack of discussion prior to the interviews concerning any preconceived ideas, the sameness of the questions being queried, and the open-ended nature of the questions. Answers and replies from the participants were transcribed using computer transcription devices from an original recording of the actual interview. Participants were aware the computer was recording; however, names were not indicated on the transcript in any manner—only the alphanumeric code assigned to each educator. The researcher maintained a copy of the alphanumeric codes and correlating teacher identification within a secure, locked cabinet within her home. Any identifying information that was inadvertently recorded was edited prior to release of the transcript.

The actual transcript was analyzed through the use of computer analysis software to ascertain trends within the data. This researcher used MaxQDA software that was available through the DC Network at Grand Canyon University. This software had been approved by the university and was accurate. Using a computer analysis program authenticated the data and validated the research; however, the researcher also used member checking and manual coding to validate the answers were accurate.

Credibility. For information to be accurate, the researcher conducts an interview to determine information about individual's attitudes, concerns, motivations, and experiences (Howson, 2019). This study employed the use of member checking to assure credibility. Qualitative works show that member checks have numerous benefits for both researchers and interviewees by extending an opportunity to identify individual

prejudices of the researcher by seeking different perspectives about the elucidation of the information, maintaining the moral responsibility of the researcher to guarantee a precise display of interviewee accounts, and offering the researcher the prospect of gathering supplementary elements, or addressing sections of misperceptions (Kornbluh, 2015). Information gathered through the interview process was reliable and credible due to the following guidelines that were utilized throughout the process. No dialogue of the topic had been debated with any potential participant prior to the actual interview. This lack of discussion on the part of the researcher enabled participants to remain impartial in their responses and prevent trying to give the researcher the information she needed to prove a specific point. Furthermore, it was important the interviewees gave an honest response from their experiences, so the focus remained on those experiences and not on other topics.

This project was also reliable due to the methods the researcher employed when gathering data. Information was recorded, and then transcribed using computer software. The researcher used member checking to allow the interviewees to view the transcript on the computer and add additional comments for clarification to accurately detail what was intended. Member checking is a comprehensive method to assure credibility within the research project (Varpio, Ajjawi, Monrouxe, O'Brien, & Rees, 2017). The researcher also took notes throughout the interview; however, those notes were used only as a basis for further questioning or to further elucidate the information. Furthermore, all information was collected based on actual answers the participants gave and not on any interpretation that may be garnered by the researcher during the process of the interview.

Transferability. Transferability, or research conclusions, is unlike some facets of research in that individuals may establish how relevant the conclusions are to their circumstances (Connelly, 2016). This information may be replicated in other settings and another population if the same interview protocol and participant selection strategy was used with teachers within the state of Indiana (Williams, 2015). Since this research was being conducted at an early stage concerning Indiana's Public Law 90, it was possible that additional studies may replicate it and provide additional information. The questions that had guided this study have been placed in Appendix D and may be replicated in other school systems within the state of Indiana to further elucidate this information.

Eleven middle school (grades 6 -8) teachers were interviewed in northeastern Indiana regarding their experiences within the classroom after the implementation of the legislation known as Public Law 90. These teachers were able to relate their experiences as relating to this law and any possible effects of this law. Any additional interviews which are conducted within other school corporations by other researchers would further illuminate educator's experiences within the classrooms of Indiana. Their findings would be added to those within this study to continue to add to the body of knowledge information about this law.

Dependability. Dependability refers to the constancy of the information over a period of time and the circumstances of the research (Connelly, 2016). The study was dependable as it formed specific conclusions and themes found within the transcripts which was supported by a logical development from the teachers' accounts to the findings of the study (Williams, 2015). Evidence within this study included transcripts of the interviews, an alignment of the problem statement and research questions with the

interview questions, member checking of the transcripts, a recording of the interview using computer generated transcription software, and documentation of the interviews.

Confirmability. Confirmability is the impartiality, or the level answers are constant and could be recurrent (Connelly, 2016). It also refers to the objectivity of study outcomes (William, 2015). This study was impartial due to its registering the comments of teachers within the interview, which was grounded with the consensus that all answers were correct and the only responses that were being sought were the experiences of the classroom teacher. Since all responses were transcribed within the study and all comments were included in the outcomes, the interviews were impartial regardless of the comments. Middle school teachers (grades 6 - 8) were interviewed in the community room at the local public library or at a place the interviewee requested using the interview questions in Appendix D as a guide. All teachers were asked the same questions and were able to respond in the time frame the educator needed to answer the question.

All middle school general education teachers in grades 6-8 were asked to participate in the study from several school systems within the northeastern section of Indiana. Individuals were randomly chosen from those who volunteered to take part in the study. Teachers who volunteered were assigned an alphanumeric identification code to maintain their anonymous status. Their responses to these questions were placed in categories or themes that became apparent after the interviews were concluded. No predetermined themes had been designed by the researcher at the beginning of study.

Data Collection and Management

Data was collected throughout the study through the use of the open-ended long interview. Individuals were interviewed in the private community room at the local

public library or at a location of their choice, without distractions. The computer recorded the interview using Dragon software, so an immediate transcript was available. After each interview, the transcription of the interview was viewed by the individual for accuracy. This transcript was downloaded from the computer and transcribed for evaluation. After the final interview was approved, the transcripts were downloaded into MaxQDA software. Information was sorted into themes by the researcher, which were evident after the interviews, and used these themes as codes in the software. The software was utilized to categorize the transcripts into the coded themes. After the transcripts were categorized, the researcher began the process of analyzing the information. After the analysis of themes was complete, all participants had the opportunity to view the analysis related to the data collected during their own interview and give personal agreement as to the final analysis of information for member checking.

All personal notes taken within the interview, using alphanumeric codes to preserve the participant's anonymous status, were stored in a lockbox and then will be destroyed in the paper shredder three years after the completion of the research. Transcripts were stored in a password-protected personal computer, to which other individuals did not have access. Any printouts of transcripts were kept in a secure location and shredded after the three-year waiting period, as required by the Association of Qualitative Research (AQR) and Grand Canyon University's requirements. Epoché was determined by recording the descriptions on the specific subject as it appeared, or was experienced, in everyday life as given in the interview (Englander, 2016).

A set of questions, which guided the interview, had been developed and placed in the appendix to describe the experiences of the participants (See Appendix D). These

questions had been approved for use by an expert panel of educators at Grand Canyon University. These questions were general in nature, but specific to obtain the data required to address the research questions. Using these questions as a guide allowed others to replicate the study in other settings within the state of Indiana. However, since these questions were used in a semi-standardized or semi-structured interview, other studies might find their discussions develop in a different direction due to the personal experiences of their participants.

The data were collected and organized for analysis. Braun and Clark's 6-step process provided a clear and usable framework for organization of the raw data into codes and then themes. This 6-step process included the following steps: Becoming familiar with the data, generate initial codes, search for themes, review themes, define themes, and write up the information (Braun & Clark, 2013) (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Following the advice of Braun and Clark, the researcher continued with this process by organizing the data based on the latent level which looks beyond what has been said and identified or examined the underlying statements about the data (Braun & Clark, 2013) (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

Data Analysis Procedures

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students. Using an interview protocol allowed the researcher to enter the world of the teacher's involved in the study and see their world from their point of view.

The following research question was used within this study:

RQ1: How do northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers describe their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they meet the needs of their gifted students?

The researcher observed specific themes which became apparent within the interview and aided in the data analysis. These themes included the identification of gifted students, differentiation within the classroom, the use of standardized tests, teaching with the standards, evaluation emphasis, and opinions from teachers about Public Law 90. Each of these themes were apparent in each of the interviews for this study. While teachers differed slightly on some of their responses, their responses overall were consistent throughout the study.

After the transfer of interview transcripts of all participants had been completed, the use of MaxQDA software was utilized by the researcher to organize the information. Next, a Modification of the Stevick – Colaizzi – Keen Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data was used to analyze the information. This method analyzed the information using the following steps:

1. Record all relevant statements
2. List each non-repetitive, non-overlapping statement.
3. Relate and group the differing components into themes
4. Synthesize the differing components and themes into a description of the experience (including examples from the transcripts)
5. Reflect and construct a description of the experience.
6. Construct a textural-structural description of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

These themes and experiences were collected and used for the exhibition of ideas presented in the interviews. As stated above, most teachers were consistent in their responses to the questions, while some gave more illustrations than others. These

additional responses provided a more thorough description of the experiences of these teachers.

In order to prevent any problems that could occur when reviewing and understanding information garnered from other individuals such as the natural inclination to allow the researcher's personal biases and experiences to influence the analysis of the information, the researcher used the process of bracketing to maintain the integrity of the information. Bracketing required the researcher to be truthful and heedful about her own viewpoint, both with established theories and convictions and evolving assumptions, with the investigative objective of focusing on the interviewees' descriptions with a receptive mindset (Tufford & Newman, 2010). With this mindset clearly forefront in the researcher's thoughts, the information remained objective and untarnished by prior bias.

Ethical Considerations

Both verbal and written permission had been obtained by the researcher from the Superintendent of Jay Schools, the Superintendent of Southern Wells Schools, the Superintendent of Blackford County Schools, and the Superintendent of South Adams Schools for the research to occur (See Appendix A). Furthermore, IRB permission had been given prior to any retrieval of data (See Appendix B). Additionally, all participants signed a written consent. This consent was obtained prior to the interviews. When individuals participating in the study arrived for the interview, they were greeted by the researcher and made comfortable. The researcher then explained the consent form and its necessity for the interview. After the review of the form, the participant was allowed to ask questions regarding the consent form and was allowed to reschedule their interview for a later time at their convenience if necessary. Once all questions had been addressed,

the participant signed the consent form (see Appendix C) and the interview began using the open-ended questions from Appendix D. None of the individuals who participated declined to sign the consent form.

This study endeavored to protect all individuals involved in presenting information through the interview process. Since evaluations of individuals was a volatile discussion for some individuals, it was important to have complete privacy regarding the information and names associated with the results. For this reason, there was not any recording of personal names of the individuals involved in the study on the transcript. Individuals were given an alphanumeric code, which was noted on the transcript of the interview and any notes the researcher kept during the interview. This list of codes and corresponding identity information is kept in a locked strongbox at the home of the researcher. Educators willing to participate in the study and their information will remain confidential throughout the collection of the data by the researcher. All individuals involved in the interviews were also cautioned by the researcher to keep their identities confidential and not reveal any information given or asked for during the interview.

Transcripts of the interviews were stored in a password-protected, private computer that was safeguarded by the researcher. This device will not be available to the public and will be stored in a secure, private area. The researcher has a back-up USB device for all material for safeguarding purposes, but it will also be placed in a locked, private strongbox with the alphanumeric codes indicated above so access will not be available to the public. The data will be kept by the researcher for a period of three years as required for research at Grand Canyon University. After this time period, all records will be destroyed. The Belmont Report indicated research should be conducted to

safeguard the individual the researcher was researching and maintain basic ethics and principles to protect these individuals (Belmont Report, 1979). Individuals should be treated fairly, respected, and protected for their personal opinions and ideals (Belmont Report, 1979).

Using bracketing throughout the process within the interview process and the analysis provided safeguards from any information becoming distorted from the original intent of the participants. This process enabled the transcript to relay the personal experiences of the participants without the bias of the researcher, so the integrity of the research remained. This process of member checking protected not only the integrity of the research, but also the integrity of those participating in this research.

Limitations and Delimitations

As with any research study, there are often assumptions, limitations, and delimitations that occur within the realm of the study. While it was important to address as many of these factors as possible, some are outside of the control of the researcher. It is important that any study that is undertaken view and acknowledge these items to make sure consideration is given to the results. It is with these factors, that the following had been taken into issue:

Assumptions.

1. This study was indicative of the population of the teachers in several school districts located in the northeastern section of the state of Indiana. It was assumed the participants would answer the questions honestly and to their best of their knowledge. This assumption was based on the fact that anonymity and confidentiality had been and will be continuously preserved. It was also assumed that all participants had voluntarily chosen to participate in this study and may leave at any time at their own discretion without retribution by the researcher.

Limitations.

1. This study was limited by the number of individuals who could be interviewed, the interview process, and the reluctance of individuals to provide authentic responses to questions without exaggerated elaboration. Although these teachers were randomly selected based on the qualifications from the individuals willing to participate and were available, additional individuals may have provided greater insight into any problem. Meeting and interviewing individual teachers was time-consuming, but necessary to gather the data for this study. This process may be limited to these time constraints (Sewell, 2016).
2. It was also possible that some individuals were reluctant to share information due to a perceived fear of retribution on their evaluation. Although each individual signed a consent form and anonymity was guaranteed, there are some people who still might be hesitant to speak freely about the subject. The interviewer identified each interviewee by using an alpha-numeric coding method and not their name or subject taught, which should alleviate this fear and reassure all participants.

Delimitations.

1. The results of this study could be characteristic of public-school teachers in the state of Indiana who teach in the average school system. However, since this study was conducted in a densely populated county in northeastern Indiana, the study was restricted by experiences relevant to this area.
2. Furthermore, this study may be constrained by the fact that this particular area has a limited number of professional positions for employment—only 10.2% have a bachelor's degree or higher, and 19.9% of students live in poverty (Public Records, 2014).
3. Furthermore, this study was limited to teachers within the general education classroom. Teachers who were employed to teach in the Special Education department, who had training teaching and working with gifted students, were not be a part of this study. It was important to have the average, non-specialized, teacher's experiences in order to determine if gifted students were having their needs met in the general classroom.

Summary

This research was an endeavor to gather data about a specific phenomenon—the neglecting of teaching gifted students as a result of the passing of Indiana Public Law 90. Through the interviewing of educators, themes became apparent to indicate whether or not Indiana's Public Law 90 has had an adverse effect on the teaching of Indiana children who were gifted. Only through the interview process can information be garnered to

indicate if teachers were being unduly influenced to ignore those higher ability or gifted students in their classes in order to bring the scores up of less able students.

Indiana Public Law 90 specifically indicated that a teacher's overall evaluation was influenced by the scores obtained through standardized testing (Keck, 2015). However, research indicated that the tests used to assess student success may be appropriate to measure what students discern, but it was a defective gauge of how well these students had been taught (Popham, 2014). Further research indicated that merit pay flows from defective logic and several assumptions (Gratz, 2009). These assumptions included the idea that teachers do not work hard, schools are failing, and measuring educational success was the most important factor in schools (Gratz, 2009).

Many individuals, including legislators, believe these myths (Gratz, 2009). As a result, these legislators created state policy to force teachers to spend their time preparing students for a standardized test, as well as work with individual students on the lower level within their classes, in order to raise standardized test scores (Weinbaum, 2012). While teachers were working with those students on the lower level of the ability spectrum, or with those students considered "on the bubble" (those students who are close to passing but need intense remediation to assist them in moving above the passing line), the gifted child was ignored (Richardson & Bushaw, 2015).

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students. Classroom teachers were questioned about their experiences regarding their interaction and teaching of students within their classroom with a concentrated look at the gifted student. Classroom

teachers were also questioned about whether Public Law 90 influenced how they taught, who they taught, and what they taught. Interviewing classroom teachers enabled the researcher to determine if a problem exists in this area as a result of current legislation, or if another cause is to be determined.

Since the purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students, Chapter 4 will describe the responses teachers gave through the interview. Using their responses as the only data that was necessary to answer the stated purpose, as well as address the gap, the researcher was able to determine if these teachers had to make a choice between their students and their needs in order to meet the requirements of Public Law 90.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the data provided by the participants in this study. Information was gathered by the researcher through the use of an interview. Using an interview to gather data within qualitative research to determine a consensus of the population is a routine procedure (Willis, 2007). Furthermore, in educational research interviewing is considered the most commonplace method of collecting data and in many cases, it is the solitary resource of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 106).

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students. This chapter reveals the experiences of middle school teachers (grades 6-8) as they work with students in northeastern Indiana, while teaching under the mandates of Indiana's Public Law 90, Ind. Code 20-28-11.5, 2011. It also revealed information by some teachers who were able to compare their personal teaching experiences before and after the implementation of this law.

Prior to this research, it was not known how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students. Although three separate analyses had been conducted regarding perceptions of teachers, principals, and superintendents about the law, an identified gap was a study regarding the impact this law had on the day-to-day teaching experiences of educators.

The following research question guided this study:

RQ1: How do northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers describe their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they meet the needs of their gifted students?

A qualitative methodology had been used for this study because this method allowed the researcher to give an account of how teachers see their classroom from their point of view (Barnham, 2015). Qualitative research allowed the researcher to study the experiences of the participants as they described their knowledge of teaching pedagogy firsthand and meet the requirements of Indiana's Public Law 90 (Barnham, 2015). The collection of data, which was obtained using an interview format, allowed a more personal involvement for the researcher. Information was not obtained through a test, a database, or visual representation of ideals, but, instead, was gathered through the interaction of the researcher with the participants within the study. This particular study used an interview to determine the experiences of educators within the state of Indiana and it allowed them to answer, explain, and elucidate any information from the description by the teacher.

Many teachers changed their teaching methodology in order to comply with the law. The law and the teacher's administration required they reform their methodology to encompass the standards represented on the state test. It was prudent teachers arranged their schedules of teaching their required standards so the students could have additional preparation for the standardized test in the spring. Failure on the state test not only affected an individual teacher's evaluation, it also affected the entire school's grade. This school grade would affect the evaluations of all of the educators within the school. The law and its requirements became the basis for educators throughout the state since it affected their salary, position and reputation within the education society.

Descriptive Findings

All of the teachers interviewed for data input for this study worked in the public-school sector of Indiana teaching sixth, seventh or eighth grade. These teachers taught language arts, science, mathematics, or social studies and were not employed in the capacity of special needs classrooms. While the majority of the teachers were employed in rural areas within northeastern Indiana, two participants taught in a northeastern metropolitan area of the state. These individuals were known personally to the researcher and provided data on their respective schools and their personal classrooms.

There was a total of eleven participants who provided data to the researcher, although approximately 150 teachers were approached about participating in this research study. Most participants answered all the questions, but some declined to provide information on particular subjects. They were reassured that this was not a problem by the researcher prior to any interviews taking place. Furthermore, all participants were allowed to elucidate any comments they wished in order to state their point. All participants were also able to review their comments or request a copy of their transcript. Member checking was provided by the researcher to make sure all comments were exactly stated as the participant wanted.

While it had been expected that all grades would be represented, seven teachers taught eighth grade, but only two taught in each the sixth or seventh grade level. Furthermore, only two male teachers were willing to participate in the research, while the remaining teachers were female. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), only 32.9% of teachers in the United States who teach grades six through eight are males (OECD, 2017). With this explanation in mind,

the gender discrepancy seemed plausible and within acceptable margins. Indiana, specifically, did not list their ratio of male versus female teacher in this grade level on the Indiana Department of Education website.

All teachers who answered questions within the interview had taught for a minority of five years, while many taught more. No first year or second year teachers participated in the research. Furthermore, one teacher had served as an English teacher for several years, transitioned to a school librarian, and recently, due to a reduction in staff, transitioned back into the classroom. This transitional period placed this individual in a position to compare her experiences before Public Law 90's implementation and after its implementation with more insight.

A copy of one of the interviews conducted for this study was included in Appendix F. It has been coded using the Code Book in Appendix E. One of the interviews lasted approximately one hour. The remaining interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 45 minutes each, depending on whether the teacher needed additional clarification about a question. The researcher had provided clarification and the questions to the teachers prior to the actual interview so expectations about the interview could be expedited. It was found that this process eliminated some of the nervousness about participating in the research, which had plagued the procurement of participants. It was the opinion of the researcher that this process was necessary for the research to be gathered as Public Law 90 deals with the personal evaluations of teachers. These teachers were uncomfortable giving opinions that could be interpreted negatively, and this process alleviated some of that nervousness. The researcher gave the teachers an option to have either a written or oral interview to lessen any apprehension. This option allowed all

participants the opportunity to feel comfortable and have some control, as well as provide flexibility with the direction of the interview. It also allowed the participants the ability to review their responses on their own time basis which allowed for a more comprehensive, accurate interview.

The following table (Table 1) indicates a description of teachers who participated in this study.

Table 1.

Participant Information

Participant Number/Code	Grade Taught	Demo-graphic	Transcript in Single Space Pages
1R8	8	RURAL	4
2R6	6	RURAL	2
3R6	6	RURAL	3
4C8	8	CITY	1.5
6R8	8	RURAL	1.5
7C7	7	CITY	2
8R7	7	RURAL	3
9R8	8	RURAL	2
10R8	8	RURAL	1.5
11R8	8	RURAL	1.5
12R8	8	RURAL	1.5

Data Analysis Procedures

Although this study was originally a phenomenological study, it was found that a descriptive qualitative study was more appropriate to relay the information. According to Duckham and Schreiber (2016), phenomenology is a viewpoint that centers on how one advances understanding as one relates tangible experiences. Descriptive studies are studies that describe the prevailing phenomena as precisely as possible systematically

(Atmowardoyo, 2018). The data in this study contributed more to the concept of description than understanding.

Information that was given through the interview was transcribed and then categorized and systematically arranged to identify codes for use in the analysis software. In coding, labels such as short phrases are given to sentences that characterize repetitive themes from the interview. The researcher chose a selective coding method to form the codes in this study. The selective coding empowered the researcher to select themes of structured data from interrelated statements (Williams & Moser, 2019). In selective coding, levels of connectedness can develop from the procedure, permitting the researcher to detect similar responses (Williams & Moser, 2019). This coding method allowed the researcher the ability to discern themes from the interviews. Using these codes, the researcher used MaxQDA to sort through the comments and provide a presentable consensus of the responses given. These results are shown in the Code Book (Appendix E). Coding qualitative research to find shared themes and views was a function of analyzing the data. The first step after coding was completing a thematic analysis, an exploration for themes that surface as being significant to the explanation of the phenomenon (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This first step in analyzing the interviews allowed the researcher to obtain the themes for the study. The researcher was then able to examine the themes to understand what the teachers were saying.

The researcher used these themes as codes to sort the information in the software. The following codes were used: Gifted Identification, Differentiation, Remediation, Teaching with the Standards, Evaluation Emphasis, Test Preparation, and Opinion about the state law. The first code used within this study was Gifted Identification. All

comments in this code related to information the teacher provided concerning what the teacher knew about the identification of gifted students within the educator's school system. While there were several teachers who were unaware of this information, there were others who made assumptions based on their own experiences or theories.

The second code used within this study was Differentiation. All comments in this code indicated the teacher's use of differentiation within his/her own classroom, the teacher's definition of how differentiation was used within the classroom, and if the teacher used differentiation for specific students. These comments were requested due to the need to determine if teachers used differentiation with their gifted students or if its use was for other purposes. Since differentiation is recommended highly and advocated for in research and practice in the teaching of gifted students, it is a significant determination of whether gifted students are having their needs met within the classroom (Kaplan, 2019).

The third code used within this study included Teaching with the Standards. Comments made within the interviews regarding what was emphasized within the lesson plans, exactly what requirements are in place that educators are directed to teach, and whether teachers are directed to reinforce certain ideas are placed in this category. Furthermore, any comments made concerning directives made to teachers regarding their lesson plans are placed in this code.

The fourth code used within this study included Evaluation Emphasis. Comments concerning the importance of the teacher's evaluation were placed in this code. Included in this code were any comments made that showed whether a teacher was concerned

about their evaluation when they prepared their lessons. This code also included any comments that mentioned the evaluation process or the teacher's final evaluation.

The fifth code used within this study included Test Preparation. Any comments made by the teacher about the amount of time a teacher utilized throughout the academic year on preparing for the state test was included in this code. Additional comments made concerning any use of PIVOT or Acuity preparation tests was also included in this code. Test preparation also included any comments about reteaching a concept that preparation tests indicated students had not mastered. This code included all comments about steps the teacher needed to undergo to make sure the students in their classroom was prepared for the state test.

The sixth code within this study included Remediation. Any comments made by the teacher about whether that teacher used remediation within the classroom, outside of the classroom, school wide efforts to remediate students, and the identification of students who required remediation was included in this category. This code included both teacher efforts and special programs that were available both during the school year and during special sessions after school or in the summer. Teachers were also able to state their opinions about this remediation process and those results.

The final code used within this study included Opinion about the state law. Within the interviews, teachers often made comments concerning their opinion about the law. Included in this code were all remarks regarding both positive and negative comments about the law, its fairness, or any opinion that was offered in regard to the law. Any comment that could be regarded as a personal opinion by the teacher was included in this code. These opinions are important to the body of knowledge since they personally affect

how a teacher responds to the requirements of the law. Furthermore, qualitative research's purpose is to gather information to better understand the phenomena being studied (Willig, 2019). An individual's opinion does affect their reaction so this information will be included in the study for that purpose.

This research study was guided by the research question. The interview protocol was developed specifically with the research question in mind (Appendix D). The interview protocol was approved by a Grand Canyon University Expert Panel, comprised of Dr. Jason Ward, Dr. Patricia D'Urso and Dr. Matthew Stimpson, before it was used to interview educators and was approved through the Association of Qualitative Research (AQR). Furthermore, all teachers had the opportunity to review their transcripts before the final submission after they had reviewed the questions. Educators were allowed to decline to answer questions they were uncomfortable answering to prevent any misrepresentation of the factual responses. While only one teacher declined to answer one response, it was more the opinion of the educator that this participant was not experienced enough to give a response, even though this educator had taught for several years. This lack of response did not disqualify the remainder of the teacher's data since it was apparent there were plenty of responses to reference the information.

The following research question guided this study:

RQ1: How do northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers describe their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they meet the needs of their gifted students?

The data were collected according to Braun and Clark's 6-step process which provided a clear and usable framework for organization of the raw data into codes and then themes. This 6-step process included the following steps: Becoming familiar with

the data, generate initial codes, search for themes, review themes, define themes, and write up the information (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Following the advice of Braun and Clark, the researcher continued with this process by organizing the data based on the latent level which looked beyond what had been said and identified or examined the underlying statements about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

The following categories were used in this process: the school's process for identification of the gifted which students were identified in the school database as gifted, which students that teachers felt were gifted and a teacher's experience with gifted students. These categories eventually were placed under the code, Identification of the Gifted. The categories that were eventually placed under the code, the Uses of Differentiation, included if teachers used differentiation in their classroom, the teacher's definition of differentiation, who benefitted from the differentiation if it was used, and what the teacher differentiated. The categories that eventually were placed under the code, The Uses of Remediation, included how often remediation was given, who provided remediation, and what school-wide remediation measures were used. Categories that eventually were placed under the code How Teachers used the Standards in the classroom, included administrative pressure to teach standards, the correlation between lesson plans, objectives, and state standards, and teachers' opinions about the standards for their subject and their peers' subjects. Categories that were eventually placed into the code Preparation for the State Test, included how much time was given to preparing for the state test, practice tests given to students to determine if students were prepared for the state test, the focus of the administration on preparation for the state test, and in-class

preparation for the state test for the actual taking of the test. Categories that were eventually placed in the code, Teachers and their Evaluation, included teachers' opinion about the use of a test as an evaluation tool, the teachers' regard for the accuracy of the evaluation, and the effect of students who fail the test on the teacher's final evaluation. The final code, Teacher's Opinions about Public Law 90, included all opinions about any part of the law including Indianapolis politicians, accountability, the fairness of the law, other opinions—which each was originally in its own category.

The researcher used MaxQDA software to assist in analyzing the information. After the transcripts were reviewed, the researcher uploaded the transcripts into the software so individual statements made by the teachers could be sorted into the following codes: Identification of the Gifted, Uses of Differentiation, The Uses of Remediation, How Teachers used the Standards in the classroom, Teachers and their Evaluation, Preparation for the State Test, and Teacher's Opinions about Public Law 90. In order to be more concise, these codes were eventually retitled as the following themes: Gifted Identification, Differentiation, Remediation, Teaching with the Standards, Test Preparation, Evaluation Emphasis, and Opinion about the state law.

Gifted Identification was defined in this study as information concerning what the teacher knew about the identification of gifted students within their school system. Differentiation was defined in this study as the teacher's use of differentiation within his/her own classroom, the teacher's definition of how differentiation was used, and if the teacher used differentiation for specific students. Remediation was defined in this study as whether the teacher used remediation within the classroom, outside of the classroom, school wide efforts to remediate students, and the identification of students who required

remediation. Teaching with the Standards was defined in this study as comments made by the teacher regarding what was emphasized within the lesson plans, exactly what requirements were in place that educators were directed to teach, and whether teachers were directed to reinforce certain ideas. Evaluation Emphasis was defined in this study as comments made by the teacher concerning the importance of specific requirements that had to be met by the teacher for their evaluation as well as any comments concerning whether the teacher was keeping the evaluation foremost in his/her mind. Test Preparation was defined in this study as the amount of time a teacher utilized throughout the academic year on preparing students for the state test as well as comments made concerning any use of PIVOT or Acuity preparation tests. These general codes became the themes used within the analysis phase

Results

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students. With that purpose in mind, the following Research Question guided this study:

RQ1: How do northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers describe their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they meet the needs of their gifted students?

It took approximately ten months of searching for participants to conduct research for this study. Many teachers indicated they were nervous about participating in anything that was connected to Public Law 90. This procurement of teachers was one aspect which was a major limitation of the study. In the Limitations section of chapter one, this limitation is mentioned and referred to when it stated "by the number of individuals who

could be interviewed”. One teacher, who was not a participant, emphasized she would never participate where it could even remotely appear that she had. Teachers were nervous since Public Law 90 was most famous in Indiana for the evaluation process used within school systems since the evaluation requirement included the use of standardized testing, but also additional observations throughout the school year than what had been previously required. Every teacher, regardless of their seniority within their individual school systems, was required to make changes to how they taught. Furthermore, with this law, teachers were more likely to lose their position if they received a poor evaluation. Teachers did not want to be seen as possibly upsetting the status quo or angering their principals or supervisors.

Individual teachers who were interviewed spoke candidly about their students’ ability levels and how they determined their students’ ability level. The majority of teachers indicated they did not have access to whether or not a student was gifted through a specific process, but instead used the results of prior standardized test scores and whether or not a specific student was assigned to a low-level or advanced-level class. Teacher 7C7 indicated that this information was supposed to be in their Information database, but he did not feel the information was viable since the information was entered in the elementary level. Teachers are the pivotal influence in classifying and cultivating the gifted (Kelemen, 2020). Since many teachers were interviewed from different school systems, it was apparent that the Gifted Identification code was essential in determining the ability level of specific students.

While most gifted educators had stressed the need to differentiate the lessons of gifted students to make those lessons more challenging, this need was usually not applied

to gifted students specifically. While educators did provide more challenging material for students enrolled in Advanced classes, students who did not enroll in an advanced class for unknown reasons would not receive the more challenging lessons. Furthermore, most educators view differentiation as a method of providing multiple methods of presentation, such as visual, spatial or auditory based, rather than a lesson with instructions tailored to a skill set. With this information in mind, differentiation was addressed within the interview process.

Although remediation of students may not be directly related to the gifted student, the direct correlation of information that indicated that lower-level students were given remediation through multiple avenues while gifted students were not provided avenues for their learning level, indicated to the researcher that emphasis was being placed elsewhere. Teachers indicated multiple avenues where students were given remediation within and without the school system, while teachers did not indicate avenues for the students who did not require remediation.

Indiana requires educators teach specific standards as part of the educational path. Teachers must present information to students within the stated perimeters of the state standards. However, even though these standards must be presented, Indiana does not give standardized state level testing on every subject. This places teachers in a quandary. They must teach the standards as indicated for their subject, but they are held responsible and their evaluation was affected by standards that may or may not be taught in another's class. The school librarian, for example, is a licensed teacher in Indiana and has standards that need to be taught to the students. However, a librarian's evaluation was based on the English or mathematics teachers' ability to teach their standards and not the standards

that are assigned to this position. Teaching with the Standards influenced every lesson that was presented by the teachers.

Regardless of these other factors, the evaluation and its emphasis were evident in most of the comments of the teachers. Although they might not realize its influence, many of the teachers referenced their evaluation and how many of the above factors had an impact on their job performance. According to Teacher 2R6, the evaluation places more stress to an already stressful occupation by judging the teacher's effectiveness on a single test. Other teachers echoed this sentiment. Their opinions about the evaluation, teaching specific standards, lesson plans, data-driven instruction, and the law in general indicated a level of stress beyond what most occupations must contend.

Through the use of interviews, the researcher gathered data from currently teaching educators in grades six, seven and eight. These teachers disclosed information concerning their personal experiences in Indiana public schools. This information presented specific themes or categories of data that directly applied to the teaching of gifted students in the classroom. These themes include Gifted Identification, Differentiation, Remediation, Teaching with the Standards, Evaluation Emphasis, Test Preparation, and Opinions. These themes could be viewed as a whole to apply to all students who were currently enrolled in Indiana public schools; however, the overriding purpose of this study was to view these themes in relation to the gifted student as a result of Indiana's Public Law 90. Each of the following themes is defined in Appendix E.

Gifted identification. Many states have guidelines for the identification of gifted students. Indiana is one of many in that category. According to the Indiana Department of Education website (IDOE, 2019), Indiana uses the same definition of a gifted student

presented by the National Association of Gifted Children: “Gifted individuals are those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement in top 10% or rarer) in one or more domains.” Unfortunately, according to many of the teachers, the teachers do not have access to the information necessary to devise an educational plan for a gifted student.

The most common response given to the researcher from teachers was the lack of information from the school system regarding who was actually gifted. Teacher 4C8 specifically said she was not given any information about a student’s true ability level other than that student was placed in an advanced level class. Unfortunately, other students within this class may not be high-ability or gifted, just hard-working so this discrepancy was left to chance in many school district corporations.

Teacher 7C7 indicated he felt that some of his more advanced students were bored because he needed to spend more time working with students who were not at an advanced level. Some teachers felt they did differentiate some of their lessons but Teacher 10R8 indicated that it was easier to have the advanced students review materials, read a higher-level article, or take the lead in a lab with other students. Others indicated less concern since many felt their gifted or high-ability students would succeed since they were more motivated to learn. While this may be true in some of these classrooms, research indicated that gifted students may not be self-motivated to learn and can even be troublesome in classes where their needs were not met (Lashaway-Bokina, 2000).

Other teachers indicated they used the results of the Indiana state test scores to determine whether a student was gifted or not. This test, which was not designed to

determine this aptitude, may be misused in many classrooms for this reason. For example, according to Teacher 6R8, her school system used a data wall in a secure setting to display the results of the state test. The teachers viewed this wall to determine where students were in relation to other students. They were also using this data to determine if a student was gifted or had higher-ability level than another.

Some school systems have an information website that only teachers, counselors, and the administration had access. One school used PowerSchool; another used Information Now. When Teacher 8R7 checked whether the smartest student in her school was listed as gifted, it was not completed so she did not have any idea whether the student was gifted, high-ability, or highly motivated. Another teacher, Teacher 7C7, checked the information site and found one student was listed as high ability, but that diagnosis was entered when the child was in second grade and had not been updated since that time.

Another school system, according to Teacher 6R8, used the results of three different exams to rank their students: The Language Arts portion of the state test, the beginning of the year test, and the first chapter test. This beginning of the year test and the first chapter test were coordinated by the team and administered to all students in that grade. This information was then shared with all of the teachers via a team approach.

There were also several teachers who indicated they felt the high-ability or gifted students would succeed on their own. As Teacher 10R8 indicated, these students would succeed because they were the ones who were motivated the most to do well. Others generally felt that these students would do well since they had in the past and would pass the required standardized tests. The consensus expressed among many teachers was that

the counselors placed these students in the advanced class, so their needs were being met. Other students may be listed in some school systems as advanced, based on the responses, by teachers who recommended they be placed in a more-advanced class.

Teacher 7C7 stated he believed that all students were gifted in some area. With this view, he indicated he tried to assist each child to do his/her best. This view presented his personal effort to assist all children to be their best. He also indicated that some students showed high ability at times and other times did not. He strived to create opportunities for all students to succeed regardless of their learning ability level.

Gifted identification is defined as information provided concerning what the teacher knew about the identification of gifted students within their school system. The following table (Table 2) indicates specific comments made by teachers during their interviews regarding Gifted Identification within their school district corporations.

Table 2.

Theme One: Gifted Identification

Teacher Code	Teacher Comment
1R8	a. "The only indication I have if a student is gifted is if they receive a Pass or Pass+ on the state test." b. "We focus on the 50% and under rather the 51% and above."
2R6	a. "Students are recommended for the advanced ELA by the prior year's teachers." b. "Students are identified by the STAR reader results and standard-based tests."
3R6	"Honestly, I find I have a select few of truly gifted students; most of these students are 'teacher pleasers'."
4C8	"I have not received any information concerning this topic" (identifying gifted students)
6R8	"Our school has a data wall that is color-coded...we as teachers can always see who the high and low achieving students are."
7C7	a. "Some students have a note in our online system that notes "high ability"; I find these notes pretty unreliable." b. "I would say that many students have some skill that would qualify as high ability."
8R7	a. "The only way I know a student is gifted or high ability is that they are placed in the advanced ELA or Math class." b. "I am unaware of our school's process of identifying high ability."
9R8	a. "I don't feel as if I have been told if students are high ability or gifted." b. "Students are grouped on our data wall from high to low from their I-Step tests."
10R8	"I have never received information regarding gifted students."
11R8	a. "I have not been provided with this information other than I teach an Advanced class." b. "I do not feel all of my advanced students are gifted or high ability."
12R8	a. "I have no experience with high ability and gifted students." b. "I think as long as they are passing, not much thought is placed on how to make these students better at the higher levels."

Differentiation. Some teachers revealed their individual school systems used a program called Study Island which automatically differentiated school assignments for the students. This program used test results to determine the level of the students. The teachers did not indicate how accurate this program was or specify what would happen if a student did not perform at his/her best intentionally. However, these teachers felt this program did allow for students to progress at their own speed and not have repetition of

lessons they had already mastered. This program continually built upon past lessons in order to mobilize students toward mastery of a subject.

Other teachers indicated they used several different techniques to reach students within the classroom. These techniques included using auditory, spatial and visual teaching tools, as well as a combination of these tools, to reach the majority of the students. Some teachers indicated they used group lessons where students assisted each other in solving the problems. In a situation such as this, a few of the teachers had encouraged the higher-level students to assist those in their group to understand the material. Teacher 3R6 commented that it was not unusual to have a large class where 50% of the students had special needs, without the assistance of special needs aides in the room.

A few of the teachers denoted they assigned grades differently for students who were higher-level over those who had more trouble learning. The higher-level students were graded more critically than those who were not. A student could get an A on an assignment if he/she was a lower-level student that would earn a C if he/she was a higher-level student. Furthermore, a lower-level student may have fewer requirements for an assignment than a student who had more ability. One example Teacher 8R7 gave the researcher was that lower-level students received fewer choices to select from in a multiple-choice examination while the higher-level students must fill in the blank and were not given any choices from which to choose. Teacher 2R6 revealed she sometimes gave a “collected” or “excused” grade for a lower-level student if the situation signified it was necessary.

Teachers were expected to teach all students, according to Teacher 3R6, regardless of the make-up of the students' ability levels within the classroom. This admonition came directly from the administration of her school. While this directive had been given, the administration was aware of discrepancies and tried to assist teachers when it was possible. Special needs aides were assigned to assist teachers when it was possible, but many of these positions had been reduced due to monetary reductions.

Other teachers specified that students may receive an assignment that appeared the same but was also different. For example, Teacher 2R6 used the basic story line from a text, but the text itself was leveled so all students could understand the story, with leveled-appropriate vocabulary and context. However, when the students would discuss the story in a group setting, the story line was the same so all students could contribute to the conversation, without concern for their version being slightly different.

Teacher 6R8 specified she used the same text, but the assignments related to the text was different. For example, she used fewer choices on the test for the lower level students to choose from other answers. She also indicated she gave different assignments based on the students' ability levels. She gave the example of the higher ability students being required to write out the definition of vocabulary words, find synonyms for these words, find a picture or two that related to the word, and use the vocabulary word in a sentence. The lower level student in this class would only have to write out the definition and find one picture to illustrate the word.

Differentiation has been identified as a method to present information to gifted students within the regular classroom. According to Carol Tomlinson, a noted authority on gifted students, using differentiation provides modification of content, modification of

activities that explain the content, and the results of what was learned within the classroom (Caldwell, 2012). While the comments indicated that many teachers were differentiating within their classroom, their differentiation was benefitting those students who were more likely to have difficulty passing the state test than those who had higher-ability. Since the teacher's evaluation was based on raising scores for those students, Public Law 90 encouraged this form for differentiation.

There were some teachers who admitted they did not differentiate their lessons. Teacher 6R8 felt that all students must take the same state test, with the same questions and responses, so they all needed the same access to all the material. Other teachers indicated they differentiate periodically but do not differentiate during the period prior to the state tests or practice tests so all students were on a level playing field. Since the state test was the final indicator on whether they were successful or not, all students needed the same preparation.

Differentiation is defined as how the teacher uses this method within his/her own classroom, the teacher's definition of how differentiation was used, and if the teacher used differentiation for specific students. The following table (Table 3) indicates specific comments made by teachers during their interviews regarding Differentiation within their school district corporations.

Table 3.

Theme Two: Differentiation

Teacher Code	Teacher Comment
1R8	"I differentiate by immediately assessing student's learning styles through a standardized assessment to make sure I have an overview of how my students pick up information. I incorporate those methods in as many lessons as possible to that on any given day the visual learners...the auditory learners...and the spatial learners are going to learn."
2R6	"I do not differentiate much because every student has to take the I-learn test. I do grade the higher-ability students more critically. I grade the lower level students less critically."
3R6	"I feel that differentiation is one of my strengths. I take pride in making sure that I appeal to visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile learners."
4C8	"My usual procedure is to have a major lesson on Mondays and Thursdays, NWEA remediation on Wednesdays, group-learning in small groups to remediate and review on Tuesdays and Fridays. Normal practice activities are planned for the various levels of learning."
6R8	"For lower level students, I reduce their workload. I give fewer test questions and they do not have as many requirements on their daily lessons."
7C7	"Quite often I use text with varying levels of difficulty. I also use a lot of small group and project work. I set up assignments with required work and optional work and also use drawing and writing to help the students illustrate their response."
8R7	"I do not differentiate the delivery much. I do try to use multiple methods for teaching the information, but I feel I so more of my differentiating when I grade."
9R8	"During the lessons, I like to differentiate using puzzles, stations and domino games. I also give skeleton notes to the students, so they have an outline of the notes, so they have an outline of the lesson."
10R8	"My lower students have fewer test choices and I do not grade their answers as hard."
11R8	"I give more material to my advanced class and have higher standards for them. My lower level students have extended time and shortened assignments."
12R8	"The level of work between my general and advanced class varies. I vary the timeline, the content, and the level."

Remediation. Many teachers implied their school had an active Title I program.

This program provided financial incentives to schools who had a high number of lower income students to assist in meeting their individual educational needs (Moffitt, 2016).

Since they had these additional monetary funds, this allowed these schools to provide funding for more aides and other staff to tutor students and raise their scores. Some teachers showed that these funds had been used to provide additional tutoring services

before and/or after school for those students who were struggling. Other teachers revealed that these funds were used to provide summer tutoring for students who were having difficulty passing the state test. Teacher 8R7 indicated these funds were used for additional staff so struggling students who were having difficulty could receive tutoring to alleviate this situation.

Several teachers indicated that no funds were available for additional tutoring; however, Teacher 1R8 said he and other teachers at his school provided assistance to students during the homeroom period or immediately after school free of charge. These tutoring sessions were provided by volunteer teachers who just wanted to assist students in passing the state tests. There were several teachers who specified that if a student wanted help, help was available from someone.

With the data wall available in many schools, kids who were considered “bubble kids” were easily identified. These students were those who were right on the line between passing the state test and failing the state test. According to the teachers, in many schools these students were placed in remediation classes—sometimes with co-teachers or with the assistance of aides so more one-on-one attention was given. Furthermore, according to Teacher 7C7, he revealed that a minimum of once or twice a year, teachers were reminded to not forget the “bubble kids” in a faculty meeting. This emphasis was used to encourage teachers to assist these lower level students so they would pass the state test.

Funding for Indiana schools was reviewed and updated in 2015. Although Indiana was one of the few remaining states that used property taxes to fund schools, in 2015 a funding overhaul was initiated by the state legislature that placed a cap on property tax

revenue and used funds from income taxes and sales tax to fund education (Cavazos & Elliott, 2015). An additional change, that had in the past provided extra funding for the lower income students, provided that students would only be counted as poor if they qualified for welfare services instead of the free or reduced lunch program (Cavazos & Elliott, 2015). This eliminated funding for many lower-income students. Schools had to cut services for many students as a result of this change.

Additionally, students who were considered special needs received funding from federal aid (Cavazos & Elliott, 2015). Unfortunately, for third graders in Indiana, no additional funding was provided for remediation if they failed the state mandated I-Read test which is required to be promoted to the fourth grade (Kilbride, 2012). These scores affected the state school grade so many educators prepared their students for this important test. Schools had the option of remediating these students and having them retake the test in the summer, but the funding was not provided by the state. Furthermore, Public Law 90 associated students' standardized test scores with teacher evaluations so teachers only received a salary increase if they were considered effective or highly effective (IDOE, 2014). If a student failed or did poorly on the state test, it affected the teacher's salary. If a school grade was a D or F (which is determined by the state standardized test scores), then this also affected a teacher's salary since this grade was averaged into their evaluation. Remediation became extremely important to the schools since it directly applied to their salaries.

Remediation is defined as whether that teacher used remediation within the classroom, outside of the classroom, school wide efforts to remediate students, and the identification of students who required remediation. The following table (Table 4)

indicates specific comments made by teachers during their interviews regarding Remediation within their school district corporations.

Table 4.

Theme Three: Remediation

Teacher Code	Teacher Comment
1R8	“I can tell you every remediation kid because the remediation and ESL teachers really focus on updates. Guidance counselors also regularly ask who needs to go into remediation. I work after school hours with remediation, so I recognize these students.”
2R6	“Our school has a Success program that offers an opportunity to students for help to prepare for the state test. We choose students who generally struggle but would benefit from small group instruction. This gives the students extra practice.”
3R6	“Our corporation adjusted the grading system to use Standards-Based Reporting. We formulated benchmark priority standards and focus on these. I reteach the concepts through class discussions, bell ringer activities, review games and simulations for those students who have not mastered the benchmarks.”
4C8	“I give remediation using NWEA on Wednesdays. I remediate and review lessons each week.”
6R8	“Students use a program for ELA remediation.”
7C7	This teacher remediates within the classroom using differentiation. He stated that his administrators remind the teachers that every child needs to show growth. In reality, he said he spends about 80% of his time differentiating for lower level kids, not higher level.
8R7	“The Title I program gives us more staff to focus on the struggling students. The teachers and Title I staff work closely together to help these students.”
9R8	“I reteach skills based on the results of NWEA tests. We have I-STEP bootcamp was designed by the school to help remediate the students that were grouped on the Data Wall’s lower level.”
10R8	“I help with remediation during homeroom periods.”
11R8	“Students having difficulty work with the Special Needs teacher.”
12R8	“The school offers interventions for those students who are struggling.”

Teaching with the standards. Teachers prior to the implementation of Public Law 90 speak of a “golden time” that allowed them the ability to choose what was taught and how it was taught according to Teacher 12R8. After the implementation of Public Law 90, teachers had to adjust their lesson plans, so they were standards-based. The only guideline they had emphasized throughout each interview was the fact that all lessons must be based on the standards. Extra “fluff”, as veteran Teacher 2R6 indicated, had been

eliminated from the curriculum and school lessons focused on the standards.

Furthermore, teachers must make sure they had reviewed all of the standards for their subject prior to April so that preparation for the state test could begin.

In college classes, younger Teacher 8R7 signified that professors trained new teachers to use best practices and gave ideas to use in the classroom. Teacher 9R8 was asked to write objectives based on the standards of the class they would be teaching and follow through by presenting lessons that supported those standards to her university professors. As a result, the teachers felt their lessons were more focused, but they felt additional stress regarding the lessons they had created. This stress was the result of wondering if the lesson was understood and could be applied to the standard on which it was based. While some teachers benefitted from workshops and in-service seminars provided by their school systems, other teachers did not.

It was also noted by many teachers that it did not benefit students to have the standards taught to them since the state test did not test their subject. Teacher 1R8 indicated his subject was not tested so he intentionally chose subjects like graphing from the Mathematics standards, which were tested, and showed his students applications in his Science classroom. Teacher 3R6 indicated she was expected to support and reinforce the English Language Arts standards in her Social Studies classroom. She further stated that she and her colleagues received considerable pressure from her administrators to reinforce these standards as well as teach her Social Studies standards. They had the stress of completing their subject standards, as well as the pressure of administrators wanting them to assist other classroom teachers whose subject was tested by the state test. In some school systems, teachers must corroborate on which standards to emphasize

throughout the school year. This corroboration was also stressful since it was not unusual for one teacher to want to accentuate one standard over another which disagreed with another's opinion, according to Teacher 6R8. While Public Law 90 did indicate that lessons should be standard based, it did not determine which standards would be tested and which would not. That determination was a matter of opinion by the teachers until after the test was completed in the spring.

Many of the teachers used a testing program called Acuity at the beginning of the implementation of Public Law 90 to determine which standards students performed poorly on. This allowed the teachers to custom design testing programs to review these standards. Eventually, most school systems of teachers within this study transitioned to the Pivot test for preparation for testing. While some teachers did not voice if their school system used a specific testing program, the Pivot test was mentioned by some.

Teacher 1R8 mentioned that standards the teacher felt were unnecessary based on her/his professional experience were ignored in the classes she/he taught. Furthermore, he/she felt that it was illogical to have an individual who worked in Indianapolis (the capital of Indiana where the Department of Education is located) to dictate what the teacher was teaching in the classroom when those individuals were not aware of the ability levels, interests, vocations or background of the students that were taught in the teacher's school. While this teacher did adhere to many of the standards for the subject that was taught, the teacher felt justified in this decision. This also allowed this teacher the flexibility to assist teachers whose subjects were tested to reinforce their priorities.

Teaching with the Standards was a large part of the teacher's day and encompassed many areas. While Teacher 4C8 initially planned lessons with a brief

synopsis of what the teacher wanted to cover within the day or week as a beginning teacher, this process had evolved to writing objectives, identifying standards, detailing assignments and determining how much time would be involved throughout the day on a particular subject now. After completing the extremely detailed lesson plans, this teacher had to submit them to administration for review. This process was the responsibility of the teacher, which was extremely time-consuming, in addition to other duties. Furthermore, this teacher indicated that all the lessons could be voided at the last moment if an event or test was later planned.

This same teacher expressed that the primary responsibility of the job was only to carry out plans that another had devised at the last school. At that school, the teacher was given a complete lesson plan of what was to be taught on a weekly basis, including standards and objectives, specific lessons, and quizzes. The teacher did not have the freedom to arrange any of the details and had to follow procedure based on a designed curriculum. Every teacher at that school followed this set of procedures. Furthermore, the teacher was not given the option of asserting any opinion about this procedure. Due to this rigid guide, this teacher moved to another school within the same corporation. While happier at her new school, this teacher did indicate that the planning for the classes that were now taught was labor intensive.

Teaching with Standards is defined as comments regarding what was emphasized within the lesson plans, exactly what requirements were in place that educators were directed to teach, and whether teachers were directed to reinforce certain ideas are placed in this category. The biggest problem according to the literature with teaching only the standards was the fact that teachers not only were unable to be creative with their

teaching, they were unable to assist their students in being creative (Bloom, & VanSlyke-Briggs, 2019).

The following table (Table 5) indicates specific comments made by teachers during their interviews regarding Teaching with the Standards within their school district corporations.

Table 5.

Theme Four: Teaching with the Standards

Teacher Code	Teacher Comment
1R8	“I admit my guilt in ignoring the standards in some areas in order to give...kids the opportunity to learn best. I tend to teach things that count and not necessarily what the law states should be counted.”
2R6	“Every lesson needs to be geared towards a specific standard.”
3R6	“We have 12 Power-Standards. Each nine weeks we focus on 3 of these standards. I am expected to reinforce the ELA standards even though I teach Social Studies. I am bound to certain standards and that limits my creativity as an educator.”
4C8	“Every lesson must be based on a standard that is reflected in my lesson plans.”
6R8	“I teach the standards that I need to teach.”
7C7	“I am more focused on data now. I use NWEA data to drive instruction.”
8R7	“I really plan my lessons on what I noticed on the previous year’s test. When we used Acuity (we now use Pivot), I would see what standards my students did poorly on and then create custom acuity tests.”
9R8	“In my yearly planning, I have to make sure I get all of the standards covered by the beginning of April. Otherwise, the students would not be fully prepared for the standardized state test. I also use the standards to guide my lessons.”
10R8	“I used to approach class with an emphasis on notes and lecture. Now I make sure I look at what standards I have to teach and focus on them. Now I make sure I look at the standards and focus on them.”
11R8	“We use NWEA test results to guide instruction.”
12R8	“I do use standards to form my lessons. I use the Understanding by Design method to create my lessons because it has the end goal in mind.”

Emphasis on evaluations. Teachers were overwhelmingly affected on a daily basis due to the emphasis on evaluations as a result of Public Law 90. Teachers in Indiana could expect to be evaluated regularly during their first two years on the faculty. After that, some teachers would be evaluated once a year to once every three years or

more depending on the school system. Evaluations could be flitting or could be detailed, dependent on the individual who completed the evaluation. As a result of Public Law 90, all teachers were required to be evaluated a minimum of two forty-five-minute observations and an additional two-ten-minute observations a year. While this eventually was reduced for some school systems, administrators spent the majority of their time during the initial roll-out of Public Law 90 doing nothing but evaluating teachers. Some school systems even had to hire additional administrative personnel so these evaluations could be completed.

Even with a reduction of observations for those who were evaluated as being highly effective, administrators still had other requirements that factored into the actual evaluation. Schools would receive a grade of A through F based on the scores of the students who took standardized tests. All teachers would receive the value of the school score whether they taught the subject the standardized test, tested or not. The value would affect their overall evaluation and would determine whether they received a raise in pay the next year or a bonus stipend at the end of the year. Failing schools' teachers could lose their positions regardless of the subject they taught in this scenario. This all contributed to an emphasis in the teachers' minds about the evaluation.

Teacher 1R8 stated he was suspicious of the tests, especially since these tests directly affected his personal evaluation. Other teachers pushed their students to complete more writing assignments, even though their subject was not tested, in order to give their students more experience in this vital, tested area. The teachers also realized they unconsciously stressed more of the Language Arts and Mathematics standards in their classes since they knew it would affect their evaluation as well.

Teachers were held accountable for all classes and all students in the overall requirements of Public Law 90. This accountability placed stress on the teachers as they tried to accommodate the increased lesson load. According to the teachers who participated in this study, four of the eleven participants indicated and used the words “stress” or “pressure” was found in their workplace. Several other teachers alluded to situations that were representative of stress or pressure but did not actually use the words. Unfortunately, many teachers understood that although they were concerned about the scores of the standardized tests, they had many students who were not.

Teachers have agonized over the fact they had no control over whether their students had a bad night, were hungry, had witnessed an argument, were living in a single parent home, did not have parental supervision, were responsible for younger siblings, were babysitting a parent who had passed out on the couch due to drinking or drugs, or did not have an adequate night’s sleep for any of a number of reasons. Teacher 3R6 replied that she had students who were responsible for raising their younger siblings and had to be the adult in the home since the parent was indisposed. Furthermore, this teacher believed that the politicians who legislated Public Law 90 were out of touch with reality. Yet, even with these situations that many of the participants’ students dealt with on a regular basis, the teachers still had scores that affected their yearly evaluation, and indirectly, their salary.

Teachers also were aware that different schools judged their teachers differently. Teacher 7C7 commented that the requirements he must contend with were completely absent for his sister who taught in another school system. If a teacher was employed in an inner-city situation, there may be many situations the students encountered that would not

affect a teacher in a rural setting. Teachers felt these evaluations were unfair for these reasons. Even with these unfair perceptions, Teacher 1R8 posited that he was not against accountability or observations; however, he did believe that evaluations should not be based on a test that was not designed to be used in this manner.

Evaluation emphasis is defined as comments concerning the importance of the teacher's evaluation were placed in this code as well as any comments regarding the importance of the evaluation to the teacher. The following table (Table 6) indicates specific comments made by teachers during their interviews regarding Emphasis on Evaluation within their school district corporations.

Table 6.

Theme Five: Evaluation Emphasis

Teacher Code	Teacher Comment
1R8	"I have evaluations throughout the year with a follow-up evaluation at the end of the year. I do not believe that standardized testing to evaluate teachers has been shown to be effective."
2R6	"I feel that I am being judged on my effectiveness as a teacher by how my students perform on a single test. It is stressful to watch a student choose a wrong answer on the state test...it is reflective of my teaching. It doesn't seem to be a fair way to evaluate my effectiveness."
3R6	"I highly disagree with the emphasis placed on standardized test scores and teachers' evaluations. My evaluation should not reflect how they perform."
4C8	"If I do not have standards, lessons, assignments, and how much time we need to spend on a specific task recorded in my lesson plan book and submit it for review, it is recorded as "non-compliant" which affects my evaluation."
6R8	"The school's final grade affects my evaluation. The number of students who miss the 70% mark on the end of the year test will also decrease my final evaluation score. I worry that if students will not put enough effort in the I-Learn test and hurt the school grade (which affects my evaluation)."
7C7	"My sister teaches in another school system and it is unbelievable to me how different the evaluation process is for each of us. I do not have any faith that the current system of standardized testing is accurate or relevant."
8R7	"Personally, I do not feel the evaluations are completely fair when considering standardized testing. Teachers can bend over backwards...they still have no control over every kid taking the test."
9R8	"Evaluations are not fair when it comes to ...a teacher using growth model evaluations. I think standardized testing is good for the students to see how they relate to other students their age, but it means nothing to them. It means a lot to the teacher because it affects their evaluation as well as a stipend."
10R8	"I have noticed the emphasis on focusing on the test more."
11R8	"It is very frustrating that my evaluation is based on how a student performs one week out of the year."
12R8	"It honestly depends on who the administrator is. I have had three now...and they are all different with their expectations."

Test preparation. The teachers indicated they spend an abundance of time preparing for the state test in the spring. According to Teacher 2R6, the students take Pivot tests, tests that demonstrate how students are performing on specific standards, four times a year prior to the state test. During testing preparation time, all other lessons were suspended until after the preparation tests were completed in many schools. The teachers understood the need for preparation for the state test since it gave the students the

opportunity to encounter the types of questions that were present on the state tests and also gave the students endurance for taking the state test. However, those teachers who have taught for many years felt the students were tested too much. Teacher 10R8, who had taught for 18 years, said students spend hours testing, both for practice and for the state tests.

Students were also required to take the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) test in many schools. This testing program allowed teachers insight into how a student was performing on specific standards. This test monitored math, English and grammar scores of students and presents whether a student was progressing or having difficulty in an area that would be tested on the state test. According to Teacher 9R8, this program takes approximately 90 minutes per test. Teachers regard these preparation tests as helpful for assessing how well their students were progressing but were concerned about the number of tests each student takes per year. In fact, Teacher 11R8 counted the number of days that students were not in a testing window or testing time frame for last year and found that only 31 days were free from testing.

Teachers have found they can craft the same style or wording of the tests in their classrooms in order to prepare the students for additional testing. After viewing the practice tests, and viewing past state tests, making questions that sounded like the testing in the regular classroom allowed the students to have additional practice without actually teaching to the test. This emphasis was then reinforced in the classroom and allowed the student to relate the daily lesson to the state test. Since many teachers prepared their own chapter tests, using this same style gave the students more practice and continuity in their responses. These teachers would focus on how to take the test and how to write responses

on the test so that information was fresh in their students' minds. Many teachers felt this technique would give students more confidence when they took the state test. That confidence, they felt, could improve scores since it removed insecurities.

During the period of time prior to the state test, most lessons were suspended so all effort was spent on preparing for the state test. Teachers would give testing tips to students in order to give them an advantage over students who did not familiarize themselves with these tips. While teachers did not actually "teach to the test," the teachers who participated in this study did try to assist students by preparing them as much as possible prior to the test. Data from the practice tests and review sheets were re-taught as necessary or on a one-to-one basis so that all students would perform well on the final state test.

Test preparation is defined as the amount of time a teacher utilized throughout the academic year on preparing students for the state test as well as comments made concerning any use of PIVOT or Acuity preparation tests. The following table (Table 7) indicates specific comments made by teachers during their interviews regarding Test Preparation within their school district corporations.

Table 7.

Theme Six: Test Preparation

Teacher Code	Teacher Comment
1R8	“My area of Science is not directly assessed by the standardized tests so I have modified some of my lessons to correlate with other grade levels of science that are tested. We use the Pivot test and NWEA for preparation.”
2R6	“We give Pivot tests four times a year to help students practice and to know where there is the need for remediation—it guides my instruction. We use Success training to assist students who are struggling.”
3R6	“Each nine weeks we concentrate on three of our 12 Power Standards. Students who are “bubble kids” are placed in a co-teaching class taught by a general education teacher and a special needs teacher.”
4C8	“We prepare all year long for the state test. I teach a major lesson on Mondays and Thursdays and we have remediation every Wednesday based on NWEA results. I then have review and remediation for the main lesson every Tuesday and Friday.”
6R8	“We have a data wall indicating where each student’s level is displayed. Since the school’s final grade affects my evaluation, I really pushed my students to write more than before. I also collaborated with the English teachers to learn their terminology.”
7C7	“I have to alter my lesson plans to accommodate testing windows throughout the year. I am much more focused on data.”
8R7	“As testing nears, I would spend...time giving practice tests and tips to my students. I really base my lessons on last year’s state test results. As the test nears, I have certain students who I have a one-to-one conversation with to personally ‘pump them up’.”
9R8	“Students take the NWEA every year. I use these results and reteach where necessary. Bubble kids are asked to come to I-Step bootcamp the week before the state test for intensive review.”
10R8	“We use the NWEA test to help students prepare for the state test.”
11R8	“We increase the tasks the students must complete as the state test nears. We use Study Island during the Enrichment classes which differentiates the lessons based on NWEA scores.”
12R8	“I use the standards to make lesson plans. These standards are what the state test is based on.”

Opinion about public law 90. There were many teachers who participated in this study who have theorized that the issues students deal with today, which does affect their education, cannot be fixed by the teachers. However, they felt they were being penalized for these problems that were out of their control. Teacher 6R8 felt her effectiveness as a teacher was compromised by students who did not care about receiving a good education. Furthermore, she had students who did not have any desire or motivation to succeed.

These were issues that emanated from the home. In the words of Teacher 8R7, “Teachers cannot make sure every student reads every story or does every math assignment.”

Teachers cannot make sure every student fully applies him or herself to every lesson.

Teacher 3R6 replied that she felt she must be placed in the role of mother, sister, friend, etc. and assist students to feel better about any situation they might have had to deal with at home or that morning on the bus.

Teacher 1R8 drew a comparison between a teacher and a doctor. Doctors were not held accountable for every illness that a patient had. It was out of their control. They might be able to alleviate the pain or give a patient extra time before succumbing to death with their treatment, however, they cannot stop death. Teachers can give every incentive for a student to learn but it was still up to the student to make the effort to learn. If a student was not making any effort, it was their fault they could not pass a state test where they had been given every opportunity to succeed. However, the teachers were punished through their evaluation or salary if their students were neglectful of their studies.

Teacher 1R8 suggested that not everything that counts was counted under this law. Some students with less ability may or may not be able to pass the state mandated test. Some simply do not have the ability. These students were not considered special needs but fell within a gray area between the average students and the students with identified special needs. There were many students who will work at a chain store or factory for the rest of their lives. What reason can be given for these students to be tested over Algebra when they will probably never use it. These students’ test results will, however, affect the teacher’s evaluation.

Most teachers just consider the standardized testing an unfair practice. Of the eleven participants in this study, six teachers stated directly that the evaluation process was unfair. Two additional teachers from this study did not use the word unfair, but they both indicated they did not approve of the evaluation process. The state test was considered to many teachers to be an aptitude test, not an achievement test. The design of the test does not indicate whether a student had been taught a lesson, nor does it indicate whether or not the teacher presented the information. Many teachers viewed the test through the lens that many of their students passed the test but there were also some who did not. However, those who did not and why they did not was directly linked to how the teacher taught through the current evaluation process, instead of what other hindrances could have prevented success.

Teachers also suggested that they were under stress that was harmful to their health. Several teachers mentioned they were under enormous stress from the standardized testing process. This additional stress was the result of being subject to the results of a test that evaluated their effectiveness as a teacher. Teacher 11R8 specifically mentioned that she was held accountable for the students' results based on a test that was given one week out of the entire school year. A teacher was unable to plan on receiving a pay raise every year since every year the students the teachers had would change. It was also stressful to see students finish the actual state test in a short amount of time since that usually denoted they responded incorrectly. Teacher 2R6 mentioned she saw a student mark an incorrect choice when she knew that he had been taught differently. Furthermore, she also knew he understood the process since he had passed her unit test

about this process earlier in the year. She had reviewed the process and he showed he knew how to answer but for some unknown reason he chose the wrong answer.

Most teachers agreed that they believe that politicians in Indianapolis were out of touch with reality. Teacher 3R6 believed that politicians in Indianapolis did not have a true understanding of the obstacles or challenges that teachers face on a daily basis. It was disheartening to these teachers that the reason they entered the teaching profession was to inspire and have an impact on tomorrow's leaders. It was the loss of this illusion that affected many teachers. Furthermore, Teacher 7C7 believed that the testing was a huge waste of money. Politicians received thousands of dollars from corporations and influence from lobbyists to support their product for their re-election campaigns (Douglas-Beets & Beets, 2019). In response, the politicians voted to use specific testing packages for the students. For that reason, billions of taxpayer dollars each year were syphoned off to these companies. If the money instead was used to reduce class size, provide more aides for schools, provide additional training for in-service programs in school systems, and provide better resources for the public schools, then the money would be used more appropriately.

Opinions about Public Law 90 is defined as all remarks regarding both positive and negative comments about the law, its fairness, or any opinion that was offered in regard to the law as well as personal opinions by the teacher. The following table (Table 8) indicates specific comments made by teachers during their interviews regarding their Opinion about Public Law 90 within their school district corporations.

Table 8.

Theme Seven: Opinion about Public Law 90

Teacher Code	Teacher Comment
1R8	"I think the law had good intentions...teachers are expected to fix everything. If the scores do not go up, then the teacher and schools are held accountable. The state test is an aptitude test not an achievement test. It's not the best tool for evaluations."
2R6	"Some parts of the law are good, but there are also negative consequences of the law. This adds much stress to an already stressful occupation. Standardized tests are not a fair way to evaluate my effectiveness."
3R6	"The state expects too much from teachers. I highly disagree with the emphasis on test scores and teachers' evaluations. Standardized tests should not be the end all, be all to educators."
4C8	No comments given during interview. Later commented vocally that she did not approve of the law.
6R8	"I do not like the pressure of this law. It is unfair. The students' test scores affect how we are evaluated or if we have a job."
7C7	"I do not have any faith that the current system of standardized testing is accurate or relevant. Too much money is up for grabs with our current system...millions and millions of dollars are spent on standardized testing that is often culturally biased and anything but a true reflection of the student's abilities."
8R7	"Teachers can bend over backwards, create amazing lessons, pump the students up, etc. and on testing day, they still have no control over every kid taking the test. I do think teachers should be held accountable, but not just based off one test."
9R8	"Standardized tests mean a lot to the teachers because it affects their evaluation, but it means nothing to the students. Evaluations are unfair."
10R8	No comments given during the interview.
11R8	"The biggest difference I can think of (before this law and after it was implemented) is the amount of time we spend testing. It is frustrating that my evaluation is based on how a student performs one week out of the year."
12R8	"It honestly depends on the administrator. I have had three now at my school and they are all different with their expectations."

The following themes were expressed during the interview of middle school teachers in northeastern Indiana: Gifted Identification, Differentiation, Remediation, Teaching with the Standards, Evaluation Emphasis, Test Preparation, and Opinion about the state law. These themes were apparent due to the responses given by the teachers in this area of Indiana. The themes were not conceived prior to the conducting of interviews by the researcher; however, their responses showed these themes were relevant to the

lives and experiences of the educators in this study. Other themes may become apparent if additional interviews in a continuation of this study by another researcher is conducted.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students. Prior to this research, it was not known how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students.

The following research question guided this study:

RQ1: How do northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers describe their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the needs of their gifted students?

This research provided insight into the research question that guided this study. By reviewing the transcripts of teachers who currently teach in the middle schools (grades 6-8), the researcher found numerous themes that became apparent. These themes included the identification of the gifted learner, differentiation, remediation, teaching with the standards, test preparation, an emphasis on evaluation and the teachers' opinions about the law. These themes indicated what was being concentrated on throughout their daily lessons as well as the reasons why and allowed the researcher insight into the daily life of these educators. Furthermore, this data provided information to address the gap that existed prior to this study: daily teacher experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students.

There were limitations to the gathering of the data which might yield greater results. Only 11 teachers participated in this study and the majority of these teachers lived in a northeastern Indiana rural setting. It took approximately ten months to secure the agreements from teachers to participate. Many teachers who were asked did not want to participate for personal reasons, were nervous about participating due to fear of retaliation from their administrators or were just uninterested in any type of research. While the researcher was fortunate to have responses from two metropolitan teachers, further contributions from larger cities might produce additional understanding. Additionally, if all teachers within the state or in specific sectors of the state had the opportunity to respond to the questions, it was possible the awareness of the data may change.

Another possible limitation that was encountered was the reluctance of some teachers to be forthcoming in all areas. It was apparent to the researcher that many chose to use specific wording or hesitated to respond in any situation that may appear negative to an outside individual. Since it took over ten months to find participants that finally agreed to provide responses, this topic was obviously a sensitive issue. This apparent nervousness about the subject was noticeable while talking with these individuals.

With the information the data exhibited, it was now possible to determine if the needs of the gifted child were being met in the today's Indiana classrooms. Reviewing the data and applying them to the needs of gifted students determined if Public Law 90 was detrimental, supportive or neutral to the gifted child. Looking at the themes that became apparent from reviewing the data and the comments of the teachers in the classroom determined if there was any effect on these students.

These themes are presented in Chapter 5 and illustrate the connection of the data to the gifted student. Furthermore, chapter five explores the initial key points which began this study, the research question, the gap, the conclusions, recommendations and summary of the study. Within the recommendations are suggestions for additional studies to expand this study and its findings. Additional research areas are also recommended that would benefit this study and give additional information to add to the body of knowledge.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction and Summary of Study

There were ten strategic points determined at the beginning of this research study which organized this inquiry. This research study represented teacher experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 and gifted students. This study included a literature review of the subject that included historical information regarding the government's involvement with education, theoretical foundations that affect the gifted student, and background information about giftedness.

A problem statement declared that was not known how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students. Since this law was relative to only teachers within the state of Indiana, and the researcher lived in the northeastern sector of Indiana, it was decided that this study would find Indiana teachers who lived in this area to interview for data. Teachers outside of Indiana were not considered since they did not have the mandates of this law in their state.

The following research question guided this study:

RQ1: How do northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers describe their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the needs of their gifted students?

Although the researcher considered possibly using a mixed method or quantitative methodology, it was decided that qualitative research would provide the most information about the question. The researcher used an interview format, both verbal and/or written according the choice of the participants, to gather information. A descriptive research design was applied so the researcher could describe the events in the teacher's lives that

had affected how gifted students were taught, as well as if the individual needs of the gifted student were met.

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students. Allowing the teachers to describe how they taught on a daily basis, as well as any concerns they might have had or constraints they had to deal with, would determine if they were meeting the needs of these students. It also determined, through their own words, how Public Law 90 was affecting how or what they taught, and to whom they based their lessons.

Data collection was a difficult journey. It took the researcher over ten months to secure enough participants who were willing to respond to the questions. Additional interviews would have strengthened this study. The interview itself lasted a short period of time, just under an hour, for most participants, with the longest interview lasting approximately an hour. Individuals were able to review their transcripts, applying the concept of member checking, prior to the researcher using the data to affirm the information.

The data were organized so it could be analyzed. Braun and Clark's 6-step process provided a clear and usable framework for organization of the raw data into codes and then themes. This 6-step process included the following steps: Becoming familiar with the data, generate initial codes, search for themes, review themes, define themes, and write up the information (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Following the advice of Braun and Clark, the researcher continued with this process by organizing the data based on the latent level which looked beyond what had

been said and identified or examined the underlying statements about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

The following categories were used in this process: categories included the school's process for identification of the gifted, which students were identified in the school database as gifted, which students that teachers felt were gifted and a teacher's experience with gifted students. These categories eventually were placed under the code, Identification of the Gifted. The categories that were eventually placed under the code, the Uses of Differentiation, included if teachers used differentiation in their classroom, the teacher's definition of differentiation, who benefitted from the differentiation if it was used, and what the teacher differentiated. The categories that eventually were placed under the code, The Uses of Remediation, included how often remediation was given, who provided remediation, and what school-wide remediation measures were used. Categories that eventually were placed under the code How Teachers used the Standards in the classroom, included administrative pressure to teach standards, the correlation between lesson plans, objectives, and state standards, and teachers' opinions about the standards for their subject and their peers' subjects. Categories that were eventually placed into the code Preparation for the State Test, included how much time was given to preparing for the state test, practice tests given to students to determine if students were prepared for the state test, the focus of the administration on preparation for the state test, and in-class preparation for the state test for the actual taking of the test. Categories that were eventually placed in the code, Teachers and their Evaluation, included teachers' opinion about the use of a test as an evaluation tool, the teachers' regard for the accuracy of the evaluation, and the effect of students who fail the test on the teacher's final

evaluation. The final code, Teacher’s Opinions about Public Law 90, included all opinions about any part of the law including Indianapolis politicians, accountability, the fairness of the law, other opinions—which each was originally in its own category. The researcher used MaxQDA software to analyze the data. The transcripts were uploaded into the software and coded as stated above. MaxQDA software allowed the researcher to organize the data using these codes, and eventual themes, in order to determine exactly what was being said within the interviews.

These themes added to the body of knowledge information about Public Law 90. Prior to this study, approximately three dissertations concerning this law were located in public platforms. Google Scholar indicated other dissertations but many required memberships to view. These public platforms’ dissertations mainly included concerns from an administrator’s point of view. Kelly Andrews utilized a mixed-method study on principal insights of RISE (the state model for evaluation that most school systems in Indiana used in some form), which utilized a general survey with both Likert-style questions and open-ended questions (2015). Michael Steven Sargent’s dissertation on *An investigation of research-based teaching practices through the teacher evaluations in Indiana public schools* used a quantitative design with a survey to collect information from Indiana principals’ and teachers’ preceding and after the Public Law 90 was legislated (Sargent, 2014). The last dissertation that was found by the researcher was written by Brian R. Disney in 2015. Disney’s dissertation, titled *Demanding instructional leadership: Indiana high school assistant principals implementing high-stakes teacher evaluations*, used a mixed-method methodology which used both a survey and an interview format to retrieve information for the study.

This study added to the body of knowledge information concerning the educators who teach under this law. Currently, peer reviewed journal articles were not found in either Ball State University's (a prominent teacher training university in Indiana) database or on Google Scholar with an exception of one article published in 2014 in the *International Journal of Educational Reform*. This article concentrated on teacher evaluation in Indiana; however, the article was written concerning principals' use and perception of practices in the schools. This study demonstrated the actual direct effects of this law on the teachers who were employed to implement it and their students, both gifted and average.

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

The research question that guided this study examined the responses of Indiana middle school teachers in grades 6-8 who described their experiences with teaching gifted students. The actual Research Question asked: How do northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers describe their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they meet the needs of their gifted students? Questions were asked of all participants in the Interview Protocol (see Appendix D). The transcripts of the questions and responses from the Interview Protocol were categorized, coded, and then formed into themes using the process as given by Braun and Clarke. The questions were open-ended and allowed the teachers to give their replies from their experiences. Themes that were apparent from these interviews were Gifted Identification, Differentiation, Remediation, Teaching with the Standards, Evaluation Emphasis, Test Preparation, and Opinion about the state law.

Using the theoretical perspective of interpretivism, the researcher documented the phenomena being explored by accurately recording the experiences of the northeastern

Indiana middle school teachers involved. This perspective indicated exactly how Public Law 90 was influencing educators within the schools in Indiana. Furthermore, using this model allowed the researcher the opportunity to explore the experiences as personally relayed. This method allowed the flexibility necessary to record the experiences of the teachers involved in educating middle school students. This phenomenon, how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students, was documented within the interviews and themes became apparent from those conversations.

The first theme that was overwhelmingly apparent dealt with Gifted Identification. Although there was evidence that most schools have an information site such as Power School or Information Now, where a teacher can access information about the student and to identify gifted students, most teachers were unaware of their gifted students' information. After being asked this question, some teachers went into their information site and found this information absent. Many teachers had a vague idea that gifted students would automatically be placed in advanced classes by school counselors. Other teachers mentioned that teachers from prior years would recommend students for their school's advanced classes. Other than these advanced classes, no mention was made of any programs or curriculum that were specifically designed for the gifted student in the middle school. Furthermore, it appeared the only requirement for many of these advanced classes was teacher recommendation or receiving a grade of Pass+ on the state test. The majority of teachers indicated they did not have any information to share about gifted students.

The other themes--Differentiation, Remediation, Teaching with the Standards, Evaluation Emphasis, Test Preparation, and Opinion about the state law—also gave insight into the situation. Teachers did use some differentiation with their students, but most of this differentiation was based on the style of teaching. Teachers used auditory, visual, or spatial methods to reach students. Some teachers did use differentiation by using leveled reading for their students, but this process was used to assist those lower level students who needed additional assistance to proceed. The teacher would use the same story line but provide the story on different reading levels for the students. They only used more difficult levels for their advanced students if that student was assigned to an advanced class.

With the exception of Gifted Identification, the remaining themes were all connected and related to another. Remediation was the focus for most of the teacher's experiences, as well as Test Preparation. Evidence from the transcripts indicated many teachers were concerned about their final evaluation (ie: Evaluation Emphasis) and spent days preparing for the state test or reviewing lessons of the standards to reinforce this information for their students. Some teachers stated that they needed to have all of their standards taught by April so preparation for the state test could begin. Specific school systems also prioritized remediation in either the summer, homeroom period, or after school. This concentration on these themes showed the emphasis they had on the daily lives of the teachers. All of these themes, as well as the teacher's Opinion about the Law, affected the lessons for the students in their care.

Since the Research Question specifically was seeking information about the daily experiences of teachers and their interactions with gifted students, it would be vital for

these teachers to know exactly who was gifted and who was not. These teachers indicated with their responses they were either unaware of gifted students in their classrooms, they expected all gifted students to have already been placed in an advanced class by prior teachers or counselors, or they did not know the protocol of how these students were identified. No mention of specialists was given by the teachers who would facilitate this process as well. According to the NAGC (2015), identification of gifted students needs to be an ongoing process where multiple opportunities are given for students to display gifts. These opportunities are represented at different times for different students and may be exhibited across all racial, ethnic, and income levels with both subjective and objective means (NAGC, 2015). Not having multiple opportunities to view and recognize gifts in students, especially in the middle school, is detrimental to those students.

Prior teachers may have recommended students for an advanced class but did not classify them as gifted. Being placed into an advanced class was ambiguously applied based on state scores and teacher recommendations. While studying for an Educational degree, most teachers would have been introduced to Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences. According to research, his theories were introduced into many teacher training programs starting in 1983 (Leshkovska, & Spaseva, 2016). This theory described an individual's intellectual faculties in eight autonomous but interrelating intelligences: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, intrapersonal, naturalist and interpersonal (Leshkovska, & Spaseva, 2016). All intelligences are uniformly significant and as such schoolchildren require development of all their intelligences to use them to augment their educational success (Green, 2020). A student who has a gift in one intelligence should be able to attain the highest level of success

through educational support in their school. The identification of a child's gift and the school's continual enhancement of all of the child's intelligences is necessary to allow the child to reach his/her potential. A child who is gifted musically would still need the support of all teachers, regardless of the class, who might be able to enhance that child's ability within their classroom by relating assignments to the child's gift. Failure to understand the application of this theory to a gifted child might be detrimental to the student's overall education. If a teacher did not have access to information about whether a child was gifted and in what area, as it appears from the data collected in this study, it could severely handicap the teacher's ability to reach that child.

According to the National Public Radio Education page, there are approximately three million gifted students in the United States (Kamenetz, 2019). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, there were 56.6 million students enrolled in PK-12 educational programs in 2019 (NCES, 2020). This means that approximately 5.3% of students in the United States have a gift on some level. While this number is an approximate amount, it was notable that no students had been identified as gifted in the school systems in this study. After being asked about the gifted in her school, one teacher checked the school information site and did identify one student who was listed as high ability in the elementary years, but this student did not receive special training of which she was aware at the middle school.

In one school system, the Gifted and Talented teacher was recently assigned to another teaching position since the program was discontinued. Although Indiana does have a law requiring exceptional children should have specialized training, this school system does not have a trained individual for this specialty in place. They simply place

any advanced students in an advanced class which fulfills the requirement of the law. There are multiple instances where students are not recognized as gifted in the literature, especially children who are minorities or in low income situations (Ecker-Lyster, & Niileksela, 2017). When gifted students are not situated in classes that complement their abilities, they usually experience unrewarding incidents that inhibit their education (Morgan, 2019).

Many of the teachers denoted that their emphasis was on the lower-level students or the “bubble kids” since their evaluation was based on the standardized test scores from the state test. These teachers were not proud that the higher-level students had to help teach the lower level, but there were few alternatives for them to use. Many teachers acknowledged that many of the top students must fend for themselves. One specific teacher summed it up when the teacher stated that educators were doing a fantastic job with the lower 50% but really do not focus on the top students.

Another teacher mentioned that he/she could name every remediation student in his/her grade level since the remediation teachers and school counselors checked every week on how the remediation students were doing academically. However, he/she indicated that those same counselors were not checking on the upper level students or students who might be gifted. Those students were not as important, he/she felt, to the school report card. This inattention to the best and brightest in a school was a direct result of Public Law 90. This law required standardized testing, which was then used to grade the school and grade the teachers. This grading had a direct relationship to whether or not a teacher received a salary increase or even was able to remain employed. The emphasis within the school was on the lower 50 %.

While many teachers were assigned an advanced class within their subject area, these teachers did differentiate their overall lessons for these classes. However, if a student had not been assigned to an advanced class, he or she would not receive the higher-level challenges. Subject specific teachers were not trained in the identification of gifted students. A teacher may recognize that a specific student was a better student, but some teachers regarded these better students as “teacher pleasers” who were more motivated than other students. It wasn’t the teacher’s fault they did not recognize a gifted student since were not trained in the identification of the gifted.

Another problem that was evident was the misconceptions about the gifted child. Most teachers felt that these students would be successful regardless of what they, as teachers, did within the classroom. These teachers believed they were doing exactly what they needed to do for their students and their schools. Misconceptions about gifted children often lead to these students feeling less than worthy (Cross, O’Reilly, Kim, Mammadov, & Cross, 2015). Many gifted students, who did not have their educational needs met, become “trouble-makers” within the classroom because they are bored (Cross et al., 2015). Very few teachers would recommend a student for an advanced class if they were a discipline problem in the present class. Again, not having a trained individual within the school system evaluating the students was detrimental to these students. A student who was bored may not strive for perfection.

With the overall emphasis of most schools being the lower-level students, it was likely that some students needed attention so badly they underperformed to receive attention. The majority of teachers who participated in this study expressed that there was an emphasis on the lower-level students. While this was not the fault of administrators or

teachers since they must raise the scores of all students, it was a direct result of Public Law 90. Failure to raise scores for the students resulted in a lower school score and lower evaluations for the teachers. Continued levels of low scores would result in a school being “taken over” by the state according to the law. A teacher who was judged as ineffective for more than one year may lose their position, even if it was not their fault. The best teacher in the world cannot force a child to do his/her best.

Some studies showed that merit pay, a component of Public Law 90, was detrimental to students if it was rated on the scores of standardized testing. Educational success was not the result of attending school and passing a test; our society also respects students’ continuing capability towards progress, curiosity about subjects, teamwork with others, and the ability to exist in this society, which they learn about while attending school (Froese-Germain, 2011).

It was important to realize that education was more than just learning certain facts or being able to solve for x . It was also important to realize that some teachers developed a special rapport with some students and, as a result, were able to change the direction of that student’s life for the better and not even have that student in their classroom. School counselors and school librarians often have an impact on students but are not in a classroom setting. These individuals, who must be licensed teachers in Indiana, also had their evaluations affected by standardized test scores under Public Law 90. However, under this law, these individuals would not receive added compensation for the success they achieved in turning a student around.

Throughout our history, the government has initiated methods to improve education. The purpose of a public education was to have an informed electorate so the

common citizen could vote intelligently. That purpose still exists; however, the involvement of money and political favors into the public education sphere has reduced the education of the average individual to choosing between letters *a*, *b*, *c* or *d*. Many teachers spend their time determining which standards to teach, which must then be suspended during testing windows, where new material cannot be introduced. They must then reduce the time spent on “fluff” that makes education more valuable. This “fluff” can be anything from debating current political trends to determining what values this society determined as important to field trips to sites near where students live.

Public Law 90 has had several studies conducted on its policies. However, these studies were conducted from the point of view of administrators or district managers. There was only one dissertation listed in the database at Grand Canyon University’s library webpage for dissertations and it studied Indiana administrator perceptions dealing with this law. Google Scholar listed several studies, but after reading the abstracts of these studies, there were not any regarding Public Law 90’s possible ramifications for the gifted. Furthermore, the studies listed in Google Scholar were focused on the evaluation requirements of Public Law 90, but not on the experiences of the teachers in the classroom. This reading provided an area for the researcher to explore: the experiences of the teachers within the classroom and the needs of gifted students in these teachers’ classrooms.

Many older individuals, including this researcher, can remember specific conversations in a classroom that had an impact on what our society considered as important at that time. These conversations were not part of any standards but were the most important information received. Political assassinations, wars in other countries,

protests and other aspects of daily life were a part of the education in the past. Many teachers lament the loss of these conversations since they were valid and connected their students to the world around them.

In a report initiated by President Ronald Reagan's administration, *A Nation at Risk*, it testified schools were failing, students were illiterate, and teachers were not providing the appropriate lessons for the current society (Claudio, 2013). This initial report startled many individuals within the United States. Since that time, the government has tried to legislate change. *No Child Left Behind* eventually became the law of the land, which was soon followed by *Race to the Top*. Indiana's Public Law 90 followed the same trends and touted more accountability—the new educational catchphrase. All of these programs and steps have yet to solve the educational problems we have today. Each of the above has demonstrated there are problems within the educational community, but perhaps continued efforts and revisions will eventually solve this dilemma.

Implications

It was apparent from this research that the needs of gifted students in Indiana were not being met. It is also possible that the school systems in this sector of the state could provide additional services to students that would address this deficiency. Providing these services to gifted students at the school system level would be a great first step. This researcher is aware that revising laws and legislation is a slow, tedious process. Furthermore, the researcher is aware that changing the law from using standardized testing would be an uphill battle, especially since this would involve money, lobbying efforts by testing companies, and politicians. However, this battle needs to occur. It is not in the best interests of the students in Indiana, whether gifted or not, to be placed in a

testing or testing window that lasts 141 days of a school year that only has 180 days for research has shown that classrooms who test often worsen monotony, anxiety, and fatigue, and promote behaviors that destroy a child's natural love of learning (Amrein & Berliner, 2003).

Teachers who were interviewed for this study have stated that there was too much testing. Teachers felt using the standardized test for their evaluation was unfair. Teachers admitted that the upper-level students were being ignored or left to fend for themselves. Teachers also admitted that it was difficult to teach all of the standards they were required to teach with all of the interruptions from the testing and practice testing. This information came directly from the individuals who knew it best—the teachers involved.

Theoretical implications. Interpretivist theory is a method in which the researcher tries to understand how an individual reacts or conducts himself/herself by seeing the world through that individual's eyes (Weller, 2014). The interpretivist practice within a qualitative research study seeks to acquire admission to the experiences through interaction with the subject (Howson, 2019). Using this world view, the researcher was able to acquire admission into the world of the middle school teacher in northeastern Indiana. Without looking at the data through this lens, the information would be meaningless. This study was enhanced by using the teachers' views and words to display their experiences in light of Public Law 90. The teachers' words allowed them to be the main witness to the testimony given—they spoke for themselves. Only viewing this information through their eyes would lead credence to the data. An outsider or an administrator would not have had the same point of view.

Using this theory advances our understanding of the importance of listening to those involved and the ramifications of actions taken by individuals who truly do not understand but are in charge. According to Crelin (2017), the government accelerated attempts to reform public education in 1965 with the original ESSA and has continued those attempts through many highly criticized efforts throughout those years. Involving teachers in the transformation of education is imperative for ongoing change (Painton, & Vitale, 2017). Listening to teachers provides the background on how best to assist students in education since they are on the frontline, know their students, understand what affects those students, and can make viable suggestions on how to help those students obtain the best education. The Interpretivist theory allowed those teachers to speak and have their responses heard.

Before one can apply Gardner's *Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, a teacher needed to know whether a child was gifted in one of the intelligences mentioned in this theory. The eight competencies or areas of intelligence that Gardner included in his theory included Musical Intelligence, Bodily Kinesthetic Intelligence, Logical-Mathematical Intelligence, Linguistic Intelligence, Spatial Intelligence, Interpersonal Intelligence, Intrapersonal Intelligence, and Naturalistic Intelligence (Leshkovska, & Spaseva, 2016). Students could be gifted in any one area of these intelligences and not another. Some students may be gifted in several of these intelligences and not just one.

Educators were questioned about the identification of any gifted students in their classroom. The majority of the participants within this study allowed other factors to determine a student's ability level. Instead, the teachers relied on standardized test scores and recommendations of former teachers to determine whether students were gifted or

had higher ability. Standardized test scores, which only tested Mathematical abilities or Linguistic abilities, could not identify gifts in the other six areas that Gardner identified. Furthermore, teachers, like the standardized tests given routinely in the state, applied only academic abilities when they identified students who might be gifted or have higher ability within their classrooms. The idea that a student may be gifted in leadership, athletic, artistic or any other of the intelligences did not register with their responses. All intelligences are uniformly significant and as such schoolchildren require development of all their intelligences to use them to augment their educational success (Green, 2020). A student who has a gift in one intelligence should be able to attain the highest level of success in their gift area through educational support in their school. The identification of a child's gift and the school's continual enhancement of all the child's intelligences is necessary to allow the child to reach his/her potential in that area. This lack of response from the teachers signified they were only aware of the possibility a student was gifted in an academic setting and would not be considered as gifted if their gift was in another of Gardner's competencies. A teacher needed to enhance all eight areas of the intelligences to support the one area of giftedness.

Other theories that involved giftedness vary but have a common feature. These theories include Renzulli's Three-Ring Model, Sternberg's Triarchic Theory of Intelligence, WICS Model of Gifted Leadership, Tannenbaum's Star Model, Vygotsky's Dynamic Theory of Giftedness, as well as Gagné's Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent. While most of these theories differed on the best way to approach a gifted child, they all have determined that students who are gifted have a natural ability that should be trained and encouraged to develop. Unfortunately, if teachers were unaware a

child had a specific gift, it would be difficult to cultivate that talent or gift and encourage its development. In this study, the teachers' responses indicated that teachers were not informed of this information.

This study advanced our understanding of *Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences* and supported the need of this theory. If individuals take Gardner's theory into consideration at the K-12 level, it will enhance gifted education. A school cannot assist a gifted student in reaching his/her potential if attention to that gift is brought to the forefront and isolated from the other intelligences. All intelligences are uniformly significant and as such schoolchildren require development of all their intelligences to use them to augment their educational success (Green, 2020).

Practical implications. If more attention to identification of gifted students is promoted, if teachers learn to teach utilizing Gardner's Multiple Intelligences, and if teachers are listened to about the problems they face within the schools, the entire United States Educational system could be changed. In order for education to be transformed, three things need to occur: teacher training systems need to be revised to reflect theories and their importance, public debate needs to occur for the public to be open to change as well as the reasons behind it, and professional learning needs to be ongoing and reflective of current research (Hall, 2016). Politicians are not involved in the above warranted changes. Educators need to be involved in these changes from the teacher trainee, the novice teacher, the experienced teacher in the classroom, the college professor, and researchers of educational theories. While this study has indicated the history of the federal and state governments in education, history indicated that originally the lessons

and curriculum were guided by the local board, as well as the teacher, who were aware of what the students needed to be successful.

In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to overhaul and improve education within the United States (Nelson, 2016). This piece of legislation funded disadvantaged schools and students, strengthened school libraries, and improved educational research (Nelson, 2016); however, it was also controversial since it removed control of who and what was taught in the local schools to a more equitable field (Baskin, 2017). This lack of local control has exacerbated through the years with the Common Core standards, the accountability movement, the promotion of school vouchers, and the promotion of charter schools. While input from others is worthwhile, it is important that educators frame future changes in the schools.

To extend Interpretivist theory to the fullest, we must listen to those within the schools and stop listening to politicians and standardized testing companies. Many teachers in this study decried the billions of dollars wasted on tests that only proved students may have minimum competencies. To paraphrase one teacher in this study, millions of dollars are spent on a test that is not designed to evaluate a teacher, but to show aptitude for a student if that student applied her/himself to answering the test questions appropriately.

Future implications. This study found that the needs of gifted students were not being met in these Indiana schools. However, it does not find that the needs of gifted students were not being met in every school system in Indiana. It was possible that the needs of these exceptional students may be met in some school systems; however, this

information was not found in the school systems that were involved in this study. Teachers need additional training through professional development in theories, such as Gardner's Multiple Intelligences, in order to continue to grow as teachers and provide the most current, most effective methods to reach students. Successful outcomes of teacher professional development are found when progressive changes are made through collaboration with teachers instead of being forced into the lives of teachers (Svendsen, 2020). Teachers indicated Public Law 90 was forced into their lives and many of these teachers did not agree with its policies. If politicians sincerely want to improve education, providing funds for professional development instead of spending millions of dollars on standardized tests might need to be considered.

This study found a lack of training to be apparent with the teachers in this area of Indiana. Although that training could begin in teacher training universities, it is recommended that training for current teachers is continued throughout their career. Although Indiana did issue life licenses in the early 1980's, this practice was stopped after that time and now required any teachers from that time forward to take two classes every five years or acquire professional growth plan points for renewal, with the exception of beginning teachers (IDOE, 2020). Beginning teachers apply for a 2-year license and then must successfully meet the requirements of a mentoring situation within their current school system before they qualify for the 5-year license (IDOE, 2020). Unfortunately, teachers may take any loosely associated college class that might really not assist in their professional development. Professional development should be made a priority in areas of giftedness of students so appropriate referrals can be made.

Teachers were unaware that gifted students could have alternate scenarios than the ones indicated from their responses in this study. These teachers need training to be able to identify gifted students within their classrooms and not need to rely on a standardized state test that was not developed to identify a gifted child. Furthermore, teachers should be able to recommend a student for testing to identify gifted traits and not just be able to recommend that a student was placed in an advanced class. A child who is highly motivated to succeed does not fall within a gifted category although a child could be both gifted and motivated.

It is also necessary to identify a gifted child at a younger age. Students who are truly gifted need the specialized training that comes from an individualized educational program (IEP). It was apparent from this study that there were not any IEP's for middle school students who were gifted, but there were many for the lower level students. Students who were identified as having a specific gift at a younger age should have their gift developed throughout their educational career. Students who do not have this development of their gift may become less motivated to succeed in school or could even become a "problem child" within the classroom due to boredom. While academic gifts are usually developed more readily in some schools, all gifts should be developed. Most countries in the world have special training for their athletic, naturalistic, leadership, academic or artistic gifts and cultivate these gifts so they are fully developed; most school systems in the United States do not.

Strengths and weaknesses of the study.

This study was credible since it described the experiences of middle school (grades 6-8) teachers in a section of Indiana as they portrayed it. However, it was limited

since it did not review all teachers' experiences within the state. Furthermore, even though this study did consist of the experiences of 11 teachers, there were approximately 150 teachers in this area who could have provided insight. This number gave the researcher a consensus but could have been better served if additional experiences had been given. The primary weakness of this study was the inability of the researcher to locate and interview teachers for this study.

This study would have been stronger if more participants could have been located. Furthermore, it would have aided significantly if a focal group could have been formed to address the issues within this study to assist in triangulation of the responses. This was attempted through many methods, including the formation of a new Facebook group specifically for Indiana teachers, emails sent to all superintendents in Indiana to distribute to their teachers, and through word of mouth to anyone the researcher could find. Unfortunately, these methods failed to secure individuals to participate in either a focal group or for additional interviews.

This study was also limited by the nervousness of the participants. Public Law 90 is a controversial, sensitive topic among teachers in the state since it deals directly with a teacher's evaluation. The teachers selected their words carefully when approached about the study and did not wish to appear negative. Furthermore, they were careful to make sure that the administration was not presented in a negative view. This carefulness may have limited the conversation even though these participants were guaranteed confidentiality.

However, even with these limitations, the teachers presented reliable descriptions of their teaching and their experiences in a Public Law 90 school through the use of the

interview. Having them present their experiences was enlightening to the researcher. These experiences allowed the researcher to determine the status of gifted students in the school system and in this area of Indiana.

Public Law 90 was implemented with very few studies about its effects. A strength of this study indicated that Public Law 90 needs additional revisions to address the needs of gifted students. Possible revisions that are needed include the aforementioned requirement of professional development for teachers. Another possible revision is the need for the state to require specific gifted instruction and identification methods instead of leaving these requirements to the local school administration. While the researcher found three dissertations that were written within a few years of its implementation, there have been very few other studies that were publicly available. This study is the first study to evaluate whether or not it was detrimental to the gifted students of Indiana. All students have had increased time on standardized tests and practice tests. While the study did indicate that students at the lower level had raised their scores, it also determined that those students in the top 50% were not a top priority of the schools. Also, due to an individual teacher in this study who counted the days, it showed that students within her school system were in a testing window or taking standardized tests 141 days out of a 180-day school year. This information needed to become more publicized. This study provided those details.

This study also revealed the stress that teachers in Indiana are showing. Many people have a misconception about what a teacher is paid and what a teacher is worth. It has even been said that teachers only work 183 days of the year so they should not be paid as much. The requirements of this occupation go well beyond the number of actual

days a teacher is within the building. This study revealed that teachers have given up any downtime they might have had to tutor students at risk of failing the state test.

Furthermore, this study revealed that due to the additional guidelines about lessons, teachers must associate every lesson to a standard and give detailed objectives as well as time constraints for each lesson. This process involved a lot of planning on the part of the teacher, often completed at home. This planning was in addition to the regular grading of paperwork handed in for regular classes, which is also often completed at home. Any time a study can show that an individual, in this case a teacher, is worth the investment that is entailed for that person, it is a strength.

Another strength of this study is that fact that revealing information at this stage about teacher moods and attitudes allow time to remedy this situation before it becomes untenable. While there were some individual teachers who did not want to go on the record as a participant and were not officially involved in this study, they revealed to this researcher that they were looking forward to retirement since they had lost their love of teaching as a result of the requirements of this law. This was indicated by one teacher who was involved in this study who felt she was not respected and felt she was blamed for everything that was wrong with the students in Indiana. This study showed that as a result of this information being revealed, Indiana may have a shortage of qualified teachers in the near future. Several of the teachers implied they were looking forward to retirement. Universities in the area have indicated that their enrollment is lower than it has been previously in the Teacher Education Department (Will, 2018). With this study indicating this situation, it is important that legislators review Public Law 90 to solve this dilemma.

Recommendations

Recommendations for future research. This study added to the body of knowledge research on Indiana's Public Law 90. Although some educational policy briefs had been written, very little research had been conducted on the effects of this law. In Indiana, the gap that was studied was whether teachers meeting the requirements of Public Law 90 are inadvertently not meeting the needs of gifted students, as related to research-based teaching practices (Sargent, 2014). This specific area had not been studied by researchers in the state, and, as a result, there was scant information regarding any impact. Evidence was gathered through the interview process that revealed the teaching strategies of educators within several school corporations in northeastern Indiana. This was the first step to determine if Public Law 90 was detrimental to the gifted student.

Since this study included a small section of Indiana, it is recommended that additional studies take place throughout Indiana. Having another researcher gather and review the practices of middle school teachers throughout the state would benefit this study and determine if there was a consensus in Indiana with the descriptions these teachers had given. Additionally, it would be beneficial for research to be conducted from an administrator's vantage point regarding how their gifted students are performing or having their needs met. This researcher also believes additional training for administrators would be appropriate since they would be responsible for providing guidance for their faculty members. Along that same line, additional training would be beneficial in university training facilities so that new teachers are more adequately prepared in identification, differentiation and meeting the needs of gifted students.

It would be beneficial to investigate other grade levels of teachers and explore the possibility that this situation was more common than originally thought. Currently, students are required to test in English Language Arts in grades three through eight, Mathematics in grades three through eight, Science in grades four and six, Social Studies in grade five, and Biology in high school (IDOE, 2019). This opens the field to many other teachers to describe their teaching situations.

It would also be beneficial to determine exactly what services were available throughout the state for gifted students. If students throughout the state did not have access to these services, especially in smaller school corporations, it is possible in our more technologically centered society to provide these services on-line. This also might be more cost effective for smaller school systems. However, without further research, this information may not be readily available.

In addition, a review of the standardized test itself is in order. Since most legislators are not trained in education, it would be beneficial to review the standardized test that is given in every subject and grade level throughout the state. It is apparent from the teacher's responses that this test was not designed to evaluate whether a teacher was effective or not. According to the teachers who have administered this test, it was not an achievement test, but an aptitude test. This type of test really does not evaluate what a child had learned over the prior year but seeks to test a student's capacity or abilities. For this reason, it was not an appropriate device to use to evaluate a teacher.

It would also be illuminating to determine which legislators chose this test to use for the students in the state. If these individuals received contributions from a particular testing company, it would be a conflict of interest for them to also suggest this company's

product and spend millions of Indiana tax dollars to enrich this company. While this may sound political in nature, it reinforced the belief that teachers alluded to in this study: many teachers believe that taxpayer money has been wasted on these tests. For this to occur, however, would require the reevaluation of the Supreme Court's *Citizen's United* landmark case.

This study identified many areas that need additional input regarding Public Law 90. While this study identified a gap regarding gifted students, other students could also be evaluated to see if this law is detrimental to their education as well. If all students spend approximately 141 days out of the school year in a testing window or taking standardized tests, it would appear that all students are being shortchanged in their overall education.

Additionally, it was apparent that teachers should reflect on how they are evaluated. Since an exam that was not developed to evaluate their ability was being used to evaluate them, it seems reasonable that some teachers were receiving evaluations that were truly unfair. Teachers are working diligently in the state to provide an education to their students. They were told they must teach certain standards to these students. They were held accountable to teach their lessons to raise scores for the state standardized test as well, even if their subject was not on the test. Research should be conducted that determines whether this is a fair practice or if it should be eliminated.

There have been several research studies conducted concerning Public Law 90, which was passed in Indiana in 2011; however, no research has been located where the impact of this law on gifted students or from the teachers' daily experiences under this law had been studied. There is evidence in the literature that the emphasis in America to

raise the scores of lower level students was causing teachers to overlook gifted students (Warne, & Price, 2016). There have been studies in other states about ignoring gifted students (Cohoon, 2015), but not in Indiana since Public Law 90 was legislated. Since the gap this study was researching was whether teachers were inadvertently not meeting the needs of their gifted students by meeting the requirements of Public Law 90, it was important to investigate this topic. This study will advance scientific knowledge available about Public Law 90 in Indiana by elucidating this information, but also congruently on the impact to the gifted student within the classrooms of Indiana's teachers. Furthermore, this information will give additional insight from the experiences of those on the frontline, the teachers in the classroom.

In Indiana, the gap that was studied was whether teachers meeting the requirements of Public Law 90 are inadvertently not meeting the needs of gifted students, as related to research-based teaching practices (Sargent, 2014). This specific area had not been studied by researchers in the state, and, as a result, there was very little information regarding any impact. Evidence that was gathered through the interview process revealed the teaching strategies of educators within several school corporations in northeastern Indiana. While it is necessary to hold additional studies in other school corporations within the state, this first step was necessary for the process to begin.

Using the theoretical perspective of Interpretivism, the researcher documented the phenomena that was explored by accurately recording the experiences of the middle school (grades 6-8) teachers involved. Interpretivism is based on the true to life method of data collection such as an interview (Dudovskiy, 2017). Interpretivism allows specific issues to be studied at a deeper level than many other methods, and also allows the

researcher true and reliable data since the information comes directly from the subject (Dudovskiy, 2017). Using this perspective gave the researcher information from the teacher's point of view about the experiences in their classroom.

Recommendations for future practice. There is evidence in the literature that the emphasis in America to raise the scores of lower level students was causing teachers to overlook gifted students (Warne, & Price, 2016). There have been studies in other states about this phenomenon (Cphoon, 2015), but studies have not been conducted in Indiana since Public Law 90 was legislated. The need to explore this phenomenon in Indiana was apparent from studies elsewhere. This study advanced scientific knowledge available about Public Law 90 in Indiana by elucidating how gifted students are taught here and that they too are being ignored due to educational legislation. Furthermore, this study gave additional insight from the experiences of those on the frontline, the teachers in the classroom. In chapter one of this study, it was noted that describing this phenomenon would be significant since the gap this study was researching was whether or not teachers were inadvertently not meeting the needs of their gifted students by meeting the requirements of Public Law 90. This study advanced scientific knowledge available about Public Law 90 in Indiana by elucidating this information. Furthermore, this information will give additional insight from the experiences of those on the frontline, the teachers in the classroom. It is recommended for individuals who practice in the educational field that this study is taken under consideration. This study indicated that middle school teachers were unaware of the definition of a gifted student. Whether this indicated more preparation at the college level or in-service workshops for teachers already employed in the school systems, it was obvious that additional training should

occur. Ignoring the gifted student could be detrimental to not only the student's future, but possibly the future of this society. Many believe these students hold the key to the future.

Additionally, the evaluation process should be overhauled. Teachers had indicated they were not against being evaluated; however, this evaluation should be fair and equitable for all participants. Teachers, especially those who are employed in a school system that has a larger population of students who believe that education is not as important as other students, should be evaluated on their presentations and attention to their lessons. They should be evaluated on whether they were presenting material using differentiation within the classroom so that all students have the opportunity to learn regardless of their ability level. This practice will benefit all students. It will also place some of the responsibility for learning on the students and parents instead of making a teacher 100% responsible for all outcomes. In other words, a teacher can lead the class, but that teacher cannot make the student pay attention or learn.

A Nation at Risk that was published in 1983 (Boyd, 2019) began a long string of legislative endeavors that not only did not solve the nation's problems with educating the young, but placed the blame for these problems on the shoulders of those individuals who were trying to help these students succeed. Many of these legislative endeavors have caused more harm than good to not only the gifted and higher ability students, but also the children who were struggling to have any success. This researcher believes strongly that a new report needs to be written to place the blame where it really belongs. In the future, a child's education should be the responsibility of the child, the parents, the educational system and this society. The teachers can be evaluated on their presentation

and differentiation styles of presentation, but it takes every individual within the society to educate the child completely. Furthermore, every student, not just those in the lower 50%, should have an IEP that addresses their unique learning abilities, strengths, weaknesses, and learning style. When we concentrate only on the lower level students, we will only have mediocre results for the remaining students. When we concentrate on all of the students, we can have success for all of them.

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand how northeastern Indiana (grades 6-8) teachers described their experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they met the varying needs of their gifted students. This had not been studied and a gap was apparent in the knowledge about this law. This law included accountability, standardized tests, and teacher evaluations linked to merit pay. Teachers were held accountable for the scores on standardized tests of students in their classes, whether they taught the actual classes that were tested on those standardized tests or not. Information was given by the teachers in this study to describe how these items affected their performance in the classroom, especially in regard to gifted students. The information described the efforts of teachers to meet the needs of the students in their classroom through the confines of this law. It is apparent that this law, which may have assisted students in the lower 50% of their classes, may have inadvertently sacrificed the needs of the gifted students in those same classrooms.

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Appendix A.

Site Authorization Letters

Site authorization(s) on file at Grand Canyon University.

Appendix B.

IRB Approval Letter



GRAND CANYON
UNIVERSITY™

3300 West Camelback Road, Phoenix Arizona 85017 602.639.7500 Toll Free 800.800.9776 www.gcu.edu

DATE: September 25, 2018

TO: Cathi Godfrey

FROM: Grand Canyon University Institutional Review Board

STUDY TITLE: Teacher Experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 and Gifted Students: A

Phenomenological Study

IRB REFERENCE

IRB-2018-435

#:

SUBMISSION
TYPE:

Submission Response for Initial Review Submission Packet

ACTION:

APPROVED

APPROVAL

DATE:

September 25, 2018

EXPIRATION

DATE:

REVIEW TYPE:

Expedited

REVIEW

CATEGORY:

Category 7

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. Grand Canyon University Institutional Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study

design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant.

Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document. If applicable, please use the approved informed consent that is included in your published documents.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials or the data collection protocol must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate modification request form.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

Based on the risks, this project requires Continuing Review by this office on an annual basis.

Please use the appropriate renewal forms for this procedure.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at irb@gcu.edu or 602-639-7804.

Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

Advancement To Candidacy

Congratulations!

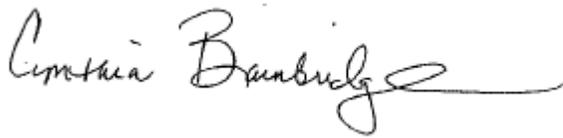
On behalf of the College of Doctoral Studies, we are pleased to inform you that you have now advanced to the Candidacy stage of your Doctoral journey. This means you have completed all of the required proposal phases of the dissertation and you are now ready to move into the research portion of the dissertation work.

This is an important step in the doctoral process. Through advancing to candidacy, you are now among an elite group of learners who are doing academic research. This also means you are representing yourself and Grand Canyon University as an independent doctoral researcher and with that comes a great deal of responsibility. We wish you the best in your endeavors!

Congratulations on this important step in your doctoral journey and welcome to Candidacy!



Dr. Michael Berger
Dean, College of Doctoral Studies



Dr. Cynthia Bainbridge
Assistant Dean, Research and Dissertations Director, Institutional Review Board
College of Doctoral Studies

Appendix C.
Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
<p>Teacher Experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 and Gifted Students:</p> <p>A Phenomenological Study</p>
INTRODUCTION
<p>The purposes of this form are to provide you (as a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research and to record the consent of those who agree to be involved in the study.</p>
RESEARCH
<p>Cathi A Godfrey has invited your participation in a research study.</p> <p>I am completing this research as part of my doctoral degree in Organizational Leadership for Effective Schools</p>
STUDY PURPOSE
<p>The purpose of the research is to explore the experiences of the Northeastern Indiana teacher in grades 6-8 in teaching in a Public Law 90 school.</p>
ELIGIBILITY
<p>You are eligible to participate in this research if you:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have taught more than 6 years in a public school. 2. Are a subject specific teacher with a teaching degree in English, Mathematics, Social Studies, Health, or Science.

You are not eligible to participate in this research if you:

1. You have any training in any area of Special Education.
2. You have taught for under 6 years.

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH ACTIVITY

If you decide to participate, then as a study participant you will be asked to:

1. Meet at the Jay County Library conference room for an interview that should take approximately 1 hour.
2. Review and sign a copy of this informed consent form (Required for participation in any research)
3. Maintain confidentiality about the topic and questions used within the interview until all research is completed.
4. Indicate any time where you feel uncomfortable answering and have the right to refuse.

Approximately 15 subjects will be participating in this research study.

RISKS

If you decide to participate in this research study, then you may face some risks such as having other individuals request information about the interview format and information. Your name will not be indicated on the study since an alphanumeric code will be substituted and no other identifying information will be indicated on the transcript or otherwise.

To decrease the impact of this risk, you can avoid indicating you are a part of the study, so individuals will be unaware of your involvement.

BENEFITS

If you decide to participate one direct benefit to you is the satisfaction of knowing you assisted another in obtaining a higher degree. Furthermore, you will know you are assisting in researching the effects of a law that have a direct impact on your teaching.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. The results of this research study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researchers will not identify you. In order to maintain confidentiality of your records, Cathi Godfrey will not divulge your name in any transcript or notes. You will be identified by an alphanumeric code in all transcripts and notes. The only individuals who will have access to your name will be the dissertation committee and myself.

Audio recording:

I would like to use a voice recorder to record your responses. I will also use Dragon Software on the computer to generate a computerized transcript. If you do not wish to be recorded, please let me know so I can make other arrangements.

I will secure your information with these steps:

1. Using an alphanumeric code to refer to your comments.
2. Keeping a legend of the alphanumeric code and your name in a locked, secure box in my home.
3. Not relaying any comments you have made and connecting that comment to your identity.

I will keep your data for 3 years. Then, I will delete electronic data and destroy paper data.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE

It is okay for you to decline to participate in this research study. Even if you say yes now, you are free to say no later, and stop participating at any time; there will be no penalty to you.

If you decide to stop participation, you may do so by informing me as soon as you feel you desire to stop participating. If so, I will use the information I gathered from you only with your permission.

Your decision will not affect your relationship with Grand Canyon University or with Cathi Godfrey, or otherwise cause a loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you will not receive compensation for participating.

I may stop your participation, even if you did not ask me to, if I find your responses have any perceived bias, or if it appears you have a personal agenda you wish to engage.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS

There is no financial cost to you as a participant in this study, nor is there payment for your participation.

COMPENSATION FOR ILLNESS AND INJURY

If you agree to participate in the study, then your consent does not waive any of your legal rights. However, no funds have been set aside to compensate you in the event of injury.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

Any questions you have concerning the research study or your participation in the study, before or after your consent, will be answered by Cathi Godfrey, cgodfrey1@my.gcu.edu, or at the following telephone number: [REDACTED]

If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the College of Doctoral Studies at IRB@gcu.edu; (602) 639-7804.

This form explains the nature, demands, benefits and any risk of the research study. By signing this form you agree knowingly to assume any risks involved. Remember, your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefit. In signing this consent form, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this consent form will be given (offered) to you.

Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in the above study.

Subject's Signature

Printed Name

Date

INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

"I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits and possible risks associated with participation in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature. These elements of Informed Consent conform to the Assurance given by Grand Canyon University to the Office for Human Research Protections to protect the rights of human subjects. I have provided (offered) the subject/participant a copy of this signed consent document."

Signature of Investigator _____

Date _____

Appendix D.

Interview Protocol

Question # 1 and # 2 will be the primary questions; while questions 3-8 will be used as necessary to elicit further information through a probing format.

1. Tell me about your experience with Indiana's Public Law 90; Ind. Code 20-28-11.5, 2011.
2. How do you differentiate your lessons to provide for students of different learning ability levels?
3. Describe situations you have encountered in the classroom that have surfaced as a result of this law.
4. Describe your experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90 as they meet the varying needs of your gifted students.
5. Describe any situation where you have been directed to adjust your lessons to meet the needs of student struggling to pass the state test.
6. Since you have taught prior to the implementation of Public Law 90, how have you changed your teaching method or style if you have? Please give me specific examples of how you have changed your presentations, methods or style.
7. How have you been provided information that indicated one of your students was gifted or high-ability? Describe how this information influenced your lessons.
8. Do you have any comments or additional experiences you would like to relate regarding Indiana's Public Law 90 and its implementation? Feel free to comment beyond any information that has already been asked.

Appendix E.

Code Book

Theory	Codes (With colored shading)	Count of number of instances by participant	Total number of occurrences	Definition	Examples
Interpretivism	Differentiation	1:1; 2:6; 3:5; 4:2; 6:7; 7:2; 8:4; 9:1; 10:2; 11:4; 12:1	36	The teacher's use of differentiation within his/her own classroom, the teacher's definition of how differentiation was used, and if the teacher used differentiation for specific students.	I like to differentiate through using puzzles, stations and domino games. I adjust my lessons based on how well my students achieve.
	Remediation	1:3; 3:2; 4:1; 7:1; 10:2; 12:2	11	Whether that teacher used remediation within the classroom, outside of the classroom, school wide efforts to remediate students, and the identification of students who required remediation.	I have been told to pay attention to the "bubble kids" and they are an important group. Based on the results of benchmark assessments, I reteach the concepts through activities.
	Teaching with the Standards	1:2; 2:5; 3:4; 4:4; 6:2; 7:4; 8:2; 9:5; 10:2; 12:3	33	Comments regarding what was emphasized within the lesson plans, exactly what requirements were in place that educators were directed to teach, and whether teachers were directed to reinforce certain	We get a lot of pressure from our administration to assist the Language Arts teachers. There are many times I have adjusted my instruction due to following the standards created.

Theory	Codes (With colored shading)	Count of number of instances by participant	Total number of occurrences	Definition	Examples
Multiple Intelligences				ideas are placed in this category.	
	Test Preparation	1:1; 2:6; 4:1; 6:3; 7:3; 8:7; 9:3; 10:2; 11:3; 12:1	30	The amount of time a teacher utilized throughout the academic year on preparing students for the state test as well as comments made concerning any use of PIVOT or Acuity preparation tests.	We have access to Pivot tests, which are given 4 times prior to the state test. Students are required to take the NWEA test. Only 31 school days of 180 last year was spent without testing or test preparation.
	Opinion about Public Law 90	1:8; 2:5; 3:5; 4:1; 6:4; 7:2; 8:5; 9:1; 10:1;	32	All remarks regarding both positive and negative comments about the law, its fairness, or any opinion that was offered in regard to the law as well as personal opinions by the teacher.	Teachers can not make every student read every story or make them give it their full attention. I feel pressure every day based on how these students test. Teachers can't control what happens at home.
	Evaluation Emphasis	1:4; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1; 6:2; 7:1; 8:5; 11:2; 12:1	18	Comments concerning the importance of the teacher's evaluation were placed in this code as well as any comments regarding the importance of the evaluation to the teacher.	I honestly do not feel my evaluation was an effective measurement of the job I do. Teachers are held accountable and if those scores don't go up, the teacher and the school is held accountable.
	Gifted Identification	1:2; 2:5; 3:2; 4:1; 6:2; 7:4; 8:5; 9:1;	33	Information provided concerning what the teacher	I have not received any information

Theory	Codes (With colored shading)	Count of number of instances by participant	Total number of occurrences	Definition	Examples
		10:5; 11:3; 12:3		knew about the identification of gifted students within their school system	about this subject. I am unaware of our school's policy for this.

Appendix F.

Coding Example

1. Tell me about your experience with Indiana's Public Law 90; Ind. Code 20-28-11.5, 2011.

Since the time that Indiana Public Law went into effect, teachers were told about the law and 14 teachers from my school were chosen to determine which model we would use for our evaluation. I was on this committee. We chose to use a modified RISE model and it was adopted by the school. Since that time I have been evaluated by principals in both the High school and middle school for the required amount of evaluations as written in the law. I write out an extensive SLO at the beginning of the year based on my incoming students. I have chosen a large number of students each year to be included in my SLO, which is then adopted and approved by my principal. I have evaluations throughout the year with a follow-up evaluation at the end of the year to see how we fare. My area of middle school science is not directly assessed by the standardized tests so I have modified some of my lessons to correlate with other grade levels of science that are tested. I intentionally choose difficult areas such as genetics which frees up the teachers at other levels to reinforce my lessons. I have been given positive reinforcement about this since it has shown improved scores in those grade levels where it is tested. In Math, I do a great deal making sure kids understand graphing. They appear to understand how to make graphs, but using the graph is applied which better leads to their understanding and improved test scores. I have purposely focused on the depth of what we do instead of the breadth of what we do.

2. How do you differentiate your lessons to provide for students of different learning ability levels?

Ok. I differentiate by immediately assessing students' learning styles through a standardized assessment to make sure I have an overview of how my students pick up information. Then I try to incorporate those methods in as many lessons as possible so that on any given day the visual learners are going to learn, the auditory learners are going to learn, and the spatial learners are going to learn. Part of my graduate work was done at Oxford University in England and the British style of teaching incorporates Spiraling. They start with Physics, just the basic concepts of Physics in the freshman year, then move to Chemistry and actually leave Biology to the last because they believe that most of Biology is based on chemical reactions. If you don't really understand Chemistry, you just end up memorizing those things and don't really understand the process. Chemical reactions are based on basic physics laws such as positive and negative reactions, so it makes sense to introduce these concepts first. So, I have found that if I taught in a spiral, and introduce vocabulary with something they visually saw, it gives them something concrete to associate with those vocabulary terms. Then we would come around and visit those concepts again and they would really see the connections. Then spiral around and do some math problems associated with these concepts, other visuals such as graphing and "tweak" it, continuing to spiral back to the concept and add additional concepts as I go. The kids who miss it the first time may actually get it the second, third, or fourth time around. Each time adding more rigor to help explain or understand the concept better. It appears after we have spiraled around several times, the vast number of kids finally grasp the concept by the time of the unit test. I don't really

care if the kids are slow learners as long as they get it in the end. My goal is to get them there at the final part. The school data has really reinforced that the spiraling methods really reinforces the concept.

3. Describe situations you have encountered in the classroom that have surfaced as a result of this law.

Situations I have encountered really make me have to determine if I need to follow the letter of the law or my judgment as a professional that this is really important. Sometimes the letter of the law determines I need to base my lessons on student data. But in Science, sometimes what I need to base my lessons on are the students' ability level, their reading level, and their math abilities. It doesn't go back to what the last standardized test results were in Science because the rigor level is much higher than what they previously had in prior years. The content is so different than what they have had in the past. You can't base their ability on their ability to do math or their ability to read well because they can have poor skills in these areas and still do well in Science. So I want to give these kids their best opportunity to learn and it doesn't always tie back to standardized scores. So, I admit my guilt in ignoring the standards in some areas in order to give those kids the opportunity to learn best. Not everything that can be counted, counts under this law. I tend to teach things that count and not necessarily what the law states should be counted.

4. Describe your lived experiences with Indiana's Public Law 90; Ind. Code 20-28-11.5, 2011 as they meet the varying needs of your gifted students.

Well, I totally believe that public education in the 2000's has focused on raising the scores of the bottom half. We have done everything in our power to raise those kids

and give them remediation in reading and math. In fact, I believe it is in the law that if they fail their standardized test scores they are put into remediation. In the middle school they are put into literacy classes to boost those scores. However, they don't put them into remediation for Science because Science doesn't count. We are told that by guidance counselors and administrators. I particularly believe that the Scientific Method and how we learn is something that will help us in adulthood and help us adjust to be better learners. So, I think we have done a good job at bringing up the bottom, but we did so at the expense of the top. We have put too much effort at remediation that we haven't worked on acceleration. What I have always tried to avoid doing is saying if you do more work, I will give you a higher grade, which motivates some kids. I don't want to motivate you for more, I want to motivate you for better. I want to deepen their thinking skills and really make them have an inquiring mind. So, in my classes, my extra credit does not come from doing more, it comes from doing better. I don't believe repeating first grade six times is the same as a sixth-grade education. So, I don't believe if you turn in 2 extra papers, it makes you a better student or a more gifted student. So those students who do my extra credit are the ones that I can push towards excellence. I try to not label those students and try to let students know that every student is gifted in some area and try to maximize that, so they get some self-worth out of their education.

5. Describe any situation where you have been directed to adjust your lessons to meet the needs of student struggling to pass the state test.

I don't say this proudly, but I am very much respected by my administrators and colleagues. And as such I have never been directed to reteach or teach in a different manner just to meet state regulations. Maybe that is a bad thing, but I tend to think that is

a good thing. Professionals are professionals. Inherently I should recognize if I need to change how I am doing something instead of having another professional step based on a twenty-minute observation or an anecdotal conversation overheard in the hallways. I have resisted what I do based on political advisers in Indianapolis telling me I needed to be evaluated on one competency or another because they haven't been in my class. If they believe that e-learning is expedient because it is inexpensive, then I believe that the only reason it might have worked for them is because they already had an education based on their own experiences with a flesh and blood teacher and used their on-line learning to augment what they already knew. But to say that it will work with non-successful students is very short-sited in my view.

6. Since you have taught prior to the implementation of Indiana's Public Law 90; Ind. Code 20-28-11.5, 2011, how have you changed your teaching method or style if you have? Please give me specific examples of how you have changed your presentations, methods or style.

Generally speaking, I can say that I haven't really changed how I have been teaching my lessons unless I saw that students were really missing the mark. And then I have tried to incorporate those skills or areas into my own classes even though it might not be counted in my class, it would certainly help in other areas.

7. How have you been provided information that indicated one of your students was gifted or high ability? Describe how this information influenced your lessons.

The only indication I have if the students is gifted or high ability is if they receive a Pass or Pass+ on the standardized test scores. We do use NWEA scores. We use the

PIVOT test, but I haven't seen any of those scores yet and the year is half over. We do receive updates from our literacy teacher and remediation teachers for our lower score students, but not for our gifted or high ability. I can tell you every remediation kid because the remediation and ESL teachers really focus on giving updates, etc. Guidance counselors will regularly ask who needs to go into remediation so that is regularly addressed, but not the gifted or high ability. I work after school with remediation, so I recognize those students. As I said earlier, we really focus on the 50% and under rather than the 51% and above.

8. Do you have any comments or additional experiences you would like to relate regarding Indiana's Public Law 90; Ind. Code 20-28-11.5, 2011 and its implementation? Feel free to comment beyond any information that has already been asked.

As I mentioned earlier, I think the law has a good intention to hold teachers accountable for student learning. But it is kind of like holding doctors accountable for personal illness. Sometimes it is not something they can control. The doctor can do everything he can to alleviate the pains, he can provide things that provide more nurture, he can deal with emotional well-being or physical well-being, but in the case of Public Law teachers are expected to fix everything. Teachers are held accountable and if those scores don't go up the teacher and the school will be held accountable. What bothers me the most is some of the tests have been designed as aptitude tests and not as achievement tests. We need to have the right tests instead of trying to use a hammer as a screwdriver. It's not the best tool for what is being evaluated. If it's not the right test, then those are not valid data points. I am suspicious of the tests and would like us to not pay out the

billions of dollars the state is paying out for something that doesn't really evaluate what it is supposed to evaluate. Teachers embrace change if it brings about success but change for change's sake doesn't always bring success. If I change and use technology that will give immediate feedback to the students, I will embrace that tool. But new tests that cost billions of dollars and are not reliable is a waste of money. I do not believe that standardized testing to evaluate teachers has been shown to be effective.