

**Student Learning + Retention = Teacher Growth;
A Product Evaluation Case Study among CTI Fellows**

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BACKGROUND: Significant quantitative research has demonstrated the impact of the classroom teacher on students' academic and economic outcomes, and the high cost of teacher turnover (Chetty, Freidman, & Rockoff, 2014). These studies also suggest more qualitative research is needed in order to better understand how certain factors influence teachers and students. The goal of this research is to conduct a product evaluation of Charlotte Teachers Institute (CTI), an innovative 7-month teacher professional development (PD) program for public school teachers, to make informed judgments about the value of CTI.

METHODS: The CIPP model (Stufflebeam, 2003) was the evaluation framework for the product evaluation used in this study. Product evaluation provided a guide to assess CTI's goal of retaining highly qualified teachers. A multi-case study method was used to take an in-depth view on two CTI Fellows. Both participants are public school teachers with varying years of experience, teaching different grade levels and subject areas. A grounded theory methodology was adapted for data triangulation. Primary data consisted of semi-structured interviews and follow-up questionnaires. Secondary data included 2015-2017 artifacts (e.g. school demographics, CTI Fellows' Questionnaires, CTI Curriculum Unit Usage surveys, and EVAAS data). The collected data was analyzed through pattern-matching and cross-case synthesis divided into three phases: coding, categorizing, and identifying themes.

RESULTS: Using grounded theory methodology and a multi-case study method three themes emerged: (1) teacher growth; (2) student engagement; (3) teacher leadership. Fellows' data revealed teacher growth as a cycle of collaboration in CTI seminars to application of original curriculum units in their classrooms to student engagement and teacher effectiveness. Through data triangulation of Fellows' testimony, it was evident that student engagement increased student learning. Fellows were inspired by CTI to continue leadership roles in CTI and the school district. One Fellow is continuing their leadership journey while remaining in the classroom and the other in administrative leadership. Moreover, the three emerging themes played a role in the retention of the participants.

CONCLUSIONS: Since 2014, the school district began measuring teacher effectiveness through student growth. This product evaluation highlighted the shortcoming to EVAAS data, a student growth measure, as it does not provide rich descriptions of Fellows students' learning experiences formed by their teaching. To improve CTI outcomes it is recommended to conduct a qualitative study on Fellows' students' academic journeys. Capturing stories on Fellows' student learning would aid in providing a complete picture on the effectiveness of CTI Fellows on student outcomes.