

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF HIGH SCHOOL BIOLOGY TEACHERS'
PERCEPTIONS OF THE NORTH CAROLINA PROFESSIONAL TEACHING
STANDARDS IN AN ERA OF HIGH-STAKES TESTING

A Dissertation
by
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ABSTRACT

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF HIGH SCHOOL BIOLOGY TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE NORTH CAROLINA PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS IN AN ERA OF HIGH-STAKES TESTING (December 2011)

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This qualitative study investigated four career status, four initially licensed, and four lateral-entry high school Biology teachers' perceptions of the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards' (NCPTS) usefulness in preparing them to be exemplary science teachers. These teachers are among the first group of teachers to use the NCPTS for professional growth and be evaluated with the Teachers Evaluation Process (TEP). Several historical documents including *National Science Education Standards*, *National Board for Professional Teaching Standards*, and *How People Learn*, along with NSTA's Search of Excellence in Science Teaching identify the characteristics of exemplary science teaching. These best practices are reflected in the NCPTS. Individual and cross case analysis found four themes of high-stakes testing, time, technology, and the Teacher Evaluation Process that have an impact on these teachers. The results indicated there is an inconsistent distribution of technological resources, lack of funding for lab equipment and supplies, lack of time for inquiry, and lack of time to find and use resources. Teachers feel the additional stress for unprepared and unmotivated

learners, a rigorous curriculum, and more accountability for student performance.

Implications of this research include: Administrators need to spend more time with initially licensed and lateral entry teachers to help them understand how to improve their practice.

There is a need for additional professional development for teachers to understand how to use the NCPTS to improve teaching and learning.

Keywords: teaching standards, science teaching, Biology teachers, accountability, high-stakes testing.

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