2015

Assessing and Guiding Instructional Practice: Administrators' and Teachers' Perceptions of the Framework for Teaching Evaluation

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2015

Abstract

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by

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MA, Delta State University, 2000

BA, Jackson State University, 1999

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Education

Walden University

December 2015

Abstract

School officials in a large district adopted a research-based teacher evaluation system, the Framework for Teaching (FFT). Despite a 4-year phase-in of the FFT, teachers' evaluation ratings increased while student achievement results decreased. This disparity impacted the school district's growth targets as set by the State Department of Education. If target growths are unmet, school administrators must relinquish school operations to the state. A bounded, qualitative case study was designed to explore administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the FFT and its influence on school administrators' assessment of teachers' instructional practices. Social constructivist and andragogy theories formed the study's conceptual framework. A purposeful sample of 6 K-12 district administrators, who reviewed teacher performance, and 12 K-12 district teachers, who were evaluated using the FFT, volunteered to participate in semi-structured interviews. Qualitative data were analyzed using open and axial coding. Key results included concerns with lack of time for conferences during the evaluation process, administrators' skills to provide quality feedback to teachers, and their lack of content knowledge to improve teaching and learning in specific content areas. It was recommended that teachers receive evidence-based, constructive, and individualized feedback from the school administrator. Based on the findings, the Feedback Institute was developed to engage school administrators in professional development to learn how to provide substantive feedback using protocols and structures to support teacher growth and to use content specialists to address gaps in administrators' content knowledge. These endeavors may contribute to positive social change by restructuring the teacher evaluation process to improve instructional practice, and, thus, enhance school improvement and student learning.

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Dedication

I dedicate this project study to my daughter Khristiaynna, parents, siblings, coworkers, extended family, and friends. Your sacrifice and unwavering support are greatly appreciated. You have tolerated many days, evenings, holidays, and weekends of me spending vast amount of time conducting research. I pray that you understand my commitment to this process and education and use my experience as a guide of motivation and high expectations for your future endeavors.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my project study committee. You have provided the knowledge and support in order to assist me in completing the process.

As my chair, Dr. Andrea Thompson has provided a great support system, knowledge, accountability, and encouragement as I worked through the research process. You were supportive at every milestone and you continued to have a strong desire to see me through the project. Thank you very much for your hard work and commitment to me and the process.

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Section 1: The Problem

Improved leadership, teacher effectiveness, and student achievement are the focus of K–12 educational systems, and as a result the teacher evaluation process, these have become a focal point in developing administrators' and teachers' professional practices (Biggers, Croft, & Goe, 2012). This increased attention to teacher evaluation has raised questions about the relationship between teacher evaluation and student achievement. In the research district, teacher evaluation ratings are calculated by holding teachers responsible for students' assessment; therefore, a data analysis was conducted to determine the correlation between teacher evaluation rating and student achievement scores. Data from the public schools in the research district indicated a general disconnection between student performance on the reading and math state assessment and satisfactory teacher evaluation ratings, as measured by the Standards for Excellence (SFE) evaluation tool. An analysis of the elementary and middle school reading and math state assessment data over the past 5 years revealed an average annual increase of 1.04 and 1.2 percentage points, respectively. This growth is considered insufficient to keep pace with the school system's upcoming 5-year growth target of +1.5 and +2.1 annual percentage points (Maryland State Department of Education [MSDE], 2013). Simultaneously, teacher evaluation data for the past 4 years showed that an average of 8,484 teachers were evaluated annually and of them, an average of 8,407 teachers achieved a satisfactory performance rating, whereas only an annual average of 78 teachers received an unsatisfactory performance rating. A high satisfactory evaluation rate, based on the teacher evaluation system, is usually synonymous with high-quality teacher skills. The implication of this finding infers that more than 99% of all teachers

evaluated used instructional practice effectively. Given a common belief that high quality teacher skills and performance lead to higher student scores on annual achievement exams (Kane, Taylor, Tyler, & Wooten, 2011), there appeared to be a disconnect between the research-district teacher evaluation scores and the research district's student achievement and performance.

As the teacher evaluation ratings and student achievement disconnect became more apparent, the district focused closely on examining and understanding the causes. According to school district officials, one of the three major points of concern became whether school administrators understood the SFE teacher evaluation process, and whether they were able to identify effective instructional practice. The second point of concern was whether school administrators were capable of helping teachers improve their instructional practice in order to increase student learning. The third point of concern was whether the actual SFE evaluation tool was designed to allow school administrators the latitude to identify and differentiate between *best* and *poor* instructional practices.

Scrutiny of the SFE teacher evaluation system showed that, dating back as far as 1985, the SFE tool was used only as a summative assessment for measuring research-district teacher quality, and that it was ineffective as a formative evaluation tool. According to Danielson (2007), effective evaluation tools should provide formative information to inform practice and should provide a common language for educator collaboration. Danielson's beliefs further substantiated the school district's claim of its ineffectiveness. Specifically, the information collected from the SFE did not allow school-based administrators to help teachers build strong instructional practice.

Furthermore, the tool did not include common language between teachers and evaluators, which would have enhanced understanding of the evaluation results.

The SFE evaluation tool was limited to checklist style criteria, which included only two designations, "satisfactory" and "unsatisfactory." Binary rating systems are insufficient in evaluating teachers' performance. In fact a multiple rating is preferred to a binary rating system. According to Kelling, Mulhern, Sexton, and Weisberg (2009), districts that use multiple designations in their rating system show some variability in teacher evaluation beyond those using binary rating systems. The instrument also lacked descriptions of practice, it provided no direction for specific improvement and instructional delivery, and it offered a more punitive than supportive evaluation process. As a result of the instrument's insufficiently rigorous structure, it failed to provide formative assistance in professional development, which surfaced as a critical focus for reform at the federal and state levels of educational policymaking (Jerald & Hook, 2011). These researchers provided sufficient evidence for the research-district supervisors to expedite their efforts to find a new evaluation tool.

As a result of the SFE's deficiencies, the research district launched a massive strategic planning operation to correct this problem. The first step in the corrective process was to ensure that school-based administrators had a clinical evaluation instrument that would enhance their instructional leadership skills so that they could evaluate and guide teachers' instructional practice effectively. Ultimately, the more clinical evaluation tool would serve dual purposes: (a) helping principals become better leaders and (b) helping teachers improve their practice.

State and federal policy initiatives, such as the Race to the Top grant (RTTT) and the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, increased the research district's efforts to identify the clinical evaluation instrument that would improve the school-based administrators' performance to guide changes in teacher instructional practice and help improve teacher evaluation methods. A large part of this push was focused on teachers' contributions to student learning, measured by value-added models (VAMs) that would attempt to measure a teacher's impact on student learning, apart from factors such as individual ability, past schooling, family environment, and the influence of peers (Polikoff & Porter, 2014). There was also a drive to develop multiple-measures evaluation systems to determine teacher effectiveness by combining VAM scores (or other achievement data) with observational ratings of teachers' pedagogical quality along with stakeholder input from student survey ratings of teacher quality (Polikoff & Porter, 2014).

Evaluation in the Large Educational System

With the release of the National Commission on Excellence in Education's (1983) report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, evaluating teachers' performance became a political issue. To date, teacher evaluation has remained a primary focus for local school districts, states, and other countries around the world. The Obama Administration's Blueprint for Reform (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) further substantiated this focus. It concentrated on the classroom teacher's instructional strengths as being the most effective method of improving education. Researchers have documented that facilitating instruction and student learning also call attention to how principals guide and help teachers change instructional practices, and the impact that an evaluation system has on teachers' instructional practices and the relationship to students'

standards-based assessment scores (Gay, 2007; Jones, 2009; Liston, Whitcomb, & Borko, 2007; Rumberger, 2008). These researchers suggest a need to examine how principals assess and guide changes in a teacher's instructional practice.

As the research district's initiative became that of establishing new guidelines to measure teacher quality, a standards-based "research-proven" evaluation system for teachers was adopted. Funding needed to be secured to train selected employees to implement a new evaluation tool. In 2007, a northeastern state and the research district secured funding through the Foundation of Teacher Incentive Funds (FIRST). The research district was awarded $6.43 million to launch the FIRST program as a pilot in 10 selected schools out of the 208 schools in the research district for training and for implementating the new evaluation tool. The FIRST program involved working with the FFT evaluation methods. The research district's administrators recognized that additional funding would be required to sustain and implement the new evaluation tool across the district.

Simultaneously, the state received $250 million in RTTT funds to continue statewide school reform. As a result, the research district was awarded $23.5 million in RTTT funds to support the district-wide reform efforts (MSDE, 2010). Terms of the RTTT funding mandated the use of an evaluation instrument that would ensure that every educator was: (a) evaluated using multiple, fair, transparent, timely, rigorous, and valid methods; (b) afforded a meaningful opportunity to improve their effectiveness; and (c) provided the means to share effective practices with other educators statewide (MSDE, 2010). Prior to implementation of the new evaluation tool, a collaboration among the

teachers' union, the administrator's union, and district level management sought to develop a plan to oversee training and use of the new evaluation tool.

Transition to the New Evaluation System

As national and state demands increasingly called for improved student achievement and teacher accountability, the *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching* (FFT) method for teacher evaluation was designed to meet quality demands while addressing a wide range of teachers, content areas, and years of experience. In 2006, the research district adopted the Danielson evaluation model, which was part of the FFT. By adopting the model, teachers and administrators were better suited to improve evaluation performance reliability through the use of a formal evaluation process. The model would work to enhance the quality of teachers' instructional skills while simultaneously increasing student achievement levels. The research district's argument was that the use of FFT, as formative evaluation tool, would yield a better evaluation process than the SFE because it (a) is a research-based model for assessing and supporting teaching practices, (b) provides a consistent definition of good teaching, (c) includes four levels of performance that describe degrees of teacher expertise, (d) provides a common language to describe teaching practices, and (e) focuses on quality assurance. The expectation was that the FFT could improve aspects of school-based leadership in guiding changes in instructional practice; it could inform teacher practice better than the SFE instrument; and thus it could improve student achievement. If the new evaluation tool could meet these expectations, the research district would make huge strides towards improving leadership, instructional practice, and student achievement.

The FFT differs from the SFE evaluation instrument in that the FFT formally identifies aspects of teachers' work that have been documented through empirical studies and theoretical research as promoting improved student learning (Danielson, 2007). In other words, Danielson defined what teachers should know and do in the practical realm of the teaching profession. The SFE has fewer informative designations and is used as a summative report, whereas the FFT model is designed to be more informative. It uses four designations to rate teacher performance: (a) unsatisfactory, referring to the instruction as not conveying an understanding of concepts and to an unacceptable, possibly harmful, performance level in the classroom; (b) basic, referring to teachers with the knowledge and skills to be effective, yet who apply their skills inconsistently; (c) proficient, referring to consistently successful professional practice; and (d) distinguished, referring to teaching that includes students in the learning process in new ways and creates a true community of learners (Danielson, 2007).

Furthermore, the FFT evaluation instrument is used to assess teachers' professional practice and provides the administrators with insight about the teacher's instructional practices. It includes the following professional practice areas: planning and preparation, the classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. In sum, the FFT signifies teacher accomplishment by virtue of what the teacher should know and be able to do. As the use of the FFT evaluation instrument became more appealing to the research-district supervisors, during the academic year (AY) 2006–2007 a $17.1 million federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant was secured to provide for planning and implementing a voluntary, performance-based financial incentive system. The aim of these administrative actions was to increase student achievement by increasing the

effectiveness of teacher and administrator and to have enough funds to implement the FIRST program with fidelity. Therefore, the focus of administrators was to use the funds to provide support, financial compensation, and training for teachers and principals, which was presumed to improve student achievement.

During the AY2006–2007, partial implementation of a pilot performance compensation model, FIRST, was instituted. During this year, an executive management team was hired and the core component of FIRST were discussed, vetted, negotiated and finalized for full implementation of the pilot program during AY2007–2008. FIRST was rolled out in AY2007–2008 and each school term after until AY2011–2012. FIRST used a new and standard research-based evaluation that was based on FFT and growth over time model to document improved teaching practice and student achievement respectfully. This program provided financial rewards for teachers and administrators who worked in hard-to-staff schools and subject areas. After the pilot FIRST program was complete, the research district decided to continue the use of the FFT as an evaluation tool for all classroom teachers. Thus, qualitative data is needed to accurately reflect how administrators and teachers feel about the use of the FFT. There is a need for a qualitative case study on administrators' understanding to recognize sound instructional practices and to guide teachers in using best practices. The results may reveal how teachers use administrators' guidance and what they have learned from the FFT experience to improve practice.

The FFT was used during the AY2012–2013 to evaluate teachers in the aforementioned manner. It was also used during the AY2013–2014 to articulate a classroom teacher's final, summative rating of "highly effective," "effective," and

"ineffective." Hence, during AY2013–2014, the research district fully implemented FFT as both its formative and summative evaluation tool for all classroom-based teachers. As such, it is imperative that school administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the implementation be explored. This exploration will allow a better understanding from the users' perspective and guide teachers' instructional practices.

Definition of the Problem

For the past 4 years, the research district phased out the use of the observation component of the current SFE teacher evaluation tool and implemented a self-adapted version of Danielson's FFT. This change was carried out because the SFE evaluation tool lacks purpose, descriptions of practice, and provides little direction for specific improvements in teachers' instructional practices (Jerald & Hook, 2011; Kelling et al., 2009). Nor were district officials satisfied with the teacher summative evaluation performance ratings, which consisted of only two designations, *satisfactory* and *unsatisfactory*. These ratings were considered insufficient not only because of their breadth, but also because they lacked sources of evidence and failed to be sufficiently formative. The research-district supervisors believed that a change to the FFT teachers' evaluation instrument was needed to provide a more meaningful and formative evaluation process that could improve school-based administrators' leadership, could lead teachers to improve their own practices, and could foster student achievement. In 2012, the research district allowed school administrators to use the FFT to evaluate their teachers formatively. The administrators were required to use components of the FFT as the observation tool and protocol. The teachers were required to complete the goal-setting forms, the self-assessment, and the reflection documents in addition to participating in the

administrators' FFT observation process. These elements constituted a formative evaluation process where the process and data were intended to help the leadership guide instructional practice and to help teachers develop professionally.

In compliance with the reporting mandates of the State Department of Education's (SDE) *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* (ARRA) of 2009 and the RTTT, a data report was generated regarding the teacher evaluations for AYs 2009–2013 (MSDE, 2010). This report provided the data that formed the basis of the problem addressed in this study: the apparent disparity between high teacher evaluation ratings and low student achievement. Specifically, from AY2009 to AY2013, the research district experienced below-standard student performance ratings as measured by the state assessment; however, the majority of research-district teachers earned performance ratings of satisfactory as set by the SFE instrument.

In AY2009–2010, the research district's ARRA reports revealed that a total of 9,355 teachers were evaluated using the SFE summative evaluation instrument and 9,268 teachers in the district received a satisfactory rating, whereas 87 teachers in the district received an unsatisfactory rating. Data for AY2010–2011 are not yet available. In AY 2011–2012, 8,081 teachers were evaluated using the same evaluation tool; 8,004 teachers in the research district were rated satisfactory, whereas 77 teachers received a performance level rating of unsatisfactory. During AY2012–2013, 8,019 teachers were evaluated; 7,949 teachers received a satisfactory performance level rating and 69 teachers received an unsatisfactory performance rating. Figure 1 displays the total number of teachers in the research district evaluated, the total number of teachers receiving a

satisfactory rating, and the total number of teachers receiving an unsatisfactory rating on the evaluation tool for the stated academic years.

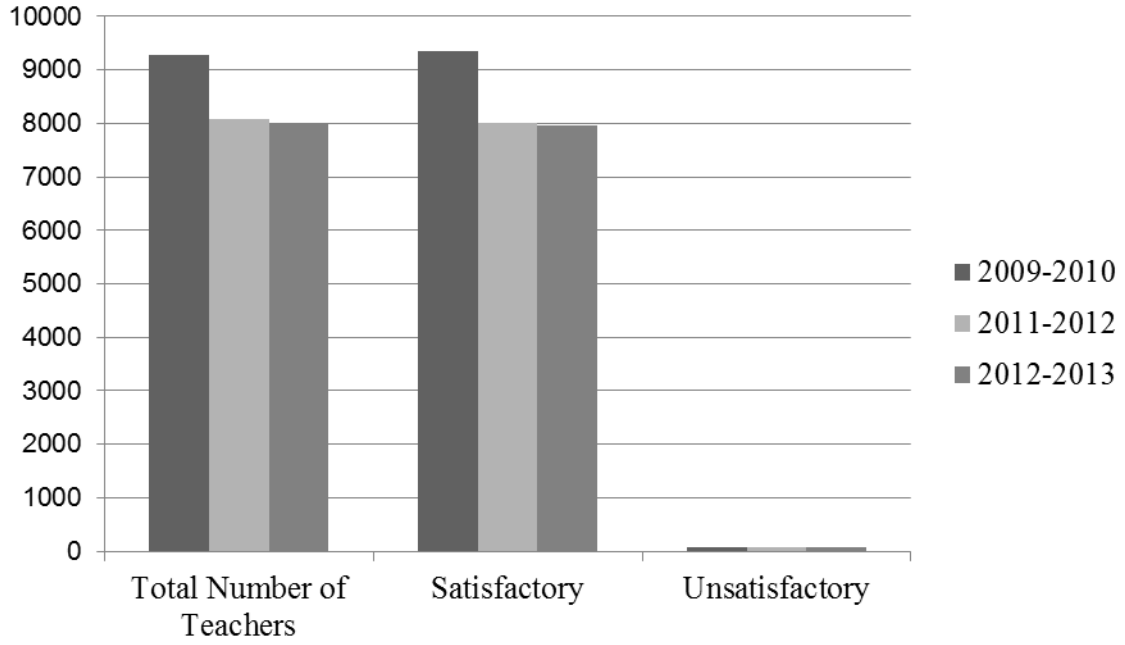

Figure 1. The research-district teacher evaluation data.

After examining the research district's teacher-evaluation performance rating for the previous 3 academic years, it was important to examine the student achievement data to determine whether student performance data were aligned with the teacher performance ratings. This comparison illuminated how the teachers' satisfactory evaluation ratings and low student performance ratings coexisted in the research district. The State Report Card (MSDE, 2013) reported student achievement data on the state assessment for the past 4 academic years. From 2009 to 2013, the State Report Card (MSDE, 2013) data revealed at the elementary level that aggregate student proficiency in reading had increased by approximately one percentage point per school year—from 76.8% in AY2007–2008 to 82.0% in AY2011–2012. Few data were published for

AY2012–2013. At the middle school level for the same time period, aggregate student proficiency in reading increased by an average of 1.2 percentage points per year from 67.3% in AY2007–2008 to 73.3% in AY2011–2012. Average annualized increases in proficiency percentages at both the elementary and middle school levels during these years—+1.04 and +1.2 percentage points respectively—were insufficient to keep pace with the school system's annual growth targets over the next 5 years, which were +1.5 and +2.1 percentage points. The data revealed a gap in student achievement on the state assessment performance levels in comparison with the high teacher performance evaluation ratings. The research-district-level data on student achievement on the reading and math state assessments and the teacher evaluation rating suggested an unexplained difference in that student achievement and reported levels of high-quality teacher practice. The district data revealed a teaching-to-achievement gap which supported the need to investigate the school administrators and teachers' perceptions of the FFT and the influence the FFT has on teachers and school administrators' skills to assess instructional practice and guide changes in teacher instructional practice.

To gain a better understanding of what may be happening overall, administrators and teachers from the research district were invited to participate in this qualitative case study. A questionnaire and a semistructured interview were used to collect data. This disparity between satisfactory teacher performance and insufficient student achievement represented a practical problem that must be considered in the research district and that this project study seeks to address (see Appendix A). This study's findings are important to the mission of improving leadership and teacher quality, which is presumed to have an effect on student performance; therefore, data will be gathered by exploring school

administrators and teachers' experiences during the implementation of the FFT and understanding how the experiences of the formative evaluation process influence teachers' self-described instructional practices.

Rationale

Research shows that the evaluation of teacher performance is a primary focus in the field of education (Sartain, Stoelinga, & Krone, 2011). To improve instruction and student achievement in the classroom, the research district has committed to ensuring that all students are instructed by highly effective teachers; therefore, all teachers must be evaluated to learn, develop, and guide professional practices. The research-district officials believe the FFT evaluation tool may help eliminate the achievement gap, help principals guide teachers' professional practice, develop teachers' skills, and build teacher quality through a formative evaluation process. The district's evaluation process using the FFT evaluation tool is a collaborative endeavor between the administrator and the teacher. It includes teachers self-assessing their practice, teachers identifying professional goals, pre- and postconferences with administrators, teacher self-reflection, and administrators conducting classroom observations based on the FFT. The district involved in this study used the FFT evaluation tool for the past 4 years in concert with the SFE. The use of the FFT tool is sufficiently well understood and can be examined for its potential effectiveness in developing administrator and teacher excellence. Educator effectiveness is presumed to have an effect on student performance on the state assessments. Based on the elementary and middle school achievement data, it was important to examine school leaders' skills in assessing and guiding teachers'

instructional practice and to see if the FFT was meeting the demands of the school district to (a) help principals become better leaders and (b) help teachers improve their practice.

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

Elementary and middle reading state assessment performance 2011–2013.

There were marginal improvements in AY2011–2012 over the previous year's performance level; the reading achievement scores at the elementary level declined in AY2012–2013 (from 82.0% to 79.4%). During AY2012–2013, a 3-year trend of stagnation-to-marginal decline held true in the elementary student achievement data. Additionally, the AY2012–2013 proficient or above target rates (79.4%) were slightly more than five percentage points (−5.7) below the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) (85.11) for the school year (see Figure 3). During AY2013, the elementary level reading performance declined across the board: for males (−2.7), females (−2.2), special education students (−8.9), Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students (−6.6) and low-income students (−2.8 percentage points; see Figure 4). As it relates to the middle school performance data, there was overall improved reading performance however; the AY2013 proficient rate was 3.1 percentage points below the middle school AMO standard performance target for the academic year (see Figure 5). The performance of special education students at both the elementary and middle school levels continued to lag behind aggregate student performance. During the AY2012–2013, the proficiency or above percentage for special education students in reading was (−25.0) percentage points under the aggregate proficiency percentage at the elementary level (Figure 4), and (−37.9) percentage points under the aggregate proficiency percentage at the middle school level (see Figure 2). In AY2012–2013, the LEP student proficiency or above

percentages in reading were −10.7 and −29.7 percentage points below the aggregate proficiency percentages at the elementary and middle school levels respectively (see Figures 4 and 2).

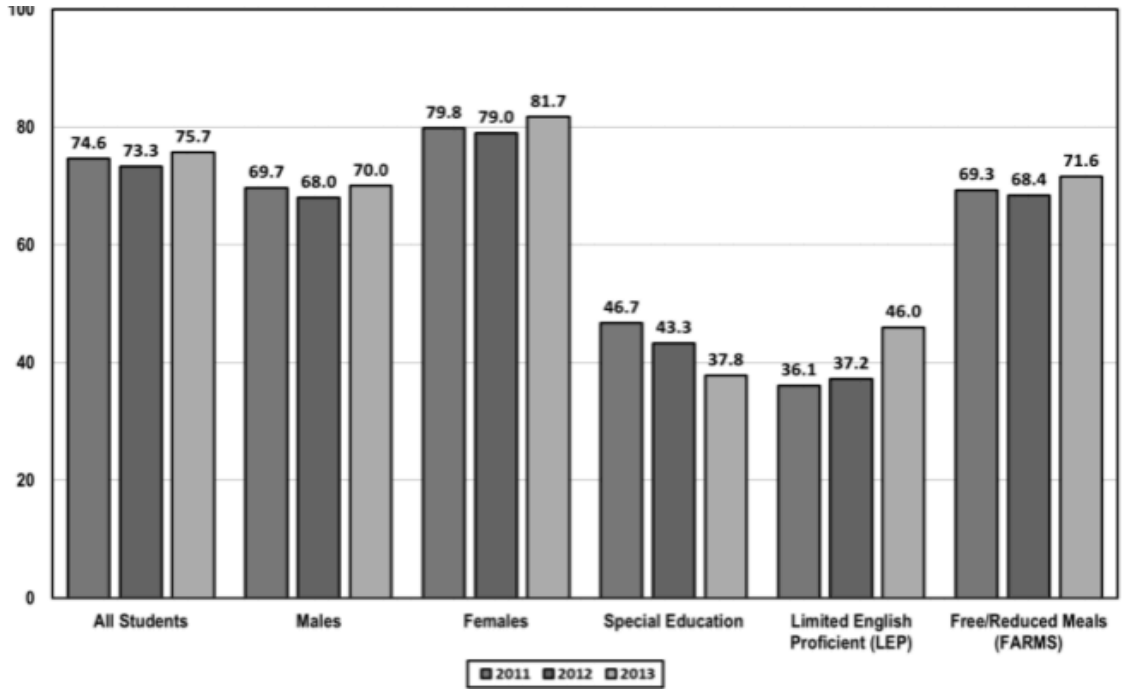

Figure 2. Middle school reading state assessment performance results by subgroups, AY2011–2013 (percent proficient or above).

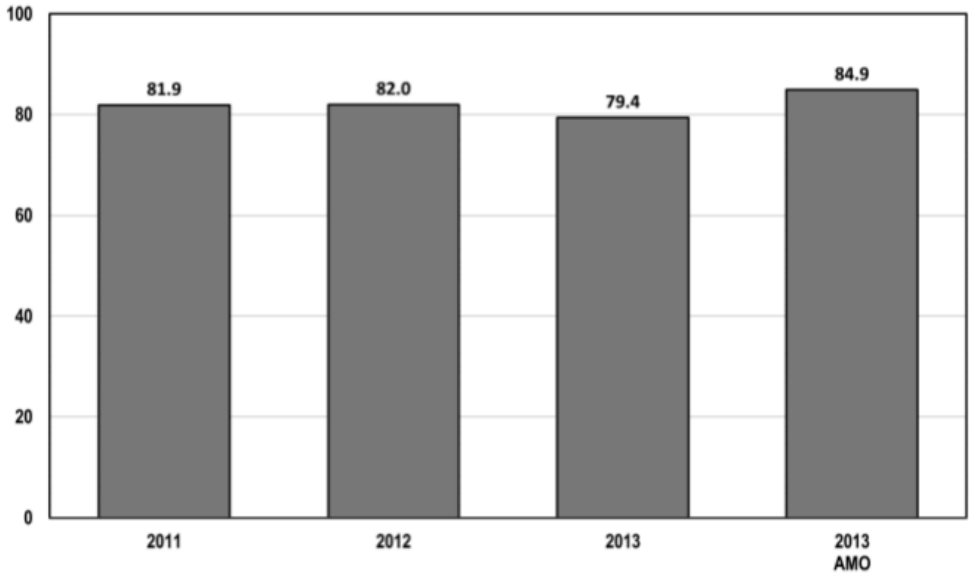

Figure 3. State assessment performance results, elementary reading annual measurable objective analysis (percent proficient or above).

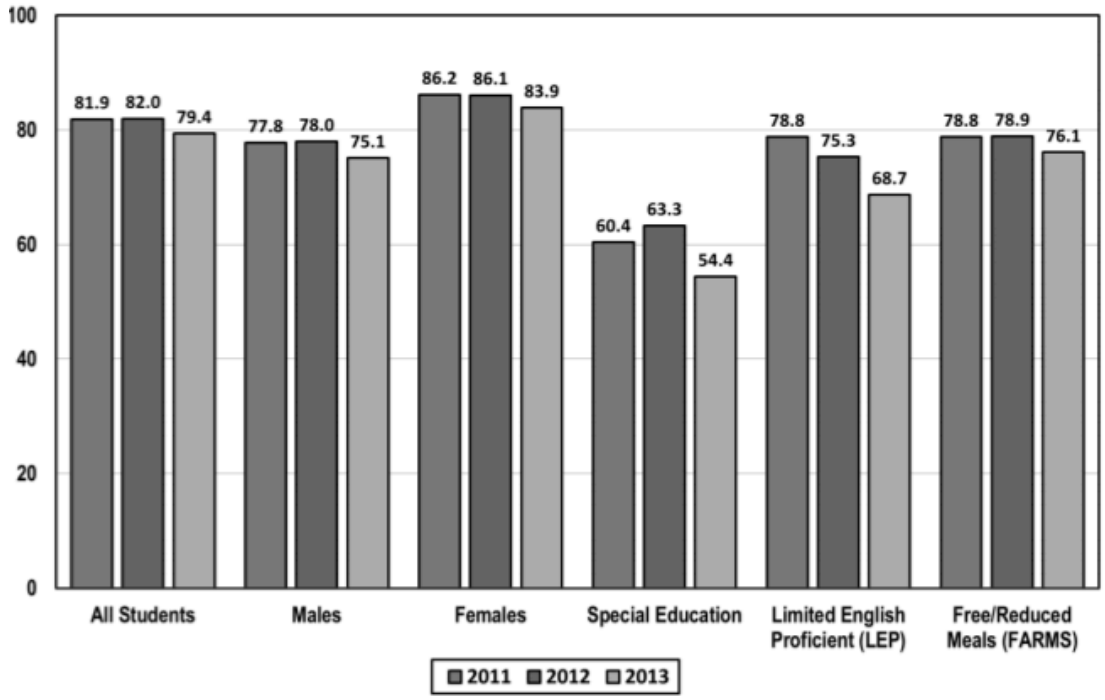

Figure 4. Elementary reading state assessment performance results by gender and special needs subgroups, 2011–2013 (percent proficient or above).

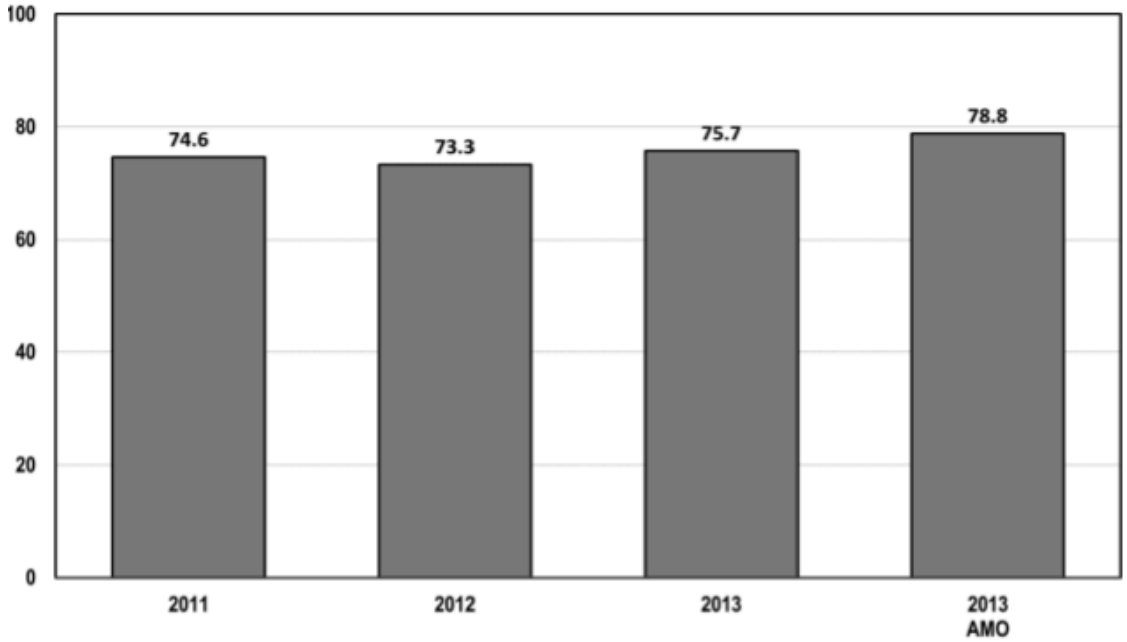

Figure 5. State assessment performance results, middle school reading annual measurable objective analysis (percent proficient or above).

Elementary and middle mathematics state assessment performance 2011–2013. Improvements were made across the board at the elementary and middle school level in AY2011–2012 over AY2010–2011; the research district's mathematics performance declined across the board in AY2012–2013. The decline held true not only in the aggregate, but also among males and females, and across each of the special needs subgroups. At the elementary level, proficient or above percentages declined by about four percentage points, at the same time at the middle school level, the aggregate declined was less (−2.6 percentage points; see Figure 6 and 7). Specifically, at the elementary level, the performance gap between SPED students and students in the aggregate expanded by 8 percentage points (from −26.0 to −34.0 percentage points). The middle school math achievement gap increased by 5.6 percentage points (from 25.7 to 31.3 percentage points). These performance gaps are much greater between Free and Reduce

Meal Students (FARMS) and students in the aggregate at the elementary and middle school levels (−3.5 and 5.0 percentage points respectively) and between LEP students and student in the aggregate at the elementary level (−7.7 percentage point) (see Figure 6 and 7). The decline in SPED and LEP students' performance from the elementary to the middle school level is equally intense. The decline in proficiency or above percentages from the elementary to the middle school level is −12.7 percentage points for SPED students and −30.9 percentage points for LEP students.

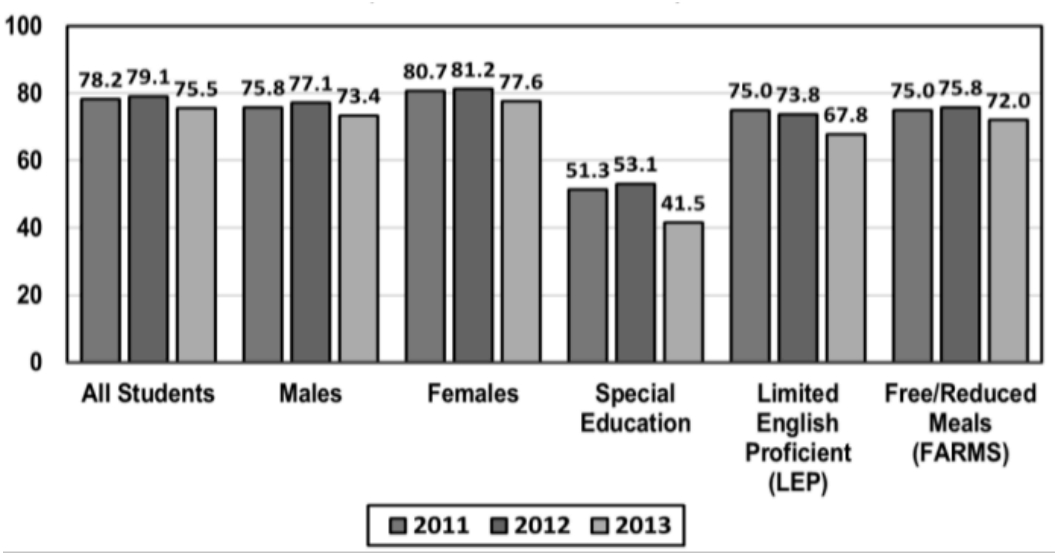

Figure 6. Elementary mathematics state assessment performance results by gender and special needs subgroups, 2011–2013 (percent proficient or above).

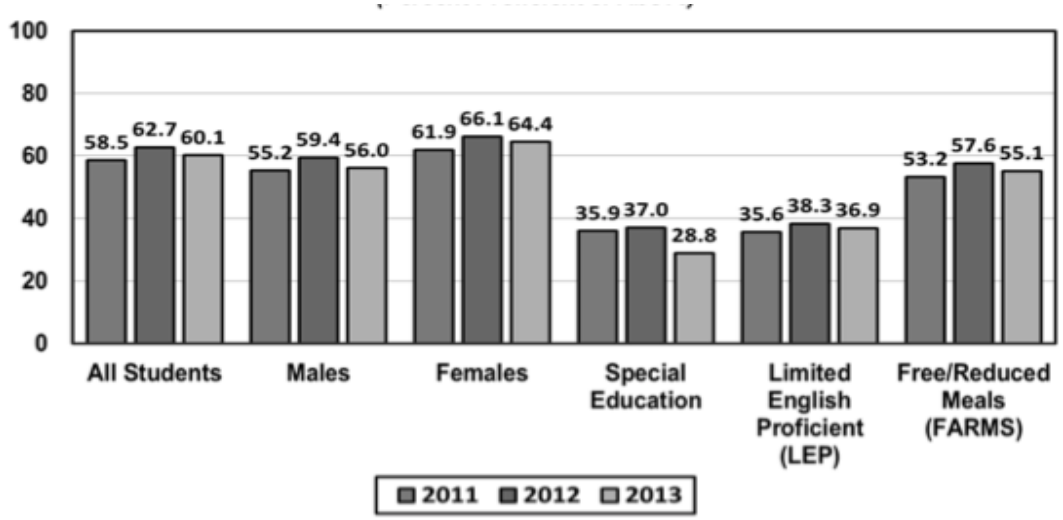

Figure 7. Middle school state assessment performance results by gender and special needs subgroups, 2011–2013 (percent proficient or above).

Teacher Evaluation Ratings and Achievement Gaps (2010–2013)

Elementary achievement gaps AY2010–2013. In AY2012–2013, 79.4% of the research district's elementary students scored at the proficiency or above level on reading state assessment. This performance level was −2.6 percentage points below the research district's AY2011–2012 proficiency status and −5.5 percentage points below the research district's AY2013 performance target (84.9%). Over the course of 3 years, the students' performance remained stagnant, declining by −2.5 percentage points. As it related to the math state assessment and the math achievement scores, in AY2012–2013, three quarters (75.5%) of all elementary students in the district scored at the proficient level or above on the math state assessment. Aggregate performance was −3.6 percentage points below 2012 performance and this performance counteracts the progress made from 2011 to 2012. In addition, the research district's student performance fell 6.3 percentage points short of the AMO target of 81.8% (see Table 1).

Table 1

Teacher Evaluation Rating and Student Achievement Gaps in Reading and Mathematics, AY 2011–2013

	2011	2012	2013	2013 ± 2012	2013 ± 2011	2013 AMO	2013 ± 2013 AMO
Elementary reading AMO analysis	81.9	82.0	79.4	−2.6	−2.5	84.9	−5.5
Middle school reading AMO analysis	74.6	73.3	75.7	2.4	1.1	78.8	−3.1
Elementary mathematics AMO analysis	78.2	79.1	75.5	−3.6	−2.7	81.1	−6.3
Middle school mathematics AMO analysis	58.5	62.7	60.1	−2.6	1.6	65.4	−5.3
Satisfactory teacher evaluation rating	N/A	8,004	7,949				
Unsatisfactory teacher evaluation rating	N/A	77	69				

Note. AMO = annual measurable objectives.

Middle school achievement gaps AY2009–2013. At the middle school level, 75.7% of research-district students scored at the proficiency or above level on the AY2012–2013 reading state assessment. This performance level was 2.4 percentage points above the previous year's (AY2011–2012) level. Despite this increase, the proficient or above percentage was an only 1.1 percentage point above its AY2010–2011 performance level, and −3.1 percentage points below the research district's 2013 performance target (AMO). Thus, the district is currently not on pace to reach its

AY2016–2017 middle school reading performance goal of 87.3% proficiency. As it relates to middles school math state assessment and student achievement data, there was a 3.8 percentage point increase between AY2010–2011 and AY2011–2012. However, middle school mathematics state assessment performance declined in AY2012–2013 by −2.6 percentage points below the AY2011–2012 performance level. In AY2012–2013, 60.1% of all middle school mathematics students in the research district scored at the proficiency level or above on mathematics assessment, which also were − 5.3 percentage points below the district's proficiency target (65.4%) AMO for the school year (see Table 1).

Teacher evaluation data AY2009–2013. The research-district teacher-evaluation data for the AY2009–2010 revealed a total of 9,355 teachers were evaluated and 9,268 teachers were rated satisfactory. Although the majority of the teachers received the highest final rating, 87 teachers were rated "unsatisfactory." There was no teacher evaluation data available for the AY2010–2011. However, AY2011–2012 there were 8,004 teachers evaluated "satisfactory" and 77 teachers were rated "unsatisfactory" in the district. Yet, the discrepancy between the AMO targets and the district elementary reading state assessment scores (−2.6) and elementary math state assessment score (−3.6) revealed a negative achievement gaps. The middle school students' performance reflected minimum growth on the reading state assessment (2.4). The middle school math state assessment performance declined by −2.6 percentage points. It is important to note the 2.4 percentage point gains on the middle school reading state assessment is considered on pace to achieve the yearly growth target (+2.1) in reading. In AY2012–2013, despite high teacher performance as indicated by the evaluation ratings, the student achievement gap

between the AMO targets and the math and reading overall student performance scores continued to surface. There were a total of 8,018 teachers evaluated and "satisfactory" teacher ratings were assigned to 7,949 teachers and 69 teachers received and "unsatisfactory" evaluation rating. Over the course of these 3 years, the elementary reading (−2.5) and math (−2.7) achievement gap continues to persist. However, the middle school students showed minimal growth over the last 3 years (+1.1 in reading and +1.6 in math). Although growth is apparent, this growth is not substantial enough to meet the middle school reading 2.1 percentage point growth target and the 3.5 percentage point growth target as set by the research district (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 2

Teacher Evaluation Data, AY2009–2013

	AY2009–2010	AY2010–2011	AY2011–2012	AY2012–2013
Total number of teachers in the researched district	9,355	No data available	8,081	8,018
Total number of teachers rated satisfactory	9,268	No data available	8,004	7,949
Total number of teachers rated unsatisfactory	87	No data available	77	69

Note. AY = academic year.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

The teacher evaluation data and the student achievement data in the research district do not equate. The disparity between teacher strengths and student performance indicates a potential disconnect between teacher instructional practices and teacher evaluation. A new evaluation tool was implemented and the state assessment data suggested that research is needed to (a) determine the effectiveness of the tool (b) to

determine how the tool is perceived by administrators and teachers and (c) to determine if the district's evaluation process using the FFT evaluation tool served to influence the school leaders' skills to assess and guide teachers to modify instructional practices.

Research in the field of education is inconsistent regarding the belief that teacher evaluation rating should align with student achievement data. According to Kane et al. (2011), one would expect that teachers who are evaluated as "satisfactory" would have students who perform at least satisfactorily on a state-wide achievement test. Some researchers argue that test scores can be used in isolation of other indicators to make accurate statements about school and teacher effectiveness (Au, 2010; Haertel, Rothstein, Amrein-Beardsley, & Darling-Hammond, 2011; Papay, 2010; SAS, 2011). A few studies have been conducted that indicate a relationship between teacher evaluation ratings and student achievement (Jacob & Lefgren, 2008; Rockoff & Speroni, 2011; Rockoff, Staiger, Kane, & Taylor, 2009). These studies found positive correlations between teacher ratings and teachers' ability to increase student achievement as measured by standard base assessments. Using data from the early years of Cincinnati's evaluation program, Holtzapple (2003) and Milanowski (2004a, 2004b) demonstrated a positive relationship between teachers' final overall evaluation ratings and student achievement.

However, a recent report published by the American Statistical Association (2014) on the Value Added Model (VAM) stated that VAMs normally are based on standardized test scores and do not directly measure potential teacher contribution toward other student outcomes. VAMs are statistical algorithms designed to figure out how much teachers contribute to their students' learning, holding constant factors such as demographics. Most VAM studies find that teachers account for about 1% to 14% of the

variability in test scores, and that the majority of opportunities for quality improvement are found in the system-level condition (American Statistical Association, 2014). Additionally, a study conducted by Polikoff and Porter (2014) analyzed a subsample of 327 fourth- and eighth-grade mathematics and English-language-arts teachers across six school districts in New York, Dallas, Denver, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Memphis, and Florida's Hillsborough County. The researchers found that some teachers who were well regarded based on student surveys, classroom observances by principals, and other indicators of quality had students who scored poorly on tests.

Such research indicates that although the apparent discrepancy in teacher performance and student achievement in the research district is of concern, it may not be evidence of poor teacher quality. The district spent significant funds on the implementation of the FFT evaluation system to improve teacher quality and student achievement. Therefore, a natural next step is to conduct a study on how administrators and teachers experience and view the FFT evaluation instrument as a means to guide and modify instructional practice. This project study may reveal conflicting research on, the nature of the discrepancy in the research district, and how the FFT works to influence school leader's skill to assess and guide changes in teachers' instructional practice. At a minimum, however, this project study may offer ways to understand how administrators and teachers view this formative evaluation tool as a potential part of their professional learning. The purpose of this case study is to understand administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the FFT evaluation tool, and its influence on school leaders' skills to assess and guide changes in teachers' instructional practice.

Definitions

The following key terms are defined for purposes of this study:

Adequate yearly progress (AYP): AYP is a specific state's measure of yearly progress toward achieving state academic goals as defined by the NCLB Act. AYP is the lowest level of improvement that school districts, states, and schools must achieve annually (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2009, p. 8).

Annual measurable objectives (AMOs): AMOs are performance objectives or targets of student achievement for schools. AMOs have been set for each year between 2002–2003 and 2013–2014 to measure progress in moving toward the 100% proficiency in reading and mathematics that is required of schools in 2013–2014 by the NCLB Act. The AMO targets increase annually, requiring schools to improve student achievement incrementally. The goal of every student group meeting the AMO in reading and mathematics each year is a key to making the AYP (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2009, p. 8).

Artifact: An artifact is a physical piece of data used to assess teaching and learning. Artifacts may be in the form of student work, surveys, test scores, lesson plans, reflections, teacher generated materials, and professional activities (Nolan & Hoover, 2011).

Evaluee: An evaluee is the person being evaluated (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 2009, p. 195). Evaluees in this research project include the study school's middle school teachers, administrators, and specialists in the seventh and eighth grades.

Evaluation system: An evaluation system includes the rules, procedures, assignments, and other elements that an institution uses to evaluate its personnel and accomplish the purpose of teacher evaluation (Gullickson, 2009).

Formative evaluation: "Formative evaluation is an ongoing evaluation designed to promote continuous feedback to the person being evaluated for the purpose of self-improvement and professional development" (Webb & Norton, 2009, p. 194). Formative evaluation involves goal setting and feedback (Webb & Norton, 2009) and focuses more on teacher needs than institutional accountability (Glickman, Jordan, & Ross-Gordon, 2010).

Nontenured teacher: For the purpose of this study, the term *nontenured teacher* describes a teacher who has a hire date on or after July 1, 2010. Teachers have a 3-year probationary period before being considered for tenure. They are required to be on-cycle for evaluation until they become tenured and their evaluation is supported by a minimum of four formal observations. They are also required to have an interim and a final evaluation.

Off-cycle teachers: An off-cycle teacher is a tenured teacher holding an APC and the principal has determined he or she will not be evaluated during the current school year. The principle has discretion to determine when to evaluate a tenured teacher with an APC in the required cycle year.

On-cycle teachers: An on-cycle teacher is one who is being evaluated the current school year.

Summative evaluation: This evaluation is conducted at the end of an activity or period of time and is designed to assess terminal behaviors or overall performance over a

period of time. Summative evaluation is used to make employment and professional development decisions. This form of evaluation is formal, infrequent, and focuses only on the person being evaluated. (Webb & Norton, 2009, p. 194) The context of summative teacher evaluation is "intended to meet the organizational need for teacher accountability" (Glickman et al., 2010, p. 275). Currently in the research district, the SFE are used to provide a summative rating of "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory," whereas the FFT is used more formatively.

Tenured teacher: Tenured teachers have a hire date prior to July 1, 2010. For the purposes of this study, *tenure* means teachers are certificated and have 3 consecutive years plus 1 day of service and have received satisfactory evaluations. Tenured teachers are evaluated on professional practice based on a 3-year cycle if they have a prior year's overall rating of "satisfactory." Tenured teachers are required to be on-cycle for evaluation every year if they hold an SPC. If teachers hold an APC, they are required to be evaluated in the 1st year of the 5th-year certificate validation period and a minimum of one more time during Years 2 through 5.

Guiding/Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the research-district teachers' and school administrators' perceptions of the Framework for Teaching evaluation tool?
2. How did use of the Framework for Teaching tool influence administrators' skills in assessing and guiding teachers' instructional practice?
3. How has the use of the Framework for Teaching tool helped to strengthen teachers' skills to modify teaching and learning in the classroom?

4. How has the Framework for Teaching tool helped teachers to assess and guide their instructional practice?

The research district's leaders acknowledged the need for a new evaluation system and implemented a new evaluation tool. A study is needed to explore the perceptions of the administrators and teachers regarding the use of the tool. A successful start of any new evaluation tool requires much more than just a rudimentary level of use or implementation. Practical resources and training on how to use the tool in understanding one's teaching and skills is also a major requirement to ensure success. Providing these resources may cause a more effective use of the FFT evaluation instrument by both the administrators and teachers. The FFT is well-positioned to help school-based administrators assess instructional practice and guide teachers with changes in instructional practice, because it is intended to offer formative and summative information about what teachers should know and be able to do (Danielson, 2007).

Significance

The significance of this case study resides in the need to explore the administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the FFT and to understand from the users' perspective, the influence the FFT has on teachers and school-based leaders' skills to assess and guide changes in teacher's instructional practice. The primary goal of the project study is to identify perceptions and understandings regarding the FFT evaluation and how it helps administrators guide teachers' instructional practice and promote or impede teachers' instructional capabilities. Teacher quality and leadership are two of the most influential factors contributing to student growth and are pivotal to school improvement (Drame & Pugach, 2010). The project study will assist district supervisors

in providing support and resources related to the district's evaluation process, thereby enabling and encouraging administrators and teachers to be more reflective practitioners. More reflective administrators and teachers will likely better comprehend how to use the evaluation process to promote enhanced teaching and learning potentially improving student achievement.

Conceptual Framework

Social Constructivism

This study is grounded in social constructivist views about teaching and learning. Social-constructivism is based on the cognitive-development theories of Piaget (1970), Dewey (1951), and Vygotsky (1978), which require learners to construction new knowledge through "active participation in problem solving and critical thinking."

Davis, Maher, and Noddings (1990) defined social constructivism as learners building their knowledge collaboratively and individually. Each individual has prior knowledge and concepts through which they construct new knowledge. Individuals also work with the community to help them provide a setting, pose questions, and provide support. The Davis et al. definition encompasses repetitive aspects of other definitions found in the literature. Specifically, social constructivism is appropriate for the present study because learners' specific knowledge and concepts refers to prior knowledge the teacher will use to construct meaning, and the school administrator will act as the community support, encouraging construction.

Social constructivist further defined the theory as how the individual learner goes about the construction of knowledge in his or her own cognitive apparatus (Perkins, 1999). Perkins (1999) identified three roles in social constructivism used to describe a

learner's cognitive behavior while constructing knowledge. The author described one of the roles as the active learner. The active learner constructs knowledge through discussion, debate, hypothesis, investigation, and taking a stance. The second role in social constructivism is the social learner. The social learner constructs knowledge in dialogue with others. In addition to the active learner and the social learner the author also defined the cognitive behavior of a creative learner. The creative learner creates or recreates knowledge to make sense of the new information.

In this study, the teacher will function in the role of social constructivist learner. While in the act of learning, social constructivism learners use creative learning to apply their meaning to a topic, using active and social-cognitive circumstances (Bloom, Perlmutter, & Burrell, 1999). Social constructivist learners function in the roles to cohesively construct knowledge.

The research of Bloom et al. (1999) helped frame the cognitive function and roles of the social-constructivist learner; whereas, Vygotsky (1978) helped explain the importance of the social aspects of constructivism. Learning, according to Vygotsky, is best understood in conjunction with others in a person's world. These social negotiations about the world with others are called the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD; Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Vygotsky described the ZPD as the intellectual potential of a person when provided with assistance from a knowledgeable adult. During the learning process, a person in need of assistance is guided or regulated by a more skillful adult. In this case, guidance or regulation pertains to the scaffolding and cues given by the more knowledgeable adult to the person needing assistance. In other words, the distance between a person's actual level of independent achievement and the person's potential is

the ZPD, and it is in this zone where the most critical learning and the advancing of skills occur. In this study, in social interactions with teachers, the school administrator will assume the role of the more skilled adult and the teacher will be the person needing the assistance.

Andragogy

The participants in this study are adults who construct knowledge during a teacher-evaluation process; educators need to understand how adults learn. Andragogy is the art and science of helping adults learn, based on constructivist ideology (Kearsley, 2010; Knowles, 1984). Andragogy theorists believed adults learn best when they are able to develop their own learning strategies and meaning in a practical environment. The premise of andragogy is that adult learners evolve from dependent learners to self-directed learners, using their previous experiences as the learning tool on which they build new learning (Knowles, 1984). The social role held by the adult learner is a contributing factor in determining readiness to engage in the learning process. Adult learners are task centered, desire to implement new learning immediately, and are internally and externally motivated (Knowles, 1984).

Constructivism and andragogy theorists share beliefs regarding learner ownership in the learning process, the importance of cognitive organizational skills in the approach to learning, and self-discovery learning (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005, p. 193). In addition, all knowledge is context bound and personal meaning gained from learning experiences is internalized from an individual perspective (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011). To further substantiate the need to include constructivism and the andragogy premise in this project study are the viewpoints of several researchers who study how

adults learn. Optimal learning for professional adults with rich background experiences is more effective when (a) the problem being addressed is meaningful for the learner, (b) the learner is informed of expectations and how the expectations are to be completed, (c) the adult learner is provided an opportunity to analyze and reflect on their ideas and expectations, and (d) the learner is provided feedback from their supervisor (Keeton, Sheckley, & Griggs, 2002; McKenna, 2008; Sheckley & Bell, 2006; Sheckley & Keeton, 2001). These factors align with the social-constructivist perspective and the anadragogical ideology advanced by Knowles (1984).

This qualitative case study of teacher's perceptions of the new evaluation tool reflects social constructivist views that include anadragogical theory as the foundation for this project study's conceptual framework. The project study also aligns with the constructivist view of teachers who will engage in the constructivist-based teacher-evaluation process.

Literature Review

The literature reviewed for this study covered the following topics: the purposes that evaluation serves, traditional evaluation, teachers becoming active participants in the evaluation process, Danielson's FFT, problems with the use of the FFT evaluation model, the participant's role during the district's evaluation process, FFT's influence on changes in instructional practices and student achievement.

The Purpose of Evaluating

The purpose for evaluating teachers includes licensing requirements, quality assurance, professional development, measuring teacher effectiveness, and making career decisions (Danielson, 2011; Howard & Harman, 2007; National Education Association

[NEA], 2010). Specifically, researchers from the MSDE (2012) explained that "the purpose of evaluation is to strengthen the knowledge, skills, and classroom practices of educators to improve student achievement through professional development" (p. 7). Research-district supervisors expressed that the "purpose of teacher evaluation is the improvement of teaching and student learning." The purposes for teacher evaluation from the State of Department of Education and the research district are similar, and teachers' skill development is key in both purpose statements.

Marzano (2012) conducted a study questioning 3,000 teachers about their beliefs on teacher evaluation being used to measure teacher effectiveness and to develop teaching skills. Findings revealed that educators believed teacher evaluations should be used to measure effectiveness and to develop teachers' skill set; however, teachers indicated the latter should be the dominant purpose for teacher evaluation. The author's findings suggested that teachers' beliefs and attitudes regarding the purpose of the evaluation experience might affect how teachers view the use of the tool and how teachers use an evaluation tool such as the FFT.

Traditional Evaluation

Traditional evaluation practices allow for very little input from teachers regarding teacher-evaluation criteria because state laws, collective-bargaining units, or school boards most often decide the focus and criteria of teacher evaluations (Marshall, 2009; Partee, 2012). The old evaluation system often cast teachers in the role of passive participants, who had little input into their evaluation beyond one or two brief meetings with the school administrator (Milanowski & Heneman, 2001). Traditional evaluations are flawed, lack structure to improve the teacher's professional practice, lack credibility,

and do not contribute information that will inform a teacher's instructional practice (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2011; Danielson, 2011; Kyriakides, Demetriou, & Charalambous, 2006; Peterson, 2004; Toch & Rothman, 2008b; U.S. Department of Education, 2009; von Frank, 2011; Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009). Equally important, teacher-evaluation systems have not developed proficiently skilled teachers nor have they accurately measured teacher quality (Marzano, 2012). In the same way, traditional evaluations systems designed to measure teaching skills are flawed as they ineffectively capture variants in teaching quality (Hill, Umland, Litke, & Kapitula, 2012). In recent years, educators have discovered that rather than promoting professional growth, many evaluation systems prevent meaningful discussion about student learning and instructional practice (Marshall, 2009; Marzano & Toth, 2014).

The authors of recent literature on the flaws in teacher evaluations are most interested in the Widget Effect (WE). According to Weisberg et al. (2009), WE describes the tendency of school districts to assume effectiveness is the same from teacher to teacher. Additionally, teacher performance is not measured, recorded, or used to inform meaningful decision-making in any purposeful manner. Likewise, traits of the WE are similar to characteristics of a failed evaluation system. Therefore, when evaluation systems fail to provide adequate, credible, and accurate information regarding a teacher's instructional practice, they support the phenomenon, the WE (Weisberg et al., 2009). Weisberg et al. (2009) conducted a study involving 12 school districts in four states. The researchers reviewed teacher-evaluation records in each district and surveyed teachers, school administrators, state officials, and teacher's union representatives. The authors asked participants to voluntarily participate in the survey. Findings from this study

showed less than 1% of the 40,000 teachers participating in this study had ever received a less than satisfactory rating on an evaluation. The authors offered recommendations, outlining a comprehensive approach to maximize student learning and improve teacher effectiveness.

The problem with the Weisberg et al. (2009) study is that the surveys were completed voluntarily and reports did not compare characteristics of the sample to the workforce in the district. Consequently, the data cannot be used to generalize about teachers' perceptions in the 12 districts. Despite the flaws in the findings and methodology, several authors substantiated the cause-and-effect relationship between flawed teacher-evaluation systems and the WE. Authors of studies related to the WE offered explanations and rationales for the majority of the teachers receiving high ratings: a poor evaluation tool and lack of district guidance on the topic of evaluation (Koppich & Showalter, 2008), and the evaluator's lack of training, and lack of oversight (Donaldson, 2009).

Teachers as Active Participants in the Evaluation Process

Teachers should be active participants in the development of evaluations, and in turn, teachers must endorse district goals and be reassured that their participation in the evaluation experience would help improve their teaching skills (Donaldson, 2012). Teachers are more likely to commit to a new evaluation system if it was designed in collaboration with other teachers who had a strong voice in the evaluation criteria (White, Cowhy, Stevens, & Sporte, 2012). Teachers should not only be involved in the teacher-evaluation design but also involved with monitoring the structures and appeals process. Teachers involved in the evaluation-design process should be responsible for monitoring

the implementation, gathering feedback from other teachers, and communicating concerns to the appropriate parties to ensure the evaluation system would work as designed by the teachers (White et al., 2012). The involvement of teachers in the design, monitoring, and appeals process would help build trust in the new evaluation process and increase the likelihood of teachers adapting to the changing needs of the evaluation experience.

Studies conducted by Hull (2011, 2013) on teacher evaluation systems included participants from all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. Hull used the teacher-evaluation database provided by the Center of Great Teachers and Leaders at the American Institutes of Research to collect data for the study. Hull collected document reviews of administrative civil codes, state legislation, legislative hearings, training materials, and testimony for this study. Hull (2011) discovered that certain key elements should be part of all good teacher evaluations; in particular, stakeholder (teacher) involvement throughout the process. A second study conducted by Hull (2013) cited that 47 states require or recommend that stakeholders, including teachers, provide input into the design of new evaluation systems. Such input is important to gaining broad-based support.

For example, in Florida, Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) involved teachers in the design, implementation, and monitoring phases of the transition to a modified version of Danielson's FFT as a new evaluation system. HCPS implemented professional development on the potential new evaluation system before implementing the change in its use. School leaders offered teachers professional development on the new evaluation tool. The professional development was designed to allow teachers an

opportunity to provide feedback to the evaluation office staff. The district then used teacher feedback to make commensurate modifications to the evaluation tool, aiding teachers to improve their teaching skills prior to the implementation of the new evaluation (von Frank, 2011).

As the new teacher evaluation transition was underway, HCPS simultaneously instituted a program designed to give the teachers a continuing voice in evaluation implementation and the power to regulate the profession through the use of the new teacher-evaluation system. This teacher-regulation program, Peer Assistance and Review (PAR), was established to allowed greater regulation of the teaching profession by lead teachers who are committed to the profession. This program allows a lead teacher to act as an observer, coach, and supporter, and provide purposeful feedback about practice for their colleagues. In addition to the role of supporting teachers, the PAR lead teacher works to build understanding of their peers using observational experiences similar to the performance-evaluation system used in the district. These observation experiences between the PAR lead teacher and their peers helps regulate who stays and who goes in the classroom, as well as monitoring whether the evaluation system is being implemented as designed. PAR has been established in other school districts across the United States: California, Florida, Ohio, New York, Maryland, and Minnesota (Johnson, Donaldson, Munger, Papay, & Qazilbash, 2009).

More states are allowing teachers to be active participants in all phases of implementing new evaluations systems. However, researchers did not allude to teachers' perceptions of implementation of the evaluation system or how these evaluation systems

are working to influence administrators' skills to guide instructional practice and improve teachers' instructional practices.

The Danielson Framework for a Teaching-Evaluation Tool

Several evaluation models have been developed and used by school districts in the nation. The most frequently used models are those developed by Danielson (2011), Marzano and Toth (2014), Marshall (2009), and the Center for Educational Leadership (2013). For this project study, the literature review will focus on Danielson's FFT evaluation model. Danielson's FFT evaluation tool is currently "one of the most common systems" used by in school districts across the United States (Donaldson, 2009, p. 5).

Danielson began to work with the Educational Testing Series and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards to capture the full complexity of the process of classroom teaching and to establish a common language around the complex behavior of teaching. As a result of this work, Danielson's (2007) *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching* was a standards-based evaluation instrument developed on the premise of Vygotsky's (1978) social-constructivist theory. The FFT is

> A research-based set of components of instruction, grounded in a constructivist view of learning and teaching. The FFT may be used as the foundation of a school or district's mentoring coaching, professional development, and teacher evaluation process, thus linking all those activities together and helping teachers become more thoughtful practitioners. (Danielson, 2011, para. 1)

The Danielson model indicates that districts should focus on formative evaluation to improve student learning; in addition, use the evaluation tool as a summative decision-making component of the evaluation system. Evaluators should also teach teachers to

recognize distinguished practice, receive constructive feedback, and function as an essential part of the professional-development program that helps to accomplish these goals (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). The FFT has three important factors: coherence, shared definition of definition of good teaching and clear evaluation criteria. In addition, it requires evaluation techniques and procedures that accurately and consistently assess whether teachers are meeting its definition of good teaching. Finally, a successful evaluation system needs consistent and reliable judgments about teacher performance so that school administrators can recommend appropriate professional development activities for each teacher (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 24).

Another unique feature of the FFT model is that evaluation procedures should differentiate different groups of educators. Specifically, "novice teachers need more of an administrator's time than do successful, experienced teachers" (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 78). In the same way, "struggling tenured teachers need more time than their more successful colleagues do" (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 80). In light of the different levels of support teachers need, Danielson's FFT evaluation system provides three tracks.

1. Track I—administrators spend more time mentoring and coaching beginning teachers to assist these novice teachers in strengthening their practice and ensuring they keep the administrator well informed to make accurate summative decisions regarding who to retain (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 79).
2. Track II—administrators set aside less time to assist experienced teachers who have sustained a track record of proficient or distinguished teaching skills.

This track focuses on fostering professional-development opportunities to encourage continued skill development through professional-learning communities, curriculum development, study groups, action research, peer coaching, and professional portfolios (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 79).

3. Track III—administrators focus on the needs of teachers who are exhibiting teaching skills that reflect basic or marginal performance. Teachers on this track receive more intensive help and clear standards for improvement from school administrators (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 79).

The FFT evaluation instrument has four domains, 22 components, and 76 elements that are used as indicators of effective teaching (Danielson, 2007). Specifically, Danielson's (2007) FFT has defined standards for effective teaching in four domains: planning and preparation, professional responsibilities, instruction, and classroom environment. Evaluators should use the domains to assess a teacher's professional practice so as to ensure student learning is taking place. Evaluators use data from classroom observations to evaluate teachers in two of the four domains: instruction and classroom environment. In addition, the evaluators also use lesson plans and teacher portfolios as data or evidence to assess teacher's professional practice in the planning and preparation domain as well as the professional responsibilities domain. Each domain is partitioned into components that define a distinct aspect of a domain and further partitioned using two to five elements that describe a specific feature of a component. Danielson's work also provided a rubric for each domain and each element in the domain has language describing performance at each of the four levels of the rubric:

distinguished, proficient, basic, and unsatisfactory. Evaluators assign respective scores of 4, 3, 2, and 1 to these rubric levels, characterized as follows:

1. Unsatisfactory: Teaching is below the standard of "do no harm" and necessitates prompt intervention.
2. Basic: Teacher has some knowledge of the components of teaching, but implementation is infrequent.
3. Proficient: Teacher has mastered the work of teaching.
4. Distinguished: Teacher has created a community of learners with students assuming responsibility for their own learning.

Framework for a Teaching-Evaluation Process

Districts develop evaluation processes on the premise of the clinical supervision model, averring that teachers are thoughtful, and can analyze and reflect on their learning (Williamson & Blackburn, 2009). Evaluations involve a significant reflective component and encourage teachers to become active partners in diagnosing their learning and identifying opportunities for improvement (Sullivan & Glanz, 2013). Three phases of the FFT teacher-evaluation process are preconference, observation, and postconference.

Phase 1: Pre-observation. In an effort to ensure a focused and productive preconference, the teacher sends the lesson plan for the observation to the school administrator in advance because the portion of the lessons observed may not reflect the entire lesson. During the pre-observation conference, the teacher and administrator meet to identify a focus of the lesson, share information about the class to be observed, and engage in professional conversation to help the teacher's professional learning. The teacher explains what is planned for the students to learn, how the teacher proposes to

engage students in the lesson, and when and how the teacher will know whether students understand the desired outcome. The school administrator reviews the evaluation standards and indicators of performance for meeting the standards. Additionally, the school administrator provides instructional guidance and serves as an active coach to help the teacher make connections between the domains and the teachers' descriptions of the planning, instruction, assessments, and other professional activities. The school administrator also poses questions about the lesson to prepare for observing the lesson in action (Danielson, 2011). Danielson (2007) suggested these pre-observation conference questions be used to guide the professional conversation:

1. To which part of your curriculum does this lesson relate?
2. How does this learning fit into the sequence of the learning for the class?
3. Describe the learners in the class including those who are special needs.
4. Describe characteristics about the learning environment.
5. How do you differentiate for the subgroups in your class?
6. What are your learning objectives for this lesson?
7. What do you want your students to understand and be able to do?
8. How did student data impact your decision regarding student grouping and the lesson activities?

At the end of the preconference, the school administrator and teacher should mutually agree on a time and date for the observation, as the next phase of the evaluation process. The preconference is a core part of the planning and preparation domain. The school administrator scores preconference interactions and artifacts in the planning and preparation domain, however evidence of planning is observed in the instruction domain.

Phase 2: Observation. The school administrator should arrive at the agreed time, sit in a place to minimize distractions from the lesson, and focus on gathering sufficient evidence. The school administrator gathers data that may include statements, actions, descriptions of behaviors, and artifacts. The evidence should not include personal bias or opinions; rather, the school administrator should gather four types of observational evidence:

1. Verbatim scripting of teacher or student comments
2. Statements of observed teacher or student behavior
3. Numeric information about time, student participation, resources, and others
4. Observed aspects of the classroom environment

Following the observation, the teacher and school administrator should agree on a time and location for the postconference. The school administrator should analyze the evidence collected during the observation and identify questions that will promote reflection. The school administrator scores the observation evidence in the classroom environment and the instruction domains. The school administrator should send the teacher a copy of the observation data, allowing the teacher to prepare for the reflective conversation in the next phase of the evaluation process, the postconference.

Phase 3: Postconference. The postobservation conference is an essential portion of an evaluation system and is the most important part of the evaluation process (Danielson, 2011). During the postobservation conference, the teacher is an active participant in analyzing data, reflecting on the lesson, and pointing out ways to strengthen and improve instructional practices. Based on the ratings and the evidence generated during the observation, a school administrator and teacher should collaboratively

translate the ratings into changes in instructional practices. It is essential, during this time, to identify instructional practices to affirm and continue, in addition to the instructional practices that should be modified. It is also critical to develop instructional skills and reinforce effective instructional practices. The school administrator poses other questions about the lesson to foster the reflective conversation during the postconference (Danielson, 2011). There are postobservation conference questions be used to guide the professional conversation:

1. In general, how successful was the lesson? Did the students learn what you intended for them to learn? How do you know?
2. If you were able to bring samples of student work, what do those samples reveal about those students' levels of engagement and understanding?
4. Comment on your classroom procedures, student conduct, and your use of physical space. To what extent did these contribute to student learning?
5. Did you depart from your plan? If so, how and why?
6. Comment on different aspects of your instructional delivery (e.g., activities, grouping of students, materials, and resources.) To what extent were they effective?
7. If you had a chance to teach this lesson again to the same group of students, what would you do differently, from planning through execution? (Danielson, 2007).

The postconference is the time the teacher has an opportunity to reflect and consider ideas to grow professionally. The school administrator scores postobservation conference interactions in the professional-responsibilities domain. As a result of the

postobservation conference, the teacher can implement the information learned into their instructional practice and seek professional-development opportunities related to areas of concerns. School administrators should continue to provide feedback to the teacher around professional practice as much as possible, seeking opportunities for informal observation, attending planning sessions, scheduling walk-throughs, and formal/informal professional conversations.

On the whole, the FFT teacher-evaluation system is a noteworthy change over traditional teacher-evaluation methods and practices of evaluating teachers. For example, the FFT highlights different aspects of good teaching. The FFT also encourages school leaders to gather evidence of effective teaching practices in aspects of proficient practice that may not be evident during the classroom observation. In addition, the model brings attention to formative purposes of evaluation such as offering teachers purposeful feedback to ensure growth and to differentiate support based on teachers' skill levels.

Problems with the Danielson Model

Many researchers found the FFT teacher-evaluation model to be a significant improvement over traditional evaluation systems; yet, a number of educational researchers have noted some problems with the FFT evaluation model (Donaldson, 2009, pp. 5–6; Tucker & Stronge, 2005, p. 25) and believe the model has not been as effective as many educators claim. Obstacles and limitations noted were incorrect application of the model, problems with school leaders' skills to evaluate effectively, deemphasizing the summative purpose of evaluation, and limited scope.

Incorrect application of the model. Even though Danielson promoted the essential need for school leaders and teachers to have frank conversations about teaching

and student learning, frequently, school leaders provide feedback in a hierarchical, top-down manner that does not allow for teachers to actively participate in self-reflection. This statement holds true when school administrators do not mandate teachers to engage in written self-reflection as part of the evaluation process (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Reflecting on practice through the use of a portfolio, working with groups of educators on a focus area, and working with school administrators to establish professional growth goals encourages professional learning

Garth-Young's (2007) survey of Illinois junior high and middle school administrators showed the merit of Danielson's (2011) belief regarding the importance of school leaders giving quality feedback to teachers. The findings from Garth-Young's study revealed that meaningful and frequent constructive feedback given to teachers is the most essential instructional-leadership strategy to promote teacher growth. Of school administrators surveyed, 30% listed effective feedback as the single most important strategy to encourage continued professional growth. In addition, the results of the formative evaluation and guidance from administrators are useful to teachers who are attempting to improve instructional practice.

Problems with school leaders' skills to evaluate effectively. Several researchers have placed fault for the failure of current evaluation systems to improve school leaders' ineffectiveness. Donaldson (2009) noted that from time to time "administrators evaluate teachers on subjects or grades with which they are not familiar," which makes it difficult for school leaders to evaluate a teacher's performance accurately (p. 11). In the same way, Tucker and Stronge (2005) indicated that that the FFT evaluation system may have "limited validity based on the skill of the observer" (p. 7).

In addition to the concerns about the school leader's skill or content knowledge, Pritchett, Sparks, and Taylor-Johnson (2010) highlighted that "principals are seldom in the classroom, rarely give constructive feedback, and that only 2.5–10 percent of a principal's time is spent in classrooms each day" (p. 7). The deficiency is the time spent on effective evaluation, as well as observations of staged lessons selected by a teacher to emphasize their best practices, have provided an "isolated view" of what happens in the classroom. In this case, school leaders may not be able to differentiate between lessons they observed and the teaching practices that regularly occur in a classroom (Pritchett et al., 2010, p. 55).

Kersten and Israel (2005) conducted a study about problems with the FFT evaluation system, and found that administrators' view of recent evaluation practices was limited to the time they can spend on evaluation. The researchers also indicated that the evaluation is not well designed to help administrators provide purposeful feedback to teachers (Kersten & Israel, 2005, p. 58).

Garth-Young (2007) conducted a follow-up survey in 2007. Participants in the survey were junior high and middle school administrators in Illinois. The responses from the survey substantiated Kersten and Israel's (2005) conclusions regarding the concerns of school administrators. "Time constraints" were cited by 35% of school administrators as a significant obstacle prohibiting instructional-leader effectiveness and 24% of school administrators noted "inadequate instruments" as another hurdle prohibiting instructional-leader effectiveness (Garth-Young, 2007, p. 102). Garth Young noted, "quality evaluations may be possible if the amount of time to conduct evaluations and the number of teacher to be evaluated were within reasonable parameters" (2007, p. 124).

Deemphasizing the summative purpose of evaluation. In addition to the concerns regarding evaluation model being misapplied and deficiencies in instructional leader feedback, educational schools also commented on evaluation rating-inflation as another problem with the Danielson model. Researchers found that a major factor contributing to evaluation rating inflation is that most evaluators give teachers positive ratings that do not reflect the teachers' professional practice. Between 1995 and 2005, "only one in every 930 teachers (0.1%) in Illinois received and unsatisfactory rating while nearly 100% of Chicago teachers were rated satisfactory or above" (Donaldson, 2009, p. 9). Donaldson stated rating inflation creates difficulty for firing unsuccessful teachers' ineffective. The author also noted that inflated ratings may make it harder to reward truly effective teachers. In sum, the Danielson model may do an ample job of providing formative feedback to educators; however the model may be less effective as a summative evaluation tool.

Limited in scope. Despite the FFT model's focus on teacher growth and development, several educational researchers have noted the model is faulty as a result of its limited scope. The limited scope is referred to as the small snap shot of a teacher's professional practice that is gleaned as a result of the evidence collected during the teacher observation. Several researchers have supported the complaint of flaws with the evaluation tools' limited scope provided as a result of minimal time the school administrators spend in the classroom conducting observations and walk-throughs. Pritchett et al. (2010, p. 62) noted that teachers drew a connection to the small number of observations in providing "a lack of scope for the depth of a teacher's knowledge and ability, a lack of consistency, and a lack of reliability." Teachers and school leaders both

acknowledge that the current FFT model provides only a small picture of a teacher's effectiveness, but it is used to make important summative decisions.

More importantly, educational scholars have criticized the FFT model because of its heavy focus on teacher behaviors rather than student learning. Iwanicki (2001) and Pritchett et al. (2010) highlighted the need for teachers and evaluators to reflect on the standards, curriculum, relationship with students, and student learning and its impact on teachers and relationships. More recently, Pritchett et al. (2010) noted that classroom observations have more of a teacher focus than student learning focus.

Tucker and Stronge (2005) also expressed concern that the FFT is developed on the assumptions that the presence of proficient teaching practice during an observation will align with student achievement. To conclude, although the Danielson model advocates the need to include student-performance data as an element in the evaluation process, inclusion of the student-performance data has not been the authentic practice in most school districts.

Participants' Role During the Evaluation Process

School administrator's role. The role of the evaluator is to use observations and evaluations data and feedback to help teachers develop new sills and learn new research-based practices to become better practitioners. Specifically, the evaluator serves as a mentor, consultant, and coach, while guiding teachers to improve instructional practice. The evaluator should also encourage teachers to consider the evaluation process as ongoing, leaving an open line of communication for teachers to ask questions, engage in purposeful discussion, and express their comfort level with instructional suggestions.

The school administrator, as the evaluator, also must create a positive school culture of trust and continuous improvement to improve teacher effectiveness. Several factors often work together in an educational setting to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement (Wallace Foundation, 2013): shaping a vision of academic success for students, creating a safe and hospitable environment, developing the leadership skills of others, improving instruction, and managing data to foster school improvement. The school administrator and administrative supervisors are in positions to bring these factors together and play an important role in improving teacher effectiveness (Seashore-Louis, Wahlstrom, Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010). The impact of the school administrator on student achievement is so profound that researchers have cited school administrators as second only to teachers in their impact on student achievement (Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Seashore-Louis et al., 2010; Wallace Foundation, 2013). School administrators can make efforts to improve teacher effectiveness by helping teachers enhance their instructional performance (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Seashore-Louis et al., 2010), therefore, leadership is also important to the role of the evaluator.

Another role of the evaluator is to provide instructional support (Seashore-Louis et al., 2010). Researchers have listed several ways evaluators can provide instructional support. Seashore-Louis et al. (2010) suggested stressing the importance of research-based strategies and implementing them effectively to the educational environment; and increasing the frequency of unannounced observations of classroom instruction and providing feedback to enhance teacher effectiveness as a form of instructional support to help teachers enhance their instructional skills. In addition, the Wallace Foundation

(2013) suggested promoting and cultivating social interaction and teacher collaboration among peers and administrators; having regular informal interactions with teachers throughout the year instead of waiting for end-of-year evaluations to share feedback with teachers; making provisions for additional teacher planning time; and keeping track of teachers' work as other forms of instructional support that evaluators could provide to improve teacher's instructional practices.

Studies indicated that the evaluators need to understand what teachers must know to improve their teaching practices, provide the support teachers need, and ensure that the educational climate fosters professional growth. To this end, it is important to learn specifically what knowledge teachers gain form evaluation processes such as the FFT. Only with such information can a school administrator support and create useful professional development to improve professional and instructional practice.

Teacher's role. During the evaluation process, the teachers' take on the role of the learner. In this role, they are receptive to guidance from the school administrator, in order to link classroom knowledge to classroom practice. School administrators must be prepared to provide modeling, as teachers develop strategies for practice. In addition, the teachers should have the opportunity to understand why they are expected t exhibit specific behaviors (Nebraska Institute for Adult Literacy, 2005) outlined by the FFT evaluation tool. According to Danielson (2007), teachers are responsible for demonstrating preparation of content-rich lesson that are based on understanding students' prior knowledge of the subject. Teachers must set clear instructional outcomes that reflect information in the curriculum, in addition to plan lesson activities that are sequenced and require high cognitive engagement, questioning, and problem solving. In addition,

teachers must design formative assessments, thereby providing data to differentiated instruction. Further, teachers are responsible for actively engaging in collaboration because active collaboration means maintaining positive relationships with the school administrator. Teachers are also expected to question school administrators during feedback, be receptive to school administrators' constructive feedback, and participate in the learning community. Teachers must maintain a positive rapport and culture for learning to enhance student learning (Danielson, 2007).

In addition to the aforementioned, teachers must establish and maintain procedures and a classroom-management system (Danielson, 2007). Teachers should analyze the impact of instructional practice on student learning (Alter & Coggshall, 2009), and consider next steps, based on the analysis of student work. When teachers reflect on practice this strengthens their ability to make adjustments to future instruction (Alter & Coggshall, 2009).

Changes in Instructional Practices and Student-Performance Data

Evaluation and changes in teachers' instructional practice. Researchers have explored factors that influenced changes in teachers' instructional practices and the correlations between teacher evaluations and student-performance data. Rindler (1994) explored the perceptions of teachers who use an evaluation system to promote teacher growth. Using a modified version of the Teacher Evaluation Profile Questionnaire, Rindler collected data from 222 teachers and conducted interviews to generate and explain the findings. Findings showed the following factors significantly impacted teacher-improved instructional practices: credibility of the evaluator, the trusting relationship between the teacher and evaluator, the evaluator's skill to model practices,

usefulness, suggestions accompanied by rationale provided by evaluators, quality and specificity of information given in evaluator feedback, evaluation based on clear standards, teacher prior evaluation experience, the role of the evaluation (formative or summative), and the amount of information given in the feedback. Equally important, Rindler (1994) noted that teachers perceived the attributes of feedback and the evaluator as the most influential attributes of the evaluation process that lead to teacher growth.

More recently, O'Pry and Schumacher (2012) conducted research on how teachers perceive the teacher-evaluation process. This study was conducted on 121 new teachers in Houston Public Schools. The researchers sought to understand teachers' perceptions of the evaluation system and factors contributing to changes in the teachers' instructional practices. Researchers surveyed participants and followed up with interviews with teachers who had the most positive and negative views of the evaluation system. Specifically, they found teachers' perceptions of the evaluation system were determined less by the actual tool and more on the ways it was used. The value school administrator placed on the evaluation process was also one of the most consistent factors influencing the teachers' changes in instructional practices. Researchers surveyed participants and followed up with interviews with teachers who had the most positive and negative views of the evaluation system. Specifically, they found teachers' perceptions of the evaluation system were determined less by the actual tool and more on the ways it was used. In addition, the teachers who felt well-prepared and well-supported by their school administrator viewed the experience positively, and teachers also placed a higher value on the process when they felt they received meaningful and timely feedback and were provided an opportunity for self-reflection. The high value school administrator's

placed on the evaluation process was also one of the most consistent factors influencing the teachers' changes in instructional practices.

Another key study, conducted by Toch and Rothman (2008b), offered examples of evaluation models that would aid teachers' instructional practices. Toch and Rothman commented that the Teacher Advancement Program, designed by the Milken Family Foundation in 1999, and one designed by The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards are evaluation models that are favorable as productive evaluation models aimed at improving instructional practice. These models share characteristics that are key factors in the in the success of evaluation models. These are factors related to improving instructional practices: (a) explicit standards, (b) multiple measures of evaluations, (c) drive-in rather than drive-by evaluations, and (d) focused team work (p. 34).

Correlations between evaluation ratings and student performance. Some researchers found a positive association between teacher FFT evaluation ratings and student achievement (Kane et al., 2011). Researchers' findings revealed teachers' classroom practices, as measured by FFT evaluation scores, predict differences in student-achievement growth. Based on a sample of 365 teachers in reading and 200 teachers in mathematics, the main results indicated that improving a teacher's overall classroom practice scores by one point, that is, moving from an overall rating of Proficient (3) to Distinguished (4), aligns with one seventh of a standard-deviation increase in reading achievement, and one tenth of a standard-deviation increase in mathematics.

Other studies resulted in similar findings about correlations between teacher evaluation ratings and student achievement. Taylor and Tyler (2012) examined one

approach to a teacher-evaluation system used in Cincinnati Public Schools, a teacher evaluation system, which is based on the FFT. A quasiexperimental analysis compared student-achievement data before, during, and after the midcareer middle and elementary school teachers' evaluation year. Findings revealed teachers were less effective at improving student achievement the year prior to the evaluation year, more effective at improving student achievement during the school year when they were being evaluated and even more effective in the years after the evaluation. Study results indicated that a student instructed by a teacher who was evaluated through the Cincinnati Teacher Evaluation System evaluation process will score about 11% of a standard deviation higher in mathematics than a similar student taught by the same teacher before the teacher was evaluated via this system. The study also revealed postevaluation improvements in teaching performance mostly for teachers whose performance was weakest prior to the evaluation.

In more recent work, scholars associated with the Measures of Effective Teaching Project conducted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2012) conducted more research on the correlation between teacher-evaluation scores and student performance. Approximately 3,000 teachers from seven school districts in the United States took part in this study. Data showed that the correlation between teachers' FFT evaluation scores and student-achievement scores were .18 in mathematics and .11 in English language arts. The study's findings also suggested that teachers who receive higher ratings on their evaluations produce greater gains on student test scores.

Implications

Large-scale efforts to help the research-district educators develop teaching skills and increase student achievement through teacher-evaluation reform efforts has required millions of dollars, a new evaluation tool, and revamping of the evaluation process. Given that the Standards for Excellence tool has been replaced by the sole use of the FFT, a natural next step for the district research is to learn about perceptions of the FFT from school administrators and teachers and how has the FFT evaluation tool influences teachers' and administrators' skills to assess instructional practice and guide changes in teachers' instructional practice. This information can be derived from studying how teachers and school administrators, who have participated in the district's evaluation process using the FFT evaluation tool, use the FFT to improve teaching practices. Once the information has been gathered, a new FFT resource tool kit can be written. Such tool kit of resources could provide teachers and administrators with instructional strategies ideas and/or protocols needed to apply what they have learned from the Evaluation process into their classroom professional practice.

Summary

In the research district, teachers received high evaluation ratings, whereas student performance was below the required target for growth. The goal of the district's administration was to develop the teaching skills of educators to improve student achievement. As such, the school district's leaders decided to revamp the evaluation instrument and process. The district phased out the use of the Standards for Excellence and is now using the FFT as the sole evaluation tool for classroom teachers. Although the FFT has been used for several years, there is no data on (a) the influence the FFT

evaluation has on school leaders' skills to assess and guide instructional practice, (b) the influence the FFT has on teachers' skills to assess and guide their own instructional practice, and (c) administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the use of the FFT evaluation instrument.

The purposes for evaluating teachers vary depending on states and school districts' beliefs about education (Biggers et al., 2012; Danielson, 2011; Hazi & Arredondo Rucinski, 2009; Howard & Harman, 2007; Marzano, 2012; NEA, 2010; Tschannen-Moran &Tschannen-Moran, 2011; Viviano, 2012), but regardless of differences in beliefs, evaluation of teaching performances occur. As such it is important that results of past studies conducted on teacher evaluation system used to make modifications to the evaluation systems. Researchers revealed that teachers traditionally had little input in the teacher evaluation development and the flaws of the tradition evaluation system (Danielson, 2011; Marshall, 2009; Milanowski & Heneman, 2001; Partee, 2012; Toch & Rothman, 2008b; Weisberg et al., 2009). The educational scholars conducting research on teachers becoming active participants in the evaluation process addressed the PAR program as a means of giving teachers an active voice in the teacher evaluation implementation (Donaldson, 2011; Hull, 2013; White et al., 2012). The educational researchers also provided information on Danielson FFT, the role of the participants in the evaluation process, and studies that cited problems with the FFT evaluation tool (Danielson, 2007; Pritchett et al., 2010; Seashore-Louis et al., 2010; Tucker & Stronge, 2005). Finally, researchers also showed positive student-achievement-data correlations for states using the FFT evaluation tool (Kane et al., 2011; Marzano & Toth, 2014). In addition, researchers addressed the role school administrators' play in helping teachers

develop their practice. Authors suggested school administrators and administrative supervisors influence teacher effectiveness (Seashore-Louis et al., 2010) and student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004; Seashore-Louis et al., 2010; Wallace Foundation, 2013).

Section 2 outlines the methodology of the study, and in so doing describes and justifies the research design, sampling procedures, data collection procedures, data analysis approach, and strategies for ensuring that the study is conducted in a valid and credible manner.

The remaining sections of this project study are Section 3, the project, and Section 4, the reflection and conclusion. Section 3 will provide details about the project goals and a review of the literature based on the analysis of the research. It will also delineate the deployment plan for the project and how the project will contribute to the growth of teachers and students in the research district. Section 4 will conclude this project study by including its strengths, detailing recommendations, and addressing the limitations of this work. Reflections will be presented regarding the final analysis of what was learned about how school administrators and teachers use the FFT evaluation tool to assess and guide changes in instructional practice. Finally, Section 4 will discuss the importance of the work, directions for future research, and the key messages from the work.

Section 2

Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand teachers' and school administrators' perceptions of the FFT evaluation tool. Secondary, but of equal importance, was to comprehend how teachers and school administrators assessed and guided teachers' instructional practice in the classroom.

Research Design

This project study used a qualitative case study design. Yin (2009) indicated that case study is appropriate for addressing "how" and "why" research questions, because answering these questions points to "operational links over time" (p. 8) rather than frequencies or questions requiring surveys. The main rationale for using this qualitative approach was based on the fact that the data to be collected will yield from the in-depth experiences and perceptions of teachers and school administrators who used a particular evaluative program: FFT. This rationale is supported by Leedy and Ormrod (2005) who wrote that a case study is an "in-depth study of a particular program, individual, or event for a defined period of time" (p. 12). The FFT evaluations have been in use over a four year period of time in the school district, and an in-depth analysis of the users' perception of its influence on instructional practice was justified. Use of the qualitative case study design is merited because it lends itself to studies being conducted in the location where a phenomenon occurred, and allows for investigation and probing of real-life circumstances that may not be feasible with other designs.

The purpose of this study and research questions could not be addressed from a quantifiable standpoint; therefore, a quantitative design would have been inappropriate. Because the research question and purpose focused on participants' perceptions and the interpretation of their experiences, this study used a constructivist paradigm (or worldview) rather than a positivist or postpositivist paradigm. As such, this ruled out a quantitative approach. A mixed methods approach would have been required if some of the research questions were quantitative and some qualitative. In such case, a pragmatist approach would have to be taken (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2001) in which both strands—quantitative and qualitative—would need to be addressed. This was not the case in this study. The research questions were largely qualitative in nature, which requires an exploratory approach.

A constructivist worldview (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) reflects a bottom-up approach; the experiences, views, and perceptions of those who experienced the program were the foundation of the study. They are essential to understanding the phenomenon. This constructivist worldview is framed around the participants because it is the participants who construct meaning out of their experiences. Creswell and Plano Clark wrote that although participants' experiences, views, and perspectives are the foundation, the themes that are generated from these experiences and perspectives are the symbolic top; hence, the bottom to top approach in which experiences are shared from the bottom and the themes are identified at the top.

Other qualitative approaches such as narrative, grounded theory, phenomenological, and ethnographic were eliminated for several reasons. The narrative

approach involves autobiographical and biographical information from participants' life and oral histories. Because this study does not focus on storytelling, the narrative approach was inappropriate (Algozzine & Hancock, 2006). This study was also not seeking to discover or generate a theory that explains an interaction, action, or process; therefore, grounded theory would be inappropriate. Given the stated research question and purpose of the study, the research does not require understanding a culture or group behavior, therefore the ethnographic approach is ruled out. Lastly, the goal of the research purpose and research questions was not to understand the meaningfulness and essence of participants' lived experience; hence, phenomenological approach was unsuitable. The qualitative case study design is appropriate for understanding and exploring educational innovations (Merriam, 2009), and is appropriate for conducting in-depth examination of issues within a single natural educational setting as a bounded system (Creswell, 2007); hence the appropriateness of this design for conducting an in-depth study in this bounded case—an urban school district in the southern end of Maryland.

Population and Sampling

This study is bound in both place and context as is typical of qualitative case study designs, which are in-depth explorations of a bound system (Yin, 2009). The context in which the case is bound is the evaluation of teachers by administrators using the Framework for Teaching as the evaluation tool. The place in which the study is bound is one of Maryland's largest urban school district located in the southern section of the State. The selected school district consists of 198 schools, of which 123 are elementary,

24 middle, 23 high, seven charter, six alternative high schools, and 11 K–8 academies. Several levels of selection occur in a case study design, and the first level is selection of the case. This school district was conveniently selected because, although the Framework for Teaching was being used as an evaluative tool in all of Maryland's school districts, I was an employee in the selected school district, which made collection of data convenient in terms of proximity to reaching participants; hence, the convenience sampling method. The next level of selection and sampling were schools in the selected research district. To ensure that the schools selected represented the diverse demographic population of 198 schools, a random selection of elementary, middle, and high schools occurred. Randomization ensures equivalency (Trochim, 2006), which means that the schools selected were likely to be similar in characteristics. Four elementary, four middle, and four high schools were randomly selected; thereby, a total of 12 schools were used in selection of the target sample of teachers and school administrators.

The targeted sample from this population was purposively sampled. Use of the purposive sampling method guaranteed that participants would meet a stated criteria (Curtis, Gesler, Smith, & Washburn, 2000): (a) Teachers who are employed by the research district and are currently being evaluated using the Framework for Teaching evaluation tool; (b) school administrators who currently use the Framework for Teaching as the evaluation tool when assessing and guiding teachers' instructional practice. The rationale for these criteria was the importance of guaranteeing that the data was gathered from those who experienced use of the evaluation program. The targeted sample size was 12 teachers and six school administrators. Although these teachers were purposively

sampled based on the stated criteria, a variety of teachers and administrators were sampled. Justification for using maximum variation as a strategy in the sampling process guaranteed heterogeneity and diversity in the targeted sample to strengthen the study's validity and propensity for transferability of findings. Of the 12 teachers, four were from elementary schools, four from middle schools, and four from high schools. A similar method of variation applied in the selection of school administrators. Of the six school administrators targeted, two were from elementary schools, two from middle, and two from high schools.

The sample size of 12 teachers and 6 school administrators from a variety of school levels (elementary, middle, and high) was also justified based on saturation. Depth of inquiry can be reached with a sample size of 12 teachers and six school administrators. There comes a point in a study when additional data does not lead to additional information because saturation is reached. When additional data does not lead to additional and new information, it means the study is at the point of diminishing return. The fact that qualitative research is concerned more with interpretation and meaning, just the mere occurrence of a code or data is enough to make this meaning a part of the analysis framework; hence, total of 18 participants was sufficient to the point of saturation. The experiences of 18 teachers and school administrators were enough from which to gain in-depth inquiry. Further, the likelihood of reaching this saturation in a small study is feasible (Charmaz, 2006). Gathering data from 18 participants with similar experience from the same setting provided sufficiently varied data, mainly due to the heterogeneity of the sample (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003).

Researcher Bias and Role

Prior to gathering data, all biases concerning this topic was bracketed. Having been a 15-year teacher in the school district, and having been evaluated using both the SFE and FFT evaluation tools, no doubt I have developed an opinion of both evaluation tools. I am inclined to view the FFT evaluation tool as a more comprehensive approach to evaluating all the components of teaching. Nonetheless, as a classroom teacher being assessed via the evaluation system, these personal views and biases were bracketed, by incorporating several techniques in the interview process. During the data collection process, I did not ask the interviewees leading questions, or interjected into their responses. Doing so would have caused interviewees to respond in a manner reflecting the direction in which they believe I was leaning. I also ensured that participants accepted in the study were not teachers I ever worked with or supervised.

There are several techniques that could be used in order to guarantee bracketing, one of which would be to refrain from conducting the literature review until after collection of data (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010). The reason for this is that it maintains objectivity because I would not be entering the study with predetermined themes based on what was already found in the literature. Use of this technique however, was unrealistic in light of the dissertation process, which required a literature review prior to data collection. The literature review that precedes the development of the project, however, was conducted after the data analysis and themes became evident. Using a reflexive diary is another bracketing technique (Wall, Glenn, Mitchinson, & Poole, 2004), including documenting thoughts, feelings, and perceptions in a journal, throughout the

research process. I kept a diary of my thoughts, feelings, and actions regarding any issues that occurred during the data collection process. Fortunately, no issues occurred.

As the researcher, I was cognizant of my role and the researcher-participant relationship (see Appendix B). It is important to note that the researcher participant relationship was nonexistent because I had never worked with the participants; hence, my relationship with the participants did not affect data collection.

Ethical behavior was upheld, as autonomy and beneficence were exercised during the project study. Autonomy was exhibited by allowing researchers the freedom and independence to make changes to scheduled interview dates, and beneficence was exhibited as all actions were planned to benefit the participant in terms of comfort and flexibility.

Data Collection

Using various data collection sources in a qualitative study would serve to incorporate triangulation, which in turn strengthens the study's validity (Merriam, 2009). Based on this justification, two sources of data collection were used; teachers and school administrators. The use of semistructured interviews, rather than structured and unstructured interview methods, is based on the fact that although the questions are preestablished in semistructured interviews, the process also allowed for further probing to elicit more in-depth data and clarification (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Unstructured interviews would have been too unfocused, thereby leaving room for the interview process to steer off topic, whereas a structured interview does not lend itself to probing due to its highly structured close-ended questions.

One 45–60 minutes interview was conducted with each participant, at a place of their choice. Interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed after the interview, with analysis of each interview beginning while data collection of other participants continued. Audio-tapes were password encrypted. Participants were not interviewed on school grounds. To guarantee that participants felt safe in an environment where they would not suffer repercussions for their perspective on the evaluation system, they were allowed to choose a safe and comfortable location outside of school grounds (Seidman, 2006). There were two sets of interview guides; teachers' interview guide questions (see Appendix C), and school administrators' interview guide questions (see Appendix D). Although the interview guide has been established in alignment with the research question, there were probing questions asked to guarantee that participants' views were gathered on each component of the Framework for Teaching.

It is important to note that the interview guide is based on the questions asked in Towe's (2012) dissertation: "An Investigation of the Role of a Teacher Evaluation System and its Influence on Teacher Practice and Professional Growth in Four Urban High Schools." Although not mirrored exactly as that of Towe's, the reason for using these interview questions as a guide in establishing the interview guide in this study, is that the purpose of Towe's study and the demographics in which that study was conducted is similar to the purpose of this study and the study's population. The interview questions were already beta tested in Towe's study, showing which needed modification and which did not; hence the validity of the instrument. The fact that these questions yielded responses that answered the research question, and met the goal of the

purpose of the study means that the questions were valid. Dr. Towe granted permission of use (see Appendix F)

Research Procedure

Institutional permission was petitioned from the research district (see Appendix G), and once that was gained, IRB approval was solicited and obtained from Walden University (approval number: 05-26-15-0237931). Informed consent letters were emailed to all teachers and school administrators in the 12 randomly selected schools (four elementary, four middle, and four high schools). The school district's email system was used because all teachers and administrators could be easily contacted via this medium. The informed consent letters provided detailed and comprehensive information relating to the purpose of the study; its significance; description of how participants' confidentiality is addressed through the use of pseudonyms so as to protect their identity; the fact that their participation is voluntary; and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. They were also informed that their participation required 45–60-minute individual semistructured face-to-face interview, and that their phone number was requested as a contact source. The informed consent letter included information regarding where the data would be stored. Data are currently stored in a locked file cabinet for a period of five years; a locked file cabinet located in my home. The data are stored in alphanumeric order, in categories of elementary, middle school, and high school teachers. Participants were assured that their names would never be used, and that their raw data would not be shared with the school district or any other entity. Participants provided consent to participate in the study by reading the following statement: I have read the above

information and I believe I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement in the project study. In addition I understand that by replying to the email with the words I consent, I am agreeing to participate in this study. All signed consents were returned via email.

Once the targeted sample size of 12 teachers and 6 school administrators was reached, all participants were contacted through the phone number they provided on the consent form, and thanked for consenting to participate. During the phone conversation, participants had the opportunity to ask clarifying questions regarding the research process, and all questions were answered. During the phone conversation, interview location was decided, and interview appointments made.

Once the required sample size was reached, a letter was emailed thanking the additional respondents for agreeing to participate in the study, informing them that the targeted number of participants had been reached, and that should any of the current participants choose to withdraw from the study they would be contacted to replace them. Upon completion of each interview, data transcription began in preparation for data analysis.

The school district involved in this study is the community stakeholder and as such, upon completion of the study; an abstract and one copy of the final project study will be submitted to the school district's research department. Participants will also be emailed a summary of the results from the project study.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using an inductive approach in which coding and theme development occurred. The inductive approach used was thematic analysis in which six steps were carried out, namely; establishing familiarity with the data by reading and understanding what was being stated, coding the data, searching for themes, reviewing themes that were identified, defining the themes, and finally naming the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Transcribed data were coded, which means that data were reduced to sections and categorized. This process is termed, open coding. A second phase consisted of rereading the data, re-categorizing, and placing the data under similar topics. When categorizing and labeling were exhausted, the next step was axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to establish whether links and relationships existed among categories. As themes became evident, the initial data were reassessed to determine if data relevant to the identified themes were disregarded. Continuation of theme identification was followed by defining, and then naming each theme. Finally, the data from both sources, teachers and administrators, were triangulated to irradiate multiple views and different angles at which the phenomenon was perceived.

Discrepant Data or Disconfirming Evidence

When analyzing the data, I confirmed data categories, patterns, and themes, and ensured that they were supported by the data. In the analysis process, there were no data that did not fit in any category or themes, in essence no disconfirming discrepant data were evident or need to be discarded.

Increasing the Study's Validity and Reliability

The terms reliability and validity are often found in quantitative studies based on post-positivist and positivist paradigms; however, these terms have long since been used in qualitative studies and are regarded as a study's dependability, confirmability, credibility, and transferability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). There are several strategies for ensuring dependability, confirmability, credibility, and transferability (Creswell & Miller, 2000), of which audit trail is included. Audit trail is considered a strategy for ensuring dependability. The terms credibility and transferability are synonymous with validity and reliability, and are defined by Guba and Lincoln (1994) as a study being believable, and one in which the findings can apply to similar settings and circumstances. Merriam (2009) proposed eight methods for ensuring that qualitative research is conducted with reliability and validity: triangulation, member checks, adequate engagement in data collection, reflexivity, audit trail, rich thick descriptions, and maximum variation.

Triangulation refers to the use of several sources of data and data collection methods, and increases a study's validity and reliability (Merriam, 2009). This study's use of semistructured interviews and from two different groups (a variety of teachers and school administrators), guarantee that triangulation will occur. Triangulation of all data collected via several sources will serve to confirm the findings. The themes identified from the analyzed data from both sources will provide a comprehensive view. Triangulation broadens an understanding of the data when it is viewed from multiple angles (teachers and administrators). Finally, triangulating the data gathered from

teachers and those gathered via school administrators only served to illuminate the interpretation of the phenomenon.

With each participant being interviewed for duration of 45–60 minutes adequate engagement in data collection was achieved which in turn promoted the study's validity and reliability. Reflexivity, another strategy for ensuring the study's reliability and validity occurred during the bracketing of bias phase, with the use of a diary and journal for logging personal feelings and thoughts. In this phase, personal views, opinion, assumptions, and biases about use of the Framework for Teaching were bracketed to guarantee that the study's findings are based only on data collected from the study's participants (Creswell, 2012). A variation in the sampling was evident in the fact that teachers and school administrators across all three levels (elementary, middle, and high school) were solicited. Whereas past studies focused only on high school teachers (Towe, 2012), this study used maximum variation as a sampling strategy to ensure diversity in participants. This strategy increased the validity and applicability of the findings to all teachers and school administrators in the county.

During data collection, a journal, as an audit trail (Merriam, 2009) of the entire research procedure was maintained. A log was maintained detailing data collection methods, processes, and how the data analysis process was carried out. This served as wealth of information to readdress the research procedure section after the study. Not having to rely on sheer memory as to what occurred served the process well. As questions and thoughts concerning the research process arose, they were documented in the audit trail. An audit trail ensured substantiations, verifications, and confirmations of the

research process, as noted by Carcary (2009) it heightens trustworthiness in a study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that an audit trail serves as a convincing way of claiming the study's validity, mainly because it chronicles the how and why decisions were made in the research process, and what decisions were made. It verified and ensured that the studies' research process was carried out with integrity and reliability; hence increasing believability and transparency from start to finish. Carcary supports Merriam (2009) and Lincoln and Guba's findings that audit trail ensures that a study's results can be trusted because it provides a way of trace through the researcher's judgment and reasoning while conducting the study.

Data Analysis Results

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand teachers' and school administrators' perceptions of the FFT evaluation tool. In addition, the study also explored how teachers and school administrators viewed this evaluation tool's influence on instructional practice. This report also examined school administrators' beliefs concerning FFT evaluation tool's influence on their evaluative skills for assessing and guiding teachers' instructional practice. The study focused on an urban school district in the state of Maryland, and the research was driven by four research questions:

1. What are the research-district teachers' and school administrators' perceptions of the Framework for Teaching evaluation tool?
2. How did school administrators believe that use of the Framework for Teaching tool influence administrators' skills in assessing and guiding teachers' instructional practice?

3. How has the use of the Framework for Teaching tool helped to strengthen teachers' skills to modify teaching and learning in the classroom?
4. How has the Framework for Teaching tool helped teachers to assess and guide their instructional practice?

Participants' Demographics

This case study examined six school administrators and 12 teachers purposively selected from 12 randomly selected schools, (four were elementary, four middle, and four high). Two administrators from each school level (elementary, middle, and high) were purposively selected. The elementary school administrators had 1 -14 years of experience, the middle school administrators had 1 to 2 years of experience, and the high school administrators had 1 to 4 years of experience. The length of time in which the administrators had used the FFT evaluation tool to assess and guide teachers' instructional practice ranged from 1 to 4 years.

Four teachers from each level (elementary, middle, and high) were purposively selected. The elementary teachers had 1 to 13 years' experience, middle school teachers had 3 to 17 years' experience, and high school teachers had 1 to 20 years' experience. These teachers were evaluated using the FFT evaluation tool between two and six times.

Table 3

School Administrator Demographics

Pseudonym	School Level	Years of Teaching Experience	Number of years evaluating teachers using FFT
EA1	Elementary	14	4
EA2	Elementary	1	1
MA1	Middle School	1	1
MA2	Middle School	2	2
HA1	High School	1	1
HA2	High School	4	4

Table 4

Teacher Participants Demographics

Pseudonym	School level	Years of teaching experience	Number of times evaluated using FFT
ET1	Elementary School	3	4
ET2	Elementary School	1	2
ET3	Elementary School	13	2
ET4	Elementary School	5	2
MT1	Middle School	17	2
MT2	Middle School	3	6
MT3	Middle School	4	4
MT4	Middle School	10	3
HT1	High School	11	4
HT2	High School	20	3
HT3	High School	1	2
HT4	High School	8	3

Research Question 1: Administrators

Research Question 1 examined the research-district school administrators' perceptions of the FFT evaluation tool. The most frequent themes that emerged from the analysis of the administrator's responses were (a) collaboration, (b) ambiguity, (c) need for administrators' knowledge of content and instruction, (d) challenges and benefits, and (e) the roles of the teacher and the administrator.

Increased collaboration. Administrators' perceptions of the FFT evaluation tool were that it increased collaboration between teachers and administrators relating to instructional planning and execution of lessons. Middle school administrator MA1 believed that the FFT process created a forum for discussion about teaching and learning, and that the in-depth conversation about teaching and learning was where the professional growth took place. This middle school administrator shared that the in-depth conversation which FFT collaborative process generated, provided an opportunity for helping teachers in the planning phase of instruction as suggestions are made for lesson implementation and reflection on their instructional practice.

Elementary school administrator EA1 shared a similar belief that FFT provided collaborative opportunities between administrators and teachers. EA1 believed that in the previous evaluation system administrators had no pre-observation conference that provided opportunity for administrators and teachers to collaborate and have open dialogue; therefore, this element of the FFT process made collaboration possible. Further, collaborative conferences provided administrators with additional instances to monitor teachers' teaching and learning. EA1 stated, "I now have additional face-to-face forum to

provide specific feedback and recommendations for continuous improvement." Administrators believed that pre-observation conferences served to strengthen the collaborative process because teachers and administrators are better able to effectively plan together.

Elementary school administrator, EA2, expressed similar beliefs by sharing that regardless of how well teachers may have planned their lessons, the additional collaboration that the FFT process provided allowed the teacher and administrator to work together to make that lesson even stronger in terms of instructional practice. High school administrator HA1, and Middle school administrator MA2, mentioned that through the FFT process, teachers and administrators dialogued more and planned more effectively. This dialogue, they believed, gave them more insight as observers as to what should be seen and heard during the lesson. Elementary, middle, and high school administrators all agreed that collaboration opportunities between teachers and administrators during the evaluation process, was an exceptional beneficial aspect of the FFT evaluation tool. The benefits derived from these collaboration opportunities created a team approach for planning and solving problems related to instructional practice that ultimately promoted improvement in instruction.

Ambiguity. Although increased collaboration was identified as a common theme in the discussion of administrators' perception of the FFT evaluation tool, ambiguous feelings pertaining to the collaboration also surfaced. While administrators appreciated the benefits of increased collaboration, there were elements in the collaboration process that proved to be an issue. All middle and high school administrators and elementary

administrator EA1 cited difficulties that surfaced during administrator-teacher collaborations. Middle school administrator MA1 found that while administrators welcomed the opportunity to collaborate, post observation conferences were often awkward for both administrators as well as teachers, because administrators found that teachers took offense to comments about their instructional practice. High school administrator HA2 shared a similar perception and described preconferences as being an uncomfortable process for both administrator and teacher. This discomfort was described as stemming from teachers taking offense when administrators spoke negatively about their instructional and professional practices. MA1 stated, "They take what you are saying as a personal attack on their character and become judgmental of the evaluator. I speak to the evidence and try to explain as much as possible how the evidence leads to the assigned component rating."

Feelings of ambiguity were further described by middle and high school administrators as wanting collaboration due to its benefits, but not appreciating the anxiety they feel as they collaborate with resistant teachers. Although collaboration was regarded as a process that increased administrators' and teachers' analytical thinking skills, this process, administrators believe, will not build teachers' instructional expertise unless they are willing to collaborate and accept administrators' feedback.

High school administrator HA2 and middle school administrator MA2 perceived the FFT's collaboration opportunities as being beneficial in terms of providing the setting to discuss teachers' instructional practice and their job embedded professional development, before and after instruction. In addition, they believed the information

gained through the FFT evaluation *feedback routines* and teachers' reflections are beneficial because teachers become more reflective practitioners; however, ambiguous feelings concerning the challenges of providing quality feedback becomes an issue. MA1 believed that administrators' inability to provide quality feedback was heightened by their lack of content knowledge and limited awareness of instructional strategies. While administrators are pleased with the chance to collaborate with teachers, lacking the skills necessary to provide quality feedback generates anxiety; hence feelings of ambiguity. While administrators perceive the FFT tool as being beneficial, it has been described as increasing the number of evaluations administrators must conduct over a short period of time.

Middle school administrator, MA2 stated, "It is a challenge to give feedback when you don't have the time to research instructional strategies, you lack content knowledge, and have thousands of other things on your plate." This admission of the challenge to effectively guide teachers in the collaborative pre and post conferences, mirrors HA1's belief that it is challenging to guide teachers' instructional practice if you don't know instructional strategies. HA1 stated, "Sometimes I am put in positions where I don't know content either and in this situation it is challenging to give quality feedback." While high school administrator HA2 shared similar sentiments, further explanation detailed how time consuming pre and post conferences were. The perception was that although pre and post conferences were needed and made for necessary collaboration between administrators and teachers, there was difficulty with providing effective feedback, and the collaborative process was also time-consuming. HA2 stated, "The

biggest challenge I face is time management and providing feedback that will help teachers improve their instruction."

High school administrators viewed the pre-observation/preconference process as a tedious and time consuming process because they are required to conduct a preplanning prior to the conference. They expressed how they felt it was a task to review curriculum, locate strategies that might be useful, preplan questions that promoted dialogue, and ensuring that the evaluation process was completed with fidelity in a timely manner. While pre- and postconferences were touted as excellent tools for increasing collaboration between administrators and teachers, planning and preparing for conferences was considered wearisome, and time consuming. High school administrator, HA2 explained that, whereas the overall process was an asset to school administrators' professional practice, it was too time consuming given other administrative responsibilities and duties. HA2 was evaluating about 25–30 teachers several times during the year.High school administrators believed that their responsibility for submitting reports, ensuring school building safety, overseeing implementation of Common Core State Standards and professional development, addressing parent concerns and community involvement far overshadowed the benefits derived from collaboration through FFT conferences.

Adding to the feelings of ambiguity concerning the benefits of the FFT generated conferences and issues noted with the process, middle school administrators shared the frustration they felt due to teachers' unpreparedness for collaborating in conferences. Administrators explained that teachers are usually unprepared for the pre-observation

conference, complained about not having had the time to do the prework, and they struggled with explaining or demonstrating understanding of the content in which they would be teaching. MA1 stated, “When teachers don’t have the time to complete the prework; administrators find it challenging to ask the appropriate questions to pull out the thinking and processing that teachers should have engaged in during the planning of the lesson.”

MA2 also believed similarly that the evaluation process was time consuming given school administrators’ additional responsibilities. This participant further shared that the evaluation process took about four to five days to complete per teacher, which required many hours to complete. The fact that there were usually 15–20 teachers on each administrator’s case load, the time involved was overwhelming and counterproductive. Although elementary school administrators valued the FFT’s pre and post conferences in terms of opportunities for administrative and teacher collaboration, they mentioned administrators’ difficulty learning the FFT process and lack of time for managing the process, as being two frustrating elements. Elementary school administrators shared that the FFT process was difficult for administrators to learn in view of all the school district’s initiatives that they were already learning. They believed that at a time when implementing and monitoring Common Core was perceived as time consuming, school administrators did not relish the idea of having to learn a new evaluation system and its associated electronic platform such as Teachscape which they must use to document the FFT process. Administrators perceived use of this electronic platform in the FFT process as only adding to the time-consuming issue. All administrators shared that there were too

many steps to completing the evaluation process in the electronic teacher-evaluation platform. EA1 stated, “It can be more of a hindrance than help at times.”

Limited knowledge of content and instruction. Of the six administrators, five perceived administrators’ deficiencies in content knowledge and instructional strategies negatively impacted the evaluation process. Elementary administrators believed that although they understood curriculum content and how to use the FFT evaluation tool, it was a challenge locating instructional strategies to share with teachers during post conferences. Elementary administrator EA1 mentioned how time-consuming it was locating useful instructional strategies that were applicable to the cited instructional deficiency, and how this caused administrators to feel inadequate in teachers’ presence. Elementary administrator EA2 experienced feelings of discomfort when evaluating and providing feedback on teaching unfamiliar subject contents. EA2 hid the lack of content knowledge and instructional strategies, by sharing with teachers, videos and websites related to what the teacher taught. It was believed that doing so caused teachers to view the administrator as a strong instructional leader who gave effective feedback which entailed providing additional resources.

In contrast, middle school administrators MA1 and MA2 shared that they depended on lead teachers and department chairs to help them address the needs of teachers who teach in content areas that were unfamiliar to administrators. MA1 described the lack of subject knowledge and instructional strategies during the evaluation process as a struggle, but noted that there were ways around it. The strategies shared, specified that prior to conducting FFT conferences MA1 would request teachers’ lesson

plans and then share the lesson plan contents with department chairs who would coach the administrator through the content and instructional strategies, and then provide feedback which would then be used in pre and postconferences. The feedback obtained from department chairs, MA1 believed, prepared administrators for providing feedback and strategies that might be useful to teachers. In addition, MA1 shared that additional ways to overcome lack of knowledge was to attend collaborative planning related to the unfamiliar subject areas.

Both high school administrators also specified that due to their deficiencies in content knowledge and instructional strategies, it was difficult to effectively evaluate teachers. Although they regarded the FFT evaluation tool as being detailed enough to guide assessment, and that the elements in the FFT tool helped them to hone in on the domains, they continued having difficulty giving teachers effective feedback during pre and post conferences.

Role of the teacher and the administrator. Despite administrators' admission of ineffective feedback, they believed that the evaluation process clearly defined distinct roles for teachers and administrators, and providing effective feedback was mentioned as one of their perceived roles. Elementary, middle, and high school administrators perceived that their role was to assess and guide teachers' instructional practices, provide coaching and mentoring when necessary, and that teachers' roles in the process was to function as learners. They defined *learners* in terms of professional responsibilities, with the expectation that teachers will be open minded enough to receive feedback. HA1 shared that teachers' role as professional was to be prepared for pre and post conferences,

and be receptive to administrative feedback. High school administrator HA2 believed that while teachers' role was to be students of their craft, teachers should be active participants in the evaluation process by offering artifacts to justify student learning, participating in collegial conversations with the administrator, and using administrators' feedback to improve professional practice.

Research Question 2:Administrators

Research Question 2 explored how the FFT evaluation tool influenced administrators' assessment skills and ability to guide teachers' instructional practices. The most common themes identified based on administrators' responses were (a) awareness of instructional leadership skill level, (b) mindfulness of knowledge of elements of instructional practice, (c) evaluative skills, and (d) feedback.

Awareness of instructional leadership skill level. Administrators noted that using the FFT evaluation tool made them more aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and their inability to effectively guide teachers' instructional practice. Both high school administrators mentioned that using the FFT evaluation tool helped them to realize their lack of content knowledge. This inadequacy, they believed, played a role in their ineffective feedback on instructional practices. High school administrator HA1 perceived that although use of the FFT tool provided a basis of what to look for in a lesson during an observation, it did not necessarily inform them about effective instructional practices, and what should be done in case teachers are inept. HA1 stated, "The evaluation tool does not account for evaluators' lack of content knowledge and minimum strategy resources needed to suggest next steps, provide feedback and to have meaningful

conversations about teaching and learning. That is a deficiency." HA1 emotionally shared the experience of having evaluated a world language teacher's instructional delivery, and mentioned how intimidating it was because during the entire observation the teacher and students spoke in Spanish. HA1 stated, "I had the hardest time collecting evidence, assessing the lesson, and guiding the teacher's instructional practice, simply because I lacked the content knowledge which required understanding Spanish."

Middle school assistant principal MA2, shared a similar experience in which there was a struggle with anxiety. During evaluation of Algebra and Science lessons, the administrator felt totally lost and confused. MA2 stated, "My instructional background is in reading so my evaluation feedback and guidance for the reading teachers are of high quality; however, I realized I struggled when I conducted evaluations in Algebra I and science classes." MA2 felt as though other administrators had similar feelings because in discussion with other school administrators they also shared how the lack of content knowledge and current instructional strategies related to the subject matter, impeded their ability to guide teachers' instructional practice.

Mindfulness of elements of instructional practice. All six school administrators believed that the FFT evaluation tool was instrumental in their cognizance of the elements and components of teachers' instructional practice. Administrators were delighted because the FFT evaluation tool was useful to gain a more in-depth understanding of teacher behavior expectations within the four teaching domains.

Elementary school administrator EA1 shared that in previous years when they used the Standards for Excellence as an evaluation tool, the focus was more on

implementation of the lesson and the classroom environment; however, once they began using the FFT evaluation tool, the focus shifted to observation of specific elements such as teacher interactions with students, and students interaction with students. School administrators also shared that prior to using FFT they were totally unaware that they should focus on student assessment throughout the entire lesson and that student discussion was a major part of student engagement. The concept of a mandated time for open dialogue and one-to-one collaborative planning with teachers, around lesson being evaluated was new to these six administrators.

High school administrator HA1 shared that there were some aspects of the FFT evaluation tool related to student engagement that were totally new to the district's school administrators, and that in the past, when conducting an evaluation they were trained to only examine activities, assignments, instructional materials. Using the FFT evaluation tool, however, increased administrators' awareness of the importance of examining structured lesson pacing, and how instructional delivery impacted student engagement. HA1 stated, "I also never realized how much the grouping of students impacted student engagement."

Improved evaluative skills. Administrators believed that use of the FFT evaluation tool was instrumental in enhancing their evaluation skills. MA1 shared that the ability to assess instructional practice was enriched, because they received various trainings to build awareness and understanding of the FFT evaluation tool. MA1 believed that while using the FFT evaluation tool to assess teachers' professional practice facilitated identification of evidence of teacher and student behavior aligned with each

component, administrators still needed to work on guiding teachers' instructional practice. He stated, "I need more strategies to suggest in my feedback to help teachers deliver more effective lessons."

High school administrators mentioned that although they had to learn new content and more strategies to effectively guide teachers' instructional practice, to use the FFT evaluation tool effectively, they needed additional professional development related to current instructional strategies. HA1 shared that although copies of the curriculum and textbook were available for content information, it was difficult to locate instructional strategies because they were really unaware of what they were seeking. Elementary administrators agreed with middle and high school administrators' views regarding enhancement of evaluative skills, and believed that professional development related to content knowledge and instructional strategies was needed for administrators.

Providing teacher feedback. While an inability to provide teachers with instructional strategies was viewed as an issue, knowledge of the characteristics of quality feedback was another theme that surfaced regarding administrators' skill to guide teachers' instructional practice. Elementary school administrators, EA1 and EA2 shared that in the evaluation process they tried to provide constructive, objective, and understandable feedback and to follow-up with teachers in providing support. It was noted however that these school administrators were concerned as to whether they understood what effective feedback meant. They further shared that to ensure and reinforce that teachers were following-up with agreed *next steps* outlined in the feedback, they would conduct informal observations. EA1 stated, "I may not fully understand how

effective feedback looks, however, I am most effective with follow-up visits regarding my feedback when during the post conference I use my IPAD to review notes, and schedule follow-up visits." EA2 perceived feedback as providing guidance and recommendations for improvement, evidence for self-selected goals, and identifies new goals.

Middle school administrators shared that they needed more professional development on how to provide meaningful feedback. They believed that knowledge of the subject content was the first step in becoming more effective at providing quality feedback. MA1 stated, "Knowledge of the content makes it easier for me to be purposeful and objective regarding the feedback I provide to teachers; however at times, I just don't know what feedback or suggestions to give that will motivate teachers to improve their practice. So sometimes my feedback will help to guide the teachers practice and sometimes my feedback is very general." Similarly, high school administrator HA2 noted that administrators tried to be as realistic as possible with feedback to teachers, but admitted they needed help with providing feedback designed to develop teachers' critical thinking. HA2 stated, "I feel like the district has better prepared administrators for assessing instruction but I still need a lot of help with constructing feedback that will guide instructional improvements; therefore, sometimes my feedback is generic and may not serve to improve the teacher's instructional strategies."

Research Question 3–Teachers

The third research question examined teachers' perceptions of the FFT evaluation tool. The most frequent themes identified were (a) quality of feedback, (b) how the FFT

process was carried out, (c) value of the FFT process, and (d) challenges. Subthemes that emerged from quality of feedback were inconsistences and lacking substance. Subthemes that emerged from how the process was carried out were lack of fidelity, varying administrative attitudes, and irregularities. Subthemes that emerged from the value of the FFT process were improved working relationship between teachers and administrators, collaboration, and self-reflections.

Quality of feedback. Teachers' perceptions regarding the quality of feedback received from administrators were that administrative feedback was inconsistent in terms of quality. Teachers stated that when different administrators would observe the same components looking at the same material, they gave different feedback. Elementary school teacher ET3 was evaluated by two different administrators on the same lesson, and the quality of their feedback was inconsistent. One evaluator gave general comments and did not provide any suggestions for continued professional growth, while evaluator 2 provided instructional strategies and articles for improvement of instructional practice." Similarly, high school teacher HT4 was evaluated by the same administrator at the beginning of the school year and at the end of the school year. The feedback received at the beginning of the school year was direct, detailed, and itemized for each component; however, the evaluation feedback provided by the same administrator at the end of the year was general and provided no suggestions for improvement.

Elementary, middle, and high school teachers expressed a desire to receive substantive feedback, which they described as direct, additional resources, suggestions on lesson delivery and instructional practice, content-specific examples of instructional

strategies, and information on how lessons could have been presented in a more effective way to engage all students. Poor quality feedback received were described as general, merely restatements of what the teacher did or said, uninformative, sporadic, and nondirective. Middle school administrators believed that administrative feedback should entail probing questions and suggested instructional strategies. MT1 stated, "When my principal used probing questions, the suggestions of my principal prompted me to research questioning strategies, questioning stems, and discussion techniques. As a result of the feedback, I now use these strategies consistently during classroom instruction." High school teacher HT1 shared an experience in which during the post conference no administrative feedback on the FFT components or domains were received, and the administrator had no questions about the lesson observed. When HT1 asked a question to probe for feedback, the administrator continuously repeated that the teacher was doing fine, and was distinguished in all areas. HT1 felt that this type of feedback did not allow for professional growth.

How FFT process is carried out. Another theme that surfaced based on teachers' perceptions of the FFT tool and process, centered on lack of fidelity in the manner the FFT process was carried out. Teachers shared that school administrators knew nothing about the subject being observed, and at times were unaware of the FFT elements that should be observed. MT3 was concerned about the credibility of evaluation scores when they were evaluated by administrators with poor knowledge of the FFT evaluation tool and of the content being observed. It was also noted that several school administrators were skipping the FFT required preconference, and teachers were told, "I do not want to

have a preconference because I cannot tell you nothing about the subject, so just upload the lesson in the Teachscape system."

Elementary teacher ET2 also shared similar experiences of witnessing FFT evaluation being implemented without fidelity, meaning that preconferences were not experienced as part of the FFT evaluation. The school administrator only required that the teacher submit a lesson plan and complete a list of concerns. There was no dialogue between teacher and administrator. High school teachers also explained that high school principals often skipped the pre- and post-conferences with an explanation that they were, "too busy to sit down and talk."

Of the 12 teachers interviewed, one from each school level (elementary, middle, and high) shared that school administrators treated the evaluation process as though it was of little importance; however, the remaining nine teachers viewed their school administrators as being well prepared and fully engaged in the evaluation process, but shared that they were more likely to ignore parts of the process when they were too busy.

Teachers expressed that there had been times when they shared with administrators, their frustration about the tedious nature of the evaluation process. Middle school teacher MT2 and elementary teacher ET3 shared, that their principals reminded them that the evaluation process was a good opportunity to get to know teachers as professionals and to contribute to helping teachers improve their professional practice." Elementary teacher ET3 believed that not all school administrators treated the evaluation process lightly, and the belief stemmed from an experience ET3 had with a school administrator who was once an elementary teacher. The school administrator took the

time to share great ideas, literature, and other names of other teachers who ET3 could observe an effective lesson. ET3 was even more impressed that the school administrator required a timeline of when it would be comfortable for a follow-up visit to observe how the new ideas were being implemented in the classroom.

Value of FFT process. Teachers' perceptions of the value of the FFT process included improved working relationships. Elementary school teachers perceived that the FFT process was an opportunity for better collaboration with school administrators because of the collaborative conferences required in the process. Middle school teachers also shared similar sentiments by explaining how the FFT process provided a means for conversation about professional practice and student learning. In contrast, high school teachers expressed that they rarely spoke to principals in one-on-one meetings related to being evaluated, so they found no value in the FFT process in that regard; however, assistant principals were more inclined to dialogue to develop a better working relationship. High school teacher HT3 detailed experience of collaborating with vice principal about lessons, professional development, and student behavior but never did so with the principal.

Elementary school teachers believed that school administrators needed more content knowledge to effectively collaborate about instructional practice; however, high school teachers felt collaboration about content was not beneficial because administrators made little to no effort to learn about the lessons' content. HT2 believed that if the evaluation process was used solely for teacher and administrator collaboration it would be a valuable tool because the collaboration before, during, and after the lesson served to

enhance teacher pedagogy. HT2 further recommended that during teacher and administrator collaboration expectations should be made clear to prevent excuses for not doing well.

Middle school teachers believed that administrators could not effectively talk about important learning of the curriculum, and shared that conferences often consisted of the teachers providing the guidance about the lesson plan content so that school administrators would know what to expect when observing the lesson. Elementary teachers believed that this could be viewed as positive collaborative conversations in view of administrators' need to learn content and pedagogy. The teachers shared that during FFT evaluation, administrators provided what little information they could, actively listened, and shared expectations of evidence that could be analyzed to determine if students learned the intended outcome.

Self-reflection was viewed as one of the most valuable components of the evaluation process. High school teacher HT3 referred to it as a reality-check experience, and stated, "My self-reflection was guided by what should have happened instead of what actually happened." High school teacher HT2 expressed a similar belief that when post conference was conducted, self-reflection was more valuable than any other part because self-reflection drove the need to modify strategies and instructional delivery based on student assessments. Middle school teachers also lauded the self-reflection aspect of the FFT process as most valuable because it caused them to take the time to review the planning and preparation that would be or was used for the lesson, rather than relying on habits and routines. MT1 found that it was through the self-reflection aspect of FFT that

critical thinking occurred because it revealed the need to be prepared at all times, and it allowed teachers to think of what is necessary to embed several instructional strategies in the lesson plans, as an act of modifying lessons.

Challenging experiences. High school teachers HT4 and HT2 believed that the FFT process began as a challenging process, and that although they could target positive aspects they still viewed it as being overwhelming and challenging. Initially they were skeptical of the FFT process and wondered what the school district's motive was for changing from the previous evaluation tool to the FFT. At the time of the interview, HT4 was experiencing ambiguous feelings about the FFT process, and shared that at times it was perceived as positive and sometimes challenging and disciplinary. High school teacher HT2 explained that the challenging aspect of the FFT process generated feelings of anxiety that teachers may not be fairly scored, and that their employment depended on these scores.

High school teachers discussed their lack of trust and belief that all administrators fairly evaluated teachers, without hidden agendas such as retaliations or disciplinary actions. HT2 stated, "From a punitive perspective, these administrators smile sneakily in your face, some of them try to help you but at the end of the day your scores will be entered into Teachscape and the scores will be used to calculate your final evaluation scores for continued employment."

High school teachers expressed that they had evidence of school administrators evaluating teachers unfairly, and that some administrators had lost touch of what it means to be in the classroom. It was suggested that master teachers would be more suited to

function as evaluators, because they understood instructional practice and would be more inclined to score more fairly. Middle school teachers MT2, MT3, and MT4 believed that school administrators were hurriedly evaluating teachers, and this caused them to suspect that use of the FFT was punitive despite the lack of perceived fidelity in the process. Teachers declared that administrators were most concerned with completing the job. The teachers also complained that school administrators were not being held accountable to maintain fidelity in the FFT process, and as a result there was no authenticity of the process. MT4 believed that in a large school system it was impossible to detect ineffective school administrators.

Elementary teachers ET1 and ET3 echoed similar beliefs that the evaluation process was used as a punitive measure, and was not administered to all teachers in like manner. ET3 described what it was like being a mentor to a beginning teacher who was evaluated in the FFT process. “The poor child was so overwhelmed with evaluations, Student Learning Outcome evidences, implementing the learning curriculum, managing the classroom in addition to school building duties as assigned.” ET3 described it as being mission impossible, because the teacher was evaluated through the thorough and lengthy FFT process, after only being in the classroom for a few weeks. Further, ET3 explained, this teacher never had an opportunity to understand what the FFT process was, yet was evaluated and expected to score at the proficient level. High school principal, HT3 had a similar perception that the evaluation process was a punitive process, and believed that it should not be used to evaluate new teachers. It was further suggested that

new employees should have a mentor, time to learn the process, and mandated professional development on the FFT process prior to being evaluated.

Administrators' roles. When asked their perceptions of the administrator's role during the evaluation process, high school teachers perceived one of the administrators' roles in the FFT process as facilitators. Middle school teachers' perceived the administrators' role in the FFT process as that of assisting teachers throughout the process, ensuring they understand the steps involved in FFT and administrators' expectations. Further, teachers perceived administrative roles entailed evaluating fairly and objectively, using the FFT evaluation tool to provide meaningful feedback and recommendations, and to complete each phase of the FFT process in a timely fashion.

Middle school teacher MT1 perceived administrators' role in the FFT process as a partner in teaching and learning. Within this partnership they should serve as collaborators and coaches. Elementary teachers' perception of the role of the administrator during the evaluation process was described as being a helper. Elementary teacher ET2 described the helper role as that of being open to sharing and hearing information about teaching and student learning. It was shared that the administrators' role must be about understanding that the process is about highlighting what teachers are doing well, and not so much about finger point and blaming.

In the teacher perceived roles, it was expected that administrators would help teachers understand the FFT process and desired expectations, in addition to providing verbal and written constructive feedback that promoted teachers' professional growth. Elementary teacher ET4 believed that in order to be effective in their evaluative role,

administrators needed to remain updated with evaluation trainings, provide teachers with FFT professional development and effective feedback, and provide mentors for teachers who require support in particular areas of FFT. Elementary teacher, ET1 views were similarly stated in that administrators were expected to use the FFT evaluation tool to help teachers develop new skill and learn new instructional strategies, and should receive training to help them lead teachers to reflect and change their instructional practice.

Teachers' roles: All the high school teachers characterized teachers' roles in the evaluation process as being that of a learner, meaning one who actively listens to and incorporates feedback. High school teacher HT1 believed that the teacher's role included continuously learning new strategies and discovering limitations and barriers. The belief was that discovering strengths and weaknesses in instructional practice would help teachers learn how to change their instructional practices to increase student learning.

Middle school teacher MT3 shared a similar view that the teacher's perceived role in the FFT process was to plan, prepare and deliver appropriate lessons, establish and maintain a classroom environment that fostered teaching and learning, performed a variety of professional responsibilities that ultimately assist in the development of students, and being prepared to show evidences of the aforementioned through demonstration and and/or documentation. Further, middle school teachers explained that all teachers should learn to be advocates of the process being fairly administered, develop awareness of the FFT process, and should be ready to solicit feedback and recommendations with targeted questions if necessary in the FFT process. All elementary

teachers described the role of the teacher during the FFT process as being a receptive learner, ready to listen to administrators' feedback and heed self-reflections.

Research Question 4:Teachers

Research Question 4 explored how teachers described the FFT evaluation tool's influence on their skills to assess and guide instructional practice. The most recurrent themes that surfaced from analysis of all teachers were (a) role clarity (b) reflection, and (c) awareness of instructional leadership skill level. Subthemes that emerged from role clarity were requirements in preparation for instruction and functions. Subthemes that surfaced from reflection were being helpful and necessary. The subthemes identified from awareness of school leadership were inadequate instructional school leadership.

Role clarity. Participants declared that during the FFT process, their functions were elucidated in terms of the requirements in preparation for instruction. High school teachers HT4 and HT3 expressed that being involved in the FFT process helped them to really understand how teachers need to be prepared at all times, to make changes in the middle of lessons to accommodate students' differences, needs, and engagements. According to these teachers, the FFT process helped them to plan lessons based on student assessment results, and to learn to evaluate lessons for coherence. An awareness of their role in the teacher planning process helped them understand how to examine the alignment of instructional outcomes, learning activities, and formative assessments so as to ensure students will learn and extend their understanding of skills and concepts.

Middle school teachers MT1 and MT3 mentioned how the FFT process helped to further clarify and define their roles as lesson planners. Specifically, these teachers shared

their new level of understanding regarding the design of student assessments to be used throughout lessons. In addition, both middle school teachers mentioned they would only use rubrics at the end of the lesson to share expectations for assignments; however, because of the FFT process they now use various forms of rubrics to monitor students' understanding throughout the lesson.

Elementary teacher ET1 shared how being involved in the FFT process developed a broader awareness of how a teacher needed to understand the children being taught. ET1 expressed how use of the FFT process shed light on the importance of demonstrating knowledge of students when planning daily lessons, and how the process helped in understanding that one of the roles of an ESOL teacher among a diverse student population was to efficiently plan to address students' interest and cultural heritage. Prior to the FFT tool, ET1 was unaware that part of the role of a teacher and professional responsibility was to understand the students' culture, and to address cultural sensitivities during instruction. This increased awareness and heightened understanding improved ET1's knowledge of students, and impacted the ability to plan engaging activities and evaluate instructional delivery's contribution to student learning.

Teachers also shared that the FFT process clarified their functions in terms of instructional delivery. High school teachers HT1, HT2, and HT4 mentioned that their previous understandings of how to engage students in the learning process were totally different from the expectations in the FFT process. The teachers mentioned that being aware of students' thought processes when participating in class activities, grouping students based on assessment data, and regrouping students based on formative

assessments during the lesson were totally new facets of their instructional delivery. They further explained that they needed suggestions from the evaluator to effectively incorporate these aspects of the FFT process.

Middle school teachers MT1, MT2, and MT3 believed that the use of assessments to monitor student progress throughout instructional delivery, and the task of engaging students in learning were all redefined as routine and daily responsibilities during classroom instruction. This redefinition resulted from the FFT process. MT4 explained how as a classroom teacher, understanding of how to use questioning and discussion techniques to engage students in the learning process, was increased. Use of the FFT process helped MT4 to become a facilitator of the lesson by posing probing questions as needed to keep students' discussion going. Further, the FFT process elucidated the point that part of the role of a teacher was to embed questions in the lesson that would yield rich discussion about the content, thereby allowing students' learning to be heard, and adjustment of the lesson to occur in alignment with intended student learning outcome. Prior to the FFT process, MT4 would pose questions but was uncomfortable with the process of allowing students to pose questions to other students, and to take responsibility for their learning.

In contrast, elementary teachers shared that several of the instructional components used to evaluate teachers in the FFT process were already a part of their current practices; however, the FFT process provided more descriptions of the expected teacher behaviors during planning, instructional delivery, and learning assessments.

Elementary teacher ET1 declared that most of the FFT elements were already implemented but not always at a proficient level.

Reflection. Teachers also shared that through the FFT process they found that self-reflection was most helpful as they worked to assess and guide changes in their instructional practice. Specifically, middle school teachers shared that the reflection phase of the FFT evaluation helped them discover what happened in the classroom versus what should have happened according to the lesson plan. They revealed that the FFT reflection process helped them to better analyze instructional practices in terms of student learning, and improved their ability to make appropriate changes to instructional practices.

Elementary teachers shared that the self-reflection process seemed to continue long after administrators completed their evaluation. The FFT process seemed to heighten the need for self-reflection. They also believed that interacting with school administrators and discussing the lesson seemed to heighten their reflection of analysis of student work and research-based strategies. After reflection, teachers shared that they were more inclined to seek new idea from colleagues, and implement new ideas in future lessons. The FFT reflection has also helped elementary teachers to understand the importance of reflecting on instructional practice. Teachers believed that as a result of the evaluation process they were better able to assess instructional practices while observing demo lessons, listening to new ideas in collaborative planning, and posing questions to school administrators about techniques to incorporate in the classroom.

High school teachers shared that prior to the evaluation process, self-reflection was often overlooked as a daily practice; however, being forced to reflect during the FFT

process helped them assess student learning based on intended student learning outcome. High school teacher HT2 expressed a need to have principals engage in the reflection process along with teachers. Teachers believed that the FFT reflection process helped them to assess instructional practices and incorporate new instructional strategies, rather than relying on habitual instructional techniques used for many years.

Awareness of instructional leadership skill level. In response to how teachers believed the FFT process influenced their ability to assess and guide instructional practice, administrators' instructional leadership skill level was identified as a theme. Teachers aligned the measure of their abilities to the extent of instructional leadership received. High school teacher HT3 stated, "Administrators should understand the FFT process before they try to assess my practice. If the administrator is well versed in the FFT process I would not have issues with being receptive to the feedback and changing my practice." High school teacher HT1 explained that when administrators did not offer suggestions or techniques to improve instructional practice, this affected teachers' ability to improve assessment and guidance of instructional practice. HT1 stated, "When I probed the administrator to get some suggestions on how to improve my instruction she told me that she didn't know and that I was already a distinguished teacher anyway."

High school teachers demonstrated how they relied on administrators' level of instructional leadership to improve their instructional practices. HT2 and HT4 mentioned that administrators' lack of content knowledge impeded their ability to adequately assess and guide their practices, and middle school teachers also agreed that inadequate

instructional leadership was a factor that contributed to the teachers' inability to assess and guide changes in their instructional practice.

Middle school teacher MT2 shared that some school principals had no clue of the content teachers were teaching, and made no effort to learn about the concept after the lesson plans were shared with them. MT2 believed that principals' behavior affected teachers' ability to better guide and assess learners. MT2 stated, "My principal told me not to worry about the observation because she couldn't tell me anything about geometry."

Elementary teacher ET4 also shared a similar experience in that while the school principal had no problems assessing practice, he could not provide helpful instructional strategies for special-needs students. ET4 also shared another experience with a prior principal who had exceptional instructional leadership skills. This principal was described as being able to interactively exchange ideas during the FFT process and was willing to model strategies that helped teachers assess and guide changes in their practices. ET4 further believed that this former principal took on the role of a coach who helped teachers to assess instructional practice, by posing probing questions and making suggestions. This behavior, ET4 shared, was necessary to move teachers forward in the process of making needed changes to instructional practice.

ET1 explained that when a principal took the time to explain each step of the evaluation process, examined lesson plans, and provided feedback to help improve lessons, it made teachers more confident that they were being led by a leader who knew content and cared enough to take the time to explain strategies. This action, ET1 thought helped teachers to think about how the instructional delivery might contribute to, or

imped student learning. It also made teachers feel empowered and confident that their lesson would go well the next day.

What occurred after observation of a lesson was also deemed important to building teachers' awareness of their instructional practices. Elementary teachers believed that discussion of their reflection and understanding of effectiveness of the lesson was crucial to knowing how to address instructional practice. Teachers expressed an admiration for principals posing tough questions which they believed challenged them to elevate their instructional practices to the next level. In so doing, they were able to locate additional strategies that allowed students to take ownership of their own learning.

Evidence of Quality

Triangulation is a process used to examine the consistency of findings generated by different data collections, and it is used to produce a more in-depth understanding on what is being studied. Triangulation strengthens the validity of research by telling a more comprehensive story of what is being examined and it enhances the accuracy of the study (Creswell, 2007). The themes identified from the analyzed data from both sources will provide a comprehensive view. Triangulation broadens an understanding of the data when it is viewed from multiple angles (teachers and administrators). Finally, triangulating the data gathered from teachers and those gathered via school administrators only served to illuminate the interpretation of the phenomenon. As triangulation was used similar themes were identified from both administrators' and teachers' responses pertaining to collaboration during the FFT process. Administrators at all school levels perceived that the FFT process increased teacher–administrator collaboration, and

mentioned that the FFT process created a platform for collaboration and open discussion on monitor teaching and learning. Teachers also agreed that the FFT process presented opportunities for collaboration; however, they perceived some aspects of collaboration with administrators as being ineffective and inconsistent. Specific aspects noted were administrators' lack of knowledge about content and instructional strategies. High school teachers described collaboration sessions with administrators as lacking substance. In contrast, the majority of elementary teachers described their collaboration with administrators as positive, noting the collaboration sessions as informational and student focused; however, one elementary teacher cited collaboration with her principal as nonexistent.

The theme of ambiguity surfaced in both teachers' and administrators' responses about the evaluation process. Administrators' ambiguity deals with the perception of the FFT process being beneficial; however feelings that it was a challenging and time consuming process. Teachers' feelings of ambiguity related to their perception of administrators' handling of the FFT process. The ambiguous details in the teachers' and administrators' responses served to verify the participants' thoughts and actions. The administrators' views related to the evaluation process as being beneficial but time consuming was evident in the responses from administrators of all levels. Administrators mentioned the overall process is a great asset to the professional practice; however, it was time consuming and felt like a frustrating task. Teachers of all school levels perceived administrators' approach to the evaluation process as a necessary annoying task; which some administrators executed patiently and supportively, while others shirked the

responsibility. Administrators admitted to deficiencies in content knowledge and instructional strategies, which teachers believed impeded their ability to learn during the evaluation process.

The themes pertaining to administrators' and teachers' perceived roles during the evaluation process were very similar. Administrators believed that their roles as FFT evaluators entailed assessing and guiding teachers' instructional practice, and providing quality feedback to improve teaching and learning. Teachers perceived administrators' role as facilitating instructional practice, evaluating teachers fairly, conducting FFT evaluations with fidelity, providing meaningful feedback, serving as collaborator, and coaching teachers. Teachers viewed their roles as entailing planning, preparing and delivering appropriate lessons; establishing and maintaining classroom environments that foster teaching and learning; performing professional responsibilities that ultimately assist in the development of students, being knowledgeable about the FFT process; and soliciting administrative feedback and recommendations.

Instructional leadership awareness impact was an overwhelming theme from administrators' and teachers' descriptions of how the FFT tool influenced their skill to assess and guide instructional practice. Administrators shared how the lack of content knowledge played a role in their ability to guide teachers' instructional practice, and high school teachers agreed, citing in their responses how administrators' lack of content knowledge impeded them from being able to assess and guide their professional practice adequately. Middle school teachers' responses reflected similar thoughts. Teachers also

described how the FFT process made them aware of the extent to which administrators were capable of instructional leadership.

Summary of the Findings

Themes identified from Research Question 1, which explored the research-district school administrators' perceptions of the FFT evaluation tool showed that administrators perceived the FFT evaluation tool as a means to increase collaboration between administrators and teachers. Administrators described their role in the FFT process as assessing and guiding teachers' instructional practice through coaching and mentoring. They also believed that being able to provide quality feedback to teachers for improving teaching and learning, was another role. Administrators viewed teachers' role during the evaluation process as being that of a learner in that they should be receptive to feedback and administrative recommendations, and being an active participant in the evaluation process. Although administrators viewed their role as that of providing teachers feedback, and teachers' role as learning from them, administrators also recognized their deficiencies in content knowledge and instructional strategies that impede teachers' instructional practice.

Administrators described the evaluation process as beneficial in assessing teachers' professional practice, and providing educators the opportunity to reflect on their practice; yet, administrators also perceived the evaluation process as lacking the resources to help guide practice and provide quality feedback to the teacher. In addition, administrators referred to the evaluation process as tedious and time consuming in conflict with the administrator's other responsibilities. In addition, they perceived that the

videos and practice modules located on the electronic platform used to collect FFT evaluation data as beneficial, yet they described the use of the electronic platform during the actual observation as a challenging task due to the number of steps and clicks required to submit FFT evaluations.

The findings from Research Question 2's revealed how use of the FFT evaluation tool influenced administrators' skills in assessing and guiding teachers' instructional practice. Administrators perceived that the influence of the FFT evaluation tool on their skills made them more aware of their strengths and weaknesses as instructional leaders. Both high and middle school administrators believed their teacher-evaluation skills were questionable due to their limited knowledge of content and instructional strategies. They also believed that using the FFT evaluation tool made them more mindful of the elements of instructional practice when assessing and guiding teachers' instructional practice.

School administrators believed that use of the FFT evaluation tool had a positive influence on their need to develop a better understanding of teachers' and students' behavioral expectations within the four domains of teaching, and on their ability to assess instructional practice. In addition, administrators perceived the FFT evaluation tool as making them more aware of the need to provide quality feedback as they work to guide instructional practice.

Research Question 3 focused on teachers' perceptions of the FFT evaluation tool which revealed that some teachers believed that some aspects of the district's evaluation process lacked fidelity. Some teachers shared that administrators conducted the evaluation process without required teacher pre and post conferences; nevertheless,

teachers also perceived the experience of being evaluated by the FFT evaluation tool as rewarding in several ways. The rewards, teachers shared, consisted of improved administrator–teacher working relationship, enhanced reflection on instructional practice, and increased awareness that administrators lacked content knowledge necessary to effectively collaborate on instructional practice. In addition, teachers believed that administrators used the FFT evaluation in a disciplinary and retaliatory manner when evaluating teachers they do not care for. They also suggested that new employees should be assigned mentors to assist them with learning the FFT evaluation tool and process, and should not be evaluated based on this tool during their first year teaching.

Teachers also defined the role of the administrator during the FFT process as that of assisting teachers with understanding the process; maintaining fidelity of the process; evaluating teachers fairly and objectively; providing meaningful feedback and recommendations. Teachers believed those administrators' roles should entail completion of each phase of the process in a timely manner; and serving as coaches, collaborators, and partners in teaching and learning.

Research Question 4 revealed how teachers described the FFT tool's positive influence on their assessment and guidance of instructional practice because the teachers' function, in terms of planning and preparation for teaching and instructional delivery, were clarified in the FFT process. The teachers credited the FFT evaluation tool with possessing detailed information regarding teacher and student behavior found within domains, components, and elements of the tool. They believed that the FFT tool provided a clear picture of how to plan effective lessons, how to prepare for the lesson, and how to

deliver instruction. Teachers also shared that use of the FFT evaluation tool made them more aware of the need for administrative instructional leadership. They believed that administrators needed to know and understand the district's evaluation process prior to using the tool to evaluate teachers, and that administrators' deficient instructional leadership skills only impeded teachers' ability to effectively assess and appropriately change their instructional practice. In addition, teachers also shared that administrators should be interactive in the evaluation process by modeling, coaching, posing questions, making suggestions, providing feedback to improve lessons, knowing subject content and instructional strategies, and providing explanations of evaluation scores. Teachers also believed that the reflection portion of the FFT process was the most helpful because it allowed them to critically assess their instructional practices.

Interpretation of Findings

The results of the study offered implication for the FFT teacher evaluation process used to improve and evaluate teachers' professional practice. Considering school administrators' and teachers' responses concerning their ability to assess and guide instructional practice as a result of the evaluation process, this information served as a foundation on which the quality of the district's teacher-evaluation process could be improved. This information shed light on what school administrators and teachers need to improve their skills associated with guiding and assessing professional practice.

The results of this study bear implications for school administrators, because teachers expressed a need to receive quality feedback from school administrators to improve their practice, and administrators expressed a need to improve their skills to

provide quality feedback to teachers. In response to the challenges related to needing and providing quality feedback, professional-development modules related to providing quality feedback to improve teachers' professional practice can be offered to school administrators.

Another concern expressed by teachers and administrators is the lack of time to conduct pre- and postconferences during the evaluation process. The pre- and postconferences are important to helping assess and guide teachers' professional practice because the conferences are designed to offer school administrators an opportunity to provide feedback to teachers about their professional practice. In response to this issue, the professional development on providing feedback can include information about how to schedule conferences into daily routines.

Additionally, teachers and administrators shared another challenge: improving school administrators' content knowledge so that content-specific feedback can be improved. In response to this concern, school administrators can conduct paired FFT evaluations. The evaluation pair could consist of the administrator and a content specialist. The evaluation pair would conduct the entire evaluation process together, which would serve as professional development for the school administrator, increasing his or her content knowledge and instructional-leadership skills.

Conclusion

School administrators and teachers overwhelmingly credited quality feedback as an element needed to improve teachers' ability to assess and guide improvements in their instructional practice. To improve teachers' professional practice, teachers need focused

evidence-based and constructive, individualized feedback from the school administrator. This case study offers an improved understanding of the teachers' and school leaders' perceptions of the FFT evaluation tool and how it influenced their skills to assess and guide instructional practice. The findings from analyzing the data collected from the research district's teachers and school administrators led to a professional development project to address administrators' revealed deficiency in administrative feedback. The project focused on school administrators improving their skills to provide quality feedback to teachers during and after the evaluation process. The project itself is addressed in the next section.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

Section 3 is a description of a 3-day professional-development program designed for school administrators to address concerns shared by the research district's administrators and teachers. As shown by the qualitative data, many school administrators want to improve their feedback skills in assessing and guiding teachers' professional practice. Teachers want to improve their instructional practice through principal feedback, but as yet it is ambiguous, unrelated, and vague. Teachers and school administrators agreed that face-to-face feedback conferences are awkward and uncomfortable.

Based on professional development research, social constructivism (Dewey, 1916, 1938; Sparks, 2005; Vygotsky, 1978), andragogy (Knowles, 1990), and acknowledgement of the paradigm shift from one-shot workshops to collaborative professional learning (Learning Forward, 2011), I developed a comprehensive, 3-day seminar for school administrators that incorporates theory, research, and practice. The seminar also incorporates best practices, as detailed in North Central Regional Educational Laboratory's Professional Development Toolkit (Hassel, 1999), the professional development standards backed by Learning Forward (2011) and Guskey's (2005) Five Critical Levels of Professional Development .

Section 3 begins with an overview and discussion of the purposes of professional development and the specific objectives and goals of the project. The overview and discussion provide a natural transition to a discussion about the details of the workshop

and a synopsis of each of the 3 days of the professional-development program. This summary is followed by a review of the literature on professional development, including the history of the genre, the conceptual framework of the research, models of effective professional development, and a discussion of the paradigm change from individualized training to collaborative professional learning.

The section on planning and implementation will cover the resources, logistics, and potential barriers to implementing the project. Lastly, the implications for the district and social change are discussed.

Overview of the Project

During the case study data analysis, two themes emerged: feedback quality and the challenges of collaboration, ambiguity, and the need for instructional leadership. First, feedback quality is an important element in improving teachers' skills to modify their professional practice. Second, the three challenges can be addressed through a professional-development program that focuses on school administrators. The essence of the program should be to provide school administrators with the information they need to increase their skill level in providing quality feedback to teachers. This area is where I believed I could make a difference. Several of the findings suggest that quality feedback from school leaders during the evaluation process could make a difference in the teachers' skills to improve professional practice. In addition, school administrators expressed a need for more training on providing and writing quality feedback; therefore, I developed a 3-day professional-development program to meet the needs communicated by participating school administrators and teachers in their interviews. Participants will

attend the seminar from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. each day, including a 1-hour lunch and two 15-minute breaks. The training will be designed to (a) support the use of a research-based instructional framework to inform the feedback process, (b) address specific information gaps in skills and knowledge articulated by the administrators, (c) provide several feedback/conversation protocols on how to adapt the conversation based on simulated responses and targeted coaching on key decision, and (d) provide feedback structures designed to support teacher growth.

This practical seminar will be based on application of principles of andragogy, constructivist learning theory, and best practices in the field of professional development. The seminar will be designed for school administrators and will focus on all aspects of writing and providing effective feedback. Workshop activities will include (a) a database of generic feedback comments, strategies, videos, and articles resources for each FFT domain; (b) techniques for providing formative and summative feedback during formal and informal observations, (c) a practice coaching session based on the "Learning-Focused Supervisor;" (d) pre- and postconference simulations through pairing, sharing, and role-playing; and (e) designing a teacher feedback tracking tool.

At the end of the professional-development programs, school leaders will complete an evaluation form to determine the effectiveness of the seminar. I hope that this type of hands-on seminar will encourage school administrators and district personnel to review the research district's evaluation process and to reflect upon the changes necessary to improve existing practice. This section describes the goals of the project, rationale for the project genre, a scholarly review of the literature that supports the

project components, an implementation plan, plans for formative and summative assessment of the project, and a local implication plan for the project.

Description and Goals

The goals of professional learning and development have evolved during the past 60 years. Initially, industrial training was advocated by supervisors to "fix" participating employees or teach them new skills (Kirkpatrick, 1959). The objectives of trainings were to improve the knowledge, attitudes, and skills, and to create better educators (Joyce & Calhoun, 2010). Since then, staff development has changed over time: An equally important objective of today's professional learning is to employ professional development as a catalyst for individual and organizational change (Toch & Rothman, 2008a; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). The goals of professional development continue to include developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of the participants; however, the goals have been extended to include implementing the vision (and needs) of the organization (Leithwood, 2010) and ensuring the transfer of new knowledge to the work setting to influence the results from individuals and organizational outcomes (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2008; Fullan, 2007; Valeda, Caetano, Michel, Lyons, & Kavanaugh, 2007). In the context of education, this goal refers to educators transferring their newly attained knowledge and skill to the classroom environment to improve teaching, thus improving student learning.

The professional-development project, The Feedback Institute, is a 3-day interactive seminar designed to (a) improve the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of the school administrators in providing written and verbal feedback to teachers; (b) help

school administrators learn feedback structures that will support growth of teachers' instructional practice to increase student learning; and (c) support the use of a research-based instructional framework to inform the feedback process. This seminar will include a variety of information and activities: presenting new information, reviewing current best practices, and practicing everyday skills (peer feedback, professional dialogue, and guided practice).

The first goal is designed to increase school administrators' skill level in the context of providing verbal and written feedback that will guide teachers' instructional practice. The second goal is to increase awareness of the elements of effective teacher observation and evaluation feedback and to improve the school administrators' dispositions by improving verbal and nonverbal communication skills and practicing difficult conversations. The third goal is to help school administrators integrate the language of a research-based instructional framework in teacher observation and evaluation feedback to improve the teachers' professional practice, which, in turn, will increase student achievement. Together, these three goals should help school administrators become more knowledgeable, confident, and motivated in giving verbal and written feedback, which will improve teacher instructional practice, which will in turn impact student achievement.

Rationale

The decision to design a traditional albeit interactive workshop/seminar despite many newer models of professional development was not a challenging decision. Research in the current literature suggests that a well-planned training seminar can still

be an effective model for professional growth (Joyce & Calhoun, 2010). Moreover, the workshop/seminar model has been championed as an effective and efficient method of delivering staff development (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). A well-crafted interactive seminar will provide practical and effective solutions to what school administrators have identified as the concerns in the research district regarding their skill level in assessing and guiding teachers' instructional practice. In the future, the issue of assessing and guiding instructional practice could be the topic of an in-depth inquiry by local teachers and school administrators in a district-based professional learning community (PLC); however, the research district's leaders have expressed the need for more immediate feedback and direct information on various aspects of providing feedback that will help them guide and assess teachers' instructional practice. Instead of providing a series of lectures for school administrators to attend, or recommending articles for participants to read, or writing a handbook of procedures for school administrators to follow, a 3-day summer seminar (which actually embraces many of these concepts) is the most cost-effective and constructive way to share current ideas and present new material on the subject of providing effective feedback to help assess and guide teachers' instructional practice. Additionally, participants will leave with a personal "Think Pad," indicating the next steps to be taken in their school environment. Although the seminar is not designed or intended to be a strategy that solves every administrative concern, school administrators will be engaged in professional dialogue about the importance of providing effective feedback to teachers and will be encouraged to consider applying the new knowledge, skills, and strategies in their daily work. In

addition, the seminar will offer a "safe space" in which school administrators can be honest about their skill levels, share ideas, practice providing written feedback, practice initiating verbal feedback, and practice using the language from the framework in their written and verbal feedback as they work to guide and assess teacher's instructional practice. The seminar will also provide an opportunity for school administrators to encourage and stimulate new thinking about remediating how they provide written and verbal feedback to teachers as they work to improve their professional practice. The goal of any professional-development seminar is to initiate change (Fullan, 2006; Guskey, 2000; Joyce, 2002) and monitoring the success of the change can be done through the use of an evaluation-plan model similar to Guskey's (2000) five stages of training evaluation.

In conclusion, The Feedback Institute presents an abundance of information about providing written and verbal feedback that will assess and guide teachers' instructional practice and interactive opportunities for participants to practice and hone skills associated with this important aspect of administration. The specific topics of the professional development seminar were requested by the research district's school administrators in their semistructured interviews. Therefore, the data collected during the interviews provide informal needs assessment, the initial step in planning an effective professional-development seminar (Hammack & Wise, 2011). Presumably, if school administrators get the assistance they have requested, they will be more encouraged and motivated to change their professional practice and improve their performance in providing feedback that will help to assess and guide teachers' instructional practice.

Review of the Literature

This review of the literature relates to the relevant findings of others as published in empirical studies, dissertations, journal articles, and other manuscripts. Research on the project genre, professional development, is plentiful (Kaiser, Rosenfield, & Gravois, 2009; Landry, Swank, Anthony, & Assel, 2011; Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011; Steckel, 2009; Zepeda, 2012); however, there is little research focused on the content of the project, evaluator feedback to teachers. One of the studies reviewed, which was related to the content of the project was conducted by Thurlings, Vermeulen, Bastiaens, and Stijnen (2013). These researchers focused on feedback to teachers. According to Thurlings et al., there is knowledge of one review prior to their study, Scheeler, Ruhl, and McAfee (2004), which determined that performance feedback given to teachers was effective. Thurlings et al. conducted a follow-up study and updated the findings of Scheeler et al. These researchers also support my notion that there is very little research focused on feedback to teachers.

Professional Development

Effective professional learning and development is important to the work of teachers; it should be sustained over time and embedded into the daily work (Kaiser et al., 2011; Landry et al., 2011). Effective professional development intertwines adult learning into the daily work according to a case study of two instructional coaches (Steckel, 2009). The most successful and effective professional learning consists of a minimum of 20 contact hours and is sustained over time (Pella, 2011; Sinnema, Sewell, & Milligan, 2011). In a mixed-methods study of three secondary schools and nine primary schools,

Opfer and Pedder (2010) found that the most effective professional development involves inquiry, collaboration, and problem solving.

Models of Professional Development

Many educators are familiar with such training formats as workshops, seminars, conferences, and lectures. Recently, the training models were expanded to include several authentic learning designs (Marzano et al., 2011; Zepeda, 2012). Aside from the current trend for the use of PLCs, which have been championed as very effective (Fullan, 2007; Reeves, 2010; Schmoker, 2006; Zepeda, 2012), many studies have found a large variety of effective, research-based professional-development models that can be executed or combined to create powerful professional learning (Joyce & Calhoun, 2010; Zepeda, 2012).

One useful model is self-directed learning (Killion, 2003; Zepeda, 2012). Personal growth is persistently a viable option for those who want to improve their knowledge and skills. Opportunities for self-directed learning include: reflection (Joyce & Showers, 1996; Lyons, 2010; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989), action research (Guskey, 2000; Wei et al., 2009), journaling (Charles & Shane, 2006), formal classes (Zepeda, 2012), portfolios (Marshall, 2009; Mestry & Schmidt, 2010; National Governor's Association, 2002), and professional reading (Marshall, 2009; Zepeda, 2012).

Presently, collaborative or collective learning is considered one of the most powerful genres of professional development. Such designs as professional book clubs (Marshall, 2009; Zepeda, 2012), Japanese lesson study (Schmoker, 2006; Zepeda, 2012), critical friends (Wei et al., 2009; Wise, 2010; Zepeda, 2012), Professional Learning

Communities (DuFour et al., 2008; Fullan, 2006; Schmoker, 2006) and collaborative teams (DuFour et al., 2008; Marzano, 2003; Schmoker, 2006) represent a moderately new and different type of learning. Collaborative learning is widely advocated by DuFour et al. (2008), Fullan (2006), and Schmoker (2006), who suggested that high-trust collaborative cultures build the skills and knowledge levels for continuous improvement.

Lastly, educators can certainly take advantage of technology and online opportunities for professional development (Condie & Livingston, 2007; Ellis & Kisling, 2009). In fact, online learning can embrace any number or a combination of professional-development designs at any place and any time (Ellis & Kisling, 2009). Therefore, professional developers can be selective about the most appropriate model or combination of models when planning professional development. Hence, it would be vital for the professional developer to design a professional development program well-suited for the content, desired learning outcomes, and local context.

Older professional development designs are heavily criticized in the current literature. Some researchers have called the workshop model an extremely practical but maligned format (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). Other researchers have vilified the workshop or seminar design. Wei et al. (2009) referred to the workshop as the "egg-crate" model or the ineffective 1-day workshop. Reeves (2010) spoke about "death by PowerPoint" (p. 23) and asserted that most professional-development programs today have not departed from the one-shot model of yesteryear. This disapproval motivated Guskey and Yoon (2009) to declare that one-shot-workshops is not the remedy for unsuccessful instructional practice.

Conversely, Guskey and Yoon concluded that workshop models can be effective if (a) workshops or seminars are well planned, (b) professional-development participants allocate purposeful time to the new professional-practice strategies, (c) and if the participants are afforded sustained follow-up and support. Steinert, Boillat, Meterissian, Liben, and McLeod (2008) asserted that workshops continue to be one of the most commonly used and effective models offered for increasing purposeful knowledge and professional practice skills. Marzano et al. (2011) agreed that workshops or seminars were still the most common form of professional development, which supports Guskey and Yoon's (2009) belief that most school improvements have involved workshops.

Planning professional development

What is accomplished and the implication of its contribution depends mainly on how the professional-development program is planned (Guskey, 2004). Accomplishment and implication are applicable to both the traditional forms of professional learning (seminars, workshops, conferences, study groups, mentoring, and coaching) and for recent forms of professional development (face-to-face or technology-based PLCs, teacher exchanges, data teams, bug-in-the-ear-coaching, and individualized improvement plans). There is one aspect that educational researchers agree on: Professional learning experiences, whether individually structured or group-oriented, are rarely well planned (Guskey, 2012). Many professional developers plan for process and not for results (Guskey, 2012). For example, they often plan job-embedded activities with contextually relevant assignments and use needs assessment to determine the activities included in the professional-development program. However, what is lacking is the clear notion of

purpose, cohesiveness, and direction. In other words, professional developers have no idea why the participants are doing the activities. In addition, professional developers have no ideas what they hope the participants will accomplish by engaging in the activities. Therefore, professional developers should determine the goal of the professional development prior to selecting the content, professional-learning activities, and format to judge the value, worth, and appropriateness of any professional-development program or activity.

A Better Approach: Planning Backward

When planning professional development, the primary goal is to improve student learning outcomes; therefore, planning must begin with clarifying those outcomes. Professional developers must plan backward, starting with the end in mind and then working their way back to the processes that will help the professional-development participants understand the intended outcomes (Guskey, 2001; Hirsh, 2012). The specific order of the steps for planning professional development are (a) student learning outcomes, (b) new practices to be implemented, (c) needed organizational support, (d) desired educators knowledge and skills, and (e) optimal professional learning activities (Guskey, 2014).

Desired student outcomes. Planning needs to start with discussions of the intended outcomes. Before thinking about the content and format of any professional development, professional developers must first consider the learning outcomes they want the participants to attain and what evidence will best reflect those outcomes. These outcomes should be determined after careful analysis of needs assessments, classroom

observations and discussions with students, interviews with teachers, focus groups, or collaborations with PLCs (DuFour, 2004b). However, it is sometimes complicated to determine what evidence best reflects achievement of the professional-development learning outcomes, because not everyone trusts the same evidence (Guskey, 2012). Research indicates school administrators tend to perceive national, state, and district assessments as valid indicators of learning, whereas teachers give more credence to classroom assessment, observations, and class participation (Guskey, 2007). Therefore, it is almost always best to consider several sources of evidence.

New practices to be implemented. The next step in planning is to decide what professional practices are most likely to encouraged and promote the achievement of the learning outcomes. At this stage, professional developers should ask themselves: (a) How do we know these particular practices will produce the results we hope to achieve? (b) How good or reliable is the evidence? (c) Was it gathered in contexts similar to ours? (d) Is it the kind of evidence we consider most important? In addition, when deciding on what new professional practice to implement, designers must be cautious of instructional practices that are more opinion based than research based (Guskey, 2014). Specifically, professional developers should look for credible sources that validate the chosen professional practice, look for publications related to the professional practice that are refereed, meaning that experts in the field have reviewed the articles and judged them as sufficiently rigorous to yield trustworthy results.

Needed organizational support. Professional developers must ensure they have the organizational supports vital to implementing the professional-development program.

Many professional-development efforts fail for a lack of participation, resources and support from school leaders (Guskey, 2004). Another component of organizational support is feedback to participants on the results of their efforts. Professional-development-program participants are reluctant to continue with implementing new practices in the absence of evidence (feedback) that what they are implementing is making a positive difference. Hence, it is important to build some mechanism into the implementation process to show participants that these new professional practices are working. In fact, this evidence (feedback) should be provided regularly, specific, and based on trusted measures.

Educator knowledge and skills. Professional-development planners must determine what specific knowledge and skills participants need to implement the suggested practices well (Guskey, 2012). Determining the important knowledge and skills requires attention to "the what and the why" of professional development. Professional-development participants must acquire sufficient depth in their understanding of new professional practices so they can modify these practices to fit the nuances of their particular context while maintaining the practices' fidelity. Therefore, participants must fully understand the rationale behind the change in the professional practice. In addition, professional-development participants need direction and guidance on how to implement these new professional-practice ideas in practical, time-efficient ways and in specific classroom environments.

Optimal professional learning activities. Only after a professional developer has completed Steps 1 through 4 should he or she turn attention to the experiences that will

best enable participants to acquire the needed knowledge and skills. Seminars and workshops can be a highly effective means of sharing information and expanding educators' knowledge and skills, especially when paired with collaborative planning, structured opportunities for practice with feedback, and follow-up coaching (Guskey, 2012). Action research projects, PLCs, organized study groups, collegial exchanges, online services, and many other group and individual activities can also be effective, contingent on the identified goals for participant learning (Guskey, 2012).

Content of the Project

The findings of this project study suggest that teachers are not able to improve their professional practice because they are not receiving quality feedback from school leaders during the teacher-evaluation process. In fact, teachers explicitly stated they are in need of quality feedback to change, guide, and assess their professional practice. School leaders solidified the teachers' request for quality feedback when they requested more training on providing quality feedback to teachers as they complete the evaluation process. This problem is well documented in the literature that connects quality feedback to teacher evaluation, identifying teacher effectiveness, and increasing student achievement.

The largest determining factor in student achievement is having an effective educator in the classroom (Liu, 2010; Oliva, Mathers, & Laine, 2009; Routman, 2012; Southworth, 2010). An effective approach to identifying good teachers is for school leaders to visit classrooms and watch what happens as students learn and teachers teach (McGill, 2011). However, visiting the classrooms to conduct observations in not

completely effective (Marshall, 2005). To optimize the classroom observation, leaders are encouraged to offer feedback to teachers (Tuytens & Devos, 2011). Feedback is offered to teachers as a means to inform them of professional practice that that may be new. Feedback is also offered to increase teacher effectiveness (Getzlaf, Perry, Toffner, Lamarche, & Edwards, 2009).

Performance feedback should communicate explicit information about the classroom observation. Colvin, Flannery, Sugai, and Monegan (2009) proposed that an effective method of improving professional practice is to conduct classroom observations and provide performance feedback to teachers. School leaders should observe and provide teachers with feedback that communicates classroom practice teachers may not realize by themselves (Getzlaf et al., 2009; Tuytens & Devos, 2011). The performance feedback provided to teachers should be accurate and personal as it relates to instructional practices and professional-practice expectations (Getzlaf et al., 2009). In addition, feedback should be descriptive and based on what was observed (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). At the same time, performance feedback provided by the evaluator should solicit a response from teachers (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). According to Lee (2011) teachers may not perceive feedback in the manner it was intended by the observer. Miscommunication or misinterpretation of the feedback, and the resulting mistaken actions, may cause even more issues with instructional practices.

Studies Related to Feedback

Feedback offered to teachers from observers must be of high quality (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Hattie and Timperley (2007) conducted a meta-analysis to study the

bearing feedback had on learning. The authors determined that, although feedback had a major influence on learning, the kind of feedback and the way it was given determined levels of effectiveness. Hattie and Timperley recommended a feedback model consisting of four levels; task, process, regulatory, and self. Effective feedback at the task, process, and regulatory levels were interdependent. Feedback was maximized when it helped identify flawed and erroneous cues and help build more efficient and effective strategies for understanding material. Hattie and Timperley noted that feedback relating to the fourth level, self, is rarely effective. The learner ordinarily avoids the risk of engaging the material and lessened personal effort to avoid the dreaded failure.

Hellrung and Hartig (2013) conducted a review of empirical studies where they tried to address how teachers understand and use feedback. These authors studied how teachers understand the feedback they receive from external sources, how teachers use the feedback, and how teachers' understanding and use of such feedback affected their students' achievement. After application of study criteria, Hellrung and Hartig analyzed 52 empirical studies in their research study. The researchers clustered the studies into three separate groups; student achievement, use, and understanding. They reported that their analysis discovered that teachers usually have problems understanding feedback from external sources, thereby requiring support and training to help them with the interpretation of specific feedback data. With regard to the use of external feedback data, the researchers proposed that there should not be a long delay between the experience and the feedback that resulted from the experience. Large time spans between the experience

and the feedback encumbers teachers from understanding and applying the feedback to change practice.

Ferguson (2011) studied 101 undergraduate students and 465 graduate students majoring in teacher education at an Australian university to determine what these university students perceived to be effective, quality feedback based on their university experiences. The participants completed a questionnaire after finishing nearly three quarters of their course work. The questionnaire content focused on assessments, quantity, the tone of the feedback provided, and the feedback targeting. The participants were also asked to respond to questions that would allow them to share what they felt was the best balance between competing feedback issues as well as to provide ideas about how to improve feedback quality. Ferguson reported that students felt that written feedback that was timely and personalized to a specific piece of work was the most helpful option for them. The students also identified feedback as a valuable part of their educational experience. Lastly, Ferguson suggested that the majority of students expressed frustrations when feedback was unclear, not relevant to their purpose, or too brief. The findings from Ferguson's supported results published by other researchers in this review by (Feeney, 2007; Getzlaf et al., 2009; Oliva et al., 2009).

Harms and Roebuck (2010) examined the concept of learning receive and giving feedback in their business course at Kennesaw State University (Roebuck) and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Harms). These researchers suggested two feedback techniques in their article to assist student in giving and receiving feedback. They researched techniques with the intention of finding techniques that their students

could use during class and in their future professional careers, specifically seeking feedback models that were cooperative, reciprocal, and constructive while also being clearly designed and time efficient. These authors settled on the Behavior Effect Alternative and Results (BEAR) and Behavior Effect and Thank-you (BET) feedback techniques to teach to their students.

The BEAR feedback technique consisted of four phases: behavior, effect, alternative, and results. Harms and Roebuck (2010) promoted the use of the BEAR technique about 20% to 25% of the time when giving feedback. In the behavior phase, feedback giver provides specific, detailed feedback of nonproductive or negative behaviors. In the effect phase, the feedback provider describes how the specific behaviors affected the team. In the alternative phase, the feedback provider offers suggestions and explains the behavior he or she would like to observe instead of the unwanted behavior. In the results phase, the authors encouraged students to think of other productive ways to have exhibited behaviors so that outcomes would have been more beneficial.

The BET feedback technique focuses on positive feedback and included three phases: behavior, effect, and thank you. Harms and Roebuck (2010) urged their students to make about 75% to 80% of their feedback positive. In the behavior phase, the feedback provider describes detailed, specific, observations of positive behaviors. Positive feedback should be detailed, clear, and accurate. The effect phase explains how the individual's behavior or actions are useful. Thanking the person is sometimes challenging, but is essential to remain positive when feedback is provided.

Harms and Roebuck (2010) concluded that business teachers are well positioned to implement feedback instruction in to their courses. Students in their classes stated that the BEAR and BET feedback techniques were beneficial to them when providing feedback. In addition, the students stated that activities designed to practice the feedback techniques provided them with helpful experiences for both unacceptable and acceptable behaviors among peers and employees; they helped formulate both verbal and written feedback regarding behaviors.

Feedback After Observation and Teaching Improvement

Feedback offered to teachers should be of the highest quality and should promote reflection regarding teachers instructional and professional practice (Feeney, 2007; Gray & Streshly, 2008). Feeney (2007) examined the quality of feedback and how school administrators use and provide this feedback to teachers through the teacher-evaluation process. Gray and Streshly (2008) studied what made good schools great. These authors modeled their research after the good-to-great project authored by Jim Collins, where he examined businesses that transformed from good to great companies (Collins, 2001), and applied it to educational leadership.

Feedback offered to teachers becomes more valuable and effective when teachers believe the feedback to be of high quality. Oliva et al. (2009) shared effective teacher evaluation and suggested that evaluation with little or no information related to performance or how to improve instruction has very little value. Teachers want to be reassured that what they are doing in the classroom is meeting standards and how they can improve their practice. Quality feedback can provide teachers with information.

Quality feedback should be a process where all parties feel comfortable both receiving and giving it (Getzlaf et al., 2009; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Effective feedback has been shown as an essential part of communication between the teacher and evaluator (Getzlaf et al., 2009). The study conducted by van Eekelen, Vermunt, and Boshuin (2006) also supported the idea of the observer being willing to accept feedback from the teacher during a teacher-evaluation process. Routman (2012) suggested that teachers were much more open and welcoming of people in the classrooms if a level of trust has been established. Tuytens and Devos (2011) reported that if the school leader conducting the observations exhibited characteristics that were important to the teacher, the feedback from the school leader was judged to be of higher quality by the teacher. Feeney (2007) asserted that, in order for feedback to be considered meaningful and accurate, it should concentrate on what the teachers and students are truly doing. The quality of the feedback often relies on the way in which the feedback is generated and the relationship between the evaluator and the teacher. When teachers believe the feedback provided to them is of high quality, they are more likely to use the feedback to improve their instructional and professional practice (Tuytens & Devos, 2011).

Anast-May, Penick, Schroyer, and Howell (2011) examined teachers' perceptions of conferencing with feedback. The authors suggested that to give focused and quality feedback, a protocol must be in place to promote reflective inquiry and conversations for facilitating teachers' learning. Conferencing facilities reflective and collaborative conversations after the classroom observation has taken place. Anast-May et al. (2011) used qualitative data to conduct an action research project. They investigated the

experiences of teachers who volunteered to participate in both a classroom observation and face-to-face feedback. Thirty-seven teachers agreed to participate in the study and these participants had an average of 15 years of experience. These authors reported that extended and frequent classroom observations are needed before summative evaluations are held; formative feedback needs to occur throughout the year and conferencing needs to be in place after each observation instead of just once at the end of the year. The authors also concluded that the process of teacher evaluation should involve conferencing and feedback that will guide teachers to construct their own knowledge and understanding and set professional goals measured in terms of student learning.

Thurlings et al. (2013) suggested that characteristics of effective feedback and feedback processes were connected to the particular learning theory from which learners are facilitated. They determined through their review of literature that it is important from a metacognitivist view to leave the control with the learner. From the perspective of a social constructivist it would be practical to provide constructive feedback. However, regardless of the learning theory, effective feedback is specific, goal or task oriented, and neutral. In addition, they suggested that characteristics of learners be considered when feedback is provided. These authors proposed four principles when feedback is provided: (a) Feedback should involve both the teacher and the observer. (b) Feedback should explain problems of practice made and not just acknowledge the problems. (c) Feedback should promote improvement in teaching practice either through growth opportunities or some type of professional learning. (d) Timely feedback is essential so that there is little to no loss of relevancy resulting from extended delays between feedback opportunities.

Saturation

The literature on professional development is complicated. The search was difficult due to the fact that the phrase *professional development* is used synonymously with terms such as training, professional learning, in-service learning, seminar, and staff development, made the search quite difficult. In addition, other terms such as clinic, symposium, colloquium, practicum, and conference complicated the search. The Boolean *and* operator was used to pair all the terms associated with professional development. These words were also paired with such words as *educational, philosophy, best practices, evaluation, conferences,* and *standards*. I was very fortunate that the recently published articles usually included a complete reference list, which leads me to other scholarly peer-reviewed resources.

After reading books and articles on the topic, it became apparent that Guskey, Yoon, Wei, Danielson, Marzano, Fullan, and DuFour should be researched. Also organizations and agencies such as the National Staff Development Council (NSDC), The Center for Teaching Quality (CTQ), and Learning Forward were also to be researched. Not only did I have to research information on the project's genre, I also had to research information on its content. Therefore, the literature review on professional development was accompanied by additional research on the workshop topics (feedback, conferencing, and communication skills). These were not my own choosing because they were suggested in the interviews with the administrators and teachers. As I continued to research these topics, I came to the realization that reviews of literature never truly reach saturation because new articles and research are published every day. Each week I would

discover a new avenue, new name or new combination of Boolean language to pursue. However, after reading over 75 current and seminal articles on professional development, the current review of the literature is believed to be complete and comprehensive.

The Feedback Institute Seminar

Theory Guiding the Project

Research, theory, best practices, the philosophical framework of social constructivism, and andragogy support the content of The Feedback Institute. Also, the primary goals of the project reflect the ideologies of shared visions, collective inquiry for the purpose of continuous improvement, core values, and individual growth. In addition, The Feedback Institute supports the district's mission of improved student achievement and is aligned with the needs of the participants as previously shared in their interviews. It is essential to stress the goals of the seminar are deliberately aligned to the needs of the research participants and the research district's vision.

This seminar is primarily based on the theoretical underpinning and principles of andragogy and constructivism. Trust must be established when working with adults. It is important to view adult learners as partners by acknowledging their previous learning and life experiences. It is also important to ensure the objectives and goals are both useful and practical to the adult learners in the workplace. It is also important to note that adults are often action oriented and prefer working collaboratively with others. Many adults are often eager and excited to tackle authentic problems using real-world scenarios that have professional implications (Knowles, 1990; Knowles et al., 2005). As the professional developer, I took all of these principles and theories in to consideration. During the

seminar, I will establish respectful and trusting relationships with the participants. The participants' openness, truthfulness, and wiliness to express their concerns during the interviews were indicative of a trusting relationship. I believe that participants will feel even more respected when they realized that their concerns are acknowledged and will be meaningfully addressed in the forthcoming seminar. In addition, the activities embedded in the project reflect the authentic concerns, issues, and realistic situations that participants often encountered when evaluating their teachers. Hence, mock observations, evaluation, pre- and postconference protocols, documentation, and communication skills are all built into the seminar's layout.

Another aspect of andragogy principles is the fact that I will not necessarily be an "expert." Instead, I will attempt to employ shared leadership and peer feedback to help participants acquire new skills and new knowledge. The participants will be encouraged to construct meaning throughout the seminar. More specifically, they will be encouraged to reflect on their prior knowledge and their learning to construct their own meaning from these experiences. Therefore, the seminar will actually be constructivist in nature and will offer the participants opportunities to develop personally and professionally.

The andragogy and constructivist principles are embedded in each day of the seminar. For example, on Day 1 of the seminar, participants are involved in simulated and experimental activities such as collecting evidence and scripting feedback based on the evidence, simulated feedback conferences, providing structured feedback, rehearsing basic verbal and nonverbal communication skills, and creating an observation tracker. In addition, the participants will work in pairs, triads, and small groups to complete the

activities. These experiences and activities reflect the collaborative nature of the andragogy and constructivist principles.

In the same light, the seminar relies extensively on educational best practice and research including the works of Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, and Krathwohl (1956); Marzano (2003); and Danielson (2011). The project includes some of Marzano's strategies such as focusing on collaborative learning and acknowledging the effectiveness of practice. In addition, this project also includes research-based models of observation and feedback techniques and reflection in Days 2 and 3. Also in Days 2 and 3, I will introduce the creation of a feedback resource book, feedback techniques for goal-setting conferences and pre-observation conferences, brain-based rehearsal techniques such as role-play, quick writes, and jigsaw activities to provide insight and reinforce understanding. The Day 3 activities encourage participants to work at the highest level of Bloom's New Taxonomy to apply, analyze, and evaluate their skills and knowledge. These activities include participants participating in opportunities that allow them to simulate providing feedback regarding Domains 1, 2, and 3, Component alignment, role-play providing feedback during a summative evaluation conference, and constructing a feedback conference schedule.

In addition to the andragogy and constructivist learning ideologies, the seminar reflects the research on the new standards of professional learning and professional development. More specifically, the project reflects Standard 2: Developing the capacity of leaders,; Standard 5: Creating effective learning designs that integrate theories, research, and models of learning; and Standard 7: Addressing multiple outcomes. Not

only does the project reflect the professional learning and development standards it also includes an evaluation plan based on Guskey's five-step evaluation model. I have also incorporated specific research findings into the project design. For example, the seminar is scheduled for three days based on the research of Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley (2007), which demonstrates that professional development under 14 hours does not promote sustainable change. In addition, I also applied the work of Wiggins and McTighe (2005) and Guskey (2000), who suggested the use of backward planning when designing professional development.

Finally, this project mirrors the paradigm shift form a one-shot traditional workshop to the current collaborative model. The Feedback Institute features several models of professional development, embraces the principles of collaborative learning, and includes aligned and meaningful goals to increase professional-practice skills and promote sustainable change in professional practice. The seminar considers multiple outcomes for administrators, teachers, and students. If participants acquire the new knowledge and practice the newly acquired skills, they may become better evaluators, which could then have a positive impact on teacher performance, student achievement, and lead the research district to greatness.

There are three phases in developing and organizing and effective professional development workshop. This portion of this research will focus on the three stages of developing and organizing a professional development workshop: Planning, Implementation and Evaluation.

Project Outline

The seminar's 3 days are intended to be a summer "retreat" for administrators in the research district. The morning of Day 1 features an overview of the topic, information to administrators understand the characteristics of effective feedback, formative observation feedback protocols, and factors that may impede the effectiveness of feedback. The administrators will watch videos, role-play, hold collaborative discussions, write mock feedback scripts, and critique their colleagues' feedback scripts based on the effective-feedback criteria.

The afternoon session of Day 1 presents several videos about alternative strategies to use when holding a feedback conference. The participants will also learn to provide differentiated support and effective feedback through shared leadership. In addition, the administrators will design an observation tracker to store teacher-specific feedback on an Excel spreadsheet and work to problem solve common concerns related to providing effective feedback to teachers.

On Day 2, using the research district's current evaluation instrument, the administrators will receive a refresher on in Domain 1. Protocols will be provided to prepare and provide written feedback related to the goal setting and pre-observation conference. Administrators will then be introduced to features of Microsoft Word (Comments and Track Changes) that will allow them to provide written feedback to teachers on the lesson plan provided by the teacher during the pre-observation conference. The participants will then be divided into groups of five: elementary, middle, and high school. Each group will design a FFT-based feedback resource document using the

elements of Domain 1: (a) brainstorming common problems of practice related to a specific element of each component, (b) using the language from the FFT to create generic feedback comments related to the problem of practice and element, (c) finding videos that teachers can use to improve their skills in writing lesson plans or the problem of practice, (d) providing a list of strategies and descriptions the teacher can use to improve their lesson plans or their skills in the problem of practice.

The Day 2 afternoon session will repeat the morning activities. However, the focus will be on the postconference and Domains 2 and 3. The activities for Day 2 include pairing and sharing notes based on videos, the discussion of the video, analyzing and providing feedback on an effective lesson plan, the exploration of pros and cons of feedback techniques, and the creation of a FFT-based feedback resource guide.

During Day 3, administrators will analyze the information related to Domain 1 of the feedback resource document and determine how these problems of practice may impact the need for feedback in Domains 2 and 3. The participants will also be introduced to feedback techniques with an overview of providing feedback as a Learning-Focused Leader.

In the Day 3 afternoon, participants will complete the feedback resource document using the components of Domain 4 to prepare for providing feedback during the Summative Evaluation conference. They will receive protocols for sharing feedback during a summative evaluation conference and will create a weekly schedule for feedback conferences. The school administrators will also participate in a 20-minute question-and-answer (Q&A) session with a member of the Office of Employee Performance and

Evaluation, who is an expert on teacher evaluation and observation and providing effective feedback and has agreed to participate in the seminar.

Finally on Day 3, the seminar will conclude with the administrators completing a wall chart describing the "plusses" and "deltas" of the seminar and sharing their next steps, explaining how they plan to apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills to their own educational environment.

Stage 1: Planning

Most of the planning strategies for developing a professional-development seminar were discussed in the previous sections. However, in the interest of presenting a coherent planning process, I represent the information here, including more details.

Needs assessment. Conducting a formal or informal needs assessment is one of the first steps to planning an effective professional-development seminar. Normally, this process would require gathering data through a variety of data-collection methods, such as surveying stakeholders. However, I was able to discover gaps in practice and the expected performance during the teacher and administrator interviews. Furthermore, the administrators suggested professional development on how to provide feedback to teachers would help them become better evaluators. Therefore, the findings from the research became the needs assessment, governing the workshop content.

Philosophical underpinnings and current research. The foundation of the seminar is focused on current theory: research on professional development, principles of andragogy, and the ideologies of constructivism.

Goals. As mentioned previously, the identified objectives of this seminar are aligned to the needs of the participants. Specifically, the goals include (a) supporting the use of a research-based instructional framework to inform the feedback process, (b) addressing specific information gaps in skills and knowledge articulated by the participants, (c) providing several feedback and conversation protocols and how to adapt the conversation based on simulated responses and targeted coaching on key decisions, and (d) providing feedback structures designed to support teacher growth.

Targeted population. The target population for improving teachers' instructional practice and evaluation process is district administrators who are observers or evaluators. In the research district, the participants may include principals, vice principals, district supervisors, and other school leaders.

Content. The focus of the project was solidified by the findings of the research. The findings became an informal needs assessment that determined the project's content.

Process and activities. The activities were supported by professional development standards, research, and best practices. If an adaptation of this workshop were to be presented to a different district, with different needs, then a collaborative team of stakeholders should be established to develop the needs assessments and the design of the adapted seminar.

Resources. A full list of the required resources is included under the topic *support* in Stage 2, Implementation.

Evaluation. Evaluation is mentioned during Stage I only to indicate that backward planning (Guskey, 2000) was used in creating the project. The details of the seminar's assessment can be found in Stage 3: Evaluation.

Stage 2: Implementation

Location. Permission to conduct the seminar was requested and received from the supervisor of the Office of Employee Performance and Evaluation during the Summer Principal's Retreat in the 4th week of July. The Summer Retreat is held at a high school and principals are given the autonomy to select seminars to attend for their own professional growth. The local high school is an ideal location for The Feedback Institute because of the room dynamics. It has huge rooms, round tables with folding chairs that can be arranged in any configuration, and every room has the latest technology (Elmos, LCD projectors, and flat-screen televisions). The school also has a several huge faculty lounges so that participants can get coffee, snacks, and water. Lunch will be the responsibility of the participants.

Timetable. The proposed workshop is scheduled for the 4th week in July 2016. Participants will attend from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., which includes 1 hour for lunch and two 15-minute breaks throughout the day. Coffee will be provided and snacks are available at the participants' expense.

Resources. Three types of resources are essential to the project: resources provided by the research district, financial resources from multiple sources, and human resources, including those who will assist in the delivery of the seminar.

Research district resources. The research district's attitude towards the proposed seminar has been very supportive. Its support includes the use of a local high school and permission for the district to attend and assist with the seminar. The research district has also given me permission to use any available equipment such as copy machines, projectors, print shop access, Internet access, and televisions. Clearly, the research district's help and support is necessary for the success of the seminar.

Financial resources. There is no cost associated with the seminar for the attendees. The paper and the printing of the material will be done at my expense. Opportunely, the research district's print shop is being made available and is less expensive than printing the materials commercially. Therefore, all expenses would include a $45.00 cost for handouts, flyers, and evaluation surveys. This is quite reasonable for a 3-day seminar. However, if a similar seminar were presented in another district, then additional funding might be needed for printing, facilities use, food, and a fee for services rendered. It would also be beneficial to look for grant opportunities through Edutopia (www.edtopia.org) and Grants.gov (www.grants.gov).

Human resources. After seeking permission, I invited the supervisor of the Office of Employee Performance and Evaluation department and 14 consulting teachers to assist in the implementation of the seminar. The individuals will provide feedback related to the design and will assist during the seminar activities. For example, on each day of the seminar the consulting teachers will work and monitor the room helping the participants in their discussion groups, providing feedback when participants are writing and sharing ideas, and lending support when the participants are constructing the

feedback book. In addition, the supervisor of the Office of Employee Performance and evaluation has agreed to participate in a question-and-answer session about the evaluation feedback and conferences.

Existing support. The project is supported by the superintendent, associate superintendent, and instructional directors. The project also has support of the Office of Employee Performance and Evaluation, the Office of Talent and Development, and 14 consulting teachers who have agreed to participate. This support is crucial to make any major project a success. Also the administrators have proven to be happy and willing participants, also essential to the success of this seminar.

Potential barriers. Solutions will need to be employed to overcome potential barriers for a successful project implementation. Communicating the benefits of the project to the school administrators will be a challenge because of the number of schools in the research district. Several strategies will be implemented to overcome this barrier. Time will be requested from the district supervisors during the required principals' meetings to present an overview of the research and the content of the project. A request will also be made to the district supervisors to advertise the project on the district's website. Finally, the project materials will be made available through the online staff portal to facilitate sharing within the district.

Proposal for implementation and timeline. The goal is to present the seminar to district leaders so the project can be implemented in the summer of 2016. Once the district leaders approve the seminar, the project materials will be stored on the district's staff portal. A meeting will then be arranged with the district superintendent to share the

study's findings and the project. The request of support in sharing the project with school administrators will be made during this meeting with the superintendent. The informational meeting will then be scheduled. As part of the meeting, I will request formal notification of use, so that I can be available to provide support in implementing the project and also to determine adjustments that need to be made to improve the project.

Roles and Responsibilities. Communicating the components and value of the project is my sole responsibility in this research. I will communicate the benefits of the project to the research district's leaders, instructional directors, and department supervisors in the informational meetings. I will make the project materials available to any school team or district clusters interested in using the project and make myself available to provide modifications and support needed. In addition, I will track use and modifications and update the project materials at the end of the first seminar based on the feedback.

The district and school administrators will have critical roles. They will decide if this project has value, warrants support, and should be offered to other school leaders. This important decision will be based on the needs of the school administrators and my explicit explanation of the project's benefits.

Stage 3: Evaluation

Guskey's model. I have adapted the goal-based evaluation system from Guskey's Five Critical Levels of Professional Development Evaluation to formally assess the project. Level 1 of Guskey's model measures participant satisfaction. This level offers feedback related to the effectiveness of the activities, the efficacy of the facilitator, and

the overall success of the workshop. Level 1 can be assessed by a survey or questionnaire. Notably, there is consensus that most professional development is heavily focused on Level 1. Level 2 of Guskey's model evaluates participant learning. This level can be evaluated through a questionnaire or open-ended interviews. Level 3 measures organizational support and change. Organizational support and impact can be evaluated using interviews, observations, district records, and questionnaires. Level 4 assesses the application of new learning. Implementation of new learning can be assessed using structured interviews, reflections, observation, and self-report questionnaires. Level 5 assesses how professional development impacts student learning. Level 5 is the most difficult to assess because change happens over time and other variables impact student outcomes; however, there are several ways to assess the professional development's impact on student learning: standardized test scores, school records, and course grades. It is important to note, the project must be a part of a long-term study to collect meaningful data to determine the professional development's impact on student learning.

Applying Guskey's model. I will use Levels 1, 2, and 3 of Guskey's model to assess if the objectives and goals of The Feedback Institute have been achieved. A survey will be developed to evaluate Guskey's Levels 1 and 2: satisfaction and new learning. Participant satisfaction is naturally a goal for professional development developers and providers. Nonetheless, they should be equally interested in signs of participant learning. The survey will evaluate the outcomes of the seminar. Thus, the survey will focus on eliciting the participants' awareness and skill improvement. For instance, the survey will focus on the awareness of the relationship between quality feedback and improved

instructional practice and professional skill improvements to determine if the objectives were met. In addition, the survey will include open-ended questions designed to document new learning and skills acquired related to providing quality feedback. Unfortunately, a survey completed at the end of the Feedback Institute will not assess the application of new learning and cannot measure long-term change; therefore, a follow-up research study, 3 to 5 years after the seminar is recommended. This follow-up research could include a new survey of administrators to determine their perceptions of change and the impact on administrators, teachers, and students.

I believe that the initial survey will provide enough information to measure the workshop's initial success. However, change is a slow process, taking 3 to 5 years to become part of the culture (DuFour, 2004a; Guskey, 2000). Learning Forward (2011) echoed the slow progress of change, stating it takes 5 years to bridge the "knowing–doing gap." Follow-up studies may document changes in the administrators' attitudes or their determination to improve their practice, or note significant impact on teachers' professional practice and student achievement. It would be intriguing for the district to review 3 to 5 years of data to find (a) improvement in providing quality written and verbal feedback, (b) a pattern of steady improvement in student achievement, and (c) a correlation between improved teacher evaluation ratings and student progress. A positive correlation between improved teacher evaluation ratings and increased student achievement would be ideal and an indicator of the effectiveness of the seminar.

Implications

This project is important to the local area because the research district has high teacher-evaluation ratings and low student achievement. This means the research district may experience consequences if the students do not demonstrate continuous improvement and if the research district does not meet its federal and state performance targets. Several researchers have shown that the teacher is the most essential factor in student achievement (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2010; Hanushek, 2010; Jacob, 2006), so better instruction must be a vital aspect of any plan to address student achievement. If teacher evaluation ratings were more accurate (less than 1% of the district teachers receive unsatisfactory evaluation ratings) and quality feedback accompanied these accurate evaluations, then teachers would understand the idea that their professional practice must improve to help students learn. In contrast, if poor teachers continue to receive satisfactory evaluations and minimal feedback, there is no motivation for teachers to make changes in their daily instructional practice.

Regrettably, this is not just a local problem; it is a reflection of many school districts across the United States. Many researchers have documented the poor results from the inaccurate and inadequate teacher evaluations. Weisberg et al. (2009) called this occurrence a "national failure," allowing poor teachers to remain in the classroom setting. If evaluation is not used as a tool to help these poor educators to improve their practice, then there is little hope that our students will ever have the chance to obtain the education they deserve. Lack of quality educational opportunity has a strong impact on equity and social justice.

Conclusion

In this section, I used the findings in Section 2 as the needs assessment for a 3-day seminar developed to create awareness of the importance of and how to provide quality feedback in assessing teachers' professional practice. One of the goals of the seminar is to improve the skill level by providing participants with an opportunity to gain knowledge. The literature reviewed on the topic of professional development has provided best practices and the current professional-development standards in the field of education. I have tried to apply this knowledge about current standards and best practices to the seminar and have, therefore, included activities that allows for observation, feedback, and practice. This seminar is expected to provide the skill and motivation for participants to become better assessors of teachers' professional practice, which, in turn, will improve teaching and impact student academic performance.

In Section 4, I reflect on the strengths of the project, its limitations, and offer some recommendations for alternative approaches. I then reflect on my personal learning myself as a scholar and the importance of the work. Finally, I discuss the implications for future research and the implications for the district and the community.

Section 4: Reflection and Conclusion

Strengths of the Project

The importance of The Feedback Institute lies in the fact that it addresses major obstacles that the research district's administrators and teachers identified as pitfalls to improved professional practice and effective evaluations. It was developed based on an identified need. Administrators request for training on how to provide quality feedback during the evaluation process, and teachers' expressed need for quality feedback from principals for improving their professional practice. The need to develop effective feedback skills is addressed in the seminar. Embedded in each day of the seminar is an opportunity for administrators to collaborative to create a feedback resource guide.

The Feedback Institute's seminar includes simulated pre- and post-conferences, using new protocols to improve administrators' verbal and nonverbal communication skills. This component addresses teachers' and administrators' concern that pre- and post-conferences during the evaluation process were awkward and unproductive. In addition, a question-and-answer session with the supervisor of the Office of Employee Performance and Evaluation will provide feedback and respond to participants' questions.

Another strength is the design of the project, which integrated best practices, research, and professional-development standards. Constructivist and andragogy theory were important factors in establishing the project's rational and creating its framework. The standards of professional learning (Learning Forward, 2011) and Guskey's (2000) work on evaluating professional development formed the foundation of the project. The strength of the design and the credibility of the seminar is also based on existing research

in education (Danielson, 2011; DuFour et al., 2008; Marzano et al., 2011), professional development (Joyce & Calhoun, 2010; Joyce & Showers, 1996; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989; Wei, 2009; Yoon et al., 2007), and examination of theories about learning organizations and institutional change (Fullan, 2002, 2006; Senge, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1996).

Project Limitations

Several topics are addressed over the course of 3 days, so the seminar could be criticized for lacking depth. The critique may be slightly valid; however, the number of topics addressed in the seminar should not impact the quality of the project because some agenda items were meant to serve as a review and not intended as new material or new knowledge. Other topics on the agenda are meant to stimulate new thinking.

Another limitation is the fact that the seminar is applicable only to the research district; the seminar was based on results of research conducted in one school district. If a similar seminar were to be conducted in another school district, that district would need to conduct a needs assessment and customize the activities based on that district's needs.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Based on interviews with teachers and administrators in the research district several recommendations were formulated. These are designed to improve the teacher-evaluation process and quality of feedback provided during the evaluation process within the research district.

When annually evaluating principals, Instructional Directors should hold principals more accountable for teacher evaluations, including rating their attempt to

remediate, provide feedback, and document ineffective teachers. To support this recommendation, the district should consider providing all evaluators with continuous training in teacher evaluation and providing meaningful feedback. In addition, principals need to know that if they do write accurate and honest evaluations they will be defended and supported by the Office of Employee Performance and Evaluation, the Curriculum and Instruction department, the union, and the research district.

Area directors should require principals to attend monthly professional-development sessions for added support. During these sessions principals should provide teacher-evaluation results, videos of teacher pre- and post-conferences, and feedback provided to the teachers. The area director and principals could then engage in coaching conversations to guide principals' evaluation practices. Principals should also be given an opportunity to practice observation, evaluation, communication, and guidance and assessment skills around teachers' instructional practice. According to Wagner (2008), continued practice in evaluation and observations accompanied by corrective feedback makes evaluation more accurate and more consistent. In other words, practice makes principals better evaluators. Finally, principals need to know that partner departments in the district will support their evaluations and the resulting measures they take.

The school district's professional department could require live-paired observations. These live-paired observations could include a content specialist, and a school administrator. The content specialist could be selected from within the school or from another office or school, ideally to complement the administrator's strengths. The

subset of data will provide the basis for measuring the accuracy of an observer's scoring, professional dialogue, and coaching conversation.

The district could also hire observation coaches. These coaches would monitor the quality of district's teacher observations and mentor observers and evaluators. In addition, observation coaches would serve as calibrators for the on-going evaluations. This position would help the district ensure that observers continue to score accurately and provide meaningful feedback to teachers during the observation and evaluation process. Calibration assessments completed with the observation coach should be short and measure a narrow set of skills. Candidates for this position should have excellent observation and feedback skills and possess the skill to effectively communicate and coach others.

School leaders must be internally motivated to improve their performance. They must be encouraged to evaluate with accuracy and integrity, and must take responsibility for their lack of knowledge about any aspect of evaluation and providing feedback to teachers. They could take the initiative and make arrangements to meet with appropriate district supervisors to review confusing aspects of evaluation and feedback. Lastly, school leaders could communicate and interact with each other in supporting better practices in teacher evaluations and providing meaningful feedback.

Analysis of Learning

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

Through this endeavor, I have learned a remarkable amount about scholarship. I learned that educators need to continually remain current and reflect on their knowledge

and skills base so they can develop a more effective professional practice. Therefore, professional development is important for administrators to enhance the instructional practice of teachers and to improve student performance. In addition, I learned that the key to a successful professional development project is that as the professional development planner I should know as much as I could about the administrator participants and their needs. Once I learned about participants' needs, I strove to meet those very needs, and worked to develop the project. To stay focused on participants' needs while developing the project, I considered administrators' expressed needs as the gap between what is expected and the existing conditions. Administrators' response were used to guide planning, choice of materials, activity selection, research based practice choice, technology choice, and other supports needed for the professional development project. The agenda primarily addressed administrators' need. Use of the agenda minimized the risk of using haphazard information, activities, and resources that would do little to advance the administrators' professional skills. It helped to keep the project on target. I realized I had to have a comprehensive professional development project that was the professional focus for the participants in the study; therefore, the goal was to grow collaborative administrative teams and build their professional practice by speaking to the specific needs of the administrators. Ultimately, the administrators would work collaboratively, use research to guide their practice, and reflect and adjust their professional skills.

Project Development and Evaluation

As a teacher leader in the research district, I have designed and facilitated professional-learning opportunities for many colleagues and departments; however, it never occurred that every professional-development project should be supported by standards of practice, should represent a philosophical point of view, and should have a theoretical foundation. Previously, I would only review best practices in education and created professional-development projects.

Through this experience, I learned to more effectively evaluate professional-development projects. In the past, I designed seminar evaluations to capture data related to participant satisfaction and new information learned; however, for this professional development project the transfer of new information and skills was a major part. As a result, I am extremely aware that evaluating transfer of new information and skills is just as important. Evaluation transfer of new information and skills involved assessing the professional-development project's overall impact on school leaders, teachers, and student learning. I no longer believe that, when administrators learn new knowledge and skills in a seminar, they are applying what they have learned to their daily practice in the classroom. Despite the overall impact on school leaders, teachers, and student learning being complex and difficult to measure, it makes sense to include outcomes as part of the evaluation of any professional-development project. As a result of what I have learned from designing this professional-development project, I will design future opportunities more deliberately and purposefully.

To evaluate the professional development goals, the duration of the professional development must be ongoing to allow time for the administrators to learn the new information and implement the skills learned. Extended professional development sessions will include time to practice the application of the new skills in the administrator's own professional setting, allowing administrators to grapple with the transfer of skills. Significant hours must be dedicated to supporting administrators during the implementation stage of putting new skills and strategies into practice. Support in this implementation stage will help administrators navigate the frustration that comes from using new professional practice. Administrators should be coached as they work to transfer the newly learned practice which may in turn improve both teacher practice as well as student learning; therefore, evaluation of the professional development goals will be difficult and can only be evaluated only if professional development sessions are extended, administrators are coached during the implementation phase of trying new professional practice, teachers receive and implement administrators feedback in their daily lesson, and if student work is analyzed to find evidence of improved student performance.

Leadership and Change

Many educators and researchers believe that after the quality of teaching, school leadership is the most essential component in increased student achievement and continuous school improvement. In this time of accountability, administrators must assume several roles as managers, agents of change, and instructional leaders; therefore this project will focus on improving administrative professional practice. In so doing, the

way in which administrators conduct evaluations and provide feedback will change; and with this being transformational across the school district, it is regarded as a major social modification which will impact school improvement and student performance. A social change of this magnitude will address teachers' expressed need for more effective administrative feedback on their instructional practice. This social change takes on a domino effect in that administrators improve the way feedback is given, resulting in improvement of teachers' instructional practice, ultimately impacting students' learning and overall school improvement.

The planning and development of this project revealed that the district must have a clear vision and mission specific to professional development, student performance, and school improvement. Where there is no clear mission and vision many administrators have different interpretations of how to improve teachers' professional practice. When there are no clear directions, accountability, and follow-up, administrators will only work to the best of their knowledge and skill level. I realized this project needed to entail a clear vision and mission for the project to help administrators regain focus and move in a direction to improve the professional practice of teachers and student academic performance.

Administrators looking to make a difference must establish a vision and mission. The vision must be used to determine a shared understanding of the current reality and commit to change being initiated and sustained. The mission should be an action plan that helps achieve the vision. The mission will help to prompt change, the monitoring of progress, and growth. Ultimately, the school mission and vision should guide continuous

school improvement. As a result of understanding how the vision and mission guide school improvement I used research based practices, authentic activities, and several professional development structures to ensure the vision and mission of the project could be transferred into the administrators' school settings.

Administrators who have a vision and mission in place are more likely to be successful in achieving and school improvement. When the vision and mission are aligned school improvement is expected to occur. In addition, leaders must take the initiative to bring all stakeholders together to review hard data related to teaching, learning, and student achievement. The administrator and stakeholders will make up a collective team that decides which changes have priority and which changes will have the greatest impact on the school's vision for student learning. I embedded activities in the project that allow administrators to collect data, model desired behaviors, prioritize targets and reflect on their performance. This portion of the project will help administrators improve their skill level to collect appropriate data, develop prioritized action plans, monitor progress, and to adjust their practice.

Analysis of Self

Scholar

I have learned that designing project can be tedious; yet, rewarding. I have gained tremendous knowledge about scholarship. I have learned that an effective professional development project begins with a quality discussion about the school district's needs, a review of the literature on quality professional development, and understanding the role of various school district employees. After the background research and discussion was

done, I had to develop a vision for the project that included: (1) purpose of the professional development project, (2) vision for project in the research district, and (3) operational guidelines to support the planning and implementation of the project. Taking the time to develop a vision for the project helped me to focus on the needs of the administrators and unique contextual issues of the research district.

While planning the project I have gained a greater appreciation for professional development planners. I extended my knowledge of how to conduct the background research prior to planning a professional development project. For the past 12 years I have created professional development workshops and seminars; however, this experience has taught me so much more. Recently, I was asked to work with a team of colleagues to plan a professional development and I had to ask questions, conduct an informal survey, and review the literature prior to meeting for the first professional development-planning meeting. I realize from this experience the importance of communicating the project's mission, collaborating to create a vision for the administrators attending the professional development, and ensuring monitoring of the vision where vital to the success of the project. In the future, I will not facilitate, present or disseminate information without exploring background knowledge needed to establish a vision and mission for an effective professional development.

Practitioner

Although, based on years of experience, I possess and demonstrate the skills of an effective practitioner, I believe that completing this project study helped improve my practitioner skills. Completing this project has made me (a) more aware of the importance

of providing research-based professional development, (b) more analytical and supportive of administrators and teachers during the implementation phase of new skills, and (c) more supportive of the idea that professional development is most successful when implemented and monitored overtime.

As a teacher, I have always acknowledged my unique professional needs and valued attending professional development to improve my effectiveness as a practitioner. I understood that the knowledge I learned from professional development experiences had to become a part of my day- to-day professional practice. I would often feel frustrated and discouraged when implementing strategies learned during professional development. I would be even more discouraged to realize that collaboration and follow through was almost none existent. After completing this project I can declare that professional development experiences should be implemented in administrators' daily practice. In addition, the school district should provide administrative support during the implementation stage. This support should address specific problems of practice, continued professional collaboration, and follow-up job embedded experiences.

Professional Developer

As result of this project development experience I have a deeper understand of how effective professional development is used to improve teachers' professional skills and student learning. For example, I understand that professional development is likely to improve student learning when the professional development needs are based on student learning, or factors that affect student learning needs. This realization caused me to review the goals for learning. The learning goals reflected what individuals knew and

should be able to do as a result of the professional development experience. Once the goals for learning were established multiple sources of data were used to analyze and determine gaps between what is supposed to be happening and what is actually happening. I then had to determine the major barriers preventing administrators from achieving the learning goals in addition to solidifying what knowledge, skills, and beliefs administrators would need to improve their skill level. Most importantly, I learned the process of determining what knowledge, skills, and beliefs would enable unsuccessful administrators to be successful and that this learning was the key to planning effective professional development that would lead to student success and school improvement.

The next phase of project development was also a new professional learning experience for me. This phase involved determining outcomes and how the project would be evaluated. First, I had to reflect on the knowledge, skill and beliefs administrators needed to help teacher close student performance gaps, and then I used the reflection experience to develop desired outcomes and specific measures of success for the professional development project. At this point, I realized that I would only be able to measure success of the professional development project if I implemented it over time.

In addition, I learned that I needed to include benchmarks to check regularly so as to determine if the professional development project was successful or needed any changes; hence, this was the first time I ever developed an evaluation for a professional development session. The completed professional development plan for this professional development project included a description of how and when benchmarks or monitoring would occur and who would be involved in both the formative and summative

evaluations of the professional development. In the future, writing goals and creating an evaluation plan will be a higher priority of my daily work. As a result of this experience, I feel more prepared to serve as a professional development planner for the school district.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

The goals for the research school district are to improve the learning of all students. The district uses school improvement and administrators' professional development as means to improve student learning. School improvement and professional learning are focused on educator change. These changes occur during school improvement efforts and professional learning experiences processes such as: (a) analyzing multiple sources of data, (b) selecting areas that are in need of improvement, (c) establishing goals to measure the improvements, (d) professional development planning, (e) implementation over time, and (f) the formative and summative evaluation process. Grounded in the belief that all students can learn, school improvement and professional development brings about change in the school's leadership, culture, and instruction to attain high levels of learning for all students. Change becomes even more apparent when school improvement and professional learning are viewed systematically. Change through this systematic process allows for individual learning and organizational changes to be addressed simultaneously and support one another. When these changes are made systematically, school improvement is likely to be sustained overtime. Moving forward, a focus on school improvement and professional learning must infiltrate the entire school system, meaning every classroom, school, and all school leaders must

support the culture shifts. I plan to lead as a role model and support the district as it moves on the path of social change and school improvement.

Implications for Future Research

As stated earlier in the strengths and limitations segments, future research on this topic could go in several directions. One of the most interesting would be to conduct a duplicate study in five years. I would like to verify if there had been any changes that could be directly related to the professional development project. Another direction would be to conduct the professional development project in one or two different districts to compare and contrast through a multiple case study methodology.

If I were to modify the current methodology, I would add focus groups to engage students directly. Examining the academic experiences of students who are not performing well, academically successful students, and even a group of students whose academic progress is stagnated could generate significant data and lead to a much deeper understanding of how to enhance the students' school experience.

Conclusion

As Section 4 concludes, reflection of my growth as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer was described. I have also contemplated what I learned on a systemic level and offered directions for future research. The task of completing this doctoral study was remarkable and interesting and I intend to continue the research path. To this end, I would like to end on an optimistic note: After reviewing data, I have learned that teachers and school leaders are aware that school improvement and professional development is needed to become more effective practitioners.

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Appendix A: The Project

Day 1

Setting: Large classroom

Equipment: Ten round tables, 100 chairs, speakers, Internet access, email access, Excel spreadsheet, LCD projector

Participants Responsibly: Please bring your laptop.

Materials: Color-coded name tags, large 3x5 inch, post-it notes, colored markers, 5x7 index cards, 10 dice, 100 copies of the Deposits and Withdrawals handout, 100 copies of the Johari Window Diagram, 100 Personal Interactive Notebook (PIN) packets, 100 copies of the Steps to Provide Formative Feedback Protocol handout, 100 copies of the Pros and Cons of the Feedback Approaches handout, 100 of the observation scripts; 100 copies of the Putting "*From Written Formative Observation Notes to Written Feedback for the Verbal Conference Protocol"* into Practice Protocol handout; 100 copies of the Letter from a Colleague handout, 100 copies of the This Is Happening … handout.

7:45 Sign-in and name-tag distribution

8:00 Introduction of the Goals of the Seminar

Introduction of Presenter

Goals of the Seminar:

- To improve the knowledge, skills, and disposition of school administrators in providing written and verbal feedback to teachers
- To help school administrators learn feedback structures that will support teacher growth of instructional practice to increase student learning
- To support the use of a research-based instructional framework to inform the evaluation and feedback process

Review of the Agenda

Introduction of the Session Norms

Review of the Purpose of The Feedback Institute

8:15 Icebreaker

"Getting to Know You" Cubes Activity
Introduce yourself by responding to the question corresponding to the number on the die.

Directions:

1. The oldest person at the table roles the cube first.

2. The person then answers the question corresponding to the number thrown.
3. Then each person in the group will follow Steps 1 and 2 rotating clockwise until all group members have had an opportunity to participate.

Questions:

1. What is your favorite way to waste time at work without getting caught?
2. What was the MOST unusual food you ever ate?
3. If you could spend 15 minutes with any living person, who would it be and why?
4. What article of clothing most closely describes your personality?
5. If you could rid the world of one thing, what would it be?
6. What one thing (modern convenience) could you not live without?

8:20 Introduction to the Personal Interactive Notebook (PIN)

Directions:
Use the PIN throughout the seminar for note taking and reflection before, during, and after activities as we progress through the seminar.

8:22 Facilitator shares the definition and features of formative feedback

8:25 Activity 1: How is Feedback Used–"A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words"

Goals:

- To understand the two ways that feedback is used in the district
- To understand the connection between feedback, professional practice improvements, and teacher evaluation
- To explore the difference in mindset for the use of feedback in the district

When it comes to professional practice in the school district how do we use feedback as teacher evaluators and observers?

Directions:
Provide each participant with the "Deposits and Withdrawals" handout and a marker. Ask the participants to form a line (a cheerleader window line is ideal). Pose the question, **When it comes to professional practice in the school district, how do we use feedback as teacher evaluators and observers?** Ask participants not to reveal their answer until they are asked. Tape the responses on the board and call it "a picture is worth a thousand words." Use the responses to have a whole-group discussion. Then reveal the use of feedback according to research. Engage the participants with their thoughts.

Probing questions for discussion:

1. Analyze the responses and determine what were the most repetitive answers.

2. Have you changed your mind after seeing some of your colleague's responses? If so, why?
3. What do you think contributes to such difference in mindset?
4. Why are the response(s) right or wrong?

8:35 Activity 2: The Power of Feedback "Deposits and Withdrawals"

Goal:
- To understand the cognitive effects of providing effective feedback to teachers

Directions:
While watching the video, jot down examples of the deposits and withdrawals you observe.

Discussion:
Afterwards, with an elbow buddy, discuss the impact of deposits and withdrawals.

Probing question for discussion:
In what ways does this video remind you of the feedback you have received?

8:45 Facilitation notes

The facilitator will share the information about (a) effective use of feedback and (b) using how to set the stage for giving and receiving feedback.

8:50 Activity 3: Table Talk Discussion

Goals:
- To understand the effective use of feedback
- To understand and apply the Johari Window as a communication model to improve understanding between individuals

Directions:
Name five characteristics of effective feedback. Rank your characteristics in order of importance with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least. Compare and discuss your responses to your elbow buddy.

Answers: focused, evidence-based, constructive, timely, and individualized

Discussion:
Now take what you have learned about the characteristics of effective feedback and apply these characteristics as you are learning to use the Johari Window.

9:20 Activity 4: Poor Feedback

Goals:
- To understand the characteristics of poor feedback

Directions:
Most of us have received less-than-helpful or discouraging feedback in our career. As a whole group, discuss the characteristics of less-than-helpful feedback.

Probing questions:
1. Which of these characteristics do you practice frequently? Why?
2. Now that you are more aware of these characteristics, what will you do to minimize your use of them?

9:30 Applying What We Have Learned

Goals:
- To apply what the participants have learned and use the information to provide constructive, evidence-based, and focused feedback.

Facilitation Notes:
Now we are going to stop by Kelli's 4th grade math classroom for a quick 9-minute observation. Kelli's goals focus on:

Student Objective: The students will use what they have learned about expressions, equations, and patterns to solve problems and to defend their answers to the group using words, numbers, and pictures.

Professional Practice Goal: Provide clear directions for classroom activities (Danielson 3a).

Remember to identify a focus prior to an observation. For this observation, we're going to focus on evidence related to Kelli's second goal, her professional practice goal. Go ahead and use the FFT evaluation instrument to "refresh" the participants' knowledge of component 3a. Please review the section of the book (pages 59–61) that includes the rubric and descriptions for that element. This portion of the activity will remind the participants of what to look for in Kelli's instruction**.**

Directions:

Video link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZMbCENzaws
1. The focus of this observation is Component 3a: Communicating with Students.
2. Review and collect evidence from the video of Kelli's fourth grade math class.
3. Write a feedback script that is focused, evidence based, constructive.
4. Share your feedback with a partner.
5. Your partner should critique your feedback response.

10:00 Break 15 Minutes

10:15 Giving and Receiving Feedback

Facilitation Notes
The next section will cover information related to giving and receiving feedback. We will build on the information we learned related to the Johari Window to improve our feedback skills.

Activity 5: Graffiti Wall

Goal:
- To have participants share experiences that may have impeded the effectiveness of their feedback to teachers

Prompt:
In your past experience, how has the effectiveness of your feedback to teachers been impeded?

Directions:
1. You should remain silent during the first 2 minutes of this activity as you write your response to the prompt. Please write your name under your response.
2. Write questions and/or comments in response to your colleagues' ideas. Please write your name under your response.
3. Discuss comments and respond to questions.

10:30 Nonverbal Communication

Facilitation Notes:
There are several factors that may impede the effectiveness of your feedback given to teachers. These factors include content, function, presentation, learner motive opportunity, and meaning. Remind the participants that nonverbal communication is also a powerful aspect of providing feedback. Review the communication system breakdown, including body motions and voice characteristics of nonverbal communication.

10:40 Activity 6: Nonverbal Communication as Told by "Friends"

Goals:
- To understand how nonverbal communication is expressed in everyday conversation.
- To analyze how the speaker responds to the nonverbal communication

Directions:
Watch the video and discuss the nonverbal communication expressed in each mini-clip. Share how the listener responds to the nonverbal communication expressed by the speaker.

Discussion:

1. How did the character communicate his/her emotions nonverbally? How did the speaker respond to the nonverbal communication?
2. How could the speaker respond differently to the nonverbal communication to be sensitive to the listener's feeling?

10:50 Facilitation Notes:

This completes the overview of providing feedback and the review of communication skills. We will now use what we have learned to improve our daily work. The next portion of the seminar will provide information and strategies to improve our skill level when providing feedback after formative observations. Then explain the definition of formative feedback. Formative feedback is information communicated to the learner intended to modify the learner's thinking or behavior for the purpose of "improving learning." Timely feedback gathered and reviewed during the course of a learning experience serves to inform both teachers and observers and allows for the formation of new plans for learning. Next, have participants to review the *From Formative Observation to Feedback Protocol* handout.

11:00 Activity 7: Putting "*From Written Formative Observation Notes to Written Feedback for the Verbal Conference Protocol"* into Practice

Goals:

- To determine if the protocol is a realistic resource for communicating with teachers about their instructional practice
- To make modification to the protocol as needed to be user friendly
- To provide a systematic way of changing evidence into written feedback and a script for a verbal conference

Directions Part 1:

1. Review the observation script.
2. Checking your notes (look at every three–five sentences) ask yourself the question "What did the teacher accomplish?"
3. Then make a generalization about the evidence and add these generalizations to the margins of your evidence. Be sure to use the language from the standards-based evaluation to create your statement or generalization.
4. Scan down the margins of your notes to determine trends and patterns. On average, expect one–two trends to surface.
5. Write your claim statements, evidence, and their impact on student. Trends and patterns become claims.
6. Now apply the Seven Steps for Effective Feedback Protocol to help develop your skill level to provide verbal feedback

Directions Part 2:
You have learned to make claims, identify evidence to support the claim, and determine its impact on students.

You have also learned to use the formative observation protocol to frame your feedback-conference conversation.

1. In the next activity you will put it all together. You will conduct an observation.
2. Make claims based on patterns and trends, find evidence to support your claim and write you impact statement.
3. Use your Observation Feedback Protocol to prepare for your feedback conference.
4. Role-play your feedback scripts.

12:00 Lunch Break 60 Minutes

1:00 Alternative Feedback-Conference Methods

Facilitation Notes:
We are going to learn about alternative feedback-conference methods. In the next section, we will study the use of video to facilitate feedback conferences and you will create feedback-conference techniques and strategies that may be unique to your building and your leadership style.

Activity 8: Using Video Footage to Facilitate the Feedback Conference

Directions:
1. Input information in the graphic organizer related to the traditional face-to-face feedback conference
2. Now review Video 1 of a coach using video footage of another colleague teaching an observed lesson to assess and guide the teacher's instructional practices.
3. Now input information in the graphic organizer related to Video 1.
4. Now review Video 2 of a coach using actual video footage of the observed teacher to assess and guide the teacher's instructional practices.
5. Now input information in the graphic organizer related to Video 2.
6. Share the information on your graphic organizer with a colleague.

1:30 Facilitation Notes:
In the time of accountability, we must provide differentiated feedback for novice and veteran teachers. To accomplish the task of providing differentiated feedback to teachers, school leaders should consider shared leadership. Explain shared leadership and shared leadership responsibilities. Explain the unique feedback strategy used by one of their colleagues. Have participants discuss how they could use shared leadership to incorporate this into their schools' observation practices.

Activity 9: Alternative to the Traditional Ways of Collaborating with Teachers: Letter from a Colleague

Goals:

- To understand alternative ways of providing feedback and how shared leadership could work to promote professional growth
- Connect alternative ways of providing feedback to observation practice
- Consider various other methods of providing feedback to teachers

Directions Part 1:

1. Read the letter from your colleague.
2. Provide your expertise to help your colleague improve the structure, focus, and content of the feedback letter. Specifically, pay close attention to the language and the efforts to incorporate words that suggest this experience is not punitive but conducted in a effort to increase collaboration among the department members.
3. You may also provide feedback on other aspects of the letter. Other aspects include but are not limited to
    - the elements you like
    - what you noticed
    - possible changes
    - structure concerns
    - delivery mode
    - impact statements
    - next steps
    - timeline for follow-up
    - purpose of the feedback
    - is the feedback focused, evidence based, and constructive
4. Now you will share you feedback with other school administrators for discussion.

Discussion:

1. How practical is this feedback letter strategy for your building?
2. How can you modify this feedback letter strategy to be more realistic for your building?
3. How could other school leaders use this feedback letter strategy as a collaboration opportunity for departments and teams in the building?

Facilitation Notes:

Now that you have seen a unique feedback strategy used by your colleague in their school setting, you will now create unique feedback strategies for your building. Remember, shared leadership is always an option so the strategies you create can be strategies your assistant principal, department chair, instructional coach, specialist, team leader, etc. can use to promote professional growth with other colleagues.

Directions Part 2:

1. I have listed three feedback strategies:
    - Unseen Observation
    - Teacher Focus Group
    - Student Centered
2. Take 10 minutes to research a feedback approach. You will find several ideas that you may want to use as the foundation of your description.
3. Create a description of your feedback approach using the chart paper. Feel free to modify the approach to accommodate your leadership style. (5 minutes)
4. Conduct a 2–3 minute presentation to share the feedback approach with your colleagues.
5. In 1–2 minutes, entertain questions and comments from your colleagues.

Directions Part 3;

1. Share the strategies in the presentation explaining how you as a facilitator created the vision for the alternative ways to collaborate with colleagues in your building.
2. Allow participants to jot notes in their PIN.
3. Host a Q and A to address questions, comments, or concerns about the strategies you shared.

2:30 Break 15 minutes

2:45 Facilitation Notes

Now that you have learned alternatives for providing feedback, we will learn how to organize an observation feedback database for each teacher. This systematic way of tracking your feedback provided to teachers will help you hold teachers accountable and accurately track progress toward each teacher's goal.

Activity 10: Teacher Observation and Evaluation Tracker

Goal:

- To systematically monitor teacher progress and holding teachers accountable

Directions:

1. Facilitate a whole group discussion: How do you keep track of the nuances of the teacher observations, walk-throughs, drop-ins, and evaluations? You will respond to the following aspects of note taking.
    - notes
    - evidence
    - data
    - schedule
    - interactions

- goals
- professional development
- action steps

2. Retrieve the email sent to you titled "Observation Tracker."
3. Review the components of the observation tracker.
4. The facilitator should explain each component of the observation tracker.
5. Work to make this observation tracker your personal observation tracker.
6. Share the modification you made to the observation tracker with others.
7. Use notes from a recent observation you conducted to determine if the tool is practical in your daily work (additional time, technology comfort level, etc.).

3:45 Facilitation Notes:

Now that you have learned to track your observations, it is now time to put our heads together to solve common issues related to providing feedback to teacher during the observation/evaluation process.

Activity 11: Problem Solving—This is Happening …

Goal:

- To share ideas related to common issues of providing feedback to teachers

Directions:

1. Find a partner that you have not worked with today.
2. You will be given a "This is Happening …" graphic organizer.
3. Read the scenario presented on the graphic organizer and work with your partner to provide a suggestion that may help to resolve the issue presented in the scenario.
4. You will have 40 life-changing minutes to complete this activity.
5. Share your problem-solving strategies with your table buddies.

4:35 Wrap-up activities and Reflection

Goal:

- To reflect on the knowledge and strategies learned in Session 1 of The Feedback Institute.

Directions:

1. In your PIN, draw three dots. (red, green, and yellow)
2. Respond to the questions below to next to the appropriate dot.
3. **Green dot–**What will you start doing that you have not previously done?
4. **Yellow dot–**What will you continue doing?

5. **Red dot–**What will you stop doing?
6. Share your ideas with your colleagues.

4:45 Complete Evaluations: Plusses and Deltas, Formal Evaluation

Day 2

Setting: Large classroom

Equipment: Ten round tables, 100 chairs, speakers, Internet access, email access, Google documents access, and LCD projector

Participants Responsibly: Please bring your laptop.

Materials: 100 copies of the Proving Feedback during a Goal-Setting Conference, Teachscape Platform Formative Observation to Feedback Protocol.

Facilitator Note:, Add the question from the Providing Feedback during the Goal-Setting Conference Feedback Question Prompt to the Google document.

7:45 Sign-in and name-tag distribution

8:00 Introduction of the Goals of the Seminar

Goals of the Seminar:

- To improve the knowledge, skills, and disposition of school administrators in providing written and verbal feedback to teachers
- To help school administrators learn feedback structures that will support teacher growth of instructional practice to increase student learning
- To support the use of a research-based instructional framework to inform the evaluation and feedback process

Review of the Agenda

Review of the Session Norms

Review of the Purpose of The Feedback Institute

8:15 Icebreaker

Introduce yourself and tell us one word that reflects how you feel about providing feedback to teachers during the evaluation or observation process.

Stem: "I feel _____ about providing feedback to teachers during observation/evaluation because _____."

8:20 Review of your Personal Interactive Notebook (PIN)

Directions:

Continue to use the PIN throughout the seminar for note taking and reflection before, during, and after activities as we progress through the seminar.

Facilitator Notes:
We are going to have a "Table Talk" to discuss, determine, and list the feedback opportunities embedded in the evaluation process and the evaluation document. Participants should also describe the tools they use to enhance the feedback process and their thought process when they are generating quality feedback. Reveal the list of opportunities in the evaluation process and on the evaluation document. Facilitate a discussion about the differences in responses. Allow participants to explain their thinking behind their responses.

Today we will participate in activities to improve our skill level of holding conferences and providing feedback during the evaluation or observation process.

8:30 Providing Feedback during the Goal-Setting conference

Facilitation Notes
The goal-setting conference takes place at the beginning of the school year. In the seminar we are taking an inquiry stance in the goal-setting conference. When school leaders take the inquiry stance to facilitate the goal-setting conference the conference

- offers teacher-centered, systematic, and proactive approaches to empower and inform practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Nakkula & Ravitch, 1998; Ravitch, 2006; Ravitch & Tillman, 2010).
- is engaged in an ongoing discovery process through which we view and approach ourselves as active learners engaged in the coconstruction of knowledge (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).
- engenders a particular attention to one's practice and a view of oneself as an agent of that practice.
- can lead to the formation of critical ideas about practice.

Now we are going to review a protocol designed to enhance the goal-setting conference experiences. Then we will design appropriate questions that will prompt authentic teacher feedback during the conference.

8:40 Activity 1: Providing Feedback during the Goal-Setting Conference Protocol

Goals:
- To determine if the protocol is a realistic resource to communicate with teachers about their instructional goals
- To modify the protocol as needed to be user friendly
- To provide a systematic way of facilitating a goal-setting conference that will promote teacher reflection and feedback

Directions:
1. Review the Providing Feedback during the Goal-Setting Conference protocol.
2. Determine if the document is realistic resource to use when conducting goal-setting conferences.

3. Make suggested modifications to the document.
4. Generate question prompts that will promote teacher feedback and reflection.
5. Share your questions with your group on the Google document.
6. Review the responses from other colleagues.

PIN Activity
Journaling: Reflect on how the Providing Feedback during the Goal-Setting Conference protocol and the question prompts inform your feedback during a goal-setting conference.

9:00 Providing Feedback during the Preconference

Facilitation Notes
Previously, we learned how to improve our skills when giving feedback during a goal-setting conference. In the next activity, we will learn about providing feedback during the evaluation preconference. It is important to know that the components and elements in FFT Domain 1 will guide your feedback suggestions. In fact, your mindset should be to determine what a teacher knows and does in preparation for the lesson. As prework. we will analyze each element of the components 1c, 1e, and 1f. During the analysis phase of this activity, we will learn how to use the language of the FFT rubric to give feedback to teachers. Facilitators should review each of the components and the elements of those components that teachers include in the lesson plan for the observation.

Activity 2: Preparing for the Preconference: Feedback Using Microsoft Word

Goal:
- To use Microsoft Word's Comments and Track Changes features to provide feedback to teachers on the lesson plan document.

Directions: Comments
1. Open one of your previously used lesson plans in Microsoft Word.
2. Select the text you would like to comment upon.
3. Open the Review ribbon, select New Comment in the Comments section
4. In the balloon that appears in the right margin, type your comment.
5. Click anywhere in the document to continue to working/editing the document.

Directions: Track Changes
1. In Word 2007 and Word 2010, on the Review tab, use the little menus in the Tracking group. Final: Showing Markup or Original: Showing Markup will show what changes you have made. But check the selected items on the Show Markup menu to be sure that Word is showing what you need to see.

2. In Word 2007 and Word 2010, on the Review tab, in the Tracking group, choose Final. This displays your document as if you had accepted all the tracked changes in the document. It hides (but does not remove) the tracking.
3. In Word 2007 and 2010, on the Review tab, in the Tracking group, choose Original. This displays your document as if you had rejected all the tracked changes in the document. It hides (but does not remove) the tracking.

10:00 Break 15 Minutes

10:15 Facilitation Notes

Now that you have a thorough understanding of the Track Changes and Comments features, we are going to use this information to provide feedback to teachers in our daily work. The important aspect is to create generic feedback resources that will help you provide purposeful feedback to teachers.

Activity 3: Feedback Resource Book for Domain 1.

Goal:

- To use the elements of each component to create generic feedback and generate resources that could be used during observation time.

Directions Part 1:

1. Brainstorm possible instruction issues that may occur related to an element of the component.
2. Create generic a feedback statement for each instructional issue.
3. Find three articles or a book teachers could read to improve their performance.
4. Find two videos teachers could use to develop a better understanding of the element and how the element should play out in the lesson.
5. Provide two–three strategies teachers could use to improve their practice.

Facilitation Notes:

Now that you have generic feedback notes, you will now use the generic feedback samples to embed comments in the appropriate place in the lesson plan document.

Directions Part 2:

1. We are going to review a lesson plan.
2. Provide feedback to the teacher using your generic feedback and resource document.
3. Use Microsoft Word's Track Changes to insert your feedback in the lesson plan document.

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Preconference Techniques

Facilitation Notes

You have learned strategies to provide written feedback to teachers and will need to use this written feedback to facilitate your face-to-face conferences with teachers. In the next activity, we will learn verbal-feedback techniques that may increase the effectiveness of your preconference.

Activity 4: Preconference Techniques

Goal:

- To learn and practice strategies that will enhance the value of feedback during a preconference

Directions:

1. Review video "Reviewing the Quality of a Lesson." This video will model how to review the quality of a lesson with teachers instead of just reviewing the lesson plan.
2. Share with your table group the difference in looking at the written lesson plan versus looking at its quality.
3. Now review the "Talk Through" and "Lesson Rehearsal" techniques.
4. Share how the techniques will benefit your teachers and your leadership efforts to guided and assess instructional practice.

2:00 Facilitation Notes

The morning's information and activities were focused on the preconference. This afternoon we focus on providing feedback during the postconference. It is important to know that the components and elements in FFT Domain 2 and 3 will guide your feedback suggestions. In fact, the mindset when observing Domain 2 should be the learning environment. This includes the classroom culture, the interactions in the classroom, established routines and procedures, and the teacher's use of physical space. When observing Domain 3, your mindset should be to observe the core of teaching, for example communicating clearly and accurately, using questioning and discussion techniques: engaging students in activities that promote learning, providing feedback to students, and demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness.

Discussion:

How do you provide feedback to teachers after an observation? You may want to share some of the aspects below.

- strategies that are effective
- challenges you've had with providing feedback
- setting

- time of day
- preferences

2:30 Activity 5: Providing Feedback on Domain 2 and 3 via the Teachscape Platform Protocol

Goals:
- To determine if the protocol is a realistic resource to communicate to teachers about their instructional goals
- To adjust the protocol as needed to be user friendly
- To provide a systematic way of facilitating a goal-setting conference that will promote teacher growth and feedback

Directions:
Review the Providing Feedback on Domain 2 and 3 via the Teachscape Platform Protocol

1. Review the PostConference protocol.
2. Determine if the document is a realistic resource to use when conducting goal-setting conferences.
3. Make suggested modifications to the document.
4. Generate question prompts that will promote teacher feedback and reflection.
5. Share your questions for your group on the Google document.
6. Review the responses from your colleagues.

PIN Activity

Journaling:
Reflect on how the Providing Feedback on Domain 2 and 3 via the Teachscape Platform Protocol and the question prompts inform your skills to give feedback during a postconference.

Facilitation Notes:
As prework, we will analyze each element of the components in Domains 2 and 3. During the analysis phase of this activity, we will learn how to use the language of the FFT rubric to give feedback to teachers.

Activity 6: Feedback Resource Book for Domain 2 and 3

Goal:
- To use the elements of each component to create generic feedback and generate resources that could be used during observation time

Directions Part 1:
1. Brainstorm possible instruction issues that may occur related to an element of the component.

2. Create generic a feedback statement for each instructional issue.
3. Find three articles or a book teachers could read to improve their performance.
4. Find two videos teachers could use to develop a better understanding of the element and how the element should accurately play out in the lesson.
5. Provide two–three strategies teachers could use to improve their practice.

Facilitation Notes:
Now that you have generic feedback notes you will use the generic feedback samples to imbed comments in the lesson plan document in the appropriate place.

Directions: Part 2
1. We are going to review a previous observation you conducted using the Teachscape platform.
2. Provide feedback to the teacher using your generic feedback and resource document.
3. How is your feedback different from what you have written before?

4:35 Wrap-up Activity and Reflection

Goal:
- To reflect on the knowledge and strategies learned in Session 2 of *The Feedback Institute.*

Directions:
1. Participants are in small groups, and each group calls out one important point from the workshop content.
2. Rotate around the room, hearing from each group.
3. Continue rotating until no groups have unique points left to share.
4. If possible, create clusters or headings for themes can help participants understand the workshop material.

4:45 Complete Evaluations: Plusses and Deltas, Formal Evaluation

Day 3

Setting: Large classroom

Equipment: Ten round tables, 100 chairs, speakers, Internet access, email access, Google documents access, and LCD projector

Participants Responsibly: Please bring your laptop.

Materials: 100 copies of the Summative Conference Guide

7:45 Sign-in and name tag distribution

8:00 Introduction of the Goals of the Seminar

Goals of the Seminar:

- To improve the knowledge, skills, and disposition of school administrators in providing written and verbal feedback to teachers
- To help school administrators learn feedback structures that will support teacher growth of instructional practice to increase student learning
- To support the use of a research-based instructional framework to inform the evaluation and feedback process

Review of the Agenda

Review of the Session Norms

Review of the Purpose of the Feedback Institute

8:15 Icebreaker: Act and React

Materials:
Pens or pencils
Pieces of paper

Time:
15 minutes

Objective:
To provide participants with the opportunity to get to know their colleagues.

Instructions:
Act and React is a funny icebreaker in which players randomly select a sheet of paper that has an occurrence on it (for example, winning a million dollars in the lottery) and they must react to the occurrence using animated expressions, gestures, and words.

Feel free to break into groups. Pass out sheets of paper and pens to the participants.

Have each participant write an event on the paper—Be creative! Examples of events can include

- being surprised by a large, aggressive bear in the woods
- winning the lottery
- being proposed marriage with an engagement ring
- getting fired by an incompetent boss
- making the game winning pass to win the Super Bowl
- falling in love
- getting accolades on and important report

Once everyone writes an event, fold the paper once and put them in a hat or empty bag for participants to select from. Ask one student from each group to randomly select an event from the hat or bag. Instruct them to react to this event, without explicitly giving away what the event is. Choose a time limit (usually 30 seconds to a minute works well). When you say "Go!" have them simultaneously react to their event using exaggerated gestures, facial expressions, and their voice.

8:20 Review of your Personal Interactive Notebook (PIN)

Directions:
Continue to use the PIN throughout the seminar for note taking and reflection before, during, and after activities as we progress through the seminar.

Facilitation Notes
We have completed the feedback resource book for Domains 1, 2, and 3. Feedback can be even more valuable when teachers can see how one domain impacts other domains. Domain 1 deals with lesson planning, Domain 2 deals with cultivating the environment that allows you to implement the lesson in Domain 3. We will complete an activity to help you see how alignment takes place during the instructional delivery.

8:25 Activity 1: Feedback Alignment

Goal:
- To understand the alignment of the components in each domain and how the alignment may be demonstrated in a teacher's professional practice

Directions:
1. Select a component card.
2. Review the domain/component/element alignment.
3. Write a brief description of how this alignment may be demonstrated in a teacher's professional practice.

9:25 Everyday Check-up Formative Assessments

Facilitation Notes

During our daily practice, we create opportunities to conduct brief visits. We call these visits "Everyday Check-up Formative Assessments." The next activity will introduce new strategies to use with teachers in your building. A three-minute classroom check-up model includes six steps:

1. Notice whether students appear to be oriented in the work (you may question one student).
2. Review the curricular objectives being taught.
3. Observe instructional practices;
4. "Walk the Walls" to look for information on what has been taught previously or may be taught in the future.
5. Note the existence of any safety or health issues.
6. Follow-up with an informal face-to-face conversation, leave a note, or send an email.

Goal:

- To understand the "Everyday Check-up Formative Assessments" strategies

Directions:

1. Introduce the following "Everyday Check-up Formative Assessments" strategies.
    - Two Stars and a Wish
    - Glow and Grow
    - Warm and Cold Feedback
    - Traffic Light
    - ABC Feedback
    - Three Keepers and One Polisher
2. Observe the lesson, selecting one or more of the components/elements of instruction to provide feedback using each "Everyday Check-up Strategy."
3. Fold your paper in half (hot dog fold).
4. Open you paper.
5. Now fold your paper in thirds the other way.
6. You should have 6 blocks on your foldable.
7. Use the foldable to write one Drop-by feedback strategy per box.
8. Your Drop-by strategy responses should be based on the video you are about to view.

10:35 Break

10:55 Feedback Resource Book for each Component in Domain 4

Goal:

- To use the elements of each component to create generic feedback and generate resources that could be used during observation time

Directions:

Using the elements of each component, create generic feedback and generate resources that could be used during observation time.

1. Brainstorm possible instruction issues that may occur related to the element.
2. Create a generic feedback statement for each instructional issue.
3. Find three articles or a book teachers could read to improve their performance.
4. Find two videos teachers could use to develop a better understanding of the element and how the element should accurately play out in the lesson.
5. Provide two–three strategies teachers could use to improve their practice.

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Summative Evaluation

Facilitation Notes:

This summative evaluation conference is conducted to determine the extent to which the teacher has changed as a result of the evaluation process, professional development opportunities, and other professional responsibilities. Review the Summative Evaluation Conference Guide.

Activity 2: Summative Feedback Practice

Goal:

- To improve the evaluators skill to host a summative evaluation conference

Directions (Each partner must have a turn):

1. Choose a partner.
2. Share evaluation information for one of the teachers in your building.
3. Work with your partner to write a summative evaluation script that you would use to guide a summative evaluation conference with this particular teacher. (Use the Summative Evaluation Conference Guide to frame the script for the conference.)
4. Now role-play your summative evaluation conference. One of you will play the role of the administrator and the other will play the teacher.

Discussion:

- How is the summative evaluation conference different from the postobservation conference?

- What are your strengths and areas of concern? (Allow one of your colleagues to provide you with ideas to address your areas of concern).

2:30 Facing the Feedback Conference Scheduling

Goal:

- To learn to schedule feedback conferences and effectively complete other daily school tasks

Directions:

1. Count the number of instructional leaders in the school.
2. Figure out the leader-to-core-teacher ratio. (*The goal is to get to 15 to 1 for weekly observations, or 30 to 1 for bi-weekly observations.*)
3. If this is a large school, determine if the principal will solely manage other instructional leaders or if principal will also manage some teachers directly
4. Get some yellow post-it notes.
    - If the ratio is 8:1 or less, write "Teacher 1" through "Teacher 8" on each yellow post-it—one post-it for each teacher
    - If the ratio is between 8:1 and 15:1, write two teachers' names on each yellow post-it ("Teacher 1-2", "Teachers 3-4", etc.)
    - If the ratio is more than 15:1: write four teacher names on each yellow post-it ("Teachers 1-4," "Teachers 5-8", etc.)
5. **Task 1—Green:**

Block out all the time where the principal will most often be busy with student/parent/external issues: *when principal must be with students, often have parent meetings, receive tours, etc.*

6. **Task 2—Yellow Part 1:**

Write on post-its each nonteacher meeting the principal will have in coming school year (individual, team, PD, etc.). Each post-it represents one hour

7. **Task 2—Yellow, Part II:**

Post each teacher the principal will meet with weekly. You already made the post-its.

8. **Task 3—Orange/Pink:**
    - Map out the core times when the principal can do observations.
    - Goal: observation time occurs <u>before</u> principal will meet with the teacher each week
    - Goal: 10–15 minutes per teacher the principal will observe.
    - Thus, one post-it (1 hour) represents four observations.
9. **Task 4—Blue:**
    - Identify the big-picture work time (2–3 hours).
    - Block out one–two times in the week when the principal can work <u>uninterrupted.</u>

- During this time, the principal needs to be able to practically disappear (leave the office) and have peers manage anything other than a crisis

Discussion:

1. Where might this schedule not work? Is there a change we could make to mitigate that issue?
2. What about this schedule makes regular observation happen more consistently?
3. What are the big takeaways for building your principal's schedule and his/her leadership team's schedules?

3:30 Question and Answer with Supervisor Expert

4:30 Plusses, Deltas, and Next Steps

4:45 Evaluations

Appendix B: Teachers' Interview Guide Questions

1. Describe your experience being evaluated using the FFT process.
   1a. How would you describe the pre-observation process?
   1b. How would you describe the postobservation process?
   1c. Describe the type of feedback received during the FFT postobservation with administrators?

2. What is your perception of the FFT process?
   2a. What is your view of the pre-observation experience in particular?
   2b. What is your view of the postobservation process in light of self-reflection?
   2c. What are your views on the implementation of the FFT evaluation system in terms of challenges and benefits?
   2d. What elements of the FFT evaluation system would you improve? How and why?

3. How would you regard school administrators' role in the district's evaluation process?
4. How would you regard teachers' roles in the district's evaluation process?
5. How did the district's evaluation process help to assess and guide your instructional practice?
6. What impact do you believe this evaluation process has on your professional growth?

6a. How did the evaluation process assist teacher-administrators collaboration?

6b. How did the evaluation process assist knowledge sharing?

7. How did the information in the FFT postevaluation feedback improve your instructional practice?

   7a. How did the evaluation process' encourage on self-reflection?

   7b. How was the self-reflection beneficial?

8. How did administrative recommendations, based on the FFT evaluation, help to guide and assess your instructional practice?

Appendix C: Administrators' Interview Guide Questions

1. Describe your experience using the FFT process to evaluate teachers.
   1a. How would you describe the pre-observation process?
   1b. How would you describe the postobservation process?
   1c. Describe the type of feedback given to teachers during the FFT pre-observation?
2. How do you think the feedback given during pre-observation observation helped teachers with teaching and learning in the classroom?
3. How do you think the feedback given during postobservation helped teachers with self-reflection?
4. What is your perception of the overall FFT process?
   4a. What is your view of the pre-observation experience through as an administrator's lens?
   4b. What is your view of the postobservation experience as an administrator?
   4c. What are your views on the implementation of the FFT evaluation system in terms of challenges and benefits?
   4d. What elements of the FFT evaluation system would you improve? How and why?
   4e. How would you regard school administrators' role in the evaluation process?
   4f. How would you regard teachers' roles in the evaluation process?

5. Based on your experience as an evaluator, how do you think the evaluation process has helped teachers assess and guide their teaching and learning in the classroom?
6. How do you think the FFT tool strengthened your skills in assessing and guiding teachers' instructional practice?
7. What impact do you believe the evaluation process has on your professional growth?

Appendix D: Permission of Use for Towe's Interview Questions

Permission Use Data Interview Question

2 messages

Walden University <latonya.wright2@waldenu.edu> Mon, Apr 13, 2015 at 7:55 AM
To: "pbtowe@aol.com" <pbtowe@aol.com>

Subject: Permission Use Data Collection Tool

Good morning Dr. Towe,

I am Latonya Wright, a current doctoral candidate in the Ed.D Program at Walden University. My Project Study title is Assessing and Guiding Instructional Practice: Administrators' and Teachers' Perceptions for the Framework for Teaching Evaluation. I would like to use your data collection tools used in your dissertation titled: An Examination of the Role of a Teacher Evaluation System and It's Influence on Teacher Professional Growth in Four Urban High Schools as a foundation to create interview questions for my research.

Therefore, I would like your permission to use your data collection tool as a foundation for interview questions that will be used in my study. Specifically, I will modify your questions to be more aligned with my work. Using your questions as foundation to create my interview questions would serve my purpose well.

Thank you in advance for any assistance that you may offer.

Sincerely,

Latonya Wright

Doctoral Student

Latonya.wright2@waldenu.edu - School

301-996-5334

Sent from my iPhone

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pbtowe <pbtowe@aol.com> Mon, Apr 13, 2015 at 7:58 AM
To: latonya.wright2@waldenu.edu

Good Morning, Ms. Wright,

I enjoyed speaking with you on yesterday.

Thank you for requesting permission to modify and use my interview questions as foundational questions in your study entitled "Assessing and Guiding Instructional Practice: Administrators' and Teachers' Perceptions for the Framework for Teaching Evaluation". I gladly grant my permission. If I may be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I wish you much success.

Sincerely,
Princess B. Towe, Ed.D.

Appendix E: Letter of Cooperation

Kola K. Sunmonu, Ph.D.
Director, Dept. of Research & Evaluation

April 29, 2015

Ms. Latonya Wright
6800 Geneva Lane
Temple Hills, MD 20748

Dear Ms. Wright:

Your application to conduct the research titled "*Assessing and Guiding Intructional Practice: Administrators' and Teachers' Perception of the Framework for Teaching Evaluation*" has been reviewed by the Prince George's County Public Schools' research application reviewers. Based on the examination, I am pleased to inform you that the Department of Research & Evaluation has granted conditional authorization for you to proceed with your study.

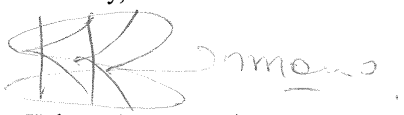
Authorization for this research extends through the 2014-2015 school year only. If you are not able to complete your data collection during this period, you must submit a written request for an extension and that request must be approved. Each request for an extension must be accompanied with a status report of the study. The district reserves the right to withdraw approval at any time or decline to extend the approval if the implementation of your study adversely impacts any of the school district's activities.

Please secure written approval of the principal of each school where you plan to conduct your research on the enclosed Principal Permission to Conduct Research Study forms. The original signed copies of these forms should be forwarded to my attention and a copy given to the respective principal. Regarding the Informed Consent form, please be aware that only copies of the approved form (attached herewith and containing the stamp '**APPROVED**') can be distributed to your target subjects. Should you revise the consent form or any other document submitted with your application, the revised documents must be approved by this office before being used in the proposed study.

Finally, it is important that the procedure detailed in the proposal submitted be followed while conducting your research. An abstract and one copy of the final report should be forwarded to

the Department of Research & Evaluation within one month of successful defense of your dissertation. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. I can be reached at (301) 780-6807 or by email, kolawole.sunmonu@pgcps.org. I wish you success in your study.

Sincerely,



Kola K. Sunmonu, Ph.D.
Director, Department of Research & Evaluation

KKS:kks
Enclosures
cc: Lisa D. Price, PMP, CGPM, BSP, Executive Director