

Teacher Growth in the Evaluation Process

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ABSTRACT

Teacher evaluation has a history of challenges, from disagreement over its fundamental purpose to questions of its significance to teachers. Studies (Barnett & McCormick, 2004; Frase & Streshly, 1994; Machell, 1995; Milanowski, 2005; Milanowski & Heneman, 2001; Ovando & Harris, 1993; Stiggins & Duke, 1988) have consistently identified poor feedback, a lack of credibility, and an absence of trust as key issues that impact the effectiveness of an evaluator in the process. The purpose of teacher evaluation may be seen on a continuum from accountability, summarizing the progress of a teacher for the year, to improvement, motivating a teacher on to growth throughout the year and beyond. With the continually-expanding knowledge base on learning principles, a commitment to improvement and growth is essential to optimally meeting the needs of learners. There is a need to better understand the connection between principal practices in the evaluation process and teacher openness to professional growth.

In this qualitative study, data from interviews and assorted artifacts were examined to ascertain what an elementary principal can do in the teacher evaluation process to promote the professional development of teachers. Elementary principals and teachers from a school division in Virginia were interviewed. The sources of data for this study were interview records, field observation notes, and archival data in the form of written observation summaries and professional growth goals, year-end evaluations, and the evaluation handbook and policies of the school division.

The data in this study supported the conclusion that elementary principals do not use the evaluation process to promote professional growth. It was apparent in the interview data however, that the belief that evaluation should foster growth was very strong in this school division. From the study emerged principles of practice that could indeed encourage a climate of growth in the elementary setting.

DEDICATION

To my husband, Gary, and my children – Landon, Steadman, Culvan, Jordan, and Whitney. Also, to my mother, Myrtle, and my mother-in-law, Rachel.

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A special thank you goes to Dr. Glen Earthman, my committee chair. His gracious, kind manner of providing suggestions and guidance throughout this project has been a blessing. I am also grateful for the work of the other committee members: Dr. Travis Twiford, Dr. Carol Cash, and Dr. Winston Odom. The willingness of this committee to see me through the dissertation process successfully is greatly appreciated.

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I also acknowledge the support of my family through this process. Their willingness to allow me the time and space to complete this study is greatly appreciated. I hope that in some manner my pursuit of a doctorate will motivate my children to reach for higher academic achievements in their lives.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

In a series of journal articles in the early 1920's, Harold Rugg wrote about how Army officers rated their subordinates in the evaluation system of the military and tried to determine whether or not the results of the study could be transferred to the field of education. Rugg explained in great detail how the scale for determining competence in the Army was developed. He presented the purpose of evaluating as "diagnosis and improvement through conscious effort" (Rugg, 1922, p. 84).

Rugg expressed such surprise at how the evaluation of human character hinges so firmly on the "intimacy of acquaintance" (Rugg, 1921, p. 489), on how well the officers knew their subordinates. He uncovered the incredible challenge of securing reliable ratings, so that scores of different evaluators agree. As officers were trained in the implementation of the evaluation system, Rugg discovered that it is "important to evaluate the competency of the rater" (Rugg, 1921, p. 489). Even though these early research efforts did not specifically identify the phrase "halo effect" to describe the tendency of evaluators to consistently rate high, the halo concept is attributed to Rugg in a later study (Medley & Coker, 1987). In this early research, Rugg tried to clarify the purpose of evaluation, understand the impact of appraiser-appraisee relationships, and consider the importance of rater competency.

More than eighty years later, educators are still faced with challenges similar to those recognized by Rugg. How does the evaluator-evaluatee relationship impact the perceived effectiveness of evaluation? Can evaluation be undertaken in such a way that professional growth is fostered? What is the overall influence of leadership on the process of evaluation? Rugg's introductory analysis and findings provide the foundation for answers on how to utilize

evaluation effectively to improve an employee's performance. In transferring his conclusions to the education arena, a closer look at fostering teacher growth in the teacher evaluation process needs to be considered.

Statement of the Problem

There is no hesitation with most researchers and practitioners to point out the challenges with teacher evaluations evident over the past few decades. One specific challenge made evident in the research is a lack of emphasis on professional growth in the teacher evaluation system. There is a need to determine if it is possible for principals to craft their involvement in the routine evaluation system so that professional growth is fostered. A look at principal practices to impact growth in evaluation and teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of those practices is warranted.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to ascertain if elementary principals can effect teacher professional growth through the evaluation process. What measures can a principal take, what practices can be followed, to promote the effective development of teachers? Data will be systematically gathered and analyzed, and the principles will surface from the data.

Research Questions

The central research question for this study is: *Can principals promote the professional development of teachers through the evaluation process?* Sub-questions that will guide the study are:

- (a) What specific behaviors and practices of principals promote professional development?
- (b) Do teachers think these behaviors and practices are effective?

Significance

The teacher evaluation process has a history fraught with challenges on the definition of good teaching, the vagueness of evaluative ratings, the competence of evaluators, and the overall disconnect of the process from teacher growth. As the education profession moves toward the goal of continuous improvement and growth, measures that will steer teachers toward increased professional growth are crucial. If a principal can utilize specific strategies to foster teacher growth through the law-mandated annual evaluation process, it is in the best interests of all to do so.

The knowledge base for effective, research-based instruction is continually expanding; the needs of children are continually changing; and teachers must be continually growing into that expanded knowledge base to meet those changing needs. Federal mandates for student achievement are steadily pushing educators to meet specific benchmarks that rise to higher levels every few years. These mandates for student achievement have a connection with the federal funding of education. Teachers who do not maintain a commitment to professional growth run the risk of becoming stagnant and reaching an impasse with student achievement.

In the role of instructional leader, a principal must utilize all possible avenues to keep the fire of teacher growth stoked. A better understanding of the connection between the evaluation system and professional growth is needed. This study was designed to add to the knowledge base of how to foster professional growth through evaluation.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms and concepts will be used in this study and are defined in this section.

Professional Growth refers to the process whereby teachers undergo various types of experiences of learning concepts and strategies that improve the quality of the instruction they provide.

Evaluation Process is the formal system a school division utilizes to summarize and assess the progress of teachers.

Limitations

Data developed for this study will emerge from documents and interviews of a small number of teachers in a school division located in the state of Virginia. Evaluation can be controversial, sensitive, and very personal to the individual teacher and even the school division as a whole. Gaining access to documents and obtaining permission to question teachers for this research is challenging due to the highly sensitive nature of the subject of evaluation. For these reasons, the sample for this study is not large, and the school division chosen is one familiar with the researcher. A small population does limit the generalizability of the findings.

Due to the selection process of the participants, the researcher examined data from voluntary teachers who have experienced successful professional growth in the past. This limited the findings to a positive perspective on what can effectively promote growth, rather than limiting the findings to the opposite perspective of what does not work in fostering growth. Four of the teacher participants were totally unknown to the researcher, and the other two teacher participants were known only by sight. Readers need to consider their own individual circumstances and situations in making decisions on the use of the findings.

Organization of the Document

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter One provides an introduction to the study with a statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, definition of terms, and statement of limitations. Chapter Two supports the importance of the study with a review of the literature on the topic. The methodology, with sampling, data collection and analysis, is included in Chapter Three. Chapter Four presents and describes the findings, and Chapter Five provides the outcomes, conclusions, and implications from the study. Recommendations for further research are given, and references and appendices are included.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Background and Purposes of Teacher Evaluation

The literature is replete with descriptions of a two-fold rationale for effectively evaluating teachers: accountability and improvement. Stronge and Tucker (2003) calls these two the “fundamental purposes” (p. 4) of evaluation. Danielson and McGreal (2000) uses the terms “quality assurance” and “professional development” (p. 8) to describe accountability and improvement.

The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation may have spearheaded the progress toward effective change in evaluation procedures in several areas. The Committee, comprised of representatives from key organizations such as the American Association of School Administrators, the American Psychological Association, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, identified critical attributes of evaluation systems. The product they developed allows users to ensure the reliability and validity of their evaluation systems (Stronge, 2006). These standards have served as a reference, or even a foundation, for much of the research and the evaluation manuals that have been developed since 1988.

The guidelines from the Joint Committee have little detail on relationships and growth, however. The standard on “Interactions with Evaluatees” briefly addresses the teacher-administrator relationship in evaluation with “the evaluation should address evaluatees in a professional, considerate, and courteous manner so that their self-esteem, motivation, professional reputations, performance, and attitude toward personnel evaluation are enhanced or, at least, not needlessly damaged” (p. 40). Professional growth is treated in the “Follow Up and Impact” section of the report. It deals marginally with the process of following up the evaluation

with conferences so that the person evaluated knows about the follow-up procedures. The report contains the statement “evaluations should be followed up, so that users and evaluatees are aided to understand the results and take appropriate actions” (p. 67). Some guidelines are provided that include the development of professional growth plans.

Several studies after the development of the Standards for Educational Evaluation, however, do indicate that teacher growth is becoming more important in current evaluation emphases (Bradshaw, 2002; Loup, Garland, Ellett, & Rugutt, 1996; Mo, Conners, & McCormick, 1998; Ovando & Harris, 1993). Stronge and Tucker (2003) included trends toward professional growth and collegiality in their outline of evolving directions that they believe teacher evaluation is taking:

1. Teacher evaluation and school reform are increasingly intertwined.
2. Multiple data sources are being used more frequently to document performance.
3. Involvement of multiple supervisors in the evaluation process.
4. Greater complexity in evaluation design.
5. Stronger connections between evaluation and professional development.
6. Hierarchy is giving way to collegiality.
7. Use of computer software to support and manage the evaluation process (pp. 83-84).

These trends cause the evaluation process to be of more significance for both teachers and administrators. There is more accountability, more tools and personnel to determine whether or not goals have been reached, and more connectedness between the progress of a teacher and the improvement of the school as a whole.

The literature (Barnett & McCormick, 2004; Chow, Wong, Yeung, & Mo, 2002; Ebmeier

& Nicklaus, 1999; Machell, 1995; Milanowski, 2005) presents a steady change in direction for teacher roles in the evaluation process. In the past, perceptions were that evaluation was done to teachers; whereas, the goal now is for evaluation to be done cooperatively with teachers. Administrative roles in the evaluation process are evolving as well. A more collegial approach in the process of evaluation is being seen more frequently in the public schools (Barnett & McCormick, 2004; Calabrese, Sherwood, Fast, & Womack, 2004; Ebmeier & Nicklaus, 1999; Ovando, 2005; Stiggins & Duke, 1988). Evaluation is no longer seen as a snapshot collection of what is seen in two or three lesson observations. On the contrary, evaluation has moved to a higher plane as principals and teachers work to make the evaluation process meaningful to professional growth. Administrators are working to change the *formative-summative* evaluation challenge into the more meaningful *teacher growth-student achievement*.

A persistent criticism of the evaluation process has been issues surrounding the role of the evaluator. Some principals have not even managed to complete the mandatory number of formal observations in their evaluation system (Kimball, 2002). Beyond meeting the basic procedural requirements of an evaluation system, however, the quality of what actually has been accomplished has come under scrutiny. Studies of perceptions of teachers of the evaluation process have consistently identified poor feedback (Frase & Streshly, 1994; Heneman & Milanowski, 2003; Machell, 1995; Ovando & Harris, 1993), a lack of credibility (Haefele, 1993; Machell, 1995; Milanowski & Heneman, 2001; Stiggins & Duke, 1988), and an absence of trust (Barnett & McCormick, 2004; Machell, 1995; Stiggins & Duke, 1988; Stronge, 1991) as key issues that cause the evaluation process to be meaningless and merely something to be endured for many teachers.

The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1988) identified ten

purposes for effective teacher evaluation. These purposes are:

1. Evaluate entry-level educators before certifying or licensing them to teach
2. Identify promising job candidates
3. Assess candidates' qualifications to carry out particular assignments
4. Guide hiring decisions
5. Assess performance of educators for tenure and promotion decisions
6. Determine recognition and awards for meritorious contributions
7. Assist faculty and administrators in identifying strengths and needs for improvement
8. Plan meaningful staff development activities
9. Develop remediation goals and activities, and, when necessary
10. Support fair, valid, and legal decisions for termination (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1988, pp. 6-7).

These ten statements further clarify the accountability and improvement aspects of teacher evaluation processes. In addition to these purpose statements of the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, Peterson and Peterson (2006) offers two other reasons to evaluate teachers: to inform audiences such as legislators and parents of teacher performance, and to provide data for researchers.

Practitioners have presented foundational aspects of teacher evaluation in various ways. Danielson and McGreal (2000) presents three essential elements of a blueprint for teacher evaluation:

1. A coherent definition of the domain of teaching, including decisions concerning the standard for acceptable performance

2. Techniques and procedures for assessing all aspects of teaching
3. Trained evaluators who can make consistent judgments about performance, based on evidence of the teaching as manifested in the procedures (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 21).

As Danielson and McGreal present the challenges of effectively establishing these three essential elements in an evaluation system, they acknowledge that the demands of quality assurance have the potential to stifle professional growth. They advocate for an evaluation system that is also based on reflection of practice, collaboration with colleagues, and self-assessment. They maintain that this will foster the development of a professional learning community that will promote teacher growth (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). This is echoed by Stronge and Tucker (2003) as they present the key elements of a constructive climate for evaluation as communication, commitment, and collaboration.

The research of Stiggins and Duke (1988) points to several key components of effective evaluation, evaluation that leads to professional growth. This work identified five components and their corresponding critical attributes, as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1

Attributes of Key Components of Effective Evaluation

Component	Attributes
Teacher	Instructional competence, personal expectations, openness to suggestions, orientation to change, subject knowledge, experience
Evaluator	Credibility, persuasiveness, patience, trust, track record, modeling
Procedures	Performance criteria and standards, data collection procedures
Feedback	Amount of feedback, level of formality, ways to communication, specificity of the information, frequency of feedback, format, timing of feedback, feedback relative to performance standards
Context	History of labor relations, time spent on evaluation, resources available

These five components surfaced repeatedly in the interview data as being crucial to the evaluation process fostering professional growth. They include the people who participate in the evaluation – the teacher and the evaluator – and the nature and quality of the practices used for the evaluation – the procedures, feedback, and context. The attributes listed in the chart were found to have an impact on professional growth. For example, growth is more apt to occur if teachers are very competent, expect a great deal of themselves, are open to constructive suggestions, are open to change, are knowledgeable about the content they teach, and have experienced useful evaluations previously.

Two landmark studies, almost a decade apart, investigated the purposes of teacher

evaluation as identified by the 100 largest school divisions in the United States. The first study was completed by Ellett and Garland in 1987. Nine years later a replication of the original study was completed by Loup et al. (1996).

In Ellett and Garland's classic 1987 study, 80 of the 100 largest school divisions in the United States responded to a survey (*Teacher Evaluation Practices Survey – TEPS*) on the purposes of teacher evaluation (Ellett & Garland, 1987). Packets with the TEPS and a request for supporting documents were mailed to the superintendents, and two follow up letters were sent to nonresponders, resulting in an overall 80% return rate. In the superintendents' rankings of teacher evaluation purposes professional development of teachers was number one, with accountability second. In the survey questions on uses of evaluation results, however, development of remediation plans for teachers with identified deficiencies received the largest percentage of responses, followed closely by teacher dismissal.

It is curious that the response choices on Ellett and Garland's TEPS instrument for the question on uses of evaluation results were all related to dealing with marginal teachers, awarding merit pay, certification decisions, and contract renewal or tenure (Ellett & Garland, 1987). Why would the researchers not offer "professional development for teachers" as one of the options for utilizing results of evaluations, particularly since it was offered as one of the options for the purposes for evaluations?

Almost a decade later, Loup et al. (1996) replicated this study of the 100 largest school divisions in the United States, with 68 of the districts participating. As the researchers modified the TEPS instrument to reflect new trends in teacher evaluation systems, "teacher growth/professional development" was indeed added to the listing of how evaluation results were used in school divisions (Loup et al., 1996). In the rankings for the purposes of teacher

evaluation, Loup et al. found accountability and professional development of teachers to be regarded as equally important, with the highest ranking. Accountability rose in significance from where it was in the 1987 study. In the survey question on the uses of evaluations, the accountability factor was also at play: of the ten answer options, the three with the largest percentages of responses were development of remediation, teacher dismissal, and evaluation of instruction. The fourth largest percentage, however, was teacher growth/professional development.

The researchers interpreted these trends as a possible shift in thinking by the school division administrators from an emphasis on summative, to more use of formative strategies with teacher evaluations (Loup et al., 1996). The finding would be more convincing if the “teacher growth/professional development” use for evaluation was included as a choice in the initial 1987 TEPS instrument so the comparison could be a truer one.

The two fundamental purposes of evaluation typically manifest themselves in the two aspects of evaluation: accountability relates to summative evaluation and improvement relates to formative evaluation. Stronge (1995) says these two branches are at times described as “incompatible,” (p. 131) but notes that both purposes must be effectively addressed for an evaluation system to be successful.

These two branches of evaluation have been the source of heated debate. Popham (1988) terms the blending of summative and formative “a grave conceptual error” (p. 88). He presented three staffing options that would allow school divisions to split these roles. One option is the separation of functions: one administrator in the school works on formative evaluation, and another works on summative. The second option he proposes is for a teacher to assume the formative responsibilities, and an administrator to maintain the summative aspects of evaluation.

His third option is for school administrators to take up all formative responsibilities, and for central office administrators to hold up the summative end of the process. Scriven (1988) describes these same three options, and maintains the challenges of one person completing both formative and summative evaluations with,

One might as well expect clients to seek advice from attorneys who are doubling as judges on the same case. Furthermore, teachers getting help from the person who will judge them is akin to teaching to the test or authors reviewing their own works (p. 114).

There is evidence that both goals can be achieved by one evaluator, however.

Milanowski (2005) studied the evaluation process with the formative and summative roles split for a group of newly-hired teachers. Part of the teachers had peer mentors providing formative feedback and administrators giving summative input. The other teachers had formative and summative feedback provided by a peer. He found that “There were no major differences between the groups in terms of openness to discussion of difficulties, reception and acceptance of performance feedback, stress, turnover intentions, actual turnover, or performance improvement” (p. 153).

In a study of elementary school teachers in Hong Kong, senior teachers were identified by survey results as more competent evaluators for fostering improvement than were principals. However, the teachers still preferred that principals be their evaluator, for both formative and summative purposes (Chow et al., 2002). The researchers speculated that this may be due, at least in part, to the Chinese traditional bureaucratic relationship between supervisors and subordinates.

Frase and Steshley (1994) acknowledged the formative-summative debate, but expressed with certainty that a combination of interpersonal skills and training would allow for one

administrator to effectively handle both facets of evaluation. Kimball (2002) studied appraisal in schools that had moved beyond the pilot stage in implementing new evaluation systems. His qualitative research did not demonstrate a disconnect at all between formative and summative evaluation; teachers found it quite appropriate for evaluations to cover both accountability and growth under one evaluator, and did not see a conflict with this practice.

A trend toward a formative emphasis for evaluation has been acknowledged by some researchers and theorists (Bradshaw, 2002; Loup et al., 1996; Mo et al., 1998; Ovando & Harris, 1993). This perspective is tempered by the opinions of others, who purport that evaluation to improve practice is “oversold,” and “laypersons want teachers who have documentation of good teaching and results and not ones who merely have good goals for improvement for the current year” (Peterson & Peterson, 2006, pp. 8-9).

Fostering Professional Growth through Evaluation

Professional growth, whether or not it is the primary purpose of evaluation, most assuredly is a valued goal established for teacher appraisal in typical school systems. How can an evaluation system generate professional growth in teachers? Stiggins and Duke (1988) were perplexed with the disengagement they found between evaluation and growth, and began a series of studies on evaluation with a specific effort to determine what barriers were in place that perhaps discouraged growth. In case studies of teachers and administrators from four school districts commonalities in the evaluation systems were found with the use of clinical supervision elements: pre-conference, observation, and post-conference. This process was accomplished once or twice per year by a principal or assistant principal, and resulted in both written and oral feedback. Other similarities among the four districts included the absence of other data sources (peer, student, or self evaluations, or student achievement) and the absence of rating scales.

Administrator perspectives in the case studies expressed the concerns of time, trust, clarity, and an emphasis more on meeting board requirements than on improvement.

Representatives from each of the districts – a district administrator, a principal, and a teacher – conferred as a team after the interviews to give further input and clarity. The participants distilled their feedback into a list of four barriers to formative assessment, in priority order:

1. Evaluators often lack important skills needed to evaluate teachers
2. There is often insufficient time for both evaluation and follow up
3. The process for linking staff development and teacher evaluation is not clear
4. Trust in the evaluation system often is lacking among educators functioning

within that system (Stiggins & Duke, 1988, pp. 21-22).

In a subsequent round of research, 33 teachers -- eight of them volunteers and the remainder were recommended by colleagues -- who had experienced professional growth in conjunction with their evaluation process were involved in case studies, to determine the evaluation aspects that seemed to foster growth. Interview results were analyzed and organized into five key components: teacher, evaluator, procedures, feedback, and context, as depicted in Table 1. These components were described as “the five keys to success in teacher evaluation” (Stiggins & Duke, 1988, p. 80). The researchers identified important attributes to consider for each of the five components.

For the last of this series of studies, a questionnaire was developed incorporating the facets and concepts gleaned from previous efforts in this research. The Teacher Evaluation Profile (TEP) served as an instrument to describe and rate the quality of a teacher’s most recent appraisal, and indicate its effects on him or her (Stiggins & Duke, 1988). The Profile was

completed by 470 teachers from five school districts. The instrument had 55 items, with an internal consistency reliability of .93. From the questionnaire the researchers gleaned 20 items that they perceived as being central to growth, with 7 of them relating to evaluator credibility and trust and 7 relating to feedback. The two components of evaluator creditability and feedback were perceived as the most crucial to the impact of evaluation in these studies.

Attributes of the evaluator and attributes of feedback, and, additionally, attributes of the evaluation procedures, had the greatest affect on teachers' perceptions of evaluation. The two components of feedback and evaluator are evident in much of the research of the past 20 years, as is documented in Table 2. Table 2 presents a list of research studies by author along with selected attributes as identified in the individual studies.

Table 2

*Studies Presenting Evidence that Attributes of Stiggins and Duke's Key Components Impact**Teacher Growth through Evaluation*

	Teacher	Evaluator	Procedures	Feedback	Context
Stiggins & Duke (1988)	X	X	X	X	X
Ovando & Harris (1993)				X	X
Frase & Streshly (1994)		X		X	
Machell (1995)		X	X	X	
Blase & Blase (1999)		X		X	
Ovando (2001)		X		X	X
Heneman & Milanowski (2003)				X	

The table indicates that all of the researchers found feedback was a very important component of an effective evaluation system, and seven of the nine studies found that the evaluator was a key attribute. Effective feedback during the evaluation process is one of the cornerstones of systems in which teacher growth is facilitated. Attributes of ideal feedback include, it is timely (Frase & Streshly, 1994; Machell, 1995; Ovando & Harris, 1993; Stiggins & Duke, 1988), specific (Blase & Blase, 1999; Machell, 1995; Stiggins & Duke, 1988), frequent (Machell, 1995; Stiggins & Duke, 1988), relative to standards (Heneman & Milanowski, 2003; Machell, 1995; Stiggins & Duke, 1988), and of an appropriate frequency (Machell, 1995;

Stiggins & Duke, 1988). These characteristics of ideal feedback are contingent upon their successful implementation by an effective evaluator.

Factors Impacting Evaluator Effectiveness

Since practically all of the aspects of evaluation flow through the evaluator, it stands to reason that the administrator who is evaluating can either make or break the system. “No system can succeed beyond the abilities of those implementing the program” (Stronge, 1991, p.79). Therefore, an effective evaluation system needs to have an evaluator who is knowledgeable about the purposes and possibilities of the system.

Credibility is a factor in evaluator effectiveness (Haefele, 1993; Machell, 1995; Milanowski & Heneman, 2001; Stiggins & Duke, 1988; Stronge, 1991). Haefele specifies the critical need for effective training for administrators on evaluation: “commitment to and involvement in a rigorous training program for evaluators will improve the validity, reliability, and ultimately the acceptability of the evaluation” (Haefele, 1993, p. 26). A lack of training is one of the barriers to effective growth-oriented evaluation identified by Stiggins and Duke (1988); the team that developed the list of barriers identified this as the number one priority. Machell (1995) found a moderate correlation, .497, between the credibility of an evaluator and the overall quality of an evaluation as perceived by teachers. In another study, teacher reaction to a new evaluation system was more negative when administrators were perceived as not collaborative in attitude and not qualified to evaluate (Milanowski & Heneman, 2001).

The literature review on teacher evaluation compiled by Colby, Bradshaw, and Joyner (2002) identified the leadership role of the evaluator as one of the five criteria for analyzing the effectiveness of teacher evaluation systems. For this theme, Colby, et al. identified the main ways in which leaders have a strong, positive role in evaluation. Strong leaders need to: (a)

possess knowledge and dispositions that help maximize the potential of teacher evaluation and its impact on professional growth, (b) focus on learning, (c) promote collaborative interactions with evaluatees, (d) provide useful feedback, and (e) facilitate reflection on practice.

Evaluator-evaluatee collaborative relationships can be elusive and challenging to achieve. Expectations and perceptions of the effectiveness of the evaluation process can be quite different for teachers and their evaluators. Calabrese et al. (2004) investigated the perceptions of teachers and principals in a qualitative study of a school's evaluation system. They examined the documents related to the evaluation conferences completed at teacher observations, held interviews with teachers and administrators, and had both parties respond to the system in a written format.

In reference to the evaluation conference after an observation, Calabrese et al. found that the primary intent for teachers was to finish the meeting quickly. Their source of discomfort often hinged upon their concern with the rating system, whether it exceeds expectations, meets expectations, or needs improvement. In contrast, many of the administrators saw the conference as "an opportunity to learn about instruction, discover what teachers were doing, and form relationships." (Calabrese et al., 2004, p. 113). The rating scale, however, seemed to be too vague, lacking in definition, and a potential source of conflict for administrators.

All in all, Calabrese, et al. found the evaluation conferences to be filled with suppressed negativity as reported by their respondents. Teachers held in check their questions of unfairness, ambiguity, subjectivity, and thoughts that conferences were a waste of time. The researchers found that strategies used by teachers to accomplish this included 1) refuse to argue, 2) do not share negative feelings, and 3) do not raise fairness issues (Calabrese et al., 2004). Principals fretted over the tense, uncomfortable tone of the conferences, and how the reactions of teachers

over a “needs improvement” rating clouded effective communication. Some administrators felt their input on developing the evaluation they were mandated to use was not sufficient. “In effect, principals emphasized the need for collaboration; yet, for the most part, there was little, if any, evidence of vertical or horizontal collaboration” (Calabrese et al., 2004, p. 115).

Stronge notes, “the process of evaluation builds upon a relationship between the evaluator and the evaluatee” (Stronge, 1991, p. 80). Only by building a sense of collaboration can an evaluator create trust in the evaluation system. An administrator needs to develop one-to-one relationships, conveying individual concern.

Barnett and McCormick (2004) collected data from 373 secondary Australian teachers to study the relationship of leadership to school learning culture. Their findings pointed to the importance of individual, one-to-one relationships between principals and teachers, as opposed to a single group-to-leader relationship. The researchers defined individual concern as a principal treating a teacher with respect and fairness, being assessable, supporting and encouraging, and providing direction. They surmised that this quality cultivated more faculty support of the leader’s vision for the school. As aspects of favoritism were considered, they suggested that it discouraged excellence in teaching and fostered competition. These Australian teachers indicated their responses to their ideal of individual, one-to-one relationships with administrators would be positive and supportive.

An atmosphere of reflection and growth is important. Blase and Blase (1999) studied instructional leadership by analyzing open-ended questionnaires completed by 809 teachers. A premise of the study was that a principal’s impact comes, in part, from his or her “interaction with and influence on teachers” (p. 368). The findings resulted in the identification of two themes for instructional leadership: reflection and growth. Evidence of the importance of trust,

support, and professional interaction was readily apparent as effective principals guided teachers to reflect on their practice and urged them toward growth.

As evidenced in Blase and Blase (1999), trust is vital to an effective teacher-administrator relationship. Other researchers also have found trust to be an essential part of the evaluation process (Haefele, 1993; Machell, 1995; Milanowski & Heneman, 2001; Stiggins & Duke, 1988; Stronge, 1991).

The Element of Trust

The research validates a connection between leadership behaviors and teacher trust of the principal (Hoy, Tarter, & Witkoskie, 1992; Tarter, Bliss, & Hoy, 1989; Tarter, Sabo, & Hoy, 1995). There is sound logic and common sense in the thought that trustworthy behavior results in the development of a trusting relationship.

Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) define trust as “an individual’s or group’s willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open” (p. 189). In their study three types of trust were examined: faculty trust of principals, faculty trust of one another, and faculty trust of clients (students and parents). The researchers developed a set of scales that measured trust with validity and reliability in these three dimensions. With the responses of 898 elementary teachers, the three types of trust were found to be correlated. In elementary schools faculty trust tends to be pervasive; when teachers trust their principal they are more likely to trust each other and the students and parents they serve. The trusting principal-teacher relationship that increases the effectiveness of the evaluation system is apparently connected to the element of trust as it plays out in other relationships teachers have in the elementary school setting.

Tarter, Bliss, and Hoy (1989) surveyed 1083 secondary teachers with the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire to define faculty trust and explore school properties that may cause that trust to develop. One of the factors analyzed in this study was the impact of principal behaviors on faculty trust of administrators. A principal's supportive behavior, defined as providing help, working hard, caring about staff welfare, and utilizing constructive criticism, was positively correlated with faculty general trust of the principal. A principal's directive behavior, described as rigid and domineering, was negatively correlated with faculty trust of the principal. Neither of these dimensions of behavior, however, presented with a significant effect on teacher trust of colleagues in the secondary setting. Teacher-principal trust was also found to be not related to trust of colleagues.

Hoy, Tarter, and Witkoskie (1992) examined principal supportiveness, faculty trust, and school effectiveness through data collected from 842 elementary teachers. Supportive leadership was expressed as "behavior that reflects a concern for teachers" (p. 38), and was considered through the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ-RM). School effectiveness was assessed in terms of "how well, how much, how flexible, and how efficiently the school functions" on an eight-item scale (p. 40). Correlational analyses found that supportive leadership is related to teacher-principal trust and teacher-colleague trust. Teacher-colleague trust was a predictor of school effectiveness, while supportive leadership and teacher-principal trust were not. Using the same OCDQ-RM instrument, Tarter, Sabo, and Hoy (1995) studied teachers from 87 middle schools. Evidence was found that teacher-principal trust, supportive leadership, and teacher-colleague trust were all related to school effectiveness. Leadership was, once again, found to be related to teacher-principal trust but not teacher-teacher trust.

Table 3 presents an overview of the findings of these studies. Hoy teamed with Tarter and other researchers using the OCDQ-RM instrument for the first three studies. The last study in the table is by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, building on the previous three studies and using a new scale they developed to measure trust.

Table 3

A Comparison of Findings in Selected Research on Trust in Schools

	Tarter et al. (1989)	Hoy et al. (1992)	Tarter et al. (1995)	Hoy et al. (1999)
Level of Teachers	Secondary	Elementary	Secondary	Elementary
Supportive leadership is related to teacher-principal trust	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Supportive leadership is related to teacher-teacher trust	No	Yes	No	
Supportive leadership is related to school effectiveness		No	Yes	
Teacher-teacher trust is related to school effectiveness		Yes	Yes	
Teacher-principal trust is related to school effectiveness		No	Yes	
Teacher-principal trust is related to teacher-teacher trust	No	Yes	No	Yes

In the first three of these studies, principal supportiveness was related to teacher trust in the principal. In the secondary school studies, principal supportiveness was not related to teacher trust in colleagues. In the Hoy, Tarter and Witkoskie (1992) study of elementary teachers, there was a correlation between teachers' trust in the principal and their trust of colleagues. This study supported the findings in the Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) study of elementary teachers. In

both of the studies of secondary teachers, however, teacher-principal trust was not related to trust from faculty member to faculty member. Perhaps the element of trust is different at the elementary and secondary levels.

Teacher trust of administrators is linked to job satisfaction for teachers in schools. Moye, Henkin, and Egley (2005) developed a survey to study the relationship between elementary teachers' level of empowerment and their interpersonal trust in their principals. Surveys were completed by 539 elementary teachers in an urban school district. As they analyzed the data with regression equations, they found that "teachers who find their work important and personally meaningful, who report significant autonomy in their work, and who perceived they have influence over their work environment reported higher levels of interpersonal trust in their principals" (p. 270). There was no consideration in this study, however, of the relationship between job satisfaction and satisfaction with the evaluation process.

Ebmeier and Nicklaus (1999) considered the impact of collaborative supervision on teacher trust of administrators and on teacher trust of colleagues. Using experimental design, voluntary teachers were placed into two groups at random. One group worked with graduate students, the other with their administrator in the collaborative supervision model. Both graduate students and administrators underwent 30 hours of training on the supervision model utilized in the study. For the graduate students, the training was part of graduate-level coursework. For the principals, the same training was presented in an extensive inservice program provided by the school division. The training involved an overview of the philosophy and methods of clinical supervision, strategies for effective conferencing with teachers, data collection techniques, and basic principles of learning and teaching. In analyzing teacher surveys after an eight-week period, it was found that both trust of evaluators and trust of colleagues increased. The groups

that worked with principals produced higher scores on the scales than did the groups that worked with graduate students. Ebmeier and Nicklaus theorized that time was a factor, as the principals had worked with the teachers for a greater amount of time than had the graduate students, and the development of trust takes time. They also hypothesized that collegiality among teachers and trust in the administrator may precede the development of trust among teachers. This study evidences that collaborative supervision impacts the development of teacher trust of administrator, but it does not address how this trust relates to teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of the evaluation process.

McLaughlin and Pfeifer identify trust, along with communication, openness, and commitment, as one of the “enabling conditions” that foster effective evaluation (1988, p. 15). They present the absence of trust as a condition that causes teacher evaluation efforts to fail. Practitioners and researchers oftentimes mention trust as though its foundational importance to evaluation is a given (Acheson & Gall, 2003; McLaughlin & Pfeifer, 1988; Stronge, 1991).

There is evidence in the research of Stiggins and Duke (1988) of a connection between teacher trust of the principal and the effectiveness of evaluation as perceived by teachers. In their work, trust is identified as one of the attributes in an effective evaluation (1988). Their case studies allude to a relationship between trust and several factors:

1. Supervisors’ intentions (what they and the teacher regard as the ultimate purpose of evaluation)
2. Maintaining confidentiality in communication
3. How a supervisor handles evidence of performance from sources other than the classroom (e.g., hearsay and complaints)

4. The consistency with which the supervisor applies evaluation rules and regulations
5. The extent to which the teacher and the supervisor see themselves as partners in the school improvement effort
6. The honesty and sincerity of interpersonal communications
7. The extent to which the teacher has an opportunity to interpret evaluation data first before sharing it with others
8. The extent to which teachers participate in the selection of performance goals

(Stiggins & Duke, 1988, p. 85).

Machell (1995) also found trust to be a factor in the effectiveness of teacher evaluation.

In this study, the Teacher Evaluation Profile was used, the instrument that was developed by Stiggins and Duke in their work. The research was intended to study how a teacher evaluation system can foster growth in teachers. Teachers in a parochial school environment participated in the study, with 171 submitting completed surveys and six selected for interviewing from a group of volunteers. In the correlation analysis, feedback attributes of the amount and the depth of information provided had the highest correlation with the perceptions of the teachers of the quality of their evaluation. Level of trust was an attribute with a moderate correlation to the perceived quality of the evaluation.

One of the dominant themes in Singh and Shifflette's study is that "trust was an important component in the teacher-principal relationship and in teacher improvement" (Singh & Shifflette, 1996, p. 156). The focus of this qualitative study was to gain insight on what caused a teacher who was found ineffective through the evaluation process to change and grow to later be identified as competent or exemplary. The component of trust in this study, however, is

expressed more in terms of the administrator trusting and encouraging the teacher rather than teacher trust of administrator. Even though trust is a dominant theme in this research, it is in the principal-to-teacher direction rather than teacher-to-principal.

Summary

Teacher evaluation has traditionally been depicted with two branches, summative and formative, that achieve its two main purposes, accountability and improvement. Both ideals have been goals since the beginning of the evaluative process, but the current tendency leans toward more concentration on teacher growth through formative evaluation.

In order to foster this growth through evaluation, studies have pointed out the importance of elements such as effective feedback and evaluator factors of credibility and trust. The research on trust evidences how a principal's supportive behavior can increase the level of trust a teacher has in the administrator.

In the writings of many practitioners, the evaluation process as it is most often used today is described as sadly lacking in the power to impact the professional development of educators. Studies have identified several elements that tend to create the necessary conditions for growth to flow from evaluation. There is a need to better quantify those elements, consider the possibility of other factors that may encourage growth, and determine how the field of education can best maximize the evaluation process to foster the effective professional development of teachers.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to ascertain how a principal can promote the professional development of teachers through the evaluation process. This could offer clarification on the practices of principals that result in teacher growth, provide understanding of the responses of teachers to the evaluation process, and potentially offer a meaningful guide for principals and human resource personnel for effective evaluation practices.

Research Questions

The central research question for this study was: Can principals promote the professional development of teachers through the evaluation process? Sub-questions that guided the study were: (a) What specific behaviors and practices of principals promote professional development? (b) Do teachers perceive these behaviors and practices as effective?

This chapter contains details about the methodology utilized for this study. The research design is described, including the role of the researcher, the selection process, the setting, and participants. Informed consent and measures taken to ensure confidentiality of participants will be discussed next. Finally, the data collection process and analysis procedures will be described.

Research Design

Creswell provides a compelling rationale for choosing qualitative research. Three of his reasons are particularly appropriate for this study: 1) qualitative research addresses the *how* and *why* questions and offers descriptions of what is going on, 2) qualitative research allows topics to be explored so that theories can be developed, and 3) qualitative research presents a detailed view of the topic (Creswell, 1998). The qualitative approach should provide rich descriptions of

how teachers perceive the entity of professional growth in the evaluation process. The in-depth discussions from the teachers should allow for the development of principles that will provide insight for administrators and human resource personnel on fostering professional growth through evaluation.

In this study, elementary teachers and their principals were interviewed to record their thoughts on the teacher evaluation process and how it impacts professional growth. The corresponding written evaluation documentation on each teacher was examined, along with the written policies of the school division on teacher evaluation. All of these data were analyzed through a software package with the goal of answering the research questions dealing with professional growth through the teacher evaluation process.

Data from interviews of elementary school teachers in one Virginia school division were analyzed. The principals of these teachers were also interviewed, and that data were analyzed. Other data sources include the summary documents completed for the teachers by the principals during formal observations, the year-end evaluation reports completed for the teachers by the principals, the evaluation handbook of the school division, the section of the policy and regulation manual of the school division that describes the evaluation process, and field notes taken during interview sessions. Visits were made to the field, the data analyzed, further visits made for more data and analysis, back and forth until the point of saturation was reached. This is called a “zigzag” process by Creswell (1998). These procedures allow the final results to be grounded in the data.

Role of the Researcher

I am in my twelfth year of elementary principalship in the state of Virginia. The number of evaluations I have accomplished in the schools in which I have served range from 17 to 57 each year. The responsibility to balance the accountability and improvement aspects of evaluation is at times challenging. I bring to this research project a strong desire to discover principles that will make the evaluation process more effective in encouraging teachers to greater professional growth. Perhaps this desire may be expressed in terms of a “deep interpersonal or emotional sensitivity,” one of the principles of good practice as presented by Rossman and Rallis (2003, p. 26).

Regarding personal bias in this study, Strauss and Corbin (1998) maintain that, “In qualitative research, objectivity does not mean controlling the variables. Rather, it means openness, a willingness to listen and to ‘give voice’ to respondents” (p. 43). I am committed to listening openly to those being interviewed and to provide them with the opportunity to express their thoughts freely.

Selection Process

This study was conducted at the elementary level in a school division in Virginia. With the necessity for elementary teachers to be more generalists, their professional development needs may be different than those of secondary teachers. Normal observations are that there is a lower teacher/administrator ratio in elementary than in the secondary schools. Because of that there is more interaction between principal and teacher in their relations. For this reason, elementary schools would provide a better venue to investigate the evaluative relationship between administrator and teacher. In consideration of these points, the decision was made to limit the study to the elementary level. Two principals and six teachers were participants in this

study. A description of the selection criteria for this purposeful sampling is provided in the *Participants* section of this chapter.

Setting

Rossman and Rallis describe an appropriate setting as follows:

The ideal site is one where entry is possible; there is a rich mix of the processes, people, programs, interactions, structures of interest, or all of these; you are likely to be able to build strong relations with the participants; ethical and political considerations are not overwhelming, at least initially (2003, p. 136).

The school division participating in this study has three elementary schools, with a total of 4213 students in kindergarten through grade twelve. It is located in a small city in central Virginia, with a general population of about 22,730. Given the sensitivity of the topic of evaluation and the size of the school division, great care was needed to be given to conducting this study in such a manner that the impact of political considerations will be minimized. More than half of the housing units in the city are rental, and 62.3% of the students are identified by their school lunch status as being in poverty. The school system has a remarkable record of student achievement despite challenges, however. The school division met the Adequate Yearly Progress designation, and all schools were fully accredited with the Commonwealth of Virginia in 2007-2008.

The school division selected for the study has a strong commitment to professional growth. This is evidenced by professional leave request documentation; approximately 1,043 leave requests were approved in the 2008-2009 school year with the overwhelming majority of these opportunities funded with division monies. Although there is not an allotment for each teacher in the division for coursework tuition reimbursement, funding for courses in critical areas

of need has been provided. There are also annual division-level professional development workshops with nationally-known practitioners and authors. This school division is below the state average in the percentage of teachers with earned post-graduate degrees.

Participants

Two schools were utilized for the study; the researcher is principal of the third elementary school in the division and it was not in the study. The principal and three teachers from each of the two participating schools were interviewed.

A survey of teachers was utilized to determine which teachers were interested and willing to participate in the study. Elements of the survey allowed for consideration of years of experience, years with current administrator, and personal rating of professional growth as voluntary participants were selected. Teachers with three or more years of teaching experience were selected. This allowed for participants to have moved beyond the typical growth that occurs with teachers simply by virtue of being new to the profession. Teachers who have worked two or more years with their current administrator were selected. This allowed for the development of more effective evaluator-evaluatee relationships. Attempts were made to select teachers with higher self-ratings of professional growth. This allowed the research to better examine the connection between growth and evaluation.

The teachers selected were open to sharing their thoughts freely and professionally with the researcher. A withdrawn, non-communicative interviewee would not be effective, nor would an individual who perceives the interview process exclusively as a medium for airing one's grievances with the educational system. The teachers interviewed were willing to share their written evaluation data from the 2007-2008 school year to the present with the researcher.

The two principals involved in the study have been known to the researcher for five years. Relationships between the researcher and each of the two principals are professional in nature. There is a good sense of camaraderie that allowed for the interviews to be open, honest, and upfront. Both principals have been educators for more than 30 years, with 20 or more years as administrators. They are skilled in their profession, with solid reputations in the community in which they have served for so many years.

Informed Consent and Permission Procedures

Assurance of Confidentiality

A consent form explaining the study – its purpose, data collection procedures, and how data will be used – was provided to each participant. This consent form was submitted to the Institutional Review Board from the university to secure prior approval. Appendix A is a copy of the IRB approval letter. Each participant was contracted prior to the study, with issues of their participation being shared, discussed, and agreed upon. The contracting was accomplished in individual sessions with the participants, either over the telephone or in person. The data were kept securely locked away, with access by the researcher only. Teacher participants were encouraged to keep their participation in the study confidential, due to the small size of the school division and the potential for recognition of participants by readers of the finished study.

Gaining Access and Entry

Evaluation is a sensitive topic for the teacher and the administrator involved, and is ultimately a reflection on the school division as a whole. Gaining access to documents and obtaining permission to question teachers for this research was challenging. For these reasons, the sample for this study was not large, and the school division chosen was one with which the

researcher is familiar. Appendix B, C, D, E, and F are permission memoranda and consent forms that were used for this study.

Data Collection

In this study, the sources of data were interview records of teachers and of principals, field observation notes, and archival data in the form of written observation summaries, year-end evaluations, and the evaluation handbook of the school division and the policies and regulations handbook of the school division.

Interview Method and Protocol

Seidman lists several approaches for a qualitative research method, such as observation and examining personal records, and goes on to describe the significance of the interview as follows:

If the researcher's goal, however, is to understand the meaning people involved in education make of their experience, then interviewing provides a necessary, if not always completely sufficient, avenue of inquiry (Seidman, 2006, p. 11).

The interview questions for this study were validated by a doctoral cohort of students in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program at Virginia Tech. At the time of validation, 12 cohort members were doctoral candidates and two members had already achieved their degree. Most of the cohort members were administrators or central office administrators in school systems in Virginia and North Carolina. Feedback from this group was studied, and the questions revised accordingly.

The teacher interview protocol was piloted with a teacher outside of the two schools included in the study. This allowed the researcher to field test the interview design, and

experience some of the practical aspects of interviewing. The piloting teacher was familiar with the researcher and with the evaluation system of the school division.

In this study, each participant underwent a 45- to 60-minute interview in his or her school or in a mutually agreed upon location. Interviews were taped and transcribed for analysis.

Two elementary principals were interviewed first to determine what practices they have instituted to foster professional growth in the evaluation process. The protocol for the principal interviews is in Appendix G. The guiding questions for the interview sessions for the principals are presented in Table 4 along with their relationship to the research questions for this study.

Column 1 is marked as the interview question relates to the central research question, Can principals promote the professional development of teachers through the evaluation process?

Column 2 is marked as the interview question relates to the research sub-question, What specific behaviors and practices of principals promote professional development? Column 3 is marked as the interview question relates to the research sub-question, Do teachers think these behaviors and practices are effective? Column 3 is empty because this sub-question relates to interview questions for the teachers, as itemized in Table 5.

Table 4

The Relationship between Interview Questions for Principals and the Research Questions

	1	2	3
What do you see as the purpose of teacher evaluation?	X		
Explain how the current evaluation system in your school division works.		X	X
How do you promote the professional growth of teachers through the formal evaluation process? What activities do you perform to promote Professional Development?		X	X
What are the barriers that you experience in fostering teacher growth through the evaluation system? What can be done to eliminate these barriers?		X	X
If you prioritized the strategies that you personally use to encourage teacher growth in the evaluation process, what strategy would be at the top as your most effective strategy? Give examples of times when you have successfully used the strategy.		X	X
What recommendations would you offer to help a new administrator work the formal evaluation process so that optimal professional growth is promoted?		X	X
Have your attempts at promoting professional growth been successful? If so, how do you measure this success?		X	X

In each of the two schools, three teachers were interviewed to study the impact of the evaluative practices of their respective principals and to glean understanding of what additional practices would be effective in promoting their development. Together with the administrator interviews, there was a total of eight interviews to examine for patterns and details that allowed for the logical development of theory.

An interest survey (Appendix H) was distributed to all teachers in the two schools. The surveys gathered information on who was willing to participate in the study, and itemized data on such things as the number of years they have taught, how many years they have been under the direction of their current administrator, how they would rate their professional growth over the past year, and whether or not they would be willing to share written evaluative data with the researcher. The surveys were presented and completed in a faculty meeting at each of the respective schools. The survey results allowed a methodical selection of participants for the interviews. In addition to information from the surveys, consideration was also given to diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, and teaching assignment as participants were selected. After participants were selected, each was contacted to introduce the researcher, explain the purpose of the study, request participation, and set up a time and location for the first interview.

The protocol for the teacher interviews is in Appendix I. The guiding questions for the interview sessions with teachers are presented in Table 5 along with their relationship to the research questions, in much the same way as the interview questions for principals is in the previous table. Column 1 is marked as the interview question relates to the central research question, Can principals promote the professional development of teachers through the evaluation process? Column 2 is marked as the interview question relates to the research sub-question, What specific behaviors and practices of principals promote professional development?

Column 3 is marked as the interview question relates to the research sub-question, Do teachers think these behaviors and practices are effective?

Table 5

The Relationship between Interview Questions for Teachers and the Research Questions

	1	2	3
What do you see as the purpose of teacher evaluation?	X		
Tell how the current evaluation system in your school division works.		X	
In what ways does the evaluation system impact your teaching?	X	X	X
In what ways does your formal evaluation help you to grow professionally?	X	X	X
What specific professional development activities has your evaluator suggested to you? Did you undergo the recommendations, and, if so, were they helpful to you?	X	X	X
What elements need to be in place for a teacher evaluation system to foster professional growth?	X	X	X
What recommendations would you give to an administrator who wants to maximize his or her effectiveness in promoting the professional growth of teachers?	X	X	X

Field Notes and Archival Data

Field notes were to be taken during the interview on a laptop computer, or by hand if a participant preferred. Typing the notes as the interview unfolds rather than utilizing handwritten notes would allow the researcher to record notes with efficiency while maintaining appropriate eye contact throughout the interview. These notes were to include a running record of what was observed along with observer comments, as recommended by Rossman and Rallis (2003).

The archival data that were collected from each teacher also included the principal observation summaries for the year, which ranged from one to three in number. These are the written records of formal observations completed by administrators during 30- to 60-minute visits in the classroom.

Also requested from each teacher were copies of his or her annual professional growth goals. These documents have a statement of each goal and corresponding strategies to work toward its achievement during the course of the year. In addition, year-end summative evaluation summaries were collected as well from each teacher. These documents are composed by administrators and provide an evaluation of teacher progress on meeting the mandates of the teacher job description and the achievement of professional growth goals.

The actual policies and guidelines of the school division for evaluating teachers as spelled out in the Policies and Regulations manual of the School Board and the Teacher Evaluation Handbook were also reviewed.

Data Analysis Procedures

Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe analysis as “the interplay between researchers and data” (p. 13). Rossman and Rallis (2003) call data analysis “the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data” (p. 278). In this study, the data analysis spiral described by Creswell (1998) was used, with the four loops as follows: (a) data managing, (b) reading, memoing, (c) describing, classifying, interpreting, and (d) representing, visualizing.

To manage data effectively, all data for this study were typed into word processing software and organized into files with the computer. These documents were read in their entirety several times to get a broad, overall view of the database. Notes were written (memoing) as key concepts or ideas came to mind during the readings.

The data were examined specifically for evidence of specific recommendations and actions that promote teacher growth. The manuals and handbooks were analyzed to determine to what degree teacher growth is a factor in the evaluation program. Observation summaries, year-end summatives, and progress summaries on growth plans as available were examined to understand how the written policies for growth make their way into administrative summaries of teacher progress and work.

Coding

In the open coding process, data are “broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, and compared for similarities and differences” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 102). Moving on to more specificity, data were then organized and grouped based on properties and dimensions. Further classifying into categories then occurred, with an eye for interpreting patterns and variations. This is called conceptualizing (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

While open coding permits the discovery of concepts with their properties and dimensions, axial coding relates categories to their subcategories, coding the data around the axis of a category. In this axial coding, how categories link and crosscut were analyzed using four basic steps: (a) lay out the properties, (b) identify the various conditions associated with the phenomenon, (c) relate a category to its subcategories, and (d) look for ways that categories relate (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This flows to the final process of selective coding, which integrates and refines the theory. In selective coding, categories are organized around a primary concept.

Analyzing the data in this manner should result in the development of guidelines and principles that will address how principals can promote the professional development of teachers through the evaluation process. The basic operations of asking questions and making comparisons channeled the data analysis toward the development of guidelines through the coding process delineated above.

Trustworthiness of the Research

Rossman and Rallis (2003) describe the trustworthiness of a study in terms of is it competently and ethically conducted. This is traditionally specified in qualitative research in terms of credibility, transferability, and confirmability.

In order to ensure credibility of the research, triangulation through the use of multiple sources of data was accomplished. Findings were cross-checked with several sources: the examination of data from the teacher interviews, the examination of data from the principal interviews, the analysis of the written evaluation documents developed by the school division and utilized by administrators, and the analysis of the official evaluation policies of the school division in their evaluation handbook and regulations manual. Participant validation (member

checks) were utilized as those who were interviewed were given hard copies of their transcripts and provided with the opportunity to give further explanations and additional documentation of their thoughts.

In considering transferability, Rossman and Rallis (2003) note “to establish the usefulness of a study, provide complete descriptions of your theoretical and methodological orientation and the process” (p. 68). Notes on the process and what was learned was presented in the “rich, thick description” that is recommended. This allows for the reader to understand what has transpired in the study and determine whether it is transferable to his or her own circumstances and setting.

An organized record of interview transcripts, field notes, memos, and documentation analyses were kept in order to maintain a paper trail of the results of the study. This allows a tracing of the interpretations and conclusions back to the original sources, providing for the confirmability of the findings. The evidence trail is in place so that the results are known to be based on data sources rather than researcher bias.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to ascertain what an elementary principal can do in the teacher evaluation process to promote the professional development of teachers. This chapter presents the findings of the study. A profile of the participants, a summary of the school division evaluation handbook, an analysis of the interviews, and an examination of the written observation summaries and year-end evaluations are presented.

Profile of the Participants

The two elementary principals readily agreed to participate in the study. Table 6 presents data on the principals gleaned from the interviews.

Table 6

Data on Principal Participants

Principal	Years at				Ethnicity, Gender
	Years in Education	Years in Admin.	Current School	Certification, Degrees	
1	45	32	12	K – 7 th ; Gifted Education; Elementary Admin., Middle School Admin.; General Supervisor; Elementary Supervisor; master's	White, Female
2	34	20	12	K – 8 th ; Elementary Admin., Middle School Admin; General Supervisor; master's	Black, Female

Principal 1 is from the first school, principal 2 from the second. These numbers correspond to the labeling of the teachers who participated in the study.

Of note in these data is the longevity of the two principals in their current assignments: both have served as principal in their present school for 12 years. They have both had administrative experience previously as a central office supervisor and/or as principal in another elementary school. All of their administrative experiences have been in the same school division.

The principals were supportive of the teacher surveys being distributed in faculty meetings. Early in the spring semester of 2009 the researcher went to the two schools to briefly explain the study and distribute the surveys. In each school, an envelope was provided to the principal for completed surveys to be collected and forwarded to the researcher at a later point. In the first school, 11 surveys were turned in, with six indicating a willingness to participate in the study. In selecting the three participants from the first school, consideration was given to diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, and teaching assignment. In the second school, five were turned in, with three teachers being willing to participate. All three of these were selected to participate. Table 7 presents a summary of the teacher participants selected, with information from both the surveys and the interview. Teacher 1A, 1B, and 1C were all from the first school, and Teacher 2D, 2E, and 2F were from the second school.

Table 7

Data on Teacher Participants

Teacher	Years with				Ethnicity, Gender
	Years Teaching	Current Principal	Growth Rating	Certification, Degrees	
1A	17	12	3	Pre K – 4 th ; Elementary Admin, Middle School Admin; master's	White, Male
1B	27	12	3	K – 4 th	White, Female
1C	30	5	3	K – 4 th ; Reading Specialist; master's	Black, Female
2D	9	9	4	K – 5 th ; master's	White, Female
2E	20	12	3	K – 8 th ; General Math	White, Female
2F	20	8	3	K – 7 th ; Special Education	White, Female

Of note in the data in Table 7 is the years of experience of those selected for the study.

All are seasoned veterans. Even the survey respondents who were willing but not selected to participate had taught 14 to 24 years. Three of the teacher participants have been serving with the same principal for all 12 of the years that the principal has been in their school. The number of teachers with master's degrees in this group is not reflective of the number in the school division as a whole; 33% of the teachers school division-wide have a master's (Virginia Department of Education, 2010). Teachers were asked to estimate their rate of annual professional growth using a range of from 1 to 5, with 5 being a high rate of growth. With the self-rating of professional growth ranging from 1 to 5, average to exemplary, almost all rated 48

themselves exactly in the middle of the range, with the teacher with the least years of experience shifting her rating slightly to a 4.

The School Board Policy Manual

The School Board Policy Manual for this school division makes provision for staff evaluation with a one-page policy statement. The statement includes an introductory paragraph with references to the Code of Virginia that necessitates staff evaluation, a description of the purpose of evaluation, a paragraph on providing assistance for struggling staff members, a brief section indicating staff would be given copies of their individual evaluations, and a final paragraph detailing the evaluation of administrators. In the description of the purpose of evaluation, the piece that corresponds to teacher evaluation is stated as follows.

It is the purpose of the program of staff assessment to... stress the importance of personal improvement on the part of individual professional staff members so that each student may be provided a quality education. (XXXX Public Schools, section 3220A, p.1)

The Guidelines section of the policy manual of this school division is designed to further detail how the policies are to be implemented. The portion in the Guidelines on staff evaluation has approximately one page on the rationale for evaluation and its impact on student learning. The last half of the staff evaluation portion in the Guidelines provides the definition for several terms related to teacher evaluation.

There are three pieces that specifically speak to professional growth in these Guidelines. The first is that one of the purposes of evaluation out of a listing of three purposes is “To aid the individual to grow and improve.” (XXXX Public Schools, section 3220A, p. 1) The purpose is also stated elsewhere in the Guidelines as, “to enhance instructional quality through continuous improvement of teacher effectiveness.” (section 3220A, p. 2) The third reference to growth in

the Guidelines is in a paragraph that tries to connect staff development with the evaluation process: "The evaluation system relates to staff development by providing incentives and rewards for professional growth." (section 3220A, p. 2) There is no description of what the incentives and rewards for growth may be. Perhaps the implication is that commendations in the written evaluation serve as an incentive. If these guidelines were instituted when the Teacher Evaluation System handbook was written, it may be that prospective merit pay was being considered as the incentive and reward for growth were mentioned.

The School Division Evaluation Handbook

The Teacher Evaluation System handbook for this school division was developed in 1983-1985 through a Virginia Department of Education grant that was funded for a study of pay-for-performance for teachers (XXXX Public Schools, p.ii). With the basis of its development lying in prospective merit pay, this evaluation system has the potential to be grounded in a summative rather than formative philosophy. The handbook document describes the purpose of teacher evaluation as "to enhance instructional quality through continuous improvement of teacher effectiveness." (p.2) This is the same phrase that is given in the School Board Policy Manual. This purpose statement presents a focus on instructional quality with an implication that teachers need to improve, although the goal of professional growth is perhaps implied with the concept of improvement.

The handbook specifies the evaluation process as follows. Teachers are either on full evaluation requiring two formal observations per semester, or partial evaluation requiring one formal observation per semester. All teachers who are in their first three years of teaching and do not have a continuing contract are on full evaluation. Teachers who are hired and have had a continuing contract in Virginia previously are on full evaluation for a year and then they can

again achieve continuing contract status. All other teachers cycle on to full evaluation every third year of their employment.

Formal observations require a minimum of 30 minutes, completion of the observation form, and a conference between teacher and administrator. Personal professional growth goals are determined by the evaluatee and should be designed to enhance professional growth. The number of goals and their intent is reviewed with the administrator. These goals work together to form either an Individual Growth Plan for teachers on continuing contract or a Professional Growth Plan for probationary status teachers. The Individual Growth Plan for veteran teachers is described as optional in the Definition of Terms section of the handbook. (XXXX Public Schools, p.3) The Teacher Evaluation Report is the final activity in the evaluation process. It is to summarize the progress, performance, and growth of the teacher. This year-end form is a combination of checklist and commentary.

Two forms are available in the handbook to record formal observation summaries: the Teacher Observation Record and the Teacher Observation Checklist. Descriptors on both of the forms indicate feedback is to be formative in nature, and the data from these records “forms the basis for reaching summative evaluation ratings at the end of each school year.” (XXXX Public Schools, p.8) Only the Teacher Observation Checklist was utilized for each teacher in this study; no one submitted a Teacher Observation Record to the researcher.

Growth goals are presented in the handbook as a personal endeavor that allows teachers to maintain responsibility for their own growth. Use of the goal form of the school division and the development of a growth plan for veteran teachers are both presented as optional. Only one of the teachers in the study presented written data on growth goals. None of them referred to a

formalized process of conferencing with administrators to discuss setting goals or progress on goals.

The handbook provides other resources for the teacher evaluation process. There is a section presenting processes for extensive assistance for struggling teachers, with details on a Plan of Action for Teacher Assistance and Improvement. There are 25 pages of an outline of Indicators of Professional Effectiveness, which essentially is a description of behaviors expected of teachers. This outline provides a series of statements and brief descriptions to assist evaluators in determining if teachers have met the individual expectations itemized on the year-end evaluation form. The approved job description for teachers is also in the handbook.

The Interviews

All participants were met with face-to-face to secure consent and schedule the interview. This provided the opportunity to begin establishing rapport and setting participants at ease with the process and the interviewer. Four of the teacher participants were totally unknown to the researcher, and the other two teacher participants were known only by sight. Teacher 1B requested a copy of the interview questions beforehand, and this request was honored.

Teachers 1A and 1C requested for their interviews to occur at the school of the researcher. All other participants were interviewed at another school (three at their own school, one at another school in the school division) in an afternoon after the dismissal of students. Taking notes during the interview process proved to be problematic. The participants required much eye contact and affirmation from the researcher, perhaps due to the challenge of speaking freely with tape recorders on.

The interview tapes were kept secure throughout the study, stored in a locked cabinet in the home of the researcher as soon as there were recordings on them. The researcher transcribed

all of the interview tapes. The Word documents were saved onto a flash drive, also secured in the same locked cabinet, with a backup copy on a password-protected computer in the home of the researcher. Interviewees were labeled in the Word documents in the same manner as in Table 6 and Table 7 and the key matching the labels to actual names was kept in a different locked drawer, in a different room, in the home of the researcher. The Word documents were loaded into the NVivo 8 software on the password-protected computer in the home of the researcher.

Data Analysis

NVivo 8 software was utilized to examine the interview data for common themes and main concepts. In the initial analysis, the responses to each question in the two protocols were grouped together, one interview question per node. Memos were set up so that questions common to both the principal protocol and the teacher protocol were examined together in topic areas. With repeated readings of the question nodes and topic area memos, the work evolved around to questions and their responses being grouped into six new nodes. Table 8 presents the six nodes and the corresponding questions from the teacher and principal protocols.

Table 8

Grouping Interview Questions into General Nodes

Node	Topic	Teacher Questions	Principal Questions
1	Purpose of teacher evaluation	1. What do you see as the purpose of teacher evaluation?	1. What do you see as the purpose of teacher evaluation?
2	How the evaluation system works	2. Explain how the current evaluation system in your school division works.	2. Explain how the current evaluation system in your school division works.
3	Impact on teaching	3. In what ways does the evaluation system impact your teaching?	
4	How the evaluation system promotes growth	4. In what ways does your formal evaluation help you to grow professionally? 5. What specific professional development activities has your evaluator suggested to you? Did you follow the recommendations, and, if so, were they helpful to you?	3. How do you promote the professional growth of teachers through the formal evaluation process? What activities do you perform to promote Professional Development? 4. What are the barriers that you experience in fostering teacher growth through the evaluation system? What can be done to eliminate these barriers?

Table 8 (continued)

Grouping Interview Questions into General Nodes

Node	Topic	Teacher Questions	Principal Questions
5	Elements and strategies for evaluation that successfully promote growth	6. What elements need to be in place for a teacher evaluation system to foster professional growth?	5. If you prioritized the strategies that you personally use to encourage teacher growth in the evaluation process, what strategy would be at the top as your most effective strategy? Give examples of times when you have successfully used the strategy. 7. Have your attempts at promoting professional growth been successful? If so, how do you measure this success?
6	Recommendations on evaluation for an administrator	7. What recommendations would you give to an administrator who wants to maximize his or her effectiveness in promoting the professional growth of teachers?	6. What recommendations would you offer to help a new administrator work the formal evaluation process so that optimal professional growth is promoted?

Responses to question one in both protocols - what is the purpose of teacher evaluation – were grouped into the first node. In all eight interviews, no one described a summative purpose for teacher evaluation. Most of the interviewees discussed helping teachers improve or grow,

and some talked in addition to growth about quality control in terms of making sure the teacher is doing his or her job. The answer of Principal 1 reflected formative purposes exclusively.

You know, ultimately you do try to do something to improve the overall quality of instruction in your school. The people delivering it are good teachers. So I guess it's a form of staff development, but it's not, in all these years I know that sometimes it's very productive and sometimes it's pretty routine. (1)

The answer of Principal 2 reflected quality control purposes exclusively.

I see the purpose of teacher evaluation to make sure that the teacher is using all the strategies and skills, the latest knowledge, helping children to learn, and best practices in the classroom. It's a way for an administrator to see if teachers are doing their job. (2)

All six teachers responded with formative answers and three of them (1A, 2E, 2F) also presented the quality control purpose.

For the second node, responses from both teachers and principals on the question to explain how the current evaluation system works were grouped. There was a distinct difference in the confidence level of the responses of the teachers and principals for this question. All teachers vocalized hesitancy with phrases such as “I think (1A, 1C), It seems like (1A), I believe (1C, 2E), I would guess (2D), I never really always kept track (2E), I can’t recall right now (2F), I’m not sure (2F), if I remember right (1B), am I right (1B), that’s all I can remember (2F), and, I would have to brush up on it (1B).”

“There’s the classroom, and then you have your end of year one when you discuss, you know, how did your year go – that one. Yeah, I’ve been kind of forgetting about that one.” (1A)

"Well, if I remember right, it's been a while since it's been explained to me, every three years a teacher would be on full evaluation. This is how it was back in the day. I'm assuming it's still the same." (1B)

Some of the confusion is probably attributable to the change three years ago by the superintendent, decreasing the number of observations for teachers who are on full evaluation from four to three. This was a verbal directive to principals, not addressed by the superintendent to teachers in writing. The confusion may also be linked to the perception of some teachers that the evaluation system is lacking in significance, or it may be linked to the degree of comfort other teachers may have with the evaluation system.

Then every couple years you go back to a full and they come in one extra time, or something like that. I never really always kept track of that because it really doesn't change anything you do in the classroom. (2E)

I think it's like everything else, the more you are evaluated the less you notice them. I really, I guess it's because I've taught so many years and I'm so comfortable I can't really remember exactly how it works. (2F)

Principal 2 expressed all of the steps in the evaluation process with solid confidence. Her only hesitancy was on a term to use, which may have been a simple diction issue. All of the responses of Principal 1 were expressed with firm confidence as well.

In this second node, none of the teachers stated outright errors in their descriptions of how the system works. Their answers were either true to the Evaluation Handbook or true to the revisions instituted by the superintendent. The answers of the teachers were not comprehensive, however. Three of the teachers sketchily described the flow from formal observations to year-end evaluation summary (1A, 2D, 2E). Two of the teachers only discussed the periodic formal

observations, with no mention of the year-end summary (1B, 2F). One talked about the year-end evaluation and a mid-year check, not mentioning the observations (1C). One teacher discussed growth goals, but only as prompted through a follow up question by the researcher (1A). One teacher mentioned goals in conjunction with a mid-year form (1C). The mid-year form and mid-year check alluded to are most likely references to requirements in the Professional Growth Plan for teachers on a probationary status. Principal 2 described the system of full or partial evaluation and the corresponding observations, and did not mention the year-end form or growth goals. Principal 1 provided more details on how the evaluation system works, expanding beyond what Principal 2 explained to details on the year-end process and selecting goals.

The third node examined the responses of teachers to the question of how evaluation impacts their teaching. There was not a comparable question in the principal protocol, so this node was comprised of teacher responses only. Two teachers directly stated with clarity that the evaluation system had little to no impact on their instruction (1A, 2D). Another teacher said that she would not change what she was doing in the classroom if the principal walked in the door to observe, implying that the impact was minimal (1B). She also made the point that if a teacher had areas in which he or she was ineffective instructionally, then the evaluation might have more of an impact. The other three teachers expressed the impact in terms of providing a focus area for improvement (1C), encouraging the planning of lessons with the good instructional practices that are described in the evaluation system (2E), and ensuring that teachers perform in such a way to stay employed (2F). Teacher 2D summed up her thoughts on the impact of evaluation with, “My performance level comes from my self motivation, not from a form that’s done at the end of the year.”

It seemed challenging for the teacher interviewees to describe a connection between evaluation and growth as they responded to the question on how their formal evaluation helps them grow professionally in the fourth node. One teacher said outright that the evaluation system did not result in growth (1A). Three other teachers gave very brief answers, one to three sentences in length, with no specificity (1C, 2D, 2E). Another gave one sentence on how evaluation results in growth, and then shifted to a brief discussion of peer observations and study groups (2F). Peer observations are not a part of the evaluation system of the school division, and the teacher stated without hesitation in a follow up question that study groups were outside of the evaluation process. Another teacher, however, provided two specific, personal examples of how during the observation process she was given ideas for different kinds of activities to consider to better accomplish the learning objectives she had for her students (1B). Despite these positive examples, this teacher anchored her growth on professional conferences she had attended through the years, stating “As far as growing professionally, I feel like when I go to a kindergarten conference or a reading conference or a first grade conference, that is how I grow professionally. That does not really come about because of formal evaluations.”

The connection between evaluation and professional development for the teacher was weak throughout the responses for the teacher question on professional activities recommended and their effectiveness. Professional growth seemed to be perceived as a stand-alone entity comprised of training sessions, classes, and conferences. Three of the teachers shared specific training, classes, or conferences that were recommended to them individually by their administrator (1A, 1B, 2E). One of these spoke in glowing terms of the Reading Recovery program training that she had undergone as a result of it being offered for her consideration in the year-end evaluation report (2E). Another discussed a particular manipulative set that she

utilized in an announced observation due to the principal requiring teachers to select from a list of prospective equipment for the lesson she had planned to observe (2F). Two of the teachers only discussed broad, blanket recommendations for classes or training to all teachers (1C, 2D). One of these teachers described four separate courses that she had taken as a result of the principal or central office personnel providing general information and an invitation to take advantage of the opportunity (1C). Only one teacher mentioned school-level study groups in her answer (2E). Throughout the responses to this question, professional growth was not expressed in terms of a deliberate process of teacher development. It was described more as a collection of sessions attended. There was minimal discussion on how the training impacted instructional delivery.

The question in the principal protocol that is grouped into this node is, “How do you promote the professional growth of teachers through the formal evaluation process? What activities do you perform to promote professional development?” Principal 2 presented the need to expand the collection of instruments administrators use in formal observations. She indicated that principals need more authority and freedom to select strategies and modalities of documentation that would best meet the needs of individual teachers to spur them on to growth. She also felt that efforts should be made to connect the achievement of students to the evaluation of their teachers.

The discussion of Principal 1 provided insight on how growth could be facilitated with a whole-school focus on a specific piece of instruction. She presented how she had recently tackled writing skills across all grade levels in her school in 2008-2009, with study groups and training sessions in which the scoring process for actual student work was accomplished. There was no discussion in the responses of either principal on facilitating professional growth through

recommending conferences or graduate courses to teachers in the evaluation process. Their perspectives were based more on what they could help facilitate at the school level.

The responses to the principal question on barriers to growth were also included in this node. The principals identified two main issues: time constraints and the evaluation instrument. Principal 2 discussed the challenge of having the time to take a teacher through a Plan of Improvement and still complete all of the usual evaluation forms and requirements: “Like you put a teacher on a plan of improvement, you spend a lot of time, it’s separate from the evaluation. It’s almost like, if you do that, that should become your evaluation, or part of it.” In the Evaluation Handbook the minimum requirements for a typical evaluation are embedded into a Plan of Improvement, which essentially adds another layer to the evaluation system for a principal dealing with a marginal teacher.

Principal 1 described the evaluation system as “time-consuming” with principals having to write so much, and explained that the time barrier also applies to the involvement of teachers in the process. As both principals commented on the barriers evident in the evaluation instrument, one described it as “one size fits all” and the other described it as “one form to fit all”. Principal 1 talked about how the system is anchored on the instructional strategies of Madeline Hunter, “which isn’t the only thing I like to see going on.”

In the fifth node, questions were grouped together to consider the opinions of the interviewees on what elements and strategies are necessary for an ideal evaluation system that fosters growth. The responses of the teachers to the question, “What elements need to be in place for a teacher evaluation system to foster professional growth?” can be grouped around three themes: the time challenge, improvement and growth, and effective teacher-administrator communications.

As they worked to identify the elements, two teachers indicated time was a challenge in evaluation (1A, 2D), and a third teacher alluded to the time challenge in discussions of the scheduling of post-conferences and year-end evaluation conferences (1C). In an effort to accommodate for the time issues, one teacher (1A) marketed for another evaluator to complete observations instead of the administrators.

Three teachers (2D, 2E, 2F) gave input on elements relating to improvement and growth. Teacher 2F talked about the need of describing the how-to of improvement, not simply stating that improvement is needed. Another element was to plan professional development based on the needs of teachers as identified in evaluation (2E). Teacher 2D gave the most feedback in this theme, talking about utilizing goal-setting and connecting evaluation to teacher achievement rather than using a checklist system, and tying it into the strengths and weaknesses in the presentation of curriculum or student scores. This teacher was interested in having specific areas identified to work on rather than receiving comments on doing a good job or not doing a good job. Even though teacher 2D provided the most input on the theme of improvement and growth, there was no confidence expressed in the system of working toward professional growth goals: "But at evaluation time it's like this is one more piece of paper that we have to do and it's not related, I don't see the link. Maybe it's me not seeing the link. Turn in your professional growth and then we do this evaluation form." (2D)

Several teachers presented elements connected to the theme of effective teacher-administrator communication. Teacher 2F spent considerable time discussing the crucial task for administrators of making expectations clear, from identifying look-fors to ensuring inter-evaluator reliability. In regards to clearly communicating expectations, she stated, ...unless a teacher is failing, I don't think a teacher who is at least modestly successful

knows exactly what is expected in the evaluation, except to show the best they can show in themselves, and bring out the best in the students for a lesson. (2F)

In discussing post-conferences, teacher 1C explained the importance of having a “meaningful talk” with the administrator. As teacher 2D talked about the ideal elements, she expressed, “the principal and the employee really have to discuss a little bit more.” The need for positive feedback was hammered home repeatedly in the discussions of teacher 1B. As she reflected on several teaching assignments she has held in several school divisions, she indicated, “The way that those principals have dealt with the teachers kind of makes a big difference in whether the teacher’s motivated to grow.” (1B)

This comment from teacher 1B as she discussed positive feedback corresponded to the strategy for promoting professional growth that Principal 2 ranked as most important: building positive relationships with teachers. Principal 2 gave a recent example of how she worked to build a good relationship with a teacher new to her building, sharing specific instructional materials the teacher needed to utilize to improve her lessons. “And she went off and she did this and shared it with me and I did go back and saw a much better lesson.” The strategy Principal 1 gave that she believed promoted professional growth well was to go in to watch a lesson with a specific reason to observe, analyze what is seen, and then let the teacher do as much of the talking in the post-conference as is possible. The reasons for observation that she listed included task analysis, level of questioning, and content analysis.

The question from the principal protocol, “Have your attempts at promoting growth been successful? If so, how do you measure this success?” was also included in node five on developing an ideal evaluation system. Principal 1 expressed evidence of success in several ways: occasional verbal expressions of appreciation from teachers, good conversations with

teachers, the institutionalization of things that have been worked on for years, how well students are doing with the concepts and strategies that have been shared with teachers, and excitement during study group sessions. Principal 2 talked about the opportunities she had offered to her staff through the years in study groups, conferences, and trainings. She seemed concerned with the large volume of opportunities, wondering, "I don't know sometimes if we have too much." She spoke with confidence on how the annual technology training had made possible the biggest change in teachers. The impact of the training is readily seen in how teachers utilize computers. For other new endeavors, however, Principal 2 expressed that it is more difficult to measure how growth is impacted. At the end of her response she connected growth to what she sees in the classrooms.

I think when you can get something and you know it's going to be successful, you put the time in it to do the training and then say, hey, I'm going to come to your class to watch you do it. When they can see a use for it, that's the kind of staff development where you can see changes for the better. (2)

Both principals discussed success in terms of teacher responses to the training opportunities that had been provided for them, and whether change in instructional practice followed. The dialogue did not delineate a firm connection between the utilization of the evaluation process to support the strategies learned in training, and change in teacher practice. This connection was eluded to, but in such a vague manner that it did not appear to be standard practice.

For the sixth node, both the teacher protocol and the principal protocol included a question on what recommendations they would give to an administrator to implement evaluation in such a way that growth is promoted. The six teachers provided such diverse answers that it

was challenging to group their thoughts into common themes. They are presented separately in the following paragraphs.

The discussion of Teacher 1A was clearly focused on how an administrator should make evaluation more of a priority. There was discontent expressed over how principals often came into a classroom to accomplish a student observation for a Child Study follow up component, and simultaneously wrote a classroom observation summary on the teacher's instruction. The delay in post-conferencing was discussed with dismay, as this teacher had trouble remembering specifics of the lesson observed if the conference was too far removed. This teacher did not typically experience pre-conferences before observations, and noted, "As far as maximizing my growth, my administrator should ask me, well what do you want me to do when I come in and observe you? I've never been asked that by an administrator." (1A) The busyness of the position of the principal was acknowledged, but there was little patience expressed for the repeated postponing and rescheduling of observations. "If it only happens when it's convenient for the administrator, how can it really be for the teacher? Give me a timeframe. When you do it just on an administrator's schedule then the teacher feels completely secondary." (1A)

Teacher 1B centered her response on positive feedback and a good teacher-administrator relationship. She gave scenarios in which administrators had forwarded articles or books to her on strategies of current interest. There was not a statement verifying that this spurred her on to growth; it was rather the perception that the principal knew and appreciated her as a teacher. She said it was important to her to know that the principal had also experienced challenges personally in the classroom as a teacher and could identify with her. She described this as a "relationship." Her recommendations on how an administrator could foster growth through evaluation were summed up as follows.

So, I would say, for an administrator to be effective, an effective administrator is one that can see what's going on and kind of make sure that the teacher knows they appreciate the extra effort that they're doing, any positive feedback, and helpful suggestions. (1B)

In response to this question, Teacher 1C did not discuss evaluation. She talked about having groups of teachers meet with the principal at the end of the year to decide in which areas there was a need for improvement in the school at large, and what strategies needed to be put in place to facilitate that improvement. She kept this line of discussion, even with attempts from the interviewer to steer the conversation toward developing personal professional growth goals based on those identified areas of need.

Teacher 2D began the response to the question on recommendations for administrators to foster growth through evaluation with, "More specific information about what they would like to see improved. More discussion with the teacher about what activities they feel they would like the teacher to pursue, investigate, to accomplish those particular objectives." She went on to comment on the specificity of the evaluation instrument, picking up a copy of one and reading some of the individual indicators. The teacher believed it to be impossible to see some of the indicators to any great degree in a one-lesson classroom observation. She indicated the checklist, "doesn't mean an awful lot." (2D) When prompted in a follow-up question on the meaningfulness of the comments area of the instrument, she showed the researcher a few samples of statements in the comments area on her forms and said the remarks were too broad and general to have significance. When the researcher began following up with another question on teacher-administrator discussions in post-conferences, the teacher shared that she typically just signed the observation summary without a post-conference being held. She then reflected on the connection between post-conferences and understanding observation summaries.

If they indeed are supposed to drive what's on the form, and I guess they're really supposed to, then having those conferences throughout the year would serve the purpose of what I'm talking about. And then I would understand them probably. (2D)

Teacher 2E described an experience from several years ago that has impacted her view of evaluation and growth considerably. In a pre-conference with her principal she expressed a challenge she was experiencing in the classroom and requested that the principal observe that in action and give input on some strategies to improve. That particular area ended up being noted as a deficit on the written evaluation, and little effort was given to providing assistance on what the teacher could do differently to make instruction better. The teacher expressed the impact of this incident on her as follows.

The trust was not there. Because I was like, I'm not going to ask for help. I'm not going to say that this is the thing that I'm having a problem with. Then I became, maybe I just need to try to hide any weakness that I feel I might have. I think that a lot of teachers might feel that way, especially a new teacher. (2E)

An unpleasant evaluation experience from several years ago also permeated the response of Teacher 2F. The plot was complicated and involved, but the final message was that administrators need to keep relationships and evaluation on a professional level. The experiences of both Teacher 2E and Teacher 2F had happened years ago. It is significant that those experiences with evaluation impacted them with such strength that there was still a touch of despair in their voices in these interviews as they relayed what happened.

Principal 1 gave three recommendations for an administrator in her response: figure out what the process requires you to do, know the evaluation instrument, and understand the connection between the observation form and the final year-end evaluation form. Principal 2

talked about the importance of getting to know the teachers before you begin the formal evaluation process. As she reflected on what advice to offer a new administrator, she said, "No one tells principals how to do this. Nobody tells you how to do observations. It's just like parenting. You pick up from your parents and it may not be the best thing."

The Written Documents

Written documents examined in the study for each teacher participant included the Classroom Observation Forms completed during classroom observations and the year-end, summative Teacher Evaluation Reports. Teachers 1A, 1B, and 2F provided photocopies of their written observation and evaluation documentation. The remainder of the teachers requested that the researcher go through the Personnel office to secure the documents. Written documentation for professional growth goals was available for only one teacher. Principals are not required to forward the documentation of annual goal progress to the Personnel Department. All of the documents were from the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 academic years.

Data Analysis

Classroom Observation Forms

Table 9 itemizes some of the characteristics of the Classroom Observation Forms completed by administrators during classroom observations for the six teachers in the study. Teacher 1C and 2E had documentation for one observation each; the Evaluation Handbook indicates the minimum for veteran teachers is two annual observations. There is no standard in the Evaluation Handbook for the length of a written summary. The range of length shown in the table is 15 to 307 words, with administrators in school 1 writing more than administrators in school 2. Errors in spelling and grammar did not form a pattern.

Table 9

The Mechanics of Written Observation Summaries

Teacher	Word count of comments	Number typing, spelling, grammar errors	Working days from observation to teacher	Teacher initialed that post-conference was held
1A	273	2	11	X
1A	289	2	21	
1A	307	7	54	X
1B	274	7	15	X
1B	269	0	53	X
1C	260	8	10	X
2D	19	0	13	X
2D	44	2	32	X
2E	34	0	19	X
2F	113	1	29	
2F	33	0	5	X
2F	15	0	12	X

The standard in the Teacher Evaluation System handbook for the timeliness of a post-conference is five or less days after the observation. Only one of these observations had a date with the teacher signature indicating that the post-conference had occurred within the allotted five days. The range of days between the observation and the teacher signature date in the table

is 5 to 54 days. For all but two observations the teacher did initial that a post conference was held. It is most probable that post-conferences were not held for many of the observations, however, and if post-conferences were indeed held so far removed from the observation event their effectiveness is questionable.

Data in Table 10 was collected to give consideration to the content of comments administrators wrote on the Classroom Observation Forms and to consider how growth was encouraged. The Classroom Observation Form has a list of behaviors administrators look for during an observation, with the direction to “Check behaviors observed for most effective learning environment”. For example, if the indicator “Maintains student focus throughout the lesson” is not checked, the assumption would be that students were not focused on the teacher during the lesson. However, sometimes the lack of a check on a behavior is just reflective of a lesson not having a particular element. For example, if “Gives immediate feedback on written assignments and uses results as a basis for reteaching” is not checked, it may mean that the teacher assessed students in ways other than in writing.

Table 10

Commendations and Suggestions in Written Observation Summaries

Teacher	Number of behaviors not checked as being observed	Number of sentences giving suggestions for improvement	Number of sentences stating details of lesson	Number of sentences giving commendations, adjectives used
1A	6	0	17	0
1A	2	0	14	0
1A	4	0	16	1 - excellent
1B	7	0	19	0
1B	4	0	16	3 - good, daring, constructive
1C	10	0	15	0
2D	3	0	2	1 - great
2D	5	0	4	1 - great
2E	4	0	2	1 - excellent
2F	5	0	9	3 - strengths, good
2F	2	0	1	2 - effectively, nice
2F	4	0	2	1 - nice

The first column in the table shows a total of 56 times in these observation summaries that behaviors were not checked as being evidenced in the lesson. For five of these instances, the

administrator addressed in the comments area why the behaviors were not checked. These five instances, the comments with which they were addressed, and the teacher and observation numbers are listed below.

1. Behavior: Uses questioning techniques which require higher level of thinking.

Comment: Knowledge and comprehension level questions used. (2F, observation #1)

2. Behavior: Provides opportunities for students to work independently on meaningful tasks.

Comment: This was a whole group activity so independent work and differentiated activities were not essential elements of the lesson. (1B, observation #2)

3. Behavior: Evaluates the potential of each student and adapts instruction to meet individual needs.

Comment: This was a whole group activity so independent work and differentiated activities were not essential elements of the lesson. (1B, observation #2)

4. Behavior: Gives immediate feedback on written assignments and uses results as a basis for reteaching.

Comment: Listening and observing were used to assess student performance. (1A, observation #3)

5. Behavior: Gives immediate feedback on written assignments and uses results as a basis for reteaching.

Comment: Observing and listening were used to assess student performance. (1C observation #1)

The comments for these five unchecked behaviors provide statements of what happened, not judgments on the quality of what happened instructionally. The other 51 times behaviors were not checked on the forms were not addressed at all in administrative comments.

Sentences in the comments areas of the observation form were considered in three different ways: which ones gave suggestions for improvement, which ones simply stated what happened in the lesson, and which ones provided commendations to the teacher. Table 10 shows how the overwhelming majority of the sentences gave statements of what happened in the lesson, as evidenced in column three. Of particular interest is that none of the statements on any of the forms were classified as providing suggestions for the teachers to improve, as is indicated in column two. Thirteen of 130 sentences, ten percent, gave commendations to teachers. This is shown in column four of the table.

Through the Classroom Observation Forms, principals have the ability to identify effective instructional behaviors in a lesson and make judgments on how well they are used by a teacher. The form is an avenue to spell out for teachers in which areas they excel, in which areas they can improve, and specifics on how they can improve. The record reflects that the Classroom Observation Form for these classroom observations was instead largely used to provide neutral statements of what happened in lessons. It is startling that none of the statements on the observation forms were geared toward suggestions for improvement.

Teacher Evaluation Reports

The year-end, summative Teacher Evaluation Report was also examined for each teacher in the study. Part I of this form is titled Instructional Performance, and is divided into the same four categories that are used on the Classroom Observation Form: planning, presentation and delivery of lesson, student evaluation, and classroom management and environment. There is a

comments section included at the end of the Instructional Performance section. Ratings and feedback on part I of the Teacher Evaluation Report are to correspond in some fashion to the ratings and feedback on the Classroom Observation Forms for each teacher. Part II of the Teacher Evaluation Report is titled Professional Performance, and provides ratings for teachers in five categories: record keeping, punctuality, utilizes technology, cooperation, and professional growth. This part also includes a general comments section at the end of the ratings. Ratings and feedback on part II of the Teacher Evaluation Report are based on other evidences beyond the Classroom Observation Form. At the end of the Teacher Evaluation Report is a section for overall summary remarks. It is followed by signature lines and a space for attendance details on sick leave and professional leave.

Table 11 summarizes the ratings on the Teacher Evaluation Report. The ratings on all of the forms in the study are “exceeds expectations” and “meets expectations”. None of the six teachers received ratings of “needs to improve” or “unsatisfactory” on their summary evaluations. This is perhaps not surprising, as there is the possibility that teachers only chose to participate in this study if their year-end evaluations were positive.

Outliers in these data include Teacher 1C with all ratings in the “meets” category and none in the “exceeds” rating. Teacher 2E, with ten out of 19 ratings in part I marked as “exceeds”, is the other outlier. The data for these teachers will be considered more in depth with Table 13.

Table 11

Ratings on the Teacher Evaluation Report

	Teacher 1A	Teacher 1B	Teacher 1C	Teacher 2D	Teacher 2E	Teacher 2F
Ratings in part I, out of 19	Exceeds- 3 Meets- 16	Exceeds- 3 Meets- 16	Exceeds- 0 Meets-19	Exceeds- 8 Meets- 11	Exceeds-10 Meets- 9	Exceeds- 2 Meets- 17
Ratings in part II, out of 15	Exceeds- 2 Meets- 13	Exceeds- 1 Meets- 14	Exceeds- 0 Meets- 15	Exceeds- 1 Meets- 14	Exceeds- 1 Meets- 14	Exceeds- 0 Meets- 15
Totals	Exceeds- 5 15%	Exceeds- 4 12%	Exceeds- 0 0%	Exceeds- 9 26%	Exceeds-11 32%	Exceeds- 2 6%
	Meets- 29 85%	Meets- 30 88%	Meets- 34 100%	Meets- 25 74%	Meets- 23 68%	Meets- 32 94%

Part II of the Teacher Evaluation Report, titled “Professional Performance”, was examined on its own, as this section of the year-end evaluation is not designed to connect with the teacher observation process. None of the participants had ratings or comments indicating there was a need for improvement. Two teachers, 2F and 1C, had all “meets expectations” ratings in Part II.

There were a total of five “exceeds” ratings on the participant forms in Part II. Teachers 2E, 1B, and 1A each had one “exceeds” rating in the area of “accommodates students with special needs”. The form for teacher 1A was the only one of the three that included a comment addressing why this rating was “exceeds”. Teacher 1A also had an “exceeds” in “adapts to

change”, without it being addressed in the comments area. The fifth “exceeds” was on the form of teacher 2D in the area of “expands instructional competencies” and it corresponded with the remark, “(Teacher name) participated in numerous professional development activities to enhance and improve her teaching knowledge and skills,” (2D) in the comments field.

Table 12 gives data on the type of comments written on part I of the year-end Teacher Evaluation Reports. Since the evaluation system is designed to have information on the Classroom Observation Forms correspond in some way to information on part I of the year-end Teacher Evaluation Report, there are data included in Table 12 for each teacher’s observations as well. In Table 12, the number of sentences giving commendations and the number of sentences giving suggestions are considered.

Table 12

Comparison of Sentences in Comments for Part 1 of Teacher Evaluation Report and Sentences in Comments on Classroom Observations

	Teacher 1A	Teacher 1B	Teacher 1C	Teacher 2D	Teacher 2E	Teacher 2F
Number of sentences	2	1	0	0	1	0
giving commendations in Part I of the Teacher Evaluation Report	out of 2	out of 3	out of 2	out of 5	out of 3	out of 2
Number of sentences	1	3	0	2	1	6
giving commendations on all Classroom Observation forms	out of 48	out of 38	out of 15	out of 8	out of 3	out of 18
Number of sentences	0	0	0	1	0	0
giving suggestions for improvement in Part I of the Teacher Evaluation Report	out of 2	out of 3	out of 2	out of 5	out of 3	out of 2
Number of sentences	0	0	0	0	0	0
giving suggestions for improvement on all Class- room Observation forms	out of 48	out of 38	out of 15	out of 8	out of 3	out of 18

Comments providing suggestions were not given on any of the observation summaries, and only one was given on part I on the year-end Teacher Evaluation Report. This suggestion given on the Teacher Evaluation Report for Teacher 2D was in reference to a need to improve scores on quarterly benchmark assessments. Most of the actual verbiage of commendations on Classroom Observation Forms did not correspond with the verbiage of commendations on part I of the Teacher Evaluation Report. The clear exception to this was the commendations for Teacher 1A; commendations in the two documents were both based on classroom management strategies for this teacher. It is of note that Teacher 2F received the most sentences of commendation on Classroom Observation Forms, but did not receive any on part I of the Teacher Evaluation Report.

Table 13 gives consideration to the outliers mentioned earlier, Teacher 1C and Teacher 2E. In the discussion of Table 11 data it was noted that Teacher 1C received all “meets” ratings and Teacher 2E received 10 out of 19 “exceeds” ratings. Table 13 examines the ratings, sentences of commendation, and sentences of suggestion for these two outliers. The first rows in the table contain data on high ratings and commendations; the last rows contain data on lower ratings and suggestions.

Table 13

Ratings, Commendations and Suggestions for Teacher 1C and Teacher 2E

	Teacher 1C	Teacher 2E
High ratings and commendations		
Number “exceeds” ratings in part I of Teacher Evaluation Report	0 out of 19	10 out of 19
Number of sentences giving commendations in part I of Teacher Evaluation Report	0 out of 2	1 out of 3
Observation forms		
Number of sentences giving commendations in overall summary remarks of Teacher Evaluation Report	0 out of 2	3 out of 4
Lower ratings and suggestions		
Number “needs to improve” and “unsatisfactory” ratings in part I and part II of Teacher Evaluation Report	0 out of 34	0 out of 34
Number of sentences giving suggestions for improvement in part I of Teacher Evaluation Report	0 out of 2	0 out of 3
Number of sentences giving suggestions for improvement on all Classroom Observation forms	0 out of 15	0 out of 3
Number of sentences giving suggestions for improvement in overall summary remarks of Teacher Evaluation Report	1* out of 2	1* out of 4

*Ambiguous statement

It is of particular interest that Teacher 1C did not have any “exceeds”, “needs improvement”, or “satisfactory” ratings on the year-end Teacher Evaluation Report. Attached to the evaluation was a letter written by Teacher 1C, with phrases of “I... appreciate your recognition that I had a difficult year... although my perspective is different... I understand this is a method of compromise...” (1C) On the one Classroom Observation form that Teacher 1C had for the year (she did not have the mandated two observations), there were no comments giving suggestions for improvement. On the Teacher Evaluation Report comments were largely neutral. One sentence in the final, summary remarks area at the very end of the form was, “We do need you to work with our fourth and fifth grade students who continue to need support in reading.” (1C) This sentence may or may not be interpreted as a suggestion for improvement, which is why the table has an asterisk beside that data. The written documents did not necessarily support the possibility that this teacher’s progress was less than satisfactory, yet Teacher 1C was compelled to write an attachment, a rebuttal of sorts, to be included with the Teacher Evaluation Report.

Another outlier in the data is Teacher 2E. This teacher also only had one Classroom Observation Form rather than the mandated two. The support for more than half of the ratings in part I being “exceeds” may be questionable, as the commendations in both the Classroom Observation Form and part I of the Teacher Evaluation Report are limited. There are three additional sentences of commendation in the summary, final remarks at the end of the Teacher Evaluation Report for Teacher 2E, however. The asterisk in the table beside the data on the number of sentences giving suggestions for improvement in the overall summary remarks of the Teacher Evaluation Report represents the hesitancy in interpreting the statement, “She is encouraged to continue to use research based practices and technology to engage her students in

the curriculum.” (2E) This sentence can be a commendation, in that she is already using the practices, or a suggestion encouraging the use of the practices.

There is a possibility that both Teacher 1C and Teacher 2E would not be outliers if there was the additional documentation of another Classroom Observation form as is required in the school division evaluation plan. Data on Teacher 2E does present some evidence of excellence in the sentences of commendation, and one more Classroom Observation may have solidified the case for so many “exceeds” ratings. Data on Teacher 1C, however, is curiously neutral throughout, raising questions on why the teacher felt the need to submit a rebuttal attachment for inclusion with her year-end Teacher Evaluation Report. Since none of the Classroom Observation forms for the six teacher participants contained sentences of suggestions for improvement, it may be unlikely that an additional Classroom Observation form for Teacher 1C would have provided statements geared to stimulate improvement and growth.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter summarizes the study and the findings, presents conclusions drawn from the findings, and provides a discussion to form guidelines for teacher evaluation. Recommendations for further study follow. The chapter is organized into five sections: summary, conclusions, discussion, implications for practice, and recommendations for further study.

Summary

A review of the literature reveals a history of two fundamental purposes for teacher evaluation: accountability and improvement. The link between the improvement of instruction and the process of teacher evaluation may be described as weak. Studies of the perceptions of teachers of the evaluation process have consistently identified poor feedback, a lack of credibility, and an absence of trust as key issues that cause the evaluation process to be less than effective.

In this qualitative study, interviews and various written evaluative artifacts were examined on participants in two elementary schools in a small urban school division in Virginia. Each principal of the two schools was interviewed. Data from six teachers were examined, including interviews and written documents relating to their evaluations. The school division handbook and policies for teacher evaluation were also explored for this study. With the use of NVivo software, these data were analyzed to work toward the development of guidelines that describe what an elementary principal can do in the teacher evaluation process to promote the professional development of teachers.

Conclusions

The central research question for this study was: *Can principals promote the professional development of teachers through the evaluation process?* Sub-questions that guided the study were: (a) What specific behaviors and practices of principals promote professional development? (b) Do teachers think these behaviors and practices are effective?

As the purpose of teacher evaluation was examined in this study, the interview results from both teachers and principals pointed to an ideology of professional growth through evaluation. Although the evidence in the written evaluation documents does not irrefutably support that the teacher evaluation system as it is actually utilized in this school division is anchored on improvement, it was apparent in the interview data that the belief that evaluation should foster growth was very strong. In spite of this strong belief, the data in this study supported the conclusion that elementary principals do not use the evaluation process to promote professional growth. However, principles of practice for administrators that could indeed encourage a climate of growth in the elementary setting did emerge from this study.

Teachers and principals spoke earnestly in the interviews of what an ideal evaluation system that fosters professional growth should look like. Specific feedback and administrator-teacher trust were two elements from the literature that the teachers identified as being necessary to an evaluation process anchored in growth. Several practical guidelines surfaced as the input of principals and teachers in interviews and the written documentation on teacher progress were considered in this study. These guidelines are examined in the following sections.

Discussion

In this study, the desire for professional growth was generally in place with teachers and the willingness to foster growth was evident with principals. There were instruments available in

the system to facilitate growth. The unmet challenge was to fully utilize the available instruments and structure of the evaluation system. The first basic guideline for principals to foster growth through evaluation is take full advantage of all of the elements of the evaluation system of the school division that are designed to facilitate growth. The formation of professional growth goals was actually not mandatory in this evaluation system, but it was clarified as one of the options administrators and teachers could access. The minimum number of observation summaries was not realized for two of the six teachers interviewed. Pre-conferences before classroom observations were not mandatory, but could be utilized. Post-conferences were supposed to occur after all classroom observations, but often were not held. Only one of the post-conferences was dated as being held within the mandated time period of five days. Principals who wish to maximize growth for their teachers need to study the evaluation system in the light of how to foster growth, and fully implement all of those options that have the potential to do so.

One of the surprising findings in this study was the inability of teachers to describe how the evaluation process is supposed to work. Their hesitancy was pervasive. With the range of years with their current administrator going from five to twelve and the evaluation system being in effect more than twenty years in this school division, the assumption is that there would be a level of familiarity. The hesitancy of teachers may be connected to the evidence in written evaluation documents that the evaluation system is not fully utilized. It also may be connected to the findings in the interview question on the impact of teacher evaluation. The perception of teachers generally was that the evaluation system has little to no impact on their teaching. If its significance is minimal, understanding how it works is not a priority. If its significance is crucial, however, understanding how it works is a high priority.

At the beginning of each school year a teacher workshop should be held that outlines the basic timelines, forms, and expectations for evaluations, and for professional growth in particular. This refresher each fall could help teachers understand the structure of the evaluation system and should help with the accountability of administrators in following the mandated timelines and specifications. Discussions on professional growth should be persistent in post-conferences, faculty meetings, and grade level meetings throughout the year.

The priority of evaluation was questioned in teacher responses to the question on what elements are necessary for an evaluation system to foster growth. Time was a definite entity. Teachers discussed their perceptions that evaluation was not a priority of administrators when observations are regularly postponed and pre- and post-conferences are not held. They readily acknowledged the time constraints of an administrator, but felt that taking the time was necessary to facilitating growth. In the principal interviews, time was identified as a barrier to fostering growth through evaluation.

As the level of teacher understanding of the evaluation process and the responses of both teachers and principals on the resource of time are considered, another guideline for growth-oriented evaluation would be to commit the necessary time to the evaluation process so it is a priority and is accomplished effectively. The challenge of this suggestion is to determine what administrative responsibilities can be shifted so that more time can be reserved for facilitating professional growth through evaluation. Hand-in-hand with this challenge is how to manage teacher schedules so that the necessary time for conferencing and working on goals is available.

The definition of professional growth may need to be clarified. Teacher descriptions of growth were largely expressed in terms of which training sessions, in-services, study groups, and coursework had been completed. The carry over of what was learned into actual instruction with

students was secondary in their discussions. The scope of this factor may be far beyond a relationship between evaluation and growth, however. The field of K-12 education traditionally links salary to years of service, assuming that training sessions and experiences will always translate over to better instruction for children, with teachers receiving pay accordingly. From this logically flows the assumption that more training always results in more teacher growth. This deep-seated philosophy may be the biggest challenge of all. The gap between what one learns and what one institutes into practice is a difficult one to close in K-12 education. Thus, the next guideline is to define professional development so that it is based on improvement in instructional delivery, not simply a statement of training sessions and courses attended. Both principals talked in their interviews about change in instructional practice as one of the ways to identify professional growth. But their descriptions of the connection between the utilization of the evaluation process to support the strategies learned in training and actual changes in teacher practice were elusive.

Teachers expressed a need for specific feedback in the evaluation process. They believed a teacher should know details on how to improve, not simply that improvement was needed. One teacher indicated a post-conference was not typically held with observations, and meeting to discuss the observation summary would perhaps help give more substance to the broad, general remarks from the administrator on the form. A need for more specificity was evident in the written evaluation documents. The average of total words in the comments section of classroom observation summaries in one school was 260, 272, and 290 for the three teachers, and in the other school it was 32, 34, and 54 for the three teachers. As the teachers discussed in the interviews the ideal evaluation system for fostering growth, the three from the second school with the smaller numbers of averages of total words on observation summaries talked more about

the need for feedback on how to improve and about tying evaluation into the specific strengths and weaknesses of teachers in terms of the presentation of curriculum than did the three teachers from the other school with the higher averages of total words on observation summaries.

Specific feedback from the evaluator both in post-conference discussions and in written observation summaries came across as being important to the growth of the teachers. The next guideline can be expressed as, pay attention to the specificity of written evaluations and verbal feedback – provide details on ways to improve when a need is noted, give instructional strategies rather than a simple ‘good job’ comment.

A need for more effective feedback was one of the elements needing attention in the school division in this study, just as it was identified as a key issue causing evaluation to be less than effective in other studies in the literature. The issue of credibility that was also identified in other studies was not a factor in this school division.

The third key issue in other studies was also an element in this study: trust. Two of the teachers in this study told of previous experiences in the evaluation process that caused their trust in administrators to erode. The conviction in their tales was startling; it was evident that the experiences had impacted them greatly. Principal 2 talked about building positive relationships with teachers, which may be connected with trust. However, the two principals did not use the actual term “trust” as they discussed the critical factors for fostering growth through evaluation. The reality is, an effective principal works to promote growth regardless of whether or not a teacher trusts him or her. On the other hand, a teacher will most likely not maintain a commitment to growth through evaluation if he or she does not trust the administrator. The intensity with which the two teachers expressed their thoughts on trust cause another guideline to surface: administrators need to develop and maintain a relationship of trust with teachers.

Implications for Practice

Based upon the findings of the study, the following guidelines summarizing the previous discussion are offered to elementary administrators who wish to foster professional growth through the evaluation process. Principals should:

1. Take advantage of all of the elements of the evaluation system of the school division that are designed to facilitate growth.
2. Commit the necessary time to the evaluation process so that it is a priority. Ensure that the level of importance is clear to teachers.
3. Define professional development so that it is based on improvement in instructional delivery, not simply a statement of training sessions and courses attended.
4. Pay attention to the specificity of written evaluations and verbal feedback – provide details on ways to improve when a need is noted, give instructional strategies rather than a simple ‘good job’ comment.
5. Develop and maintain a professional relationship of trust with teachers.

There are also practices for school divisions to consider as attention is given to fostering growth through the evaluation process. Good practices identified in this study include the following.

1. Ensure that instruments to foster growth are available in the evaluation process. Monitor the use of these instruments by administrators.
2. Hold a teacher workshop at the beginning of each school year to outline the basic timelines, forms, and expectations for evaluations and for professional growth.
3. Adjust administrative responsibilities so that principals can reserve more time for facilitating professional growth through evaluation.

4. Foster the development of skills in principals that allow for the implementation of specificity in evaluative feedback to teachers. Professional development ideas for principals include workshops, readings, mentorships, and study groups.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study involved teachers and principals with multiple years of experience. Extending the study to include teachers with only two or three years of experience would bring new perspectives. Non-tenured teachers are undergoing much growth, and their viewpoints would bring much to the discussion.

The written documentation of the evaluations of the teachers in this study demonstrated they were successful in their instruction. A study including teachers who were depicted as struggling on their written evaluation summaries would add to the body of knowledge. A project with “turnaround” teachers who had initially struggled in the profession and had managed to grow into providing successful instruction would also be enlightening. What can an administrator do to facilitate a “turnaround” when a teacher is having difficulties?

Another possible study is to examine written evaluation documentation from several schools and determine if there is a relationship between the ratings and comments of the evaluators on the forms and the perspectives of the evaluatees toward growth. Do higher ratings better facilitate growth, or do lower ratings? Are there ways to formulate evaluative comments on the written documents that will better spur teachers on to more personal learning and growing?

Surveying principals throughout the state on teacher evaluation processes may also result in data that are worth studying. How do principals see their role in fostering growth through

teacher evaluation? Perhaps strategies could be identified that have successfully promoted professional growth through teacher evaluation, and barriers to growth could be recognized.

School divisions often have difficulty thoroughly monitoring the evaluative process. It can be challenging to ensure that all of the pieces of teacher evaluation are effectively and consistently handled by administrators. A study across several school divisions to determine the consistency with which the timelines are met and the reliability with which the various components of the evaluation system are utilized would be interesting. This study could add to our understanding of how well the components of the evaluation process that can facilitate growth are utilized. Permission to conduct such a study, however, may be difficult to secure.

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Appendix A



Office of Research Compliance
 Institutional Review Board
 2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497)
 Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
 540/231-4991 Fax 540/231-0959
 e-mail moored@vt.edu
www.irb.vt.edu

DATE: December 18, 2008

FWA00000572 (expires 1/20/2010)
 IRB # is IRB00000667

MEMORANDUM

TO: Glen Earthman
 Tina Barringer

Approval date: 12/18/2008
 Continuing Review Due Date: 12/3/2009
 Expiration Date: 12/17/2009

FROM: David M. Moore

SUBJECT: **IRB Expedited Approval:** "Teacher Growth in the Evaluation Procedure", IRB # 08-696

This memo is regarding the above-mentioned protocol. The proposed research is eligible for expedited review according to the specifications authorized by 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. As Chair of the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board, I have granted approval to the study for a period of 12 months, effective December 18, 2008.

As an investigator of human subjects, your responsibilities include the following:

1. Report promptly proposed changes in previously approved human subject research activities to the IRB, including changes to your study forms, procedures and investigators, regardless of how minor. The proposed changes must not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.
2. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.
3. Report promptly to the IRB of the study's closing (i.e., data collecting and data analysis complete at Virginia Tech). If the study is to continue past the expiration date (listed above), investigators must submit a request for continuing review prior to the continuing review due date (listed above). It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain re-approval from the IRB before the study's expiration date.
4. If re-approval is not obtained (unless the study has been reported to the IRB as closed) prior to the expiration date, all activities involving human subjects and data analysis must cease immediately, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.

Important:

If you are conducting **federally funded non-exempt research**, please send the applicable OSP/grant proposal to the IRB office, once available. OSP funds may not be released until the IRB has compared and found consistent the proposal and related IRB application.

cc: File

Invent the Future

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE UNIVERSITY AND STATE UNIVERSITY
An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution



Office of Research Compliance
 Institutional Review Board
 2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497)
 Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
 540/231-4991 Fax 540/231-0959
 e-mail moored@vt.edu
www.irb.vt.edu

FWA00000572 (expires 1/20/2010)
 IRB # is IRB00000667

DATE: November 19, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: Glen Earthman
 Tina Barringer

Approval date: 12/18/2009
 Continuing Review Due Date: 12/4/2010
 Expiration Date: 12/17/2010

FROM: David M. Moore

SUBJECT: IRB Expedited Continuation 1: "Teacher Growth in the Evaluation Procedure",
 IRB # 08-696

This memo is regarding the above referenced protocol which was previously granted expedited approval by the IRB. The proposed research is eligible for expedited review according to the specifications authorized by 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. Pursuant to your request, as Chair of the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board, I have granted approval for extension of the study for a period of 12 months, effective as of December 18, 2009.

Approval of your research by the IRB provides the appropriate review as required by federal and state laws regarding human subject research. As an investigator of human subjects, your responsibilities include the following:

1. Report promptly proposed changes in previously approved human subject research activities to the IRB, including changes to your study forms, procedures and investigators, regardless of how minor. The proposed changes must not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.
2. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.
3. Report promptly to the IRB of the study's closing (i.e., data collecting and data analysis complete at Virginia Tech). If the study is to continue past the expiration date (listed above), investigators must submit a request for continuing review prior to the continuing review due date (listed above). It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain re-approval from the IRB before the study's expiration date.
4. If re-approval is not obtained (unless the study has been reported to the IRB as closed) prior to the expiration date, all activities involving human subjects and data analysis must cease immediately, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.

cc: File

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Appendix B

Memo for Permission to Conduct Study - Superintendent

Memorandum

To: Dr. XXXX, Superintendent

XXXX Public Schools

From: Tina Barringer, Doctoral Candidate

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Date: XXXX

Subject: Permission to conduct a research study

I am a student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and have completed the necessary coursework in the doctoral program. The next step is to secure a location to conduct my study.

The purpose of my study is to determine what an elementary principal can do in the teacher evaluation process to promote the professional development of teachers. The theory developed in this study will provide an explanation of the practices and characteristics of elementary principals that foster professional growth among teachers in the evaluation process.

I am enclosing the first three chapters of my study. This information will provide you with a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, a review of the literature on this topic, and the proposed methodology for the study. I am requesting permission to interview teachers and administrators at the elementary level. There will be no involvement of students. Interviews will occur at times that will not impact instruction.

Thank you for considering my request to conduct the study in the XXXX Public Schools district. I believe the results of the work will be beneficial to the school division and others. I am requesting that you sign the enclosed consent form granting permission for this study. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or need further clarification.

Appendix C

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY Informed Consent for Participants - Superintendent In Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: Teacher Growth in the Evaluation Process

Investigator: Tina Barringer , Doctoral Student Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

I. Purpose of this Research/Project

The purpose of the research project will be to examine practices in the teacher evaluation process that will allow an elementary school principal to promote the professional development of teachers. Eight adult subjects will be involved: a principal and three teachers in each of two elementary schools. Subjects will be interviewed. Evaluation documents of the teachers, written by the principals, will be analyzed. Division practices and policies will be examined through district documents that describe the evaluative process.

II. Procedures

1. Each teacher and principal participant will be interviewed.
 - Interviews will last 45 to 60 minutes.
 - Interviews will take place at a mutually-agreed-upon location.
 - The researcher will record written notes during the interview process.
 - Interviews will be recorded. Participants will receive a hard copy of the transcript and provided with the opportunity to give further explanations and additional documentation of their thoughts.
2. Each teacher participant and the Personnel Department will provide to the researcher the personal written observation summaries, professional growth goal summaries, and written year-end evaluation summaries for that participant from the 2007-2008 school year until present.
3. The school division's evaluation handbook and policies on teacher evaluation will be examined by the researcher.
4. All data will be analyzed with the goal of determining what practices facilitate professional growth in the evaluation process.
5. The time commitment for principal participants should be approximately 1 ½ hours; the time commitment for teacher participants should be approximately 2 hours.

III. Risks

There are no foreseeable inconveniences or risks involved in participating in this study.

IV. Benefits

A potential benefit of the study is, the findings of this study will help elementary principals better promote professional growth through the evaluation process. No promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage participation. Information gathered during the course of the project will be analyzed and the findings may contribute to published research reports and presentations. A copy of the research report will be provided to the district upon completion of this study.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

The identity of participants will be protected. Participants will be assigned study codes for use in transcripts and data analysis. These codes will be stored in a separate, locked location with only the investigator having access. No teacher, principal or school name will be identified in the final report. The name of the school division will not be disclosed in the final report. Teachers will be encouraged to keep their participation in the study confidential. The investigator will maintain confidentiality; if a subject is believed to be a threat to herself/himself or others, the investigator will notify the appropriate authorities.

Audio taping of the interviews will occur. The tapes will be secured and stored in a locked location, under the supervision of the investigator. The transcription process will be accomplished by the investigator.

Original data will be destroyed within a year after the study is completed.

It is possible that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view this study's collected data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

VI. Compensation

There will be no compensation for participants in this study.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

Participation in the study is voluntary. Subjects are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Subjects are free to not respond to any questions that they choose not to answer.

VIII. Subject's Responsibilities

I voluntarily agreed to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities:

- To allow all subjects to participate in an audio-taped interview, 45 to 60 minutes in length. Each will examine a printed copy of his/her transcript for verification and the opportunity to give further clarification.
- To allow teacher participants to provide copies of observation summaries, annual evaluation summaries, and professional growth goals documentation for the 2007-2008 school year until the present. Copies of these documents can be accessed through the Personnel Department, if needed.
- To allow access to division policy and the evaluation handbook for the study.

IX. Subject's Permission

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

Subject signature _____ Date _____

Should I have any pertinent questions about this research or its conduct, and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject, I may contact:

Investigator: Tina Barringer, Doctoral Student, telephone: 804-541-6406; e-mail: tbarring@vt.edu; address: 16300 Prince George Drive, Disputanta, VA 23842

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Glen Earthman, Professor Emeritus, telephone: 540-231-9715; e-mail: earthman@vt.edu; address: Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department 0302, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061

If I should have any questions about the protection of human research participants regarding this study, I may contact:

Dr. David Moore, Chair Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, telephone: (540) 231-4991; email: moored@vt.edu; address: Office of Research Compliance, 2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497), Blacksburg, VA 24060.

[NOTE: Subjects must be given a complete copy (or duplicate original) of the signed Informed Consent.]

Appendix D

Memo for Permission to Conduct Study - Principal

Memorandum

To: XXXX, Principal

XXXX Elementary School

From: Tina Barringer, Doctoral Candidate

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Date: XXXX

Subject: Research study

I am a student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and have completed the necessary coursework in the doctoral program. The next step is to secure a location to conduct my study.

The purpose of my study is to determine what an elementary principal can do in the teacher evaluation process to promote the professional development of teachers. The theory developed in this study will provide an explanation of the practices and characteristics of elementary principals that foster professional growth among teachers in the evaluation process.

I would like to interview you, and three teachers from your school for this study. There will be no involvement of students. Interviews will occur at times that will not impact instruction.

Thank you for considering my request to conduct research in your school. I believe the results of the work will be beneficial to the school division and others. I am requesting that you sign the enclosed consent form granting permission for this study. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or need further clarification.

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
Informed Consent for Participants - Principal
In Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: Teacher Growth in the Evaluation Process

Investigator: Tina Barringer , Doctoral Student Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

I. Purpose of this Research/Project

The purpose of the research project will be to examine practices in the teacher evaluation process that will allow an elementary school principal to promote the professional development of teachers. Eight adult subjects will be involved: a principal and three teachers in each of two elementary schools. Subjects will be interviewed. Evaluation documents of the teachers, written by the principals, will be analyzed. Division practices and policies will be examined through district documents that describe the evaluative process.

II. Procedures

6. Each participant will be interviewed.
 - Interviews will last 45 to 60 minutes.
 - Interviews will take place at a mutually-agreed-upon location.
 - The researcher will record written notes during the interview process.
 - Interviews will be recorded. Participants will receive a hard copy of the transcript and provided with the opportunity to give further explanations and additional documentation of their thoughts.
7. Each teacher participant and the Personnel Department will provide to the researcher the personal written observation summaries, professional growth goal summaries, and written year-end evaluation summaries for that participant from the 2007-2008 school year until present.
8. The school division's evaluation handbook and policies on teacher evaluation will be examined by the researcher.
9. All data will be analyzed with the goal of determining what practices facilitate professional growth in the evaluation process.
10. The time commitment for principal participants should be approximately 1 ½ hours.

III. Risks

There are no foreseeable inconveniences or risks involved in participating in this study.

IV. Benefits

A potential benefit of the study is, the findings of this study will help elementary principals better promote professional growth through the evaluation process. No promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage participation. Information gathered during the course of the project will be analyzed and the findings may contribute to published research reports and presentations. A copy of the research report will be provided to the district upon completion of this study.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

The identity of participants will be protected. Participants will be assigned study codes for use in transcripts and data analysis. These codes will be stored in a separate, locked location with only the investigator having access. No teacher, principal or school name will be identified in the final report. The name of the school division will not be disclosed in the final report. Teachers will be encouraged to keep their participation in the study confidential. The investigator will maintain confidentiality; if a subject is believed to be a threat to herself/himself or others, the investigator will notify the appropriate authorities.

Audio taping of the interviews will occur. The tapes will be secured and stored in a locked location, under the supervision of the investigator. The transcription process will be accomplished by the investigator.

Original data will be destroyed within a year after the study is completed.

It is possible that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view this study's collected data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

VI. Compensation

There will be no compensation for participants in this study.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

Participation in the study is voluntary. Subjects are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Subjects are free to not respond to any questions that they choose not to answer.

VIII. Subject's Responsibilities

I voluntarily agreed to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities:

- To participate in an audio-taped interview, 45 to 60 minutes in length. Each participant will examine a printed copy of his/her transcript for verification and the opportunity to give further clarification.
- To permit the investigator to distribute surveys of interest to teachers in my school to identify prospective teacher participants, and to permit the investigator to collect the completed surveys.

IX. Subject's Permission

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

Subject signature _____ Date _____

Should I have any pertinent questions about this research or its conduct, and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject, I may contact:

Investigator: Tina Barringer, Doctoral Student, telephone: 804-541-6406; e-mail: tbarring@vt.edu; address: 16300 Prince George Drive, Disputanta, VA 23842

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Glen Earthman, Professor Emeritus, telephone: 540-231-9715; e-mail: earthman@vt.edu; address: Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department 0302, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061

If I should have any questions about the protection of human research participants regarding this study, I may contact:

Dr. David Moore, Chair Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, telephone: (540) 231-4991; email: moored@vt.edu; address: Office of Research Compliance, 2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497), Blacksburg, VA 24060.

[NOTE: Subjects must be given a complete copy (or duplicate original) of the signed Informed Consent.]

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
Informed Consent for Participants -Teacher
In Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: Teacher Growth in the Evaluation Process

Investigator: Tina Barringer , Doctoral Student Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

I. Purpose of this Research/Project

The purpose of the research project will be to examine practices in the teacher evaluation process that will allow an elementary school principal to promote the professional development of teachers. Eight adult subjects will be involved: a principal and three teachers in each of two elementary schools. Subjects will be interviewed. Evaluation documents of the teachers, written by the principals, will be analyzed. Division practices and policies will be examined through district documents that describe the evaluative process.

II. Procedures

11. Each participant will be interviewed.
 - Interviews will last 45 to 60 minutes.
 - Interviews will take place at a mutually-agreed-upon location.
 - The researcher will record written notes during the interview process.
 - Interviews will be recorded. Participants will receive a hard copy of the transcript and provided with the opportunity to give further explanations and additional documentation of their thoughts.
12. Each teacher participant and the Personnel Department will provide to the researcher the personal written observation summaries, professional growth goal summaries, and written year-end evaluation summaries for that participant from the 2007-2008 school year until present.
13. The school division's evaluation handbook and policies on teacher evaluation will be examined by the researcher.
14. All data will be analyzed with the goal of determining what practices facilitate professional growth in the evaluation process.
15. The time commitment for teacher participants should be approximately 2 hours.

III. Risks

There are no foreseeable inconveniences or risks involved in participating in this study.

IV. Benefits

A potential benefit of the study is, the findings of this study will help elementary principals better promote professional growth through the evaluation process. No promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage participation. Information gathered during the course of the project will be analyzed and the findings may contribute to published research reports and presentations. A copy of the research report will be provided to the district upon completion of this study.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

The identity of participants will be protected. Participants will be assigned study codes for use in transcripts and data analysis. These codes will be stored in a separate, locked location with only the investigator having access. No teacher, principal or school name will be identified in the final report. The name of the school division will not be disclosed in the final report. Teachers will be encouraged to keep their participation in the study confidential. The investigator will maintain confidentiality; if a subject is believed to be a threat to herself/himself or others, the investigator will notify the appropriate authorities.

Audio taping of the interviews will occur. The tapes will be secured and stored in a locked location, under the supervision of the investigator. The transcription process will be accomplished by the investigator.

Original data will be destroyed within a year after the study is completed.

It is possible that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view this study's collected data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

VI. Compensation

There will be no compensation for participants in this study.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

Participation in the study is voluntary. Subjects are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Subjects are free to not respond to any questions that they choose not to answer.

VIII. Subject's Responsibilities

I voluntarily agreed to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities:

- To participate in an audio-taped interview, 45 to 60 minutes in length. Each participant will examine a printed copy of his/her transcript for verification and the opportunity to give further clarification.
- To provide copies of observation summaries, annual evaluation summaries, and professional growth goals documentation for the 2007-2008 school year until the present. Copies of these documents can be accessed through the Personnel Department, if needed, by the participant or the investigator.

IX. Subject's Permission

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

Subject Signature

Date

Should I have any pertinent questions about this research or its conduct, and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject, I may contact:

Investigator: Tina Barringer, Doctoral Student, telephone: 804-541-6406; e-mail: tbarring@vt.edu; address: 16300 Prince George Drive, Disputanta, VA 23842

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Glen Earthman, Professor Emeritus, telephone: 540-231-9715; e-mail: earthman@vt.edu; address: Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department 0302, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061

If I should have any questions about the protection of human research participants regarding this study, I may contact:

Dr. David Moore, Chair Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, telephone: (540) 231-4991; email: moored@vt.edu; address: Office of Research Compliance, 2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497), Blacksburg, VA 24060.

[NOTE: Subjects must be given a complete copy (or duplicate original) of the signed Informed Consent.]

Appendix G

Interview Protocol – Principals

Introduction:

During the next hour or so you will be talking about your experiences with evaluating teachers.

There are seven questions to guide your discussion, ranging from your thoughts on the purpose of teacher evaluation, to how you promote the professional growth of teachers in the evaluation process. You can tell me as much or as little as you would like during this discussion. I am very interested in hearing your ideas on the teacher evaluation process and how it relates to professional growth.

Interviewee: _____ Date: _____

Location: _____

Demographics: _____ Years in Education: _____

Years Experience in Administration: _____

Years in Administration in Current School: _____

Certification Areas: _____

Initial Question Guide:

1. What do you see as the purpose of teacher evaluation?
2. Explain how the current evaluation system in your school division works.
3. How do you promote the professional growth of teachers through the formal evaluation process? What activities do you perform to promote Professional Development?

4. What are the barriers that you experience in fostering teacher growth through the evaluation system? What can be done to eliminate these barriers?
5. If you prioritized the strategies that you personally use to encourage teacher growth in the evaluation process, what strategy would be at the top as your most effective strategy?

Give examples of times when you have successfully used the strategy.

6. What recommendations would you offer to help a new administrator work the formal evaluation process so that optimal professional growth is promoted?
7. Have your attempts at promoting professional growth been successful? If so, how do you measure this success?

Appendix H

Survey of Teachers

TO: Elementary Teachers in XXXX Public Schools
FROM: Tina Barringer, Doctoral Student, Virginia Tech
SUBJECT: Teacher Survey
DATE: XXXX

Our profession is continually changing. An atmosphere conducive to professional growth is crucial to our continued effectiveness. As many opportunities for growth as possible should be accessed. Beyond the typical training workshop, conference, or graduate coursework, how can professional growth be encouraged through the traditional teacher evaluation process?

That's the basic topic of my research study: Can principals promote the professional development of teachers through the evaluation process? I'm planning to interview several teachers in your school to see what thoughts you have that can shed light on this.

The questions below are designed to see if you have an interest in participating in the project. Please note that your responses to this survey will be kept in confidence.

Are you interested and willing to participate in this study if you are selected? This would involve participating in one 45- to 60-minute interview to be held at a mutually-agreed-upon time and location.

1. Yes, I am interested in participating in the study.

Your Name: _____ School: _____

- No, I am not interested in participating in the study.

2. How many years have you taught? _____
3. How many years have you served with your current principal? _____

4. How would you rate your personal, professional growth over the past year?

Average 1 2 3 4 5 Exemplary

5. Are you willing to share your personal written evaluative data with the researcher – professional growth goals, observation summaries, year-end summative evaluations?

Yes No

Appendix I

Interview Protocol – Teachers

Introduction:

During the next hour or so you will be talking about your experiences with your own evaluation.

There are six questions to guide your discussion, ranging from your thoughts on the purpose of teacher evaluation, to how your personal evaluation has impacted your professional growth. You can tell me as much or as little as you would like during this discussion. I am very interested in hearing your ideas on the teacher evaluation process and how it relates to professional growth.

Interviewee: _____ Date: _____

Location: _____

Demographics: _____ Years in Education: _____

Years Teaching in Current School: _____

Years Teaching Under Current Administrator: _____

Certification Areas: _____

Initial Question Guide:

1. What do you see as the purpose of teacher evaluation?
2. Tell how the current evaluation system in your school division works.
3. In what ways does the evaluation system impact your teaching?
4. In what ways does your formal evaluation help you to grow professionally?
5. What specific professional development activities has your evaluator suggested to you?

Did you undergo the recommendations, and, if so, were they helpful to you?

6. What elements need to be in place for a teacher evaluation system to foster professional growth?
7. What recommendations would you give to an administrator who wants to maximize his or her effectiveness in promoting the professional growth of teachers?