

The Teachers' Perception of the Usefulness of Principal Observation Feedback and  
Subsequent Follow-Up Through the Teacher Evaluation Process

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**ABSTRACT**

For more than a decade, teacher accountability and teacher effectiveness as defined by student achievement have been the focus of the teacher evaluation process (Close et al., 2018; Danielson, 2007; Virginia Department of Education, [VDOE], 2011, 2015, 2021). Throughout the teacher evaluation process, principals observe teaching skills and gather instructional and assessment data to provide feedback and follow-up to teachers to improve instructional strategies that increase student achievement (VDOE, 2021). Specific and meaningful feedback can positively impact teacher confidence, reflection, and improved instructional practices (Blase & Blase, 2000). Uncertainty remains, however, in knowing precisely what feedback and follow-up motivates a teacher to adjust or change instruction for improved student learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Khachatryan, 2015; Shute, 2008). The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe teacher perceptions regarding the usefulness of principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the teacher evaluation process that resulted in implementing instructional changes in the classroom and increasing student achievement.

Qualitative data were collected through one-to-one interviews conducted with eight teachers, four from each of two rural south central Virginia school districts. The data were coded using constant comparison analysis to determine common categories and themes related to principal observation feedback and teachers' perceptions of its usefulness to change instructional habits and increase student achievement. An analysis of the data collected revealed that teachers perceived principal feedback as it related to teacher evaluation to be useful when the feedback was timely, specific, and supportive; however, the usefulness did not necessarily extend to instructional changes resulting in changes in student achievement. Teachers also perceived that principal feedback addressed teacher strengths more often than teacher weaknesses. The data further revealed that teachers perceived that collaboration with colleagues was key to making changes in instructional practices that led to student achievement gains. While principal feedback is an important component of the teacher evaluation process, the data suggest that teacher collaboration also plays a vital role in a teacher's professional growth and students' success.

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**GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT**

For more than a decade, there has been an increased focus on teacher accountability and effectiveness related to the teacher evaluation process and student achievement. School principals oversee the teacher evaluation process in the school and are responsible for providing feedback to teachers to improve instructional skills, student learning, and professional growth. This study explored teacher perceptions of principal feedback and subsequent follow-up teachers received through the evaluation process that resulted in changes to classroom instruction, leading to increases in student learning and achievement. Eight teachers, four from each of two rural south central Virginia school districts, were interviewed. The teacher interviews revealed that principal feedback through the evaluation process was useful to the teacher when the feedback was timely, specific, and supportive. The teacher interviews also revealed that principals provided feedback on teacher strengths more often than on teacher weaknesses. Additionally, teacher interviews revealed that collaboration with colleagues was beneficial to increasing teacher effectiveness in the classroom leading to student achievement gains. In order to have a greater impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning, it is vital that teachers receive high-quality feedback from principals as well as encouragement and support for teacher collaboration.

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandchildren, Levi, Kaleb, and Juliana. Through this work, it is my hope that each of you will strive to become life-long learners and that you will always put your best effort into all that you do. Always know that you are a very special blessing and that you can do anything you set your mind to do!

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## Chapter One

### The Problem

#### Introduction

Early in the 1980s, the National Commission on Excellence in Education [NCEE] released a report on the condition of America's educational system. The report titled *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* detailed concerns that our schools were failing and that our nation was at risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education [NCEE], 1983). More than twenty-five years later, the nation's attention again was focused on the condition of its educational system through the release of *The Widget Effect: Our National Failure to Acknowledge and Act on Differences in Teacher Effectiveness* (Weisberg et al., 2009). With the nation's focus and concern on its educational system, numerous reforms emerged, one of which was an increased emphasis on the effectiveness of teacher evaluation to improve teaching practices and student achievement (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). Reform efforts today continue to highlight changes in current teacher evaluation systems and how student achievement will factor into those system changes (Close et al., 2020).

For many years, teacher evaluation systems did not differentiate between effective and ineffective teachers (Weisberg et al., 2009). Weisberg et al. (2009) found that nearly every teacher was rated as effective even though 87% of administrators and 57% of teachers reported they could identify ineffective teachers in the school. Teacher evaluation systems today incorporate a framework for evaluating and measuring teacher effectiveness as it relates to student achievement (Close et al., 2020). Under this system, the evaluation cycle includes observations, review of multiple data points, and timely feedback to teachers (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley et al., 2012; Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011).

One way to improve teacher effectiveness through the evaluation process is to provide evaluator feedback to the teacher (Danielson, 2010; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Feedback provides the evaluator an opportunity to offer meaningful suggestions and new ideas to the teacher based on classroom observations. When feedback is data-based and specific to effective instructional strategies, teachers are more likely to reflect upon their teaching practices, make changes to instructional practices, and increase student achievement (Feeney, 2007). While

feedback is intended to promote teacher growth and professionalism (Feeney, 2007), there are times when evaluators do not provide feedback to teachers; or, when feedback is provided, teachers do not find the feedback meaningful or valuable (Nabors, 2015). When feedback to the teacher is not meaningful or when it is absent, the potential for teacher growth diminishes and student learning gains may not be effectively realized.

## **Overview of the Study**

The increased emphasis on student achievement has resulted in a keener focus on teacher effectiveness and how teachers impact learning. With student achievement defined and measured by assessment results, teacher accountability for student learning and increasing student achievement has become a priority for student, teacher, and school success (Lavigne, 2014). One avenue for tracking this accountability is through the teacher evaluation system.

The teacher evaluation process is a means to measure teacher performance accountability and support professional growth (Xu et al., 2016). Through teacher observations and data gathering, teacher strengths and weaknesses are identified, and follow-up conversations provide opportunities to discuss strategies to improve teacher effectiveness (VDOE, 2021). Such feedback can lead to two choices for teachers: heed or ignore the suggestions or recommendations offered through feedback to effect change. This qualitative study focused on teacher perceptions of principal feedback and subsequent follow-up on instructional practices through the teacher evaluation process leading to changes in instruction that improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement.

## **Historical Perspective**

The focus of teacher evaluation in this country has changed over time depending on the historical, political, or educational landscape. The earliest teacher evaluations had roots in the religious beliefs of the early 1700s, when moral and ethical characteristics were the basis of teacher evaluation (Ellett & Teddlie, 2003). As the nation grew and evolved from an agrarian to an industrialized economy and religious tolerance expanded, the need for schools and teachers changed, and the concept of formal education developed (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). During the late 1800s and into the early 1900s, the educational philosophies of John Dewey (behaviorism) and Frederick Taylor (scientific management) began to mold the ideas for identifying effective teaching (Ellett & Teddlie, 2003; Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011).

While educational research during this time began to hone in on the relationship between teacher practices and student results, the nation's focus on its educational system and its quest to identify effective teaching methods to increase student learning intensified with Russia's historical launching of the Sputnik satellite in 1957 (Ellett & Teddlie, 2003).

With a greater emphasis placed on education after Sputnik, it was in the early 1980s that a new educational concern was brought to the nation's attention (Marzano, 2003). In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education released a report titled, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. Just as the launching of Sputnik had intensified the focus on the nation's educational system, *A Nation at Risk* provided detailed information to support the report's findings that the nation's schools were failing, and educational reform was crucial for competing in a global society (Marzano, 2003). *A Nation at Risk* brought attention to the need for increased accountability and the development of evaluation procedures to assess teacher competency (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 1995).

Almost twenty years later, lawmakers took action in 2002. Through reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2002) was a federal mandate designed to ensure that all students were taught by highly-qualified teachers. A "highly-qualified" teacher was defined by the NCLB Act (2002) as having "obtained full state certification as a teacher" or as having "passed the teacher licensing examination" (Section 1119, p. 2). Additionally, the NCLB Act (2002) stipulated that all schools would meet statewide targeted Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals focused on student proficiency levels for all subgroups. This resulted in an increased emphasis on teacher quality and effectiveness as well as accountability for the success of all students.

In 2009, two developments brought greater national attention to teacher evaluation. The first development was the publication of *The Widget Effect: Our National Failure to Acknowledge and Act on Differences in Teacher Effectiveness*. This report criticized the ineffectiveness of teacher evaluation practices in schools across the nation, finding that identifying ineffective teachers in most schools was nearly nonexistent (Weisberg et al., 2009). The second development was President Barack Obama's Race to the Top (RTTT) announcement, a \$4.35 billion competitive grant opportunity to stimulate reform and innovation in K-12 public schools across the nation. One of the strategies and part of the selection criteria

for states to obtain grant funds under RTTT was the implementation of rigorous performance-based evaluations for teachers (USDOE, 2009). The intent of this strategy was to continue to improve teacher effectiveness as well as student achievement results.

With implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002 and later the Race to the Top (RTTT) program in 2009, states began the process of establishing a new teacher evaluation system beginning with the 2011-2012 school year (Derrington, 2014). The Commonwealth of Virginia was no exception to incorporating teacher evaluation policies into law:

School boards shall develop a procedure for use by division superintendents and principals in evaluating teachers that is appropriate to the tasks performed and addresses, among other things, student academic progress and the skills and knowledge of instructional personnel, including, but not limited to, instructional methodology, classroom management, and subject matter knowledge. ... Each local superintendent shall annually certify division wide compliance with the provisions of this section to the Department. (Virginia Legislative Code, § 22.1-295(C))

With increased accountability through teacher evaluation systems, schools and teachers faced increased pressures to “measure and demonstrate results” (Corcoran, 2010, page 2).

The most recent federal education reform, the reauthorization of ESEA/NCLB, renamed Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015), was signed into law by President Barack Obama on December 10, 2015. Among several reforms related to funding and school improvement, ESSA replaced the “highly-qualified” designation for teachers found in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation with teacher “effectiveness” as it relates to teacher evaluation. While ESSA continues to emphasize student achievement, the law does not refer to mandated teacher evaluation or how student assessment results will factor into teacher evaluation, leaving much of the decision-making on this matter at the state level (Close et al., 2020). Since the passage of ESSA in 2015, there has been little change in teacher evaluation systems across the country; however, there is evidence that state policymakers are beginning to rethink teacher evaluation by providing greater flexibility in measuring teacher effectiveness based on student achievement (Close et al., 2020).

### **Features of Virginia’s Framework for Teacher Evaluation**

A teacher performance evaluation system must be rigorous, valid, reliable, and provide consistency in its processes to be meaningful (Danielson, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Additionally, evaluation systems that incorporate multiple classroom observations, consider multiple data points throughout the process, and provide timely and meaningful feedback are most successful in helping teachers improve (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley et al., 2012). A successful teacher performance evaluation system must ensure teacher quality and promote a professional development process (Danielson, 2010; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Each of these performance evaluation system components is incorporated in Virginia's *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers* and are supported and documented by research conducted by Dr. James H. Stronge (VDOE, 2021)

Virginia's teacher performance evaluation framework, *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers*, was adapted from the research and work of Dr. James H. Stronge, Heritage Professor in the Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership Area at the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia (VDOE, 2011). In keeping with changes in federal law through ESSA (2015) and the 2021 Virginia General Assembly's new law (House Bill 1904 and Senate Bill 1196) relating to cultural competency, the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers (2021)* changed. Effective March 18, 2021, Virginia's teacher performance evaluation framework consists of eight performance standards that are used to document teacher performance (VDOE, 2021). Those performance standards include measures such as professional knowledge, instructional planning, instructional delivery, assessment of/for student learning, learning environment, culturally responsive teacher and equitable practices, professionalism, and student academic progress (VDOE, 2021).

There are performance indicators within each performance standard to provide examples of observable behaviors that would demonstrate that the performance standard is being met (VDOE, 2021). While teacher performance is observed and documented on the performance indicator levels, evaluation or ratings occur only at the performance standard levels (VDOE, 2021). A performance rubric is utilized for each standard, including rating options that now include highly effective, effective, approaching effective, and ineffective to rate a teacher's performance (VDOE, 2021). Each designated rating is assigned a point value ranging between one and four, with one being ineffective and four being highly effective (VDOE, 2021). The individual school district ultimately determines the weighting of these point values in accordance with the VDOE Guidelines (2021); provided that the weighting of "Performance Standard 8--



Student Academic Progress is not the least weighted of the performance standards or less than 1 (10 percent); however, it may be weighted equally as one of the multiple lowest weighted standards” (VDOE, 2021, p. 73). These weighted results are combined to reach a summative evaluation score for the teacher. The rubric ratings are valuable in helping evaluators establish inter-rater reliability as well as providing teachers with guidance to improve their teaching practices (VDOE, 2021).

Virginia’s teacher performance evaluation system also incorporates the use of multiple data sources (VDOE, 2021). The data sources include formal observations; informal observations; student surveys; portfolios/document logs; and self-evaluation (VDOE, 2021). These data sources offer the opportunity to provide a “‘performance portrait’ of the teacher’s work” (VDOE, 2021, p. 15) and allow for “comprehensive and accurate feedback on teacher performance” (VDOE, 2021, p. 15).

In order for teacher evaluation to be meaningful, timely feedback must be part of the process (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley et al., 2012; Goe, 2013; Hull, 2011; Tuytens & Devos, 2011). Under the Virginia Teacher Performance Evaluation Guidelines, formal and informal classroom observations are two components of observing, documenting, and providing feedback on a teacher’s work (VDOE, 2021). Formal classroom observations are planned observations that occur throughout the school year and last a specified period of time (VDOE, 2021). Informal observations are less structured than formal observations and are intended to observe and document instructional and non-instructional practices (VDOE, 2021). Evaluators are required to conduct a review conference with teachers within a designated period as determined by the school district following all formal classroom observations (VDOE, 2021).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Student achievement results in schools across the country are under constant analysis and scrutiny on school, local, state, national, and global levels to identify increases and decreases in student learning and growth. Reports on these findings increase pressure on administrators, teachers, and students to continue to seek ways to increase student learning and learner outcomes (Goe et al., 2008; LaVigne, 2014). As these student achievement results are analyzed on the school level, the data are one measure for distinguishing between effective and ineffective teachers in the school. This is especially important for identifying specific strategies to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement.

The teacher evaluation process allows principals to observe teacher practices and offer feedback for improvement to meet student achievement and school goals. Virginia's Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers (2021) address the need for an effective teacher evaluation process.

Because teachers are so fundamentally important to school improvement and student success, improving the evaluation of teacher performance is particularly relevant as a means to recognize excellence in teaching and to advance teacher effectiveness. A meaningful evaluation focuses on instructional quality and professional standards, and through this focus and timely feedback, enables teachers and leaders to recognize, appreciate, value, and develop excellent teaching. (p. 1)

With increased emphasis on student achievement and school success, the focus of teacher effectiveness and evaluation is driven by "direct evidence of valued learning outcomes" (Coe et al., 2014, p. 39) to improve teacher development and quality and ensure student success.

The emphasis on student achievement results is a major factor for determining student, teacher, and school success. The evidence of poor or lower than expected student performance results can be identified as a symptom of ineffective teachers and ineffective teacher evaluations (Weisberg et al., 2009). The problem is whether teachers are receiving meaningful feedback and subsequent follow-up through the teacher evaluation and observation process such that teacher performance improves through the implementation of recommended instructional practices, ultimately resulting in increased student achievement.

### **Significance of the Study**

Teacher effectiveness and its impact on student achievement are important to increasing student learning, thus providing greater opportunities for students to effectively compete in a global society and contribute to their community, state, and nation. Gaining a deeper understanding of how administrators can provide instructional support and assistance to teachers through useful feedback and subsequent follow-up during the evaluation process has the potential to improve the overall instructional program of the school and to build a stronger foundation of academic excellence for students and the school. As administrators and teachers recognize the value of such feedback and subsequent follow-up, there is potential for the development of a greater focus on professionalism and for creating valuable opportunities for educator growth (Roussin & Zimmerman, 2014).

## **Purpose of the Study**

Principal feedback through the teacher performance evaluation process is a vital component to improving a teacher's instructional strategies in the classroom that will increase student achievement (Kane, 2012). When teachers receive quality feedback, there is potential for increased learning and improvement in teaching practices (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe teacher perceptions regarding the usefulness of principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the teacher evaluation process that resulted in implementing instructional changes in the classroom and increasing student achievement.

## **Justification of the Study**

The teacher evaluation process allows administrators to observe and analyze teacher instruction and pertinent data related to student achievement to provide meaningful feedback and subsequent follow-up that guides and supports teacher effectiveness and growth. Feedback to teachers can be meaningful and promote change (Khachatryan, 2015) or it can be ignored by the teacher resulting in no change in professional growth or instructional practices (Roussin & Zimmerman, 2014). Given the potential impact of high-quality feedback to teachers, there is an opportunity for teachers to improve their instructional practices and improve student achievement (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley et al., 2012; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Understanding what types of feedback and subsequent follow-up are deemed meaningful and will lead to teacher improvement not only improves teacher quality within the school but can also increase overall student achievement.

## **Research Questions**

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do teachers perceive the usefulness of principal feedback on their teaching practices through the teacher performance evaluation process?
2. How do teachers perceive the usefulness of the principal's subsequent follow-up on the initial feedback provided through the teacher performance evaluation process?
3. What changes in teacher practices do teachers report are the result of principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the teacher performance evaluation process?

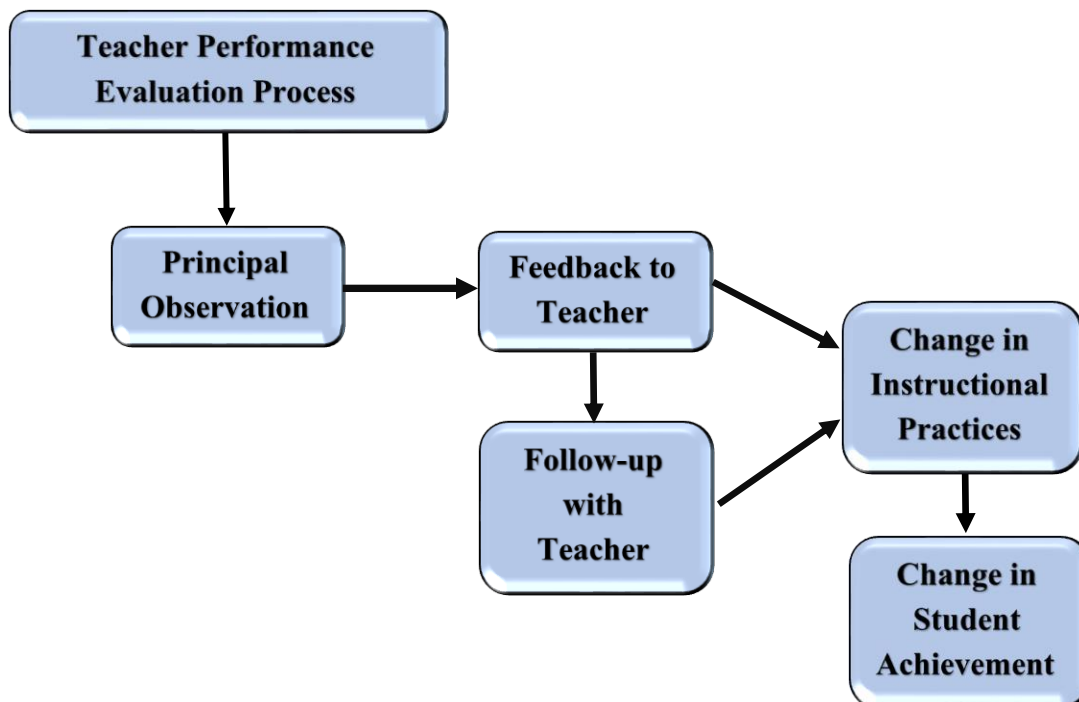
4. What evidence do teachers report that demonstrates the outcome of their change in teacher practices and student achievement based on principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the teacher performance evaluation process?

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is a visual representation of “the main things to be studied—for example, the key factors, variables, phenomena, concepts, participants—and the presumed interrelationships among them” (Miles et al., 2020, p. 15). The conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 1 shows the connection of the guidelines of the teacher performance evaluation process to principals as observers of teachers’ instructional practices. Principals observe teachers and are responsible for providing feedback to the teacher following the observation. Subsequent follow-up with the teacher may reinforce any principal suggestions or recommendations to the teacher. The principal feedback and/or subsequent follow-up on initial recommendations or suggestions to the teacher can lead to changes in instructional practices that increase student achievement. The focus of this study was to describe teacher perceptions of principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the evaluation process as a means for teachers to improve instructional practices and student achievement.

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Framework.*



## **Definition of Terms**

**Evaluation Cycle.** “An ongoing process of data collection, evaluator-evaluatee discussion, summative review, and performance improvement. The various cyclical steps in a quality evaluation (e.g. classroom observation, feedback, improvement) are inextricably linked and seamless” (VDOE, 2021, p. 24).

**Feedback.** “Information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one’s performance or understanding” (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 81).

**Formal Observation.** A structured, planned, direct observation of teaching for a specified time that should occur throughout the school year to determine if a teacher is meeting the evaluation performance standards expectations. Feedback about the observation findings is provided through a review conference with the teacher (VDOE, 2021, p. 17).

**Informal Observation.** Observation of a teacher’s “instructional and non-instructional routines at various times throughout the evaluation cycle” to provide more frequent information on teaching practices (VDOE, 2021, p. 24).

**Student Achievement/Growth.** “Student progress toward achievement as demonstrated through a valid and reliable measure” (8VAC20-131.5),

**Teacher Performance Evaluation System.** A system designed to review and analyze a teacher’s performance through “cycles of observation, reflection, dialogue and feedback, and goal setting [that] can provide teachers with new ideas as well as frequent and relevant feedback to support their professional growth” (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016, p. 715)

**Virginia Standards of Learning.** Rigorous academic standards that provide “the minimum expectations for what students should know and be able to do at the end of each grade or course in English, mathematics, science, history/social science and other subjects” (Virginia Department of Education, n.d.).

## **Limitations**

Limitations to this study included the possible small sample size and the sensitivity of information related to a teacher’s personal evaluation documentation. Additionally, it is possible that although the researcher had no connection to any of the schools or possible participants, the participants may not have trusted the researcher and were reluctant to provide truthful responses to the interview questions.

## **Delimitations**

One delimitation in this study was the small number of rural school districts in south central Virginia used in this study. Another delimitation was that only teachers were interviewed in this study, and the views of administrators and students were not considered. Additional delimitations in this study included that 1) the schools within each school district must be fully accredited in accordance with the Virginia Department of Education accreditation standards; 2) the principal had served as principal of the school for at least the past three years; 3) the teacher had taught in the school for at least the past five years but not more than twenty years; and, 4) the teacher had been summatively evaluated within the past two years, receiving a minimum rating of proficient in accordance with the Virginia Teacher Performance Evaluation process as established by the school district.

## **Organization of the Study**

The organization of this study to determine the impact and effectiveness of principal feedback to improve teacher effectiveness as well as student achievement through the teacher evaluation system is divided into five chapters. Chapter One of the study introduces the problem, provides an overview and historical perspective to the teacher evaluation process, the significance and justification of the study, a conceptual framework and the research questions related to this study. Chapter Two includes a literature review specific to the topics of the teacher performance evaluation process, the role of the principal in teacher evaluation, defining teacher effectiveness, teacher effectiveness defined by student achievement and feedback. Chapter Three explains the methodology used in this study, including the research design, sample and site selection, data collection and gathering procedures, instrument design and validation, and data treatment, management, and analysis techniques. Chapter Four presents the results of the analysis of data and a summary of those results based on the data findings. Chapter Five provides the findings, implications for practitioners, recommendations for future research, and conclusions.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Review of the Literature**

Over the past several decades, considerable attention has been given to teacher effectiveness, the process of teacher evaluation, and how these relate to increasing student achievement. While the term teacher effectiveness is difficult to define (Berry, 2008; Ding & Sherman, 2006; Goe et al., 2008; McCaffrey et al., 2003; Stronge, Ward & Grant, 2011), it is considered one of the most important components in increasing student achievement (Danielson, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Hattie, 2003; Khachatryan, 2015; Weisberg et al., 2009). Differentiating between the most effective teachers in a school and those who may fall at the bottom of the teacher effectiveness spectrum is determined through the teacher evaluation process. Implementation of this process includes providing evaluator feedback to teachers to reflect on teaching practices and to change or improve instructional habits to benefit student achievement. Such feedback has the potential for changing teaching habits to increase teacher effectiveness and student achievement (Danielson, 2010; Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

#### **Search Process**

The research process included databases provided through the Virginia Tech *University Library* website. Databases utilized were EBSCO, ERIC, JSTOR, ProQuest, and SAGE to search for peer-reviewed scholarly articles. The Virginia Tech electronic Theses and Dissertations database was used to search for dissertations related to the topic and to identify researchers recognized in the field. The search process also included Google Scholar. Keywords used in this search included: “teacher effectiveness” with 258,760 resources; “teacher evaluation” with 460,733 resources; “teacher observation” with 398,877 resources; “principal leadership” with 199,929 resources; “instructional leadership in education” with 57,651 resources; and “feedback” with 1,650,081 resources. The reference lists from peer-reviewed scholarly articles and dissertations were used to search for more specific resources related to the keywords. These searches resulted in numerous resources, which were then refined by reading the abstracts to select the most relevant research pertinent to the impact of principal feedback and subsequent follow-up in teacher evaluation to improve teacher effectiveness. Ultimately, 75 articles were reviewed.

## **Community of Scholars**

There are numerous researchers who have conducted studies and written articles and books pertaining to teacher effectiveness and teacher evaluation. The most noted scholars on these topics include Charlotte Danielson, Linda Darling-Hammond, Robert J. Marzano, and James H. Stronge. The most noted scholars on the topic of principal leadership include Jo Blase, Joseph Blase, and Kenneth Leithwood. The most noted scholars on the topic of feedback include Avraham Kluger, Angelo DeNisi, and John Hattie. The work of these researchers appears in a number of the articles and books reviewed.

## **Teacher Performance Evaluation**

Findings of *The Widget Effect*, a report issued in 2009, brought teacher performance, effectiveness, and evaluation into sharper focus on a national level. This study was conducted on behalf of the New Teacher Project in twelve districts across four states—Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, and Ohio (Weisberg et al., 2009). The twelve districts studied were located in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Information on each district’s evaluation policies and practices was gathered as was demographic information regarding teacher contract status, separations from the district, and teaching assignments (Weisberg et al., 2009). Weisberg et al. (2009) stated that the smallest district, Jonesboro Public Schools served 4,450 students, and the largest district, Chicago Public Schools, served 413,700 students. Survey responses were collected from approximately 15,000 teachers and 1,300 administrators (Weisberg et al., 2009). Additionally, Weisberg et al. (2009) conducted 130 interviews to analyze each district’s collective bargaining agreement and any relevant personnel policies and state legislation.

Among the findings of The Widget Effect study, in those districts where there was a binary rating system, more than 99 percent received a satisfactory rating (Weisberg et al., 2009). In districts with multiple ratings, Weisberg et al. (2009) noted that 94 percent of teachers rated in the top two ratings, with only 1 percent rated unsatisfactory on their most recent evaluation. The study also revealed that 66 percent of new teachers, who typically need the greatest support during their early career, received a rating greater than “satisfactory” on their most recent evaluation (Weisberg et al., 2009). The study further revealed that 81 percent of administrators and 57 percent of teachers surveyed were aware of a poorly performing teacher, while 41 percent



of administrators reported that they had never “non-renewed” a probational teacher (Weisberg et al., 2009).

The results of *The Widget Effect* study showed that evaluation practices were ineffective in distinguishing an exceptional teacher from a good teacher or even a fair teacher (Weisberg et al., 2009). The research findings also indicated that teacher evaluation had little impact on whether or not a teacher improved or was dismissed (Weisberg et al., 2009). To reverse the *widget effect*, Weisberg et al. (2009) suggested the adoption of a comprehensive performance evaluation plan as well as dismissal policies; providing training for administrators and evaluators; and using evaluation to inform key decisions, target professional development, and dismiss consistently low-performing teachers. Findings reported in *The Widget Effect* triggered reaction by lawmakers and policymakers across the country to advocate for teacher evaluation reform (Aldeman, 2017; Jerald, 2012).

The purpose and design of the new teacher evaluation system “emphasizes data, feedback for growth, and ongoing professional conversations” (Goe, 2013, p. 25). An emphasis on data for teacher evaluation enhances accuracy in evaluation and provides an opportunity for more meaningful discussions on teacher effectiveness (Hull, 2011). Those discussions relating to teacher performance, student progress, and professional goals foster the development of a teacher’s professional growth (The New Teacher Project, 2010).

Past practices in teacher evaluation were neither well-designed nor were they very effective in providing sufficient guidance in a teacher’s professional growth (Danielson, 2010). A well-designed teacher evaluation program has the potential to positively impact an individual teacher’s performance (Taylor & Tyler, 2012). When a teacher evaluation program incorporates and emphasizes processes that are rigorous, valid, and reliable, the opportunity for teacher growth is much more meaningful (Danielson, 2010). Additionally, when a well-designed teacher evaluation program provides clear definitions and expectations together with skilled evaluators, there is greater assurance that teacher quality improves (Danielson, 2010, p. 36).

The most effective teacher evaluation systems establish clear professional teaching standards and include multiple data sources to gather a fair picture of a teacher’s overall effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley et al., 2012; Kane, 2012). An effective teacher evaluation system should also require multiple classroom observations (Kane, 2012) conducted by multiple evaluators who are knowledgeable and well-trained in the evaluation

process (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Kane, 2012.) These multiple classroom observations provide opportunities for the evaluator to generate meaningful feedback on a teacher's practice while the use of multiple evaluators make the evaluation process more valid and reliable (Kane, 2012).

Throughout the teacher evaluation process, there are opportunities for providing feedback to teachers following various classroom observations, including formal, informal, or walkthroughs (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Marzano, Frontier & Livingston, 2011; Stronge, 2010). While formal observations are characterized as a structured, planned, direct observation of teaching for a specified time, informal observations, including walkthroughs, are less structured direct observations of actual teaching (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Marzano, Frontier & Livingston, 2011; Stronge, 2010). Walkthrough observations provide a three- to five-minute snapshot of what is going on in the classroom and are conducted more frequently because they are quick and provide an opportunity for the principal to be visible and to observe trends and practices throughout the school (Marzano, Frontier & Livingston, 2011; Stronge, 2010). Walkthrough observations may or may not be followed up with feedback to the teacher (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston 2011; Stronge, 2010).

Blase and Blase (2004) note that teachers view walkthroughs favorably because teachers perceive these observations to be non-threatening and an indication of the principal's interest in the teacher, the classroom, and the school. For these reasons, teachers also find walkthrough observations are motivational and enhance their self-esteem and morale (Blase & Blase, 2004). Although walkthrough observations are favorable to teachers, research suggests that these informal observations are unproductive on their own because they do not provide an adequate understanding of the teacher's instructional practices, student assessments, or the learning environment to the extent the principal could provide meaningful feedback for teacher growth or development (Leithwood et al., 2004; Stronge, 2010).

Throughout the teacher evaluation process, principals should provide timely and meaningful feedback to teachers to encourage reflection on teaching practices and to provide support and connections to professional development opportunities (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Kane, 2012). Darling-Hammond (2012) also recommends that an effective evaluation process should encourage teacher collaboration and that expert mentor teachers should be available to provide assistance and guidance to new teachers or those teachers needing assistance. Finally, Darling-Hammond (2012) recommends that teachers and school leaders should be included in

the development, implementation, and monitoring of the teacher evaluation system to ensure the system's effectiveness and overall validity.

### **The Role of the Principal**

The influence of principal leadership in a school is second only to classroom instruction in impacting student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004). Effective principals engage in leadership practices, including creating a vision and setting a direction for the school, supervising and supporting teachers, developing teacher capacity, and promoting collaboration with and among staff for instructional planning and professional development (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe et al., 2007). In addition to the leadership practices utilized by effective principals, McEwan (2001) notes that effective principals exhibit three major leadership traits prioritized in order: strong communicator, instructional leader, and one who is knowledgeable about teaching and learning. While these key leadership practices and traits are instrumental in developing and maintaining successful schools, it is the principal's influence over each of these factors that potentially impacts student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004).

The principal's focus on quality instruction is key to improving teacher instruction and student learning (Mendels, 2012). Both the quality of instruction and student learning can be monitored by the school principal through the teacher evaluation system (Tuytens & Devos, 2011). As noted by Goe (2013), the standards outlined in current teacher performance evaluation systems often place the responsibility on the principal to provide teachers with guidance and support to help improve teaching practices and performance. The use of these performance standards provides a common framework and language for principals and teachers to discuss instruction and instructional practices (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016).

Discussions between principals and teachers related to teacher evaluation often include principal feedback to the teacher, which is an essential component for improving teacher practices and growth (Tuytens & Devos, 2011). Principal feedback should be clear, specific, constructive, and supportive to develop and meet a teacher's professional goals toward improvement (Reddy et al., 2018; The New Teacher Project, 2010). Teachers find that principal communication and timely feedback together with collaboration and pre- and post-conferencing discussions are helpful components of the evaluation system for improving teaching practices (Reddy et al., 2018). As principals engage in evaluation or instructional discussions with teachers, effective conferencing skills are essential for principals to provide

support and assistance in a collaborative, reflecting, and non-threatening environment to encourage teacher growth (Blase & Blase, 2004).

Many principals face the common problem that they are not adequately prepared or equipped to provide the most effective and meaningful feedback to teachers (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Goe, 2013; Seashore-Louis et al., 2010). Derrington (2014) noted that principal preparation from the new teacher evaluation system's onset was inadequate as there was little time for appropriate planning and training opportunities to implement the system effectively. As noted by Goe (2013), because principals lack the training and preparation necessary to be effective, the feedback provided to teachers through the evaluation process "is often limited, haphazard, or lacking in specifics" (p. 25).

While principal feedback can be beneficial to improving teacher growth, it is important to note that the value of principal feedback to some teachers may be undermined where the principal lacks the necessary content knowledge of the teachers being observed for providing specific and constructive feedback to teachers (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Khachatryan, 2015). Kraft and Gilmour (2016) also note that another challenge principals face with providing feedback to teachers is the principals' reluctance to engage in critical conversations with teachers to discuss weaknesses or areas for improvement, focusing more on strengths or things that are going well in the classroom. Adequate training and preparation are essential for developing principal skills necessary for providing meaningful feedback and support to teachers through the evaluation process (Grissom et al., 2021).

In addition to improving teacher skills through the teacher evaluation process and feedback, principals can also improve instruction, student learning, and the school overall by fostering collaboration and shared responsibilities within the school (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe et al., 2007; Grissom et al., 2021; Mendels, 2012; Louis et al., 2010). When principals encourage collaboration with and among teachers and staff in the school, there is an opportunity to build trust and teamwork (Grissom et al., 2021). When principals create this collaborative culture for learning, there is ongoing support and encouragement for teachers and staff to share ideas, work together, and help each other grow professionally (Mendels, 2012). Practices such as creating time in the daily schedule for teachers to work and learn together; assigning mentors or master teachers to assist teachers where needed; or providing curriculum specialists to help guide teachers are among ways the principal can provide the time, additional

leadership skills, and support to improve teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Louis et al., 2010; Mendels, 2012). Principals in successful schools focus on quality instruction, build a school culture for learning, and share leadership responsibilities to increase effective instruction and student achievement (Mendels, 2012).

### **Defining Teacher Effectiveness**

It is difficult to provide a single definition for teacher effectiveness (Berry, 2008; Ding & Sherman, 2006; Goe et al., 2008; McCaffrey et al., 2003; Stronge, Ward & Grant, 2011;). This difficulty stems from the challenge of identifying what aspects of the teaching profession produce gains in student achievement. Additionally, the focus of specific conversations as they relate to what is valued in education and what is being measured add to the challenge of identifying a specific definition for teacher effectiveness (Goe et al., 2008). Goe et al. (2008) suggest that when the conversation focuses on student motivation, the measure of teacher effectiveness centers on teacher and student interactions. On the other hand, when the conversation focuses on student achievement gains, the measure of teacher effectiveness shifts to test score results (Goe et al., 2008). Such conversations and focal shifts in what is valued and what should be measured together with the complexities of teacher quality and student achievement influence what specific aspects define teacher effectiveness.

Thirty years ago, measures for determining teacher effectiveness and more effectively evaluating teachers were based on the concept of specific instructional domains. The Multiple-Strategies Model for Effective Teaching developed by Million (1987) incorporated *ten instructional prescriptions* including “(1) classroom climate; (2) opening lessons; (3) instructional objectives; (4) justification of content; (5) selection of content; (6) teaching strategies; (7) review of material; (8) lesson evaluation; (9) student achievement evaluation; and (10) classroom management” (p. 1) as a means for improving teacher effectiveness. The use of specific instructional domains clarifies the expectations of teaching and establishes the criteria for evaluation to aid in differentiating between effective and ineffective teachers (Danielson, 2007). Over time various models were developed to clarify teaching expectations and improve the quality of instruction as well as the evaluation process.

The most effective teachers focus on student learning (Barry, 2010) which lends itself to having the greatest positive impact on student achievement (Berry, 2008). Barry (2010) suggested that the focus on student learning by effective teachers drives their approach “to

planning, designing and implementing instruction and assessment” because effective teachers are cognizant of how each student learns and know each student’s strengths and weaknesses (p. 8). Stronge, Ward, and Grant (2011) noted that there are several variables associated with effective teachers: individual teacher beliefs; pacing and time on task; classroom management, and personal qualities. Personal qualities and beliefs of teachers are important variables in defining teacher effectiveness because of the evident impact they have on instruction and learning; yet these attributes are difficult to quantify for determining teacher effectiveness.

Teaching qualities, experience, and skills are other factors incorporated in defining teacher effectiveness. Stronge (2018) defined teacher effectiveness as two-fold, incorporating teacher qualities such as verbal ability, knowledge of teaching and learning, certification status, content knowledge, and teaching experience with teaching skills, including organization and implementation of instruction, classroom management and organization, and monitoring student progress and potential. This definition of teacher effectiveness cannot be channeled into one precise definition but rather “draws on a multitude of skills and attributes in different combinations and in different contexts” as important concepts to define the term (Stronge, 2018, p. 258).

Tangible factors such as teacher effects as well as intangible factors such as family and community support are additional components that further define teacher effectiveness. Distinguishing between teacher effects such as age, gender, and education levels and teacher effectiveness is important to articulate a clear definition of teacher effectiveness (Ding & Sherman, 2006). While teacher effects are identifiable and observable, teacher effectiveness is much more difficult to define and quantify (Ding & Sherman, 2006). Ding and Sherman (2006) contend that student characteristics such as family support and community support as well as the students’ role in their own learning are important considerations in determining overall teacher effectiveness. While teacher effects such as age, gender, or type of degree are observable, exactly how these effects translate into teacher effectiveness are not as clear or directly observable (Ding & Sherman, 2006). Equating teacher effects with teacher effectiveness “can lead to inappropriate conclusions that have direct impact on professional development strategies, on teacher preparation program content, and on professional judgment” (Ding & Sherman, 2006, p. 41).

Even before the focus on accountability, the impact of a teacher on a student's life has had immeasurable academic effects over time (Hanushek, 2011; McEwan, 2001; Stronge et al., 2007;). Cotton (2000) concluded that "Teachers' communication of high expectations, warmth, and encouragement complements all other contextual variables and instructional practices" (p. 18). Hanushek (2011) suggested that there is no way to calculate the impact of this type of teacher effect. Additionally, Goe et al. (2008) stated that teacher effectiveness is not only dependent on input such as beliefs, experience and knowledge but is also dependent on outputs beyond student achievement such as graduation rates, student behavior, engagement, and overall social and emotional well-being. Multiple indicators should be considered in determining teacher strengths, weaknesses, and overall effectiveness (Kane, 2012).

The most important person to student learning is the teacher (Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001). "The quality of the teachers in our schools is paramount: no other measured aspect of schools is nearly as important in determining student achievement." (Hanushek, 2011, p. 41). "Further, the quality of the teacher has a powerful residual effect on student learning" (Stronge & Hindman, 2003, p. 1). A review of the literature with regard to defining teacher effectiveness is indicative of the multiple measures for determining teacher effectiveness as well as the multitude of aspects that comprise teacher effectiveness.

### **Teacher Effectiveness Defined by Student Achievement**

While the research indicates that several factors define and impact teacher effectiveness, Goe et al. (2008) note that "policy conversations" play a role in defining and dictating teacher effectiveness "as a teacher's ability to produce higher than expected gains in students' standardized test scores." (p. 5). This is evidenced by the Race to the Top (RTTT) Program (2009), which defined teacher effectiveness as "a teacher whose students achieve acceptable rates (e.g., at least one grade level in an academic year) of student growth." (p. 12). Stronge (2002) concluded that the "ultimate proof of teacher effectiveness" is the outcome of student learning and student success (p. 259).

A teacher's effectiveness impacts student achievement (Barry, 2010; Hanushek, 2011; Hattie, 2003; Stronge et al., 2007; Weisberg et al., 2009). Weisberg et al. (2009) explained the impact of teaching effectiveness on student achievement during a single year and those consecutive years as having a compounding effect. The authors noted that students who have an effective teacher for one year may show additional academic growth of up to a full year when

compared to a student who did not have an effective teacher. When students have the benefit of an effective teacher for three consecutive years, the impact is that those students outperform students who have had ineffective teachers by as much as 50 percentage points (Weisberg et al., 2009).

Based on the nation's education concerns during the mid-1980s, Tennessee responded to legislation calling for greater accountability through increased standards and teacher performance using a statistical mixed model method (Sanders & Horn, 1998). The Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVASS) was designed to determine teacher and school effectiveness through student academic growth data over time. Using a database with approximately 3 million records, state assessment results for students in grades three through eight were analyzed over a three-year period to determine school and teacher effectiveness related to mathematics achievement. Sanders and Rivers (1996) used specific data for a group of students who began second grade in the 1991-1992 school year, following this group through their fifth-grade year in 1994-1995. Through this method, individual student progress "was traceable through identified sequences of teacher effectiveness" (Sanders & Rivers, 1996, p. 2). The results of this research revealed that student academic gains are additive and cumulative (Sanders & Horn, 1998). Students placed with an effective teacher for three years in a row beginning in third grade scored 52 percentile points higher than students who were placed with less effective teachers (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). The TVASS study further revealed that students who had an effective teacher for only one year continued to outperform his or her peers two years later. On the other hand, students placed with an ineffective teacher has a negative influence on student academic gains and may take up to three years to fully remediate (Sanders & Horn, 1998; Sanders & Rivers, 1996).

In addition to the Tennessee Value-Added study, similar results regarding the impact of teacher effectiveness were found in the University of Texas at Dallas (UD) Texas Schools Project. Unlike TVAAS, the Dallas project isolated the effects of the teacher on student achievement by comparing similar students in the same schools that were assigned to different teachers. The student population for this analysis consisted of Dallas students enrolled in grades four through eight with data from 1992 used to predict results in 1996. Reading and mathematics assessment measures for these students were analyzed based on teacher effects data used to rank teachers (Jordan et al., 1997). The results of the Dallas project analysis were similar



to but not as strong as those found in the TVAAS. Students assigned an ineffective teacher the first year and then assigned an effective teacher for the next two years did not exceed the level of the students who were assigned to an effective teacher in the first year (Bembry et al., 1998). Additionally, students placed with an effective teacher for three consecutive years outperformed students who were placed with an ineffective teacher for three consecutive years by 34 percentile points in reading and 49 percentile points in mathematics.

In addition to the compounding effect of teacher effectiveness on student achievement, students who benefit from achieving high academic gains in one content area with a highly-effective teacher, specifically on the elementary school level, tend to benefit from achieving high academic gains in all content areas (Stronge et al., 2007). This finding was one of the results from a study conducted by Stronge et al. (2007) involving 1,936 third grade students in 85 classrooms in an urban Virginia school district using the state's Standards of Learning assessment results. The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between teacher effectiveness and student achievement. Several findings revealed various dimensions of teacher effectiveness that distinguished effective teachers from ineffective teachers, including use of instruction strategies, student assessment, classroom management and personal qualities (Stronge et al., 2007). These findings reflect the importance of teacher effectiveness to student learning as it relates to student achievement results.

## **Feedback**

*Feedback* can be defined as information provided by an agent to a learner regarding the learner's performance or understanding (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shute, 2008). The purpose of feedback is to build upon the learner's understanding to reach a targeted goal (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Providing feedback to teachers through a high-quality teacher evaluation system is an essential component for improving instructional practices and student learning (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley et al., 2012; Goe et al., 2008). While there is extensive research on feedback, most notably on teacher to student feedback, there is no clear understanding of precisely what feedback is helpful or how it changes behavior or improves learning (Khachatryan, 2015; Shute, 2008).

To determine the effectiveness of feedback interventions to improve performance, Kluger and DeNisi (1996) conducted a meta-analysis reviewing 131 empirical studies specific to how well feedback interventions had worked. The meta-analysis results revealed that overall

feedback had a modest positive effect on performance improvement (one-half of one standard deviation) (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Additionally, the meta-analysis results also revealed that in 38 percent of the cases reviewed, feedback intervention had a negative effect on performance (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). With this inconsistency in the data findings, Kluger and DeNisi (1996) sought to describe how feedback impacts behavior and performance by developing a model known as the Feedback Intervention Theory.

Based on the Feedback Intervention Theory developed by Kluger and DeNisi (1996), feedback interventions fall within a tiered hierarchy of processes related to task (learning) details at the bottom of the hierarchy, followed by focal (motivation) task, and meta-task (self) at the top of the hierarchy. The Feedback Intervention Theory has three variables--what the feedback says to the learner; the context of the feedback provided; and the difficulty of the task—that cross-connect in determining whether or not the feedback will affect one's performance (Khachatryan, 2015). When feedback cues focus on processes related to task (learning) details, there is potential for a positive impact on learning and achievement (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Feedback cues on this level focus on the details or actions involved in performing the task leading to a better outcome (DeNisi & Kluger, 2000). On the other hand, when feedback cues focus on processes at the top of the hierarchy related to self, there is potential for little impact on learning and achievement (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). For example, feedback cues to a teacher regarding the curriculum's alignment with a specific standard to increase student achievement could focus on the focal (motivation) task itself, potentially increasing motivation and learning. Conversely, when these feedback cues to the teacher focus specifically on the meta-task (teacher-self), a teacher may feel compelled to defend his or her self-image, potentially decreasing motivation and learning (DeNisi & Kluger, 2000). Kluger and DeNisi (1998) suggest that goal-setting could minimize feedback intervention risks because the focus of the feedback would be on the goal-setting task rather than on the teacher (self).

Shute (2008) noted that effective feedback is goal-directed, nonevaluative, specific, and timely. Feedback that is constructive and meaningful provides teachers an opportunity to reflect on their teaching practices and develop and achieve new goals (Feeney, 2007). When a learner establishes meaningful goals, the feedback provided focuses on the individual tasks or goals specific to whether the established goals have been achieved (Shute, 2008). As noted by Kluger and DeNisi (1996), feedback specific to goals and not specific to the teacher has greater potential

to motivate the teacher and generate changes in teaching behaviors. Specific feedback guidelines to enhance teacher learning should include the following:

Be based on descriptive observable data (Danielson & McGreal, 2000);

Focus should be specific to the task, not the learner (Blase & Blase, 2000; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Shute, 2008);

Provide objective feedback that is specific and clear (Shute, 2008);

Provide characteristics of effective teaching (Danielson, 2007; Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001);

Provide an opportunity for dialogue to promote critical reflection on teaching practices and professionalism (Blase & Blase, 2000)

Feeney (2007) noted that during the evaluation process, teachers especially want to know, “How am I doing?” (p. 192). If the answer to this question is provided through a “satisfactory” rating and meaningless praise and does not inform teaching, a teacher will not be motivated to improve or to establish goals for professional growth (Feeney, 2007). When teachers and evaluators collaborate through the observation and feedback process, teachers can benefit from quality feedback generated through the process and improve their motivation and teaching performance (Feeney, 2007).

Feedback can be a valuable and powerful tool when considering the impact of the type and circumstances for providing feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Principals use feedback in the form of praise to reward and motivate teachers as well as demonstrate their caring and respect for teaching efforts (Blase & Blase, 2004). When principals praise teachers, whether private or public, formal or informal, most teachers find the principals’ praise is motivating and builds their confidence and self-esteem (Blase & Blase, 2004).

The goal of feedback through the teacher performance evaluation process is to promote reflection on teaching practices, improve teaching effectiveness and promote professional growth (Feeney, 2007). Teacher evaluation feedback is part of any effective evaluation plan (Feeney, 2007) and is most valuable when the teacher and evaluator have a clear understanding of what effective teaching is and when there is an opportunity for the teacher and evaluator to engage in professional dialogue (Danielson, 2010).

## **Conclusion and Implication**

The research review reveals that teacher effectiveness is difficult to define because of the multiple skills and attributes that teachers possess (Berry, 2008; McCaffrey et al., 2003; Stronge, Ward & Grant, 2011). Additionally, other factors such as student characteristics, family and community support, and student growth have an impact on a teacher's effectiveness (Ding & Sherman, 2006). The research further reveals that teachers who take time to know their students and understand how students learn distinguish themselves as effective teachers (Barry, 2010). Effective teachers focus on student learning, which has a positive impact on a student's academic growth (Barry, 2010).

One way to determine teacher effectiveness is through teacher evaluation. After the report, *The Widget Effect*, and after the passage of federal laws such as *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) and the *Race to the Top* program, greater emphasis was placed on teacher evaluation. The teacher evaluation system in the Commonwealth of Virginia is characterized by seven standards designed to analyze data and measure results to determine teacher effectiveness (VDOE, 2021). Virginia's teacher evaluation system encourages implementation of clear standards, multiple data sources, and timely and meaningful feedback for teachers (VDOE, 2021).

The research review also reveals that the role of the principal as an instructional leader is important for providing guidance and support for teacher effectiveness and to ultimately increase student achievement (Tuytens & Devos, 2011). Principals spend time observing, evaluating, and collaborating with teachers to encourage teacher professional growth. The research reveals that principals found time constraints to be a problem in the evaluation process as well as a sense of inadequacy in providing meaningful feedback to teachers (Derrington, 2014; Goe, 2013).

Studies related to the impact of feedback suggested that there is little understanding of how feedback is helpful or how it changes behavior (Khachatryan, 2015; Shute, 2008). While feedback is considered an important component of developing teacher effectiveness, it has the potential to elicit positive or negative reactions (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). When feedback focuses on task details and not directly on the teacher (self), the teacher finds the feedback meaningful and improves performance (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Feedback guidelines provide

guidance on the types of feedback that are effective and those types of feedback that should be avoided (Shute, 2008).

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

Over the past several decades, there has been an increased emphasis on student achievement and the factors that contribute to increased learning. Research studies reveal that teachers are the most important factor in student learning. The teacher evaluation process provides an avenue for monitoring and evaluating teaching practices and effectiveness to achieve the greatest student gains. In Virginia, the Teacher Performance Evaluation process includes various types of observations, student surveys and encourages support through feedback to improve teacher growth and effectiveness.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe teacher perceptions regarding the usefulness of principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the teacher evaluation process that resulted in implementing instructional changes in the classroom and increasing student achievement. The study resulted in an analysis of the means to improve teacher effectiveness, instructional quality, and student achievement through the principal's practice of providing meaningful feedback and subsequent follow-up through the teacher evaluation process. This process offers an opportunity for teachers to apply principal feedback or subsequent follow-up provided through evaluation to effect instructional change and improve student achievement.

#### **Research Design/Methodology**

The researcher utilized a phenomenological qualitative research approach to gain a deeper perspective of teacher perceptions of the value of principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the teacher evaluation performance process that changes or improves teacher behaviors as they relate to teacher evaluation, teacher effectiveness, and student achievement. The strength of qualitative research is found in the meaning people ascertain from their experiences and their interpretation of those experiences (Merriam, 2009). The qualitative research design provides a means for "understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspective, not the researcher's" (Merriam, 2009, p. 14). The strength of the phenomenological approach is "that inquiry attempts to describe and elucidate the meanings of human experience" (Rudestam & Newton, 2015, p. 43). It is through this lens that the researcher

learns the meaning that the participants hold about the issue rather than the researcher bringing meaning to the research through the study or through the literature (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Phenomenological qualitative studies often use the interviewing process to investigate and gather descriptive data. Because the purpose of this qualitative study was to describe teacher perceptions regarding the usefulness of principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the teacher evaluation process that resulted in implementing instructional changes in the classroom and increasing student achievement, open-ended interview questions provided a means for obtaining deeper responses regarding participants' views and opinions. Such responses allowed the researcher to utilize rich descriptions to convey what the researcher learned about participants' perceptions and provided a more in-depth analysis of those perceptions and their outcomes.

### **Addressing Ethical Concerns**

Utmost consideration of the school sites and participants was given at all times so as to eliminate possible risks or harm to either the setting or to any individual participants (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Informed consent documents were provided to each participant for an explanation of the study and as well as for signature prior to the collection of any data. Because the "researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (Merriam, 2009, p. 15) in qualitative research, it is important to recognize and manage any personal biases throughout the research process (Merriam, 2009). This is important in building trust with participants and adding validity to the study (Roberts, 2010).

The basis for this study related to the principal's impact on teacher effectiveness through evaluation feedback stems from my administrative experience as an elementary school principal. As the instructional leader of the building, providing support and feedback to teachers through the evaluation process was a responsibility that always weighed heavily on my mind. Teacher professional growth as well as increased academic achievement for all students were top priorities for me as a principal. While our school was successful based on measures of student achievement on Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments, I wondered if any of the feedback I provided to teachers made a difference in improving teacher growth or increasing academic achievement for all students. Also, if the feedback I provided to teachers had any impact at all, I wondered what types of feedback really made a difference for the teacher.

## **Ensuring Credibility and Rigor**

In order to strengthen the usefulness of a qualitative study, Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommend eight strategies to ensure credibility and rigor. These strategies include

- triangulation;
- member checking;
- use of rich, thick description;
- clarifying bias by the researcher;
- presenting contradictory information;
- spending prolonged time in the field;
- peer debriefing;
- external auditor (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)

Triangulation, member checks, and clarifying researcher bias were incorporated in this research study. Triangulation employs “multiple methods, measures, researchers, and perspectives” (Patton, 2015, p. 316). Obtaining data from eight different sources as well as the use of one-on-one interview transcripts with member checks were carried out in this research process.

Descriptive field notes were also important to this research study to document the researcher’s “own feelings, reactions to the experience, and reflections about the personal meaning and significance of what has been observed” (Patton, 2015, p. 388). These multiple methods and perspectives added to the credibility and rigor of this research study.

## **Research Questions**

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do teachers perceive the usefulness of principal feedback on their teaching practices through the teacher performance evaluation process?
2. How do teachers perceive the usefulness of the principal’s subsequent follow-up on the initial feedback provided through the teacher performance evaluation process?
3. What changes in teacher practices do teachers report are the result of principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the teacher performance evaluation process?



4. What evidence do teachers report that demonstrates the outcome of their change in teacher practices and student achievement based on principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the teacher performance evaluation process?

### **Site/Sample Selection**

Data were gathered in two rural K-12 public school districts located in south central Virginia, after obtaining permission from selected school district Superintendents. These school districts were selected because they are rural K-12 public school districts in close proximity to the researcher and to each other. Additionally, there were no connections between the researcher and the participants or the research sites, which eliminated risk for the researcher and participants, lending itself to validating the accuracy of the information (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To ensure confidentiality, the two school districts and all participants selected for this study were given a pseudonym. Purposeful sampling was used in this study to obtain *information-rich* data to broaden the depth of understanding relative to the research questions (Patton, 2015).

The Human Resource Director for each school district was contacted to determine the selection of specific school sites and provide the names of potential teacher participants based on the criteria provided. Specific criteria for the selection of four participants from each school district was based on the following: 1) Schools within each school district must be fully accredited in accordance with the Virginia Department of Education accreditation standards; 2) The principal has served as principal of the school for at least the past three years; 3) The teacher has taught in the school district for at least the past five years but not more than twenty years; and, 4) The teacher has been summatively evaluated within the past two years, receiving a minimum rating of proficient in accordance with the Virginia Teacher Performance Evaluation process as established by the school district.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

In order to comply with the rules and regulations that guide research involving human subjects, the researcher completed training through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) as required by Virginia Tech (see Appendix A). Before initiating data collection for this study, the prospectus examination was successfully completed, and permission was sought and granted by the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix

B). Additionally, written permission was requested from each school district Superintendent to gain entry to conduct the study (see Appendix C). Participant names were provided by each school district's Human Resource Director in accordance with the criteria provided for the study. The researcher contacted each participant via email to request participation in the study and to schedule an interview date, time, and place (see Appendix D). The participant email included an attached consent form for review and signature required prior to starting the interview. (see Appendix E).

Once the proper permissions were obtained, the process for collecting data was conducted through one-to-one interviews with each participant. These interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the participant at the participant's base school. Each interview was electronically recorded. The length of time for each interview was approximately one hour. As recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018), an observation protocol was used for the purpose of recording reflexive notes and information regarding certain demographics. Additionally, an interview protocol as suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018) was also utilized to ask questions and record responses during the interview.

### **Data Treatment and Management**

All interview notes and recordings were kept in strictest confidence and stored in a secure file cabinet at all times. Additionally, a pseudonym was given to each participant in this study to protect individual anonymity and was also kept in strictest confidence and stored in a separate secure file cabinet at all times. Each interview was recorded on two password-protected electronic devices in the event one of the recording devices failed. Once each interview was completed, the researcher transcribed the interview audio recording. A copy of each transcribed interview was sent to the interviewee for review and verification of the information to ensure "accuracy and credibility of the findings" (Merriam, 2009; Rudestam & Newton, 2015) as well as validate the trustworthiness of the data. None of the participants responded that there were any inaccuracies or that changes were needed.

The researcher manually coded each interview transcript utilizing an inductive and constant comparative analysis method where data were coded and categorized through multiple coding cycles. After reading through each interview transcript, the researcher analyzed and coded the data gathered from the first interview transcript. The codes identified through this initial data analysis were then entered onto an excel spreadsheet, and the same analysis and

coding process was followed on the remaining interview transcripts. Following multiple coding cycles, the codes were compared, analyzed, and grouped into more specific categories and themes based on patterns that emerged from the data. This method of constant comparison and analysis of the data provided for a “richer yield of concepts and relationships” in the research findings (Glaser, 1998, p. 24). After this study was successfully defended, all interview recordings and transcriptions were properly destroyed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### **Instrument Design**

The instrument developed by the researcher for gathering data was open-ended research questions designed specifically for this research study. Merriam (2009) notes that obtaining good data through the qualitative research process is accomplished by “asking well-chosen open-ended questions that can be followed up with probes and requests for more detail” (p. 17). Questions and follow-up probes provide an opportunity for the interviewee to expound on the response and also lends itself to gathering data that is more descriptive and provides greater detail (Merriam, 2009).

To ensure that the instrument developed for this study included information and questions that were clear, easily understood, and appropriate to obtain data specific to the proposed research study questions (Rudestam & Newton, 2015), a pilot test of the instrument was conducted. This test was conducted through eight teachers in the researcher’s current school district to gain feedback and to make any necessary revisions to improve the research instrument design. Interview questions with possible probes as they related to the research questions for this study are outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Research Questions with Aligned Interview Questions*

Research Questions	Interview Questions
1. How do teachers perceive the usefulness of principal feedback on their teaching practices through the teacher performance evaluation process?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What areas of strength or commendations does your principal provide to you as feedback during your evaluation post conferences based on his/her classroom observations?</li><li>• How would you describe the usefulness of your principal's feedback on your areas of strength or your commendations as they relate to your instructional practices?</li><li>• What recommendations for improvement has your principal provided to you during your evaluation post conferences as feedback based on his/her classroom observation?</li><li>• How would you describe the usefulness of the principal's recommendations as they relate to your instructional practices?</li></ul>
2. How do teachers perceive the usefulness of the principal's subsequent follow-up on the initial feedback provided through the teacher performance evaluation process?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How often does your principal follow-up with you on his/her initial feedback from the evaluation post conference?</li><li>• How would you describe the usefulness of the principal's follow-up on initial feedback provided to you?</li></ul>
3. What changes in teacher practices do teachers report are the result of principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the teacher performance evaluation process?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Based on the initial feedback provided to you by your principal through the evaluation process, describe the feedback provided to you that you believe resulted in any change(s) you made to your instructional practices.</li><li>• Based on the follow-up feedback provided to you by your principal through the evaluation process, describe the feedback provided to you that you believe resulted in any change(s) you made to your instructional practices.</li></ul>
4. What evidence do teachers report that demonstrates the outcome of their change in instructional practices and student achievement based on principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the teacher performance evaluation process?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What evidence do you have that demonstrates change(s) in student achievement based on the change(s) you made in your instructional practices?</li></ul>

## **Time Line**

The prospectus exam was successfully completed during the spring 2018 semester, and IRB approval was granted during the spring 2019 semester. In May 2019, an email request for the names of teacher participants meeting the study's criteria was sent to each Human Resource Director of the school districts where permission was granted to conduct this study. In June 2019, an email was sent to each teacher participant provided by the Human Resource Director requesting participation in the study. Teacher interviews were conducted from June 2019 through November 2019 and were transcribed between November 2019 and January 2020. Data analysis was completed in April 2021.

## **Methodology Summary**

This qualitative study focused on teacher perceptions of principal feedback and subsequent follow-up based on observations through the teacher evaluation process and what changes, if any, teachers implemented based on principal feedback and subsequent follow-up that had an impact on student achievement. Upon approval from the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board and permission from selected school district Superintendents, the researcher conducted one-to-one interviews with eight teachers, four in each of two rural school districts located in south central Virginia, for the purpose of data collection. Specific information on data collection, data treatment and management as well as instrument design was presented.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Results of the Analysis of the Data**

#### **Introduction and Restatement of the Purpose**

Over the past several decades our nation has placed greater emphasis on the importance of increased student achievement in our schools as well as those teacher qualities or characteristics that contribute to increased learning (Marzano, 2003; Marzano, Frontier & Livingston, 2011). Driven by federal initiatives to improve student achievement such as NCLB (2002), RTTT (2009), and ESSA (2015), a teacher evaluation tool was developed and implemented in Virginia as well as in other states across the nation to document teacher practices and provide feedback to teachers to enhance professional development and teacher effectiveness. The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe teacher perceptions regarding the usefulness of principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the teacher evaluation process that resulted in implementing instructional changes in the classroom and increasing student achievement. This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected through one-to-one teacher interviews to answer the following research questions:

1. How do teachers perceive the usefulness of principal feedback on their teaching practices through the teacher performance evaluation process?
2. How do teachers perceive the usefulness of the principal's subsequent follow-up on the initial feedback provided through the teacher performance evaluation process?
3. What changes in teacher practices do teachers report are the result of principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the teacher performance evaluation process?
4. What evidence do teachers report that demonstrates the outcome of their change in instructional practices and student achievement based on principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the teacher performance evaluation process?

#### **Participant Demographics**

After obtaining school district approval to conduct this research study, data were collected through one-to-one interviews of eight teachers, four from each of two rural, south central Virginia school districts. Teacher participants were selected by each school district's human resource director with the parameters that the teacher serve in a school where the

principal has a minimum of three years of administrative experience and that teachers selected for this study have no less than five years and no more than twenty years of teaching experience in his/her respective school and have been formally evaluated within the past two years. It is important to note that one of the participants in this study did not meet the study’s criteria of having no less than five years and no more than twenty years of teaching experience in the current school. Teacher 1 had taught at the current school only three years with previous teaching experience at another school in the district. This did not become apparent until after the completion of the interviewing process. A pseudonym was assigned to each school district, school, and teacher participant as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Participant Pseudonyms and Demographics*

Teacher Participant	School District	School	Years of Teaching Experience in This School
T1	Apex School District	Cardinal High School	3
T2	Apex School District	Cardinal High School	8
T3	Zenith School District	Nelsonite Middle School	19
T4	Zenith School District	Dogwood High School	14
T5	Apex School District	Cardinal High School	12
T6	Zenith School District	Dogwood High School	5
T7	Apex School District	Cardinal High School	16
T8	Zenith School District	Dogwood High School	11

Seven of the eight teachers selected by the human resource director of each school district teach on the high school level. Only one teacher in this study teaches on the middle school level. Additionally, seven out of eight teachers were female with only one male participant. Over a five-month period, teacher participants were interviewed at a date, time and location of their choosing. After discussing and signing the informed consent, each teacher participant in this study was asked the following interview questions:

1. What areas of strength or commendations has your principal provided to you as feedback during your evaluation and post conferences based on his/her classroom observations?
2. How would you describe the usefulness of you principal's feedback on your areas of strength or your commendations as they relate to your instructional practices?
3. What recommendations for improvement has your principal provided to you during your evaluation post conferences as feedback based on his/her classroom observation?
4. How would you describe the usefulness of the principal's recommendations as they relate to your instructional practices?
5. How often does your principal follow up with you on his/her initial feedback from your evaluation post conferences?
6. How would you describe the usefulness of the principal's follow-up on initial feedback provided to you?
7. Based on the initial feedback provided to you by your principal through the evaluation process, describe the feedback provided to you that you believe resulted in any change(s) you made to your instructional practices.
8. Based on the follow-up feedback provided to you by your principal through the evaluation process, describe the feedback provided to you that you believe resulted in any change(s) you made to your instructional practices.
9. What evidence do you have that demonstrates change(s) in student achievement based on the change(s) you made in your instructional practices?

Once the interviews were completed, the researcher transcribed each interview and conducted a member check for accuracy and validation of the information provided by each teacher participant during the interview process. In addition to the interview transcriptions, the researcher also reviewed personal field notes taken from each interview to glean additional reflections and thoughts pertinent to the research questions and the teacher responses. Upon completion of the member check process, each transcription was manually coded by the researcher to identify emerging themes.



## **Data Collection**

### *Research Question 1*

How do teachers perceive the usefulness of principal feedback on their teaching practices through the teacher performance evaluation process?

There were four interview questions aligned to research question 1. Those questions were specific to feedback provided by the principal through the teacher evaluation process relative to the teacher's strengths or commendations, weaknesses or recommendations, and the usefulness of that feedback to their instructional practices and student achievement. The data revealed the following strengths or commendations noted through the evaluation process.

### **Feedback on Strengths or Commendations**

All eight teachers noted at least two strengths or commendations that the principal provided as feedback based on classroom observations. The most frequent strength or commendation noted by teachers as feedback was rapport with students. Four out of eight teachers mentioned this commendation first when asked about what strengths or commendations had been provided by the principal (T1, T5, T6, T8). Three out of eight teachers first mentioned knowledge of content as the strength or commendation noted by the principal (T2, T3, T4). Three out of eight teachers commented that student engagement was noted by the principal as a commendation (T1, T7, T8). Other strengths or commendations mentioned in no particular order by two out of eight teachers as noted by the principal included delivery of instruction (T2, T3), differentiation of instruction (T6, T7), classroom management (T5, T8), use of technology (T1, T8), and the use of a variety of learning tools (T1, T6). Teacher 4 shared that the principal had commented on providing a consistent, conducive learning environment and Teacher 3 mentioned a commendation of involvement in athletic coaching as well as other extracurricular activities that supported students and the school. These specific strengths and commendations are categorized into broader professional responsibilities shown in Table 3 below.

**Table 3***Strengths or Commendations Noted by Principal by Category*

Category	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8
Professional Knowledge		X	X	X				
Instructional Practices:	X	X	X			X	X	X
- Delivery of Instruction		X	X					
- Differentiation of Instruction						X	X	
- Use of Technology	X							X
- Use of Variety of Learning Tools	X					X		
- Student Engagement	X						X	X
Learning Environment:	X			X	X	X		X
- Provides Consistent, Conducive Learning Environment				X				
- Classroom Management					X			X
- Rapport with Students	X				X	X		X
Professionalism			X					

**Usefulness of Feedback on Strengths or Commendations**

Six out of eight teachers described the feedback received from the principal regarding strengths and commendations as being useful as they relate to instructional practices (T1, T3, T5, T6, T7, T8). All six teachers mentioned that principal feedback on their strengths and commendations provided support and encouragement with regards to their instructional practices. Teacher 1 stated

I think it gives you affirmation that what you are doing is the right thing. I think it makes you feel good about yourself, but I feel like we do it because we know that it works. That affirmation is nice, but as far as useful—I guess because I know that my principal also

feels that it is warranted that I do that. It gives you that warm, fuzzy feeling that you are doing the right thing. There is so much work involved that you at least want someone to pat you on the back and say, “Hey, good job” (P1, l 14-18).

Teacher 7 also shared that positive feedback reinforces “that I am doing what I am supposed to be doing, and it makes me feel good that I’m working hard for a reason” (P1, l 13-14). Teacher 6 stated that the principal feedback she received was confirmation that she was “heading in the right direction with what [she] was doing” and that it is “nice to know that [the principals] think I am doing what I need to do.” (P1, l 15-19)

Four of the eight teachers (T3, T5, T6, T8) stated that positive feedback was useful in that it builds confidence as a teacher and motivates them to improve upon or implement new teaching strategies. Teacher 5 stated, “I love when they recognize things that I am strong in because I continue to build upon that.” (P1, l 15-16) Teacher 3 also commented that positive feedback “helps you feel like you are doing your job the right way. You are taking care of what you need to take care of in the classroom. You also feel that your administration is confident of you and that makes you feel good as an employee.” (P1, l 14-16). Teacher 3 went on to say that through positive feedback “you feel like you can go off in a different direction. You are validated. You feel like you have that creative license to go out and try different things.” (P1, l 20-22)

Teacher 8 commented that positive principal feedback

...makes me feel better about my overall teaching. It makes me have more confidence in what I do. When they tell me things that I have done well, I tend to want to use those kinds of things more or find different activities or instructional practices that are like that to use. (P1, l 24-26)

One teacher out of eight (T4) commented that the usefulness of principal feedback varied. Teacher 4 noted that feedback received from some principals was useful while some feedback received was not useful. Teacher 4 shared that over the years there have been several different principals and that “some of them [principals] took a greater interest in what was going on in the classroom. I think you get the general, well really blanket statements from some administrators that anybody could ... make improvements [upon]. (P2, l 72-74). Teacher 4 further commented that the feedback that was most useful was from a principal who had formerly taught in the same content area. Teacher 4 shared that with this principal’s “level of comfort with the content, he was able to actually give me something useable—not a general fix all or insightful or you should

strive to make it pretty type of thing. It was more directed and something I could actually do.” (P4, l 139-141).

One teacher out of eight commented that principal feedback on strengths or commendations received was not useful. In explaining this belief, Teacher 2 commented that what she found most useful was her focus through the evaluation process with regard to feedback given in those areas that “I didn’t get the excellent in. If I didn’t get the big check on something, those were the things I focused on” (P1, l 28-30).

Table 4 reflects the strengths and commendations by category noted by teachers as useful principal feedback.

**Table 4**

*Usefulness of Noted Strengths or Commendations by Category*

Category	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8
Useful	X		X		X	X	X	X
Varies by Principal				X				
Not Useful		X						
Provides support and encouragement	X		X		X	X	X	X
Builds Confidence			X		X	X		X
Motivational			X		X	X		X

**Feedback on Weaknesses or Recommendations**

Interview question 3 addressed the principal feedback teachers receive regarding weaknesses or recommendations based on classroom observations. Seven out of eight teachers (T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8) interviewed were able to provide an example of principal feedback on a weakness or recommendation based on classroom observations, although four of the teachers (T2, T4, T6, T8) stated that the feedback mentioned in the interview was not recent, but rather some time ago.

Two teachers (T6, T8) stated that classroom management was a focus area for improvement based on the principal's feedback. Teacher 6 shared that the "biggest helpful thing I received from the principal [was] classroom management" (P2, l 67-68). Teacher 6 stated that having classroom management under control was the key to better lessons and greater student engagement and is one of the areas that she constantly works on to improve. (P2, l 68-71) Teacher 8 also shared that classroom management was noted by the principal as an area for improvement. The principal's feedback followed an observation of an SOL test review class where the teacher admitted that she recognized that during the observation the class was difficult to control. (P2, l 32-34)

Two teachers (T3, T7) mentioned that the principal's feedback noted instructional delivery as an area designated for improvement. Each of these teachers shared that class demographics was a concern with regard to instruction. Teacher 3 stated that finding different instructional strategies to reach all students, particularly in inclusion classrooms, is challenging. (P1, l 25-28) Teacher 7 also shared that the blend of class demographics with general education students, special education students, varying personalities and students with behavior problems all in the same classroom presents challenges with differentiation and instructional delivery. (P4, l 126-136)

Teacher 1 was unable to recall a recent weakness or recommendation for improvement noted by the principal stating, "I really cannot say that I ever had a recommendation or feedback on improvement .... Usually, it [feedback] is what you are doing right" (P1, l 23-24).

Teacher 4 recalled that the principal questioned her, "Why are you doing so much?" (P3, l 99). She further explained

I knew exactly what [the principal] meant and I knew exactly why I was [doing so much]. It was because the previous administrator felt that the general instruction was not enough. You had to have this group working on this. This group working on that. You had to be remediating here. Like you had to be four people in one room and I was coming off of five years of that so I was like doing the amazing thing—trying to be everywhere. (P3, l 99-103) And this person [principal] was like, "What are you doing? You're going to run yourself ragged. You'll be dead by December. Please just lay it out there and then give them something to do and get everybody on the same page. You don't need these kids ahead and these remediated. That doesn't all have to happen in one

class.” And I was like-well, I mean enough. That’s not what so and so said. (P3, *l* 105-108)

Teacher 4 went on to say, “obviously that’s one [recommendation] that stuck with me because it was something that was observed and it was definitely happening, and I think I did appreciate that feedback” (P3, *l* 110-111).

Principal feedback to Teacher 2 noted a recommendation to “work on making sure that all students are called on in each class and have a chance to share.” (P2, *l* 43-44). Teacher 2 acknowledged that this was likely happening because she taught from one side of the classroom with a collab teacher teaching from the opposite side. The teacher commented that she had a tendency to call on students on her side of the classroom more frequently than those students on the side of the classroom with the collab teacher (P2, *l* 46-48).

Teacher 5 shared that principal feedback was not specific to instruction but that the principal noted that additional documentation should be included in the teacher portfolio:

We went through the binder together and she mentioned that I needed to have—even though I had evidence of lesson plans, pre-tests; post-tests, I needed more evidence, I guess, of the pictures of projects and students engaging in these projects because a lot of what we do in class are presentations (P1, *l* 21-24).

Table 5 below categorizes into broader professional teaching responsibilities the teachers’ perspectives of specific weaknesses or recommendations provided by the principal.

**Table 5***Weaknesses or Recommendations Noted by Principal by Category*

Category	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8
Instructional Delivery			X	X			X	
Learning Environment:		X				X		X
- Classroom Management						X		X
- Encourages Student Engagement by Calling on All Students		X						
Teacher Portfolio					X			
No Weaknesses or Recommendations Noted by Principal	X							

**Usefulness of Feedback on Weaknesses or Recommendations**

Seven out of eight teachers (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7) stated that principal recommendations or feedback on weaknesses were useful. Two out of those six teachers (T4, T6) shared that the explicitness of the principal’s feedback they received was important to the usefulness of the feedback. Teacher 4 stated that specificity in the feedback was much more useful than “blanket statements” (P. 2, l 73). Teacher 4 found that principals’ feedback often includes “blanket statements” which she does not find helpful. (P.3, l 79-80). Teacher 6 commented that principals should be “straightforward” and not “beat around the bush.” The principal should “just let me know what you would like to see. Give me some suggestions” (P6, l 220-221).

Of those seven teachers who found principal feedback on weaknesses or recommendations useful, four had been given specific feedback by the principal on areas for improvement (T2, T3, T6, T7). Teacher 6 noted the principal addressed concerns regarding classroom management with questions such as

What do you want it [your class] to look like? What do you want it to look like from the beginning? What do you want it to look like when you're half way through, and at the end? Do you want to be able to reach them with those SOLs? Do you want them to be able to pay attention, or are you expecting a circus at the end? (P6, l 214-217).

Teacher 6 stated that the principal was clear about the concerns and shared specific strategies for getting classroom management under control such as “starting out from day one to be really strict and to make sure that whatever I say is what I plan on sticking with the entire time I am teaching” (P2, 63-64).

Teacher 7 had also been given specific principal feedback to use differentiation in instructional delivery. Teacher 7 noted that the strategies she implemented varied by class, but that at least one class had benefited from the change. Teacher 7 shared

I am trying to do more manipulatives and differentiate my activities for these kids, but I feel like I wasted 53 minutes today in one of my classes. I could have been going over twenty multiple choice questions that they are going to see on the test on Friday instead of “I don't know what to write in here.” Seventh period—they did really well today. So, it is meaningful, yes. (P3, l 81-84)

Teacher 2 received specific principal feedback recommending that attention should be given to calling on more students in the class so everyone had an opportunity to participate and share. Teacher 2 found this principal feedback useful noting

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. I paid attention [to the recommendation]. I really focused and I was like I really do call on those kids on that side of the room a lot. ... [Now] I am all over the place calling on students. (P2, l 53-56)

Teacher 3 also received specific principal feedback regarding differentiated instruction and noted the usefulness of this feedback through reflection.

It helps you figure out what is it that I am missing? What element do I need to add? What can I add to this to make it even better? Particularly again with the inclusion group. That's where you have to try to meet so many various learning needs in the classroom. It helps tremendously. (P2, l 42-45)

Two teachers out of the six (T1, T5) found that principal feedback or recommendations on weaknesses was useful although the usefulness mentioned was more general in scope.

Teacher 5 shared that principal feedback on weaknesses “helps me grow.” (P1, l 37) while



Teacher 1 stated that “feedback is a great thing. I think we can take constructive criticism and you don’t want to waste your time if there is a better way to [teach]. (P2, l 54-56)

One teacher out of eight (T8) did not find principal recommendations or feedback on weaknesses useful at all.

When discussing principal feedback, several teachers provided additional insight into their thoughts regarding principal feedback. Teacher 2 commented “I feel like from the experience from my principals who have observed me—formal and informal—I feel like they just want to tell me that I am doing a good job and not try to tell me the things that they think can help me” (P5, l 180-182). Teacher 4 also shared, “I’ve had a lot of different principals so you know I think some of them took a greater interest in what was going on in the classroom” (P2, l 72-73). Teacher 7 remarked, “Anyway—yes, it is good to know where I could improve my teaching but in the same sense, I am kind of set in my ways. I know this [current practices teacher is using] works.” (P2, l 55-56) Finally, Teacher 8 remarked, “I am a big believer though that every classroom is different. Every classroom is unique. I don’t like when I go in to talk to a principal and they just throw me a textbook scenario or a textbook answer to something. I’m like—it’s not going to work. I know it’s not going to work because I know how to teach.” (P 2, l 48-52)

Two teachers (T1, T4) suggested that a principal’s background knowledge in specific content areas is more helpful in providing useful and appropriate instructional feedback. Teacher 1 noted, “I feel like instructional practices feedback is hard at the high school level,” noting that “it is difficult for a principal to have that specific knowledge for each specific department” (P2, l60-65) Teacher 4 shared that a principal’s content knowledge may be especially helpful for newer teachers. Teacher 4 commented, “the administrator who was the teacher in your content has the insight for the newer teacher that may be lacking when you have somebody out of content trying to tell you” (P8, l285-288).

Table 6 reflects by category the teachers’ perceptions of the usefulness of weaknesses or recommendations provided by the principal.

**Table 6***Usefulness of Noted Weaknesses or Recommendations by Category*

Category	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8
Useful--	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
- Provided Specific Area(s) Needing Improvement		X	X			X	X	
- Did Not Provide Specific Area(s) Needing Improvement	X				X			
Usefulness Varies -Depends on Explicitness				X		X		
Not Useful								X
Principal Recommendations based on “snapshot” and not useful for all classes							X	X
Teachers Shared Concerns About Principal Feedback on Weaknesses/Recommendations		X		X			X	X
Principal knowledge base is important for providing specific instructional strategies related to content area	X			X				

*Research Question 2*

How do teachers perceive the usefulness of the principal’s subsequent follow-up on the initial feedback provided through the teacher performance evaluation process?

There were two interview questions aligned to research question 2. Questions 5 and 6 were specific to how often principals follow up on the initial feedback provided to teachers and the usefulness of the principals’ follow up on initial feedback provided through the teacher performance evaluation process.

## Frequency of Principal Follow-Up on Initial Feedback Provided

Teacher responses to question 5 varied from receiving no immediate follow-up on initial feedback from some principals to receiving some form of follow-up on every informal and formal observation conducted by the principal. Teacher 4 noted that principal follow-up on feedback “varied on the administrator. I would say there was one [principal] who probably nothing—no follow-up. I have had others who were pretty consistent in terms of follow-up” (P5, *l* 163-164).

Table 7 below illustrates the type of observation and frequency of subsequent principal follow-up to teachers on initial feedback. None of the teachers interviewed mentioned concerns with timeliness of feedback; however, Teacher 1, who received feedback at the end of the year during the final evaluation conference, commented that follow-up on initial feedback might be handled differently by the principal if the teacher is inexperienced (P2, *l* 73-74), suggesting that feedback may be more immediate for a newer teacher after an observation rather than waiting until the end of the school year. Teacher 6, who received feedback on the same day as the observation, noted that “we have one assistant principal, she is really good.” (P3, *l* 70-71), acknowledging approval of this administrator’s timely feedback.

Two teachers (T4, T6) mentioned the benefits of walkthrough observations and follow-up feedback. Teacher 4 shared that principal walkthrough visits provide two benefits. First, walkthroughs “get an administrator in your room” (P5, *l* 176) and feedback is pretty immediate either through a quick conversation at bus duty or through an email message stating, “I enjoyed your class today” (P5, *l* 180-186). Teacher 6 commented that a walkthrough provides a quick snapshot of the class that shows teacher instruction and interaction as well as student engagement and also provides an opportunity for the principal to engage with the students. Teacher 6 also acknowledged that there is a quick turnaround with walkthrough feedback, “usually that day,” which is beneficial. (P4, *l* 140-150).

**Table 7***Frequency of Principal Follow-up on Initial Feedback to Teachers*

Teacher Code	Type/Timing of Observation	Follow-up with teacher on Initial Feedback	Transcript Line(s)
T1	Formal – In the spring	During end-of-year evaluation conference	71-73
T2	Formal (only one in past six years)	During end-of-year evaluation conference	11-13
T3	Informal and Formal during the year	Receives written notification following observation to follow up with the principal; sometimes follow-up is through more casual conversation	52-59
T4	Informal or Formal during the year - Informal Walkthroughs	Varies by principal Almost immediate turnaround	163 176-186
T5	Informal or Formal - Dependent on assigned evaluation cycle	Following observation	60-66
T6	Informal or Formal during the year - Informal Walkthroughs	Within one week of observation Almost immediate turnaround	136-138 142-143
T7	Informal or Formal during the year	During end-of-year evaluation conference	58-65
T8	Formal	Usually within two days; Same day (from one assistant principal)	58-62 70-71

**Usefulness of Principal Follow-Up on Initial Feedback**

Interview question 6 focused on the usefulness of the principal’s follow-up on initial feedback provided to teachers. Four out of eight teachers (T3, T5, T6, T8) found the principal’s follow-up on initial feedback useful. Teacher 6 stated that the principal follow-up provided

“reinforcement” (P4, l 162) and was useful because the feedback was applicable to “what you are currently doing [in the classroom]” (P4, l 152). Teacher 5 shared that the principal follow-up on initial feedback provided “support” for the teacher’s classroom instruction and practices (P2, l 71), while Teacher 8 commented that the follow-up on initial feedback had been an acknowledgement of appreciation for “what you do or ... some of the ways you have been teaching ... help[ing] with being a better teacher overall.” (P3, l 76-78) Teacher 3 commented that the principal follow-up was useful in that it showed that the principal saw the importance and value of the feedback by taking the “time to come back and talk to you and follow-up. You feel like it’s not just busy work. It’s not just a document that sits in the file somewhere.” (P2, l 62-64).

Two out of eight teachers (T4, T7) commented that the usefulness of principal follow-up on initial feedback varies. Teacher 4 noted that feedback varies by principal and is more useful and easier to follow up on when the initial feedback is “more specific to an actual observation—something that was seen.” (P5, l 163-165) Teacher 7 found the follow-up to initial feedback with the incorporation of more manipulatives and differentiated activities for the students is “useful for a short period of time,” in some but not all of the classes. Teacher 7 commented that because of the amount of time some students needed to complete activities in some classes due to varying classroom demographics, pacing of instruction became an issue and these differentiated instructional strategies were not necessarily working for all students. (P2-3, l 69-84).

Teacher 2 commented that follow-up on initial feedback had not been useful and Teacher 1 stated that she had not received any follow-up on initial feedback.

Table 8 below categorizes the teachers’ perceptions of the usefulness of principal follow-up on initial feedback.

**Table 8***Usefulness of Principal Follow-up on Initial Feedback*

Category	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8
Useful			X		X	X		X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows Support, Appreciation, and Value for Your Work</li> </ul>			X		X	X		X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is Applicable to Current Instruction</li> </ul>						X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps with Being a Better Teacher Overall</li> </ul>								X
Varies				X			X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Useful When Initial Feedback is Specific</li> </ul>				X				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usefulness varies by class and then only for a short period of time</li> </ul>							X	
Not Useful		X						
No Follow-up Provided	X							

*Research Question 3*

What changes in teacher practices do teachers report are the result of principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the teacher performance evaluation process?

There were two interview questions aligned to research question 3. Questions 7 and 8 were specific to principals' initial feedback and subsequent follow-up feedback leading to changes in instructional practices.

## **Initial Feedback from Principals Leading to Instructional Change**

Teacher responses to interview question 7 revealed that six out of eight teachers (T2, T3, T4, T6, T7, T8) heeded the principal's initial feedback and made instructional changes based on that feedback. Teacher 6 commented that

[the principal] was really good about giving me suggestions about things I could do in the classroom then, so when [the principal] could come in and observe me that was the biggest thing—the classroom management. [The principal] wanted to get me where I needed to be and [the principal] gave me some suggestions on--Try this. This is what I did. Or try that. ... The classroom management is where I've gained the most." (P5, *l* 169-175)

Teacher 7 received initial feedback to differentiate instruction and tried various activities and "modified things. We do read alouds with [the students], We do read alouds within small groups. ... we take the kids out [of the classroom] and help them with classwork (P3, *l* 102-104) Teacher 3 also received initial feedback to differentiate instruction and stated that such feedback "gives you a chance to do reflection—internal reflection. To sit back and think about what it is that you are doing. Am I reaching those kids? What is it that I can do to reach a few more?" (P2, *l* 73-74) Teacher 3 shared that following reflection, the teacher "would go and look at resources to try to find ways to differentiate instruction. I would visit things such as websites and things like that to look for ideas on how to address the situation the principal was talking about with me. (P2, *l* 70-72)

Teacher 2 shared that student questioning strategies changed in the classroom once the principal provided feedback that more students needed to participate in class. Teacher 2 commented that all students in the class go to the board to complete a problem—"If there are 20 kids in the class, then 20 kids are going to the board." (P 5, *l* 153-154) Teacher 8 also received initial feedback from the principal to have a more structured strategy for having students participate in class rather than having them randomly call out. Teacher 8 implemented a popsicle stick strategy to have students respond in a more orderly manner. (P3, *l* 101-103)

Teacher 4 commented that teachers should "try to accommodate the feedback given" by the principal and that instructional practices changed in her classroom whether it was the principal's feedback to have four or five things going on in the classroom at one time or whether

it was to stop those practices and get all students in the classroom on the same page (P7, l 227-229).

Teachers 1 and 5 shared that principal feedback received focused on affirmation of classroom instruction with “no red flags” (T5, P3, l 97). Teachers 1 and 5 have not made instructional changes based on principal feedback on strengths; however, Teacher 1 shared “because my principal says it is a good thing, it makes me want to do that even more.” (P3, l 108-109)

The teachers’ perceptions of their instructional changes based on principals’ initial feedback are categorized in Table 9 below.

**Table 9**

*Instructional Changes Based on Principals’ Initial Feedback*

Category	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8
Made Instructional Changes Based on Principal Feedback		X	X	X		X	X	X
• Classroom Management						X		
• Differentiated Instruction			X				X	
• Student Participation Technique		X						X
• Always Accommodated any Principal Feedback				X				
Did Not Make Instructional Changes Based on Positive Principal Feedback Provided	X				X			



## **Follow-Up Feedback from Principals Leading to Instructional Change**

Interview Question 8 focused on principal follow-up feedback to teachers leading to instructional change in the classroom. Only one out of eight teachers (T6) provided a specific example for follow-up feedback leading to instructional change. Teacher 6 mentioned that the following year the principal again expressed concerns that “your classroom management is nowhere near where I need it to be.” (P5, *l* 187). Teacher 6 continued, “So [the principal] would always give me feedback on things to improve with that and that has made a difference. The principal would follow-up” to make sure classroom management was where it needed to be (P5, *l* 195-196).

In response to question 8, Teacher 8 commented, “I don’t feel like we get a lot of help [from principals] because they know that I am doing my job. ... They don’t really come and watch much but they just know it [instruction] is going on.” (P4, *l* 125-127) Teacher 8 went on to say, “I find that I get a lot of inspiration from other teachers who teach [in my content area]. I follow them on Instagram. I follow Pinterest. We have our own Instagram that we share the things that we do—my coach and I. I feel like I am always being professionally developed by reading other things or being involved in things. So, I feel like I am doing that part myself—not so much what the principals are going to say.” (P 4, *l* 134-137) Teacher 6 also noted that ideas with regard to instruction or classroom strategies that, “My colleagues have been more of my go-to for things like that with suggestions” (P 8, *l* 327-328)

Teacher 3 shared that follow-up discussions on initial feedback “adds validity. It makes you feel like what you are doing, you’re on the right path. That’s important as a teacher to know that your practices are being backed up by your administration.” (P3, *l* 101-103). Teacher 3 also commented that “follow-up is more like a year-end looking thing. It is more summative and it gives you a good view and the principal will give you a view of what they’ve seen throughout the year.” (P3, *l* 110-111)

Table 10 reflects the teachers’ perceptions of instructional changes made based on principals’ follow-up feedback.

**Table 10***Instructional Changes Based on Principals' Follow-Up Feedback*

Category	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8
Made Instructional Changes Based on Principal Follow-up Feedback						X		
• Classroom Management						X		
Believes Follow-up Feedback is a Year-End Process			X					
Believes Principals Know Teachers are Doing Their Job								X
Inspired More so by Colleagues Rather Than by Principals for Instructional Strategies						X		X

*Research Question 4*

What evidence do teachers report that demonstrates the outcome of their change in instructional practices and student achievement based on principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the teacher performance evaluation process?

Interview question 9 aligned to research question 4 seeking evidence of student achievement that teachers believed was a result of any change(s) in instructional practices based on principal feedback and subsequent follow-up.

**Evidence of Change in Student Achievement from Changes in Instructional Practices Based on Principal Feedback or Subsequent Follow-Up**

Two out of eight teachers (T2, T6) found that student achievement improved based on instructional changes made in the class as a result of the principal's feedback. Two out of eight

teachers (T4, T8) commented that it was difficult to know if instructional changes resulted in a difference in student achievement. One out of eight teachers (T3) shared that it is the students' interaction with one another in the classroom that is an indication of whether or not students understand the concepts taught. Teacher 3 stated that while test scores are one indication of measuring student achievement, it is being able to gauge from the students' questioning and conversations with one another that is important in having an understanding of what students are learning. One out of eight teachers (T7) found that instructional changes made in the class as a result of the principal's feedback did not result in improvement in student achievement. Three out of eight teachers (T4, T6, T8) mentioned the importance of collaboration with colleagues as it relates to instruction and improvement in student achievement. Two out of eight teachers (T1, T5) commented because the principal's feedback did not note recommendations for instruction but rather commendations, their classroom instruction did not change and student learning and achievement remained high.

Two out of eight teachers (T2, T6) commented that strategies provided through principal feedback had made a positive impact on student learning and achievement. Teacher 2 commented that the principal feedback to "work on making sure that all students are called on in each class and have a chance to share" (P2, *l* 43-44) had made a difference for the students.

Teacher 2 shared:

A lot of times when I put them at the board, the student beside them will also coach them along. They might say, "Hey, you messed that up. You might want to fix that before everybody sees it." So, they are all worried about getting the answer right. They are not just trying to do the problems to say they did the problem. They will worry about getting the answer right. ... I feel like the kids are helping each other. ... I think that helps [with student achievement]. (P5, *l* 162-172).

In response to interview question 9, Teacher 6 stated, "My weaker level kids, I guess that would be the main thing to look at with that. They have seen improvement on their SOL scores. (P7, *l* 281-282). Teacher 6 further commented:

And trying to minimize what I do but still give the same amount of instruction and things like that and bringing labs into the classroom and hands-on materials--that's another thing that just from listening not only to principals but colleagues and things like that of what

they have done to reach lower-level kids--manipulatives and cut and sorts and things like that have really been beneficial to me ... (P7, l 286-291)

Two out of eight teachers (T4, T8) stated it was difficult to know whether principal feedback had made an impact on instructional strategies that changed student achievement. Teacher 4 simply stated, "You know, sometimes I do not even know if it helped or not." (P6, l 195) Teacher 8 commented that there is uncertainty about what changes impact student achievement because "all of the dynamics are different in all of my classes." (P5, l 151)

Two out of eight teachers (T1, T5) stated they had not received recommendations for improvement and that they continued on with teaching strategies that the principal had recognized as strengths. Teacher 1 shared, "I feel like they [students] are very successful in their standardized tests because I feel like they have gotten the background knowledge, and whether they are a visual learner, an aesthetic learner, or an auditory learner, I am hitting on all of those in class." (P3, l 117-120). Teacher 5 stated, "I have 20 students and they all have different levels of strengths and weaknesses and you just work to their individual strengths and weaknesses, and where he needs more time over here ... It's juggling, but you just figure it out." (P5, l 138-140)

One out of eight teachers stated that there was no change in student learning or achievement following instructional changes made based on the principal's feedback to differentiate instruction. Teacher 7 stated that changes to differentiate instruction and to modify instruction in the classroom did not "seem to really help much on their actual, not SOL, but on a test score or a quiz." (P4, l 116-120). Teacher 7 further commented, "So, it is really hard to say that I have seen positive changes with the modifications." (P4, l 120)

Teacher 7 went on to say,

I don't know if this would help you at all, but the principals or the assistant principals, they give us feedback but it would also be helpful if they would take a look at the makeup—the demographics of the classroom. You know, each classroom is different and so when you have this many SPED kids in the classroom with this many general kids or you have these SPED kids who really want to learn and you also have others with some behavior problems, I feel like as a teacher I couldn't go to my principal and say you've got way too many different personalities and different—I don't even know what the word is—it is just too much. (P5, l 126-132)

In addition to Teacher 6 who mentioned the importance of collaboration with colleagues as it relates to classroom instruction and improvement in student achievement, two other teachers also shared the belief that collaboration is essential in providing effective classroom instruction. Teacher 4 emphasized that collaboration with colleagues is “key” acknowledging that their department works as a team, sharing insight, resources and ideas to find instructional strategies that are most effective in increasing student achievement (P7, / 268-274). Teacher 8 also stated instructional practices changed “because I did have such a great collab teacher who could work with me—come up with ideas with me, create things with me. We were able to do the small groups and work and do stations—different things that really worked for the two of us because we were both actively involved” (P5, / 155-158).

Teachers’ perceptions of changes in student achievement from instructional changes made based on principals’ initial feedback or subsequent follow-up feedback are reflected in Table 11.

**Table 11**

*Change in Student Achievement from Instructional Changes Based on Principal Feedback or Subsequent Follow-up Feedback*

Category	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8
Instructional Changes Improved Student Achievement Results		X				X		
Difficult to Know if Feedback Results in Change in Student Achievement Results				X				X
Instructional Changes Did Not Improve Student Achievement Results							X	
No Change in Instructional Strategies - Student Achievement Results Remained High	X				X			
Believes Collaboration with Colleagues is Essential to Changes in Instructional Practices and Student Achievement				X		X		X
Suggested Principal Consideration of Class Demographics When Providing Instructional Strategies for Increased Student Achievement Results for All Students							X	

## Emergent Themes

Table 12 below shows the themes that emerged as a result of the data collected in this study. These themes are pertinent to the information shared by teachers through the interview process and reflect their thoughts on principal feedback, instructional changes, and the impact on student learning/achievement.

**Table 12**

### *Emergent Themes*

USEFULNESS OF POSITIVE PRINCIPAL FEEDBACK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive</li> <li>• Motivates</li> <li>• Provides Opportunities for Reflection</li> <li>• Potential for Improving Teaching Practices</li> </ul>
RELIABILITY OF PRINCIPAL FEEDBACK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback Should be Specific and Clear</li> <li>• Feedback Focus Varies Depending on Principal</li> <li>• Knowledge Base of Principal is Important Component to Feedback</li> <li>• Principals Provide More Feedback on Teacher Strengths and Less Feedback on Teacher Weaknesses</li> </ul>
CHANGE IN PROCESS FOR PROVIDING FEEDBACK TO TEACHERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain Fidelity to the Teacher Evaluation Process</li> <li>• Feedback Should be Consistent to the Teacher Evaluation Process</li> <li>• Include More Walkthrough Observations</li> </ul>
INSTRUCTIONAL CHANGES BASED ON PRINCIPAL FEEDBACK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific and focused principal feedback has a greater impact on making instructional changes</li> </ul>
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult to identify what generates change in student achievement results</li> </ul>
TEACHER SUGGESTION FOR IMPROVING FEEDBACK, INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES, AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance of Collaboration Among Teachers</li> </ul>

## Summary

Chapter Four provides a summary of the data collected and analyzed as it relates to the research questions pertaining to this qualitative study. The four research questions in this study sought to determine the teachers' perception of the usefulness of principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the evaluation process on their instructional practices that improve

teacher performance and increase student achievement. An analysis of the data reveals that teachers find principal feedback useful to their instructional practices, although it is the type of principal feedback that results in making instructional changes. Additionally, while the data reveal that teachers make instructional changes based on feedback, teachers perceived that there is uncertainty about whether or not these changes impact student achievement.

The findings, summary, and conclusions, as well as suggestions for future studies and reflections for this study, will be discussed in Chapter Five.



## **Chapter Five**

### **Findings, Implications, Future Research, Summary, and Reflections**

#### **Introduction**

Over the past several decades, there has been an increased emphasis on the teacher evaluation process to improve teaching practices and increase student achievement. Through federal initiatives such as NCLB (2002), RTTT (2009), and ESSA (2015), rigorous teacher performance evaluation systems were developed and implemented in school districts across the nation to document teaching practices and provide feedback to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement. Through the Virginia teacher performance evaluation process, principals follow established guidelines to monitor and evaluate teaching practices and provide feedback to improve teacher performance and effectiveness that will lead to increased student achievement.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe teacher perceptions regarding the usefulness of principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the Virginia teacher evaluation process that resulted in implementing instructional changes in the classroom and increasing student achievement. Through one-to-one interviews with eight teachers, four from each of two rural south central Virginia school districts, data were collected and analyzed to address the following research questions:

1. How do teachers perceive the usefulness of principal feedback on their teaching practices through the teacher performance evaluation process?
2. How do teachers perceive the usefulness of the principal's subsequent follow-up on the initial feedback provided through the teacher performance evaluation process?
3. What changes in teacher practices do teachers report are the result of principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the teacher performance evaluation process?
4. What evidence do teachers report that demonstrates the outcome of their change in teacher practices and student achievement based on principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the teacher performance evaluation process?

The findings from this research study are presented below.

## Summary of Findings

The researcher's analysis of the data from this study revealed that teachers perceived principal feedback to be useful; however, teachers are more likely to make instructional changes when the principal feedback is specific and focused. The data further revealed that although teachers made instructional changes based on principal feedback, teachers expressed uncertainty as to the benefit of these changes as they relate to student achievement.

Chapter Five details a summary and discussion of the findings from this study, implications for practice, suggestions for future studies, and personal reflections.

## Discussion of Findings

### *Finding One*

**Teachers perceived that positive principal feedback provided support and encouragement, built confidence, and was motivational.** All eight teachers (100%) interviewed for this study noted at least two specific strengths or commendations the principal provided as feedback (see Table 4). Of the strengths or commendations feedback provided by the principal, six out of eight teachers (75%) mentioned feedback related to instructional practices that had been observed. Five of the eight teachers (62.5%) interviewed noted principal feedback related to the learning environment that had been observed. Rapport with students was the first strength mentioned by four teachers (T1, T5, T6, T8) and was the most frequent feedback provided by the principal. Knowledge of content was the second strength mentioned by three teachers (T2, T3, T4).

When discussing the usefulness of this principal feedback, six out of eight teachers (75%) found that principal feedback relating to strengths or providing commendations was useful as the feedback provided support and encouragement, built confidence, and/or was motivating. As Teacher 8 stated regarding positive principal feedback, "...[it] makes me feel better about my overall teaching. It makes me have more confidence in what I do. When they tell me things that I have done well, I tend to want to use those kinds of things more or find different activities or instructional practices that are like that to use" (see narrative in Chapter Four under "Usefulness of feedback on strengths or commendations"). Teacher 7 also noted that positive principal feedback makes "you feel like you can go off in a different direction. You are validated. You

feel like you have that creative license to go out and try different things” (see narrative in Chapter Four under “Usefulness of feedback on strengths or commendations”).

This finding supports the work of Blase and Blase (2000, 2004) asserting that principal feedback that is positive, specific, and meaningful can have a powerful impact that helps motivate teachers and build their confidence and self-esteem. This finding also supports the work of The New Teacher Project (2010) and Reddy et al. (2018) that specific and supportive principal feedback to teachers through the evaluation process helps teachers become more effective and is a means for helping teachers develop and meet their goals toward improvement. Positive principal feedback to teachers that is effective and meaningful provides encouragement and can motivate teachers to become more confident and seek ways to improve their instructional practices.

### *Finding Two*

**Teachers perceived that principals provided more feedback on teacher strengths than on teacher weaknesses.** When considering the information provided by teachers relative to principal feedback on strengths or commendations and the information provided by teachers relative to principal feedback on weaknesses or recommendations, all eight teachers (100%) were able to identify at least two strengths or commendations each that the principal had noted (see Table 3) while seven out of eight teachers (87.5%) were able to identify only one weakness or recommendation each noted by the principal (see Table 5). Two teachers shared their thoughts on principal feedback strengths as opposed to weaknesses with Teacher 2 noting, “I feel like from the experience from my principals who have observed me—formal and informal—I feel like they just want to tell me I am doing a good job and not try to tell me the things they think can help me” (P5, l 180-182). Teacher 4 also commented, “I really cannot say that I ever had recommendations or feedback on improvement ... usually it is what you are doing right” (P1, l 23-24).

This finding is supported by the research of Danielson and McGreal (2000), Goe (2013), and Seashore-Louis et al. (2010), noting that many principals are unable to provide effective and meaningful feedback to teachers due to the lack of proper training or preparation in evaluating teachers. The work of Kraft and Gilmore (2016) also found that principals are reluctant to engage in difficult conversations that focus on teacher weaknesses, tending to focus on teacher strengths and what is going well in the classroom. Principals must receive appropriate training to

develop the necessary skills in providing effective feedback relative to the teacher's work and to adequately support teachers through the teacher evaluation process (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Effective and meaningful principal feedback should address teacher weaknesses as well as their strengths to improve instructional practices and student learning.

### *Finding Three*

**Teachers perceived that the principals' initial feedback was useful in making instructional changes in the classroom.** Six out of eight teachers (75%) found initial feedback provided by the principal was useful and made instructional changes in the classroom to accommodate the feedback provided (see Table 9). Each of the six teachers noted the principals' feedback designated a specific focus or area needing improvement, including classroom management, differentiated instruction, and student participation practices.

This finding supports the research of Mendels (2012), noting that it is essential that principals focus on quality instruction to improve teacher instructional practices and student learning. Additionally, the research of Reddy et al. (2018) and The New Teacher Project (2010) espouses that in order to assist teachers in developing and meeting professional goals toward improvement, principal feedback should be clear, specific, constructive, and supportive. This finding also supports the research of Kluger and DeNisi (1996), who found that when meaningful feedback is specific to a task or expectation, there is potential for impacting motivation and learning to generate change. Additionally, Kluger and DeNisi (1996) found that the type of feedback is important as teacher motivation can be negatively impacted if the teacher perceives the feedback to focus on "self" rather than on the task details. This is also supported through the research of Blase and Blase (2000), Hattie and Timperley (2007), and Shute (2008) that feedback should focus on a specific task and not the learner to be most effective. Teachers tend to make instructional changes when they are provided with specific and focused principal feedback.

### *Finding Four*

**Teachers perceived that principals' subsequent follow-up feedback was useful but did not result in teachers making instructional changes in the classroom.** While four out of eight teachers (50%) found that the principals' subsequent follow-up on initial feedback was useful, only one teacher noted that instructional changes were made based on the principal's subsequent follow-up feedback (see Table 8). As this teacher stated, the principal provided

specific suggestions and ideas for improving classroom management, and the principal always followed up, making a difference in teaching and learning (see narrative in Chapter Four under “Follow-up feedback from principals leading to instructional change”). For those teachers who did not make instructional changes based on subsequent follow-up feedback from the principal, one teacher noted that principals “just know it [instruction] is going on” (see narrative in Chapter Four under “Follow-up feedback from principals leading to instructional change”) with another teacher commenting that follow-up feedback is more of a “year-end looking thing” providing an overview of what the principal has observed throughout the year (see narrative in Chapter Four under “Follow-up feedback from principals leading to instructional change”).

This finding supports the work of several researchers. Shute (2008) notes that effective feedback is goal-directed, non-evaluative, specific, and timely. Additionally, Shute (2008) notes that providing objective feedback that is specific and clear is essential to enhancing teacher learning. Another specific feedback guideline essential to enhancing teacher learning is providing feedback that includes characteristics of effective teaching (Danielson, 2007; Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001). Furthermore, the research of Darling-Hammond (2012) and Kane (2012) emphasizes that the teacher evaluation process affords principals the opportunity to provide teachers with timely and meaningful feedback to promote reflection on teaching practices and to provide support and connections for teachers to grow professionally. Principal feedback to teachers should be an ongoing process to address and follow-up on instructional concerns and to monitor improvements in instruction based on feedback.

#### *Finding Five*

**Teachers perceived that collaboration with colleagues was an important component to increasing teacher effectiveness and student achievement.** While teachers noted the usefulness of principal feedback, they also shared that collaboration with colleagues was valuable in improving their instructional practices (see Tables 10 and 11). Four out of eight teachers (T2, T4, T6, T8) noted that through collaboration with colleagues there is a greater opportunity to learn new teaching strategies, share ideas and materials, and provide professional support to one another. Teachers shared that this type of collaboration has been an important component to improving their classroom instruction and student learning.

This finding supports the research of Mendels (2012), who found that a collaborative culture in a school that is supported by the principal provides support and encouragement for

teachers and staff to share ideas, work together, and help each other grow professionally. Additionally, collaboration and shared responsibilities fostered by the school principal can improve instruction, student learning, and the school overall (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe et al., 2007; Grissom et al., 2021; Mendels, 2012; Louis et al., 2010). Teacher collaboration is a key component to increasing teacher effectiveness and student learning and in building a positive school environment.

### *Finding Six*

**Teachers perceived that principal observation feedback was not consistent with teacher evaluation guidelines pertaining to timeliness in the evaluation process.** According to 50% of the teachers interviewed, principal feedback following a formal classroom observation varied or was provided during the end-of-year conference rather than within a designated number of days following the observation as determined by the school district (see Table 7). One teacher noted that principal observation feedback varied depending on the principal. While none of the teachers in this study mentioned concerns regarding the timeliness of principal feedback, two teachers shared that walkthrough observations were valuable for the “snapshot” of instruction observed by the principal and the quick turnaround for receiving principal feedback.

This finding supports the work of several researchers. Danielson (2010) notes that when a teacher evaluation process is rigorous, valid, and reliable and provides clear definitions and expectations together with skilled evaluators, that the opportunity for teacher growth is much more meaningful, and there is a greater assurance that teacher quality improves. Additionally, the research of Darling-Hammond (2012) and Kane (2012) also notes that throughout the teacher evaluation process, principals should provide timely and meaningful feedback to teachers to encourage reflection on teaching practices and to provide support and connections to professional development opportunities for teacher growth. Reddy et al. (2018) noted that teachers found that principal communication and timely feedback were helpful in improving teaching practices when there were opportunities for conferencing and discussions as they related to the teacher evaluation process. In order to provide the greatest benefit for improving teaching practices, principals should adhere to the teacher evaluation process guidelines and consistently communicate meaningful and timely feedback to teachers.

### *Finding Seven*

**Teachers perceived that principal feedback leading to instructional change in the classroom resulted in a minimal increase in student achievement.** Only 25% of the teachers interviewed reported that student achievement results improved due to instructional changes made in the classroom based on principal feedback. Another 25% of the teachers interviewed stated that it was difficult to know if principal feedback had resulted in changes in student achievement results. Additionally, 25% of the teachers interviewed stated that the principals' positive feedback did not warrant instructional changes, and student achievement results remained high (see Table 11).

This finding supports the research of Danielson (2010) and Hattie and Timperley (2007), stating that through the teacher evaluation process, principals have opportunities to provide meaningful feedback to teachers, potentially changing teaching habits and increasing teacher effectiveness and student achievement. Additionally, while feedback is considered to be an important component of the teacher evaluation process and developing teacher effectiveness, there is little understanding of how feedback is helpful or how it changes behavior (Khachatryan, 2015; Shute, 2008). Principals should consider adapting their teacher evaluation and feedback practices to provide increased communication and greater support in promoting teacher effectiveness.

### **Implications for Practice**

The results of this study have practical implications for school district leaders, school district evaluators, principals, assistant principals, and teachers who are responsible for developing, implementing, maintaining, and monitoring the school district's teacher performance evaluation system to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement.

#### *Implication 1*

**Principals should continue to seek effective and meaningful ways to support, encourage, and motivate teachers through high-quality feedback.** Principal feedback is an essential component of the teacher evaluation process to improve teacher effectiveness and promote professional growth. In order for principals to provide the most meaningful and effective feedback to support, encourage, and motivate teachers, principals should engage in ways of determining what feedback is most effective in eliciting positive teacher responses to

promote teacher growth and improve student learning. Principals can better understand their teachers through frequent informal observations such as walkthroughs, collaboration, and conferences. Because of the value of providing high-quality feedback to teachers, principals should develop their feedback skills through activities such as participation in professional development trainings related to developing effective feedback skills, collaboration with other principals, or collaboration and discussions with teachers. This implication is associated with Finding One.

### *Implication 2*

**Principals should participate in professional development opportunities to enhance teacher performance evaluation skills as they relate to identifying and communicating teachers' strengths and weaknesses.** It is the principal's responsibility through the teacher performance evaluation process to observe teachers throughout the school year and identify and discuss noted strengths and weaknesses in order to promote teacher growth. Many principals lack the training and/or skills necessary to appropriately identify teacher strengths and weaknesses and then effectively communicate this information to the teacher. Additionally, principals frequently emphasize teacher strengths and provide little documentation or feedback on teacher weaknesses. In order for teachers to grow professionally and have a positive impact on student learning, principals should be skilled in conducting teacher observations to identify strengths and weaknesses and should also be proficient in conducting meaningful teacher conferences to discuss the strengths and weaknesses observed. Principals can acquire the necessary observation and conferencing skills through participation in meaningful professional development and training. This implication is associated with Finding Two.

### *Implication 3*

**Principals should dedicate specific blocks of time during the school day to conference and collaborate with teachers to follow-up on progress related to the feedback provided.** Principal conferencing with teachers is a key component of the teacher performance evaluation system to discuss instructional practices, share thoughts and ideas, and build trust. While principal conferences with teachers are typically focused around a formal classroom observation (pre-observation and post-observation) conducted at the end of the school year, having principals dedicate time throughout the year to conference with teachers would bring



additional non-evaluative opportunities to discuss what is going well, where there might be challenges, and any professional development teachers may need or may be seeking to improve effectiveness. Such conferences would allow the principal an opportunity not only to follow up on any feedback previously provided but also to provide guidance and support to the teacher. This implication is associated with Finding Four.

*Implication 4*

**School district leaders should provide ongoing professional development trainings for principals focusing on research-based instructional strategies and high-quality feedback to teachers.** In order for principals to become highly-effective in promoting teacher quality and student achievement in schools, it is important that the school district develop and support ongoing professional development activities for principals to build effective leadership skills that encourage the success of teachers, students, and the school. Professional development trainings planned and provided by the school district should include internal trainings as well as support for conferences or workshops that focus on identifying the most beneficial research-based instructional strategies for improving teacher skills and ways to relate the information to teachers through high-quality feedback. This implication is associated with Findings One, Two, Three, and Four.

*Implication 5*

**Principals should establish professional learning communities or pursue other avenues within the school to generate time specifically for teacher collaboration.** Teacher collaboration is crucial to improving teacher effectiveness and student learning. One avenue principals should consider for providing opportunities for teacher collaboration is through the development of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) where teachers work in teams either by grade level or by content area to share ideas and learn from each other to improve teacher effectiveness and student learning. The success of this type of collaboration requires initial and on-going principal and teacher support. Another avenue principals could explore to promote teacher collaboration is through the school schedule where common planning periods could be dedicated for teachers to plan and work together. This implication is associated with Finding Five.

### *Implication 6*

**Principals should review the teacher performance evaluation manual with teachers annually with particular emphasis on observation expectations and timelines.** Each school district in Virginia has a teacher performance evaluation system manual detailing the evaluation process and the timeline for completing all processes. Principals and teachers should be provided with a copy of the manual, with the principal reviewing the process and observation timeline as close to the beginning of the school year as possible. In order for principal feedback to be most effective, it should be focused, meaningful, and timely. When teachers do not receive timely feedback, it is difficult for them to adjust instructional practices or make changes based on the feedback provided. This implication is associated with Finding Six.

### *Implication 7*

**Principals should work with teachers to determine appropriate professional development opportunities for increasing teaching effectiveness and student achievement.** Professional development opportunities provide teachers with new skills and knowledge that can promote their teaching effectiveness and increase student learning and achievement. Professional development should be targeted to meet the specific needs of an individual teacher or to meet the needs of groups of teachers where improvement is necessary. In order to develop an appropriate professional development plan for teacher growth, the principal and teacher should work together to determine which activities would best meet the needs for instructional improvement. This implication is associated with Finding Seven.

### *Implication 8*

**School district leaders should consider expanding staff to include content coordinators, instructional coaches, or teacher leaders to assist principals and teachers with implementing effective research-based instructional strategies to increase student achievement.** While it is the principal's responsibility to serve as an instructional leader in the school, the benefits of providing content coordinators, instructional coaches, or teacher leaders to assist principals and teachers could provide an additional level of instructional support to help teachers focus on their teaching practices and skills. Expanding staff to include content coordinators, instructional coaches, or teacher leaders could provide the additional resources and

time necessary to help teachers improve instructionally and professionally to increase student achievement. This implication is associated with Findings Four and Seven.

### **Suggestions for Future Studies**

The limitations, findings, and implications of this research study suggest that there are several areas for future research. These areas include the following suggestions:

1. This study utilized a qualitative methodology. A mixed methods study would add more comprehensive data and more fully answer the research questions by yielding a deeper understanding of the participants' thoughts and experiences related to the usefulness of principals' feedback on instructional practices to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement.
2. Because this study included teacher perspectives only, a study to include principal interviews and their perspectives as well as teacher perspectives could provide greater insight to better understand the principals' perspectives on their feedback to teachers and its impact on teacher improvement and student learning.
3. Expanding this research to include either suburban or urban school districts to examine similarities and/or differences in the results based on teachers' perceptions of the principals' feedback as it relates to the impact on teacher improvement and student learning.
4. Expanding this research to include teachers with varying years of teaching experience from teachers new to the profession to the most veteran teachers within the school to compare and examine teachers' perceptions of the principals' feedback as it relates to the impact on teacher instruction and student learning.
5. Teachers in this study represented the secondary level of instruction. A study to include teachers on the primary and elementary levels of instruction would provide a broader perspective of teacher perceptions of principal feedback relating to instructional practices and student achievement.
6. The field could benefit from research on the importance and impact of collaboration among teachers as it relates to changes in instructional practices and results in increased student achievement.

## **Chapter Summary**

This study on examining teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of principal observation feedback and subsequent follow-up through the teacher evaluation process found that teachers perceived principal feedback through the evaluation process useful; however, teachers also perceived that there was minimal impact of principals' feedback on instructional changes leading to increased student achievement. The study further found that although teachers perceived positive principal feedback to be supportive, encouraging, motivational, and built confidence, teachers further perceived that principal feedback relating to weaknesses or recommendations for change was less prevalent and did not necessarily lead to instructional changes or changes in student achievement. As a result of these findings, it is possible that principal feedback to teachers is not sufficient alone for improving teachers' instructional skills. Other strategies such as increasing teacher collaboration opportunities and enhancing principal leadership skills could supplement the process and be more impactful in improving teacher quality resulting in student achievement gains.

## **Personal Reflections**

In reflecting on the dissertation process, I am absolutely astonished at the time, energy and commitment that has brought me to this point of near finishing. While the work and effort involved have been exciting and motivating, the process was at times frustrating, challenging, and overwhelming. Through all of this, however, I must say that what I have gained personally and as a researcher has made it all worthwhile.

From the beginning of the process, I contemplated many possibilities for my research study, all of which were based on my previous experiences working in a rural school district as either a teacher, a principal, or a Human Resource Director. The one topic that kept resurfacing was from my experience as an elementary school principal. From the beginning I was concerned about the role of principal feedback in helping teachers and students to become more successful. Given the intensity of writing a dissertation and the persistence required to complete the process, I am grateful that principal feedback and its impact on changes in teacher instruction and student achievement is the direction I chose. I do not believe I would have been able to persist in completing this dissertation without my passion for this topic.

There is much to be learned from the research process. I have a much deeper understanding of conducting research and have developed my skills as a scholarly writer. I have learned to be patient with myself when frustrations and unexpected obstacles delayed my research and writing progress. I have also learned that while there are committee members, cohort members, colleagues, family, and friends who were very supportive and helpful throughout this research process, the actual work is a lonely process where you must be prepared to serve as your own cheerleader to support and encourage your efforts along the way. I am grateful to have had the opportunity for this rewarding experience and hope that this research will contribute to the work of principals and teachers in their efforts to increase professional growth and student learning.

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**Appendix A**

**CITI Program Course Completion**

**Acknowledgement of Social and Behavioral Research Training**



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**Course Completion for Nan Alga**

Congratulations on your recent course completion!

Name: **Nan Alga (ID: 9762156)**  
Institution: **Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University (Virginia Tech) (ID: 1684)**  
Course: **Social & Behavioral Research**  
Stage: **1 - Basic Course**  
Completion Date: **15 Jan 2021**  
Expiration Date: **15 Jan 2024**  
Completion Record ID: **40374818**

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**Appendix B**  
**WIRB Approval Letter**



April 29, 2019

Carol S. Cash, BS, MS, EdS, EdD  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech)  
2810 N. Parham Road, Suite 300  
Richmond, VA 23294

Dear Dr. Cash:

**SUBJECT:** IRB EXEMPTION—REGULATORY OPINION  
Investigator: Carol S. Cash, BS, MS, EdS, EdD  
IRB No.: 19-269  
Protocol Title: The Teachers' Perception of the Usefulness of Principal Observation  
Feedback and Subsequent Follow-Up Through the Teacher Evaluation Process

This is in response to your request for an exempt status determination for the above-referenced protocol. Western Institutional Review Board's (WIRB's) IRB Affairs Department reviewed the study under the Common Rule and applicable guidance.

We believe the study is exempt under 45 CFR § 46.104(d)(1), because the research is conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings and the research involves normal educational practices that are not likely to adversely impact students' opportunity to learn required educational content or the assessment of educators who provide instruction.

This exemption determination can apply to multiple sites, but it does not apply to any institution that has an institutional policy of requiring an entity other than WIRB (such as an internal IRB) to make exemption determinations. WIRB cannot provide an exemption that overrides the jurisdiction of a local IRB or other institutional mechanism for determining exemptions. You are responsible for ensuring that each site to which this exemption applies can and will accept WIRB's exemption decision.

Please note that any future changes to the project may affect its exempt status, and you may want to contact WIRB about the effect these changes may have on the exemption status before implementing them. WIRB does not impose an expiration date on its IRB exemption determinations.

If you have any questions, or if we can be of further assistance, please contact Kelly FitzGerald, PhD, at 360-252-2578, or e-mail [RegulatoryAffairs@wirb.com](mailto:RegulatoryAffairs@wirb.com).

KAF:dj  
D1-Exemption-Cash (04-29-2019)  
cc: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech)  
Nan Alga, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech)  
WIRB Accounting  
WIRB Work Order #1-1179517-1

## **Appendix C**

### **Email Requesting Permission from School Superintendent**

Dear (Superintendent's Name):

I enjoyed talking with you last week and am excited about the possibility of completing part of my study with your school district. As I mentioned to you, I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program at Virginia Tech, working under the direction of Dr. Carol Cash.

My dissertation title is "The Teachers' Perception of the Usefulness of Principal Observation Feedback and Subsequent Follow-up Through the Teacher Evaluation Process." The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of principal feedback and follow up through the evaluation process based on teacher perceptions of the feedback and follow up provided. My proposed study is to interview four veteran teachers in your school division who currently teach in a fully-accredited school where the principal has been serving the school for at least the past three years. Data from this study could provide valuable information to administrators and teachers regarding the types of feedback and follow up teachers perceive as valuable in improving instructional strategies, encouraging professional growth, as well as increasing student achievement.

I would appreciate your school district's participation in the study. I anticipate that the total time commitment for each teacher would be about an hour. Additionally, I anticipate conducting the study during the months of June and July. Once the study is complete, I will be happy to provide a copy of the results to you upon request.

If you should have any questions, or if you should need any additional information regarding the study or procedures, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you, in advance, for your consideration of this proposed study. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Nan Alga

## Appendix D

### Email to Teacher Requesting Participation in the Study

Dear (Teacher's Name):

My name is Nan Alga, and I am a doctoral student in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Virginia Tech. Your school division superintendent has granted permission to conduct this research study in your school division. The focus of my dissertation study is teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of principal feedback and subsequent follow up through the teacher evaluation process.

As a part of my study, I am interviewing teachers to gather data on teacher perceptions relating to principal feedback and follow up through the evaluation process and what instructional changes or changes in student achievement may be a result of such feedback and follow up. The findings of this study are intended to benefit principals, teachers, and other educators in understanding the value of meaningful principal feedback in effecting change in teacher instructional practices and student achievement.

I would like to schedule a meeting for an interview with you to discuss your experiences and perceptions as they relate to principal feedback and follow up through the evaluation process. The interview consists of nine open-ended questions and should take less than one hour to complete. Please let me know what date and time you might be available during the weeks of June 17, 2019 or June 24, 2019 to meet. I am available to meet at any time that is convenient for you and can meet at any preferred location at your school where you are comfortable.

I have attached a copy of the Informed Consent Form for your review prior to our meeting. Before beginning the interview, I will be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding your consent. Once you have signed the Informed Consent Form, a copy will be provided to you, and we will begin the interview.

Please contact me via email at [nanaa5@vt.edu](mailto:nanaa5@vt.edu) or by phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx to let me know of your availability to meet and of any questions you may have. I am excited about this opportunity and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Nan Alga

Doctoral Candidate

Attachment: Informed Consent Form



**Appendix E**  
**Informed Consent Form**

**RESEARCH SUBJECT CONSENT FORM**

**Title:** The Teachers' Perception of the Usefulness of Principal Observation Feedback and Subsequent Follow-Up Through the Teacher Evaluation Process

**Protocol No.:** #19-269

**Sponsor:** Virginia Tech

**Investigator:** Dr. Carol S. Cash  
2810 N. Parham Road, Suite #300  
Richmond, Virginia 23294  
United States of America

**Daytime Phone Number:** 804-662-7288

**Co-Investigator** Nan A. Alga  
199 Crescent Lane  
Clarksville, Virginia 23927  
United States of America

**Daytime Phone Number:** 434-955-0782

**24-hour Phone Number:** Same as above

You are being invited to take part in a research study. A person who takes part in a research study is called a research subject, or research participant.

**What should I know about this research?**

Someone will explain this research to you.

This form sums up that explanation.

Taking part in this research is voluntary. Whether you take part is up to you.

You can choose not to take part. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You can agree to take part and later change your mind. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you don't understand, ask questions.

Ask all the questions you want before you decide.

### **Why is this research being done?**

The purpose of this research is to describe teacher perceptions regarding the usefulness of principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the teacher evaluation process in implementing instructional changes in the classroom and increasing student achievement. The study will result in an analysis of the means to improve teacher effectiveness, instructional quality, and student achievement through the principal's practice of providing meaningful feedback and follow-up through the teacher evaluation process. The findings of this study are intended to benefit principals, teachers, and other educators in understanding the value of meaningful principal feedback in effecting change in teacher instructional practices and student achievement.

About eight subjects will take part in this research.

### **How long will I be in this research?**

We expect that your taking part in this research will last 1-2 hours.

What happens to me if I agree to take part in this research?

You will be one of eight teachers (four from each of two rural K-12 public school divisions in south central Virginia) with five to twenty years of teaching experience in your school who has been summatively evaluated within the past two years to participate in this study. Each participant will be interviewed individually using open-ended interview questions to explore teacher perceptions regarding the usefulness of principal feedback and subsequent follow-up through the evaluation process. The interview will be scheduled at your convenience within a designated two-week period and conducted at your school in your classroom or in a location at your school where you are comfortable. The interview will be audio recorded and should last less than one hour. The interview audio recording will be transcribed into a word document for analysis using coding techniques. You will have an opportunity to review the transcribed word document for accuracy in its content. Once you have agreed to the content of the transcribed word document, the researcher will review all transcribed documents to identify common words and phrases used by participants in this study as they pertain to the research questions.

Before the interview begins, you will have an opportunity to ask questions regarding your consent to participate in this study. You will be asked to sign a consent form prior to engaging in the interview. Your participation in this research study is voluntary, and you may withdraw from participation at any time. To ensure confidentiality and to protect school and individual identities, pseudonyms will be assigned to the two school divisions and to all participants selected for this study. The names of the school divisions, schools or participants will not be published.

### **What are my responsibilities if I take part in this research?**

If you take part in this research, you will be responsible to:

- Respond to this initial email to schedule a mutually agreed-upon date, time, and place for a one-hour interview.

- Review this consent form
- Meet with the researcher to participate in the one-to-one interview
- Sign this consent form
- Inform the investigator if you choose to withdraw participation at any point in the study
- Review the transcribed word document of the interview conducted with you

**Could being in this research hurt me?**

Strict confidentiality will be maintained throughout this research study. Pseudonyms will be assigned to the school divisions and to each participant in this study to protect the anonymity of all. While there are no known immediate risks for you as a participant in this study, there may be unintended, but minimal, risks not yet identifiable.

**Will it cost me money to take part in this research?**

There is no cost to you for your participation in this research study.

**Will being in this research benefit me?**

We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits to you include the potential that your personal reflections through this research process may provide insight on your instructional practices and professional development leading to increased student achievement. Additionally, your perceptions and insights on principal feedback through the evaluation process may contribute to the improvement of principal practices regarding observation feedback and the teacher evaluation process.

**What other choices do I have besides taking part in this research?**

This research is not designed to diagnose, treat or prevent any disease. Your alternative is to not take part in the research.

**What happens to the information collected for this research?**

Your private information will be shared with individuals and organizations that conduct or watch over this research, including:

- Dr. Carol S. Cash
- Dr. William J. Glenn
- Dr. Ted S. Price
- Dr. Gerry R. Sokol
- The Institutional Review Board (IRB) that reviewed this research

We may publish the results of this research. However, we will keep your name and other identifying information confidential. A copy of the final dissertation is available to you upon request to the co-investigator listed above on the first page.

We protect your information from disclosure to others to the extent required by law. We cannot promise complete secrecy.

**Who can answer my questions about this research?**

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think this research has hurt you or made you sick, talk to the research team at the phone number listed above on the first page.

This research is being overseen by an Institutional Review Board (“IRB”). An IRB is a group of people who perform independent review of research studies. You may talk to them at (540) 231-3732 and irb@vt.edu, if:

- You have questions, concerns, or complaints that are not being answered by the research team.
- You are not getting answers from the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone else about the research.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.

**What if I am injured because of taking part in this research?**

If you are injured or get sick because of being in this research, call the investigator immediately at the phone number listed above on the first page. There is no compensation or payment of any charges if injury occurs due to participation in this research study.

**Can I be removed from this research without my approval?**

The person in charge of this research can remove you from this research without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include:

- It is in your best interest
- We will tell you about any new information that may affect your health, welfare, or choice to stay in this research.

**What happens if I agree to be in this research, but I change my mind later?**

If you decide to leave this research, contact the research team so that the investigator can:

- Remove your transcribed responses to the interview questions

**Will I be paid for taking part in this research?**

You will not be paid for taking part in this research.

**Statement of Consent:**

Your signature documents your consent to take part in this research.

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Signature of adult subject capable of consent

---

Date

---

Signature of person obtaining consent

---

Date

## **Appendix F**

### **Email to Teacher Requesting Member Check and Thank You for Participation**

Dear (Teacher Name):

Your interview with me has been transcribed and is attached. Please read over the document and let me know if you have any questions, comments, or concerns. It is possible that I may have missed something or transcribed something incorrectly. I would be very interested in your thoughts. If I do not hear from you before Wednesday, February 5, 2020, however, I will assume that the transcription is accurate and appropriately reflects your responses to the interview questions.

I am most grateful for your time and your willingness to be a part of my dissertation study. Again, many thanks.

With kind regards,

Nan

Attachment: Password Protected Interview Transcription