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TEACHER EVALUATION PRACTICES AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS:
EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR CHANGING INSTRUCTION

Scott M. Grens

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of

Doctor of Education

in the National College of Education at National Louis University

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Dissertation Hearing

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Approved:

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Chair, Dissertation Committee

_____
Member, Dissertation Committee

_____
Dean's Representative

_____
Director, EDL Doctoral Program

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Dean, National College of Education

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ABSTRACT

This study is a program evaluation of the effectiveness of teacher evaluation practices in a small suburban elementary school district in Illinois from 2017-2019. The primary research question explored in this program evaluation is whether and to what extent the teacher evaluation process is changing teacher practices in Washington School District 25. Employing a qualitative research methodology, with data gathered from teacher interviews, school administrator interviews, and document analysis, this study identified several key components to the improvement of instructional practices for teachers. Policy implications and recommendations highlight the importance of the following: a common instructional framework, staff involvement in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) aligned to the instructional framework, and multiple opportunities for meaningful feedback.

PREFACE

This program evaluation reinforced my belief in the importance of intentional alignment of school and district systems for professional learning. I also found overtime that changing teacher practice requires a balance of support and accountability with the establishment of a culture of learning for students and adults. To establish a culture of learning for all stakeholders across the organization, a common framework for learning is necessary alongside a system for intentional collaboration. When educators feel supported through meaningful relationships and learning opportunities with colleagues, a willingness to experiment with instructional practices in the framework emerges, leading to changes in teaching and improvements in student learning.

Although policies of various sizes and origins are responsible for creating the conditions for which educators are evaluated, leaders in schools and districts need to take initiative in identifying how practices and policies will be implemented. The procedures for implementation must place the needs of students and teachers first, allowing for everyone to work together to achieve a shared vision of excellent teaching. The teachers and school administrators participating in this program evaluation consistently worked to improve their practice as reflective practitioners, always seeking to grow and accomplish learning outcomes for students. Their willingness to share practices, struggles, and recommendations was inspiring and integral in arriving at best practices for schools, districts, and policy makers to consider when seeking to implement effective teacher evaluation practices that change teacher instruction and improve student learning.

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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

The goal of this program evaluation was to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher

evaluation practices in a small suburban elementary school district in Illinois. For the purpose of

protecting confidentiality, all participants and schools mentioned in this study have been

assigned pseudonyms. In 2010, the State of Illinois Governor, Patrick Quinn, signed the

Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) setting into action a change in the evaluation

requirements for both teachers and school leaders across Illinois (Growth Through Learning,

2012). The adaptation of this change, paired with a variety of past educator evaluation practices

across districts, stirred a series of reactions ranging from disagreement to agreement as educators

worked to develop evaluation systems that would accommodate new requirements focused on

the measurement of one new essential element - growth.

Located within the Village of Washington, Washington School District 25 (WSD 25), is

one district which navigated the outcomes of PERA and its requirement for the incorporation of

student growth. The Village of Washington is an ethnically diverse suburb located on 3-square

miles outside Chicago, Illinois. The village is comprised of a mix of residential, commercial and

light-manufacturing properties, with a population of approximately 12,590 reported in 2010

(United States Census Bureau). WSD 25 serves all the students seeking public education from

the village boundaries with an enrollment population of 1,236 students total. Within the district,

the racial and ethnic diversity of students belonging to a particular racial/ethnic group is as

follows according to the Illinois Report Card: White (51.9%), Black (1.8%), Hispanic (8%),

Asian (36.6%), and American Indian (0.5%).

Three schools comprise WSD 25, all of which are located on one campus: John

Elementary School (K-2nd Grade), Martha Elementary School (3rd-5th Grade), and George

Middle School (6th-8th Grade). As a school administrator, I served the stakeholders of Martha Elementary School as the principal from 2016-2019. At Washington School District 25, the stated mission is, "...to build a community of learning that inspires curiosity, compassion and actively engaged students striving for excellence."

To achieve this mission and adhere to the 2010 passing of PERA, WSD 25 assembled a committee of teachers, administrators, and faculty to begin planning for the necessary changes mandated by PERA, primarily the adoption of student growth metrics into the summative evaluations of all teachers. Years later, with changes fully implemented, the district has adapted summative teacher evaluations to include several new requirements and procedures starting with the year 2017. With student growth changes in place for new teacher evaluation policies, teacher evaluation practices continue to play a role in the teacher evaluation process at WSD 25. The primary research question explored in this program evaluation is whether and to what extent the teacher evaluation process is changing teacher practices in Washington School District 25?

Purpose

Kim Marshall (2013) states, "In most occupations, it goes without saying that supervision and evaluation are key levers for improving job performance...But does this model really work in schools?" (p. 19). In reviewing the effectiveness of teacher evaluation procedures at WSD 25, the essential purpose is to determine the effectiveness of teacher evaluation practices in changing teacher instruction. In analyzing the perspectives of school administrators regarding the teacher evaluation practices of the district, and the district-wide procedural forms and prompts used (known herein as the evaluation kit), analysis will explore the effectiveness of the evaluation kit and procedures taken by principals seeking to change teacher instruction. In analyzing the perspectives of teachers regarding teacher evaluation practices of the district, including the

district-wide evaluation kit, analysis will explore the effectiveness of the procedures and the process in producing change in the instruction of teachers.

The program evaluation outcomes will also provide awareness to the WSD 25 Board of Education, and the general public, of the resources and best practices available for districts to use if seeking to implement key strategies for teacher evaluators to utilize in their work of changing teacher instruction. Focus here will concentrate on the practices applied by school administrators in evaluating teachers in the small suburban Washington School District 25.

Rationale

As a school administrator myself, I have taken a winding path to the realization and acceptance of the belief that school principals must serve as the sole instructional leaders of the schools in which they serve. Along this journey, some of this unwillingness resulted from personal experiences in feeling the mounting non-instructional responsibilities placed on school leaders. Whether seeking to implement operational changes driven to best serve staff and students, or fostering improvements in school culture, the process of changing the student experience in school often seemed to require areas unrelated to learning and teaching. Adding complexity to this process of prioritizing responsibilities, there was always heavy weight felt by the presence of accountability.

Like a cloud over the principal, the accountability for leading change forward was demanding and often felt unacknowledging of the obstacles in the way of the principal which often slowed the process. For example, growing funding deficits paired with elongated remediation procedures, created timely and urgent priorities as a principal, making it difficult to find focus on instruction, let alone visit students and classrooms. However, over time and experiences, I found logistical opportunities to reprioritize what mattered most – learning. And,

in focusing on student and staff learning, the role of a principal as the instructional leader became increasingly clear, and necessary. As a result of focusing first on instruction, data and outcomes from learning emerged as key performance indicators for not only my work as a principal, but for the work of teachers serving students, as well.

The first question posed to teachers as part of the evaluation kit on the Post Observation Teacher Self-Reflection Form at WSD 25 reads, "In general, how successful was the lesson? Did the students learn what you intended them to learn?" This question, and others similar to it, steer the educator into opportunities for generalizing - versus the posing of data-driven questioning. A more specific example may prompt teachers to provide evidence of student learning, guiding educators to consider how data and evidence drive practice in our school? (Smith et al., 2015). The simple requirement of evidence in the latter questioning strategy drives the teacher to search for proof of learning, resulting in accountability for the learning. This program evaluation hopes to uncover similar opportunities and shifts possibly available to ensure maximized learning for both student and adults, as well as accountability for learning. As administrators face increased accountability nationwide, often with as much as half of many principals' annual performance ratings based on student or school growth, teacher support and accountability remain as opportunities for continuous improvement.

This need for teacher support and accountability also exists in WSD 25, specifically when determining the level of success from a specific lesson of teaching. The current generalizations elicited in the WSD 25 evaluation kit are increasingly complicated by the changing roles many administrators experience, such as the redefinition of principals from managers to that of instructional leaders of schools. With new demands placed on principals for teacher evaluation, atop the pre-existing operational responsibilities, principals must prioritize teacher evaluation to

ensure that it becomes the one major responsibility and area for focus. As Patton (2008)

describes, "What gets measured gets done," and to support principals seeking to change teacher

instruction and to support teachers in experiencing meaningful teacher evaluation processes,

school districts need strong, efficient, and worthwhile evaluation strategies to produce change in

the instruction of teachers (p. 171). The Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) of 2010

established a timeline of requirements for school districts in changing teacher evaluation

procedures, yet it did not provide areas for focus. The following concepts at WSD 25 will be

analyzed in this research:

- WSD 25 teacher evaluation practices: the school administrators' perceptions and
  strategies to create instructional changes in teaching using the WSD 25 teacher evaluation
  procedures and evaluation kit;

- WSD 25 teacher practices: the teachers' perceptions and strategies to change instruction
  using the WSD 25 teacher evaluation procedures and evaluation kit; and,

- WSD 25 teacher evaluation procedures and evaluation kit: analysis and observations of
  changes in instruction resulting from the WSD 25 teacher evaluation experience with the
  evaluation kit.

Goals

The main goal of evaluating the teacher evaluation practices in WSD 25 will be to focus

on the key concept of change to determine whether and to what extent teacher evaluation

practices change teacher instruction. Specifically, this research seeks to discover the following:

1. How school administrators perceive and use the existing teacher evaluation procedures
   and tools (e.g. WSD 25 evaluation kit) to change teacher instruction?

2. How teachers perceive and use the existing teacher evaluation procedures and tools (e.g. WSD 25 evaluation kit) to change instruction?

3. How teacher evaluation at WSD 25 is aligned to other school or district priorities, initiatives, goals, and plans?

Essential to this review is the final goal of identifying a playbook of effective, high-impact, and research-based teacher evaluation practices for schools and school districts to employ that will foster continuous improvement of teacher instruction.

Research Questions

In working to determine the correlation between teacher evaluation procedures in WSD 25 and changes to teacher instructional practices, this research specifically seeks to explore the following:

- Whether and to what extent teacher evaluation practices are providing motivational urgency for teachers to change instruction?

- Whether and to what extent teacher evaluation practices are providing support and accountability for teachers to change instruction?

- Whether and to what extent teacher evaluation practices, and the improvement of teacher instruction, are areas of focus, alignment, and/or priorities for the school(s) and district?

- Whether and to what extent school and district policy focus on teacher evaluation and the role of adult learning as it relates to improving student achievement?

SECTION TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In reviewing the effectiveness of teacher evaluation procedures to change teacher instruction, it is important to have a thorough understanding of the complexities involved in evaluating teachers. Specifically, a review of teacher evaluation also includes a review of both the theory and practice of evaluating instruction, including what is working and what is not working in the evaluation of teachers. The literature reviewed for this program evaluation was organized to provide a deep understanding of the larger context of evaluation with three major trends explored across literature: the intended uses of evaluation, the misuses of evaluation, and the promotion of teacher growth.

Intended Uses of Evaluation

Sources focusing on teacher evaluation are plentiful, addressing many of its intended uses and providing insight into what works in an effective educator evaluation system. The literature reviewed within this section surfaced the following three requirements as necessary elements of an effective evaluation system: feedback for learning, principal as instructional leader, and holistic alignment of evaluation to practice.

Maslow and Kelly (2012) review performance evaluation and its effect on teaching quality in their research titled, "Does Evaluation Advance Teaching Practice?" While the author's acknowledge the importance of teacher evaluation as an "important institutional feature," they also posit that "The effectiveness of teacher evaluation as a learning tool is shaped by the broader school context and culture and the extent to which school leaders approach evaluation as a meaningful tool for teacher and organizational learning" (Maslow et al., 2012, p. 600). This study examines many of the far-reaching school components that interact and impact evaluation, some more obvious to stakeholders than others, such as the time-consuming

limitations of evaluator responsibilities with unrelated items like school climate and student behavior responsibilities consuming principal time.

Feedback for Learning

By using a 2005 study of teacher evaluation in several high schools, Maslow et al. (2012) examine evaluation practices to focus on how the presence of feedback in teacher evaluation models and practices can impact teaching and learning (p. 601). The study "provides timely information on the limits and possibilities of evaluation as a tool to leverage meaningful improvements in teaching and learning at the high school level" (Maslow et al., 2012, p. 602). In the form of case studies, the following research questions form the foundation: "What role does teacher evaluation feedback play in advancing teacher quality among experienced teachers in diverse high schools?" and "In what ways are teacher evaluation data used to advance teaching quality at a systemic (organization-wide) level as well as an individual teacher level?" (Maslow et al., 2012, p. 606).

Interviews were conducted to gather qualitative data from teachers, "administrators (evaluators), and department chairs in four large diverse high schools in the Midwest" (Maslow et al., 2012, p. 606). The teachers were asked what types of feedback they receive about their teaching from a variety of sources, including evaluation, and what feedback they have used to inform their professional learning. The evaluators were asked to provide specific information about the type of feedback they provided. In addition, data was collected from evaluators and department chairs on evaluation rotation schedules, assignment of evaluators to particular teachers, and the use of evaluation feedback at the individual teacher, department, and school levels.

The main findings indicate that, "Together, both formative evaluation and summative evaluation become important resources when determining the professional development needs of teachers" (Maslow et al., 2012, p. 603). However, trends emerged indicating requests for formative feedback to take place more frequently, and for the feedback to become more of a focus for teacher evaluations by administrators (evaluators/supervisors). Additionally, feedback from teachers revealed many of the constraints facing principals in the large high schools, such as discipline requirements with students, stating in one case for example that, "much of administrators' time was spent trying to maintain adult control of the schools. Thus, teachers at these schools reported that evaluations did not occur regularly as prescribed in evaluation policy" (Maslow et al., 2012, p. 616). The authors expressed concerns for the potential of teacher evaluation to always lack fidelity and failed potential if the time-consuming responsibilities (e.g. discipline) are not reallocated or removed from principal (evaluator) duties.

Other conclusions from this case study research included alternative approaches for evaluation, as shared by stakeholders participating in the interview process. The importance of this feedback is that it provides input aligned to learning tools, which are a key component of the theoretical framework for this study. For example, interviewees shared that "evaluation and feedback can encourage collaboration and promote learning for some motivated teachers" (Maslow et al., 2012, p. 628). This input advocated for peer learning in what was described as transformational learning in creating a "strong collaborative school culture with a shared vision of high levels of learning for all students…to promote teacher learning" (Maslow et al., 2012, p. 628). Interview findings also concluded that schools need, "a shared belief that effective teaching can produce high levels of learning for all students, a collaborative professional environment that promotes conversations about teaching and learning, and a safe and orderly school environment

so that adults can focus on improving teaching and learning rather than being overwhelmed by student safety and discipline issues" (Maslow et al., 2012, p. 628). These elements for successful teacher evaluation provide attention to the complexity of this topic and the varying perceptions of what is needed for successful evaluation to occur.

This study also emphasizes that "evaluation can also provide an important source of formative feedback to individual teachers and data to inform school leaders about systemic learning needs. This information can be used to develop and focus professional learning opportunities for all teachers" (Maslow et al., 2012, p. 629). Elements of collaboration, professional learning communities, and other learning tools are considered with implications for possible policy adjustments, stating the following:

> In some cases, districts have rewritten policies to create an alternative to teacher evaluation. One prominent policy is peer assistance and review, which utilizes veteran teachers as coaches/evaluators and is a more recent alternative that works to address teacher isolation and potential conflict between management and worker." (Maslow et al., 2012, p. 603)

The dichotomy of this hierarchical evaluation structure, and the implications it may have for principals as instructional leaders, is also explored in greater depth by Derrington's 2013 study, "Metaphors and Meaning: Principals' Perceptions of Teacher Evaluation Implementation."

Principal as Instructional Leader

This unique study examined "principals' use of metaphors and added to previous research by applying the concept of metaphor use to describing the implementation of a significantly changed teacher evaluation system in a Southeastern Race to the Top state" (Derrington, 2013, p. 22). At the crux of this study is the belief that metaphors function as a form of expressing

meaning and can serve to highlight feelings and sentiment on the purpose of evaluation. Specifically, the research practice of coding allowed for categorizing perspectives of principals and the development of themes regarding possible necessary next steps for principals in effectively evaluating teachers.

The researcher contacted participants (principals) from suburban and rural schools, and "The interview questions were constructed with the study's research questions in mind and were based on current literature" (Derrington, 2013, p. 24). In the interview process, the research sought to explore metaphors principals would use to conceptualize, or make sense of teacher evaluation implementation, as well as the principals' perceptions of teacher evaluation implementation. The metaphors shared by principals were "multiple and included themes related to bodies of water, means of transportation, religion, and medicine" (Derrington, 2013, p. 24).

By categorizing and coding metaphors, Derrington concluded that principals need training and information regarding teacher evaluation execution to competently teach the necessary concepts and explain the process to teachers. Also, the research suggests that principals view the staff development role as an important component of instructional leadership. Yet, given time constraints in the actual rollout of the teacher evaluation model, "principals felt they were only one-step ahead of teachers and could not answer questions to fulfill the instructional leader role" (Derrington, 2013, p. 24). Again, the competing roles and responsibilities required of principals emerge as barriers to the intended uses of educator evaluation with principals viewed as instructional leaders, but realistically incapable of fulfilling the role. To further explore the role of principals as instructional leaders it is helpful to review the work of Danielson and McGreal in *Teacher Evaluation to Enhance Professional Practice* (2000).

Danielson et al. (2000) emphasize that principals (and teacher evaluators) must be trained to recognize criteria in action, interpret the evidence gathered against the criteria, and make a judgment about the teacher's performance aligned to consistent levels of performance used across the school and district. These responsibilities demand skills from evaluators, as well as teachers, that many evaluators and teachers may not initially possess – including principals. Danielson et al. (2000) highlight the necessary procedural elements of evaluation in the following:

> Evaluation processes must allow for evaluators to make reasonable judgments regarding the quality of teaching; and schools and districts must include procedures to offer intensive assistance, if needed, to teachers who are struggling to perform adequately. And, if performance is not at least minimally acceptable, after schools and districts have provided assistance and have followed all the requirements of due process, schools must devise manageable procedures for termination. (p. 22)

Yet, before remediation of an educator can even be broached, reliability must exist in the competence of the principal as an evaluator with expectations and supports made extremely clear and available for all constituents involved in the evaluation process. To assist in establishing, vocalizing, and supporting expectations, Danielson et al. (2000) recommend "a clear and coherent definition of exemplary practice" which extends beyond the walls of the classroom to include the many facets of a teacher's responsibilities (p. 21).

Holistic Alignment of Evaluation to Practice

A strong definition of exemplary practice includes all the other important aspects of teaching outside the classroom, which can be varied and different from grade to grade, as well as school to school. Additionally, "To ensure teaching quality, schools and districts must base the

evaluative criteria on recent research on teaching and learning" (Danielson et al., 2000, p. 22). Danielson et al. (2000) refer to quality assurance to summarize this focus on strong criteria and a review of instructional outcomes. And, quality assurance - as described by Danielson et. al (2000) - must be merged with professional learning (available in a variety of formats). For example, "By requiring self-assessment, working in teams on a focus area, and reflecting on one's practice through portfolio exercise," evaluative sessions can promote adult learning and growth (Danielson et al., 2000, p. 30). Here in the recommendations of Danielson et al. a shift in evaluation responsibilities emerges with responsibilities placed not just on the evaluator, but also on the teacher, as criteria provide more explanation of what is expected of educators, including outcomes for any failure to meet expectations.

The work of Linda Darling-Hammond continues to explore the role of educators in their own evaluation with the 2013 text, *Getting Teacher Evaluation Right: What Really Matters for Effectiveness and Improvement.* What really matters, according to Darling-Hammond, is a teacher evaluation system that is "connected to-not isolated from-preparation and induction, daily practice, and a productive instructional context" (Darling-Hammond, 2013, p. 7). This holistic framework reflects the recommendations and suggestions of Danielson et. al (2000) to ensure that teaching, evaluation, and learning (by both students and adults) are all connected with not only expectations, but a fully defined support system for teachers to experiment with and improve in their instructional practices. Only with well-defined supports can schools and districts discuss the removal of teachers as the necessary step in relevant circumstances, yet the "system must allow for the fair and timely removal of teachers who do not improve with feedback and assistance" (Darling-Hammond, 2013, p. 8). If the feedback and assistance is lacking from an evaluator, the step of removal gains scrutiny and a lack of justification, which can negatively

impact the effectiveness of future evaluations due to elements of fear and mistrust seeping into the relationships between educators and evaluators. This relationship, and the dichotomy of complex responsibilities emerge again as areas of necessary focus for schools and systems to review in order to assess if the current evaluation system is meeting its intended uses, or if it is being misused.

Misuses of Evaluation

Sources related to misuses of evaluation addressed several of the missed opportunities and incorrect procedures in practice with teacher evaluation systems. The literature reviewed within this section surfaced the following three themes that often exist in ineffective evaluation systems: inauthentic conventions, isolated evaluator responsibilities, and bureaucratic barriers.

Inauthentic Conventions

In Kim Marshall's 2000 text, *Rethinking Teacher Supervision and Evaluation*, he bluntly describes both the practical and theoretical misuses of evaluation, addressing how awry the procedures for evaluation have become in most school settings today:

> To get a true picture of a lesson, an observer needs to walk around, see what students are being asked to do, look at their work, perhaps chat with a student or two, and carefully observe the subtle interpersonal teacher-student and student-student dynamics….it's impossible…sitting at a desk and writing or typing on a laptop. (p. 26)

In what Marshall describes as the dog-and-pony show, the author outlines how ineffective announced and planned teacher visits are, as he feels the process inevitably leads to inauthentic snapshots of teaching. Instead, Marshall advocates for a more unannounced, frequent mini-observation cycle that is both casual and direct with feedback provided in bite-sized increments for the teacher. Marshall likens this process to that of a restaurant in that "Restaurants

get regular visits from Board of Health inspectors, and a restaurant critic might also drop in any time and write a make-or-break review. What if restaurant owners know when these high-stakes visitors were going to arrive?" (Marshall, 2000, p. 24).

Likely greeted with reluctance at first thought from teachers, Marshalls' unannounced structure is emphasized to address the misuse of conventional evaluation structures, which Marshall characterizes as inauthentic and one-sided with the evaluator taking the lead in delivering both the reflection and the evaluation. "Teachers, like workers in other occupations, often feel demeaned by the paternalistic, distrustful dynamic at work in conventional evaluation, as contrasted to an approach that aims to foster employee involvement in improving results" (Marshall, 2000, p. 32). Marshall criticizes this evaluation model as a missed opportunity for observation of genuine teaching with limited focus on learning – learning for both the students and the adult.

Marshall argues, "because evaluation doesn't focus on student learning, principals are rarely able to help teachers emerge from their classroom isolation and reflect with colleagues on what needs to change so more students succeed" (Marshall, 2000, p. 36-37). Danielson et al. (2000) affirms the hierarchical challenges mentioned by Marshall that appear in most of the predominant evaluation procedures in stating that "Most evaluation systems are characterized by top-down communication, in which the only evidence of teacher performance is that collected by an administrator….the teacher's role is essentially passive; thus the teachers don't do anything" (p. 5). Given the one-sided design of these evaluation procedures, practitioner knowledge and expertise may not even be considered, widening the impact gap between evaluation and any helpful change in teacher practice.

Isolated Evaluator Responsibilities

The distance between evaluation and changes in teaching resulting from evaluation increases when teaching expertise is taken into consideration. Given the complexities of content demands, and the far-reaching differences in developmentally appropriate practices across grades in a school and district, "Teachers may well be more knowledgeable in these matters than the administrator who evaluates their performance; this fact undermines the evaluation process, contributing to the perception that it has little value" (Danielson et al., 2000, p. 6). Yet, procedures for distributive leadership in the evaluation process do exist in several formats. For example, the elements of collaboration and frequent classroom visits are blended in the 2016 research of Garza et al. titled "Aspiring School Leaders' Perceptions of the Walkthrough Observations." This study centers its research, findings, and conclusions on the educational leadership practice of walkthroughs, whereby principals and other teacher observers/evaluators in leadership conduct classroom observations.

The main findings included a blended definition of walkthroughs by the participants, with some considering the practice as "informal observations, pop-ins, walk-ins, or drop-ins" (Garza et al., 2016, p. 2). With these varying names for walkthroughs aside, the results of survey respondents shed light on two different approaches to walkthrough observation practices, titled in the article as "The Bureaucratic Approach" and the "The Collaborative Approach" (Garza et al., 2016, p. 7). The bureaucratic approach was generally described as classroom observations in which authority supervisors provided unannounced visits for short durations of time by "evaluating what was observed and providing critical and/or constructive feedback to the teacher being observed" (Garza et al., 2016, p. 7). "In contrast with the Bureaucratic Approach, a collaborative approach includes distributed power reflected through active engagement of shared

responsibility and accountability among team members" (Garza et al., 2016, p. 9). This approach can include other participants such as teachers and colleagues working together to improve teaching with feedback to the teacher and for the school as a whole.

As a result of this study, findings showed that a Bureaucratic Approach involved a "one-way transmission of feedback from the principal to the observed teacher" with some benefits acknowledged by participants (Garza et al., 2016, p. 1). The opposite approach, the Collaborative Approach, was summarized as a more active practice due to the shared participation in gathering data. For Bureaucratic Approaches, major conclusions indicate that for those observed, "it appears that the purpose, process, and scope of a walkthrough observation through clear and consistent communication is necessary to realize its potential as a way to enhance instruction and influence student learning and success" (Garza et al., 2016, p. 7). These same elements also applied to the Collaborative Approach, although it remained a more acceptable practice if data would not be immediately shared with the teacher, given the multiple stakeholders involved and the often school-wide use of the data gathered. This study shares analytical perspective into the specific teacher evaluator practice of the walkthrough, weighing the opportunities and costs to using this practice as one approach that can be used as intended or misused.

Even more insightful, is the study's recommendation of what should be used for effective evaluation, stating concisely and with the support of respondent's feedback, that feedback is valuable given that "the end result is to gather evidence of teaching and student learning to inform and improve instructional practice through constructive feedback" (Garza et al., 2016, p. 11). Yet, this model is not adopted in most schools and instead the "Many evaluation systems in use today were developed in the early to mid-1970s and reflect what educators believed about teaching at that time. Current systems rely heavily on the documentation of a small number of

observable behaviors" (Danielson et al., 2000, p. 3). Yet, with research and models existing to

support some change in evaluation procedures to improve practice and student learning,

"Discussion about ways to improve the quality of the teaching performance is very often left out

of the follow-up conversation, if there is one" (Darling-Hammond, 2013, p. 4). Kim Marshall

(2000) asserts that, "human failings, bureaucracy, interpersonal dynamics, and politics all

conspire to prevent things from working the way they should" (p. 21).

Bureaucratic Barriers

Bureaucratic barriers also echo throughout literature on the topic of educator evaluation

systems, drawing attention to the systemic nature of misuses in evaluation. For example, the

2016 research by Downing focuses on teacher job satisfaction in Ohio, specifically focusing on

the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES), with the purpose of reviewing the impact of

increased accountability that the evaluation system may have on teacher job satisfaction.

Downing reveals that supervision and satisfaction were found to have a direct relationship with

impressions of the evaluation model. In particular, "Supervision turned out to have the strongest

relationship" with the evaluation system while responsibility, security, and recognition were

identified as having a weak-to-no relationship with the evaluation model (Downing, 2016, p. 90).

This research shares how elements of supervision outweigh elements of learning when an

evaluation system focuses overwhelmingly on procedural efficiencies, versus intentional

opportunities for learning by adults.

Darling-Hammond (2013) shares how evaluation is misused due to barriers in stating the

following:

Evaluation procedures are typically determined by contract rules and seniority (with

greater frequency for novices) rather than by teacher needs. There is little consideration

of which teachers could benefit from being evaluated, how often, in what manner, and by whom. (p. 5)

Complicating these larger contractual elements are the educators' own perceptions of the evaluation process as it relates to their growth and achievement in the career. The 2008 research of Duffet et al. refers to evaluation as a formality in the teacher workplace with almost 7 in 10 teachers expressing how the achievement of tenure status for teachers is not an accurate reflection of the teachers' effectiveness. Given these obstacles, Darling-Hammond (2013) elaborates on the importance of building the larger culture of learning in a school and district setting by competing with the existing barriers. She stresses that schools should "not adopt an individualistic, competitive approach to ranking and sorting that undermines the growth of learning communities which will, at the end of the day, do more to support student achievement than dozens of the most elaborate ranking schemes" (Darling-Hammond, 2013, p. 3). Instead, the focus must be on helping "teachers access professional development to address their unique learning needs" (Darling-Hammond, 2013, p. 5).

Promotion of Teacher Growth

Within the literature reviewed, the trend related to the promotion of growth emerged with several elements for focus. Examples and sources related to this trend identified the following elements in practice across leadership, schools, and districts as they relate to teacher growth: principal instructional leaders, collaborative learning approaches, and criteria for exemplary practice.

Principal Instructional Leaders

The Mette at al. (2015) study on "Teachers' Perceptions of Teacher Supervision and Evaluation" includes a belief that principals are the main instructional leaders of schools, which

the study argues will then lead to a necessary change in principal practices. The theory behind

principals as instructional leaders can be filtered through three practices: formative supervision,

summative evaluation, and professional development. By supervising teaching, the study

suggests, principals then become leaders of instructional excellence with possible role changes

resulting. Within this study, the researchers sought to arrive at "lessons learned" from teacher

input to help provide practical ideas and suggestions for effective teacher supervision (Mette et

al., 2015, p. 17). More precisely, "This quantitative study was conducted to understand teachers'

views about teacher supervision in eight high performing elementary schools, including how

supervision practices supported high performance and thus might better inform school reform

efforts and policy decisions" (Mette et al., 2015, p. 24).

Collaboration arose as an important finding and idea explored by teachers in their

responses to the surveys, with school reform becoming a joint responsibility between teacher and

principal. (Mette et al., 2015, p. 16). Within this sphere of collaboration, the following three

main findings capture overall teacher perceptions:

> 1) teachers believed that all pre-observation and post-observation conference items were
> important but agreed most that principals discussed student assessment within the pre-
> observation conference and identified teacher performance strengths of the extended
> observation within the post- observation conference; 2) results of regression analyses
> suggested teachers attributed one variable as the most important predictor of teachers'
> rating principals' supervisory effectiveness in helping improve teacher instruction,
> namely discussions about student engagement during the pre-observation conference; and
> 3) results of regression analyses suggested teachers attributed one item as the most
> important predictor of principals' supervisory effectiveness in helping improve teacher

instruction, which included discussions surrounding capacity building to cause teachers to self-reflect during the post-observation conference." (Mette et al., 2015, p. 24)

As a main conclusion, Mette et al. reiterated the belief in teacher supervision as the lever to change and improve education with the support of practices in supervision and resources for staff (Mette et al., 2015, p. 16). Within this overarching conclusion were two criteria for improving education through supervision with the first involving school districts, stating "In order to provide better instructional environments for students, however, schools must be supported by school districts to not succumb to managerial reform efforts" (Mette et al., 2015, p. 26). With acknowledgement given to the variables and inconsistencies principals interact with in supervision procedures, district support was described as necessary.

The second criteria for success involves a refocusing of the principal so that instruction is front and center in the list of responsibilities, asserting the following:

> By viewing their principals as an instructional facilitator targeting student engagement, teachers from high achieving schools shared their perceptions of their principals who value a focus on self-reflection of instruction in order to help meet the individual needs of students. (Mette et al., 2015, pp. 25-26)

Yet, this practice is much easier said than done as "In many schools, especially larger ones and under-resourced schools serving high-needs populations, principals have little time or training for evaluation, and even less for teacher support" (Darling-Hammond, 2013, p. 4). Therefore, the system will only work if it is also rooted in a collaborative approach to adult learning.

Collaborative Learning Approaches

In *Leading Adult Learning,* the work of Eleanor Drago-Severson (2009) begins to paint a learning-oriented picture of high-functioning school learning communities in which all adults are

collaborating in learning activities (regardless of role), including principals, superintendents, and teachers. Drago-Severson gives credit to Andy Hargreaves and Richard Elmore for their use of words like "integrity, equity, innovation, and interdependence to describe staff development at its best" (Drago-Severson, 2009, pp. 21-22). On a practical level, Drago-Severson's years of research provide direction and a "need to differentiate the kinds of leadership we provide according to the different needs of the adults with whom we are working, just as we do for young learners" (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 24). At the center of this prescribed model by Drago-Severson, is the concept of the Four Pillar Practices for Growth, which exemplify collaborative adult learning opportunities for schools and districts to adapt.

Teaming is summarized as an opportunity for adults to "question their own and other people's philosophies and assumptions about leadership, teaching, and learning. It provides a context in which adults can examine and question their assumptions and beliefs about the ways they implement a school's core values" (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 25). Leadership roles for adults is the second pillar practice, which includes any "opportunity to raise not only one's own consciousness but also a groups consciousness with respect to the ideas, perspectives, and assumptions we bring to our practice" (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 25). Collegial inquiry is defined by reflection, specifically to share "dialogue that involves reflecting on one's assumptions, values, commitments, and convictions with others as part of the learning process" (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 26). The fourth and final pillar practice to promote teacher growth is mentoring, which "takes many forms, including pairing experienced teachers with new teachers or university interns, pairing teachers who have deep knowledge of the school mission with other teachers, pairing new and experienced principals, and group mentoring" (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 26).

Within this foundation of pillars for teacher (and school leader) growth, as recommended by Drago-Severson, is an understanding that flexibility will be needed for the adult learning opportunities to succeed. This belief is rooted in the constructive-developmental theory that informs the thinking and research of Drago-Severson (2012) in advocating for schools and districts to understand "adults' differing ways of knowing (that is, the ways we interpret and respond to the world around us)" (p. 19). Danielson et al. (2000) also advocate for a collaborative nature in successful observations and evaluation models by pointing out that "Some newly developed evaluation systems require that teachers conduct a self-assessment, establish professional growth goals, and participate in a study group with colleagues to pursue a topic of common interest" (p. 30). Central to the success of these collaborative learning approaches, is a shared understanding of the criteria for exemplary practice, or a common vision of what effective teaching and learning looks like to all educators.

Criteria for Exemplary Practice

In "The Relationship between Growth Scores and the Overall Observation Ratings for Teachers in a Public School System in Tennessee," Davis, Lampley, and Foley analyze the teacher evaluation systems in Northeast Tennessee, with a focus on the framework of value-added systems for teacher evaluation. Following the 2009 American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA), the state of Tennessee reformed teacher evaluation to include an overall "effectiveness rating," based upon observation ratings (referred to as TEAM), student effect data from state assessments (referred to as TCAP), and student growth data (referred to as the Tennessee-Added Assessment System or TVAAS) (Davis et al., 2016, p. 45). This study was designed to determine a "relationship between the TVAAS growth score given by the Tennessee

Department of education and the overall TEAM observation rating for teachers given by system administrators in grades 3 through 8 in a Tennessee school system" (Davis et al., 2016, p. 46).

The results of this study show a moderate positive relationship between a teacher's TEAM observation score (the observational practice rating) and the TVAAS growth score given by the Tennessee Department of Education (the assessment growth score). More specifically, this study identified administrators with more experience appearing to award higher observation scores than peers, in which years of experience included the following four levels: 0-1 year of experience, 2 to 4 years of experience, 5 to 10 years of experience, and 11 or more years of experience (Davis et al., 2016, pp. 47-49). With no shared criteria for exemplary practice in place, evaluators begin to drift in their evaluations with no calibration and consistency in existence.

Darling-Hammond (2013) highlights one possible cause for inconsistent evaluations, such as these, because the standards statements that "attempt to guide teaching practice often list the elements of effective teaching but fail to elaborate what constitutes evidence of these, thus hampering accurate, fair, and reliable assessment of a teacher's work, and clarity about how to improve" (Darling-Hammond, 2013, p. 4). Or, as Danielson states "We don't have, in other words, the equivalent of the "anchor papers" or "benchmarks" used in evaluating student work against rubrics" (Danielson et al., 2000, p. 4). Therefore, if a common understanding of exemplary practice is absent, the process of identifying effective teaching after a lesson will become more and more arduous as varying interpretations by both the evaluator and the teacher produce varying evaluations.

Conclusion

The study "Shifting Practices in Teacher Performance Evaluation: A Qualitative Examination of Administrator Change Readiness" analyzes additional teacher perspectives regarding a shift in teacher evaluation procedures in Illinois through the theoretical framework of change readiness. More specifically, this study looks at the "perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of administrators and teachers in one school district located in Southwestern Illinois related to the recent reforms in teacher performance evaluation and the extent to which their district and schools are prepared for them" (Spina et al., 2014, p. 114). The element of change was emphasized most for the following reason: "In order for school leaders to transform their environment and lead their schools through this transition successfully, they must understand organizational change and the dynamics of the change process" (Spina et al., 2014, p. 114).

One of the main findings that emerged was a shared need expressed by interviewees for an updated teacher evaluation approach; however, respondents shared that the need was felt as more pressing for education in general, and not just the respondents' district (Spina et al., 2014, p. 119). The responses of the participants share the following perceived advantages of a change in the teacher evaluation procedure: decreased emphasis on teacher tenure; decreased accountability for student growth; focus on professional growth and improved instruction; more objectivity on the part of evaluators; and, emphasis on Data-driven Decisions (Spina et al., 2014, pp. 120-122). In addition to these advantages, the following barriers were shared: trust, unions, lack of teacher training, apprehension about including student achievement, and time-intensive procedures for evaluators (Spina et al., 2014, pp. 122-124).

In this case, which is similar in geography and demographics to Washington School District 25, acknowledgement of a need to change exists alongside elements of denial, in that

claims are made throughout the research that the need to change does not apply to the home school district. Internationally, we see a different, paradoxical scenario in the form of Finland, a country that has been frequently referred as an "exemplar of school improvement since it rapidly climbed to the top of the international rankings….the entire system is intended to improve through continual reflection, evaluation, and problem solving, at the level of the classroom, school, municipality, and nation" (Darling-Hammond, 2013, pp. 9-10). Finland is systematically building an intentional learning culture through reflective practice and a focus on continuous improvement and change – highlighting the importance of a holistic prioritization of a shard professional learning culture, one in which it is each staff member's responsibility to grow and change.

This analysis of literature sought to review the effectiveness of teacher evaluation procedures to change teacher instruction, and one realization from this review was that in order for a school or district to grow, there must be a willingness to change; the denial of any personal or local need to change runs contrary to the key element of growth (and change) that now exists in teacher evaluations. Further, if an organization refuses any personal need to change, the work of continuously improving professional learning and school improvement will be even more difficult, and possibly non-existent. One solution to move beyond the inauthenticity, isolation, and bureaucracy existing in some school and district evaluation models is the development of a comprehensive, aligned, and systematic approach to evaluating and supporting teaching.

In order to improve teaching, Darling-Hammond (2013) synthesizes and advocates for the following necessary elements: common, shared statewide standards for teaching; performance-based assessments based on the standards (and used to guide state functions, such as licensure and advanced certification); evaluation systems aligned to the state standards;

support structures for evaluators and mentors; and, professional learning opportunities with

alignment to teaching and learning. These elements from Darling-Hammond serve to summarize

the various literature review findings herein and identify what it takes to promote teacher growth,

which involves the work of making changes to instruction and improvements in student learning.

More specifically, the advocacy by Darling-Hammond (2103) for common standards for

teaching, aligned evaluation systems, and professional learning also provide areas for continued

focus and analysis across the qualitative research of this study.

SECTION THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Design Overview

In this research design, Patton's 2008 *Utilization-Focused Evaluation* served as the method and inquiry framework for a qualitative research methodology evaluating the effectiveness of teacher evaluation practices in Washington School District 25. The research was conducted at three elementary schools to determine the effect of teacher evaluation practices in changing teacher practice. Patton (2008), states, "those who become involved in an evaluation learn by doing" (p. 153); and, in alignment to Patton's claim that sheer involvement in evaluation can have an impact, this program review evaluated the correlation between effective teacher evaluation strategies and the likelihood of teachers to change instruction according to data gathered. As a qualitative study, "there is rather a continual back-and-forth process between observation and interaction, description and interpretation, conceptualizing and theorizing" that occurred throughout the research, especially involving the interview side of the data-gathering process (Kvale, 1994, pp. 160-161).

Data was gathered from principal and teacher interviews to explore whether and to what extent teachers benefitted from evaluation as a catalyst for changing teacher practice; or, as Patton (2008) describes, whether and to what extent teachers learned "not just from the findings but from going through the thinking process that the evaluation required" (p. 155). In order to achieve this understanding of the impact of teacher evaluation practices, data from school administrator and teacher interviews (along with analysis of the teacher evaluation tools) provided a framework for analysis to determine the success of the existing teacher evaluation practices in producing change. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded for themes. This feedback data also explored whether and to what extent the evaluation procedures were

"mainstreamed," or aligned to other school or district priorities, initiatives, goals, and plans (Patton, 2008, p. 157). By evaluating the evaluation kit, the set of documents and procedures used by principals in WSD 25 to evaluate teachers, the formal structure of teacher evaluation conferences was also reviewed, which included various components of the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Participants

Through purposeful sampling as prescribed by Patton (2008), specific criteria were developed to identify teacher participants. Whereas the three participating school administrators (principal, principal, and assistant principal) were selected as the only three school leaders in the district of three schools, excluding myself. While not a participating interviewee in the interview process, my role as a sitting principal in the district is important to highlight, given the potential for limitations in the responses from colleagues. As colleagues, the school leaders were reminded of anonymity and freedom to speak on topics at will. Two of the six teachers interviewed as teachers in the school in which I served as principal were also implored to speak freely and openly with anonymity. Frequent reminders were provided of the phrase here from the Interview Informed Consent located in Appendix A: "I understand that my identity will be kept confidential by the researcher and will not be attached to the data." Regardless of outcomes, the potential for implications due to my role as an employee in the district is warranted and deserving of consideration in this study.

These three separate school administrators identified two teachers each, for a total of 6 teachers, whom function as the teacher interview participants. Each teacher was selected with consideration for criterion sampling based on Patton (1990) stating that "The logic of criterion sampling is to review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance"

(p. 176). In this study, this meant the requirement of having achieved the following criteria

before the interview(s): tenure status, previous summative rating of excellent, and a rating of

excellent on Component 4a. (Reflecting on Teaching) from the Charlotte Danielson Framework

for Teaching. These criteria were selected to ensure participants would support the following

ethical considerations when sharing data on the evaluation practices of school administrators:

honesty, reflection, and safety. To support the possible elements of fear and concern of those

school administrators and teachers involved, pseudonyms and anonymity have been used and

honored to protect any data.

<div align="center">**Data Gathering Techniques**</div>

The data gathered in this research highlighted teacher evaluation success stories,

moments when evaluation awareness led to adult learning and a change in practice. These

examples aligned to Patton's research and advocacy for data collection as an ongoing initiative

with "staff and participants (knowing) what is being evaluated and…the criteria for judging

success" (Patton, 2008, p. 171). The primary data was gathered from the following techniques:

one-on-one interviews with six teachers and three school administrators; and, document analysis

of the procedures and forms comprising the WSD 25 evaluation kit.

In data-gathering for the interview process, the twenty questions (ten for teachers and ten

for school administrators) located in Appendix C were utilized for purposes of consistency and

reliability, as "A measure is reliable to the extent that essentially the same results can be

reproduced repeatedly, as long as the situation does not change" (Patton, 2008, p. 402). For all

interviewed participants, the interviews were conducted on-site inside the teacher or school

administrator workplace either before, during, or after school. The interviews conducted spanned

approximately 45-60 minutes. The interview participants included approximately nine (9) staff

members comprised of the following: two (2) primary grade teachers, two (2) intermediate grade teachers, two (2) middle school teachers, and three (3) school administrators.

Each of the interview participants expressed written willingness to participate and received an informed consent form along with confirmation of the anonymity of interview responses and their identity in the process. Lastly, the analysis of the procedures and forms located in Appendix D of the WSD 25 evaluation kit analyzed procedural elements of the teacher evaluation process with possible implications for changes in teacher instruction. For all data analysis, the following focus on ethical considerations was intended to eliminate and reduce any insecurities, embarrassment, or discomfort possibly exsienced by participants during the interview process.

Ethical Considerations

James, Milenkiewicz, and Bucknam (2008) articulate the ethics concept of "do no harm," as not to "cause injury or damage to individuals in research through the misuse of research subjects, often related to informed consent protocols in educational studies" (p. 26). To ensure that this "do no harm" concept was followed with fidelity, especially when considering the sensitivity of feedback on evaluation practices shared from teachers, the ethical elements and considerations of Participatory Action Research (PAR) were followed with fidelity. In alignment with ethical recommendations, the following ethical actions took place with each principal and teacher involved in the interview process:

- Obtained informed consent (and, disclosed the intent and purpose of the research);
- Shared the right to withdraw with participants;
- Ensured no harm to subjects (such as personal information-sharing, etc.);
- Honored confidentiality;

- Used valid research techniques;

- Remained considerate of the roles of principal and teachers involved; and,

- Practiced honesty by disclosing the advantages and disadvantages of the research (James et al., 2008).

More specifically, to follow the aforementioned ethical actions related to the statement of intent of the program evaluation and the guidelines for gathering informed consent, the "Interview Informed Consent" was generated for adult participants (Appendix A).

Data Analysis Techniques

Through the use of Patton's (2008) "Utilization-Focused Framework for Engaging Learners," four processes took place to allow users to understand and learn from the WSD 25 program evaluation findings. First, the qualitative data was organized into themes to assist in comprehending the results, as represented in Table 1. Second, the data was interpreted to arrive at any meaning and importance. Next, judgment occurred as a result of pairing values with the data in consideration of areas related to support, accountability, and influence for instructional change and improvements to teaching. Lastly, some action-oriented steps took shape in the form of recommendations, which are rooted in the qualitative data findings.

Interviews

Individual one-on-one interviews were conducted with principals and teachers primarily to learn from their perspectives regarding teacher evaluation. In interviews, voices were recorded, and transcripts of the recordings were created. The interview questions for the principals were created to learn their perspectives on the teacher evaluation practices and procedures in place in Washington School District 25, as well as to learn what the principals believed to be the essential elements to produce change in teacher practices. The interview

questions for the teachers were created to learn their perspectives on the teacher evaluation practices and procedures in place in Washington School District 25, as well as to learn what the teachers believed to be the essential elements to produce change in teacher practices. The purpose of interviewing the three school principals within the district was also to determine if there were any common practices, shared goals, or areas of alignment across the district focused on teacher evaluation. Interview responses were coded to identify themes and any emerging trends discovered from the data.

Document Analysis

The purpose of analyzing the procedures and forms comprising the WSD 25 evaluation kit, was to learn of any possible technical elements in the teacher evaluation practices that may have contributed to or stifled change in teacher instruction. Specifically, analysis of the evaluation kit sought to identify whether and to what extent the procedures and forms provided support and accountability for teachers, as well as motivational urgency to change instruction. Additionally, by analyzing the district-wide procedures for teacher evaluation, a final purpose was to learn of any commonalities and priorities shared in the schools and district as it related to teacher evaluation.

SECTION FOUR: RESULTS

As Is Analysis

To examine the necessary elements for teachers to change practice, the 4 C's framework of Wagner et al. (2012) provides a comprehensive perspective of the varying components involved when analyzing and synthesizing the concept of change as it relates to teacher practice. Broken into context, culture, conditions, and competencies, Wagner et al. (2012) articulate the intersection of the framework's 4 C's by stating that "The interactions of these parts naturally create some kind of product or result" and that "any system – is designed to produce the results you're getting" (p. 106). In understanding the patterns, trends, and emerging themes (and intersections between policies, actions, and outcomes), four "Arenas of Change" will be analyzed in the following order: context, culture, conditions, and competencies (Wagner et al., 2012, pp. 98-110).

Context encompasses the organizational systems and structures which impact outcomes. Context is important as it can "help inform and shape the work we do to transform the culture, conditions, and competencies" that may be involved (Wagner et al., 2012, p. 104). Culture includes the items seen and unseen, or in other words, the "powerful meanings and mindsets held individually and collectively throughout the system" (Wagner et al., 2012, p. 102). Conditions can often embody some of the more external factors that can still carry influence, such as the "arrangements and allocations of time, space, and money" (Wagner et al., 2012, p. 102). Lastly, competencies serve as the fourth C and include "the repertoire of skills and knowledge that influences" the desired outcomes (Wagner et al., 2012, p. 99). By applying the 4 C's framework to research data gathered, findings emerge with indications for what is needed to foster change in teacher practice. The current state is articulated in Figure 1 as the As Is Diagnostic Tool.

Figure 1

As Is Diagnostic Tool

"As Is" 4 C's Analysis for Washington School District 25 (WSD 25)

Context
1. Three schools, three principals, and one mission
2. In 2010, a Teacher Evaluation Task Force Committee was formed to review new state evaluation requirements (PERA) and make recommendations
3. 70% of teacher evaluation will be based on teaching performance, and 30% will be based on school-wide student growth from prior year using MAP [math (15%) and reading (15%)]
4. Evaluation procedures and frequency determined by teacher contract rules
5. WSD 25 adopted Charlotte Danielson educator evaluation framework for developing professional practice

Culture
1. Detachment of evaluations from teacher professional development
2. Limited cycle or reference to professional development from evaluation to evaluation
3. Limited District-level focus on educator evaluation, evaluator calibration, and analysis of school-wide student growth data
4. Inflated educator expectations of evaluation ratings due to past ratings and lack of Charlotte Danielson framework knowledge
5. Limited collegial inquiry and time devoted for reflection and collaboration

Conditions
1. Evaluations and observations conducted by only the school building administrator(s), not department leaders
2. Educators receive two biennial evaluations if tenured (one formal / one informal)
3. Educators receive three annual evaluations if non-tenured (two formal / one informal)
4. Observations rate Domains 2 and 3 of Charlotte Danielson educator evaluation framework, not the performance of a teacher's students
5. Professional development varies across district, existing only at school-level with minimal reference to evaluation findings nor Charlotte Danielson Framework

The teacher evaluation process provides limited motivation, support, and accountability for teachers to improve the quality of teaching practice.

Competencies
1. Administrators all use common WSD 25 "Evaluation Kit" handouts in evaluation
2. Procedural steps for delivery of WSD 25 "Evaluation Kit" to educator(s) vary by administrator
3. No support structures exist to ensure properly trained, nor calibrated evaluators
4. Educators lack authentic awareness of specific evidence of effective teaching, as defined by Charlotte Danielson framework
5. Educators generally present a shared desire to perform effectively and rate high on the teacher evaluation ratings and procedures

Summary of Interview Findings

In analyzing the data gathered from this study through the framework of Wagner et al. (2012), three themes surfaced. The context of misalignment exists in the misunderstandings exhibited by teachers and evaluators in the approach and blurred focus on the Charlotte Danielson educator evaluation framework. An organizational culture of limited professional learning and collaboration also emerged, involving missed opportunities for time devoted to collegial inquiry and shared learning by teachers as practitioners. Lastly, inauthentic practices were reported due to conditions of professional development with extreme variation from school to school within one district; this variation also included disparate evaluator practices and competencies when attempting to deliver effective feedback to change teacher practices.

Context of Misalignment

With three schools, three principals, and one mission on one campus, WSD 25 is rich with opportunities for collaboration and alignment. Yet, the vertical collaboration district-wide is mainly initiative-driven, and lacking consistency and the characteristics of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) as implicated by Administrator 2, "The District priorities are not clear, and the District's Strategic Plan is not referenced nearly enough. As a result, we're not able to align what we do inside the bigger picture of goal-setting." This lack of alignment repeatedly surfaced from administrator to administrator with Administrator 3 stating, "Some (staff) know the framework (Danielson) and some don't; some reflect intrinsically, and some don't. It would help if we asked more targeted questions." Administrator 2 shared the challenges of district-level alignment stating, "Goal-setting with teachers is easier to do at the school level; it's when we get to the District and outside into the bigger picture that we get lost." Within the organizational systems of the WSD 25 context, one of the most impactful structures is the

adopted teacher evaluation framework for developing professional practice, known as the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching. The framework was adopted in accordance with the Teacher Evaluation Task Force Committee.

At WSD 25, the response to Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) in 2010 included collaboration, between teachers and administration in the form of an arranged Teacher Evaluation Task Force Committee. The committee's mission statement reads: "we believe that a collaborative evaluation process promotes the professional development of educators in order to maximize the potential of all students" (WSD 25 Teacher Evaluation Information Packet, 2013, p. 1). Within this mission and PERA, the committee sought to review the new state evaluation requirements (PERA) and make recommendations. As a result of this committee initiative with administrative collaboration, it was determined that 70% of teacher evaluation will be based on teaching performance, and 30% will be based on school-wide student growth from the prior year using standardized assessment data from the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) MAP test, with math accounting for 15% of a teacher's summative rating and reading the other 15%.

According to the committee, this approach to the required adoption of student growth data was selected as an "all-in model," in which WSD 25 staff would all be held accountable to each staff member's respective school-level data for reading and math as previously outlined. In the words of the committee, "We firmly believe that all teachers play a role in the education of the whole child. We all teach all students, and we are a professional community where teamwork is paramount" (WSD 25 Teacher Evaluation Information Packet, 2013, p. 3). The context of a collective responsibility for student learning was felt by Teacher 1 in stating that "Personally, the inclusion of student growth in my rating has helped a lot. It definitely differs per teacher, but I want to get better; and, if I know I'm held accountable for their (students') growth, I'm going to

improve." Aside from this nuance to the process of teacher evaluation, as required by the state of

Illinois, the local evaluation procedural approaches and frequency of evaluations are all

determined by teacher contract rules, with collective bargaining agreements spanning four-year

durations of time and no differentiation approved within the contract for varying the approach to

observation (such as case-by-case variations as-needed based on teacher effectiveness). While

the inclusion of student growth in teacher evaluation ratings is greeted with mixed emotions from

staff, the adopted Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching was overwhelmingly favored as

a necessity to achieve aligned practices by all teachers and principals interviewed in this study.

Interview findings also expressed variance in the process of observation and evaluation as

"Some evaluations were straightforward while others were not. Some referenced the framework

and others did not" (Teacher 6). The interview findings suggest that a shared instructional focus

includes not only the tangibles of a common, aligned framework; but, also it involves the

prioritization of time and responsibilities for stakeholders involved. This focus may require the

removal of obstacles and the narrowing of tasks for teachers and administrators, as Administrator

1 states:

> You have to remove all of the bureaucratic things that the administrator needs to do in
>
> order to be effective within a teacher evaluation system. I don't have the time to be the
>
> sole person holding teachers accountable for growth. With everything else that I am
>
> tasked with, right now, with construction and everything, this system is not set up for me
>
> to successfully or effectively hold teachers accountable.

These findings within the arena of context start to frame some of the systematic elements

involved in the practices and actions related to improving teacher practice in the classrooms. The

contextual elements were identified first because Wagner et al. (2012) state how "We need to

understand *all* this contextual information to help inform and shape the work we do to transform

the culture, conditions, and competencies of our schools and districts" (p. 104). When exploring

the components of culture as an arena for change, the significant finding of limited professional

learning and collaboration emerged as a key obstacle standing in the way of changing how

teachers teach.

Culture of Limited Professional Learning and Collaboration

Some of the disparities expressed in WSD 25, as it relates to having a shared instructional

focus, take place in the culture of the organization because of the hierarchical structure of the

school district, in which administrative central office decisions regarding adult learning and

collaboration directly impact individual school decisions and areas of focus. This relationship

between central office and schools, is best exhibited in the realization that there are no individual

school focus areas unless there has been district-level approval of the focus areas. This leaves

schools unable to focus on teacher evaluation, evaluator calibration, and analysis of school-wide

student growth data unless it is also going to be a district-driven initiative. Most striking in the

arena of culture was the existence of a natural drive and passion to improve practice, which was

hindered by organizational disconnectedness, which also impacted collaboration and reflective

teaching.

Teachers lacking opportunities to improve teaching due to the absence of an evaluative

model, expressed missed opportunities for increasing the collegial inquiry related to one

another's practice. This was evidenced by Teacher 5 in stating the following:

> I'd like to be in other classrooms; I want to learn from others, because by ourselves we're
>
> not learning anything. If I had a more casual manner in which I could see practice and
>
> then try it, I would learn and change more.

Drago-Severson (2012) addresses necessary components to achieve real collaboration in stating that organizations must balance "each individual's request for growth with compassion, understanding, and care for his or her strengths and needs" (p. 88). Yet, in WSD 25, the focus is not on collaboration and the future, but instead more immediate reactions to current issues, as expressed by Teacher 2:

> Focus is on what we are doing right now – that's the mindset. It's not about professional development and the outcomes of a practice, it's more on what we're doing right now in that lesson. And, that is only worse when you know it's not your year for evaluation.

In the absence of motivating and supportive professional development to improve practice, the teachers in WSD 25 have been forced to look elsewhere to grow as educators. Teacher 6 shared the practice of seeking out "teacher podcasts and social media to learn" stating that "I have to learn somewhere" (Teacher 6). With teachers seeking outside supports to grow practice, and limitations to structures and cycles for developing practice from evaluation to evaluation for teachers, the detachment of evaluations from teacher professional development stood out as a glaring issue. The complex culture of disconnectedness also arises in several existing conditions and competencies related to evaluations and practices in WSD 25.

Conditions and Competencies for Inauthentic Practices

Teacher evaluation practices at WSD 25 lack effectiveness due to several interconnected causes, including but not limited to isolated procedures, variation, and laborious structures. Isolated teacher evaluation practices that only occur by the school building administrator, and no others, were summarized as problematic at WSD 25. These observations only rate teachers in Domains 2 and 3 of the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching; the observations do not

assess the performance of a teacher's students for that lesson or segment of time. Teacher 4 found this process particularly unmotivating in sharing the following:

> The value of the feedback is questionable; I want to know how I can make this guided reading group better – not be given a number from one person's perspective. The feedback is so general, it's difficult to tell if it's from this lesson. I actually think real dialogue with other teachers about the lesson would help me the most.

Within the existing formal teacher observation and evaluation systems at WSD 25, a void exists with no system for correlating the actions of the teacher and the outcomes of the students. The existence of opportunities for increased alignment of procedures and actions to the evaluative feedback outcomes emerged as a common trend throughout teacher and principal interviews. This gap was widened by the competencies and details of the teacher evaluation procedures across Washington School District 25.

The paperwork and forms developed for the purposes of teacher evaluation, knowns as the evaluation kit, include a consistent series of documents used for Pre-Observation, Post Observation, and Summative meetings during the evaluation cycle of an educator in WSD 25. Yet, elements of consistency drift the moment the forms are put into practice, as the procedural steps for delivering the WSD 25 evaluation kit to educators during evaluation vary from administrator to administrator across the district. As a result, educators report scattered experiences and wide-ranging feedback from one evaluator to the next. For example, predecessors take one approach while current administrators take another. This was the case experienced by Teacher 6, whom shared how "some evaluations were straightforward while others were not. Some referenced the framework and others did not." This lack of consistent

evaluation practices contributed to inconsistent teacher practices. The district-wide evaluation kit was also expressed as a contributing factor to inauthentic practices by evaluators and teachers.

Teacher 1 shared how the questions from the post-observation evaluation kit were "monotonous, worded the same, and very general in asking for summaries." This challenge of limited specificity and alignment issues are compounded by educators lacking authentic awareness of what specific evidence of effective teaching is, as defined by the selected Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching. For example, Teacher 2 shared how "You want to get a 4, and most people get that rating year to year, so they're used to being in the top category. Any thought of that rating not happening is stressful with nervous anticipation of the unknown." This teacher shared a passion and drive to improve and change practice; yet, the evaluation kit was unhelpful in driving any change. Frustrations with the disingenuous nature of the evaluation procedures were also present in feedback from Teacher 6, stating, "I want to be better. I focus on the top 2 tiers of Danielson, but sometimes the process (evaluation kit) feels like busy work." These conditions and competencies warrant interpretation alongside additional data points from interview findings.

The organization of data and findings was also supported by the recommendations of Patton (2008), as the analysis of results sought to make sense of the evaluation findings by "organizing raw data into an understandable form that reveals basic patterns and constitutes the evaluation's empirical findings" (p. 478). Each of these significant findings are included in Table 1, providing interview findings listed verbatim. Patton (2008) indicates that "Data need to be arranged, ordered, and organized in some reasonable format that permits decision makers to detect patterns," and these patterns and themes are used to inform the to be analysis of Section 5 in this study (p. 479).

Table 1

Significant Interview Findings

Data Source	Finding 1. Misalignment
One-on-One Interviews	• **Teacher 1**: The feedback that (principal) gave my posts was all fantastic and fair with strategies that I could implement right away with the Danielson model. • **Teacher 1**: The Danielson piece is helpful because it's a common language; I think it provides details and if a visitor gives me specific examples focused on if this, then this, my teaching will change with specific instructional shifts. • **Teacher 1**: Personally, the inclusion of student growth in my rating has helped a lot. It definitely differs per teacher, but I want to get better; and, if I know I'm held accountable for their (students') growth, I'm going to improve. • **Teacher 1**: I like how if I am getting a 3 or 4 on Danielson, I have a good idea of whether I'm doing a good job. It's useful; it articulates awareness. • **Administrator 2**: The District priorities are not clear, and the District's Strategic Plan is not referenced nearly enough. As a result, we're not able to align what we do inside the bigger picture of goal-setting. • **Administrator 3**: Some (staff) know the framework (Danielson) and some don't; some reflect intrinsically, and some don't. It would help if we asked more targeted questions. • **Teacher 3**: We're not all-in in our model; and, the conferences, conversations, and pre and post processes are different. Danielson helps with how we communicate about the teaching; but I think the focus areas are different from person to person and definitely school to school in our district. • **Teacher 6**: Some evaluations were straightforward while others were not. Some referenced the framework and others did not. • **Administrator 1**: Too busy to be solely responsible for evaluation; something has to go. We don't even have time to talk about evaluation in principal meetings. • **Administrator 1**: You have to remove all of the bureaucratic things that the administrator needs to do in order to be effective within a teacher evaluation system. I don't have the time to be the sole person holding teachers accountable for growth. With everything else that I am tasked with, right now, with construction and everything, this system is not set up for me to successfully or effectively hold teachers accountable. • **Administrator 3**: Using the Danielson Framework is helping teachers to pinpoint very specific areas that they can target and set goals with, and then be able to use that to really dive in deeper and try different methodology than in their classroom. • **Administrator 3**: For other teachers, reflection may not happen naturally and that's where it's nice to have that rubric (Danielson). • **Teacher 2**: The formal observations create nervous anticipation of the unknown. What would certainly help chip away at some of those real natural reactions is for the evaluator to be incredibly clear about what they expect. • **Teacher 4**: I think Danielson definitely helps as a newer teacher to have a framework because if that wasn't there I would come out of those reviews with my head spinning in all these different directions; the language of the framework is actionable with specific things. • **Teacher 5**: I guess I always just try and focus on the top two tiers (of Danielson) because I am scared of being in the bottom two tears because I would feel like I did the students a disservice. • **Teacher 6**: The ratings (in Danielson Framework) are helpful; it lets me know what I am striving to be, whether or not I agree with that - I know why I was given the rating.
Data Source	Finding 2. Limited Professional Learning and Collaboration

One-on-One Interviews	• **Teacher 1**: I'd rather take the opinion of somebody I don't know, but who has been a successful awarded teacher over the last couple years as a colleague, than an administrator with a title. • **Administrator 2**: Goal-setting with teachers is easier to do at the school level; it's when we get to the District and outside into the bigger picture that we get lost. • **Teacher 5**: I'd like to be in other classrooms; I want to learn from others, because by ourselves we're not learning anything. If I had a more casual manner in which I could see practice and then try it, I would learn and change more. • **Teacher 2**: Focus is on what we are doing right now – that's the mindset. It's not about professional development and the outcomes of a practice, it's more on what we're doing right now in that lesson. And, that is only worse when you know it's not your year for evaluation. • **Teacher 1**: Post-observations can be monotonous, worded the same, and very general in asking for summaries. • **Teacher 6**: I want to be better. I focus on the top 2 tiers of Danielson, but sometimes the process (evaluation kit) feels like busy work. • **Teacher 6**: I want to see others' classrooms more. • **Teacher 3**: Danielson helps. It's focused and helps me segment what I need to do as a teacher technically, and more emotionally in terms of my classroom environment and the relationships with my students. I don't think everyone has that same feeling, though, because not everyone has the urgency to push their teaching – especially if on an off-year when not evaluated. • **Administrator 2**: We don't have a system; the evaluation and its outcomes depend entirely on the person doing the evaluation. • **Teacher 3**: A lot of teachers don't see Danielson as the job, and they don't know what's in it. That shouldn't be the case. • **Teacher 6**: Have turned to teacher podcasts and social media to learn – I have to learn somewhere. • **Teacher 1**: Something about the numeric process that certainly motivates us in some way…because you know the shifts that are necessary…the one missing component the missing element of that component. • **Administrator 1**: Staff meetings need to provide opportunities for staff members to hear other staff members tell their experiences with certain instructional strategies or technology that they used within their classroom; but, they can't just be a one and done type of thing. There needs to be follow up throughout the year. I feel like a lot of times we provide training and PD for staff, and they hear it once and they say, "Oh yeah, I'm going to try that." But then twenty five other million things come up. There is no follow-up. PD needs to be practical, actionable, and realistic. And, what better resource than people that are also doing the same thing. • **Teacher 2**: So, what I've seen those conversations at least on our team or with other colleagues it's how do I get from a three to four. • **Teacher 4**: I use conversation with other teachers a lot to learn, or just listening to other teachers; and, not copying them, but taking ideas that they thought worked and applying them in my own way. I'd like to be in more classrooms to observe. It's just that I need time. • **Teacher 6**: Probably other teachers if there was time to watch and time to listen to what they're doing. You know the teachers in this school are so good. There's a wealth of information to be had. At the second grade weekly team meetings, we are always asking, 'Hey how did everybody teach A to B? Or, 'I don't even understand what the standard is asking? Anyone help?' And, that is so valuable - when we sit there and talk as professionals. Sometimes, someone will say, 'Well, let's ask third grade what they want out of the standard, and we'll look at the third grade assessment and realize we're not even teaching what they're building; that to me is the most valuable practice to change instruction.

Data Source	Finding 3. Inauthentic Practices

One-on-One Interviews	• **Teacher 1**: I can tell if a teacher has classroom management in the hallway by what I hear when I walk by. • **Teacher 1**: Visits should be more often and less labor - like a little half sheet of paper where it's like what did that worked and what could you take away from it to improve upon. • **Teacher 1**: I've also had principals just write one sentence for a category of teaching – that's not helpful. • **Teacher** 1: I worked this year on whole group assessment at the end of the lesson after an observation because it was good feedback about how I heard from 8 kids and not the other 13. That made me think. • **Teacher 4**: The value of the feedback is questionable; I want to know how I can make this guided reading group better – not be given a number from one person's perspective. The feedback is so general, it's difficult to tell if it's from this lesson. I actually think real dialogue with other teachers about the lesson would help me the most. • **Teacher 2**: You want to get a 4, and most people get that rating year to year, so they're used to being in the top category. Any thought of that rating not happening is stressful with nervous anticipation of the unknown. • **Teacher 2**: I want to be incredibly clear on what is expected in the classroom with supporting documentation if possible. • **Teacher 3**: We need to allow colleagues to have a discussion with each other, shifting the conversation between administrator and teacher to teacher and teacher. I think that will create greater support for changing practice. • **Teacher 1**: Specific instructional shifts shared – either from a colleague visiting or from me visiting a colleague to see it in-action – is the best way for me to change how I teach. • **Administrator 3**: Some teachers take their learning to teams, but it never comes in or leaves to other classrooms outside the school. • **Administrator 2**: I think a lot of times people work in isolation and don't always think, "Hey let's literally have a conversation about what I do in my classroom and what you do in your classroom." People who put both hands together can create awesome classrooms. • **Administrator 2**: I think there needs to be other means like if each staff member had a mentor to meet three times a year to figure out if you're on your goal and how things are going with your goal…to help as a colleague and peer; it doesn't necessarily always need to come from the evaluator or the administrator. • **Administrator 3**: I find it helps to be able to ask very targeted and specific questions to get teachers to reflect on their practice. • **Teacher 4**: The evaluation process doesn't motivate me; the evaluation process lets me have another chance of reflecting, and it's that reflection that changes my (teaching) strategy. • **Teacher** 4: I think overall evaluation allows teachers to reflect. It's not the evaluation that will change anything. It's a chance to step outside their classroom and just think overall, "How's it going? What do I need to focus on?" • **Teacher 4**: I want visitors to be a part of my class, meaning they know what we're doing, and their feedback reflects that. I want a dialogue on specific teaching strategies. I need to see it to know and believe it. • **Teacher 5**: When I first started teaching the district had coaches that would come in once or twice a month to observe your whole class all day and then they would tell you what went really well and what you really need to improvise and that was a big difference. • **Teacher 6**: I didn't really get feedback about trying new strategies; questioning was one of my strengths, and I didn't really even know why that was a strength.

Interpretation

In the necessary work of interpreting these data points, it is important to remain grounded in the interactive and complex nature of school districts, as Wagner et al. (2012) warn of how "linear cause-and-effect explanations sometimes miss the fact that today's effect may in turn be tomorrow's cause, influencing some other part of the system" (p. 98). With comprehensive sensitivity to the organizational environment of a school system, the data interpretation begins to highlight the juxtaposition of teacher desires to improve and the limited opportunities for any improvement to take place. Murphy (2015) expresses how challenging the work of building instructional capacity can be when sharing how "teachers bring their own contexts with them to the community" (p. 73). Knowing these complexities assists the process of considering themes to which the data supports, such as the misalignment of practices, limitations on professional learning and collaboration, and inauthentic practices in teaching and evaluation.

Educators in WSD 25 generally present a shared desire to perform effectively and rate high on the teacher evaluation practices involving the ratings and procedures; yet, teachers do not have immediate and regular access to support structures for this professional growth to take flight. For example, Teacher 6 shared a desire to "See others' classrooms more" and how if that was the case there would be increased likelihood that new instructional strategies would take place. Additionally, the specific instructional components and a common language – all provided by the framework – appear to be missing. Teacher 2 requested that evaluators be "Incredibly clear on what is expected in the classroom with supporting documentation if possible." Other teachers relied on the Danielson Framework for specificity, such as Teacher 3 stating the following:

Danielson helps. It's focused and helps me segment what I need to do as a teacher technically, and more emotionally in terms of my classroom environment and the relationships with my students. I don't think everyone has that same feeling, though, because not everyone has the urgency to push their teaching – especially if on an off-year when not evaluated.

One major challenge that emerged, is the detachment of evaluations from teacher professional development with limited review of evaluations after they occur and no referencing to an aggregate of evaluation data as a learning community. This theme of disconnectedness also emerged due to the limited cycle of professional development from evaluation to evaluation, which created an isolated evaluation structure without any continuity or connection to past evaluations, nor ongoing professional development. This is a staggering finding because professional development exists in writing as the focal point in the mission statement of the district's Teacher Evaluation Task Force Committee. The need for support exists for both teachers and evaluators in WSD 25.

Judgements

One possible cause of the variance existing across evaluations is a lack of support structures to ensure proper evaluator training and calibration for district administrators against a standard definition of excellence in teaching. Principal 1 shared how the administrator role, as it exists, is "too busy to be solely responsible for evaluation; something has to go. We don't even have time to talk about evaluation in principal meetings." As a result, in the context of WSD 25, educator evaluation is a standalone practice with limited alignment and linkage to other elements of the district and school resources. As Principal 2 indicated, "We don't have a system; the evaluation and its outcomes depend entirely on the person doing the evaluation." As a result,

evaluation becomes less and less a priority for school-specific administrators and evaluators of teachers, which in turn breeds less of a focus from teachers on their own evaluations and professional learning together. Teacher 3 expounded on the need for time together when sharing that "We need to allow colleagues to have a discussion with each other, shifting the conversation between administrator and teacher to teacher and teacher. I think that will create greater support for changing practice."

Given the currently narrow focus and absent alignment to adult learning, educators have developed inflated expectations of personal evaluation ratings, with the majority viewing each lesson as successful with limited ideas of what to change if teaching the lesson again. Consequentially, this lack of focus and accountability leads teachers to undermine the relevance of the existing Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching as a tool for reference and professional learning. Teacher 3 explained how "A lot of teachers don't see Danielson as the job, and they don't know what's in it. That shouldn't be the case." Darling-Hammond (2013) supports the problematic nature of this view of evaluation by the WSD 25 staff in contending that "Evaluation alone will not improve practice" (p. 99). WSD 25 lacks substantial support for its teachers to improve practice, and evaluation needs to be aligned to that support in a cohesive model with the following interconnections:

> Productive feedback must be accompanied by opportunities to learn. Evaluations should trigger continuous goal-setting for areas teachers want to work on, specific professional development supports and coaching, and opportunities to share expertise, as part of recognizing teachers' strengths and needs. (Darling-Hammond, 2013, p. 99)

The data findings herein provide insight into the research questions of this study. For instance, the existing teacher evaluation practices in WSD 25 do not appear to be providing motivational

urgency for teachers to change instruction. In addition, the organizational culture lacks

opportunities and structures for support and accountability for teachers to change instruction.

Also, the conditions and competencies for inauthentic practices by teachers and administrators

indicate that the improvement of teacher instruction via evaluation and professional learning is

not a current priority area of focus for the district.

Recommendations

For teaching to change, opportunities for increased collaboration must occur with detailed

and actionable feedback for teachers incorporated in the process. As a result of diminished

collaboration, teachers such as Teacher 6, "have turned to teacher podcasts and social media to

learn – I have to learn somewhere." The school as an organization must shift from isolated

teaching practices to shared awareness and understanding of what is taking place in one

another's classrooms. This change was selected as a result of the overwhelming data from

teachers and administrators in support of improving personal practice without any means to

change. As Teacher 1 described, "Specific instructional shifts shared – either from a colleague

visiting or from me visiting a colleague to see it in-action – is the best way for me to change how

I teach." Additionally, a focus on a common instructional framework is necessary with alignment

to outcomes and student data where possible.

Darling-Hammond explains the consequence when there is no connection to student

outcomes in the evaluation process: "Most evaluations pay little or no attention to the

performance of a teacher's students, and hence provide little advice about how to support student

learning" (Darling-Hammond, 2013, pp. 4-5). Also disconnected is the approach to professional

development and teacher support across WSD 25 with a variety of school-based professional

development meetings taking place without any adherence to a common focus area or cycle of

learning from session to session. Principal 3 shared how "Some teachers take their learning to teams, but it never comes in or leaves to other classrooms outside the school."

This professional development exists only at the school-level with minimal reference, nor alignment, to evaluation findings and the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching. Without alignment, a gap forms between teaching, learning, and evaluation. When evaluation stands alone, it loses its power to serve as a possible antecedent to change instruction for those motivated by performance indicators. In essence, the framework must serve as the foundational keystone to align all other components of teacher professional learning with every initiative and focus related back to the framework's components. Additional strategies and actions related to these recommendations will be shared in detail in section six.

SECTION FIVE: TO BE FRAMEWORK

Introduction

Regarding the essential elements for staff to grow and improve teaching practices, the emergence of a context with instruction as the focus became evident, such as the use of one common and understood framework (e.g. Danielson) across the school district. The need for a culture of support was expressed and shared in data gathered, specifically in the form of framework-aligned and job-embedded professional learning to foster a culture of growth together. Lastly, in examining teacher experiences with evaluation and classroom observation, the importance of conditions for meaningful feedback, and adults with the competencies to provide such feedback, were both repeatedly reported as levers for changing practice.

Envisioning the Success: To Be

Context of Shared Instructional Focus

A systemic disconnect exists across WSD 25 in the existing relationship between the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching, evaluation procedures, and professional development cycles for evaluators and teachers. This disconnect emerged after analyzing the findings of teachers and principals from Section 4 regarding teacher evaluation practices in WSD 25, including the district-wide evaluation kit. Analysis also explored the effectiveness of the evaluation kit and procedures taken by principals seeking to change teacher instruction, revealing discrepant behaviors when implementing procedural steps.

The clarity and focus created by one evaluation framework was overwhelmingly well-received by interviewees because it provided a common resource for discussing, improving, and changing practice. In reflecting on the use of an instructional framework for shared focus, Teacher 1 shared that "I like how if I am getting a 3 or 4 on Danielson, I have a good idea of

whether I'm doing a good job. It's useful; it articulates awareness." As one teacher described, the framework provides some specificity for improving practice, in that "the Danielson piece is helpful because it's a common language; I think it provides details. And, if a visitor gives me specific examples focused on if this, then this, my teaching will change with specific instructional shifts" (Teacher 1). Teachers overwhelmingly indicated the contextual importance of aligned expectations of what exemplary instructional practice is; and the alignment was not limited to peers, but also to those expectations of the evaluating administrator:

> Using the Danielson Framework is helping teachers to pinpoint very specific areas that they can target and set goals with, and then be able to use that to really dive in deeper and try different methodology than in their classroom. (Administrator 3)

An inference can be made that in the absence of a common vocabulary and expectation for exemplary instruction, the work of improving teacher instructional practice would be prolonged and increasingly more challenging. Given the multifaceted nature of teaching as both an art and science, it is not surprising to hear of teachers and administrators whom advocate for a streamlined, focused approach, as one teacher summarized the significance "because if that (Danielson Framework) wasn't there, I would come out of those reviews with my head spinning in all these different directions; the language of the framework is actionable with specific things" (Teacher 4). Yet, interview findings suggest that in order to have a shared instructional focus, the time, values, and budget must also be prioritized with the shared focus on instruction as the lever for improving student outcomes.

Varying areas of focus in WSD 25 was a challenge shared by interviewees, whom articulated the need for District-level refocusing in order to produce changes in teachers' practice. Administrator 1 expressed the challenges of day-to-day responsibilities and feeling,

"Too busy to be solely responsible for evaluation; something has to go. We don't even have time to talk about evaluation in principal meetings." Additionally, aside from administrative responsibilities, this need for focus was also experienced by teachers:

> We're not all-in in our model; and, the conferences, conversations, and pre and post processes are different. Danielson helps with how we communicate about the teaching; but I think the focus areas are different from person to person and definitely school to school in our district. (Teacher 3)

At the crux of the theme of misalignment, is a missed opportunity to value and focus time and resources on meaningful professional development. As a result, there is limited adult learning and a disconnected Professional Learning Community (PLC) across WSD 25.

Culture of Job-Embedded and Framework-Aligned Professional Learning

To help connect evaluation and the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching to a cycle of ongoing and targeted professional development, one helpful step toward collaboration with faculty and the learning community will be to reengage the district's Teacher Evaluation Task Force Committee. As Darling-Hammond (2013) describes, initiatives seeking to improve teaching effectiveness with evaluation will have the greatest impact if they "make intense use of coaching and offer extensive opportunities for teachers to help their colleagues" (p. 141). Yet, the task force's role in supporting professional learning will also require district involvement, creating a strong partnership between teachers and administrators.

The task force (or other District-wide team in a district site) will be most effective if the administration disaggregates district-wide evaluation ratings for each component by school, grade, department, and teacher. The evaluation rating data will support the task force in returning to the professional development side of their mission statement by using the data to identify an

area of instructional focus for adult learning in the district. The disaggregated evaluation data can also provide urgency for this professional learning planning by identifying common components worthy of attention at the district, school, and grade/team levels. In this research, this shared focus will be referred to as a Targeted Instructional Area (TIA). For example, if staff evaluation data results overwhelmingly reveal a shared opportunity to improve in questioning and discussion techniques, the task force can serve as a developer and provider of framework-aligned professional development related to questioning strategies as the TIA.

Using the annual school calendar, Teacher Institute Days can be devoted to framework-aligned professional development with the Teacher Evaluation Task Force Committee leading the engagement of staff in the necessary work of building a guiding coalition of stakeholders to help lead and plan adult learning sessions focusing on achieving the TIA. For example, these job-embedded sessions may be held for teachers to improve in specific component areas. Or, different sessions may support evaluators with opportunities to calibrate observation approaches while district leadership continues to analyze teacher evaluation data for use in future planning. The most important element to this professional learning is that it is all intended to include alignment district-wide on improving in one common area of the instructional framework (e.g. 3b. Questioning and Discussion Techniques). With new focus on teacher evaluation as a resource and compass for learning, versus an isolated hindrance, teachers can grow through collaboration and data-driven instructional shifts that are articulated by the common framework and scheduled during the contractual workday and scheduled time.

Conditions and Competencies for Meaningful Feedback

The main lever for change already exists in WSD 25 in the form of a trusted organization of various staff members with the Teacher Evaluation Task Force Committee. Collaborative and

effective observations cannot take form without the foundational roots of trust in the school and district. As a trusted committee, the task force can influence the culture of WSD 25 to change from one of apathy toward evaluation to one of trust and learning, which embraces opportunities for learning (as identified from the disaggregated evaluation results). The meaningfulness of consistent feedback from evaluations will inevitably foster consistent professional learning requests from staff. The key to this change relies on assembling the task force to foster trust and focus on evaluation findings, before aligning professional development to the evaluation results.

As a part of the responsibilities of the Teacher Evaluation Task Force Committee, the school building administrator and the committee members must next begin to conduct observations together. "Common statewide standards for teaching that are related to meaningful student learning and are shared across the profession" already exist across WSD 25 in the form of the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2013, p. 14). With this framework in-hand, a non-evaluative, and colleague-driven, model of observation can take place to increase awareness of effective and ineffective teaching practices taking place across the schools and district. Another key condition to effective change at WSD 25 will be dependent upon the district's ability to utilize the colleague observation data and the teacher evaluation data, for the purposes of district-level reviews of evaluation ratings. Most importantly, ongoing professional development for evaluator calibration and instructional planning can begin to take shape with the framework serving as the reference point for all of the focus on feedback planning and delivery to colleagues.

This framework alignment and shared knowledge of classroom, teacher, and school needs will allow the task force members to maintain a focus on employing the evaluation findings to support collaboration for all staff. Essentially, the task force also contributes to the culture of the

district and schools by serving as a model exemplary PLC, one that is focused on adult learning aligned to the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching. The findings from classroom visits by committee members will also help to continuously improve the observation skills and practices of evaluators. As a means of checks and balances for holding administrators accountable, teacher teams can calibrate and visit instruction – comparing their evaluative outcomes to that of principals. This shared responsibility will provide an identification process to use in planning for "Support structures to ensure properly trained evaluators, mentoring for teachers who need additional assistance, and fair decisions about personnel actions" (Darling-Hammond, 2013, p. 5). The visits to classrooms may also prompt transparency.

With transparency becoming a condition for feedback and professional learning, the desire to become more data-focused as an organization will occur. Through supportive reviews of student growth data, realistic educator expectations of evaluation ratings will develop, due to new awareness of outcomes as they relate to the evaluation process. In tandem with colleagues, the culture will shift from variety to one in which teachers all know what is expected and can more clearly plan lessons and teaching together with support from the framework.

The conditions for this change also include an increase in the frequency of evaluations for tenured staff – shifting from the current model of two biennial evaluations of one formal and one informal to two annual evaluations of one formal and one informal. With the non-tenured staff remaining as is at three annual evaluations (two formal and one informal), increased awareness of teaching strengths and areas in need of professional development are regularly identified for tenured staff each year, and then included in the school's comprehensive professional development planning on an annual basis (versus biennial). In next section, a plan will be shared of how to accomplish this organizational change.

Figure 2

To Be Diagnostic Tool

"To Be" 4 C's Analysis for Washington School District 25 (WSD 25)

Context
1. 3 schools, 3 principals, 1 mission
2. The Teacher Evaluation Task Force Committee will meet regularly to review evaluation data and make recommendations for aligned professional learning opportunities
3. 70% of teacher evaluation will be based on teaching performance, and 30% will be based on school-wide student growth from prior year using MAP [math (15%) and reading (15%)]
4. Evaluation procedures and frequency determined by teacher contract rules and student learning (growth) data
5. Charlotte Danielson educator evaluation framework reviewed and referenced regularly by non-evaluators

Culture
1. Alignment of evaluations to teacher professional development opportunities
2. Ongoing, intensive professional development with application to evaluation and instruction
3. District-level review of evaluation ratings; and, ongoing professional development for evaluator calibration and instructional planning using student growth data
4. Realistic educator expectations of evaluation ratings due to knowledge of common framework
5. Collective expertise is fostered through devoted time for reflection and collaboration

Conditions
1. Evaluations conducted by the school building administrator(s), and non-evaluative observations are conducted by department leaders (at times, alongside the building administrator)
2. Educators receive two annual evaluations if tenured (one formal / one informal)
3. Educators receive three annual evaluations if non-tenured (two formal / one informal)
4. Observations rate Domains 1, 2 and 3 of Charlotte Danielson educator evaluation framework and focus on reviewing the performance of a teacher's students
5. Professional development plan exists across district, with diverse team of stakeholders assembled to maintain a focus on evaluation findings and alignment of adult learning to the Charlotte Danielson Framework

The teacher evaluation process provides motivation, support, and accountability for teachers to improve the quality of teaching practice.

Competencies
1. Administrators all use common WSD 25 "Evaluation Kit" handouts in evaluation
2. Procedural steps for delivery of WSD 25 "Evaluation Kit" to educator(s) will be consistent from administrator to administrator
3. Biannual professional development occurs to ensure properly trained and calibrated evaluators
4. Educators possess authentic awareness of specific evidence of effective teaching, as defined by Charlotte Danielson framework
5. Educators all present a shared desire to perform effectively on the teacher evaluation ratings, but major focus is to increase student growth

SECTION SIX: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

Several strategies exist based upon research and best practice in professional development to achieve the following outcomes: a shared instructional focus; job-embedded and framework-aligned professional learning; and, meaningful feedback. To identify a shared instructional focus district-wide, one strategy outlined by Wagner et al. (2012) is to develop a "Shared vision of good teaching" (p. 27). This section will analyze strategies for defining such a vision by developing a Targeted Instructional Area (TIA) (Nelsen et al., 2009). In designing job-embedded and framework-aligned professional learning, Darling-Hammond (2013) advocates for the strategy of ensuring that professional development is "connected to other school initiatives," with action steps outlined in this study focusing on the alignment of instructional strategies to the existing instructional framework (p. 104). Lastly, strategies for delivering feedback that matters to teachers will be explored with best practices gleaned from Kim Marshall (2009) and accompanying action steps related to best practices for the observation of teachers.

Targeted Instructional Area

In the article "Lasting Impressions," Nelsen et al. (2009) warn that "As is often the case, less is more when it comes to establishing a culture of professional learning" (p. 33). Yet, the science and art of teaching demands such an extensive skill set of professionals to implement in the classroom, complicating the work of defining a vision of good teaching. Despite complications in finding focus, Wagner et al. (2012) provide a warning of the urgency of this work in stating:

> Without agreed-upon definitions (or at least a clarification of how a person is using a term) and observable data that support the person's assessment of the lesson, conversations about teaching and learning remain ethereal, reinforcing the teaching

profession's weak craft knowledge base, professional language, and standards of

practices. We need agreed-upon criteria. (p. 38)

The successful creation of clear teaching criteria (with a shared vision focusing on

instruction and a common framework) should involve the review and analysis of teacher

evaluation data and student growth data. With disaggregated evaluation data and student growth

data available and shared with teachers for transparency and focus, urgency will be created in the

work of aligning professional learning to an identified Targeted Instructional Area (TIA). This

alignment of data to instruction and a specific time for professional learning is often missing in

schools, which was the case in WSD 25. Reasons for this absence may vary; at WSD 25, time

and trust were factors in that opportunities for a large-scale data review with all staff were rare,

and fears existed in wondering whether and or to what extent staff would be willing to trust the

data. Yet, best practices in professional development support opportunities such as described

herein for teacher-to-teacher collegial inquiry and the review of data to identify actionable next

steps with instruction, such as the following:

> It can also be useful for groups of teachers to analyze and discuss student performance
>
> data and samples of students' work (science projects, essays, math problems, and so on),
>
> in order to identify students' most common errors and misunderstandings, reach common
>
> understanding of what it means for student to master a given concept or skill, and find out
>
> which instructional strategies are or are not working, and for whom. (Darling-Hammond,
>
> 2013, p. 104)

In addition, staff involvement in the process of identifying a TIA and powerful practices will

create a shared vision, diminish staff fear of the unknown, and foster collective responsibility for

the work of continuously improving teaching and student learning together.

When the focus is tuned into one framework-aligned instructional component deemed worthy of attention by the data, the teachers' input will also strengthen and support the findings reported by the administrator's evaluation outcomes. Essential to the shared instructional focus and vision of good teaching is the regular reference and alignment of all actions to the common instructional framework, as well as measurement of the instructional strategies in use (which will be elaborated upon in the upcoming focus on feedback). Once the focus is established district-wide, actions can be taken to use a targeted professional development plan for staff so that "schools can increase the likelihood of student success by using cycles of learning to incorporate professional development lessons into daily school and classroom rhythms" (Nelsen et al., 2009, p. 32).

Professional Development

To achieve the organizational shift (outlined in the *Figure 2. To Be Diagnostic Tool*) with teacher evaluation providing motivation; support and accountability; and, alignment for teachers to improve the quality of teaching, the professional development for schools and districts should align to both the TIA and the common instructional framework (e.g. Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching, etc.). This strategic shift includes the action of developing a professional learning calendar focused on the larger shared vision of specific instructional strategies that will drive instruction in classrooms and during professional development – all focused on the TIA. The professional learning calendar is intended to forecast the path forward for how each moment of staff time will be prioritized in alignment to the TIA. By focusing on the use of existing time with staff in the collective bargaining agreement at the start of the year (time that is typically allotted for various school and district housekeeping and instructional improvement areas), the planning shifts from the difficult task of creating more time to instead

repurposing existing time. The reasoning for this focus is that "Research suggests that professional development tends to be more effective when it is an integral part of a larger school reform effort, rather than when activities are isolated, having little to do with other initiatives or changes" (Darling-Hammond, 2013, p. 104).

For professional development to exist as an integral element of any school and district professional learning community, it must be valued as a resource that receives prioritization when allotting time with staff. Too often, windows of time are filled with items deemed as necessary announcements or pieces of information that must be delivered to staff in-person. Given the scarcity of time together in most school communities, planning and preparing for staff learning should always be emphasized as a top priority by leadership, just as it is expected of teachers in most instructional frameworks such as the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching, where planning and preparation components are directly emphasized and evaluated.

In focusing on a shared vision based upon a common instructional framework, professional learning plans can become more targeted and staff collaboration more focused. As one school administrator in WSD 25 described, professional development now becomes more purposeful:

> Staff meetings need to provide opportunities for staff members to hear other staff members tell their experiences with certain instructional strategies or technology that they used within their classroom; but, they can't just be a one and done type of thing. There needs to be follow up throughout the year. I feel like a lot of times we provide training and PD for staff, and they hear it once and they say, "Oh yeah, I'm going to try that." But then twenty five other million things come up. There is no follow-up. PD needs

to be practical, actionable, and realistic. And, what better resource than people that are

also doing the same thing. (Administrator 1)

The elements of alignment and specificity repeatedly emerge in WSD 25 data and research

findings, as Darling-Hammond (2013) states, "Research suggests that professional development

activities are most effective when they address the concrete, everyday challenges involved in

teaching and learning specific academic subject matter, rather than focusing on abstract

educational principles or teaching methods taken out of context" (p. 103). This focus on tangible

takeaways transcends professional development and appears in the strategies and actions for

meaningful feedback, as well.

Feedback

To shift the evaluation model to play a more effective role in staff development with real

learning for staff, school and district leaders must develop opportunities to provide frequent,

focused feedback to educators with examples of excellent instruction aligned to the TIA. In his

process of conducting what he declares mini-observations, Kim Marshall outlines a new

approach to teacher evaluation in which school administrators visit more classrooms for less

time, stopping afterward to ensure individual meetings with the teachers. Marshall advocates for

in-person follow-up conversation as an integral part to the success of the process, with feedback

generally fitting into one or two of the following categories: praise, reinforcement, suggestions,

or criticism. Marshall (2009) shares that this conversational format was important as the "mini-

observation didn't carry a judgmental boss-employee, superior-subordinate tone and instead

became part of an ongoing dialogue between teaching and learning" (pp. 57-58). This process

can also be designed for teachers to visit teachers in the form of a Learning Walk Calendar.

Despite preconceived notions of fear and anxiety from educators being observed by colleagues, many crave the opportunity as Teacher 4 in WSD 25 shared, "I want visitors to be a part of my class, meaning they know what we're doing, and their feedback reflects that. I want a dialogue on specific teaching strategies. I need to see it to know and believe it." In order for these non-evaluative, peer-based feedback opportunities to flourish in support of the TIA, a structured schedule must be developed by district and school administrators to designate time and remove any barriers that may exist between teachers observing one another. Nelsen et al. (2009) describe this process as involving the following:

> Teachers schedule time to observe each other using the newly learned strategies. The
> instructional leadership team, administrative team, and others begin visiting classrooms
> on targeted learning walks to see what additional training or support teachers need.
> Instructional coaches schedule time to observe teachers and give feedback. Teacher
> collaboration teams meet regularly to discuss implementation of the new practices and
> the impact of the practices on student learning by looking at student work and course
> assessment data. (p. 33)

In this model of targeted learning walk opportunities, each staff member involved maintains a collective focus on the one TIA and its accompanying powerful practices. This shared focus brings more than opportunities for specific framework-based dialogue between teachers. It also contributes to improvements in the school and district culture, as educators struggle, support, and learn alongside one another, rather than the learning source stemming only from the evaluator in the traditional formal evaluation process.

In addition to learning for teachers from teachers, school administrators can also participate in the targeted learning walk procedures, both as planner and participant, based on

school and district dynamics. Regardless of approach, Marshall (2009) emphasizes that the most important outcome is that "Ideally, teachers leave feedback conversations with specific ideas for improving their practice – or a warm feeling that their work is appreciated by an intelligent and thoughtful colleague" (p. 81). In considering the program evaluation at WSD 25, this process meets the requests from teachers for more meaningful feedback while allowing school administrators to facilitate professional learning for adults on a larger scale than single evaluation cycles with staff.

The involvement of the school and/or district administrators in the learning walk process while providing feedback with colleagues also provides an opportunity to showcase the expertise and background of the administrator – especially if that background is that of a teacher. This may also have implications for the school culture for staff and administrator relationships. When the administrator is provided with a chance to relate more to teacher colleagues on a classroom and pedagogical level, relatability and trust will form. Marshall (2009) also felt this importance of relatability, and shared that "When I did give critical feedback, I found it was a winning strategy to confess that I had made the same mistake when I was a teacher…I always tried to offer a suggestion that the teacher could easily put into practice" (p. 56).

In summarizing theses data-informed and research-based strategies and actions, the following Strategies and Actions chart was developed. This chart outlines the cause and effect correlation of intentional and strategic planning for school, district, and policy-making leaders to consider when seeking to change teacher practice and positively impact student learning. In summary, this chart is intended to serve as a starting point in planning for how teacher evaluation can change instruction with consideration for the following interrelated concepts: motivational urgency; support and accountability; and, alignment of priorities for the schools and district.

Table 2

Strategies and Actions Chart

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
1. Identify one Targeted Instructional Area (TIA) consisting of powerful practices (instructional strategies) used school-wide for collective focus and shared goal-setting	**1. Analyze framework-aligned teacher evaluation data and student growth data (e.g. NWEA MAP, etc.) to identify specific areas requiring attention school-wide for goal-setting:** • Engage appropriate staff in the data analysis of evaluation and student data reports (School Administrator, Human Resources, Psychologist, Interventionist, etc.) • Utilize data trends to narrow a focus on one Targeted Instructional Area and specific framework-aligned instructional strategies that require improvement and correlate to a future increase in student learning • Gain consensus with staff on which instructional strategies to focus on implementing school-wide as a powerful practice to improve the one collective Targeted Instructional Area • Focus professional development on the Targeted Instructional Area and develop a method for assessing use of the instructional strategies while continuing to collect teacher evaluation data and student growth data
2. Align professional development to the TIA and the common instructional framework (e.g. Charlotte Danielson Framework for Learning, etc.)	**2. Develop a Professional Learning Calendar:** • Identify Teacher Institute Days • Identify school-specific opportunities for structured staff collaboration and professional learning time • Allocate time for adult learning and collaboration focused on the specific instructional strategies within the Targeted Instructional Area
3. Provide frequent, focused feedback to educators with examples of excellent instruction aligned to the TIA	**3. Create a Learning Walk calendar and system for teacher feedback for all educators:** • Develop sequence of classroom visits for teachers to observe one another implementing powerful practices aligned to the TIA • Design protocol for educators to visit classrooms and deliver non-evaluative feedback to one another with specific evidence focused on the TIA and the student learning observed during the visits (as well as a protocol for school administrators to visit classrooms to deliver evaluative feedback) • Identify teacher examples from the Learning Walk of exemplary practice for teachers to share and highlight during professional learning opportunities • Engage teachers in providing feedback regarding both the Professional Learning Calendar and the Learning Walk procedures

SECTION SEVEN: IMPLICATIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The goal of this program evaluation was to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher

evaluation practices in changing teacher instruction at Washington School District 25 (WSD 25),

one district navigating the outcomes of PERA and its requirement for the incorporation of

student growth. With the greatest intentions of meeting the requirements set forth by the 2010

Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA), the nuances of subsequent teacher evaluation

policies across districts in Illinois have strived to improve and change teaching, while following

the necessary administrative mandates from the state. For example, at the local level in WSD 25,

the majority of new policy resulting from PERA focuses on student growth:

> 30% of our teacher evaluation will be based on student MAP math (15%) and reading
>
> (15%) performance growth scores. Staff evaluation is a two-year cycle. One year of the
>
> cycle consists of previous student data (30%), while the next year consists of current
>
> professional practice (70%). [i.e. For any staff member on evaluation cycle for the 17-18
>
> school year, the 16-17SY captures the student growth data (30%) and the 17-18SY
>
> captures professional practice (70%)]. (2017-2018 Teacher Evaluation Information
>
> Packet)

While the accountability side of the teacher evaluation system was remodeled in this

district example with new components, "including those that address the use of data and

indicators of student growth as a significant factor in rating performance," the support structures

for achieving the necessary outcomes in both areas of professional practice and student growth

are completely absent (Title 23: Education and Cultural Resources, 2015). By focusing solely on

the accountability side of teaching, there is no focus on the supportive side of professional

development and the necessary adult learning to improve the instruction and increase student academic growth. As a result of these expectations and priorities assigned by the State of Illinois, a major opportunity is missed to systematically improve and change teaching by failing to identify a requirement at the state level for schools to support teachers in continuously improving with professional learning plans aligned to the components of professional practice and student growth.

<div align="center">**Policy Statement**</div>

This policy advocacy intends to reconcile the existing missed opportunity from the state to mandate a more comprehensive school improvement effort attached to teacher evaluation by focusing on the development of a requirement for schools and districts to organize systems designed to achieve the following:

1. A common instructional framework for teaching and learning;

2. Staff participation by all staff members in some variety of a job-embedded Professional Learning Community (PLC); and,

3. Frequent and flexible instructional feedback.

To best understand the complexity of these themes and the interrelatedness to teacher evaluation, Linda Darling-Hammond appropriately explains that "If teaching is to be effective, policies that construct the learning environment and the teacher context must be addressed along with qualities of individual teachers" (Darling-Hammond, 2013, p. 14). In constructing the learning environment as ascribed by Darling-Hammond, this policy recommendation advocates for a state and school level requirement for districts and schools to identify and document the one common instructional framework planned for use in all matters related to teaching and learning. Secondly, this policy recommendation calls for state policy makers to request that districts and

schools design and provide a comprehensive school-wide, job-embedded professional learning plan for all staff that is aligned to the evaluation results from teacher observations. Lastly, a repeated need has been shared throughout this study calling for increased feedback with meaningful takeaways for staff, which has implications for decisions made in local district policies and collective bargaining agreements.

<div align="center">**Analysis of Needs**</div>

The conclusions drawn from this research suggest that comprehensive adjustments to state mandates of schools to specify how support will be provided for staff development will lead to improved student learning. In analyzing the adjustments, there are implications for additional areas of focus related to the proposed changes including educational, economic, social, political and ethical arenas.

Educational Analysis

In analyzing the educational elements of these policy recommendations, the job-embedded professional learning plan would provide opportunities for staff to improve professional practice during the existing daily schedule. By giving focus to the critical components from each evaluated domain in the teachers' professional development activities, a shared focus on instructional strategies will be attached to conversations and learning that seeks to improve student growth metrics. These professional learning opportunities would always align to and explicitly state the relevant components of the common instructional framework. By revealing and discussing the common instructional framework elements in all teaching-related items across the school, staff would bring the common instructional language of teaching to life, diminishing misunderstanding about the vision of good teaching and fostering increased opportunities for collaboration to improve teacher practice.

With common language in place, opportunities for more frequent and meaningful feedback will increase as teachers discuss progress in practice and how it relates to the framework (and the varying levels of teacher practice in the framework). Yet, district-level policy decisions must first prioritize the instructional feedback process. This may include the removal of other conflicting responsibilities for school administrators, or other related staff members contributing to the development of a true Professional Learning Community (PLC).

Economic Analysis

Odden (2012) directly references the PLC element of this policy recommendation with good news to share regarding the implication of a PLC structure on the arenas of education and economics:

> The way to change culture in a school and get a more uniform deployment of effective instructional practice into all classrooms was to organize teachers into collaborative teams to work together on an ongoing basis using student data to engage in the cycle of continuous instructional improvement….using student data to constantly improve teaching practice while focusing on both individual and class learning needs. (p. 20)

Additionally, the good news for any related fiscal concerns, as addressed by Odden (2012), is as follows:

> Once a school is staffed, organizing teachers into collaborative groups requires no additional resources. It does entail paying attention to the school schedule and ensuring that all teachers in each collaborative team have at least some time during the day, if not during the week, to engage in the collaboration. (p. 21)

Inside the classrooms across WSD 25, only the school building administrator(s) (not the department leaders) conduct evaluations and observations. This condition diminishes

opportunities for collaboration, as collaboration is "about engaging, having connected conversations, and making connections as we work *together* to accomplish goals, improve leadership, and support growth and leadership development" (Drago-Severson, 2012, p. 84). Within the formal teacher observation and evaluation systems at WSD 25, there is a disconnect in the actions of the teachers and the outcome of the students, and this disconnect has a cost.

When teacher evaluation structures bear no weight from the teaching staff, neither as a performance metric nor professional learning guide, then student learning suffers. The economic side of diminished student learning can include funding implications for schools and communities, as students and families can go as far as leaving communities to attend other higher-achieving districts and schools. As a major part of communities as a whole, schools drive large sections of the current and future economy; this provides increased urgency for ensuring that each staff member is learning through professional development that aligns to best practices with specific instructional strategies outlined in a framework for good teaching.

Social Analysis

This policy is recommended in an effort to adequately fill the gap existing between the "what" of teacher evaluation that is required by the state (which is identified as professional practice and student growth), and the "how" of teacher improvement (which would include a learning-oriented plan developed by school leaders, such as district administration, school administrators, teacher-included task force structures, etc.). This professional learning plan would articulate more than the framework the school would use for teacher evaluation (e.g. Charlotte Danielson, etc.), but also the structure for instructional feedback, specifically addressing how multiple stakeholders would observe instruction, in both evaluative and non-evaluative situations. Currently, without any required road to growth, the bulk of responsibility

for improving in professional practice and student growth is placed on the teacher. Additionally, the evaluation is subjective with feedback sometimes arriving from one designated evaluator in the form of a school administrator, regardless of the school size. This is a setup for failure in terms of the social impact and unexpected results that may take place on the culture of the organization as a whole.

Political and Legal Analysis

By changing or mandating a common instructional framework for teaching and learning, requiring the involvement of staff in a PLC, and increasing and diversifying feedback, there will inevitably be implications for the collective bargaining agreements in place in schools. In *Rethinking Teacher Supervision and Evaluation,* Kim Marshall (2009) advocates for the following:

> Collective bargaining agreement with the teachers' union that supports mini-observations and evaluation rubrics and provides professional time for teacher teams to meet on curriculum and assessments at the end of the summer, during the school year (ideally weekly), and right after students leave for the summer. (p. 200)

Marshall is identifying all three elements of change advocated herein this research. This advocacy was also heard throughout teacher interviews at WSD 25 whereby staff overwhelmingly requested more immediate feedback, more actionable feedback, and more opportunities to engage with and learn from colleagues.

With discussions across schools focused on one instructional framework language, and an increase in the time spent by colleagues in observing and meeting with one another to review and consider instructional change and improvements, many legacy obstacles (challenges formed over historical time and organizational rituals) will be tested. The political and social implications of

such change can be far-reaching for the culture of a school and district, as it has the potential to draw into focus whether and to what extent the changes challenge not only the district policies, but also the past traditions and perspectives held onto by staff toward instructional observations. Particularly challenging is the anticipated discomfort that may be felt by colleagues participating in the delivery of feedback to other colleagues in non-evaluative formats. This discomfort may also reveal itself in the form of resistance and attempts by staff members to assert their moral or personal opposition to the initiative in various political and legal forms including but not limited to requests for adjustments to collective bargaining agreements and even the filing of grievances.

Moral and Ethical Analysis

The potential resistance faced by schools and districts when attempting to improve professional practice and increase student growth results from the size and scope of the change. Within any change is a varying degree of magnitude of loss for stakeholders; further, these likely challenges cannot be diminished by a mandate. As Wagner et al. (2006) describe, "The work of reinventing schools and districts is not technical work that can be controlled by fiat from the top organization. Instead it is adaptive work that requires changes in people's heads, hearts, and actions" (p. 138). A consistent focus on improving the student learning as the eventual outcome of any change is essential, regardless of the degree of moral and ethical challenges that occur.

If helpful, "to generate the much needed momentum and urgency for change, people need to fully understand the *why* behind the journey they are beginning" (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 138). One group of constituents particularly interested and deserving of an explanation of the purpose behind any adjustments to professional practice are the teachers. The teachers serve as the major lever in improving student outcomes, and therefore must be involved in the process leading up

to, and in anticipation of, any change related to a shared vision of good teaching, professional learning, and feedback opportunities.

Implications for Staff and Community Relations

Drago-Severson (2009) indicates, "Improving the ways in which we work, grow, and learn together in school systems and shaping them to be learning centers - *mentoring communities* - is critical" (p. 276). Yet, instead, the current Illinois Administrative Code provides general information for what are considered "Competencies of Qualified Evaluators" in Section 50.420, including that the evaluator "Creates, in collaboration with teachers, supportive, targeted professional development plans that consider past results, contribute to professional growth, and assist teachers in aligning professional development and goal-setting to school improvement goals" (Title 23: Education and Cultural Resources, 2015). While appropriate for evaluation to focus on professional growth and goal-setting, this competency fails to outline any additional stakeholders capable of supporting the growth of a teacher with ongoing feedback. Teacher need feedback focused on progress toward meeting the goals set for professional practice and student growth. This failure has implications for all staff.

As a result, many schools are held accountable for the growth of one another's teaching and students (especially with the passing of PERA), yet the structures for collaboration and professional learning together are not prioritized (nor required). In some cases, these structures are even missing from the school culture altogether. For example, WSD 25 adopted an all-in model whereby the staff's student growth rating is aggregated using overall performance growth scores for every teacher's classroom of students from each prior year. Yet, there is no formalized structure across the district for supporting this student growth.

Instead, this policy recommendation herein envisions a more formal and comprehensive requirement for the professional learning of adults to be prioritized in the form of participation from all staff in a true Professional Learning Community. This can be accomplished in a series of ways, such as the approach described previously, whereby staff submit a plan for their annual professional development, regardless of the degree to which they are scheduled for evaluation each year. The example and recommendation shared previously is for this plan to include a district or school level plan for teachers to observe one another's instruction, as one example, thus contributing to the formation of increased collaboration and social camaraderie as a staff.

Conclusion

A focus on outcomes alone in teacher evaluation is not enough; the growth and development of the teacher to achieve the outcomes must also be supported and monitored. Patton (2008) addresses how "The potential positive contribution of performance monitoring is captured in the mantra that *what gets measured gets done*" (p. 257). And, while this assertion may initially support the state mandated focus on student growth, Patton (2008) also emphasizes that "Well-developed and appropriate indicators both focus attention on priority outcomes and provide accountability for achieving those outcomes…measuring the wrong thing means the wrong thing gets done" (p. 257).

By only monitoring and measuring the "what" of school outcomes in the form of student growth, educators are missing the "how" that comprises all that is necessary to design and implement a true professional learning community. This policy recommendation outlines the "how" to improve professional practice and student growth at Washington School District 25, and possible other districts sharing similar obstacles and opportunities, along with a willingness to change by focusing on the following: a common instructional framework for teaching and

learning; participation by all staff members in a Professional Learning Community (PLC); and,

frequent and flexible instructional feedback.

SECTION EIGHT: CONCLUSION

Introduction

The goal of this program evaluation was to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher evaluation practices in changing teacher practices across Washington School District 25. By using the teacher evaluation procedures and practices of one district, WSD 25, opportunities were presented to explore the implications of the following research questions for any school district seeking to assess the effectiveness of teacher evaluation practices:

- Whether and to what extent teacher evaluation practices are providing motivational urgency for teachers to change instruction?

- Whether and to what extent teacher evaluation practices are providing support and accountability for teachers to change instruction?

- Whether and to what extent teacher evaluation practices, and the improvement of teacher instruction, are areas of focus, alignment, and/or priorities for the school(s) and district?

- Whether and to what extent school and district policy focus on teacher evaluation and the role of adult learning as it relates to improving student achievement?

During the program evaluation, a larger study emerged for analysis of themes in educational leadership and policy related to change leadership. Several elements were identified as necessary when seeking to systematically improve the quality of teaching in a school and district. These elements resulted from analyzing data from the study and the research gathered from best practices in the areas of teacher evaluation, professional development, and adaptive leadership.

Supported by the 4 C's framework of Wagner et al. (2012), the study focused deeply on the areas of context, culture, conditions, and competencies. In this analysis, the following three elements stood out as necessary for school districts to consider when seeking to implement a

teacher evaluation system with the potential to improve teacher practices: context of shared instructional focus; culture of job-embedded and framework-aligned professional learning; and, conditions and competencies for meaningful feedback. At the crux of these three components for an effective teacher evaluation system there was a reappearing theme, expressed as a craving by teachers, school administrators, and best practices in research. That theme was the need for systematic alignment in schools and districts across all areas related to teaching and learning.

Discussion

The concept of systematic alignment resulted from the focus of this program evaluation, which had the larger goal of developing a playbook of effective, high-impact, and research-based teacher evaluation practices that improve teacher instruction. While seemingly simplistic to focus on alignment of all actions and outcomes in teaching and learning, achieving alignment is difficult, both at WSD 25 and across research on the topic of teacher evaluation. For example, Wagner et al. (2012) appropriately articulate the following obstacle facing schools and districts:

> Various agendas get translated into new and unrelated priorities and programs to be enacted aby the school or district. These conditions have caused many educators to move beyond appropriate responsiveness to a position of reaction. School and district administrators feel compelled to react even more quickly to urgent problems that arise in daily administration. (p. 65)

The reactiveness of educational leaders that Wagner et al. (2012) capture was also echoed from the school administrators interviewed during the program evaluation, such as Administrator 3 in stating how "Some teachers take their learning to teams, but it never comes in or leaves to other classrooms outside the school." Such reactiveness can lead to disconnected practices with far-reaching and dangerous implications for teachers and students, especially in the absence of

alignment to larger school or district priorities related to teaching and learning. In the study, Teacher 6 shared how reactive feedback was also disconnected from teaching practices and targeted instructional strategies, stating "I didn't really get feedback about trying new strategies; questioning was one of my strengths, and I didn't really even know why that was a strength."

Such a disconnect, as described in these administrator and teacher experiences, reveals the ineffectiveness of the WSD 25 teacher evaluation practices in changing teacher instruction, thus addressing the purpose of this process. More specifically, the purpose of this research was to discover the following three key items:

1. How school administrators perceive and use the existing teacher evaluation procedures and tools (e.g. WSD 25 evaluation kit) to change teacher instruction?

2. How teachers perceive and use the existing teacher evaluation procedures and tools (e.g. WSD 25 evaluation kit) to change instruction?

3. How teacher evaluation at WSD 25 is aligned to other school or district priorities, initiatives, goals, and plans?

The organizational change plan outlined in Sections Five and Six, as well as the Table 2. Strategies and Actions Chart, all share how powerful outcomes can be when a comprehensive and systematic approach is taken in the process of involving staff in the following: selecting a Targeted Instructional Area (TIA), developing aligned professional development, and providing meaningful feedback. Yet, policy must also align to these three key areas.

To create meaningful and sustainable change, the policy advocacy herein calls for a state and school level requirement for districts and schools to utilize one common instructional framework for all matters related to instruction, adult learning, and student learning. Also, this study calls on districts and schools to deliver a comprehensive school-wide, job-embedded

professional learning plan. Most importantly, this plan must be aligned to and based upon the evaluation results from teacher observations, whether disaggregated as a school or by areas for growth for each individual teacher (based on the TIA for the school or district). The final policy advocated for as a result of this study stemmed directly from individual teacher feedback during the interview process.

The staff members involved overwhelming requested more meaningful and frequent feedback regarding their teacher practices in the classroom, which led to the recommendation for more targeted learning opportunities in the professional learning plan in order to foster collegial inquiry and peer learning. At first surprising because of the desire expressed for more commentary on personal teaching, this finding also sparked personal learning for my own reflection as a leader. It served as a reminder to always assume positive intent of others, as the interview participants clearly expressed their interest in continuously improving.

Leadership Lessons

As a leader, this study emphasized the importance of achieving a balanced perspective when seeking to consider and implement organizational changes. As Heifetz et al. (2017) state, "Few practical ideas are more obvious or more critical than the need to get perspective in the midst of action" (p. 51). Amazing perspective was gained for my own leadership in the process of gathering data from the nine staff members involved in this study, allowing for an organic arrival at themes that carry the power to improve teaching and leadership practices, as well as increase learning opportunities for students in the classroom. These findings would not have been possible without the shared feelings, experiences, and perspectives from the interviewees.

As a result of this program evaluation and the research studied, I was also reminded of how critically important it is to learn from others. In learning from others, I was surprised by the

speed and ease of developing a staff engagement interview process; the structure and approach

included minimal demands for my time and effort as a leader; and, yet the results and

information revealed were invaluable. In essence, this study eliminated excuses for me as a

leader to not listen and learn from others.

The varying perspectives shared from staff also emphasized how important it is as a

leader to recognize and honor the innate individuality of people. Drago-Severson (2012) explains

how the "Constructive-developmental theory helps us understand that adults will experience the

same activities differently, so being intentional about attending to developmental diversity is key

when designing holding environments and professional learning opportunities" (p. 139). As a

leader, this focus on individuality also emphasizes the role leadership must play in aligning staff

around a common vision of good teaching and opportunities. By supporting staff to see the

direction of the school and district, the work of learning with and from one another to achieve

shared outcomes becomes more tangible and realistic.

To arrive at the same destination with teacher evaluation improving teaching practices for

a school or district, leaders must support staff to see the strategies and actions will take. As

outlined in Section Six, the common understanding of exemplary teaching can be supported

through a shared instructional focus using one framework for teaching. Variations of job-

embedded professional learning exist in multiple formats that can be achieved through targeted

learning walks or instructional rounds - just two examples similar to the recommendations in

Section Six of this research. Both of these models for professional learning provide "a very

concrete, experimental model of meaningful ways for adults to work with one another" (City et

al., 2009, p. 174). At the core of such job-embedded professional learning there exists a similar

element of adult learning to that of the personal leadership lesson shared in this section regarding

the importance of learning from others. Every member of the school and district organization must approach the work of teacher evaluation and changing practices as a learner.

Conclusion

With schools and districts existing as learning organizations, one reflection resulting from this study is this need for a focus on learning for all, including not only students but also the adults serving students. Given the literature explored in Section Two and the research cited throughout, adults learn best from one another when the process is job-embedded, and the feedback is meaningful. Smith et al. (2015) emphasize the collaborative nature of professional learning in stating that it is best achieved when staff have multiple opportunities for "providing feedback to and securing feedback from teachers as a result of frequent classroom observations that help them (teachers) to answer the question, 'Where to next?' in relation to identified learning intentions" (p. 37). In working together to reach whatever is next in the path toward the shared vision of the district and school, systems must be designed for colleagues to teach one another about powerful instructional practices. When teaching one another, a system for feedback emerges which is more meaningful and actionable, leading to a more supportive model that is not solely evaluative, but that is also supportive.

In closing, it is important to draw attention to the role of educational leaders as designers and choreographers of learning systems similar to those outlined here, as the leaders establish the system and culture for learning. In the text, *Thanks for the Feedback,* realistic acknowledgement is provided to the systematic challenges facing leaders seeking the organizational change ascribed to in this study. Related to improving how adults learn, Stone et al. (2015) state the following:

Systems will always be imperfect. We should work to improve them, but that can only

take us so far. The greatest leverage is helping the people inside the system communicate

more effectively, and as between giver and receiver, it's the receiver's skills that have the

most impact. We need to equip receivers to create *pull* – to drive their own learning, to

seek honest as well as supportive mirrors, to speak up when they need additional

appreciation or coaching or are confused about where they stand. As each receiver

becomes more skilled at receiving – at creating pull – the organization gets better at it,

too. We *pull together*. (pp. 294-295)

It is this word, together, that I choose to close with, as no teacher can improve teaching alone;

and, no school or district leader can improve teacher practice alone. Everyone must work

together to create a community of learners.

As Danielson (2000) shares, a community of learners can form when systems exist for

teachers to collaborate on a project, such as the job-embedded professional learning involved in

the practice of targeted learning walks, as described in Section Six. When working together,

teachers "feel themselves to be, a small group in pursuit of common learning. There is no

difference in status – all individuals are of equal rank – and all are engaged in activities to

advance their understanding" (Danielson, 2000, p. 25). When working together, barriers

impeding the necessary professional learning can be diminished and even removed entirely. Yet,

a community of learners "does not happen by itself; schools must create it" by working together

(Danielson, 2000, p. 25).

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APPENDIX A: Interview Informed Consent—Adult Participants

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. This form outlines the purposes of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

- I consent to participate in a research project conducted by Scott Grens, doctoral student at National Louis University located in Chicago, Illinois.
- I understand that this study is entitled: "Teacher Evaluation Practices in Washington School District 25: Effective Strategies for Changing Instruction."
- The purpose of this qualitative methodology study is to assess whether and to what extent teacher evaluation practices are changing instruction through the perspectives of principals and teachers in the small suburban school district of Washington School District 25.
- I understand that my participation will consist of one interview lasting between 15 and 50 minutes in length. I understand that I will receive a copy of my transcribed interview at which time I will have the opportunity to clarify information.
- I understand that my participation may consist of one to three classroom observations lasting between 15 and 50 minutes in length. I understand that any observation of instruction will in no way be used for evaluative purposes.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time.
- I understand that my identity will be kept confidential by the researcher and will not be attached to the data. I understand that only the research, Scott Grens, will have access to the notes from the interview and that the transcripts will be maintained in a secure file.
- I understand that in the event that I have questions or require additional information I may contact the researcher, Scott Grens, (708) 650-2677, email address: sgrens@my.nl.edu.
- If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that you feel have not been addressed by me, you may contact my Dissertation Chair: Dr. Harrington Gibson, National Louis University, 5202 Old Orchard Rd., Skokie, IL, 60077; email address Harrington.Gibson@my.nl.edu.

_____   _____
Participant Name (Print)   Participant Signature   Date

_____   _____
Researcher Name (Print)   Researcher Signature   Date

APPENDIX B: Interview Invitation Email

Dear Educators,

Your input is needed! I am conducting a program evaluation of the school district's teacher evaluation program. I would like to learn about and include some qualitative data to provide greater context and depth to the survey results.

You are invited to participate in a one-on-one interview. It should last approximately 45-60 minutes. I am interested in documenting diverse perspectives on teacher evaluation and identifying important patterns across grade levels and school buildings within the district.

The interviews will take place with 9 staff members (2 primary grade teachers, 2 intermediate grade teachers, 2 middle school teachers, and 3 school administrators).

Please indicate your willingness to participate by replying back to this email stating your willingness to participate. If you are willing, I will then provide you with an informed consent form and a proposed meeting date/time. Please be assured that your identity and interview responses will remain anonymous. Alphanumeric labels will be used on all transcripts. Recordings and transcript will be held using my password-protected laptop and destroyed at the conclusion of my study. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your consideration,

Scott Grens

APPENDIX C: Interview Questions

PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION: Whether and to what extent is the teacher evaluation process changing teacher practices in Washington School District 25?

SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS (TEACHERS):

1. As a teacher, how would you describe your experience(s) with the teacher evaluation process in Washington School District 25?
2. Whether and to what extent is the teacher evaluation process providing urgency for you as a teacher to change practice(s)?
3. Whether and to what extent is the teacher evaluation process providing support for you as a teacher to change practice(s)?
4. Whether and to what extent is the teacher evaluation process providing accountability for you as a teacher to change practice(s)?
5. Whether and to what extent is the teacher evaluation process motivating you as a teacher to try new instructional strategies?
6. Whether and to what extent are other non-evaluator stakeholders involved in changing your practice(s) as a teacher?
7. As a teacher, whether and to what extent is your current teaching focused on improving a component of instruction resulting from a previous evaluation? Can you explain?
8. Whether and to what extent are the existing teacher evaluation procedures and tools (e.g. WSD 25 "Evaluation Kit") changing your instruction and practice(s)? Can you explain?
9. As a teacher, which instructional tools and resources are most beneficial in changing your practice(s) and instructional strategies?
10. Whether and to what extent is teacher evaluation at WSD 25 aligned to other school or district priorities, initiatives, goals, and plans?

SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS (SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS):

1. As a school administrator, how would you describe your experience(s) with the teacher evaluation process in Washington School District 25?
2. Whether and to what extent is the teacher evaluation process providing urgency for teachers to change practice(s)?
3. Whether and to what extent is the teacher evaluation process providing support for teachers to change practice(s)?
4. Whether and to what extent is the teacher evaluation process providing accountability for teachers to change practice(s)?
5. Whether and to what extent is the teacher evaluation process motivating teachers to try new instructional strategies?
6. Whether and to what extent are other non-evaluator stakeholders involved in changing the practice(s) for teachers?
7. As a school administrator, which tools and resources are most beneficial in your role of changing the practice(s) and instructional strategies of teachers?

8. As a school administrator, whether and to what extent are the existing teacher evaluation procedures and tools (e.g. WSD 25 "Evaluation Kit") effective in changing teacher instruction?
9. As a school administrator, which tools and resources are most beneficial in your role of changing the practice(s) and instructional strategies of teachers?
10. Whether and to what extent is teacher evaluation at WSD 25 aligned to other school or district priorities, initiatives, goals, and plans?

APPENDIX D: Washington School District 25 Evaluation Kit

Informal Observation Feedback

Name: Assignment:

Date: Time:

Comments:

Areas to Consider:

Strengths:

Teacher Reflection:

Teacher Signature: Date:

Evaluator Signature: Date:

Formal Pre Observation Teacher Planning Form

Teacher: Subject:

Grade Level: Date:

Evaluator:

Planning and Preparation Questions for Discussion:

1. To what part of your curriculum does this lesson relate? (1a)

2. How does the learning in this lesson fit in with the sequence of learning for this class? (1a, 1e)

3. Briefly describe the students in your class. Address any students with special learning needs. (1b)

4. What are your learning outcomes for this lesson? What do you want students to understand? (1c)

5. How will you engage students in learning? What will you do? What will the students do? Will the students work in groups, independently, or in a large group? Please provide any worksheets or materials that the students will be using. (1e, 3c)

6. How will you differentiate instruction to meet the needs of the students? (1e, 3c)

7. How and when will you know whether the students have learned what you intended? (1f, 3e)

8. Is there anything that you would like me to specifically observe? (Domain 2 and 3)

9. Do you plan to integrate technology into the lesson? If so, how?

10. Are there any special circumstances that I should be aware of that will occur during the observation?

Formal Post Observation Teacher Planning Form

Teacher: Subject:

Grade Level: Date:

1. In general, how successful was the lesson? Did the students learn what you intended them to learn?

2. To what extent were the lesson's goals and objectives appropriate for your students?

3. If you have student work samples, what do they reveal about the students' level of engagement and understanding? Do they suggest modifications in how you might teach this lesson in the future?

4. To what extent were your assessment strategies effective? Would you make any changes in your approach to assessment? If so, what changes would you make, and why?

5. Please comment on your classroom procedures, your use of physical space, and the students' conduct. To what extent did the classroom environment contribute to students learning?

6. Did you make any modifications/adjustments to your plan during the lesson? If so, what were they, and what motivated these changes?

7. To what extent was your feedback to the students accurate, substantive, constructive, specific, and/or timely? How might you have responded differently?

8. Please describe an instance in which your feedback positively affected a student's learning.

9. Consider different aspects of your planning and execution in light of the domains. What evidence exists, and what does that evidence demonstrate about your performance?

Formal Post Observation Evaluator Feedback Form

Teacher Name: Date:

Strengths:

Areas for Growth:

Specific Student Needs:

Goals:

Post Observation Outcomes

To determine appropriate purpose and approximate date for the next pre-conference:

Month	Subject	Notes

Focus for future observations:

Teacher Signature _____

Evaluator Signature_____

APPENDIX E: As Is Diagnostic Tool

"As Is" 4 C's Analysis for Washington School District 25 (WSD 25)

Context
1. Three schools, three principals, and one mission
2. In 2010, a Teacher Evaluation Task Force Committee was formed to review new state evaluation requirements (PERA) and make recommendations
3. 70% of teacher evaluation will be based on teaching performance, and 30% will be based on school-wide student growth from prior year using MAP [math (15%) and reading (15%)]
4. Evaluation procedures and frequency determined by teacher contract rules
5. WSD 25 adopted Charlotte Danielson educator evaluation framework for developing professional practice

Culture
1. Detachment of evaluations from teacher professional development
2. Limited cycle or reference to professional development from evaluation to evaluation
3. Limited District-level focus on educator evaluation, evaluator calibration, and analysis of school-wide student growth data
4. Inflated educator expectations of evaluation ratings due to past ratings and lack of Charlotte Danielson framework knowledge
5. Limited collegial inquiry and time devoted for reflection and collaboration

Conditions
1. Evaluations and observations conducted by only the school building administrator(s), not department leaders
2. Educators receive two biennial evaluations if tenured (one formal / one informal)
3. Educators receive three annual evaluations if non-tenured (two formal / one informal)
4. Observations rate Domains 2 and 3 of Charlotte Danielson educator evaluation framework, not the performance of a teacher's students
5. Professional development varies across district, existing only at school-level with minimal reference to evaluation findings nor Charlotte Danielson Framework

The teacher evaluation process provides limited motivation, support, and accountability for teachers to improve the quality of teaching practice.

Competencies
1. Administrators all use common WSD 25 "Evaluation Kit" handouts in evaluation
2. Procedural steps for delivery of WSD 25 "Evaluation Kit" to educator(s) vary by administrator
3. No support structures exist to ensure properly trained, nor calibrated evaluators
4. Educators lack authentic awareness of specific evidence of effective teaching, as defined by Charlotte Danielson framework
5. Educators generally present a shared desire to perform effectively and rate high on the teacher evaluation ratings and procedures

APPENDIX F: To Be Diagnostic Tool

"To Be" 4 C's Analysis for Washington School District 25 (WSD 25)

Context

1. 3 schools, 3 principals, 1 mission
2. The Teacher Evaluation Task Force Committee will meet regularly to review evaluation data and make recommendations for aligned professional learning opportunities
3. 70% of teacher evaluation will be based on teaching performance, and 30% will be based on school-wide student growth from prior year using MAP [math (15%) and reading (15%)]
4. Evaluation procedures and frequency determined by teacher contract rules and student learning (growth) data
5. Charlotte Danielson educator evaluation framework reviewed and referenced regularly by non-evaluators

Culture

1. Alignment of evaluations to teacher professional development opportunities
2. Ongoing, intensive professional development with application to evaluation and instruction
3. District-level review of evaluation ratings; and, ongoing professional development for evaluator calibration and instructional planning using student growth data
4. Realistic educator expectations of evaluation ratings due to knowledge of common framework
5. Collective expertise is fostered through devoted time for reflection and collaboration

Conditions

1. Evaluations conducted by the school building administrator(s), and non-evaluative observations are conducted by department leaders (at times, alongside the building administrator)
2. Educators receive two annual evaluations if tenured (one formal / one informal)
3. Educators receive three annual evaluations if non-tenured (two formal / one informal)
4. Observations rate Domains 1, 2 and 3 of Charlotte Danielson educator evaluation framework and focus on reviewing the performance of a teacher's students
5. Professional development plan exists across district, with diverse team of stakeholders assembled to maintain a focus on evaluation findings and alignment of adult learning to the Charlotte Danielson Framework

The teacher evaluation process provides motivation, support, and accountability for teachers to improve the quality of teaching practice.

Competencies

1. Administrators all use common WSD 25 "Evaluation Kit" handouts in evaluation
2. Procedural steps for delivery of WSD 25 "Evaluation Kit" to educator(s) will be consistent from administrator to administrator
3. Biannual professional development occurs to ensure properly trained and calibrated evaluators
4. Educators possess authentic awareness of specific evidence of effective teaching, as defined by Charlotte Danielson framework
5. Educators all present a shared desire to perform effectively on the teacher evaluation ratings, but major focus is to increase student growth