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## Elementary Principals' Follow-Through in Teacher Evaluation to Improve Instruction

Suzanne Elizabeth Arrington

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ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS' FOLLOW-THROUGH IN TEACHER EVALUATION TO  
IMPROVE INSTRUCTION

by

Suzanne Elizabeth Arrington

(Under the Direction of Lucindia Chance)

ABSTRACT

Today, school administrators view teacher evaluation as a way to improve instruction and remove mediocre teachers from the system; however, while much is teacher evaluation, there is still much to learn. This study explored how school principals being written about employed follow-through with teacher evaluation systems for the purpose of increased student learning. This study makes both theoretical and practical contributions to the fields of education and school leadership.

This was a qualitative study, using semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and a thorough review of the teacher evaluation documents in a small county in Georgia as the method of data collection. Purposeful sampling of tenured teachers, from all four elementary schools in one county, was used to select participants for the focus groups. The four elementary principals from the same four schools were interviewed as well as the county office administrator in charge of teacher evaluations.

An open coding method of analysis was used to analyze and interpret the data. Four broad categories of themes emerged from the data to address the research questions: (a) Leaders' beliefs about follow-through to teacher evaluation, (b) Teachers' beliefs about follow-through to teacher evaluation, (c) Strategies to improve evaluation and follow-through, and (d) Policies and procedures must be clear and current for follow-through to occur.

Several conclusions were drawn from the findings: (1) Principals consider teacher evaluation of low performing teachers an important part of their job description. (2) Principals implement strategies related to structure, time, and opportunities. (3) High performing teachers rarely received valuable feedback on teacher evaluations that lead to improved instruction. (4) Most teachers had extreme emotions towards teacher evaluations; they either feared them or felt validated by them, there were few emotions in between. (5) Principals who were dedicated to the follow-through of teacher evaluation procedures had teachers who were more likely to be comfortable about the process. (6) Principals implement a variety of strategies to manage the time consuming challenges of teacher evaluation. (7) County policies need to change to include current standards-based evaluation methods. (8) Traditional formal evaluations do not adequately measure instruction. (9) Because teachers felt they learn better from observing other teachers, there should be a requirement for peer evaluation built into the system.

**INDEX WORDS:** Teacher Evaluation, Accountability, Follow-through, Principals, Highly Qualified, Use of Data, Administrators, Commitment, Collaboration, Tenure

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by

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is lovingly dedicated to the following individuals: My late mother, Carol Solomon who passed away the same year I began my education career. It was her eternal support and attention to my girls that allowed me to become an educator. To my father, Richard Solomon, who engrained the importance of education in my soul. I could not forget my four beautiful and intelligent children, Lauren, Sarah, Barry II, and Carter, who are my real legacy, and my husband, Barry Arrington I, who became both mother and father to my children while I pursued my degree. It was his faith in me that has allowed me to reach my goals. Thank you for your support when I needed it most.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”  
(Mandela, 1990).

#### **The Teacher Evaluation Process**

Teacher excellence is an important goal for the success of the teacher evaluation process. The job of the administrator includes leading teachers to this excellence. Teacher ability and performance is a vital part of that instructional process, which can be monitored by evaluation instruments, with the goal being to improve instruction and ensure continuous improvement of teacher’s skills.

The follow-through of the administrator to the teacher evaluation process is the key to the growth and development of high quality teachers. Therefore, principals can only implement the teacher evaluation process successfully, for the improvement of both low and high performing teachers, if they are committed to the practice and believe in the results (Peterson, 2000). The importance of this process and the feedback that it creates has increased with the current trend of teacher accountability (Kyriakides, Demetiou, & Charlambous, 2006). Organizational commitment is widely recognized in research and theory as a necessary element in the successful evaluation of teachers (Colby, Bradshaw, & Joyner, 2004).

#### **Background of the Study**

Teacher evaluation is a required practice used by administrators for the improvement of instruction and the accountability of teachers. The priority given to teacher evaluation by

systems and administrators heightens the positive effects of the process (Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin, & Bernstein, 1984).

The focus of teacher evaluation has changed from control to accountability (Brandt, 2000; Kyriakides, Demetiou, & Charlambous, 2006).

Requirements of The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, signed into law by the Bush administration in 2002, correlate the teacher evaluation process with accountability and assessment of students (Jorgensen & Hoffman, 2003; Tucker & Stronge, 2005).

### **History of Accountability in the United States**

Educational reform began in 1965 when President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) into law as a part of the legislative War on Poverty. The ESEA has been revised every five to seven years since its inception. The National Commission on Excellence in Education Report, called *A Nation at Risk*, led to the passage of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Jorgensen & Hoffman, 2003). This act reauthorized the ESEA of 1965, and aimed federal funding on poor schools with low achieving students. Title I, aimed at improving education for disadvantaged children, is what remains of this legislation. The latest revision, passed by Congress in 2001, NCLB was the next obvious step for a country committed to improving education because it included the performance of students as a direct result of teacher skill. With the emphasis now on accountability, teacher evaluation processes in schools require administrators to ensure that all students learn skills and knowledge through standards-based instruction (Jorgensen & Hoffman, 2003).

### **History of Accountability in Georgia**

The Quality Basic Education Act of 1985 mandated that trained evaluators should assess the performance of all certified professionals employed by the state of Georgia (O.C.G.A. 20-2-210). Leaders from the state of Georgia developed the *Georgia Teacher Evaluation Program: Evaluation Manual* (1993) in response to the ESEA mandate. The manual includes the Georgia Teacher Observation Instrument (GTOI) and the Georgia Teachers Duties and Responsibilities Instrument (GTDRI). The evaluation tool was designed to improve instruction in Georgia (Georgia Teacher Evaluation Program: Evaluation Manual, 1993).

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has recently developed a new evaluation process with a standards-based approach. The widely used Georgia Teacher Evaluation Process (GTEP), which consists of one to three annual formal observations, is outdated because it does not correlate with the required standards-based teaching techniques (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). The state of Georgia is in the pilot stage of the new teacher evaluation program entitled Class Keys, (Classroom Analysis of State Standards), that is designed to answer three guiding questions: 1) How does a teacher plan?, 2) How does a teacher teach?, And 3) Are the students learning? The overall setup of the evaluation is a rubric that follows the *Georgia Keys to Quality*, a division of the Georgia Framework for Accomplished Teaching, designed to foster improvement of teacher skills and practices. The evaluation tool is divided into five domains. Each of the five domains contains elements that clarify the specific objectives. The five domains are as follows: Standards/Curriculum and Planning, Standards-based Instruction, Assessment/Student Learning, Student Achievement,



and Professionalism (Georgia Department of Education Teacher Evaluation System Standards, 2008).

### **Motivations for Teacher Evaluation**

Businesses have used data for years to determine best practices in the work place. The more information you have the better your response will be to the needs of students in the school system. Professionals no longer have to guess what instruction is the most effective for specific groups of students or what practices are not effective in developing the learning processes. Research based strategies that are proven to be beneficial are available and documented as successful. Instructional practices that do not promote student learning can be determined, and eliminated, by the use of data collection. Schools that are successful, have faculty that are aware of what they are implementing to continue improvement (Bernhardt, 2004).

### **Data and Teacher Evaluation**

Because of recent reform initiatives, managing the learning environment has brought new meaning for teachers and administrators. Controlling student behavior has transformed into engaging students in learning. According to Brandt (2000), evaluation tools need to be completely revamped to reflect the standards-based approach to teaching that is being put into practice today after the implementation of NCLB. According to Peterson (2006), the incorporation of student data into teacher evaluations is the single most important factor in the success of the process. Researchers have shown a correlation between teacher evaluation and student achievement (Gallagher, 2004; Kimball, 2004; Kleinhenz & Ingvarson, 2004; Milanowski, 2004).

Teacher evaluation processes were developed to determine the effects of instruction on student achievement. Including teachers in the evaluation process creates more credibility and lasting results. Principals who take an active role in the development of the evaluation process have a deeper understanding of the process and are taken more seriously by the teachers they are evaluating (Kerston, 2005 & Peterson, 2006). Researchers, however, have shown that educators consider formal evaluations unimportant, thus seriously demeaning the entire process (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Peterson, 2006). Kleinhenz and Ingvarson (2004) found that teachers perceive formal evaluations as insulting and as having no real effect on their performance.

Teacher evaluation is a necessary tool to judge the ability of both low and high achieving professionals because there is no consistent product to evaluate. Professionals in the field of education require feedback to measure their skills and therefore, improve instruction (Kyriakides et al, 2006). Educators may perceive anything less than a satisfactory score as a personal attack on the teacher being evaluated and not as an opportunity for teachers to improve their teaching skills. To combat the stigma, administrators must give quality feedback, which guides teachers toward self-improvement through a standards-based approach (Collins, 2004; Feeney, 2007).

Researchers found that principals who included teachers in the evaluation process had positive results with the process that lead to improved instruction (Embrey & Jones, 1996). Other researchers concluded that ninety-five percent of the subjects found the criteria for teacher evaluation to be appropriate when they were included in the development of the instrument (Kyriakides et al., 2006).

A variety of different methods for teacher evaluation exist which include formal and informal observations, peer observations, and detailed portfolios (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2002; Fraser, Ogden, Platt, & Tripp, 2000; Gefler, Xu, & Peggy, 2004; Pecheone & Chung, 2006). One method of collecting data are with a personal portfolio created by teachers. The portfolio is considered an authentic assessment of the teacher's performance because it displays a variety of teaching methods and opportunities throughout the year (Gefler et al., 2004). Standards-based evaluation approaches have the ability to improve teacher performance and therefore improve student learning (Milanowski, 2004). The practice of peer coaching, as an alternative to formal principal evaluation, was strongly advocated by both teachers and principals. This method provides feedback from a variety of sources (Goldstein & Noguera, 2006; Xu, 2001). In contrast, Kleinhenz and Ingvarson (2004) concluded that change occurs at the administrative level of influence and not at the classroom level.

### **Follow-through of Principals**

Principals regularly find fault with teacher quality and performance, even though their formal assessments find almost all teachers satisfactory. Principals doubt themselves when making evaluative decisions about teacher competence because they lack sufficient time to follow-through with the requirements of the evaluation system (Goldstein & Noguera, 2006).

According to Fullan and Hargreaves (1992), the most crucial role of the principal is the responsibility to mold and develop effective teachers. However, many instructional leaders who agreed with this statement felt that they were not capable of accomplishing the goal. Administrators must give quality feedback, which guides teachers toward self-improvement, through a standards-based approach (Collins, 2004; Feeney, 2007). Administrators must be

committed to using the evaluation system correctly to encourage appropriate professional learning for educators (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; DuFour et al., 2002).

Administrators routinely carry out teacher observations as a job requirement for their positions. Many different instruments are available to evaluate educators with a variety of collected data. Administrators should consider many factors when evaluating teachers, such as years of experience and amount of training. However, most evaluations yield the same data regardless of these factors (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

A major concern of administrators for evaluating teachers is the time required to gather the data and organize it into any meaningful format. Without this important step in the process, there is no continuity in the process to assure professional growth at an appropriate rate (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Davenport and Anderson (2002) examined the priority given to teacher evaluation at the district level and at the school level. Results suggested that high priority assigned by administrators, yielded high results from teachers.

Organizational commitment is widely recognized in research as an important factor in the evaluation of teachers. Principals are the instructional leaders of the school and therefore, should spend a great deal of time in the classroom monitoring the instruction (Davenport & Anderson, 2002). Kersten and Israel (2005), report that administrators can make a difference in educators' abilities to teach, but time constraints often prevent them from successfully implementing a data driven approach to improvement of teacher skills. Connections between teacher evaluation and improvement of teacher skills require a significant amount of effort from educational leaders. Without the support of administrators, teacher evaluation has little impact on improvement of teacher skills (Colby, Bradshaw, & Joyner, 2004). Principals consider goal setting, teacher-principal conferences, and improvement of curriculum and

instruction as the most effective parts of teacher evaluation. Principals would like to spend more time with teachers and teachers would have like to see their principals more often in their classrooms (Xu, 2001).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Looking at principals' follow-through to the evaluation process reveals a connection to the development of quality teachers. Research concerning the evaluation process of teachers includes collection of data and the importance of feedback and follow-through in the continuous improvement of teacher performance. The task of teacher evaluation, identified in the research, has become more important with the increased public demand for accountability of highly qualified teachers.

Although researchers have clearly described the processes and implications for successful teacher evaluation, the literature is less clear as to principal's commitment and follow-through to the use of data to enhance the instruction of low performing as well as high performing teachers. There were no clear findings in the literature outlining the principals' use of the data collected from teacher evaluations and the appropriate approaches to continuous teacher growth and development. There were no specific studies addressing the commitment and follow-through of the evaluation process by principals in Georgia. Therefore, the overarching purpose of this study is to examine the follow-through of elementary principals toward the teacher evaluation process as it relates to the improvement of instruction.

### **Research Questions**

The researcher examined the following questions:

1. How do elementary principals use the data collected in the teacher evaluation process for improving the performance of low performing teachers?

2. How do elementary principals use the data collected in the teacher evaluation process for the purpose of improving the performance of high performing teachers?
3. How do teachers perceive the commitment and follow-through of elementary principals regarding teacher evaluation?
4. How do system policies support or hinder the evaluation process of elementary school teachers?

### **Significance of the Study**

Although much appears in the literature about the importance of teacher evaluation, few studies have focused on the principal's use of the data collected from the teacher evaluation process. Without the commitment to the process, the intended purpose of teacher improvement may be non-existent. This study triangulated the data of elementary school administration, teachers, and county office documents related to the teacher evaluation process to examine the principals' use of data to improve classroom instruction.

### **Procedures**

The purpose of this study is was understand the commitment and follow-through of principals to the teacher evaluation process. In this study, a descriptive, qualitative methodology was implemented by use of multiple sources to collect information for the case study regarding the follow-through of principals to the evaluation process. The researcher triangulated information from interviews with a county office administrator, three elementary principals and one assistant principal from four elementary schools, a focus group of teachers from each of the four schools, and a review of district policy documents associated with teacher observations as well as data from previous evaluations. Interview questions are based

on the current research and were related to the commitment and follow-through of principals to the evaluation practices. Research questions based on the review of literature were used to guide the interviews. The researcher developed the interview protocol (Glesne, 2006) and used a pilot study that included an alternate administrator and four teachers.

The participants for this study included elementary principals, county office administration, and teachers in a small rural public school system. The researcher invited all elementary principals in the county to participate in the interview process. The principal of one school was not available so the assistant principal completed the interview process in her place. A sample of teachers with tenure was used for the focus groups at each of the four elementary schools. Each group included one nationally certified teacher or a teacher with a masters degree or higher. Tenure requires that a teacher have taught for three consecutive years in the same system and offered a fourth contract. This qualification insured that all teachers involved in the study were familiar with the teacher evaluation process. This involves developing a framework of the variables that might influence an individual's contribution, and was based on the researcher's practical knowledge of the research area, the available literature, and evidence from the study itself (Marshall, 1996). Teachers who agree to participate were asked to meet at a convenient location, and were provided snacks and drinks. A door prize was awarded to one teacher through a drawing process in order to encourage enough participants to get a meaningful sample for each of the four focus groups.

There are four elementary school principals and a county office administrator, in charge of teacher evaluation, in the county. Along with teachers in the schools, all four were asked to participate in the interview portion of the study. Interviews were held at the

convenience of the participants and in their own schools to ensure a sense of comfort during the interview sessions (Creswell, 2003).

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Before beginning data collection, the researcher obtained permission and support of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Georgia Southern University (See Appendix H). Permission was also obtained from the school system where the study occurred. Once permission was obtained, focus turned to the data collection of the study. An introductory message explained the relevance of the study and the guidelines for protecting the name and school of each participant. The researcher used a specialized software program to transcribe the interviews and focus groups. All transcription was read carefully to check for accuracy. The researcher analyzed the data collected. Qualitative software programs have been developed to assist researchers in creating, managing, and analyzing qualitative databases.

The case study consisted of interviews with two county office administrators, three elementary principals, one assistant principal, four teacher focus groups, a review of policies, and a summary of past teacher evaluations provided by the local county office related to the teacher evaluation process. The researcher taped the interviews and focus groups, transcribed them for analysis of common themes and patterns, and compared the results of the principals and board administrators to that of teachers, and existing board policies (Creswell, 2003). The researcher used an open coding technique to determine common themes and patterns found in the participants' responses (Glesne, 2006). All school policies relating to teacher evaluation were reviewed for comparison to the data collected from interviews and focus groups.



### **Limitations**

1. The study may be limited by the researcher's unintentional bias in seeking themes and patterns in the data.
2. Administrators and teachers may not be completely forthcoming in their own commitment to the teacher evaluation process.

### **Delimitations**

1. The researcher realizes that the results of this study may not generalize due to the limited selection of participants.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

1. *Accountability*: Delivering results (Marzano, 2005). Teacher evaluation is one method used to determine the accountability of teachers.
2. *County Office Administrators*: Leaders of an academic institution responsible for the maintenance and supervision of the institution (Fraser, R., Ogden, W., Platt, A., & Tripp, C., 2000). For the purpose of this study, administrators include the personnel director and the Title I director for the county.
3. *Collaboration*: A process where two or more people or organizations work together in an intersection of common goals (DuFour & Eaker, 2002).
4. *Commitment*: The tendency of strategies to persist over time (Ghemawat, 1991). The dedication to the follow-through of teacher evaluation process.
5. *Elementary Principal*: Under direction, serve as the chief administrative officer of an elementary school to facilitate the development of a professional learning

community public and community relations activities; perform other related functions as directed. Principals routinely carry out teacher evaluations for the purpose of this study; elementary principals supervise students in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade.

6. *Elementary Schools*- Schools in this study serve students in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. The populations of students range from 65% to 75 % low income, as determined by free and reduced lunch applications. Three of the schools are similar in ethnicity, with a majority of African American students; the fourth school is primarily Caucasian. All schools have a 7% to 10% Hispanic population.
7. *Follow-through*: The act of carrying a project or intention to its natural completion. In this study, the follow-through of teacher evaluation included the collection, analysis, and use of data for the improvement of instruction.
8. *Formative Evaluation*: A type of evaluation, which has the purpose of improving programs.
9. *Highly Qualified*: To be deemed highly qualified, teachers must have: 1) a bachelor's degree, 2) full state certification or licensure, and 3) prove that they know each subject they teach.
10. *Summative Evaluation*: A type of outcome evaluation that assesses the results or outcomes of a program. This type of evaluation is concerned with a program's overall effectiveness.
11. *Teacher Evaluation*: The process of collecting data and making professional judgments about performance for the purpose of decision-making to include formal and informal observations (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).
12. *Tenured*- For the purpose of this study, tenured teachers refers to those who have worked in the same district for a minimum of three years and have been offered a fourth contract.
13. *Use of Data*: The process of reviewing data from a qualitative or quantitative

manner for the purpose of finding results or making conclusions. Data from teacher evaluations can be used for the improvement of instruction.

### **Summary**

The follow-through of principals to the teacher evaluation process is the key to successfully gathering data for improvement of teacher skills. The researcher in this study focused on the commitment and follow-through of principals in relation to the teacher evaluation process.

A qualitative case study investigated elementary principals in a small rural school system and their follow-through to the teacher evaluation process, as it related to the use of data, for the purpose of improving high and low performing teachers. The researcher used a qualitative design to examine multiple data sources including interviews with county office administration, elementary principals, teachers, and reviews of district policy documents developed for the purpose of teacher evaluation practices. Data from the sources were coded and studied by the researcher to discover common themes and patterns. Findings may prove to be useful to current or future principals and other school employees in the use of the teacher evaluation process for the purpose of improving low and high performing teachers.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction to the Literature Review**

The review of research and related literature began with the history, background, purpose, and types of teacher evaluation, and ended with the follow-through needed by principals for the success of the teacher evaluation process. A review of research of evaluation types and processes, use of data collected, and professional learning revealed the importance of the teacher evaluation system. The effect of teacher evaluation on low and high performing teachers, time constraints, teacher perceptions, and principal follow-through was researched. A review of literature by the researcher clearly revealed that in order for the data and results of teacher observation to be useful, there must be a commitment by the administrators and the teachers to school improvement. With this foundation, the link was drawn to the importance of principal's follow-through to the teacher evaluation process as it relates to the improvement of teacher skills. Current research studies were examined with a focus on teacher evaluation and the follow-through of principals to the process.

#### **Context/Background**

Teacher evaluation appeared in the United States with the first teaching positions in the 1600's. The process of interviewing teachers, administering educational tests, or conducting oral examinations has traditionally been used by districts to make decisions about a person's ability to teach. In most cases, evaluating teachers was based on character traits, morality, and attitudes as well as ability. Teacher interviews were used to determine whether teachers possessed skills necessary to teach. In part to a decline in teacher quality, the state licensing agencies implemented teacher evaluation programs as a way to monitor the quality

of teachers entering the profession (Sanders & Horn, 1994; Pajak, 1993). According to Pajak (1993), clinical supervision models, currently referred to as teacher evaluation, appeared in the 1970s, proposing a direct focus on using reflection as professional learning and as a strategy for improving teaching. Pajak (1993) also noted the developmental and reflective supervision models first began to appear following the publication of Schön's (1983) book entitled, *The Reflective Practitioner*. The evaluation of teachers was further developed in the 1980's as a means to determine the effects of instruction on student achievement and of identifying low and high quality teaching practices.

Sanders and Horn (1994), in their study of schools in Knox County Tennessee, found that home, motivation, and background counted for almost 80 percent of student academic success, while only 20 percent of academic success was determined by schools. Of that 20 percent, the biggest influence on student achievement is teachers. They concluded that a quality teacher is capable of making a 39 percent increase in student achievement over a less effective teacher. The model of assessment known as the Tennessee Value Added Assessment System (TVASS), measures the influence of the systems, schools, and teachers on academic achievement using norm-reference testing. Students in grades 3-8 are tested in math, science, reading, language, and social studies (Sanders & Horn, 1994).

In 1987, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) promoted standards that were more meaningful for teachers. The organization developed a performance based assessment system to recognize advanced ability in experienced teachers (Weiss & Weiss, 1998).

The No Child Left Behind Act (2002) changed the perspective of teacher evaluation by requiring that all teachers of core academic subjects meet a set of requirements to be

considered highly qualified by the 2005-2006 school year for the purpose of improved instruction (Jorgensen & Hoffman, 2003; Tucker & Stronge, 2005). Due to changes in curriculum and teaching techniques, teacher evaluation systems currently in place are no longer valid measures of teacher performance, when compared to current instruments that use a standards-based approach to evaluate the performance of teachers (Gallagher, 2004; Kimball, White & Milanowski, 2004; Jorgensen & Hoffman, 2003; Tucker & Stronge, 2005).

Similarly, Gallagher (2004) studied elementary school teachers in one school in California, to determine if the teacher evaluation system relates to student achievement. Significant correlation was found between teacher evaluation and literacy, while no correlation was found between teacher evaluation and mathematics scores. Gallagher (2004) determined that traditional evaluations did little to improve student learning, while standards-based evaluations have a positive effect on student learning. Likewise, a larger study by Kimball, White, and Milanowski (2004) found a positive correlation between standards-based teacher evaluation scores and student assessment scores in Washoe County, Nevada. The district consists of 3,700 teachers and 270 administrators. Teachers who scored high on the standards-based teacher evaluation taught a majority of students who had made improvements in academic success. The link between teacher observation and student achievement was clear even though the results of the study were mixed. Other variables affected the results of the study such as experience, objectivity, and follow-through of the evaluators. Milanowski (2004) studied the positive correlation between teacher evaluation and student achievement in a large school district in Cincinnati, Ohio. Standardized test scores in grades three through eight were used as a basis of comparison with teacher evaluation data.

### Teacher Evaluation Processes

Current teacher evaluation systems are well intended, but do not always lead to the projected purpose (Tucker & Stronge, 2005). Evaluations should assist school leaders in evaluating teacher performance and allow teachers to improve their teaching skills in order to improve student achievement. Danielson and McGreal, (2000) in their book, *Teacher Evaluation: to Enhance Professional Practice*, developed a three-track system for beginning teachers, tenured teachers, and tenured teachers in need of assistance. They found six areas of insufficiency in the present teacher assessment systems:

1. Outdated measures of evaluation
2. Not enough shared values about what makes good teaching
3. All teachers expect to get the highest rating on evaluations
4. The top-down process of evaluation
5. All teachers are evaluated on the same criteria
6. Limited proficiency and experience by administrators

(P.3-5)

Understanding current ineffective models studied by Danielson and others required an examination of the processes used. The most common evaluation processes were both summative and formative (Keihenz & Ingarvson, 2004; Kyriakidses, Demetriou & Charalambous, 2006; Tucker & Stronge). Summative evaluations provide information based on one or more formal observation(s) and one or more informal assessment(s) in order to summarize the performance of teachers. Kyriakidses, Demetriou, and Charalambous (2006) surveyed 335 primary teachers in Nicosia, Cyprus. From the 237 surveys returned, they found that summative evaluations, based on the judgments of the evaluator, are routinely

placed in the teacher's personnel file to serve organizational purposes. Decisions such as tenure, merit pay, and teaching assignments were based on the summative evaluation even though the data were limited.

Formative evaluation however, provides feedback and other information that encourages professional growth and development. According to Tucker and Stronge (2005), in their handbook on teacher evaluation, formative evaluation systems are commonly documented in education. When used appropriately, both summative and formative types of evaluation measure performance, but both are needed to make decisions leading to professional learning.

Classroom observations capture information about teachers' instructional practices, to be used in both formative and summative evaluations (Brandt, Mathers, Oliva, Brown-Sims, & Hess, 2007). Results can then be assessed in future observations. Despite the fact that classroom observations are the most commonly used type of evaluation, they are not successful when used by poorly trained observers with no pertinent feedback. Observations that only occur one to three times yearly are brief snapshots of teacher performance and cannot give the evaluator a complete picture of teacher ability. Administrators hesitate to give unsatisfactory evaluations when observations are limited or, in some areas of the United States, when unions are involved, for fear the teacher will file a complaint against them. This seriously undermines the success of the teacher evaluation process (Bridges, 1992).

However, observations, when used as part of a standards-based process, can have a positive impact on formal teacher assessment. According to Pecheone and Chung (2006) and Milanowski (2004), standards-based evaluations have the ability to improve teacher performance and therefore improve student learning. Pecheone and Chung (2006) reviewed



quantitative data from 235 teachers' standards-based teacher evaluations in a pilot study in California. The Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) is aligned to specific standards set by the state. Their findings have begun professional dialogues about effective teaching and the reexamination of the way teachers are trained in California.

Similarly, Georgia educators are preparing to implement a standards-based teacher evaluation program entitled Classroom Analysis of State Standards, and referred to as the CLASS Keys (Georgia Department of Education, 2008). The CLASS Keys consist of a series of pre-evaluation conferences, observational assessments, professional learning, and a series of observations and follow-up conferences. The major complaint in the pilot study by teachers and administrators was the amount of time needed to complete the thorough evaluations (Landy, 2009).

### **Teacher Evaluation Types**

Different methods of teacher evaluations exist, and are used by principals to collect data, that include formal and informal observations, peer observations, and detailed portfolios (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; DeFour, DeFour, & Eaker, 2002; Fraser, Ogden, Platt, & Tripp, 2000; Gefler, Xu, & Perkins, 2004; Pecheone & Chung, 2006). Any of these methods will gather data for principals to examine, but are not productive without follow-through designed to improve instruction.

The portfolio is one such method of evaluation and is considered an authentic assessment of the teacher's performance because it displays a variety of teaching methods and opportunities throughout the year (Gefler et al., 2004). In contrast to the traditional evaluation methods used by principals to determine the performance of teachers, the teacher portfolio allows for teacher reflection, as well as two-way communication between teacher and

evaluator. The portfolio has gained acceptance with educators as a means of contributing to teachers' growth and an extension of professional learning (Pecheone & Chung, 2006). The use of portfolios can also empower teachers to take charge and take a more active voice in their evaluation while allowing them to show and communicate to administrators how they have met a set of standards that makes them skilled educators (Attinello, Lare, & Waters, 2006).

According to other researchers, despite the popularity of the portfolio and its general acceptance as an evaluation tool, there are no conclusive findings on the reliability of portfolio assessments (Attinello et al., 2006). In addition, there is no determination as to whether or not portfolios accurately reflect what goes on in the classrooms and portfolios are very time consuming and may take away from valuable planning time (Tucker et al., 2002). Zepeda (2002) conducted a 2-year study of one elementary school and found that administrators more commonly use portfolios as a way of collecting data and not an official evaluation that can be used to increase quality teacher performance.

Downey and Frase (2001) describe the walk-through process of evaluation as “a frequent sampling of teachers' actions.” The walk-through consists of frequent mini observations that may give a clearer picture of the educators' teaching ability due to the frequency in which they are carried out and therefore, an effective way for principals to gather data. Walk through observations are designed to create dialog between the teacher and the observer. Therefore, a follow up conversation is appropriate and a short written observation of the walk-through is necessary for principals to follow-through with the process (Downey & Frase, 2001).

Earlier assessment processes focused on the assessment of lesson plans and other classroom documents as data needed for evaluation of instruction. Some school districts developed rubrics to evaluate lesson plans and have included them in the teacher evaluation process (Denner, Salzman, & Bangert, 2001). However, Brandt et al. (2007) found that less than four percent of the 140 South Carolina districts' policies required lesson plans as part of the teacher evaluation process because they are just an outline, and only provide a skeleton of the lessons taught. The system policies acknowledged that the ability to write good lesson plans did not support the evaluation process of elementary school teachers.

Another strategy for gathering data for possible use by principals for follow-through includes peer observations. Peer evaluation has been recognized as a process that gives valuable information to teachers from the classroom level and builds relationships between teachers (Fraser, Ogden, Platt, & Tripp 2000; Goldstein, 2006). Goldstein (2006) researched a form of peer evaluation called Peer Assistance and Review (PAR), which identified coaches who had been recognized for their quality teaching and support of new teachers as well as support of veterans who were struggling. The results were positive and the teachers responded well to the feedback from their peers. In contrast, Kleinhenz and Ingvarson (2004) studied teachers with the highest pay scale across Australia. Using the ETWR (Experienced Teachers with Responsibility) evaluation tool, they concluded that change occurs at the administrative level of influence, and not at the classroom level as in peer evaluation.

Another form of evaluation that provides feedback to teachers is reflection. Reflection is a means of self-evaluation that can be accomplished by professional conversations during planning meetings that encourages teachers to improve their teaching

skills (Uhlenbeck, Verloop, & Beijaard, 2002). Fraser, Ogden, Platt, and Tripp (2000) described teacher self-assessment as a form of evaluation linked to the improvement of student achievement. A research study of 15 teachers in a large Midwestern school district by Feeney (2006) concluded that teachers, who review their own teaching skills, were motivated to improve themselves.

### **The Importance of Data Collection**

School improvement is the process of changing education by doing something new and different, while school effectiveness refers to what works and why, and happens at the classroom level. A case study of several states in the Netherlands (Creemers & Reezigt, 2005) investigated the relationship between school improvement and school effectiveness determining that effectiveness is the process of research, and improvement is putting the research into action. Both require the collecting and disaggregating of data.

The practice of collecting data and documenting classroom performance allows administrators to determine and raise levels of school improvement (Feeney, 2007; Fraser, Ogden, Platt, & Tripp, 2000). According to Fraser, et al. (2000), the collection of data, through the teacher evaluation process, provides two options to combat the problem of second-rate teaching: 1) To provide the necessary training and support to encourage the highest level of excellence and when necessary, 2) Non-renewal of the teacher contract.

Data driven decisions provide improved instruction by looking carefully at what is already in place, the strengths and weaknesses of the instruction, and making recommendation for improvement. The data can be used to guide decision making at all levels leading to better practices in instruction (Bernhardt, 2004; Gallagher, 2004; Milanowski, 2004). The practice of collecting data from test scores is only part of the information needed to determine teacher

performance (Berry, 2007). Student learning data and assessment information gathered by teacher tests, observations, and standardized test scores give a picture of the students' performance in the school. Finally, the data dealing with programs and processes utilized by the school will give information about what works best in direct correlation to student learning. Ineffective practices can be determined and removed or modified and effective processes can be maximized (Bernhardt, 2004).

Administrators, with the use of teacher observation instruments, can monitor the teacher evaluation process with a goal of collecting data to improve instruction and ensure continuous school improvement. Providing criteria and descriptions of high levels of performance through an evaluation process, allows teachers to reflect on their own teaching practices (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Teacher abilities and performances are vital parts of the instructional process. The collection of data during the teacher evaluation process allows administrators to determine the effectiveness of instruction on student improvement. Gordon, Kane, and Staiger (2006) determined teacher impact on average student's math performance in grades three through five in Los Angeles Unified School District to be very important. The performance of roughly 150,000 students in 9,400 classrooms each year from 2000 through 2003 was studied. Researchers suggest a strong relationship exists between teacher quality and student performance. Likewise, Sanders and Horn (1994), in their lengthy study of schools in Knox County Tennessee, also found a relationship between teacher quality and student achievement.

Gordon et al., (2006) and Sanders and Horn, (1994) concluded that American schools have experimented with various reform strategies, from increasing accountability to reducing class sizes. They concluded that in American schools systems that already have good

accountability, further increased pressure to progress was not likely to create quick improvements. They found that policymakers have tried to raise teacher quality by raising the hurdles for those entering the teaching profession. However, the researchers suggest that those hurdles are often not related to teacher effectiveness. It was much more likely that observation of teacher performance in the first two years of teaching was a better indicator of success. Follow-through of the teacher evaluation process should include an analysis of data to make personnel decisions such as non-renewal of those whose results are below an acceptable level. These findings demonstrate that teacher evaluation processes are valuable strategies that can be put in place to improve instruction (Gordon et al., 2006; Sanders & Horn, 1994).

### **Data Collection and Merit Pay**

There has been much discussion about paying teachers based on their quality and performance, and not just years of experience and level of education (Gordon, Kane, & Staiger, 2006; Sanders & Horn, 1994). According to the United States Department of Education, the federal government issued 18 incentive grants, from November of 2006 to June of 2007, to states totaling 38 million dollars. Georgia was not one of the many states that received the incentive grants for merit pay. Based on data collected from 13 elementary school principals in an unidentified midsize school district, Jacobs and Lefgen (2006), compared teacher evaluations with the differences in student test scores that could be attributed to specific teachers. The researchers suggest merit pay programs that reward teachers should be based on evaluations by principals and focus on the performance of the teachers. In addition, researchers suggest that student achievement would probably improve more under a system based on principals' evaluations than in a system where compensation is based on education and years of experience.

Likewise, Hazi and Arredondo-Rucinski (2009) conducted an analysis of department of education regulations in fifty states. They found new interest in pay for performance for teachers that may require districts to adjust their policies to use teacher evaluation for the determination of teacher pay as it applies to both low and high performing teachers. Unlike the previous researchers, a study conducted by Rochkind, Immerwahr, Ott, and Johnson (2007), based on interviews with a nationally representative sample of 641 first-year schoolteachers, conducted by telephone or online, found that teachers prefer high quality professional learning to incentive pay.

### **Improvement of Low and High Performing Teachers**

According to Jacobs and Lefgen (2006), principals repeatedly identify low and high performing teachers with both the smallest and largest gains on student assessments. Statistician Dr. William Sanders developed the “value-added” assessment model of accountability in the early 1980s at the University of Tennessee. In 1992, Sanders’ model was incorporated into Tennessee’s Educational Improvement Act as the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS). The system was designed to measure the influence that school districts, schools, and teachers have on student achievement regardless of where on the achievement scale a child begins. This model measures the improvement of student achievement by the educational system each year. Sanders and Horn (1994), as well as Ascher and Fruchter (2001), found a large discrepancy between the quality of teachers in low and high performing schools. Ascher and Fruchter studied teachers in low performing schools in New York and found that nearly 30% of the teachers at low-performing schools were not licensed, did not have advanced degrees, or hold permanent positions. In contrast, only 7.6% of the teachers at high-performing schools were not fully licensed or did not have permanent

positions. One third or more of the teachers in low-performing schools had less than five years of teaching experience, while three fourths of the teachers at the high-performing schools had more than five years of experience. The lower the percentage of teachers who were fully licensed, permanently assigned, and had significant teaching experience, the lower student performance (Ascher & Fruchter, 2001). Low performing teachers improved with the use of data from teacher observations and the feedback that it created (Brandt, 2000; Kyriakides, et al., 2006; Malinowski, 2004).

Research-based teacher evaluation processes are successful tools with which to judge the ability of both low and high achieving teachers. Kleinhenz and Ingarvson (2004) studied teachers in Australia to determine if the evaluation systems could determine low and high performing teachers. Their current evaluation systems require teachers who receive a low mark to be evaluated again after feedback is received from the administrator. If the score is low a second time, an intervention must occur to help the teacher with this area. Administrator comments intended to improve instruction should be based on observable data and correlated to a set of standards (Halverson, Kelley, & Kimball, 2004; Sanders & Horn, 1994; Gordon, Kane, & Staiger, 2006). However, assuming that the comments are observable and correlated to the standards, this without follow-through does not guarantee the improvement of teachers (Sawyer, 2003).

Feeney (2007), in his study of 15 teachers in a large Midwestern school district, concluded administrators should give quality feedback, which guides teachers toward self-improvement through a standards-based approach. Halverson, Kelley, and Kimball (2004) studied teacher evaluations and revealed that principals feel the feedback is important, they found little critical feedback provided to teachers, either through evaluation scores or in



narratives. Principals in the study did not assign an overall unsatisfactory rating to any of the teachers in the 485 written evaluations reviewed.

When ineffective teachers teach students for a year or more, they are often unable to catch up to their peers who have had the benefit of more effective instructors (Sanders & Horn, 1994). Kenneth Peterson has been recognized as one of the leading researchers in teacher evaluation for 25 years and has served as an investigator for three U.S. Department of Education grants to study innovative teacher evaluation for school district career ladder systems (1990, 2000, and 2006). He recommends the following strategies for improving low performing teachers:

1. Mandate data gathering according to perceived problem, e.g., parent surveys for communication or complaints
2. Cooperate with district performance assistance teams (mentor teachers for remediation support)
3. Contact other educators to give support to teacher who otherwise is abandoned while in difficulty
4. Arrange for remediation in form of professional education and visits
5. Heighten Monitoring (2006, p. 346)

His later research (2006) suggests that low performing teachers are often new to the profession or that their evaluation and professional learning needs require different strategies for improvement than experienced teachers.

Peterson (2006) recommends the following for inexperienced or beginning teachers:

1. Three or more conferences per year; not just one
2. Develop continuous new teacher orientations; not just one at the beginning of the year
3. Appropriate, supportive assignments
4. Continuing, targeted professional education, not the same in-service for all teachers in the school
5. Mentors and teacher networks found, not just accidental introductions
6. Visitations of other classrooms, not just an occasional recommendation
7. Support groups of fellow beginning teachers, not leaving beginners on their own
8. Career-long evaluation program, not ignoring beginner needs for feedback and documentation of success. (p. 346)

As with low performing teachers, teachers who are recognized as high performing need and deserve feedback and support to continue to grow and improve their teaching and learning skills. Principals, to improve the performance of high performing teachers, can use teacher evaluation with feedback. Coulon and Quaglia (1989) studied kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade teachers. A total of 1143 surveys were distributed to teachers in three school districts in Alabama. Researchers found that high performing teachers have much in common with high performing principals.

Likewise, Desimone and Smith (2006), in a study of 16,000 eighth-graders from 744 schools, concluded that the majority of high performing math teachers with strong content knowledge participated in voluntary professional learning, therefore, improving their teaching skills further. The researchers correlated the desire to improve their skills, to their confidence in teaching math. Principals must support and challenge teachers to develop the necessary skills to accurately assess student needs, and to make instructional decisions in response to those assessments.

According to Glickman (2002), teacher evaluation provides a structure for teachers to plan, reflect, and change. Professionals in the field of education require feedback to measure their skills and therefore, improve instruction even if they show excellence, already. Constructive feedback requires a common language between the evaluator and the professional. Development of a performance rubric, as a tool to guide administrators, can be used to promote a common language that will improve communication (Feeney, 2007).

Peterson (2000) recommends the following evaluation strategies for the improvement of both low and high performing teachers based on his 25 years of research in the field of education:

1. Walk-through observations of classrooms, frequent, informal
2. Find out what is being talked about in the school
3. Determine what students are learning and what teachers are providing
4. Determine what students and parents are saying
5. Change the patterns conversations and topics with each teacher
6. Tell teachers what you observe, think about, and see

7. Share what you know; tell teachers your views, opinions, reactions, insights, knowledge, perceptions, and experiences
8. Listen to the teachers (2000, p.345)

Proper use of teacher evaluation processes give administrators a clear picture of teacher ability as well as lead to the development of that ability. Classroom monitoring and the use of standards of excellence will lead to improvement. The school administrator must be in charge of monitoring the learning environment to determine strengths and weaknesses of educators or to implement the appropriate professional learning opportunities for all teachers to continually improve their teaching skills through teacher evaluation and professional learning (Collins, 2004; Feeney, 2007; Fraser, Ogden, Platt, & Tripp, 2000).

### **Professional Learning**

Due to changing classroom demands, many researchers suggest that professional learning is critical for educators (Collins, 2004; Fraser, Ogden, Platt, & Tripp, 2000). Recent theories, along with new technology research, require teachers to be life-long learners to be exceptional in their fields (Brandt, 2000; Feeney, 2007; Peocheone & Chung, 2006). Likewise, DeFour, DeFour, and Eaker (2002) found that in order to remain effective in the classroom, teachers must continuously improve their own learning. Studies by Ebmeier (2003), and Stockard, and Lehman (2004) support the previous researchers by stating that teacher knowledge, training, and learning are important parts in the teacher evaluation process. Conclusions from these researchers substantiate the significance of focusing on professional learning as a means of making teacher evaluation more meaningful.

Recent researchers suggest that follow-through by principals must include feedback to teachers from teacher evaluation processes which in turn results in professional learning. Feeney (2007), in his study of 15 teachers in a large Midwestern school district, determined that feedback from evaluators should lead teachers to find the professional learning needed for school improvement. Guiding teachers to understand the significance of new ideas and an ever-evolving style of teaching can be accomplished through teacher evaluation (Fraser, Ogden, Platt, & Tripp, 2000). Allowing teachers to be a part of the evaluation process, and have input towards professional learning will empower them as professionals with ownership of the process and preparation to changes that will happen (Feeney, 2007; McEwan, 2002; Milanowski, 2004). McEwan concluded that the evaluation process should be collaborative, and that the focus on professional learning would increase student learning. However, other researchers found concerns with feedback tied to professional development. Parks and Stevens (2000) found that frustration over professional development a major contributor to educators considering leaving the profession.

### **Reforming Teacher Evaluation**

Reforming teacher evaluation holds promise as a strategy to improve instruction and raise student achievement (McEwan, 2002). Current approaches to assessment may transform teacher evaluation, which traditionally has been based on routine reviews and classroom observation (Milanowski, 2004). Hazi and Arredondo-Rucinski (2009) found that many states, including Georgia, have moved to adopt the National Governors Association (NGA) strategies for defining teaching quality, and added practices that encourage professional learning. They also found that six states (Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Texas, and West Virginia) have high levels of state control. Schools in these states are required to use

evaluation instruments designed by the state department and/or to follow identified procedures. These six states determined that increasing teacher behaviors by requiring professional learning would lead to improved student learning. The NGA has targeted evaluation as “a tool for instructional improvement” (Goldrick, 2002, p. 3). The NGA is one of the most influential organizations in determining educational policy in the United States and has compiled a list of strategies designed to improve teacher evaluation:

1. Define teaching quality: States defined academic standards for what every child needs to know. They also must clearly define what highly qualified teachers need to know and be able to do before a teacher evaluation policy can be developed.
2. Focus evaluation policy on improving teaching practice: States view evaluation as an informational tool to help administrators identify teachers who need additional or specialized assistance and to help individual teachers improve their instructional practices.
3. Incorporate student learning into teacher evaluation: States transform evaluation from a traditionally input-based process into an outcome-driven one. They should consider measurable student achievement as a principal outcome on which teachers are evaluated.
4. Create professional accountability: Career ladders can provide states an opportunity to strengthen teacher evaluation policy

and align it with performance based teaching standards.

Professional classifications (such as "beginning," "mentor," and "master" teacher) can also provide a framework to implement performance-based compensation.

5. Train evaluators: Evaluators need training opportunities to conduct more accurate and effective teacher assessments. Training might focus on skills such as analyzing effective teaching practice, determining a teacher's impact on student learning, and providing leadership for professional learning and remedial assistance.
6. Broaden participation in evaluation design: Policymakers must reach out to all education stakeholders, including teachers and administrators, to design a teacher evaluation system. Educators and school officials must have confidence in and an understanding of evaluation (2002, p.3).

Colby et al., (2002) agree with the National Governors' Association recommendations and further suggest that by linking teacher evaluation with academic standards for students and professional learning for educators, policymakers can transform teacher evaluation into a more effective tool for improving instructional practice and raising student achievement. Teacher evaluation policies and practices create connections between school improvement, professional learning, and the teaching of students (Colby et al., 2002). The role of leadership is to help others to improve their own talents and accomplishments. Administrators must

evaluate and provide feedback to all school personnel in order to make improvements and modifications that meet the needs of students in their schools (Embry, 1996; Feeney, 2007; McEwan, 2002; Milanowski, 2004).

### **Time Constraints**

Recognized by teachers and administrators, as well as those in policy positions, is the time needed for effective teacher evaluation with feedback. All recognize that the priority given to teacher evaluation by systems and administrators heightens the positive effects of the process. The time-consuming collection of data are essential if the evaluation process of teacher performance is to be effective (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Embry, 1996; Fraser et al., 2000; Kleinhenz & Ingarvson, 2004; Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin, & Bernstein, 1984). Without this important step in the evaluation process, there is no data or continuity, both of which are essential to allow for feedback and potential professional growth (Embry, 1996; Feeney, 2007).

Gillat and Sulzer-Azaroff (1994) studied two school principals and the impact of their involvement on the performance of teachers and students, one at an elementary school and another at a secondary school. They found that principals could affect student performance directly by scheduling convenient times during their weekly routine to visit classrooms and provide ongoing feedback. However, they also concluded that principals needed help scheduling their time.

Many other research studies also support the notion that a major concern of principals in evaluating teachers is the time required to gather the data and organize it into any meaningful format (Davenport & Anderson, 2002; Kersten & Israel 2005; Kleinhenz & Ingarvson, 2004). Likewise, Halverson, et al. (2004), in their case study discussed previously,



found that most principals viewed evaluation as a time management challenge. Some made adjustments by streamlining their evaluation approach or cutting back on the amount and types of evaluation evidence. Others made changes to build in more time at school for evaluation activities. Many gave up significant personal time to complete all of the evaluations. Several researchers and scholars supported principals' concerns about the time consuming and complex data gathering process required for effective observations and feedback (Davenport, & Anderson, 2002; Kersten, Israel 2005; Kleinhenz & Ingarvson, 2004). Blunk (2007), one such scholar, suggested that four to six observations are essential for the evaluation of each teacher. In response to the time-related concerns of principals and in an effort to ease the burden, other researchers reported time-reducing options in the data analysis phase of teacher assessment. Feeney (2007) and Pecheone and Chung (2006) found that the use of technology may provide many advanced alternatives for using data to expedite the improvement of instruction. Software programs may allow teachers and administrators to manipulate data in a variety of ways. The desired result is a clear picture of the school, disaggregated by grade level, by class, and by individual student performance. The capability to print graphs and charts allows administrators, teachers, and parents the ability to view the areas of instruction and student learning that need attention as well as the areas of excellence (Pearson, 2005). These assessment data make it possible for the principal to develop plans to meet the needs of specific students, student groups, and/or teachers (Feeney, 2007; Pecheone & Chung, 2006).

## Teacher Perceptions

Perhaps because of the time constraints of evaluators, teachers perceive the evaluation processes as top-down, where the administrator conducts observations, provides minimal feedback, and shows either appreciation or disapproval in the final product. Teachers view this as an attempt by the administrator to find fault in the teacher personally (Collins, 2004; Kyriakides, Demetriou, & Charlambous, 2006). The teachers' perceptions of the evaluation process, as well as the process itself, fail when new teachers are evaluated using the same criteria as those for experienced teachers, according to a study by Kyriakides, Demetriou, and Charlambous (2006) and Peterson (2006).

Batchelor (2008) studied perceptions of teacher evaluation as a determination for professional development. He surveyed 87 teachers in a private K-12 school, to determine their perceptions of teacher evaluation and the effectiveness of the system. The goals for adopting the standards-based teacher evaluation system that he was studying were to (1) increase student learning, (2) improve instruction, (3) develop a mentoring program, (4) focus professional development, and (5) facilitate collegiality. The researcher concluded that the teacher evaluation program was effective and thorough. However, the majority of the teachers had negative perceptions of professional development programs and teacher evaluation was not effectively connected to professional development goals.

Another issue facing teacher evaluation is the perception of the final assessment score itself. Danielson and McGreal (2000) suggest that any scores less than satisfactory may be perceived as personal attacks on the teachers being evaluated and not as opportunities for teachers to improve their skills. Other researchers suggest that educators consider formal evaluations unimportant, and therefore seriously demeaning the entire process (Kleinhenz &

Ingvarson 2004). Embrey and Jones (1996) found that teachers perceive formal evaluations as insulting and as having no real effect on their performance. Zimmerman and Deckert-Pelton (2003) surveyed 86 educators from five northwest Florida counties to examine their perceptions of their principals as effective evaluators. The researchers' results suggest that teachers' perceptions of an effective evaluation process involved a focus on their principals' knowledge, skills, and abilities as both experienced educators and educational leaders.

Another expert in the field of teacher evaluation studied the notion of building teachers confidence in the teacher evaluation process. In his book, *Teacher Evaluation that Works*, Ribas (2000) determined four key areas for a successful professional evaluation process: 1) interactions between principal and educator; 2) consistent observations; 3) principal commitment to effective professional evaluation; and 4) principal knowledge pedagogy, content, and evaluation. He claimed that districts that used well-trained evaluators and effectively monitored evaluation systems have teachers that trust the validity of the process as well as the ability of the evaluators to assess their performance objectively.

Teachers felt more at ease with the evaluation process when they were included in the evaluation process and given the opportunity to evaluate their own performance (Feeney, 2007). Kyriakides et al., (2006) found that ninety-five percent of teachers found the criteria for teacher evaluation to be appropriate when they were included in the development of the instrument. Turpin (2005) found that teacher evaluation positively affected the attitude of teachers toward their jobs. Conley (2006) studied career satisfaction of teachers who were evaluated with standards-based observations and found that they were satisfied with their job when they received a high evaluation.

### **Principal's Follow-Through**

The teacher evaluation process sets the stage for the school's educational priorities when carried out on a daily basis (Colby, Bradshaw, & Joyner, 2004; Feeney 2007; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992). According to Colby, Bradshaw, and Joyner (2004), the success of implementing new teacher evaluation systems depends directly on the follow-through of the administrators to improve teaching. Their study examined the priority given to teacher evaluation and the impact on school improvement. The researchers used both quantitative and qualitative data to determine a relationship between administrators, priority to teacher evaluation, and school improvement in 21 school districts. The researchers concluded that priority given to teacher evaluation directly related to teacher's perceptions of evaluation and its impact on school improvement. In the districts that had the highest student achievement scores on standardized tests, administrators had determined a change in the system was needed prior to the research study. These same administrators showed a strong commitment to teacher evaluation at all levels. Therefore, follow-through of principals in teacher evaluation is important for the improvement of educators (Colby et al., 2004).

Davenport and Anderson (2002) suggested that high priority assigned by administrators, yields high results from teachers. Researchers have also shown a correlation between teacher evaluation and student achievement, as well as the importance of support from district administrators to the teacher evaluation process (Gallagher, 2004; Kimball, 2004; Kleinhenz & Ingvarson, 2004; Milanowski, 2004). In contrast, DuFour and Marzano (2009) found that time spent constructing an environment where teachers are involved in evaluations is more productive than teacher observations determined by county office policies. Educational leaders can modify their activities to affect student performance directly, by

scheduling convenient times during the weekly routine to visit the classroom, and providing ongoing feedback and praise. In their 1994 study of principals' follow-through Gillat & Sulzer-Azaroff found that visiting classrooms, emphasizing achievement, training, and supporting teachers are important indicators of the effectiveness of school principals. They determined that school leaders modify their activities to affect student performance directly by scheduling convenient times during the weekly routine to visit classrooms and give ongoing feedback and praise.

The feedback principals give teachers is only effective if the communication is clear and the teachers are willing to accept the communication. A study by Reyes and Hoyle (1992) addressed the communication between principals and teachers. The study included 600 teachers from 20 randomly selected school districts in a Midwestern state in secondary education. They determined that as the teachers' age increased so did their satisfaction with the feedback from their principals. However, when teachers obtained advanced degrees communication was inhibited. The study suggests that young teachers have more difficulty understanding and accepting feedback from principals and more experienced teachers are more likely to accept feedback. Therefore, experienced teachers are more likely to understand feedback and communicate with principals.

Modern trends in accountability, such as the public reporting of test scores, assume that because the information is there, change will be made to accommodate for improvement. The more data are available at the school level, the more likely that change will occur at the school level (Fuhrman & Elmore, 2004). Administrators and teachers must be dedicated to using the evaluation system correctly to encourage appropriate professional learning for educators. When instructional strategies are implemented correctly, there will be an increase

in student achievement (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; DeFour et al., 2002). Both teachers and principals must attempt to work together if teacher evaluation is to improve instruction. Payne and Wolfson (2000), in an article in the *National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin*, determined five roles essential for successful principals. First, the principal is a role model for continual learning and opportunities allowing teachers to further their own knowledge. Second, principals set high expectations including the lifelong learning for all teachers. Next, principals motivate and support teachers by removing barriers and obstacles that hinder professional growth that prevent positive change. The principal also provides resources for professional learning. Finally, the principal facilitates teacher professional learning activities.

A recent case study by Glanz, Shulman, and Sullivan (2007), in a southern Brooklyn, New York elementary school with 755 Pre-K to fifth grade students indicated that supervision and follow-through, is required to build a culture of reflection and collaboration for improvement. The researchers found a clear connection between follow-through of evaluation by the principal and student achievement. Leadership, at all levels, must offer flexible and differentiated professional learning on specific teaching strategies, aimed to improve instruction, and based on effective teacher evaluation practices (Bernhardt, 2004; DuFour, et al., 2002; Peterson, 2006).

Though many researchers found a positive correlation between standards-based evaluation and student success, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) found more compelling evidence that suggests a need for use of effective teacher evaluation processes. In a meta-analysis of 69 different studies in the United States from 1978-2001, they found that creating a system that provides feedback is the most important function of teacher evaluation.

They also found characteristics involved in teacher evaluation including continuous monitoring of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and being aware of the effect of the schools practices on student achievement.

Halverson, Kelley, and Kimball (2004) conducted a case study in a large school district in the Western United States. The district was chosen because of its implementation of a standards-based teacher evaluation system. Principals and teachers from 14 elementary, middle, and high schools found that focusing on evaluation standards and goal-setting processes could help link goal setting, evaluation feedback, and overall improvement in the teacher evaluation system. Training to provide evidence-based feedback, such as that needed to demonstrate content-specific pedagogy, could extend existing training, and support relationships in order to create shared understandings of evaluation as a tool to promote instructional improvement. Each principal saw merits in the system despite the widespread belief that teacher evaluation itself was not a primary force improving teaching.

Fraser (2000), in his book on organizational leadership, described factors of leadership as dimensions, one emphasizing the leader and the ability to get the job done, and the other emphasizing the concern for the people in the organization in the process of getting the job done. Both dimensions are necessary for successful follow-through in teacher evaluation because one cannot be successful without the other.

### **National, State, and School System Policies**

District teacher evaluation policies originate outside the school context, as an effort to correct developing and/or repeated problems with teacher performance (Halverson, et al., 2004). Historically, teacher evaluation has had a limited impact on teacher performance and learning (Peterson, 2000; Darling-Hammond, Wise et al., 1984). A number of districts in a

study by Halverson, et al., (2004) in Wisconsin, developed evaluation systems based on teaching standards to develop this link. The systems' policies focus on evaluation as a common vision of teaching with comprehensive standards and rubrics, and multiple sources of evidence (Kimball, et al., 2004).

Nationwide, there are four levels of teacher evaluation policies derived from the No Child Left Behind Legislation. They are (1) all teachers' performance must be formally evaluated; (2) teacher evaluations must be tied to student achievement; (3) teacher evaluations must occur on an annual basis; and (4) evaluators must receive formal training. Most states comply with the policy of requiring formal evaluations of all teachers, but only about half require evaluators to receive formal training. Only 12 states connect teacher's performance evaluation to the achievement of their students and only 12 states mandate that evaluations occur each year (Education Research Center, 2009).

Overall, four states have all four of these teacher evaluation policies in place. They are Georgia, Florida, New York, and Oklahoma have while another nine states have implemented three of the four measures. Only 30 states have one or two policies in place. Eight states including the District of Columbia, Indiana, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, and Wyoming do not have any of the four evaluation policies (Education Research Center, 2009).

States may seek to develop systematic ways to identify and retain effective teachers. Having rigorous teacher evaluation policies could help states improve their teaching workforce and ultimately raise student achievement. Effective school system policies protect the building level administration by trying to eliminate the possibility of low performing teachers making unnecessary complaints and in responding to pressure from teacher



associations and the public. Administrators must be able to trust the county office to support them when addressing issues of low teacher performance. Evaluators may feel pressure from teacher associations and in some cases, the public to tolerate low performing teachers (Ribas, 2002).

Based on the teacher evaluation policies in Georgia, when a teacher continually receives low scores on teacher observations, a professional learning plan is developed with the administrator and teacher both agreeing to the terms. This usually requires some type of professional learning or a mentoring style situation. However, once the teacher receives a satisfactory score in the same area, the teacher returns to the standard cycle of evaluation. The non-renewal of a teacher's contract is usually the last option; it is used only when every attempt has been made to correct the low performance of the teacher.

### **Summary**

The review of research and related literature examined the context and background of teacher evaluation processes and the importance of principals, feedback, and follow-through. The importance of use of data and professional learning were identified. Current research studies were examined which related the follow-through of principals to the improvement of both low and high performing teachers. A variety of evaluation models and techniques were identified as well as perceptions of teachers toward these methods.

Successful implementation of teacher evaluation can only happen if the faculty and staff, supported by the district, have the resources to accomplish their goals. Administrators, who routinely carry out observations for the improvement of instruction, must be committed to the follow-through of the teacher evaluation process for the improvement of instruction.

Table 1

*Studies Related to Teacher Evaluation*

<b>STUDY</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>DESIGN/ANALYSIS</b>	<b>OUTCOMES</b>
Kleinhenz & Ingarvson (2004)	Determine two main purposes of the Australian teacher evaluation system are effective.	Experienced Teachers With Responsibility (ETWR). The highest level on the pay scale across Australia.	Loose coupling theory is used to interpret the findings of improved teacher work and teacher quality.	Australian teacher evaluation does not effectively address the needs of educators in respect to student success.
Pecheone & Chung (2006)	Determine the effectiveness of the performance based evaluation tool used in California	235 teachers in the pilot study in California	Quantitative data using score data from California performance assessment (PACT)	Caused many programs to begin professional dialogues about effective teaching. Programs reexamined the way they train teachers.
Gallagher (2004)	Determine if the teacher evaluation system relates to student achievement	Vaughn Elementary School teachers in California	Quantitative: teacher evaluation data and student assessment scores Qualitative: teacher interview	There is a significant correlation between teacher evaluation and literacy. No correlation was found between teacher evaluation and mathematics.
Hazi, Arredondo-Rucinski, (2009).	Determine the extent to which the identified NGA goals appear in individual state statutes and regulations, and to consider the likely effects on teacher evaluation and the implications for instructional supervision.	Teacher evaluation statutes and department of education regulations provided the data for this study. These data were accessed through the websites of each state's legislature and education departments and collected	Various sources were used to construct a comparison matrix to collect and analyze the state statutes and policies.	Results show that the states engaged in four general types of activity: adopting NGA strategies, asserting more oversight and involvement in local evaluation practices, decreasing the frequency of veteran teacher evaluation, and increasing the data used in evaluation.

Table 2

*Studies Related to Low and High Performing Teachers*

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
Ascher & Fruchter (2001)	The relationship between low performing schools and low performing teachers	New York City's low-performing schools and districts included all 59 low performing elementary schools and 139 high-performing elementary schools.	An analysis of schools in New York. Data from standardized tests was collected and compared to data from teacher observations.	A strong relationship exists between teacher quality and student performance. The lower the percentage of teachers who were fully licensed, permanently assigned, had significant teaching experience, the lower the school-level student performance.
Coulon & Quaglia (1989)	Identify characteristics of effective principals and effective teachers	Review of literature and data.	Empirical studies, Theoretical literature, Case study	Understanding of what makes an effective teacher could help in the search for effective principals
Desimone, Smith, & Ueno (2006)	Determine if professional development in mathematics addresses needs of weak teachers, or serves teachers who already have a strong content knowledge of mathematics.	Approximately 16,000 eighth-graders from 744 schools	Data used are from the teacher surveys completed for the 2000 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).	Professional learning primarily serves teachers with strong content expertise in mathematics, does not address the needs teachers less prepared to teach math.
Embery (1996)	Determine the progress of a mandatory teacher appraisal (evaluation) system	22 administrators	Quantitative: Questionnaire Qualitative: Interviews with 11 of 22 administrators	Schools should develop a professional learning culture for teacher evaluation to improve teacher instruction

Table 2 (Continued)

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
Kimball, White, & Milanowski (2004)	To determine if the standards based evaluation system had any effect on student achievement	The district consists of 3,700 teachers and 270 administrators.	Found a correlation between standards-based teacher evaluation scores and student assessment scores in Washoe County, Nevada.	Teachers scoring high on the standards-based evaluations taught majority of students who had improved academic success. The link was clear even though the results of the study were mixed.
Marks & Nance (2007)	ability of principals to influence instructional and supervisory decisions in their schools	8,524 principals in U.S. public elementary, middle, and high schools through the 1999–2000 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS).	Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) as primary analytic technique.	Principals' influence in both the supervisory and instructional domains is strongly related to that of teachers' active participation in decision making.
Milanowski, (2004)	The relationship between teacher evaluation scores and student achievement as a means determining performance pay	Teachers in a large school district in Cincinnati, Ohio.	Quantitative study of standardized test scores in grades three through eight were use as a basis of comparison with teacher evaluation data.	The research suggests that the teacher evaluation system was able to identify which teachers had higher performing students.
Sanders & Horn, 1994	To determine the effects o high quality teachers on student achievement	Students and teachers in Knox County, Tennessee	Statistical mixed-model methodology and student scale scores from the norm-referenced component of the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP).	A quality teacher is capable of making 39 percent increase in student achievement over a less effective teacher. Teacher ability has a significant impact on student achievement.

Table 2 (Continued)

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
Tschannen-Moran (2009)	Principals exercise of administrative authority and teachers in the conduct of their work	Teachers in 80 middle schools in a mid-Atlantic state and their principals	Quantitative surveys of middle school teachers and principals	Productive strategy for principals would include cultivating trust in their relationships with teachers.
Jacobs and Lefgen (2006)	Determine if teacher evaluation is successful in identifying low and high performing teachers.	13 elementary school principals in an unidentified school district	Review of collected data from teacher evaluations and standardized test scores	Principals can identify most/least effective teachers in their schools, should be allowed more say in decisions about teachers' pay/retention

Table 3

*Studies Related to Teachers Perception*

<b>STUDY</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>DESIGN/ANALYSIS</b>	<b>OUTCOMES</b>
Batchelor (2008)	Teacher perceptions and standards-based evaluation	87 teachers	Quantitative survey of 21 were from the test school. The other 66 teachers were used as a control group for comparative purposes.	The research concluded that teachers agree that teacher evaluation programs are effective and thorough. Strong indication that teachers have negative perceptions of professional learning programs and those goals are not adequately being linked to teacher evaluation.
Colby et al., (2004)	Priority given to teacher evaluation and the impact on school improvement professional learning and student learning.	3,627 teachers in North Carolina	Quantitative and qualitative. Surveys and interviews	Priority given to teacher evaluations related to teacher perceptions of the impact on school improvement, professional learning and student learning. High priority districts commit to change at all levels. Teacher evaluation is normal part of the day, resources available to provide a strong impact on teaching and learning.

Table 3 (Continued)

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
Collins (2004)	Determine the effectiveness of teacher evaluation in a Turkish secondary school	Private school teachers, administrators, and students	Qualitative: Interview Critical Incident, and Document review	Teachers felt evaluators were authoritative and unfair. They also felt the evaluation tool was ineffective causing competition among teachers
Grant, & Carvell (2001)	Determine if principals and teachers agreed on desirable and undesirable teaching practices	28 principals and 73 teachers	Quantitative survey of principals	Results show strong agreement between principals and teachers as to what teaching practices are acceptable and unacceptable.
Kyriakides, Demetriou & Charalambous (2006)	Review of teacher evaluation model (TER)	237 out of 355 primary teachers in Nicosia, Cyprus responded.	Quantitative design questionnaire. Pearson correlation and Cluster analysis were employed to examine the 42 criteria on the teacher evaluation instrument.	Teachers felt the evaluation method was important for both formative and summative teacher evaluation.

Table 4

*Studies Related to Principals Follow-Through*

<b>STUDY</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>DESIGN/ANALYSIS</b>	<b>OUTCOMES</b>
Catano & Stronge, 2006	Determine the degrees of emphasis placed on leadership and management behaviors expected of school principals. explore the congruence of principal evaluation instruments with state and professional standards.	Job descriptions and evaluation instruments from all Virginia school districts represented the total population to be studied.	Primary methodology employed in the study was content analysis. Text contained in principal evaluation instruments was analyzed to determine areas of emphasis. Systematic, objective, and quantitative method of analysis designed to describe the content of communication messages	School districts expected principals to oversee the instructional programs in their schools, to address organizational management issues, to develop strong community relationships, and to facilitate a vision for their schools.
Creemers & Reezigt (2005)	Investigate relationship between school improvement and school effectiveness	National school improvement project in the Netherlands	Case study of several states in the Netherlands	School improvement refers to changing education and doing something new or different while school effectiveness is what works and why. School improvement essentially be stated in terms of student outcomes.
Feeney (2007)	Determine what constitutes quality feedback toward the goal of teacher improvement	15 teachers in a large Midwestern school district	Qualitative	Feedback should help teachers find their own answers to improvement.



Table 4 (Continued)

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
Gillat & Sulzer-Azaroff (1994)		Visiting classrooms, emphasizing achievement , training, and supporting teachers are important indicators of the effectiveness of school principals.	Experimental Design- A withdrawal design was used to demonstrate the principal's response to instructions, feedback, and approval.	Educational leaders can modify their activities to affect student performance directly. Scheduling convenient times during the weekly routine to visit classroom, ongoing feedback and praise. Time constraints can be overcome.

Table 4 (Continued)

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
Glanz, Shulman, and Sullivan (2007)	What impact do supervisors have on teachers' in-class teaching behaviors and attitudes towards promoting student learning? What is the connection among instructional supervisory practices, teacher classroom behavior, and levels of student achievement? What can we learn about making the connection between supervision and student achievement?	755 Pre-K to 5 students. 1 principal	detailed interviewing and observation, The Case: PS X located in a rapidly changing southern Brooklyn The present school population is 62% Asian, 21% Hispanic, 14% Caucasian, and 3% black. The percent of students eligible for free lunch increased in the years between 2003 and 2005 from 73% to 93.7%. These statistics are significant in the analysis of student achievement scores.	In observations conducted in this school and conversations with administrators and teachers, instructional supervision plays a central role in promoting student achievement. Supervision is seen as critical for enhancing teacher growth. Supervision, in this school, is all encompassing from building a culture of reflection, collaboration, and improvement to encouraging leadership at all levels to offering faculty flexible and differentiated professional development on specific teaching strategies aimed to promote learning. Supervision is purposeful, targeted, and central to school wide instructional initiatives.

Table 4 (Continued)

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
Halverson, Kelley, & Kimball (2004)	Determine the results of the evaluation system. What is the outcome?	93 teachers on staff included 10 probationary teachers in Wisconsin	Qualitative research interviews with teachers and principal. Review of 485 completed evaluation instruments	Focus of evaluation is on probationary teachers and centered efforts on maximizing formative feedback to novice teachers.
Marzano, Waters, and Mcnulty (2005)	To determine the need for effective teacher evaluation processes.	Participants from 69 previous studies.	A meta-analysis of 69 different studies completed between 1978 and 2001	Evidence suggests a need for use of effective teacher evaluation processes. Feedback is the most important function of teacher evaluation. Monitoring of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and being aware of the effect of the schools practices on student achievement are important.
Ramirez (2005)	Instructional leadership actions that serve to enhance efforts at improving teaching and learning through a comprehensive teacher evaluation system in Texas	Elementary, middle, and high schools included the principal, and members of the principal's leadership team that included only assistant principals.	Qualitative research design- Interviews of all participants.	Principals used the system in different ways across school level sites. Principal used individual teacher's evaluations to determine their classroom assignments for the following school year.

Table 4 (Continued)

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
Reyes, P., & Hoyle, D. (1992).	Communication between principals and their teachers.	600 teachers from 20 randomly selected school districts in a Midwestern state in secondary schools. All the principals were males.	A 16-item survey instrument was developed and pilot tested using a sample of 250 teachers. Reliability was $r=.92$	As the teacher age increased so did their satisfaction with the feedback from their principals. However, advanced degrees inhibited communication.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

The role of the administrator in the evaluation process of teachers is one of the most important roles of the educational leader (Peterson, 2000). Although much has been written in the literature about the importance of teacher evaluation, few studies have focused on elementary principals' follow-through in the teacher evaluation process and the impact on the improvement of teacher performance. This chapter identifies the research questions, research design, population studied, procedures used, details of the pilot study, and how the data will be analyzed.

Although researchers have clearly described the processes and implications for successful teacher evaluation, the literature is less clear as to principals' follow-through and the use of data to enhance the instruction of low performing as well as high performing teachers. There were no clear findings outlining the principals' use of the data from teacher evaluations and the appropriate approaches to continuous teacher growth and development. There were no specific studies addressing the follow-through in the evaluation process by elementary principals in Georgia. Therefore, the purpose in this study was to examine the follow-through of elementary principals in the teacher evaluation process as it relates to the improvement of instruction.

#### **Research Questions**

The researcher examined the following questions:

1. How do elementary principals use the data collected in the teacher evaluation process for the purpose of improving the performance of low performing teachers?

2. How do elementary principals use the data collected in the teacher evaluation process for the purpose of improving the performance of high performing teachers?
3. How do teachers perceive the commitment and follow-through of elementary principals regarding teacher evaluation?
4. How do system policies support or hinder the evaluation process of elementary school teachers?

### **Research Design**

Information from qualitative data allowed the researcher to present interpretations as they naturally occur in real life settings. Multiple sources of information were used to triangulate data for this study. The researcher acquired information from: 1) an in-depth semi-structured interview with a county office administrator in charge of teacher evaluation, 2) in-depth semi-structured interviews of four Georgia elementary school principals within the county, 3) focus groups of teachers from each of the four elementary schools in the county, and 4) from district policies and practices and a summary of past teacher evaluation documents. Triangulation of the data enabled the researcher to make use of multiple sources to provide corroborating evidence structured around common themes and patterns to establish a comparison that provided a balanced approach (Creswell, 2003). A variety of sources better answered the research questions relating to principals' follow-through in the teacher evaluation process, as it relates to the improvement, of both low and high performing teachers.

### **Context**

This research study took place in a small county in Georgia. Each of the four elementary schools in the county were included in the study. School A is eight miles out of town and in a secluded and rural area. Students attending are pre-kindergarten through grade

five. Schools B, C, and D are located in close proximity, within the city limits, and include pre-kindergarten through first grade, second through third grade, and fourth through fifth grade, in succession. School A consists of a majority of White students (68%) with a small population of Black (17%), Hispanic (9%) and mixed ethnicity (6%). Schools B, C, and D include a majority of Black students (58%) with a population of White (38%), Hispanic (1%) and Mixed (2%).

Before any research began, the researcher requested and was granted permission from the Internal Review Board of Georgia Southern University (See Appendix H). Permission was also obtained from the Superintendent of the county where the study took place.

### **Participants**

The respondents included a pilot study consisting of one focus group and one principal interview conducted prior to the collection of data to determine if the protocols would yield the information sought by the researcher. The pilot study gave the researcher the information needed to guide the focus groups toward answers that were useful in answering the research questions. The protocol questions also allowed for the collection of rich data that related specifically to the research questions. No changes were made to the protocols after the pilot study; therefore, the information gathered was included in the analysis.

Two county office administrators were also interviewed, one using the protocol for principals and one using the protocol for county office administrators. One was a former principal who was part of the pilot study. This interview was essential in determining the usefulness of the protocol. The other was the administrator in charge of teacher evaluation. Her experiences in the human relations field and with evaluation tools gave a unique perspective to the study that no other interview or focus group could parallel. Both described

the process of follow-through as an important part of improved instruction. Both had more than 10 years of experience with the teacher evaluation process with one administrator implementing the process in school and the other overseeing the process from the county office level.

### **Pilot Study**

An initial focus group of eight teachers in one school participated in the pilot study. An interview with one former elementary principal who is now a county office administrator was also conducted. The interview and focus group took place in one of the four elementary schools and the data were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The feedback was used to confirm that the questions were thorough enough to obtain information pertinent to the study and to answer the research questions. The focus group helped the researcher to determine that the questions were clear and answers provided information directly related to the research questions. The pilot study focus group lasted one hour and the participants seemed eager to discuss the topic of teacher evaluation. The data gathered from the principal interview was also appropriate to answer the research questions and the data collected was included in the findings and conclusions.

### **County Office Administrators**

The county office administrator A, who is responsible for overseeing the teacher evaluations for the county, had worked with the county part time for three years. This administrator held the title of personnel director and was in charge of all hiring and firing as well as other personnel issues. The administrator was very knowledgeable on the topic of teacher evaluation and had worked many years as personnel director in another county before taking on her current position.



The county office administrator (B) is responsible for all federal programs. This administrator had 10 years experience in school administration as both an assistant principal and as a principal in the current school system.

### **Principals**

Of the four principals in the county interviewed, one has a doctorate degree, two have educational specialist (EdS) degrees, and one has a masters degree in educational leadership. Their experience as principals ranges from one to seven years. Two of the principals were assistant principals in their current school and two were assistant principals in schools in other counties. Each principal agreed in writing to cooperate with the researcher in conducting this study (See Appendix A).

### **Focus Groups**

Teachers participating in the four focus groups were selected (Nardi, 2003) from a list, provided by the principals, of all teachers who have obtained the status of tenure (Marshall, 1996). The researcher purposefully included one or more teachers in each group who had attained the status of National Board Certification or advanced degrees because of their experience with a variety of evaluation processes. The remainder of teachers were randomly chosen from the tenured pool. Litchman (2006) suggests focus groups consist of no more than ten and no less than six participants.

Focus group participants from each elementary school were randomly chosen from a list of tenured teachers at each school provided by the principal. Every third person on each list was chosen and then a check was made to determine if at least one teacher in each group was nationally certified or had an advanced degree. The four focus groups and the pilot study focus group consisted of teachers who had worked in the system four or more years or who

had received tenure in another system and were in their second year of teaching in the current system. Either scenario gave the teachers the status of tenure in the current system. Each group consisted of at least one Nationally Certified teacher, or a teacher holding a specialist degree or higher. All participants have had four or more years of involvement with the teacher evaluation process in Georgia.

The focus group meetings lasted approximately one hour each. All interview and focus group participants were willing to share their perceptions and experiences with teacher evaluations in their current school setting. The information gathered from the pilot study focus group was included in the data.

## **Procedures and Protocols**

### **Pilot Study**

A means of improving the researcher-designed protocols, ensuring that all respondents understand the questions in the same way, so that responses may be coded with certainty, was achieved through a pilot study (Silverman, 2001). The researcher used a pilot interview and focus group to practice interview skills and refine questions, while gathering information, in order to improve the reliability of the larger study. The pilot study provided the researcher with new thoughts and approaches that might increase the chances of accumulating findings that are more trustworthy.

### **Interviews**

The procedures for this study consisted of in-depth semi-structured interviews of two county office administrators and four elementary principals in the county who are responsible for conducting the teacher evaluations. Protocols included researcher developed interview questions, based on previous related studies from the literature. Questioning techniques such

as encouraging elaboration, probing for more thorough answers, and appropriate wait time to allow the participant time to think before answering, allowed for a more thorough understanding of underlying meaning in the responses (Lichtman, 2006).

### **Focus Groups**

Focus group prompts were designed to elicit responses that would lead the researcher to make conclusions about the research questions. The questions were semi-structured to help guide the interviews. However, the purpose of the process was to explore the opinions and ideas of the participants (Lichtman, 2006).

### **Review of Policies**

Finally, the researcher reviewed all district policy documents available from the district level, specifically, annual evaluations, and posted district policies. These documents were gathered after the interviews and focus groups are conducted. The protocol for the review of policy documents was adapted from the four domains of Danielson's Framework for Teaching (2007). The frameworks were compared with documentation of the teacher observation process and with interviews and focus groups for a more thorough examination of principal's follow-through in the teacher evaluation process.

### **Data Collection**

This study was a basic qualitative research study. In-depth interviews and focus groups were utilized as the primary source of data collection, with document review being used as a method of triangulation. Each of these methods is described in this section. Once the researcher received approval from the University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the school system, the pilot study was used to practice interview skills, and determine clarity and face validity of the questions (Glesne, 2006). All participants, principals, county office

administrators, and teachers in the study were contacted via email, to ask if they were willing to participate. The researcher began with in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with the county office administrator and each of the four principals. This procedure determined county expectations and perspectives regarding the evaluation of teachers. Interview questions were designed to elicit information related to the four research questions guiding the study. Because the county administrator originates the evaluations and determines the processes for carrying them out, this was the first logical step in the process.

The principals are the persons most responsible for the follow-through of the teacher evaluation process. All interviews were completed in the participant's home school or office in order to achieve the real life setting as explained by Merriam (2002). This allowed participants to answer questions within their own domain and therefore, may increase the attention to the details.

The third component of the study involved semi-structured focus groups of tenured teachers from each of the four schools. Tenured teachers are those who have participated in the evaluation process for a minimum of three years and are most likely to be familiar with the procedures and practices. Four focus groups consisting of six to ten teachers, one group from each of the elementary schools, were conducted. All participants were asked to meet at a specific location at a specific time in order to protect their identities. A door prize was given to encourage participation in the focus groups. Icebreaker activities served as additional information for the study and as a means of drawing the winner of the door prize (see Appendix C).

Finally, the researcher thoroughly reviewed district policies and previous annual teacher evaluations from the 2008-2009 school year. All written data were available to the

researcher via computer and was accessed confidentially in the researcher's office. A protocol for the review of policy documents was adapted from the four domains of Danielson's Frameworks for Teaching (see Appendix D) and was used to extract data from the documentation and compare it to the research based evaluation program. A summary was written comparing and contrasting the documents with the protocol. The summary was directed by the four research questions guiding this study.

### **Analysis of the Data**

An open coding technique was used to determine common themes and patterns found in participants' responses in interview and focus group transcripts (Glesne, 2006). The researcher used a specialized software program to transcribe the interviews and focus groups. A computer and recording software was to record all interviews and focus groups. All transcription was read carefully to check for accuracy. The researcher used a qualitative software program developed to assist researchers in creating, managing, and analyzing qualitative databases. Following data entry, the researcher applied codes to specific response passages, develop studies, conduct database searches to identify text passages that meet user-specified conditions, and export data in a wide array of formats for further analysis.

All school policies relating to teacher evaluation were reviewed for comparison to the data collected from interviews and focus groups. The researcher used an open coding technique to conceptualize the data, raise questions, and discover patterns the data (Glesne, 2006). Results were reported in themes that emerged from the triangulation of data. The researcher discovered conclusions by taking interest in the experiences of others and finding meaning from those experiences (Creswell, 2003). Results were tabulated in categories and presented in table form. The researcher reviewed the documents for specific procedures

principals follow when conducting observations, the rationale for evaluating teachers, and the follow-through or connection between the evaluation protocol and the improvement of instruction. Each principal's comments were reviewed to determine if they matched the overall evaluation scores. A summary of teacher evaluations from the previous year was also included to add more information to the study.

### **Summary**

According to Creswell (2003), data analysis of qualitative studies consists of the individual data building into general themes that allow the researcher to construct meaning. The case study consisted of interviews with a county office administrator, four elementary principals, four teacher focus groups consisting of tenured teachers, and a review of policies and annual evaluations provided by the local county office and the principals. The researcher recorded the interviews, transcribed them for analysis of common themes and patterns, and compared the results of the principals and county office administrator interviews to that of teachers' focus groups, 2008-2009 yearly evaluations, and existing board policies (Creswell, 2003).

This researcher triangulated data from interviews, focus groups, and a review of documentation and teacher evaluations. Protocols for this study were developed by the researcher, from the review of literature, and were used to implement the pilot study as well as the main study. The researcher sought common patterns and themes regarding the follow-through of principals in the teacher evaluation process that improve instruction. The results may help administrators implement the teacher evaluation process in a more meaningful way, for the purpose of school improvement.

Table 5

*Item Analysis*

Item	Research	Research Question
1. Motivation	Kleinhenz, Ingarvson, 2004; Brandt, 2000	1, 2, 4
2. Processes	Gefler, Xu, & Peggy, 2004; Pechione & Chung, 2006	4
3. Criteria for evaluation	DuFour et al., 2002; Jorgensen, & Hoffman, 2003; Tucker & Stronge, 2005	3, 4
4. Follow-through	Feeney, 2007; Gallagher, 2004	1, 2
5. Types of evaluation	Brandt, Mathers, Oliva, Brown-Sims, & Hess, 2007	1, 2
6. Low performing teachers	Feeney 2007, Peterson 2000; Sanders & Horn (1994) Kyriakides et al, 2006	1
7. High performing teachers	Feeney, 2007; Glickman, 2002; Peterson 2000; Sanders & Horn (1994)	2
8. Time	Davenport, & Anderson, 2002; Kersten & Israel, 2005	1, 2
9. Teacher perceptions	Collins, 2004; Peterson, 2006; Jones, 1996	3
10. Data collection	Bernhardt, 2004 Ascher & Fruchter, 2001 Sanders & Horn (1994)	1, 2
11. System policies	Brant, 2007	4
12. Observations	Bernhardt, 2004; DuFour, et al; Danielson & McGreal, 2000	1, 2, 3
13. Instruction	Jorgenson & Hoffman, 2003: Tucker & Stronge, 2005	1, 2
14. Student achievement	Davenport & Anderson, 2002; Gallagher, 2004; Milanowski, 2004	1, 2
15. Professional Learning	2000; Colby, Bradshaw, & Joyner, 2004; Danielson, & McGreal, 2000; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2002	1, 2
16. Common language	Feeney, 2007	3

Table 5 (Continued)

Item	Research	Research Question
17. Accountability	Brandt, 2000; Kyriakides, Demetiou, & Charlambous, 2006	1, 2
18. Shared values	Danielson & McGreal, 2000	3
19. Evaluator proficiency	Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001	4
20. Feedback	Brandt, 2000; Kyriakides, Demetiou, & Charlambous, 2006	1, 2, 3
21. Standards-based	Gallagher, 2004; White & Kimball, 2004;	4
22. Walk-through	Downey, Steffy. English, Frase, & Poston, 2004	4
23. Peer evaluation	Goldstein, 2006	1, 2
24. Reflection	Pecheone & Chung, 2006	1, 2, 3
25. Portfolios	Attinello, Lare, & Waters, 2006	4
26. Analysis of student data	Peterson, 2006	4
27. Rubrics	Denner, Salzman, & Bangert,	4



## CHAPTER 4

### REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand how elementary school principals use data from teacher evaluation processes for the purpose of improving instruction. The data were collected from interviews of county office administrators, elementary principals, and focus groups of tenured teachers. All participants were willing to share information about their experiences with the teacher evaluation process. The interviews and focus group meetings were recorded and transcribed. The researcher coded passages to determine common themes and patterns. The themes found and other important information that correlated to the research questions are discussed in this chapter.

Finally, the county's policies and documents related to teacher evaluation were reviewed and compared to other data as well as Danielson's Framework for Teaching (2007). The research was designed to address the following questions:

1. How do elementary principals use the data collected in the teacher evaluation process for the purpose of improving the performance of low performing teachers?
2. How do elementary principals use the data collected in the teacher evaluation process for the purpose of improving the performance of high performing teachers?
3. How do teachers perceive the commitment and follow-through of elementary principals regarding teacher evaluation?

4. How do system policies support or hinder the evaluation process of elementary school teachers?

Three elementary school principals and one assistant principal from a single county in Georgia were interviewed for this study. The principals were selected for participation based on the population of elementary principals in the county. One interview was conducted with the assistant principal because the principal was not available. The assistant principal was knowledgeable about the evaluation process in the school and shared the evaluation process with the principal. All four participants interviewed had been principals less than five years and had very positive outlooks concerning the process.

### **Presentation of the Data**

#### **County Office Administrator Interviews**

The two county administrators interviewed agreed that teacher evaluation is necessary to ensure the curriculum is implemented correctly for the purpose of student growth and achievement. Even though one administrator felt the formal instrument was outdated, both commented that the local requirements of informal observations, walk-through, and the addendum that focuses on accountability of teachers were very thorough. They both agreed that teacher evaluations should lead to professional development as determined by the principals' compiled data.

Both administrators were familiar with teacher evaluation in the county and had accurate knowledge and information of the processes. One administrator suggested that principals must be extremely organized for follow-through to be effective: "Principals should

keep a chart and keep data in a notebook in alphabetical order by teacher. They should flag any NI's (Needs Improvement) and look at prior evaluations before doing another evaluation." Both felt that keeping the data together and in order would allow principals to determine the professional development needed by the teachers. However, they did not know what each individual principal did to accomplish this follow-through. Both administrators felt that the process of teacher evaluation had been expedited and simplified with the electronic version that is now required of each principal. This step of formal and informal evaluations available are completed online and are available to be accessed and reviewed at any time by principals, human resources, and the superintendent.

County administrator A described a plan to allow teachers to become the evaluators. The county administrator wrote a grant several years ago for the program and it was very successful; however, the initiative was not continued due to funding cuts in the years that followed. The county administrator did feel that the principal's input from evaluations did effect student achievement. The process of implementing a professional development plan (PDP), assigning a mentor to assist in deficit areas, observing other teachers, or attending workshops and seminars give teachers added skills in the classroom. County administrator B commented that many times the "teacher no longer has deficits after completing the PDP and evaluation processes return to normal."

County administrator B pointed out that, "...the evaluation process has the power to get rid of teachers who are not qualified." "It (procedures) must be followed exactly. Dismissing a teacher is very difficult to do even when the process is followed correctly." This administrator also felt that it was, "unfair to give an NI" without discussing it with the teacher first and allowing time to address the problem. Another evaluation should follow to ensure the

problem was corrected. This could only be done if the principals were very organized and continued to follow-through with the evaluation process.

### **Principal Interviews**

Interviews with four principals in the county revealed many commonalities to the county office administrators. Principals consider teacher evaluation an important part of their job description. Principal A shared examples informal evaluations occurring in the building: "...the county informal evaluation is better than the formal. It is standards based. It covers all of the current teaching strategies. The problem is what is supposed to be a five-minute assessment takes at least 25 minutes to complete, even with the computer..."

Principal B, concerning the importance of informal evaluation because it may be less threatening than in a formal evaluation said, "The evaluation is unannounced and more relaxed. Teachers can control their stress level for a short period better than when they have to maintain for a planned evaluation that can go on for forty-five minutes to an hour." Clearly, these principals believed that teacher evaluation is an important part of their job description. Three of the four principals felt the informal protocol more closely evaluated the standards. Principal C preferred the formal instrument because it had been used for many years and had a more familiar with the format. The focus group results from school C also showed the teachers were not familiar with the informal evaluation form.

Principals implement strategies related to structure, time and opportunities depending on the current level and type of evaluation taking place. All four principals discussed their in-depth procedures for charting and maintaining a teacher evaluation schedule. This was the best way to make sure there was enough time to complete the procedures required. Every principal had concerns about the extended amount of time the evaluation process required. All

principals felt strongly those teachers who received Needs Improvement scores on evaluations needed to be remediated and reevaluated. Principal A, as in the situation this principal shared, facilitates this internally: *“I have them go observe teachers in other schools or send them to professional development opportunities...”* After which another evaluation occurs to determine if the problem are and improved.

All four principals interviewed, as well as both county office administrators, showed great concern over the amount of time needed to complete the teacher evaluation process correctly and with fidelity and integrity. The question of follow-through was more easily answered for low performing teachers with a professional development plan or other remediation. Principals had very little comment when asked about follow-through with high performing teachers. They felt that their performance was satisfactory and no follow up was needed.

Teachers who receive NI's and PDP's required more intervention and could easily monopolize more of the principal's available time. This, in turn, left less time for the high performing teachers' needs to be addressed. They agreed that high performing teachers are likely to be left to their own professional development while the principals concentrate on low performing teachers and how to remediate their weaknesses.

Next, teacher evaluations by principals may not facilitate improved instruction. Principals could not definitively connect teacher evaluation to improved instruction. Three of the four principals described the current evaluation tool as not measuring standards-based instruction and therefore, not reflective of current teaching best practices. Two of the principals felt that the informal checklist reflected standards-based instruction but had no means of measuring the performance of the teacher. They felt teachers needed more than just

a checklist in order to judge their performance. One principal felt the informal checklist was a great way of measuring standards based instruction and that when they looked at all the “snapshot evaluations” they would see a pattern.

Principal B admitted that, “without an evaluation tool designed to evaluate standards-based instruction, principals go through the motions” without giving meaningful feedback. The same principal described the formal evaluation process as “outdated and not linked to the current job description.” There is no accurate way to determine if the evaluation process improves instruction. Another admitted, “...going through the motions but not relying on the evaluations for professional development.”

Two of the principals, B and D, believed that teachers are the best evaluators. According to one of them: “...one of the first things a principal needs to do to facilitate improved instruction is to include peer evaluation in the process. Teachers who observe each other learn from each other.”

Principals A and D showed dedication to the follow-through of teacher evaluation procedures by giving examples of how they consistently documented performances that needed to be improved to make sure there was some kind of follow up. Both principals focused their answers on the process and the next step. This lead the researcher to believe that follow-through was of great importance even if the procedures in place were not deemed adequate.

Every person interviewed agreed that the amount of time needed is the biggest draw back to teacher evaluation. There are so many duties and responsibilities that principals perform that they must prioritize on a daily basis. Principal B felt that an evaluation tool was not necessary to know which teachers were experts and which needed remediation,

“...procedures are in place for documentation purposes only...” All principals agreed the lack of time seriously impeded the process of following-through from evaluation to evaluation and from year to year.

### **Focus Group Data**

Focus groups were held to acquire the perspectives of experienced teachers toward the teacher evaluation system. Each of the four groups consisted of tenured teachers. Each group contained at least one nationally certified teacher or a teacher with an advanced degree.

#### **Pilot Study Focus Group**

The group met in a classroom in school A and was very willing to participate in the study. Two teachers made it clear that they like “principals to get involved in the instruction” and not to just sit and watch. Others agreed with this statement and one just wanted the principal to “get in and get out” quickly. It was clear that evaluations make some teachers nervous.

Other Teachers felt that the process is necessary to help low performing teachers improve. One teacher “felt proud when evaluated and everything was clicking...It takes the pressure off.” The evaluation process gave credibility to all their hard work. Teachers like positive feedback but do not respond well to negative feedback. They expressed feelings of anger and resentment at the thought of receiving a negative mark in the limited amount of time they were observed. Principals use evaluation as, “a tool to belittle someone.” Some teachers felt that evaluations “take place at the worst possible times.” Teachers want to be able to determine when principals can evaluate. They expressed concern that evaluations add “pressure” to an already difficult job. There was also a feeling of fear that evaluations “can be used to get rid of teachers” even if they are doing a good job. Some teachers showed a

lack of trust in the evaluators and fear that they would not be treated fairly for reasons other than their instructional abilities.

### **School A**

Teachers in this group felt that “Evaluations give the administrators a chance to see and hear what actually goes on in the classroom.” They also expressed that teacher evaluations “keep you on your toes and give you an idea of what you are supposed to be doing in the classroom.” One teacher said, “The evaluation process is good in that it holds teachers accountable.” Along the same lines another teacher said, “Teacher evaluations let you know your weaknesses. It helps you focus and improve your good points.” One teacher commented, “It (teacher evaluation) forces the administration to say something positive about you.” Another teacher commented that our administrators are “easy going and make the process less threatening.”

Teachers in this group realized that the current evaluation does not measure the required teaching methods in place. One teacher commented, “The formal evaluation only evaluates three areas and the only choices are S (satisfactory) or NI (needs improvement). It (the evaluation) doesn’t allow for anything else.”

There was also fear and distrust in the comments of some of the participants. For example, “They make me a nervous wreck because something could go wrong.” “They cause some people to put on a dog and pony show when, in fact, they sit at their desk most of the time” “Sometimes you just have a bad day.” One teacher commented that, “It (teacher evaluation) feels like punishment instead of help.”



## School B

Teachers in this school were not as fearful as other schools of the process. All participants, “The evaluations help me know what I am doing right and let the administration know that we understand our job”, made positive comments.

They help teachers “know where they may need more work or where they are doing fine.”

Comments like, “They get administrators into the classrooms” and the process

“Gives feedback for things teachers might not be aware of” showed that the teachers seemed comfortable with the process.

A few of the teachers admitted that teacher evaluations “make people nervous when they see the clipboard.” They were not afraid of the clipboard but reminded that they might be next.

This school used peer evaluation as one form of improving instruction. Teachers felt that “Evaluations should also be done by co-workers, for instance the reading resource (teacher) in my room...” “I see her everyday and know what kind of teacher he/she truly is.” “Not like the 15 minute observation...” “Of course, you will be on her best behavior then.” “Twenty minutes is not enough time to witness and activating strategy, lesson, and a summary” “They (principals) are just going through the motions like a dog and pony show.”

One teacher felt that teacher evaluations “are not personal enough.” “They (administrators) only state what they saw.” I liked it when my past administrator wrote comments like, ‘I loved the way you’...or ‘you did an outstanding job’.”

### **School C**

Teachers in this school were not as exposed to evaluation processes as other schools. Most teachers reported only one evaluation was done yearly and they either feared the evaluation or looked forward to it. One teacher commented, “The evaluation gives another or different set of eyes to make sure I am efficient and effective.” Another said, “The principal helps teachers having trouble to determine their weaknesses.” Yet another said, “It helps me determine my strengths. Makes one remain prepared, lesson plans are out, EQ (Essential Question) and standards are posted.”

Some teachers felt administrators in this school were visible in the classrooms. One teacher commented, “Administrators go into the classrooms every day.” “They are visible to the students.” Another teacher I commented about informal observations “give a collegial atmosphere of give and take ideas.” However, another teacher said, “Only once a year makes me nervous.” “Kids are not sure what is going on. It is unsettling for them.” Another teacher said students tend to “change the way they are acting so it is not a true show of classroom management.”

“It might be a bad day for someone to drop in.” Another commented, “They only come in once or twice a year. They don’t see an entire lesson.” This made it appear that administrators were not visible in all classrooms.

Another teacher commented on changes that had occurred in the evaluation processes, “We used to have an individual plan for improvement each year. It worked great and gave me focus. We haven’t done that in a few years.” Another said the teacher evaluation process was very “fear inspiring.” Finally, one teacher felt “Informal evaluation is too subjective and not quantitative.”

## **School D**

Participants in school D admitted to both good and bad experiences with the teacher evaluation process. Most of the teachers felt the “Observations are good and thorough. They include details.” They did not seem threatened by process “Evaluations let you know the strengths and weaknesses of teachers.”

The teachers in this group reported that they all wrote a professional development plan yearly. One teacher commented, “Professional development plans are a good idea. We do a new one every year.” Another said the process is “fair and easy. My principal “makes us feel at ease.”

Teachers in this school did not have knowledge of follow-through with the evaluation process. They saw each evaluation as in isolated incident. One teacher agreed, “There should be a link between teacher evaluation and student achievement but there is no way to tell.” Another said, “Follow through only happens at the end of the year.”

This school allowed teachers to evaluate teachers who work together in a co-teaching classroom. One teacher did not like the idea of this type of peer evaluation, “Other teachers have too much input. Some teachers are not professional and personal bias is seen in the evaluations. It’s not fair.” Another said. “Teacher’s style may not be the same as the person evaluating. That can lead to a bad evaluation.” The group as a whole agreed to the necessity of teacher evaluation but as one teacher put it, “The evaluation process is stressful.” However, they agreed that peer evaluation of others in order to get new ideas would be good.

### **System Policies and Documents**

The results of the review of policies showed that the formal teacher evaluation process has not changed in many years. The system is not designed to measure standards based instruction. However, the informal evaluation designed by the county does look for standards-based instruction and the county is beginning to do walk-through evaluations to determine if the standards are being taught. The state of Georgia is in the process of developing a standards-based formal observation that will make the current one obsolete. The concern is the length of the instrument and the amount of time required for successful implication. All administrators and each focus group discussed concern about the new evaluation. There is concern about the amount of time involved in learning the new process as well as extended requirements being discussed by participants in the pilot studies and from the Georgia Department of Education (Landy, 2009).

A review of annual teacher evaluations for the 2008-2009 school year revealed that all elementary school teachers in the county received satisfactory marks on their annual evaluations. Further investigation determined that only four teachers in the county received NI's at some point during the school year. This supports the data collected from the teachers in the focus groups and from the principal interviews. Principals hesitate to give low marks to teachers on evaluations. This may be due to the added time and effort involved in the follow up evaluations or it may be a hesitation to offend the teachers.

County policies and evaluation criteria did not match with the actual process of evaluation in each school. Three out of the four principals described moving toward evaluations that focus on current teaching practices. One focus group described peer evaluations that were required but could not explain how they were used or if any feedback

was ever received. Differences were found in the number of evaluations and the type of evaluations conducted from school to school.

A comparison of Danielson's Framework for Teaching (Appendix C) revealed that the evaluation tools for this county do not cover all components for teaching. The Framework is divided into four domains and a summary of the findings follows:

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation- 4 out of the 6 elements were covered in the county documents.

Domain 2: The Classroom Environment- 3 out of 5 elements were covered in the county evaluation documents.

Domain 3: Instruction- 4 out of 6 elements were covered in the county evaluation documents.

Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities- 5 out of 6 elements were covered in the county evaluation documents (See Table 6).

Elements missing from the county policies include knowledge of students, designing student assessments, creating an environment of respect and rapport, establishing a culture for learning, using assessment in instruction, demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness, and reflecting on teaching. Each of these areas is difficult to assess and requires a very in-depth knowledge of each classroom as well as the teacher's instruction. However, the connection to student learning in these elements is critical in order to fully evaluate the value of the instruction.

**Table 6**  
**Framework Domains**

<b>Elements included in policies and Documents</b>	<b>Elements not included in Policies and Documents</b>
<p><b>Domain 1:</b>            Demonstrating Knowledge of Content            Setting Instructional Outcomes            Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources            Designing Coherent Instruction</p>	<p><b>Domain 1:</b>            Knowledge of Students            Designing Student Assessments</p>
<p><b>Domain 2:</b>            Managing Classroom Procedures            Managing Student Behavior            Organizing Physical Space</p>	<p><b>Domain 2:</b>            Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport            Establishing a Culture for Learning</p>
<p><b>Domain 3:</b>            Communication with Students            Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques            Engaging Students in Learning</p>	<p><b>Domain 3:</b>            Using Assessment in Instruction            Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness</p>
<p><b>Domain 4:</b>            Maintaining Accurate Records            Communicating with Families            Participating in a Professional Community            Growing and Developing Professionally            Showing Professionalism</p>	<p><b>Domain 4:</b>            Reflecting on Teaching</p>

## **Themes of the Study**

This section is divided into four parts to answer the research questions that guided the study. The first part examines principals' use of the data collected in the teacher evaluation process for improving the performance of low performing teachers. The second part focuses on principals' use the data collected in the teacher evaluation process for improving the performance of high performing teachers. The third part presents teachers' perceptions of the commitment and follow-through of elementary principals regarding teacher evaluation. The fourth part examines the system policies support or hindrance of the evaluation process of elementary school teachers.

### **Part I- Principals' use of Data for Low Performing Teaches**

- Principals consider teacher evaluation of low performing teachers an important part of their job description.
- Principals implement strategies related to structure, time, and opportunities depending on the current level and type of evaluation taking place.
- Teacher evaluations by principals facilitate improved instruction of low performing teachers or results in dismissal of the low performing teacher.

### **Part II- Principals' use of Data for High Performing Teachers**

- High performing teachers do not receive valuable feedback on teacher evaluations that lead to improved instruction.
- Principals could not definitively connect teacher evaluation to improved instruction for high performing teachers.

- Principals spend less time working to increase the instructional skills of high performing teachers.
- High performing teachers seek out their own professional development.

### **Part III- Teacher Perceptions of Principals' Follow-through in Teacher**

#### **Evaluations**

The results of the focus groups manifested into four common themes related to this study. The pilot study group was included in the data. They are as follows:

1. Teachers want to feel comfortable and not nervous when administrators come into the room to evaluate. They either expressed feelings of fear and nervousness or pride and importance. They displayed extreme and opposite emotions and nothing in between. Several felt that their administrators never see the quality of teaching that they are capable of because they are so nervous. Some said they feel “queasy” when an administrator comes in to evaluate. One group felt that it was the administrator’s job to make them feel comfortable during a teacher evaluation by walking around and getting involved in the instruction. They felt that all the results, like the documentation, should be positive and the scoring should be eliminated. One teacher thought that “in process” was a better term than NI.

All five of the focus groups discussed the positive and negative comments that administrators write on formal evaluations. One teacher remarked, “Positive comments are priceless.” Another group talked at length about the great feeling one gets from a positive evaluation. One teacher



responded, “It makes you feel like working harder.” They felt that all their hard work and planning was worthwhile. Teachers either feared the evaluation process or looked forward to being validated for their hard work.

2. Teachers do not like receiving low scores on teacher evaluations. They consider NI’s as derogatory and unfair. Those who admitted to receiving NI’s felt angry or wronged when given a low mark on an evaluation. Only three teachers in all four of the groups admitted to receiving NI’s in the past.

Most teachers said they had only received satisfactory marks on their evaluations. They felt they deserved satisfactory marks even though they felt that they could always improve their instruction. Two of the five focus groups did not like the informal evaluations because the time involved was not enough to get a clear picture of their teaching abilities. One person felt “offended” that the informal did not reflect all that was going on in the classroom. Several teachers referred to it as a “dog and pony show” put on by administrators to show they did what they were supposed to do. Surprisingly, two principals used the same term to describe teachers’ performances during scheduled evaluations.

3. Follow-through only happens at the end of the year with the annual review. Two of the focus groups felt that teacher evaluations had improved their instruction while the other three felt that it made no difference. One group did comment that they knew the evaluations were supposed to improve instruction however; there was no understanding of continuity between evaluations in any of the focus groups.

4. Professional development plans (PDP) are for teachers who receive low marks on teacher evaluations. One group commented that they had only heard of two PDP's written for low performing teachers in all their years at the school. One focus group described a yearly plan for improvement that included every teacher in the building but the present administrator had not continued it in the past two years. The teachers assumed it was due to the amount of time required.

Focus group data revealed that teachers felt that countywide professional development opportunities were determined by the changes going on at the state level and not the results of teacher evaluations. Teachers did not connect teacher evaluations with professional development opportunities.

5. Lack of trust between the teacher being evaluated and the evaluator was another theme that appeared in several of the focus groups. One teacher said, "Evaluations can be used to get rid of a teacher even if they are doing a good job." Another commented that they worry something could go wrong during an evaluation. Teachers in this study were concerned that their teaching style may differ from that of the principal evaluating them. The comments validated the idea that trust is an important part of the teacher evaluation process and must be established before teachers can accept quality feedback.

#### **Part IV- Review of Policies and Documents**

- County policies should be revised to correlate with current standards-based requirements for instruction.

- County policies and teacher evaluation documents focus on tangible things like demonstrating knowledge or classroom management. They do not address the deeper concerns such as knowledge of the students, creating a respectful environment, or reflecting on teaching (See Table 7).
- Most principals give satisfactory marks on teacher evaluations.
- All annual evaluations consisted of satisfactory remarks in all areas.
- Evaluation policy and procedure do not match actual evaluation documentation. Requirements need to be made clear to all administrators.

**Table 7*****Research Foci******Themes***

<p>Use of the data collected in the teacher evaluation process for the purpose of improving the performance of low performing teachers</p>	<p>Professional Development Plans(PDP) required Principals consider teacher evaluation an important part of their job description Teacher dismissal Strategies related to structure, time and opportunities Evaluations by principals facilitate improved instruction</p>
<p>Use of the data collected in the teacher evaluation process for the purpose of improving the performance of high performing teachers</p>	<p>No valuable feedback on teacher evaluations to improve instruction No definitive connection between teacher evaluation and improved instruction Principals spend less time working to increase the instruction of high performing teachers High performing teachers seek out professional development opportunities</p>
<p>How do teachers perceive the commitment and follow-through of elementary principals regarding teacher evaluation?</p>	<p>Stress prevents best performance Credibility to all their hard work and planning Positive comments give confidence and motivates them to improve their skills Expect satisfactory marks even though they might need improvement Principal's do not follow-through with the evaluation process Evaluations in isolation from each other PDP's are for low performing teachers Teachers view a evaluation PDP different then school wide PDP Trust must be established</p>
<p>System policy support or hindrance of the evaluation process of elementary school teachers</p>	<p>Do not address the deeper concerns such as knowledge of the students, creating a respectful environment, or reflecting on teaching Not correlated to the standards Student learning not facilitated by evaluations County policies and requirements do not Match actual procedures followed</p>

## Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the major findings of this study. The chapter began by providing an overview of the research study. The next section described the respondents in the study. The interviews, focus groups, and review of policies and evaluation documents were shared as they related to the four domains of teaching. Finally, the major themes found in the data were discussed as they related to the research questions.

The first research question dealt with follow-through for low performing teachers. The data collected from the interviews and focus groups in this study revealed principals' beliefs about teacher evaluation (a) Processes of teacher evaluation, (b) Time constraints, and (c) Importance of teacher evaluation.

The second research question was follow-through for high performing teachers (a) High performing teachers do not receive meaningful feedback, (b) Principals could not connect teacher evaluation to improved instruction for high performing teachers, and (c) Principals spend less time working to increase the instruction of high performing teachers. Principals in this study shared four major ways they believed they facilitated teacher evaluation: (a) Following processes of teacher evaluation, (b) Developing professional learning plans for low performing teachers, and (c) Communicating the importance of teacher evaluation.

The third research question gave insight as to the teacher perception of teacher evaluation. Teachers do not consider the progression from one evaluation to another important. Teachers expect to receive satisfactory remarks on evaluations even though they feel they all have room for improvement. Most teachers consider the evaluation process as an extremely stressful task that prevents them from performing at their best

while others consider the process a positive experience that gives credibility to all their hard work and planning. Positive comments give teachers confidence and motivates them to improve their skills. Teachers expect to receive satisfactory marks even if they need improvement.

Teachers feel that a strong relationship with the evaluator is important for successful teacher evaluation. This supports the idea that principals should spend considerable time in the classroom. Teachers felt that peer evaluations were productive because of the opportunity to learn new strategies and discover other ideas that could be used with their own classes.

Most teachers do not feel that principals' follow-through with the evaluation process. Instead, they are viewed as isolated occurrences. Evaluations are required tasks and opportunities for growth. Professional development plans are for low performing teachers. Teachers view a PDP from an evaluation as different from a PDP required by a principal for the entire staff to guide their yearly learning. County office personnel determine professional development based on latest trends.

Finally, the fourth research question explored the county policies and documents related to teacher evaluation. The current evaluation process is outdated and does not evaluate standards based instruction. All annual evaluations reviewed were marked satisfactory in all areas. Actual review of evaluations show that the procedures differ greatly from school to school as to the number of and type of evaluations conducted.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the study and a discussion of the findings. Also presented are the conclusions drawn from the data analysis, implications for research, theory and practice, and recommendations for future research.

#### Summary of the Study

A basic interpretive qualitative research design was selected for this study because it allowed for deeper understanding of how these elementary school principals facilitated follow-through of teacher evaluation. Semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and a review of policies and documents were used to collect the data. Two county office administrators, three elementary school principals and one assistant principal from a small county in Georgia were interviewed for this study. Five focus groups consisting of elementary teachers from each of the four schools, including a pilot study group, were held and recorded. The interviews were conducted in the offices of the administrators. The focus groups were held at a variety of undisclosed locations. Interviews ranged from 20-60 minutes and focus groups lasted a minimum of 60 minutes. All interviews were conducted, recorded, and transcribed by the researcher. The data were compared for common themes and patterns and the results were presented in chapter four.

Effective teacher evaluation and leadership are two of the most cited factors for successful teacher evaluation management (Peterson, 2006). The purpose of this study was to explore how elementary school principals follow-through with teacher evaluation to improve instruction. The research was designed to answer the following questions:

1. How do elementary principals use the data collected in the teacher evaluation process for the purpose of improving the performance of low performing teachers?
2. How do elementary principals use the data collected in the teacher evaluation process for the purpose of improving the performance of high performing teachers?
3. How do teachers perceive the commitment and follow-through of elementary principals regarding teacher evaluation?
4. How do system policies support or hinder the evaluation process of elementary school teachers?

### **Discussion of Research Findings**

This section presents a discussion about the major conclusions drawn from this study. The results of the study suggest three conclusions. Each of these findings is discussed in relation to the relevant literature.

#### ***Finding 1***

***Principals consider teacher evaluation of low performing teachers an important part of their job description.*** The belief about teacher evaluation and the follow-through of principals can be used to develop the skills of low performing teachers. Jacobs and Lefgren (2006) determined that principals are a good source for identifying low and high performing teachers. Grant and Carvell (2001) found that both teachers and principals agree on what good instruction looks like. Principals also set expectations for instructional improvement. Setting expectations helps teachers to focus on the kind of



knowledge needed to improve instruction. Just as important, setting expectations for teacher evaluation communicates the importance of the activity as well as emphasizes the priority that the principal places on teacher improvement. The impact principals have on teachers directly influences student achievement (Glanz, Shulman, & Sullivan, 2007).

Principals, as well as teachers in this study, felt that a major part of the teacher evaluation process was the improvement of low performing teachers. Teachers considered Professional Development Plans were only used for low performing teachers. Teachers viewed a Professional Development Plan from an evaluation as different than a PDP required by a principal for the entire staff to guide their yearly learning.

### ***Finding 2***

***Principals implement strategies related to time management depending on the current level and type of evaluation taking place.*** Davenport and Anderson (2002), Feeny (2007), and Peoche and Chung (2006), found similar issues with time constraints that make follow-through of evaluation processes difficult. The concern about the extended time needed to thoroughly follow-through with the teacher evaluation processes were discussed by both principals and teachers in this study. Feedback from county administrator and principal interviews discussed the development of a system to track and monitor the teacher evaluations in each school. Principals tended to implement strategies related to structure and time to help organize the evaluation data. When principals observed that their teachers were weak in any area, they provided for remediation to take place, as well as provided time for the remediation to take place.

### ***Finding 3***

***High performing teachers do not receive valuable feedback on teacher evaluations that leads to improved instruction.*** Colby et al., (2004) determined districts with a high priority to teacher evaluation were committed to change at all levels. This was an area of weakness identified from the data found in the research study. The district mandates a specific routine for teacher evaluations but ultimately allows each principal to carry out teacher evaluations independently. Principals could not definitively connect teacher evaluation to improved instruction for high performing teacher and spend less time working to increase the instruction of high performing teachers. Desimone, Smith, and Ueno (2006) concluded that high performing teachers seek out professional development to improve their teaching skills. This correlates with the results of this study and indicates that teacher evaluations are not used to determine professional development opportunities for high performing teachers. According to Kyriakides et al., (2006), teacher evaluation is necessary to judge the ability of high achieving professionals. Professionals in the field of education require feedback to measure their skills and therefore, improve instruction. Glickman (2002) determined teacher evaluation provides a structure for teachers to plan, reflect, and change.

### ***Finding 4***

***Most teachers consider the evaluation process as (a) an extremely stressful task that prevents them from performing at their best or (b) consider the process a positive experience that gives credibility to all their hard work and planning.*** These drastically contradicting views seemed to separate the teachers in all groups. Because there were very few NI's given, it was difficult to determine if performance or the school principals

played a part in these perceptions. These findings support some insights in current literature on teacher evaluation with respect to educators perceiving anything less than a satisfactory score as a personal attack on the teacher being evaluated and not as an opportunity for teachers to improve their teaching skills. Batchelor (2008) concluded that the majority of the teachers had negative perceptions of professional development programs and teacher evaluation was not effectively connected to professional development goals. Danielson and McGreal (2000) found that any scores less than satisfactory might be perceived as personal attacks and not as opportunities for teachers to improve. Other findings suggest that educators consider formal evaluations unimportant, and therefore seriously demeaning the entire process (Kleinhenz & Ingvarson, 2004).

Positive teacher evaluations give teachers confidence and motivates them to improve their skills. Based on the evidence from the data analysis, there seems to be a connection with research by Kyriakides, Demetriou and Charalambous (2006) where they determined that teachers believe evaluation processes are necessary for improvement of instruction. However, this study revealed that most teachers expect to receive satisfactory marks and are required tasks seen in isolation from each other. Halverson, Kelley, and Kimball (2004) found that principals saw merits in the system despite the widespread belief that teacher evaluation itself was not a primary force improving teaching. Collins (2004) and Feeney (2007) determined that quality feedback guides teachers toward self-improvement.

### ***Finding 5***

***County policies and teacher evaluation documents focus on tangible things like demonstrating knowledge or classroom management, neglecting important factors such as knowledge of students.*** Policies and procedures in the county do not address the deeper concerns such as knowledge of the students, creating a respectful environment, or reflecting on teaching when compared to Danielson's Framework for Teaching (2007).

Lack of effectiveness occurs when district teacher evaluation policies originate outside the school context, as an effort to correct problems with teacher performance (Halverson, et al., 2004). Historically, teacher evaluation has had a limited impact on teacher performance and learning (Peterson, 2000; Darling-Hammond, Wise et al., 1984). Halverson, et al., (2004) found the systems' policies should focus on evaluation as a common vision of teaching with comprehensive standards and rubrics, and multiple sources of evidence (Kimball, et al., 2004).

Most principals in this study gave satisfactory marks on teacher evaluations even when they indicated improvement was needed. One of the most significant observations related to this finding is that all annual evaluations reviewed consisted of satisfactory remarks in all areas. This correlates with teachers' perceptions that principals do not follow-through with the evaluation process (Batchelor, 2008).

### **Conclusions**

Even though principals understand the importance of the follow-through of teacher evaluation to improve instruction, they are hesitant to give teachers unsatisfactory evaluations. This prevents the process from working as designed. Instead, principals in this county tend to handle unsatisfactory performances informally and give teachers

opportunities to correct instructional deficits before documenting weaknesses. This may be due to the changes in teaching strategies that are occurring in the county. The evaluation system was designed before the implementation of standards based instruction and has only been modified slightly in the past few years in an attempt to be more useful.

***The findings resulted in nine conclusions:***

- (1) Principals considered teacher evaluation of low performing teachers an important part of their job description. They understood the process is for improvement and or dismissal of teachers who are not performing well. Principals are going to do the best they can with what they are given. If they are working with an outdated instrument rich data will not be found.
- (2) Principals implemented strategies related to structure, time, and opportunities depending on the current level and type of teacher evaluation taking place in order to improve the skills of low performing teachers.
- (3) High performing teachers rarely received valuable feedback on teacher evaluations that leads to improved instruction. Instead, they received written praise and no feedback for improvement. This conclusion indicates that high performing teachers are motivated to determine their own professional development opportunities.
- (4) Most teachers considered the evaluation process as (a) an extremely stressful task that prevented them from performing at their best or (b) Teachers considered the process a positive experience that gives credibility to all their hard work and planning. This dichotomy among teachers appeared at

every school. It obviously was not a result of the principal but of the teachers' own perceptions.

In determining how best to facilitate teacher evaluation, principals should diagnose the needs of their teachers and of the organization in order to implement strategies that would enhance instruction. Quality feedback is important to all teachers and must be presented in a professional and non-threatening way.

5) Principals who were dedicated to the follow-through of teacher evaluation procedures had teachers who were more likely to be comfortable about the process. More importantly, principals who felt they were going through the motions, had teachers who were not comfortable with the evaluation process.

6) Principals implemented a variety of strategies to manage the time consuming challenges of teacher evaluation. This study highlights the important role the principal plays in the process of teacher evaluation.

7) County policies need to change to include current standards-based evaluation methods. County policies and teacher evaluation documents focus on tangible things like demonstrating knowledge or classroom management, neglecting important factors such as knowledge of students (See Table 6).

8) Traditional formal evaluations do not adequately measure instruction.

Principal's efforts to facilitate teacher evaluation should include an increased emphasis on informal teacher evaluation. Requirements for principals and teachers need to be made clear. Principals and teachers need to have input into the requirements.

9) Because teachers felt they learn better from observing other teachers, there should be a requirement for peer evaluation built into the system. Principals in this study believed that teacher evaluation is an important part of their job and has the potential to increase instruction. If the principal is taken out of the equation, the responsibility of the evaluation is placed on the teachers. If they feel safe enough to let someone else rate them, the results will be more important to them.

### **Implications for Research**

This qualitative study on how principals' follow-through with teacher evaluation processes adds to the understanding of principal and teacher beliefs about teacher evaluation, principal behaviors and strategies employed to facilitate teacher evaluation, and factors that affect a principals capacity to facilitate teacher evaluation in a school organization. Findings from this study bring to light several implications for research, theory, and practice in the areas of leadership and teacher evaluation.

The importance of teacher evaluation must begin at the county level. The county administrators must make importance to teacher evaluation clear. Principals did not have a clear understanding of the procedures and protocols they were required to follow. Therefore, principals and teachers had developed there own ideas about teacher evaluation and established their own ideas concerning the importance of the processes.

This study makes several practical contributions to leadership for teacher evaluation and the link to professional development. First, while this researcher does not claim to provide a formula for principals to follow in order to effectively follow-through with teacher evaluation, she does provide an analysis of how principals identify the instructional needs of their teachers. This analysis may help both newly appointed as well

as veteran principals determine the best course of action to facilitate effective teacher evaluation in their own schools. The evidence from this study shows that there is no one right way to facilitate teacher evaluation. As it should be with any organizational development initiative, appropriate interventions should be determined based on the needs of the organization. In this case, principals should determine appropriate teacher evaluation strategies based on the current organizational goals for instruction determined by the county administrators and the board of education.

Additionally, in all schools in this study teacher evaluation seems to be occurring widely, but was not formally documented. Second, principals stated that much of their own learning about the process of teacher evaluation has been through informal means. These findings indicate a need for higher education programs in the state of Georgia to include this work as part of the new Ed.S. program performance-based requirements for all new principal candidates. Three of the principals in the study held strong beliefs about the connection between learning and teacher evaluation, and about the importance of teacher evaluation to improve teacher practice and student learning. Given these principals' beliefs about teacher evaluation processes, further studies should look at the extent to which the teacher evaluation process contributes to student learning in schools and results in effective school improvement. This could be part of the research and culminating projects required of new principal candidates in the Ed.S. program.

This study increases our understanding of follow-through for teacher evaluation and adds to teacher evaluation theory by considering the relationship between the type of evaluation processes used and the improvement of instructional strategies in the classroom. Principals selected strategies based on available time and the level of the



teacher being evaluated. While formal teacher evaluations were never abandoned, the reliance on those evaluations decreased and the purpose for evaluating teachers changed from improving instruction to praising individuals.

Based on the findings of this research some conclusions can be drawn for systems that wish to evaluate for the purpose of improved instruction:

1. Teacher participation in the evaluation process will increase their confidence and understanding of the process.
2. Programs need to correlate teaching standards to the evaluation protocols. These standards need to be clearly communicated to the teachers.
3. Programs need to clarify the purposes of evaluation and accompanying procedures.
4. The evaluation process should be comprehensive but should not take up valuable time for either the teacher or the evaluator.
5. Evaluation procedures should address the needs of both low and high performing teachers.
6. Programs need to establish and support peer and self-evaluation as much as possible if the goal is teacher growth.
7. Principals need the interpersonal skills to be able to communicate and build relationships with their teachers before evaluations take place.
8. The purpose of teacher evaluation should be to provide useful feedback designed to improve instruction.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings of this study suggest several recommendations for future research. First, this was an exploratory study to understand how principal's follow-through with teacher evaluation processes. The sample for the study was small due to the size of the county where the study occurred. Additional research is needed to determine if the findings of the study transfer to other cases as well, and should be conducted with a larger sample of elementary schools. Further, only one county from the state of Georgia was included in the study. Future studies might include elementary schools from across the nation to determine if the findings of this study hold true at the national level.

This study alludes to the possibility that the level of education and training may have a significant impact on the attitude and perception of teachers. Further study, determining the level of education and training of teachers in elementary schools their perceptions of teacher evaluation may lead to a correlation between educational levels, ability levels, and perceptions of evaluation.

Further studies should be conducted to determine the extent that principals' follow-through to evaluation processes has a positive effect on instruction. Additionally, there may be numerous factors not considered that determine if follow-through of teacher evaluation processes is productive.

The relationship of trust between the principal and the teachers was another theme that was evident in this research study. Further research in this area may prove valuable to the implementation of the teacher evaluation process.

Finally, another study should be conducted after the implementation of the future standards based teacher evaluations system. The Georgia Department of Education is in the process of developing a new system to replace the current, outdated evaluation.

### **Dissemination and Applications**

The researcher plans to write an article, to be published in an educational journal, from the findings of this study. This study increases our understanding of teacher evaluation processes and the importance of teacher evaluation to improve instruction. This knowledge may assist counties in developing teacher evaluation policies and procedures that successfully improve instructional practices. Human Resource Directors and county office administrators in charge of the evaluation process can use the information gathered in this study to implement teacher evaluation processes that are non-threatening to teachers and allow for follow-through by principals that is meaningful. Teachers can use the results of this study to obtain a deeper understanding of how the process of teacher evaluation can benefit their instruction and student learning.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented a summary of the research study, discussion of the conclusions, implications for research, theory, and practice, and recommendations for future research. The data were based on triangulation of semi-structured interviews with county administrators, elementary principals, focus groups of tenured teachers, and a review of county policies and evaluation documents. Respondents offered their perspectives on their beliefs about teacher evaluation, the behaviors they displayed, the strategies they employed, and the factors that affect their ability to follow-through with teacher evaluation.

The findings resulted in the following conclusions:

- (1) Principals consider teacher evaluation of low performing teachers an important part of their job description. They understand the process is for improvement and or dismissal of teachers who are not performing well.
- (2) Principals implement strategies related to structure, time and opportunities depending on the current level and type of teacher evaluation taking place in order to improve the skills of low performing teachers.
- (3) High performing teachers rarely received valuable feedback on teacher evaluations that leads to improved instruction
- (4) Most teachers consider the evaluation process either:
  - (4a) an extremely stressful task that prevents them from performing at their best, or:
  - (4b) consider the process a positive experience that gives credibility to all their hard work and planning.

There were no neutral positions indicating that the process caused high emotion on the part of the teachers. They had issues with trust when being evaluated by their principal.

- (5) Principals who were dedicated to the follow-through of teacher evaluation procedures had teachers who were more likely to be comfortable about the process. More importantly, principals who felt like they were going through the motions, had teachers who were not comfortable with the evaluation process.

(6) Principals implement a variety of strategies to manage the time consuming challenges of teacher evaluation. This study highlights the important role the principal plays in the process of teacher evaluation.

(7) County policies need to change to include current standards-based evaluation methods. County policies and teacher evaluation documents focus on tangible things like demonstrating knowledge or classroom management, neglecting important factors such as knowledge of students (See Table 6).

Changes were required in order for more effective teacher evaluation to take place. Principals in this study believed in the power of teacher evaluation for improvement of teaching skills, in addition to achieving their organizational goals, also they believed evaluation and professional development has the ability to change the way educator's view teaching and learning. Determining this ability begins with an understanding of the teacher evaluation process and the goals that accompany the process. From there, counties, principals, and teachers can determine the best course of action, determining and implementing the strategies that will develop the ability of the teachers to instruct students more effectively.

Teacher evaluations need to be viewed by teachers as a positive part their work. Evaluation processes must be implemented in a way that is not threatening to teachers in order for them to be effective. Teachers are professionals and in order to remain professional they must continue to improve their skills and strategies in the classroom. Because principals who take the process seriously had teachers who were also dedicated

to the process, it only makes sense that proper training must be made available to insure the process is understood and implemented with integrity.

Finally, county teacher evaluation policies are more effective when valued and monitored by the county office administrators. The process is highly unlikely to be successful and with any meaningful results without continuity from all levels.

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APPENDIX A  
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

In regards to: IRB request

Date: 11-11-09

Attention: Elementary School Principals

Subject: Dissertation Proposal

The Internal Review Board of Georgia Southern University has requested a letter of cooperation from the elementary schools included in my study of teacher evaluation. Please sign and return this letter to me if you agree to allow me to conduct a qualitative study that will include an interview with each principal at your convenience and a focus group of tenured teachers from each school.

No persons will be named or hurt in any way because of my research study. Focus groups will be randomly chosen from a list of tenured teachers. Permission will be granted from the Board of Education before any research will begin.

Thank you,

Suzanne Arrington  
Assistant Principal

Please check the line below, fill in the school name, and sign for permission.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree for Suzanne Arrington to conduct a study of teacher evaluation at  
\_\_\_\_\_ Elementary School.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not agree.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

You may fax this to 709-986-4901 or return in a county envelope to at:

Suzanne Arrington  
Dearing Elementary School  
500 North Main Street  
Dearing, GA 30808  
706-986-4911



APPENDIX B  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

**Principal Interview Protocol**

1. What is the main reason for evaluating teachers?
2. If you had to describe the teacher evaluation process in your school, what would you say?
3. What would you say are the strengths and weaknesses of teacher evaluation?
4. How do you follow up with an interview where the teacher scored only one needs improvement? Two or more?
5. How do you follow up with a teacher who scores satisfactory on all areas of the evaluation?
6. What advice would you give a new principal to help him/her keep up with the teacher evaluation data and processes?
7. What do you do with teacher evaluations from year to year?
8. Where do you go when you have questions about the teacher evaluation process?
9. How is the overall data used? How is it connected to professional development opportunities?
10. What types of observations do you typically do? (walk-through, formal or informal observations, portfolios) How often?
11. What changes would you make to improve the evaluation process?
12. Is there any other information or concerns about teacher evaluation that you would like to add?

**County Office Administrator Interview Protocol**

13. What are principals required to do in the teacher evaluation process in this county?
14. What would you say are the strengths and weaknesses of teacher evaluation?
15. How do principals follow up with an interview where the teacher scored only one needs improvement? Two or more?
16. How do principals follow up with a teacher who scores satisfactory on all areas of the evaluation?
17. What advice would you give a new principal to help him/her keep up with the teacher evaluation data and processes?
18. What do you do with teacher evaluations from year to year?
19. How is the overall data used? How is it connected to professional development opportunities?
20. What types of observations are typically used in your county? (Walk-through, formal or informal observations, portfolios). How often?
21. How do you ensure that principals are doing what they are supposed to be doing? How do you insure that follow-through occurs?
22. Is there any other information or concerns about teacher evaluation that you would like to add?

APPENDIX C  
FOCUS GROUP PROMPTS

## Focus Group Prompts

The researcher will begin with an icebreaker activity and end with a drawing for a door prize.

**Icebreaker:** Word Association, The facilitator will ask the participants to finish the prompts quickly and without thinking, "The best and worst thing about teacher evaluations are....." Participants will write their answers on a sheet of paper, and the researcher will share them with the group anonymously.

Other prompts used will include:

1. Give us an example of your experiences with teacher observations in your current school.....
2. Tell us more about that.....
3. Keep talking.....
4. Can someone summarize what we have been saying?
5. What is your reaction to negative marks on a teacher observations?
6. What is your reaction to a positive mark on a teacher evaluation?

APPENDIX D  
POLICY AND EVALUATION PROTOCOLS

**The Framework for Teaching:  
Components of Professional Practice by Charlotte Danielson**

**Domain 1: Planning and Preparation**

1. Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy Demonstrating
2. Knowledge of Students
3. Setting Instructional Outcomes
4. Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources
5. Designing Coherent Instruction
6. Designing Student Assessments

**Domain 3: Instruction**

1. Communicating with Students
2. Using Questioning and Discussion
3. Techniques
4. Engaging Students in Learning
5. Using Assessment in Instruction
6. Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness

**Domain 2: The Classroom Environment**

1. Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport
2. Establishing a Culture for Learning
3. Managing Classroom Procedures
4. Managing Student Behavior
5. Organizing Physical Space

**Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities**

1. Reflecting on Teaching
2. Maintaining Accurate Records
3. Communicating with Families
4. Participating in a Professional Community
5. Growing and Developing Professionally
6. Showing Professionalism

Review of Policies Protocol.	Standard Observation	Annual Evaluation	Duties and Responsibilities	Addendum
<b>Domain 1- Planning and Preparation</b>	1, 4, 5	1,4,5		3
<b>Domain 2- The Classroom Environment</b>	3,4,5	3,4,5		
<b>Domain 3- Instruction</b>	1,2,3,4	1,2,3,4		
<b>Domain 4- Professional Responsibilities</b>			2,3,4,6	

APPENDIX E

FINAL CODING STRUCTURE AND EMERGING THEMES



## **Impact of Evaluation on Improvement of Instruction**

### **Purpose**

- Clarity of purpose of teacher evaluation
- Role of evaluation in the school

### **Processes**

- Standards clear
- Standards endorsed by teachers
- Peer evaluations
- Number of formal observations
- Number of informal observations

### **Strengths and Weaknesses of Evaluations**

- Outdated
- Not correlated to the curriculum

### **Follow-through NI**

- Professional Development Plan
- Rarely used for improvement of teaching skills

### **Follow-through S**

- Self-directed high performing teachers
- County directs most professional learning based on new trends

### **Principal Attributes**

- Organization
- Relationship with teacher
- Interpersonal manner

### **Evaluations from year to year**

- Available but not readily accessed by principals, county office, or teachers

### **Principal Professional Learning**

- Other Principals
- Human resources

### **Feedback**

- Used primarily for individual PDP's of low performing teachers.

**Types of Observations**

- Formal observation of classroom
- Informal observation of classroom
- Occasional walk-through- School wide data and not individual
- Peer evaluation

**Changes for improvement**

- Specificity of information-Quality feedback
- Focused on standards
- Time spent on the evaluation
- Time for professional development and connection to evaluations
- Frequency of formal
- Frequency of informal
- Peer evaluation
- Increased trust

**Teacher Attributes**

- Prior evaluation experience
  - Expectations of self
- Capable of determining own for professional development

APPENDIX F  
INFORMED CONSENT



### INFORMED CONSENT

1. My name is Suzanne Arrington. I am a doctoral student at Georgia Southern University under the direction of Dr. Lucindia Chance. I am conducting research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.
2. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research is to determine the commitment and follow-through of principals for the successful implementation of teacher evaluation to improve teacher performance.
3. Procedures to be followed: Participation in this research will include completion of in depth interviews with elementary principals from four elementary schools and central office personnel, a focus group of teachers from each of the four schools, and a review of district policy documents associated with teacher observations as well as data from previous evaluations.
4. Discomforts and Risks: Discomfort and possible risks involved in this study are possible embarrassment and dealing with sensitive issues during interviews. The researcher will not use any names of participants or schools in the final paper to protect all parties involved. Participants can decline to answer any questions.
5. Benefits:
  - a. The benefits to participants include knowledge and awareness of successful teacher evaluation.
  - b. The benefits to society include possible improvement to instruction of elementary students due to improved teacher evaluation practices.
6. Duration/Time required from the participant: Forty-five minutes to an hour for interviews and focus groups.
7. Statement of Confidentiality All data collected will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office. Data will be maintained in a secure location for a minimum of 3 years following completion of the study. The researcher will be the only person who will have access to confidential information. All participants identity and responses will be kept confidential and coded for anonymity.
8. Right to Ask Questions: Participants have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. If you have questions about this study, please contact the researcher named above or the researcher's faculty advisor, whose contact information is located at the end of the informed consent. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-478-0843.
9. Voluntary Participation: All participants in this study will be volunteers and must be 18 years of age to participate. They may leave the study at any time for any reason. All information received will be coded to protect the identity of the participant, schools, and school system.
10. Penalty: There will be no penalty for participants who leave the study. You may contact the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs for answers to questions about the rights of research participants please email [IRB@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:IRB@georgiasouthern.edu) or call (912) 478-0843.

Title of Project: Elementary Principals' Follow-Through in Teacher Evaluation to Improve Instruction

Principal Investigator: Suzanne Arrington, 500 N. Main Street, Dearing, GA 30808, 706-986-4900, [arringtons@mcduffie.k12.ga.us](mailto:arringtons@mcduffie.k12.ga.us)

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lucindia Chance, Georgia Southern University, Department of Leadership, Technology, and Human Development, P.O. Box 8131, Statesboro, GA 30460, 912-478-7267, [lchance@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:lchance@georgiasouthern.edu)

Participant Signature

Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

Investigator Signature

Date

*Suzanne Arrington*

APPENDIX G  
IRB APPROVAL

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs		
<b>Institutional Review Board (IRB)</b>		
Phone: 912-478-0843		Veazey Hall 2021
		P.O. Box 8005
Fax: 912-478-0719	IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	Statesboro, GA 30460

**To:** Suzanne Arrington  
220 White Oak Street  
Thomson, GA 30824

**CC:** Charles E. Patterson  
Associate Vice President for Research

**From:** Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs  
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees  
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

**Date:** November 19, 2009

**Subject:** Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered **H10102** and titled "**Elementary Principals' Follow-through in Teacher Evaluation to Improve Instruction**", it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

*Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.*

**This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter.** If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. *At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted.* Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,



Eleanor Haynes  
Compliance Officer