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Teacher Evaluation and Classroom Practice: Teacher Perceptions in Northeast Tennessee

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Teacher Evaluation and Classroom Practice: Teacher Perceptions in Northeast Tennessee

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A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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by

Christopher Dean Bogart

August 2013

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Dr. Virginia Foley, Chair

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ABSTRACT

Teacher Evaluation and Classroom Practice: Teacher Perceptions in Northeast Tennessee

by

Christopher Dean Bogart

The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate the perceptions of K-12 teachers as they relate to the implementation of the Tennessee Educator Acceleration (TEAM) evaluation framework. Survey links were sent to 1,115 K-12 teachers from 4 Northeast Tennessee school districts. The survey achieved a 24% return rate for a total of 270 participants. The research evaluated K-12 teachers' overall perceptions of the TEAM evaluation framework, their perceptions of changes to their lesson planning processes, their perceptions of changes in the use of instructional strategies in their classrooms, and their perceptions of changes in the amount of time needed to prepare lessons for instruction since the implementation of the TEAM evaluation framework. Data sources analyzed consisted of an online survey design using a 5-point Likert-type scale. There were 4 research questions included in this research each with a corresponding null hypothesis. Each research question was analyzed with a series of single sample t-tests with mid-point of the scale (3.0) as the test value representing neutrality. All data were analyzed at the .05 level of significance. Findings from the data indicated a significant difference in perceptions of teachers in 3 of 4 areas. First the planning process for their lessons was reported to be more structured and focused on the evaluation rubric. Next, the instructional strategies used in their lessons were reported as more focused on higher order thinking skills. And finally the time required to plan instruction had increased since the implementation of the TEAM framework.

DEDICATION

The work in this study is dedicated to my family. First to my children, Isabella and Reid, who are truly the inspiration for everything I do in my life. I want this work to be seen as example of how much I value education and how important learning is in our lives. I hope you see this as evidence of the need to learn all you can in life as well as persevere and work hard to achieve your goals.

Secondly, I dedicate this to my wife Keri. Thank you for all the patience and support through these many years. Thank you for allowing me to chase me dreams.

And finally I dedicate this to my parents, Howard and Nancy. You truly provided the example to live my life by through all these years. This work represents the culmination of an educational experience you began me on as a child. You showed me the importance of education and always supported me in my endeavors.

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I would like to acknowledge my dissertation committee, Dr. Virginia Foley, Dr. Don Good, Dr. Eric Glover, and Dr. Ryan Nivens. Thank you for your patience and assistance in this process. I feel like I leaned heavily on you through this process and you were incredibly gracious and accommodating in this process.

I would like to acknowledge Unicoi County Director of Schools Denise Brown. You have provided me with support and time to accomplish this task in conjunction with working in our office. Without the support provided by Director Brown, this process would have been much more difficult. It was this support that truly made this work much easier and allowed me to accomplish my goal.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Study

Accountability requirements handed down from the federal government have had a tremendous impact on education in our state. Through initiatives like the Race to the Top grant competition Tennessee's leaders in state government have tried to put the state on the forefront of education reform in our country. Due to our state's focus on educational reform, accountability issues have created major changes in our state in areas such as tenure reform, collective bargaining, and student assessment. Teacher evaluation has also been impacted by the reform movements in Tennessee. Improvement in education within our state has been linked to the need for more teacher accountability through the evaluation process. "Accountability, typically summative in nature, reflects the need to determine the competence of teachers in order to ensure that services being delivered are effective" (Kyriakides & Demetriou, 2007, p. 43). The changes in the evaluation process in our state have been focused on linking student achievement to teacher effectiveness.

Beginning with the 2011-2012 school year the Tennessee Department of Education implemented a new requirement for teacher evaluations across the state. School districts were required to begin using teacher evaluations as part of a measure of teacher effectiveness along with student achievement score data. Along with student achievement and growth measures, these ratings were then to be used to determine which teachers were granted tenure in school districts across the state. The school systems were given the option of choosing between state approved teacher evaluation frameworks or proposing their own framework to use for teacher

evaluations. The most popular method of evaluation chosen by the school systems was the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM). This model uses the Teacher Advancement Program rubric developed by the Milken Family Foundation and now promoted by the National Institute on Excellence in Teaching. The rubric requires teachers to be rated in four categories: instruction, planning, environment, professionalism. The teachers are rated on a five-point rubric system in each category. This framework is vastly different from the former teacher evaluation model used by the state of Tennessee. Further, this new process lent more weight to the evaluation process in terms of teacher retention by tying evaluation scores to tenure decisions.

In many states teacher evaluation reform has caused a great deal of controversy. Tennessee is one such state. Teacher evaluation methods have not changed in many cases since the 1970s. Many methods used around the country today rely heavily on teacher inputs to the system and reflect the way in which educators thought about teaching at that time (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). To this point in our educational history teacher performance on evaluations has not been tied to student achievement in a specific way. Yet questions remain, is teacher evaluation actually changing the practices of teachers within the schools? Are teachers changing the way they teach in order to improve instruction? Did their methods need to be changed? And does teacher evaluation actually improve student outcomes?

Teacher evaluations are commonly held to have two main purposes: summative judgment of teacher performance and formative professional growth (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Danielson, 2007). However, most of the public and policymakers view teacher evaluation as a method of needed quality assurance in our schools (Danielson, 2001). Therefore, a more quantifiable method of evaluating teachers is called for by those who create education policy.

This has led to teacher evaluation scores increasingly being linked to student achievement along with the use of a standards-based evaluation model in many school districts.

Despite these changes in the model for how the process is executed, many education reformers and district leaders in the education community are calling for a shift in philosophy as it relates to teacher evaluation. This shift is toward a more formative process that promotes growth in teachers. Formative evaluations are not intended to be judgmental, rather they are to be used to help teachers indentify their strengths and weaknesses and therein improve their craft (Attinello, Lare, & Waters, 2006). Formative evaluations are meant to enhance a process in which teachers may adjust their methods in order to improve their skills. Through this study the researcher seeks to evaluate teacher perceptions of the TEAM evaluation framework compared to the previous evaluation framework used in the teachers' school districts.

In order to determine whether teacher practices have changed, those teacher practices to be examined need to be defined. The practices on which this study is focused on fall in two specific categories. First, the planning process used by teachers to prepare their lessons, including the amount of time spent in preparation. Second, the actual instructional strategies used by teachers in their classrooms. These two areas represent aspects of a teachers' jobs that are the foundation for what they do in the classroom. Planning leads to the development of instructional strategies that will enhance student understanding. Teacher planning is critical to successful lesson creation. Effective teachers have well structured classrooms and their planning allows them to create an engaging learning environment. Instructional strategies are defined as those methods used by teachers within their lessons to convey the content and provide opportunities for student learning.

Statement of Problem

The amount of research and data relating teacher evaluation performance to actual classroom practices of teachers is not extensive. The researcher seeks to add to the existing research on teacher evaluation, specifically how a standards based evaluation model affects teachers' practices in the classroom and in their planning processes. The focus of this research is on the implementation of the TEAM Evaluation Model in four selected Northeast Tennessee school districts. The research will further address the evaluation model from the teacher perspective in regards to teacher practices.

Because of the nature of the evaluation model, teachers have been required to adapt to a new set of indicators that are used to determine effective teaching. The previous teacher evaluation model did not address specific indicators concerning classroom practices. The TEAM evaluation rubric has multiple indicators in four different teaching areas: planning, instruction, environment, and professionalism. Each of the indicators is designed to improve teacher performance and thereby improve student achievement. High quality teachers are generally identified through the evaluation process. However, most literature has failed to provide the teacher perspective on whether evaluations actually change teaching practices.

Through this study the researcher seeks to determine if the TEAM evaluation model has caused teachers to change their practices in the classroom and also their planning processes. Further, this study is an investigation to determine if the TEAM evaluation model has motivated teachers to improve their teaching practices.

Research Questions

The following questions were used to guide the nonexperimental quantitative research design:

Research Question 1: Is there a significant difference between the teacher perceptions of the TEAM evaluation framework and the teacher perceptions of the previous teacher evaluation method used in these districts?

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of their planning processes for specific lessons under the TEAM evaluation framework compared to the previous teacher evaluation model in these districts?

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference in teachers perceptions of instructional strategies they are using in their classrooms after implementation of the TEAM evaluation framework as opposed to strategies used under the prior teacher evaluation model in these districts?

Research Question 4: Is there a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of the time required for lesson preparation due to the implementation of the TEAM evaluation framework compared to the previous teacher evaluation model used in these districts?

Limitations of Study

Limitations in this study relate to the population from which participants were selected. The population chosen was limited to four school districts in the Northeast Tennessee region. Every teacher who was evaluated under the TEAM Instruction domain rubric in the school systems selected was asked to participate in the study. Therefore, the respondents to the study may have had different opinions than the teachers not evaluated under this domain or those who chose not to participate.

The instrument used for data collection in this research was created and used for the first time specifically for this study. The survey was only used for teachers within the school districts chosen for this research. Therefore, respondents from other school districts may have reported different perceptions. No administrator opinions are expressed in the findings. Administrators' views may be different from those of the teachers represented in this research because their evaluations are based on a different set of rubrics. Therefore, the research is limited to teacher opinions and is not representative of all school district staff.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions provide explanations for terms specific to this study.

1. Teacher evaluation: The process of determining teacher competence and providing professional growth to teachers in public schools within our country (Weems & Rogers, 2010).

2. Formative evaluation: Evaluation processes focused on enhancing the professional skills of teachers through ongoing collaboration and instruction. A continual process to assist teachers in the improvement of their skills (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

3. Summative evaluation: Evaluation processes focused on making consequential decisions about teacher competence. These evaluations provide an overall assessment of the teacher's performance for a specific school year (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

4. Standards-based Evaluation System: Evaluation processes based on a clear set of defined standards of effective teaching (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

5. Value-added data: Measures that estimate the contribution of educational inputs to growth in student achievement while controlling for noneducational factors outside the control of schools (Villar, 2011).

6. Student Achievement: A measure of the cumulative effects of what students have learned over a prescribed period of time (Stronge & Tucker, 2005).

<u>Significance of Study</u>

The Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) is currently (as of 2013) in the second year of implementation in most school districts in Tennessee. Considering that the instrument is so new to teachers and administrators in the state, research on the efficacy of the program in Tennessee school districts should be conducted. The researcher seeks to add to that research. This study can provide data on the impact the process is having within our schools. The implementation of TEAM was done with the intention to improve learning in our schools by creating more effective teachers. The researcher seeks to determine if the evaluation framework is perceived to be changing teacher practices both in their delivery of instruction and their planning processes. The results of the study can help to determine if teachers perceive that professional practices are changing and/or improving from the evaluation framework as reported by the teacher. Further, this study will provide data on which to base professional learning opportunities in school districts in order to address specific concerns about the TEAM Evaluation Framework. The results of this study can also assist in further changes and modifications to the TEAM Evaluation Framework in order to improve instructional practices within school districts.

In addition, findings from this study can also provide information on the perceptions of teachers regarding the value of the TEAM Evaluation Model. This information could prove useful for future professional development planning within school districts and the state as a whole.

Overview of Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 includes the introduction, the statement of the problem, the limitations of the study, the definition of terms, the research questions, and the significance of the study and the overview of the organization. Chapter 2 contains a review of literature related to the teacher evaluation process. This review includes a brief overview of the history of teacher evaluations, a review of current literature on problems associated with the evaluation process, promising new methods in teacher evaluation, and creating a common understanding of effective teaching. The methodology used in this study is detailed in Chapter 3. This description includes the population, research questions, procedures used for research, data collection, and the procedures for data analysis. Chapter 4 reports the findings of the data analyses. Chapter 5 provides a summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research related to this study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to evaluate whether teachers in Northeast Tennessee school districts perceived the implementation of the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model Evaluation Framework had created changes to instructional and planning practices. The purpose of this literature review was to describe the process and history of teacher evaluation, current research on the problems with the teacher evaluation process in place in most school districts today, current efforts and methods to improve the teacher evaluation process, and finally to review literature related to the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model rubric that is based on the Teacher Advancement Program evaluation rubric.

History of Teacher Evaluation

Historical Overview of Teacher Evaluation

Weems and Rogers (2010) reported teachers today are entering the classroom more prepared than ever before to teach the students in our schools. However, the public is constantly bombarded with reasons why our system of education is not working. Weems and Rogers explained the center of much of the criticism is the way in which teachers are evaluated. The public schools in our nation are institutions funded by taxpayer money. Therefore, an expectation of quality assurance is expected and for the most part accepted. Teacher evaluation has, by many accounts, not provided the desired results we would expect from the process designed to ensure our students receive quality instruction in their classrooms (Weems & Rogers, 2010).

The teacher and the teaching process are the central elements of the education process. "Teaching is the essence of education, and there is almost universal agreement among researchers that teachers have an outsized impact on student performance" (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009, p.9). Therefore, a mechanism for the quality assurance of this teaching is a vital part of the educational system. This mechanism should also work to build quality instruction within the classrooms in order to enhance student achievement (Weems & Rogers, 2010).

Teacher evaluation has been a fixture of our educational system for many decades now. The purpose of these evaluations has alternated between quality assurance and professional learning. These represent dual roles of summative evaluation and formative professional growth (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Milanowski & Heneman, 2001). When the role of the principal began to change in the early part of the 20th century, teacher evaluation became a part of the job responsibilities. Surprisingly, the methods of teacher evaluation have not changed a great deal since the principal became responsible for most of the evaluation process (Attinello et al.,2006).

Even though the actual mechanics of teacher observation remain very similar to what we have seen throughout the past 60 years, teacher evaluation has experienced shifts in philosophy (Weems & Rogers, 2010). Early in the 20th century, teacher evaluations focused on personal traits of the teacher and were directed from an ethical perspective. Since the 1950s the focus of the observations has shifted to observable behaviors. This change reflected a greater reliance on objective measures of research focused on the learning process. These performance measures did not initially show a direct correlation to student achievement (Daley & Kim, 2010).

Shough (2010) reported that shifts in evaluation philosophy occurred also during the 1970s based upon the need to evaluate effective teaching behaviors. Direct observation was used to

monitor observable teacher behaviors in the classroom. Shough also reported that during the

1980s and 1990s teacher evaluation moved to the forefront of the educational reform movement.

Teacher evaluation during this period of time focused on standards-based performance indicators

as well as expansion of the evaluation process. This expansion was spurred by the enactment of

laws within states mandating systematic teacher evaluation processes for use in improving the

instructional process (Shough, 2010).

According to Danielson (2011) there have been three great reform movements in the

modern reform era. The first dates back to 1983 and the publication of the report *A Nation at

Risk*. This brought the focus of educational reform in schools to two main areas: length of the

school year and more academic course work. The next phase began in the 1990s and included

high stakes assessment and the use of academic standards on which students were to be assessed.

The third phase began with the publication of *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's

Future* (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). This publication

focused on teacher quality, thereby bringing teacher evaluation to the forefront of our

consciousness. The current reform movement within our education system has brought a

renewed focus to the process of teacher evaluation driven by the need for more accountability

(Danielson, 2011).

Weems and Rogers (2010) found that whether due to changes in state laws, federal

mandates, or the effort to link student test scores to teacher evaluation, the accountability

movement has created a significant focus on teacher evaluation. The reauthorization of the

Elementary and Secondary Education Act in the form of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001

set about several changes in educational accountability. One of the central tenets of that law was

to ensure teacher quality. Highly qualified teachers were defined in this reauthorization based on

their level of academic attainment (Weems & Rogers, 2010). Schools were required to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets based on student achievement. This achievement was determined by the rate of proficient test scores from students overall as well as in subcategories such as students with disabilities. The reauthorization also included expanded oversight for states and local district from the federal level. All of these changes spurred a perception of need to ensure that teacher performance in the classroom was high quality. Yet, that performance was assessed by how well teachers knew their content. Today's educational reform movement has shifted effectiveness as defined by how well teachers perform with their students (Stumbo & McWalters, 2011).Therefore, teacher evaluation systems needed to improve in order to provide quality assurance

The United States Department of Education created the Race to the Top grant program in 2009 through which states could receive money for innovative projects to improve education. Requirements in the application for grant award consideration called for teacher evaluation systems to use some form of student achievement data in their teacher evaluation systems (United States Department of Education, 2009). This motivated many states to improve their teacher evaluation systems and require higher standards of their teachers. Stipulations for receiving the grant also caused changes in the law of many states. Since the grant competition began, the number of states mandating the annual evaluation of teachers has increased from 15 to 23. Furthermore, 22 states as of now have measures of student growth as a significant part of the evaluation of all teachers (Schachter, 2012).

Changes enacted in the teacher evaluation process by states in order to apply for the Race to the Top grant have caused a great deal of controversy in some cases. Tennessee is one such state where the changes to the teacher evaluation process and how teacher effectiveness is

determined have caused controversy. Much of this stems from the fact that methods used to collect evidence for teacher evaluations have not changed in many cases since the 1970s (Attinello et al.,2006). The methods used today rely heavily on teacher inputs to the system and reflect the way in which educators thought about teaching at that time (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). To this point in our educational history teacher performance on evaluation has not been tied to student achievement in a specific way.

<div align="center">Current Criticisms of the Teacher Evaluation Process</div>

Accountability

Accountability is an accepted aspect of the educational system in our world today. Continual calls for educational reform bring with them calls for accountability in schools in order for the public to ensure schools are effectively educating our children. This era of accountability can be traced to the landmark publication of *A Nation at Risk* (1983). This report detailed many concerns with our educational system. The report was filled with language that was intended to shock those people who were complacent with our country's educational performance (Ginsberg & Lyche, 2008). *A Nation at Risk* was successful in shocking the nation and the era of accountability was born. Since that time the educational system has seen ever increasing amounts of accountability in almost every aspect of schools. This accountability movement has continued to the present day through reforms such as the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in the form of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Weems and Rogers (2010) reported the reforms of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 as they related to teachers focused primarily on teacher input methods. The centerpiece of teacher quality within the legislation was the "highly qualified" mandate. This mandate focused

on the degrees earned by the teachers, the years of experience the teachers had, or the types of professional development they had attended. Everything revolved around the teachers and the inputs the teachers had achieved in their certification process. Weems and Rogers explained that with all of this having been required of teachers one would expect teacher quality to be extremely high in our nation today. However, calls for more educational reform because of the perception of the poor quality of teaching in our schools are heard constantly. Much evidence of the lack of success of our students is found in the poor national test scores or the inability of graduates to show a readiness for the job market (Weems & Rogers, 2010).

Accountability, in terms of teacher evaluation, is typically considered summative. Danielson (2001) explained that accountability measures in education today generally reflect a need to determine the competence of teachers. Further, this competence is related to the manner in which teachers deliver their services. These services generally include delivery of instruction, conducting school activities, and professionalism in decisions and actions (Danielson, 2001). The public, as well as politicians, want to ensure that those services are effective. Therefore, much of the evaluation criteria teachers are judged by stem from the political and social constructs around which the society is based (Kyriakides & Demetriou, 2007). Thus teachers are left to mold their teaching after what others think is effective.

Stumbo and McWalters (2011) found a recent shift in the focus of teacher evaluation in terms of accountability. Their research found that prior to this shift, as previously mentioned, the determination of accountability by the public was generally based on inputs by the teacher. Now the focus has shifted from teacher "quality" to teacher "effectiveness". Stumbo and McWalters explained the shift is best described as a way to view teachers. Under the quality model, teachers were measured by how well they knew their content. This was evident through the No Child Left

Behind mandates for highly qualified teachers. Federal policy, through initiatives such as the Race to the Top grant competition, have now moved teacher rating to a focus on effectiveness. Those policymakers responsible for this shift seek to determine how well teachers perform with their students (Stumbo & McWalters, 2011).

Tying Student Achievement to Teacher Evaluation

Due to the shift in the focus of accountability from teacher "quality" to teacher "effectiveness", new measures of determining effectiveness should be researched and created. The most common area to begin that process has been with student scores from standardized tests. The recent Race to the Top grant funding competition encouraged states to include student achievement data in their teacher evaluation systems in order to win the award money (Fuhrman, 2010). The application for the Race to the Top contest describes in section (D)(2)(ii) the following criteria for teacher evaluation systems:"design and implement rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals….that take into account data on student growth…..as a significant factor" (State of Tennessee application, United States Department of Education, 2009, p.81). Student performance as an indicator of teacher effectiveness was used by many states in their system designs for their Race to the Top applications. In fact, some states set the requirement for student performance data as counting 50% toward a teacher's evaluation scores (Stumbo & McWalters, 2011).

The intent of this approach was to improve both teaching and learning. Studies in the past have shown that there was very little correlation between teacher evaluation scores and student achievement (Gallagher, 2004). In order to accomplish the goal of improving teaching through the use of evaluations, teacher evaluations should use multiple criteria for their assessment.

Student achievement data are the one most common set of criteria now looked to for evaluative data (Ovando & Ramirez, 2007). However, other forms need to be considered as well as the way in which student data are measured.

The major problem in using student achievement data as a measure of teacher effectiveness has been a lack of consensus on which measures to use in this process. The validity of such data has come into question on whether to use student achievement or value-added data (Kane, Taylor, Tyler, & Wooten, 2010). Norman (2010) asserted a further problem in this process is the lack of ability to even measure student learning accurately. Further complicating the process of establishing a relationship between teaching and learning is the fact that most teacher evaluation methods rely heavily on teacher input (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). For example, their lesson plans, delivery of instruction, or professionalism are all inputs used in a typical evaluation process. Any form of statistical measure that may be used to determine a relationship between these inputs and actual student performance would be a complex model. To this point in the process, research is sparse on attributing teaching practices to student learning.

Student achievement can encompass many different types of assessment data. The selection of student data to use for teacher evaluation has been a major problem for the reforming of teacher evaluations (Ovando & Ramirez, 2007). Student test scores on standardized tests are the main source from which student achievement data are derived. These test scores provide information on the level of achievement and growth of students' abilities. Students' test scores are attached to a teacher for the specific year in which they are being evaluated. The measured effectiveness of teachers based on test scores has been shown to vary greatly depending on which statistical measure is used. For example, a teacher may have both a low achievement rate, but a high growth rate in value-added score data (NEA, 2010). Further, the NEA (2010)

contended that a single test score cannot accurately represent student learning as it relates to teacher evaluation. Many educators advocate for a wider range of student work to be used as measures of student growth. These measures may include items such as: local district wide assessments, student work, and possibly projects conducted through multiple disciplinary units (NEA, 2010).

Many educators decry the use of test scores in teacher evaluations because of the external factors that can also influence those test scores. The value-added model of measurement draws much criticism from educators (Labaree, 2011). The value-added data are designed to determine the influence of a teacher on a student's achievement in a given year of school while controlling for external factors. Many testing experts contend the value-added data model is too weak in terms of reliability and validity to be used as a measure of teacher effectiveness (Labaree, 2011). Too often standardized exams do not provide enough data to accurately determine a teacher's effect on student achievement (Stumbo & McWalters, 2011).

When trying to attach student test scores to specific teachers certain problems arise. First, and most glaring, is trying to attach teacher performance to students in classes where there is no standardized test given (Stumbo & McWalters, 2011). Current testing limitations make it extremely difficult to use value-added data for teachers whose subjects are not tested. In fact, it is estimated that less than a quarter of teachers actually teach in grades or subjects that test scores would apply (Donaldson, 2009; Kane et al., 2010). Yet, expanding the use of standardized testing is not a desired outcome in order to use value-added measures more (Fuhrman, 2010). To solve this problem, states look to use school-wide value-added data as a source of information on teachers of untested subjects. This use of this particular form of data faces criticism because those teachers may not be directly involved in those scores. Another area of concern comes from

the use of value-added scores in middle and high school settings. These students have multiple

teachers each day (Stumbo & McWalters, 2011). So even though a standardized test may fall in

one subject area, other teachers may have had an influence on that teacher's students.

Further complicating the issues of using student test scores or value-added scores to

evaluate teachers is the way in which students are assigned to teachers. Teachers should be

randomly assigned to students in order for value added scores to truly represent the gains made

by a teacher during the course of a school year (Fuhrman, 2010). In most schools students are not

randomly assigned to teachers. Even researchers working with student test data have

acknowledged that nonrandom assignment of teachers to students could distort the way in which

teacher effectiveness is measured (Kane et al., 2010).

Despite the areas of concern previously mentioned determining effective teaching has

become an important part of the improvement process in schools across the nation. "As schools

and districts across the country work to improve student achievement, it is important that high

quality teaching and high quality teachers be identified" (Gallagher, 2004, p. 80). There are

proponents, regardless of the criticism, who believe that student test data are the only objective

measure to use in the teacher evaluation process (Markley, 2004). Markey (2004) stated:

> "Sullivan's research into evaluation methods concluded that nearly all methods are
>
> subjective in nature and lack any connection to student achievement. The only measure
>
> that is both objective and related to student achievement is the use of test data to determine
>
> teacher effectiveness" (p. 6).

Further, some positive linkages between student achievement and teacher effectiveness have

been established (Odden, 2004).

Odden (2004) reported on two specific cases in which strong linkages were found between teacher evaluation scores and student learning improvement. These studies, one in Cincinnati Public Schools and the other in Vaughn Charter School, showed a clear statistical link between evaluation scores and value-added gains. Fuhrman (2010) advocated the use of value-added data as the fairest alternative in tying student achievement to teacher evaluation scores. The reason for this assertion is that value-added data presumably control for differences among students that are outside of the control of the teacher. These differences may include family situations, economic status, and other external factors.

Untrained Observers

Within the current high stakes world of teacher accountability attaching student test score data to teacher evaluations is seen as a way to eliminate some of the subjective nature of teacher observations. Typically the principal's observation is the most common form of observation in schools (Weems & Rogers, 2010). Yet, these observations are limited in scope and time. Weems and Rogers (2010) reported that many times a principal is only required to observe a teacher once during a school year. The evaluation itself is generally a one-period or hour-long observation in which the principal notes the activities and interactions of the teacher within that lesson. The infrequency of these observations makes true teacher improvement difficult. If, however, the purpose of an evaluation is to determine competence, then these short time frame observations are effective. In order to effectively promote growth and improvement in a teacher's skills, a more comprehensive approach is needed (Weems & Rogers, 2010; Zatynski, 2012).

The typical principal observation, beyond the time factor, has many other problems associated with it. The observation process has largely been subjective in nature when done by principals in this manner. The problem with the subjective nature of the observation is further compounded by the general lack of training afforded to principals on the skills they need for observations (Kane et al., 2010; Medley, Coker, & Soar, 1984). Also, the nature of these observations leaves little time for ongoing discussions with teachers in order to create improvements in their skills (Conley & Glassman, 2008).

Three main areas of concern and criticism present themselves in principal observations. These areas include the lack of subject matter knowledge, failure to provide helpful feedback, and inconsistency among evaluators (Milanowski & Heneman, 2001). Many times a principal is seen as the leader of a school but not necessarily qualified to evaluate teachers in all subject areas. For example, a principal coming to their role as an evaluator from a content background of history may not feel qualified to evaluate a probability and statistics teacher. The National Education Association contends that most principals are not adequately trained in observation methods in order to provide constructive feedback (NEA, 2010). Much of this lack of training is also in content specific knowledge.

Skilled evaluators are a necessity in order to provide constructive feedback to educators in the classroom (Donaldson, 2009). Teachers will accept judgments from evaluators they believe are skilled because they perceive the feedback as more useful. High quality and intense training is required for evaluators to gain consistency in observations. Donaldson (2009) found that in order to be able to identify good instruction and evaluate teachers accurately, a great deal of commitment to training and learning is required on the part of administrators. Further, Donaldson contends, "Without high-quality professional development, evaluators will not

evaluate accurately and the evaluation will likely have little impact on teaching or learning" (p. 11). Extensive training may provide evaluators the ability to provide the type of feedback on the process of teaching that is needed to improve teacher's performance as well as student learning (Donaldson, 2009).

Donaldson and Donaldson (2012) reported that in order for teachers to benefit from the feedback they receive from evaluators, the teachers need to trust the evaluators. A lack of trust in many cases has developed from the structure of the current system. This lack of trust can be seen as a result of administrators not focusing on the feedback and instruction process. In many cases observers have not been adequately trained to lead productive coaching sessions. A lack of pedagogical knowledge in observers further hinders the process of constructive feedback. "For teachers to find these conjectures credible and respond to them with efforts to build on their strengths and address their weaknesses, they must trust the observer and have access to subsequent learning opportunities" (Donaldson & Donaldson, 2012, p. 80).

A further fallacy with the method of only using principal evaluations to rate teachers is the lack of consistency between evaluators (Danielson, 2011). Many times variance between districts makes it easier to attain tenure in one district than in another. Also, within districts there can be variance between schools and principals. The standard at one school in a district may be much higher than at another. When human error is factored into the evaluation process, consistency is difficult to achieve. Consistency allows an evaluator to be able to be accurate in the observation of teachers and their behaviors as well translating those behaviors into some score (Milanowski, 2004). Consistency between evaluators is needed in order to develop their ability to identify the practices which exemplify good teaching. Danielson (2011), stated, "even after training, most observers require multiple opportunities to practice …to calibrate their judgments with others"

(p. 38). The lack of intensive and consistent training threatens the reliability and objectivity of evaluation results (Stumbo & McWalters, 2011).

Districts struggle with improving administrators' evaluative abilities for several reasons. Donaldson (2009) found collective bargaining agreements, poor evaluation instruments, and lack of sufficient time all contribute to deficiencies in evaluator abilities. Due to the perceived weakness of evaluation instruments, principals feel as though they cannot push for consequences for poor performing teachers. Further, with little oversight in certain districts, ratings of teachers become inflated because there are no incentives to rate teachers poorly (Donaldson, 2009).

In response to many of these criticisms of the principal as the primary source of observation data, school systems are looking to broaden their approaches (Danielson, 2001). Therefore, other forms of evaluation methods have been used in school districts. Peer evaluation, teacher portfolios, student evaluations, and the inclusion of student achievement data are just some of the ways in which teacher evaluation systems are evolving beyond the standard principal evaluation (Danielson, 2001, Weems & Rogers, 2010).

Novice vs. Experienced Teachers

Reforms in teacher evaluation systems have shown an increased focus on the formative approach to evaluations. In order to accomplish better formative results, a differentiated approach to teacher evaluations should be adopted. According to Weems and Rogers (2010) the accommodation of novice and experienced teachers in relation to teacher evaluation is a key to reforming the system as a whole. Even though novice and experienced teachers have the same demands placed on them from day one, distinguishing between the processes for each group can

provide for greater professional growth for each group. Failure to do so places both groups at a disadvantage (Danielson, 2007).

There are generally few differentiated methods for novice versus experienced teachers. Generally when principals conduct an observation of a novice teacher, they have the same instrument that they would for an experienced teacher (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Yet, we know from both research and common sense that teachers have different needs for professional growth based on abilities and experiences (Attinello et al.,2006). The one size fits all approach that has dominated the teacher evaluation process in our country provides little benefit for all teachers. Further, it wastes crucial time in the process that could have been spent with efforts to improve teachers who were either novice teachers or teachers of marginal ability (Attinello et al., 2006). As discussed previously, time is a critical factor in the process of teacher evaluations. Creating a design in which teachers who need more assistance are provided these opportunities will create a more efficient system.

Danielson and McGreal (2000) provided a design for a system that encourages differentiation. Mentoring is a main component of the design they have crafted. Danielson and McGreal call for 10-14 hours of contact time between novice teachers and their supervisors. These hours could be gained through conferences, observations, or perhaps professional readings. The number of observations would vary between two to six. Further, while the principal may be the primary observer, this model calls for multiple participants to take part in the observation process. Collection of data under this system for novice teachers would include journals, portfolios, mentoring programs, structured observations, teacher artifacts, as well as preconference interviews. The focus in this process is on the continual professional development of these teachers (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

Under the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM), the Tennessee Department of Education has created a differentiated number of observations for teachers based on two factors for the 2012-2013 school year. The factors that determine the specific number of observations for a teacher are licensure level (apprentice or professional) and the teacher's final evaluation score from the previous school year. Apprentice teachers who scored from one through four the previous year on their final evaluation score would have three full-length Instructional rubric observations and two observations each focused on the Planning and Environment rubrics. Apprentice teachers who score a five on their final evaluation score only have to be observed once in each of the rubric categories (Tennessee Department of Education, 2012).

The differentiated aspect Tennessee has implemented is based on numbers of observation and the difference is shown with the Professional status teachers. The Tennessee Department of Education (2012) explained a teacher who holds a professional license and scores a one on the previous final evaluation score will be evaluated the same way in which an Apprentice teacher will be with a score of two to four on the final evaluation score. Beyond these observations, the difference becomes either two Instructional observations or simply one. Again, these differences are based on the final evaluation score attained by the teacher. This system was instituted in order to alleviate some of the burden on administrators and to recognize the differing needs of teachers (Tennessee Department of Education, 2012).

Teachers, as well as other professionals, grow and change as they move throughout their careers. The needs of teachers change. Danielson and McGreal (2000) found once teachers attain a certain level of proficiency, professional growth has a different meaning. Whereas administrators need to provide growth opportunities for novice or less than proficient teachers, teachers who demonstrate a high level of skill and expertise should be allowed to explore and

develop new techniques. Danielson and McGreal explained teachers who have attained an advanced level of skill in their craft should be allowed to demonstrate their effectiveness in alternative ways. These teachers should be given the support necessary to move to even more advanced levels as educators (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

Fear and Its Effects on Teacher Evaluation

Many teachers have a fear of teacher evaluations and the consequences that arise from those evaluations. Fear of anything causes a change in the behavior of the individual who is in fear. This fear within the teacher evaluation system has led to teacher evaluations being less productive than intended for the teachers. Conley and Glassman (2008) identified the following sources of fear within school organizations: accountability-driven sanctions, reduction of fiscal support, difficulty in meeting diverse student needs, and diminished control over intrinsic work experiences (i.e. instructional methodology). Conley and Glassman reported that for teachers entering the profession the top fear reported is job security.

A Nation at Risk (1983) was used effectively to raise the concern among the public in our educational system. The language used in the report had the effect of creating a sense of fear in the public that our schools were failing our children (Ginsberg & Lyche, 2008). This method of using fear to shock the public was not new however. Fear in the media and through the political arena has been used throughout our history in order to set agendas and advance ideology. In education there has been no single defining event during this era, simply a continual promotion of fear regarding the failed state of education in our country as it relates to Pre-K-12 education.

Teachers and administrators experience different types of fear within the school organization. Administrators fear stems from the demands of the job they are tasked with doing.

The multiple responsibilities, as well as areas in which they are expected to be experts, can create job requirements that are at many times overwhelming. Teachers' fears revolve around uncertainty within their roles, personal criticism, and the evaluation process itself. Conley and Glassman (2008) found that teachers fear evaluations even if they do not specifically fear the consequences of those evaluations. Fear, as it expresses itself in teachers, is detrimental to the entire process of evaluation and professional growth. Many times the stress related to this fear causes teachers to move into a downshifting mode. Hains (2007) describes downshifting as a behavioral response to a biological process when a threat is perceived. This response restricts a person's ability to operate at full capacity. This also creates a fight or flight mentality in the individual. In teachers this can manifest itself as doing the least and safest amount possible in order to address their greatest fear. Therefore, the teacher evaluation process becomes more about survival that it does professional growth (Conley & Glassman, 2008).

Conley and Glassman (2008) described teachers' reaction to fear by doing what is believed necessary in order to preserve their jobs. This may take the form of union representation, restricting content taught within the classroom, or in some cases cheating on state tests. Teachers who choose to protect themselves from potential job loss because of poor evaluation scores may be less than open when discussing possible deficiencies in their performance. Conley and Glassman found a teacher may become much more defensive when discussing his or her teaching performance during an evaluation. This restricts the free flow of information between teacher and administrator and thus does not allow for open communication or formative assessment. Teachers cannot take advantage of formative evaluation critiques when they are not willing to admit mistakes or subscribe to areas of needed improvement. This creates a sense

within the teacher that the evaluation is more about political necessities than professional growth (Conley & Glassman, 2008).

Conley and Glassman (2008) found teacher isolation makes self-assessment of teacher effectiveness much more difficult. Education, in contrast to other professions, has historically provided inadequate support for professionals once they enter the classroom. Therefore, many teachers have begun their career with a sense of isolation, and there has not been a change in their perceptions throughout their career. Conley and Glassman explained that in many professions a good evaluation may lead to a better job assignment or promotion. However, in education good evaluations do not necessarily provide opportunities for such rewards. Teachers question whether evaluations of them reflect good teaching and goals for improvement (Conley & Glassman, 2008).

Conley and Glassman (2008) stated, "political reform emphasis has arguably intensified conflicts already inherent in teacher evaluation" (p. 68). One example of such conflict stems from the use of a uniform and standardized evaluation model for every teacher. As previously discussed, in order to move toward the reform of teacher evaluations most experts seem to agree we need evaluations to become nonuniform in their application (Conley & Glassman, 2008). Teachers in this scenario with more experience would be evaluated less than teachers in the beginning stages of their careers. Those teachers would also have a different focus in their professional growth. The reasoning in this is that those teachers who are new to the profession need the most direction (Conley & Glassman, 2008; Danielson, 2007).

Teachers' fear of evaluations stems in many cases from their lack of control over the process. Conley and Glassman (2008) found many teachers' fear is exasperated by the loss of control over a dimension of their teaching. For example, a program that is introduced in a school

that requires for scripted teaching in some manner would take much of the individualization away from the teacher. Perceiving insufficient control over the mechanism used in the evaluation process creates a great deal of fear and uncertainty in teachers. When teachers have more control over the subjects and mechanics of their evaluations, the teachers' comfort level will rise. Teaching standards, while well intentioned, have threatened teachers' control of what they teach within their classrooms (Conley & Glassman, 2008).

Lack of Professional Growth Opportunities

Researchers have stated that the teacher evaluation process has two purposes: summative evaluation of teachers and formative professional growth (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Danielson, 2007). Yet, the only one of these recognized by policymakers is summative, specifically quality assurance. Danielson (2001) found this summative product is the one most predominately seen by the public. Yet, this focus does little to provide for professional growth or improvement of teachers. Beyond this, a purely summative approach can also be detrimental to the education improvement process. The focus on the summative process has provided very little for teachers in terms of professional growth (Danielson, 2001).

In general most evaluators give positive scores to the vast majority of teachers on their summative evaluations (Donaldson, 2009). This is a result of many factors indicative of the culture of teacher evaluation in our educational system. For example, Donaldson and Peske (2010) found there to be two consequences of poor evaluations: little improvement in instruction and continued employment of weak teachers, each an area of criticism of our current educational system. In many cases the school system is indifferent to the evaluation process and the quality of instruction given in a classroom (Weisberg et al., 2009). Weisberg et al. (2009) also found that

tenured teachers who were rated as ineffective on evaluation scores were rarely dismissed. The summative focus of evaluations has created a system in which generally evaluation scores are looked at only for remediation and/or dismissal purposes.

Because evaluation scores in most cases have few negative effects, evaluators are less motivated to evaluate accurately. As a result teachers then are less motivated to take what feedback is given in a serious and constructive manner (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). A further effect of the reality that teacher evaluations do not produce negative consequences is that the motivation of effective teachers is reduced. Effective teachers have a diminished sense of motivation when their less effective colleagues continue to receive satisfactory evaluation scores (Donaldson, 2009). The diminished motivation of the truly effective teachers can have a detrimental effect on entire school systems.

In response to these facts about teacher observations and the evaluation process itself, questions have arisen as to whether this process is flawed beyond repair (Kane et al., 2010). The cycle of administrator observation, generally positive scoring of the observation, and then a postobservation conference with little constructive feedback has become a process that provides for little professional growth. Reflection in particular is missing in the process and reflection cannot happen without substantive and credible feedback. Without constructive feedback and appropriate reflection, teacher growth is limited (Attinello et al., 2006). As previously reported, many school districts do not provide in-depth feedback opportunities. Observers are not properly trained, nor do teachers trust the feedback from these administrators (Donaldson & Donaldson, 2012). Discussions of the teacher's strengths and weaknesses are either not taking place or are not productive when they do because of a lack of adequate training for the administrator.

Zatynski (2012) found that in many cases teachers actually received little feedback or recommendations for ways to improve.

<div align="center">Improving the Teacher Evaluation Process</div>

Linking Teacher Evaluation to Overall Reforms Within School Districts

Despite all of the previous reported research, teacher evaluation systems are undergoing a shift in philosophy around the country. Many leaders in government and education have called for better ways to evaluate teachers and determine performance levels. The recent Race to the Top grant competition enacted by the United States Department of Education forced many states to review their own teacher evaluation policies. In order to receive the award money from the grant, states had to find ways to attach student achievement to teacher evaluation scores. Tying student achievement to teacher evaluation has led to many changes in the ways states and local education authorities evaluate their teachers. The changes to the teacher evaluation systems have at many times been controversial. Yet, we know from research that the current model of teacher evaluations has not been effective in either judging teacher performance or improving it. "As a measurement process, the reputation of teacher evaluation is not particularly good" (Milanowski, 2004, p.34). Teacher evaluation systems typically do not improve teacher practices or actually portray what takes place in a classroom (Peterson, 2000). In order to make teacher evaluation more effective and impactful in a school system, the teacher evaluation system should be a part of overall plan for increasing student achievement in a school district.

A teacher evaluation system, and the way a school system uses it, provides insight into the values of a school system. The importance placed on teacher evaluation in a school district is a reflection of the values and expectations the system has for all those involved (Stronge &

Tucker, 1999). School districts should strive to devise an evaluation framework that provides the proper basis for judgment of the system's teachers. This aspect of development requires great technical skill and pedagogical knowledge. Further an evaluation system centered on the common belief held by stakeholders about how students learn is more effective. "Therefore, the criteria of conducting evaluation through measuring teacher effectiveness should arise from the goals of education as defined by a particular societal and political context" (Kyriakides & Demetriou, 2007, p47).

Political skills are required for the leadership of a school system to navigate the political landscape and ensure implementation of such a system (Stronge & Tucker, 1999). Politicians and school officials often have very different opinions regarding the nature of teacher evaluations. The two most common stated purposes of teacher evaluation are measuring teacher competence (summative) and professional development and growth (formative) (Danielson, 2011; Weems & Rogers, 2010). Politicians generally rely on the former purpose in order to make judgments concerning schools, principals, and teachers. Administrators within a school system would prefer to use the latter purpose, professional growth, as the basis for teacher evaluation. Yet, political skills are necessary in order to attain reforms in any teacher evaluation system regardless of the focus of the system. Connecting teacher evaluation to such areas as tenure, promotion, removal, or compensation raise controversy regardless of where they are applied (Stumbo & McWalters, 2011). In order for these systems to be effective in their implementation, the design and introduction of the evaluation system needs to be handled properly (Kyriakides & Demetriou, 2007). Linking this process to a broader scope of educational reforms in a state or district is one path to help secure successful implementation.

Compatibility between district goals for reform and teacher evaluation goals allows for the process to be seen as more relevant within a school system. As Stronge and Tucker (1999) stated, "Performance evaluation achieves relevance only by becoming an integral component of other system-level initiatives" (p. 347). Teacher evaluation systems that address a relationship between the district's needs and the needs of the individuals in the system foster greater improvements in the school districts as a whole (Stronge & Tucker, 1999). A school system in which teacher evaluation allows teachers to grow and improve in their profession will create an environment in which student learning will improve. If the teaching standards described in the evaluation model are effective strategies, then overall student achievement will improve once those strategies are implemented in the classrooms (Odden, 2004). When student learning improves, the overall goals of the district's reform efforts will be met.

Once a school district's goals for reform have included the teacher evaluation system and goals are shared, support from the highest levels of administration should be evident. If a teacher evaluation system does not garner the support of the district leaders (i.e. superintendent, school board members), the implementation will not effectively take root. Therefore, having strong leaders support the vision of the relationship between teacher evaluation and system reforms is a key to the success of any system. (Stronge & Tucker, 1999). "None of these conditions can be sustained without strong district leadership that makes improving teaching a way of life in every school" (Donaldson & Donaldson, 2012, p. 81).

Regardless of the flaws seen in teacher evaluation systems, these systems can play a central role in the overall reform policies of school districts around the country (Milanowski & Heneman, 2001). Every school system strives for improvement. Improving teacher practices within the classroom can begin with a discussion to determine what effective teaching means for

teachers. Therefore, including teachers in the design and implementation process of teacher evaluation systems can help secure their trust and endorsement of the reforms needed within school systems (Donaldson & Donaldson, 2012).

Formative vs. Summative Evaluation Philosophy

Teacher evaluations, as previously reported, have two main purposes, summative judgment of teacher performance and formative professional growth (Danielson, 2007; Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Yet, the public and policymakers simply see teacher evaluation as a method of providing needed quality assurance in our schools (Danielson, 2001). Due to this teacher evaluation scores are increasingly being linked to student achievement. Despite this fact there are many in the education community calling for a shift in philosophy as it relates to teacher evaluation. This shift is toward a truly formative process that promotes growth in teachers. Formative evaluations are not intended to be judgmental, rather they are to be used to help teachers indentify their strengths and weaknesses and thereby improve their craft (Attinello et al., 2006).

In order for teacher evaluation to truly be an effective tool to both improve teacher performance and student learning, teachers should view the evaluation system as a formative professional growth instrument. Among all the responsibilities of school administrators, teacher evaluation is the most critical to the success of the school in terms of student achievement (Ovando & Ramirez, 2007). Yet Ovando and Ramirez stated that principals, "are faced with the dilemma of using both formative and summative approaches to make judgments about teacher performance" (p. 89). When a teacher evaluation system is seen as simply a summative process used for judgment on job performance, it loses its ability to affect teacher improvement.

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Formative assessment of teachers is the path that will lead to true growth and needed

improvements (Ovando & McCleary, 1991).

Teachers want a formative process that allows for growth as professionals. This call is

supported by many in the educational community. The National Education Association (2010)

has called for a comprehensive teacher evaluation system that has two distinct components.

These components include an ongoing formative assessment process used to improve teaching

practice and periodic summative evaluations of the teacher. The NEA's core belief on teacher

evaluation states that assessment systems should be used to strengthen a teacher's knowledge

and skills (NEA, 2010).

When teachers see the evaluation process as purely judgmental, no amount of discussion to

the contrary will change their minds. A system having administrators performing dual functions

as judges and mentors is not a sustainable model for teacher growth (Danielson, 2001; Ovando &

Ramirez, 2007). Inherently this duality causes conflict for evaluators in terms of creating a

collaborative environment to work in their school. "The result is usually that neither supervisors

nor teachers find performance assessment a constructive and respectful experience" (Donaldson

& Donaldson, 2012, p. 78). A more effective method would be to create a clear distinction in the

roles of the evaluator or possible multiple evaluators. Another solution is looking at the

evaluation instrument itself and clearly defining the purpose of the instrument.

Formative assessment requires strong leadership in the application of teacher evaluation

systems. Leaders should be willing to work to change the context and culture of the school itself

(Davis, Ellett, & Annunziata, 2002). However, sometimes principals lack the pedagogical

knowledge to provide valid feedback that truly improves a teacher's performance (Donaldson &

Donaldson, 2012). Yet, it is the leadership these administrators provide that creates the culture

necessary for professional growth. In order to enhance the quality of teaching leaders need to be effective in their application of the evaluation system and the purpose it serves in the school or district.

As stated previously, the two most common stated purposes of teacher evaluation are accountability and professional growth (Ovando & Ramirez, 2007; Weems & Rogers, 2010). To try to achieve both through a single evaluation instrument as well as a single process for all educators has its critics. Both purposes for teacher evaluation are essential for student growth and school improvement (Ovando & Ramirez, 2007). The challenge here is merging the two purposes into a single sustainable model that will work (Danielson, 2011). In fact Kyriakides and Demetriou (2007) state, "It is imperative that different mechanisms for formative and summative teacher evaluation be established" (p. 46). A system focused on professional growth is much more likely to be collaborative than one only focused on judgment.

The primary focus of any teacher evaluation system should be to improve the quality of instruction within a classroom (Weems & Rogers, 2010). To that end feedback is essential for teachers to improve their skills in the classroom. A teacher evaluation system focused on the formative nature of the process would provide useful feedback on the teacher's needed areas of improvement. Donaldson (2009) contended that the effect of formative evaluations is dependent on the feedback given to teachers by evaluators. Further, the opportunity to learn new techniques and receive mentoring from administrators and peers on how to implement changes is also needed (Weems & Rogers, 2010). Unfortunately these types of mentoring situations are very difficult to establish because of time constraints on teachers and administrators (Zatynski, 2012).

The general impression the public is given about teacher evaluation is that teachers are not doing a good job and they need to be judged. Yet, a system focused on professional growth is

important because teaching is very difficult. Teaching as a craft is always changing and evolving. Teachers need an evaluation system that provides opportunity for growth. Danielson (2011) stated that professional learning is important, "not because teaching is of poor quality and needs to be fixed, but rather because it is so hard that we can always improve it" (p. 37). Performance reviews should help teachers see what areas they are effective in and in what areas they need to improve. Effective behaviors such as planning, assessing, or delivery of instruction should be identified for teachers, helping them to learn their competencies (Donaldson & Donaldson, 2012). A process focused on professional growth will also identify areas teachers need to strengthen and present these to the teacher in a nonjudgmental, collaborative way.

Standards-Based Evaluation Systems

As school systems and states move toward accountability systems that call for teacher evaluation scores to be used in making decisions on personnel matters, a need for a more standards-based system of teacher evaluation has become evident. A review of the literature finds a great deal of support for the premise that quality observations should be based on clear standards of teaching practice (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Donaldson, 2009; Kane et al., 2010). Further, others have suggested that if the standards for evaluation are based on sound teaching practices and they are implemented in the classroom, student achievement will increase (Odden, 2004). Defining effective teaching and establishing domains of such standards are common within these systems. These standards of effective teaching would comprise the basis for performance measures to evaluate in the classroom. Further, these standards would define what practices need to be present in order to have an effective lesson (Milanowski & Heneman, 2001). Donaldson (2009) went a step further and called for performance measures to be included

in standards-based systems accepted and used by school districts that research has shown promote student learning. Regardless of the reasons standards-based teacher evaluation systems have a place in the world of high-stakes accountability in education today. Even though evaluations will always be subjective in nature to a point, clear performance standards may help remove some subjectivity.

Standards-based evaluations still rely on the observation as the primary means of collecting data on teacher performance. Teacher performance in the observation is judged against a standard set of criteria that is translated into a rubric for scoring (Donaldson, 2009). Odden (2004) provided a description of what a standards-based system requires based on a set of four criteria:

1. A set of teaching standards that describes in considerable detail what teachers need to know and be able to do.

2. A set of procedures for collecting multiple forms of data on teacher's performance for each of the standards.

3. A related set of scoring rubrics that provide guidance to the evaluator on how to score the various pieces of data to various performance levels and a method to aggregate all scores into an overall score for a teacher's instructional performance.

4. A way to use the performance evaluation results in a new knowledge and skills-based salary schedule if the evaluation system is to be used to trigger fiscal incentives.

Standards-based evaluation systems use rubrics for evaluation that include effective teaching practices. Danielson (2002) provided a comprehensive description of how to create and use a standards-based evaluation system. This framework provides specific examples for

teaching practices to be used in evaluating teachers. The framework is divided into four domains. These domains are: planning and preparation, the classroom environment, instruction, professional responsibilities. Within these four domains are 22 components of effective teaching practices. Danielson's contention is that if these components are implemented into a teacher's classroom, both teaching and learning will improve. Milanowski (2004) posited that an evaluation system focused on this framework would provide measurements more closely tied to student learning.

Through the use of a standards-based evaluation system teachers can see the specific skills that will be included in their evaluations. These skills can be made available to teachers beforehand and allow them to become embedded parts of the teaching strategies and practices in their classroom (Danielson, 2007). This allows for a common understanding between administrator and teacher throughout the evaluation process. As previously mentioned, the evaluation process has created a gap in collaboration between teachers and administrators. With a clear set of teaching standards in place, there is greater acceptance of the evaluation scores and feedback primarily because teachers can see how the teaching standards will line up with their own values (Milanowski & Heneman, 2001). Creating this shared understanding can lead to improvements in both teaching and evaluation.

Standards-based systems are not without their challenges. Milanowski and Heneman (2001) outlined three specific challenges to these types of evaluation systems:

1. The perception that the system added to teacher workload

2. Administrators providing timely and specific feedback

3. The system posed a threat to teachers' self-esteem and reputation.

Milanowski and Heneman found that these standards-based systems did not translate well to evaluations in the areas of art, language, music, and special education. These are typically the same subject areas in which it is very difficult to attach student test scores to teacher performance because of the lack of standardized testing within those areas. Also, as with any evaluation system, time and training for new standards-based systems are major concerns (Milanowski & Heneman, 2001).

Alternative Methods of Evaluation

Though the principal's observation is the most common form of teacher observation, questions have arisen as to the efficacy of the process itself. If teachers are asked to develop alternate methods to assess their students, then why do we continue to evaluate teachers in a one size fits all manner? Iwanicki (2001) found that too many schools and districts are paralyzed by the idea of what teacher evaluation has always looked like that they cannot move forward. The current, traditional methods of teacher evaluation do not reflect the current research on new learning theories or appropriate means of assessment (Attinello et al., 2006). Kyriakides and Demetriou (2007) found that teachers prefer a model that takes a multidimensional approach to evaluative data. Teachers are in favor of a system of evaluation that allows them to actively participate in the process of the evaluation. Further, there is a growing belief that evaluative data should be collected from various sources.

One promising method of teacher evaluation currently in use in some school districts is the portfolio. This model encourages teacher reflection and communication between teacher and administrator (Attinello et al., 2006). "Many portfolios include a performance-based element and some required evidence of student learning" (Donaldson, 2009, p. 6). Some school systems use

portfolios because they believe a portfolio can "capture the complexities and contexts of teaching as well as promote the professional development of teachers" (Attinello et al., 2006, p. 136). Further research describes teacher portfolios as having other uses as well, including teacher preparation, employment, licensure, advancement, and professional growth.

In terms of reaction from teachers and administrators as to the effectiveness of portfolios, a review of the literature found generally positive impressions. "Both teachers and administrators generally believed portfolios were an accurate and more comprehensive reflection of teacher performance" (Attinello et al., 2006, p. 140). In some cases portfolios were seen to have provided a better evaluation than the typical principal's observation. Toch and Rothman (2008) reported teachers felt they grew more professionally through the portfolio process. Portfolios can encourage professional growth through self-reflection of teaching practices. Much of this growth is attributed to the larger role and voice teachers had in the process through a portfolio. Portfolios allow teachers to demonstrate more than what would be typical on a standard observation. Accomplishment of teaching standards can be shown in multiple formats through a portfolio method. Further, portfolios require self-reflection and teachers deepening their understanding of their teaching practices. Portfolios can be effective in evaluating teachers in almost every area of instruction within a school system as well (Toch & Rothman, 2008).

Another method of teacher evaluation can be found in the process for attaining certification for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Due to the increased amount of accountability in educational reforms, this method has lost some popularity in recent years. Cantrell, Fullerton, Kane, & Staiger (2007) found the certification process can take 3 months to several years in some cases. The NBPTS model uses, among other items, portfolios as part of a candidate's certification process. Other requirements for consideration for this certification

include: video of a candidate teaching, samples of student work, and evidence of impact beyond the classroom in working with colleagues, community members, or families. Teachers must pass content and grade specific exams through the process as well (Cantrell et al., 2007).

<div align="center">Research Related to Effective Teaching</div>

Defining Effective Teaching

A review of current literature produces many different indicators for effective teaching. This review is focused on a small sampling of this research in order to add to the discussion as to how this relates to teacher evaluation practices. Through this review several themes were identified that commonly define effective teaching practices. These include high expectations for all students, the use of higher order thinking skills, differentiation of teaching, and a safe, respectful environment (Hindman, Stronge, Tucker, & Ward, 2007; Kyriakides & Demetriou, 2007).

High expectations for student learning take on two different forms in the effective classroom. First, the students are expected to complete high level work that includes an understanding of meaning rather than just memorization. Students are expected to do higher level work and complete more complex tasks. Further, high expectations include student behavior in the classroom. Fewer disruptions are found in the classrooms of effective teachers. Routines and procedures for the classrooms are clearly established (Hindman et al., 2007). These classroom environments show an expectation of focus on learning. Teachers hold their students accountable for their work and behavior of students is not a detractor from learning in effective teacher's classrooms. A teacher's high expectations for students contribute to the effectiveness of that teacher in the classroom (Kyriakides & Demetriou, 2007).

Complexity of instruction and higher order thinking are demonstrated as characteristics of effective teaching through a review of research. Teachers use their classrooms to encourage students to think on higher levels rather than simply recall and memorization. Hindman et al. (2007) found questioning methods within these classrooms are more complex and deal with difficult questions for the students to answer. The tasks students are asked to complete are more challenging and require a deeper understanding of content. Effective teachers allow students to dive deeper into their work to develop a greater understanding of the content. Differentiated assignments and a broader range of instructional strategies are evident as well and provide the opportunity for deeper understanding (Hindman et al., 2007).

Differentiating instruction allows for students to both learn in a manner in line with their understanding as well allow them to display their knowledge using a method they are best able to apply. "Differentiating can be accurately described as classroom practice with a balanced emphasis on individual students and course content" (Imbeau & Tomlinson, 2010, p.14). An effectively differentiated classroom will focus on both the curriculum side as well as the needs of the students. In order to address the differentiation of curriculum an effective teacher will strategically plan for the content, products, and processes within his or her classroom. Addressing student need requires teachers to differentiate by readiness, interest, and learning profile. Combining these elements will provide a more effectively differentiated classroom (Imbeau & Tomlinson, 2010).

Classroom environment plays an important role in determining an effective teacher. Kyriakides and Demetriou (2007) found the effective classroom shows evidence of mutual respect between teacher and students. Further, these classrooms have a positive atmosphere in which the learner is the focus of the classroom. Students feel both safe and respected by the

teacher. This type of environment allows for the students to understand they are valued and their success is the foundation of the classroom. Effective teachers demonstrate a higher level of respect for their students, thus creating this type of positive learning environment (Hindman et al., 2007; Kyriakides & Demetriou, 2007). When this environment is established, students and teachers are allowed to focus on learning and the trust that exists allows for deeper content exploration.

In order for a school system to achieve improvement through a teacher evaluation system, the school system should understand what effective teaching looks like. Danielson (2011) reported that without a common understanding of what effective teaching and instruction are within a school district, very little progress will made toward improvement of learning. Therefore, in order to accurately assess the teaching practices within a school or district, effective teaching needs to be defined. Once defined, the entire school system can share and communicate within the definition established. Danielson explained a shared understanding of the definition of effective teaching within a school system allows for a common language in discussing teaching practices. This common language then encourages those professional conversations to be more meaningful and constructive. Teachers benefit from these types of conversations when they understand the vocabulary and the goal desired for effective teaching (Danielson, 2011).

The assertion that effective teachers are crucial for student success is supported by research and rarely questioned when discussing teacher evaluation practices (Hindman et al., 2007). Yet, the overriding problem in this process is the fact that defining effective teacher has not been simple to accomplish. There are many different philosophies on what makes an effective teacher. The fact that students and classroom environments are always changing makes defining

effectiveness more difficult (Norman, 2010). Research should be ongoing and consistent in order to keep pace with this fluid environment. To this point much research has been devoted to the measurement of teacher effectiveness (Donaldson & Donaldson, 2012). Therefore, a first step in developing an effective and appropriate evaluation system requires reaching a common agreement on effective teaching practices.

While the previously described characteristics of effective teaching are not in any way exhaustive, they do represent common themes discussed in current literature as to what effective teaching looks like in a classroom. The four main themes discussed are areas in which school systems should be clear as to what they are looking for in teacher evaluations. Hindman et al. (2007) found many other descriptors exist as to the qualities of effective teaching. Yet the common theme found in student success is effective teaching (Hindman et al., 2007). My primary assertion based on this review is that a school system should strive for a common understanding of the characteristics of effective teaching. This understanding then creates a focus for the evaluation process in order to provide growth for teachers.

Research Base Related to the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model

Overview of the TEAM Evaluation Framework

Since July 2011 the State of Tennessee has been using the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) as the basis for teacher evaluations in the state. The Tennessee Department of Education (2012) reported the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model Evaluation Framework was based on an evaluation rubric created for the Teacher Advancement Program used by the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching. This evaluation process was designed to create a comprehensive model that included value-added scores, student achievement

data, and teacher observation scores in order to develop a more complete picture of a teacher's effectiveness (Tennessee Department of Education, 2012).

The TEAM Evaluation Framework has four evaluation components. These components are: Planning, Environment, Instruction, and Professionalism. Within each of these components teachers are scored on various domains. The scores range from 1 to 5 with 5 being considered the highest score possible given by an evaluator. Teachers are given scores on each domain within the components. Table 1 details the four components and each domain within the specific components:

Table 1: Components of the TEAM Evaluation Framework

Component: Instruction	Component: Environment
1. Standards and Objectives 2. Motivating Students 3. Presenting Instructional Content 4. Lesson Structure and Pacing 5. Activities and Materials 6. Questioning 7. Academic Feedback 8. Grouping Students 9. Teacher Content Knowledge 10. Teacher Knowledge of Students 11. Thinking 12. Problem Solving	1. Expectations 2. Managing Student Behavior 3. Environment 4. Respectful Culture
Component: Planning	Component: Professionalism
1. Instructional Plans 2. Student Work 3. Assessment	1. Community Involvement 2. School Responsibilities 3. Growing and Developing Professionally 4. Reflecting and Teaching

(Source: TEAM Evaluation System Handbook, National Institute of Excellence in Teaching, 2011)

Research Base of TEAM Evaluation Framework

Daley and Kim (2010) explained the standards for the TEAM evaluation rubric adopted by the Tennessee Department of Education in 2011were found in the TAP Skills Knowledge and Responsibilities Performance Standards developed by the Milken Family Foundation. Research to develop these standards focused on the following areas: teacher performance as it related to student achievement, discrete behaviors, teaching models, cognitive science, and education psychology. Through this research improvement in student achievement was found to be a result of "teaching strategies informed by theories of student learning and greater understanding of how students think and feel" (Daley & Kim, 2010, p.48).

Daley and Kim (2010) found the standards included in the TAP rubric were further derived from various national organizations. Included in this list are the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards, California's Standards for the Teaching Profession, and the New Teacher Center's Developmental Continuum of Teacher Abilities (Daley & Kim, 2010).

Also included in the references for the TAP standards of teacher evaluation was the work of Danielson and McGreal (2000). Danielson (2002) provided a framework for teacher evaluation based on standards of teaching and learning. Specific elements of Danielson's work can be found in the TAP evaluation rubric. The previously listed components of the TEAM evaluation framework mirror those created by Danielson. These components included: Planning and Preparation, The Classroom Environment, Instruction, Professional Responsibilities.

Danielson also advocates for the use of evaluative criteria, or standards, for use by evaluators in making judgments about teaching abilities. The TEAM framework provided specific standards for evaluators to use to judge teachers. Further, training of evaluators was a critical component to both evaluative frameworks. Danielson discusses the need for evaluators to have consistent, quality training in order to render accurate ratings when judging performance against criteria for effective teaching. Finally, within the TEAM evaluation framework evaluators rate teachers on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest score a teacher can receive. This follows Danielson's design of multiple ratings in teacher evaluation frameworks. Danielson's performance ratings include unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, and distinguished (Danielson, 2002; Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to evaluate if teacher practices as they relate to delivery of instruction and lesson preparation have changed since the implementation of the Tennessee Educator Accelerator Model (TEAM) Evaluation rubric. Specifically the researcher assessed the change in time for lesson preparation, the perceived changes in the use of instructional strategies, and the planning process for lesson preparation for teachers under this evaluation rubric. This chapter provides a description of the design of the research, research questions, null hypotheses, the population chosen, data collection procedures, procedures for data analysis, and chapter summary.

This research design was based on a nonexperimental, quantitative design using a survey instrument for data collection. This approach denotes a design that emphasizes objectivity in measuring or describing phenomena in some practice. In this design statistics were used in order to describe the phenomena researched. A nonexperimental approach allows for examination without manipulation of the conditions to be studied. Collection of data for this research was conducted using a survey method. Survey instruments allow for the description of attitudes and opinions of the population selected for the study. Surveys also allow for the attitudes of a large population to be ascertained through a sampling of subjects (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Research Questions and Null Hypotheses

The following questions were used to guide the nonexperimental quantitative research design:

Research question 1: Is there a significant difference between the teacher perceptions of the TEAM evaluation framework and the teacher perceptions of the previous teacher evaluation method used in these districts?

Ho1: There is no significant difference between teacher perceptions of the TEAM evaluation model and teacher perceptions of the previous teacher evaluation model used in these districts.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of planning processes for specific lessons under the TEAM evaluation framework compared to the previous teacher evaluation model in these districts?

Ho2: There is no significant difference in teachers' planning processes under the TEAM evaluation model compared to the previous teacher evaluation model in these districts.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of instructional strategies they are using in their classrooms after implementation of the TEAM evaluation framework as opposed to strategies used under the prior teacher evaluation model in these districts?

Ho3: There is no significant difference in instructional strategies teachers are using in their classrooms after implementation of the TEAM evaluation model as opposed to strategies used under the prior teacher evaluation model in these districts.

Research Question 4: Is there a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of the time required for lesson preparation due to the implementation of the TEAM evaluation framework compared to the previous teacher evaluation model used in these districts?

Ho4: There is no significant difference in time required for lesson preparation due to the implementation of the TEAM evaluation model compared to the previous teacher evaluation model used in these districts.

Population

The method of research was a nonexperimental, quantitative study using a survey design for data collection. The population for this study included teachers from four school districts in Northeast Tennessee. Permission was requested to ask for participation from all teachers evaluated on the TEAM Instruction rubric in Unicoi County, Washington County, Bristol City, and Elizabethton City school systems. Permission was granted by the Director of Schools in each school district. Survey links were sent to teachers regardless of discipline taught.

Instrumentation

A survey instrument was designed that included 21 items. The survey included 5 demographic questions, 15 questions related to the teacher planning and instructional activities of those teachers participating, and 1 question that allowed participants to add additional comments related to the TEAM Framework. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A. Teachers responded to the questions on the survey using a Likert-type Scale. The scale included five possible levels ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The TEAM evaluation rubric used in these districts applied to all of the teachers regardless of subject matter taught. All teachers were selected in these districts because of their required usage of the instructional rubric of the TEAM model.

This survey was used to measure the perceptions of changes to planning and instructional practices since the implementation of the TEAM Evaluation Framework by the participating teachers. Through the survey questions the teachers were asked to compare the TEAM Evaluation Framework to the previous evaluation framework each of them worked under. The Likert-type Scale was used to rate the level of change the teachers perceived since TEAM implementation in their school district. All data were self-reported to reflect individual teacher perceptions.

Each research question was addressed by specific questions within the survey instrument. The following descriptions detail the connection between the research questions guiding this study and the questions used on the survey:

Research Question 1: Is there a significant difference between the teacher perceptions of the TEAM evaluation framework and the teacher perceptions of the previous teacher evaluation method used in these districts?

Survey Items:

6. The TEAM teacher evaluation framework has provided more useful feedback from evaluators than the previous model of teacher evaluation used by my district.

7. The TEAM teacher evaluation framework allows the evaluator to assess a more accurate picture of my teaching ability than the previous teacher evaluation model used in my district.

9. The implementation of the TEAM evaluation framework has provided greater opportunity for professional growth for me than the previous evaluation model used in my district.

13. I understand the TEAM evaluation rubric criteria better than I understood the evaluation criteria under the previous evaluation model used in my district.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of planning processes for specific lessons under the TEAM evaluation framework compared to the previous teacher evaluation model in these districts?

Survey Items:

12. I use the TEAM evaluation rubric to guide my planning of instructional strategies for typical lessons each day.

16. The TEAM evaluation rubric provides useful guidelines for developing lessons and requires me to utilize a variety of instructional strategies, such as high level questioning skills, I had not previously used in my teaching.

19. My lesson plans are more detailed under the TEAM evaluation frameworks than under previous models of evaluation.

20. I use more student assessment data to guide my planning of lessons than I did prior to the implementation of TEAM.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of instructional strategies they are using in their classrooms after implementation of the TEAM evaluation

framework as opposed to strategies used under the prior teacher evaluation model in these districts?

Survey Items:

8. I have changed the instructional strategies I use in my classroom in a significant way due to the implementation of the TEAM framework. For example, I use more higher order thinking skills in my instruction.

10. My formal evaluations represent typical lessons I would teach every day. These evaluations provide an accurate reflection of the differentiation and questioning I use in my instruction.

15. Generally I feel the TEAM evaluation framework is a more effective evaluation model than the evaluation model previously used in my district in determining quality teaching. For example, the TEAM rubric more accurately judges the use of differentiation as well as higher order thinking skills.

17. The TEAM evaluation rubric requires me to focus more on strategies related to higher-order thinking concepts than the previous evaluation rubric used in my district.

Research Question 4: Is there a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of the time required for lesson preparation due to the implementation of the TEAM evaluation framework compared to the previous teacher evaluation model used in these districts?

Survey Items:

11. Since the implementation of the TEAM evaluation framework the time required for me to plan lessons for classes has increased by more than 10 minutes per subject/class.

14. The time I spend adjusting lesson plans during a typical week of school has increased by more than 10 minutes since the implementation of the TEAM framework.

18. I have a more structured planning process for my lessons under the TEAM evaluation rubric as opposed to the previous evaluation model used in my district.

Data Collection

This nonexperimental, quantitative study analyzed data collected from a survey instrument administered to classroom teachers in Northeast Tennessee. A letter was emailed to the directors of each school district outlining the specifics of the study and providing a detailed explanation of how the survey would be conducted. Once approval was secured from the directors of the four school districts and from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at East Tennessee State University, the survey was administered. A link to the Survey Monkey online tool was distributed via email to all teachers evaluated under the TEAM Instruction rubric within the selected districts. Using the Survey Monkey link teachers were able to access the survey and respond online to all questions. Teachers were asked to voluntarily to respond to the survey and the teachers were informed that responses would be kept anonymous in all reporting. Two requests were sent out to the teachers in each district to complete the survey. There was no follow up after administration of the survey.

Teachers were asked to identify the number of years they had taught, their age range, their educational level attained, and the grade level at which they currently teach. These data were collected in order to gain perceptions of those surveyed. The survey was voluntary and respondents were anonymous. No personally identifiable information was collected.

Data Analysis

This research used a nonexperimental quantitative methodology with a survey instrument to collect data. All data from this research were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20.0. The data sources analyzed consisted completely of a survey design administered to classroom teachers in Northeast Tennessee. Each research question in this study had a corresponding null hypothesis. Data for each research question were analyzed with a series of single sample t-tests with 3 the mid-point of the scale as the test value representing neutrality. A significance level of .05 was used for all data.

Summary

In summary, this study investigated the impact of the implementation of the TEAM evaluation framework in four school districts in Northeast Tennessee. Specifically the researcher attempted to determine if teacher practices related to delivery of instruction and planning had changed because of the framework's implementation. Chapter 3 reported on the methodology for this quantitative study. The design of this study was nonexperimental and the data collection instrument described was an online survey tool. Included in this chapter was a discussion of the research design, research questions and null hypotheses, data analysis, population, and data collection methods.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

<u>Participants</u>

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of the Tennessee Educator

Acceleration Model evaluation framework by teachers in four school districts in Northeast

Tennessee. Links to an online survey were sent to 1,115 K-12 teachers from the four Northeast

Tennessee school districts. Original approval of the research called for surveys to be sent to six

school districts in Northeast Tennessee. However, only four school districts chose to participate

in the research. Data collected were not identifiable from specific districts. Because the survey

was completely anonymous, no record was made of how many were collected from each district.

In this chapter data were presented and analyzed to answer four research questions and

their corresponding four null hypotheses. Data were analyzed from a 21 question survey

measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Data were collected through an online survey format

using the Survey Monkey tool. The survey was distributed two times and obtained a return rate

of 24% for a total of 270 participants.

According to Archer (2008) response rates for web-based administered surveys varies

greatly. Response rates for these web-based surveys may range from less than 40% to greater

than 60%. A response from every selected participant would be the most desired result; however,

even a response rate of less that 40% can provide a great deal of information. Further, program

improvement can still be attained from a less than desired response rate.

Research also demonstrates that low response rates may not have a detrimental effect to the

findings of online surveys. Hamilton (2009) defined response rate as the percentage of survey

invitations that result in a response. Response rates can vary greatly among surveys and are

affected by multiple variables throughout the entire process. Archer's (2008) research found the mean response rate to be 32.52% with a median response rate of 26.45%. Large surveys of more than 1,000 invited participants typically had lower response rates than smaller focused surveys. The survey administered in this study had 1,115 surveys distributed.

In this study 1,115 K-12 teachers from four Northeast Tennessee school districts were asked to participate in a survey. This survey began with five questions related to demographics. These demographics included number of years taught, highest level of education attained, grade level (or levels) taught, and age. Results indicated that 57.04% of respondents had taught from 0-15 years and 42.96% of respondents had taught for more than 15 years. In terms of age of respondents, 65.47% of respondents reported being below age 50 while 34.53% reported being over age 50. Table 2 below details the respondent's level of education attained and Table 3 details the grade levels taught by respondents.

Table 2

Distribution of Survey Respondents by Educational Level

Education Level	% of Respondents	Total # of respondents
Bachelors	19.86	55
Bachelors +30	6.14	17
Masters	63.18	175
EdS	8.30	23
Doctorate	2.53	7

Table 3

Distribution of Grade Levels Taught by Respondents

Grade Level	% of respondents	Total # of respondents
PreK/K	23.64	65
1	25.09	69
2	26.91	74
3	28.36	78
4	20.73	57
5	19.64	54
6	20.36	56
7	16.73	46
8	17.82	49
9-12	30.55	84

Research question 1: Is there a significant difference between the teacher perceptions of the TEAM evaluation framework and the teacher perceptions of the previous teacher evaluation method used in these districts?

Ho1: There is no significant difference between teacher perceptions of the TEAM evaluation model and teacher perceptions of the previous teacher evaluation model used in these districts.

A single sample *t*-test was conducted on K-12 teachers' perceptions to evaluate whether the mean score was significantly different from 3.0, the neutral value in this test. The sample mean of 2.91 (SD = .91) was slightly but not significantly less than 3.0, $t(269) = -1.668$, $p = .096$, ns. Therefore, the null hypothesis Ho1 was not rejected. The 95% confidence interval for K-12 regular education teachers' perceptions mean ranged from -.20 to .02. The strength of the relationships between the K-12 regular education teachers' perceptions and the mean score effect size d of .11 indicates a small effect size. The results indicated respondents did not have a significantly different perception of the TEAM evaluation framework compared to the previous evaluation model used in their district. This research indicates that teachers perceived this evaluation to be similar to the previous model in terms of execution. In Figure 1 the distribution of the participant responses is displayed. The frequency reported within each graph represents the total number of participants who responded with a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 on the online survey.
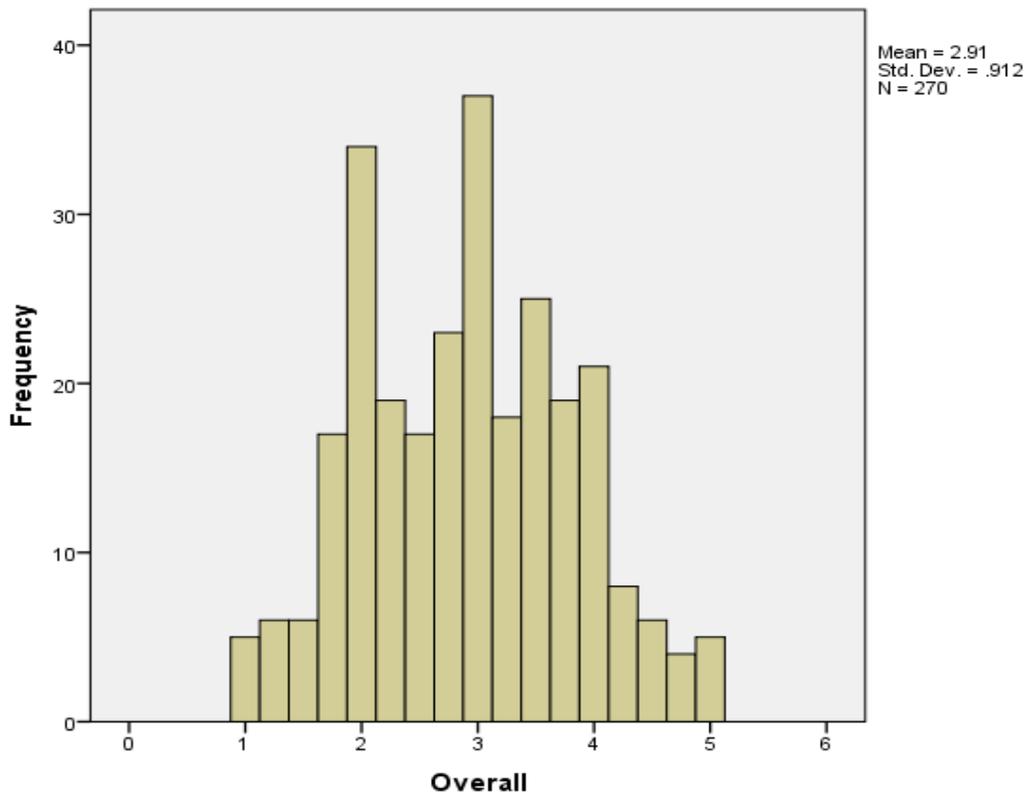
Figure 1. Distributions of responses from K-12 teachers related to research question 1. In order to determine teacher perceptions survey items 6, 7, 9, and 13 were analyzed.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of planning processes for specific lessons under the TEAM evaluation framework compared to the previous teacher evaluation model in these districts?

Ho2: There is no significant difference in teachers' planning processes under the TEAM evaluation model compared to the previous teacher evaluation model in these districts.

A single sample *t*-test was conducted on K-12 teachers to evaluate whether the mean score was significantly different from 3.0, the neutral value in this test. The sample mean of 3.14 (SD = .79) was significantly higher than 3.0, $t(269) = 2.90$, $p = .004$. Therefore, the null hypothesis

Ho2 was rejected. The 95% confidence interval for K-12 teachers' perceptions mean ranged

from .05 to .24. The strength of the relationships between the K-12 teachers' perceptions and the

mean score effect size d of .176 indicates a small effect. The results indicated the respondents

had a significantly different perception of the process for planning their lessons under the TEAM

evaluation framework compared to the previous evaluation model in their districts. The different

perceptions indicated teachers used the evaluation rubric more frequently to plan as well as

perceiving a more detailed process. The frequency reported within each graph represents the

total number of participants who responded with a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 on the online survey.
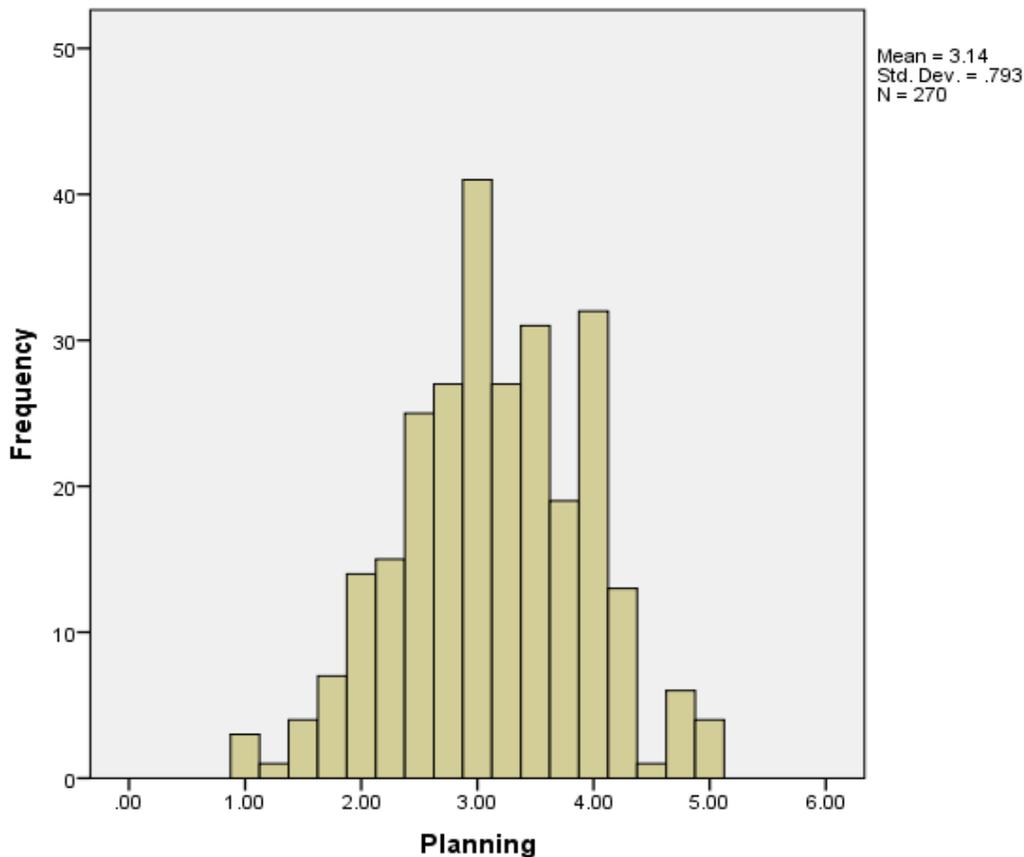
Figure 2. Distributions of responses from K-12 teachers related to research question 2. In order

to determine teacher perceptions survey items 12, 16, 19, and 20 were analyzed.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of instructional strategies they are using in their classrooms after implementation of the TEAM evaluation framework as opposed to strategies used under the prior teacher evaluation model in these districts?

Ho3: There is no significant difference in instructional strategies teachers are using in their classrooms after implementation of the TEAM evaluation model as opposed to strategies used under the prior teacher evaluation model in these districts.

A single sample *t*-test was conducted on K-12 teachers to evaluate whether the mean score was significantly different from 3.0, the neutral value in this test. The sample mean of 3.26 (SD=.80) was significantly higher than 3.0, $t(269) = 5.34$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis Ho3 was rejected. The 95% confidence interval for K-12 teachers' perceptions mean ranged from .17 to .36. The strength of the relationships between the K-12 teachers' perceptions and the mean score effect size d of .325 indicates a small to medium effect. The results indicated the respondents had a significantly different perception of the instructional strategies they were using in their lessons under the TEAM evaluation framework compared to the previous evaluation model in their districts. Responses indicated teachers perceived a greater use of higher order thinking skills in their lessons and delivery of instruction. The frequency reported within each graph represents the total number of participants who responded with a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 on the online survey.
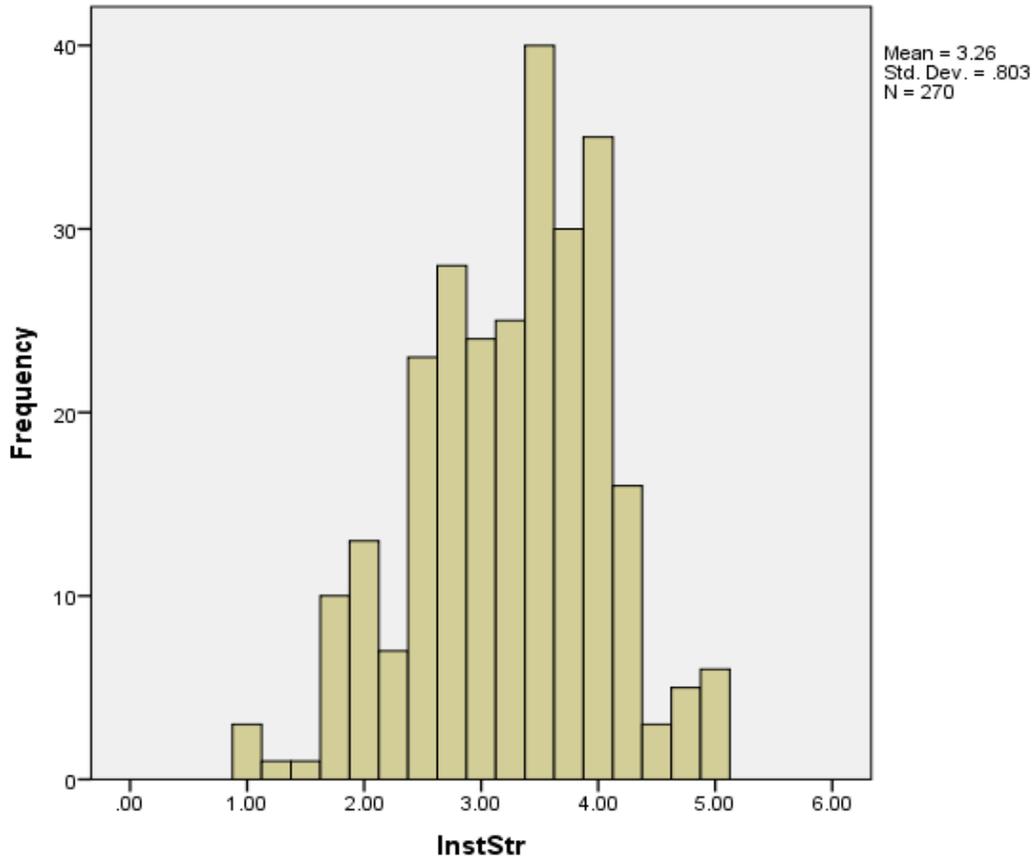
Figure 3. Distributions of responses from K-12 teachers related to research question 3. In order to determine teacher perceptions survey items 8, 10, 15, and 17 were analyzed.

Research Question 4

Research Question 4: Is there a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of the time required for lesson preparation due to the implementation of the TEAM evaluation framework compared to the previous teacher evaluation model used in these districts?

Ho4: There is no significant difference in time required for lesson preparation due to the implementation of the TEAM evaluation model compared to the previous teacher evaluation model used in these districts.

A single sample *t*-test was conducted on K-12 teachers to evaluate whether the mean score was significantly different from 3.0, the neutral value in this test. The sample mean of 3.61 (SD

= .81) was significantly higher than 3.0, $t(269) = 12.27$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis

Ho4 was rejected. The 95% confidence interval for K-12 teachers' perceptions mean ranged

from .51 to .70. The strength of the relationships between the K-12 teachers' perceptions and the

mean score effect size d of .747 indicates a large effect. The results indicated the respondents had

a significantly different perception of the time required for planning their lessons under the

TEAM evaluation framework compared to the previous evaluation model in their districts.

Responses indicated teachers perceived the time required to plan lessons had increased by more

than 10 minutes. Respondents also indicated a perceived increase in time for adjusting their

lessons of more than 10 minutes. The frequency reported within each graph represents the total

number of participants who responded with a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 on the online survey.
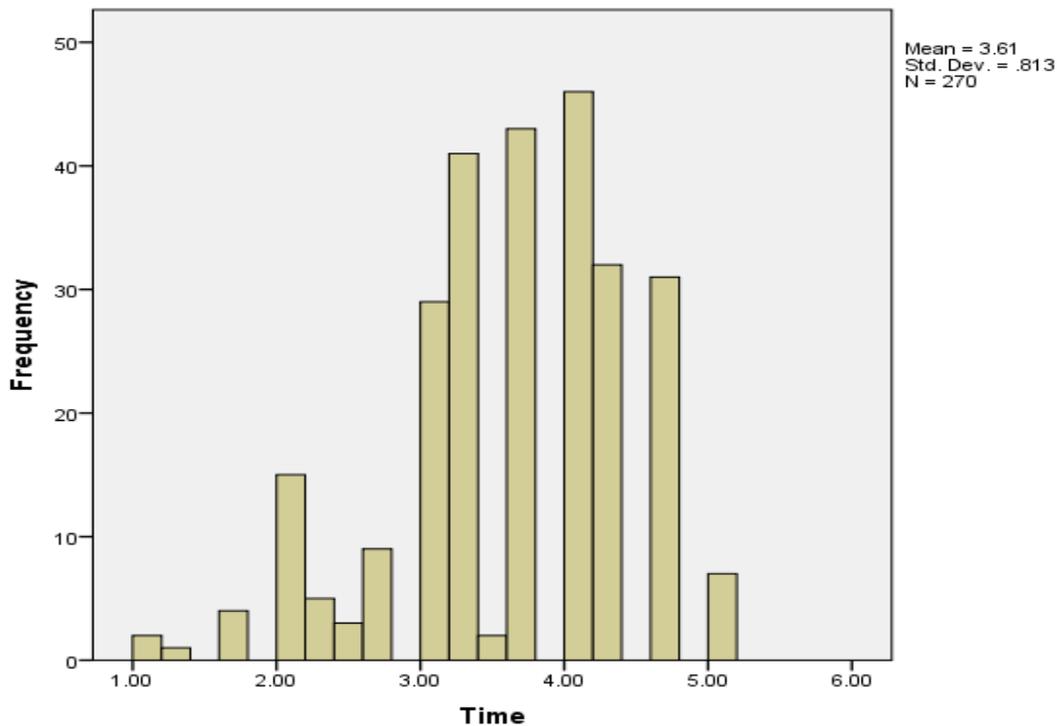
Figure 4. Distributions of responses from K-12 teachers related to research question 4. In order

to determine teacher perceptions survey items 11, 14, and 18 were analyzed.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter data obtained from K-12 teacher participants were presented and analyzed. There were four research questions and four corresponding null hypotheses. All data were collected through an online survey distributed to 1,115 K-12 teachers working in four Northeast Tennessee school systems resulting in a 24% return rate with 270 responses. Results for Research Question 1 indicated the respondents did not have a significantly different perception of the TEAM evaluation framework compared to the previous evaluation model used in their school districts. Results for Research Question 2 indicated the respondents had a significantly different perception of the process for planning their lessons under the TEAM evaluation framework compared to the previous evaluation model in their districts. The different perceptions indicated teachers used the evaluation rubric more frequently to plan as well as perceiving a more detailed process. Results for Research Question 3 indicated the respondents had a significantly different perception of the instructional strategies they were using in their lessons under the TEAM evaluation framework compared to the previous evaluation model in used in their school districts. Responses indicated teachers perceived a greater use of higher order thinking skills in their lessons and delivery of instruction. Results for Research Question 4 indicated the respondents had a significantly different perception of the time required for planning their lessons under the TEAM evaluation framework compared to the previous evaluation model in their districts. Responses indicated teachers perceived the time required to plan lessons had increased by more than 10 minutes. Respondents also indicated a perceived increase in time for adjusting their lessons of more than 10 minutes.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS

This chapter contains a summary of findings from data analysis, conclusions, and recommendations for future research for those readers who may use these results as a resource when reviewing and planning to use the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model evaluation framework. The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of K-12 teachers as they related to the TEAM evaluation framework compared to the previous teacher evaluation framework used in their school districts. The study was conducted using data collected through an online survey of K-12 teachers from four Northeast Tennessee school districts.

Summary

The statistical analysis reported in this study was based on four research questions presented in Chapters 1 and 3. Each research question had one corresponding null hypothesis which was presented in Chapter 3. Each research question was analyzed using a single sample t-test. The total number of K-12 teacher participants in the study was 270. The level of significance used in each test was .05. The results of the study showed a significant difference in the perceptions of teachers when comparing the previous evaluation framework in their school districts to the TEAM evaluation framework on three of the four research questions. Therefore three of the null hypotheses were rejected. These null hypotheses included teacher perceptions of how the TEAM framework had changed their planning practices, use of instructional strategies, and the amount of time it takes to plan for instruction. The perception of the TEAM evaluation framework itself in terms of execution and the process was not significantly different from the

previous evaluation model used in the districts surveyed. This finding supports research that

teacher evaluation processes, regardless of model, have not changed since the principal became

the primary observer and the classroom observation became the standard form of evaluation.

Even though within the model there may be differences due to specific requirements of the

evaluation model used, teachers feel an evaluation itself is still the same. This aspect of the

evaluation includes who observed them, what was observed, and what was done with the results.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were based upon the findings from the data of this study:

1. No significant difference was found in K-12 teachers' overall perception of the TEAM

   evaluation framework compared to the previous evaluation framework used in their

   districts. The sample mean of 2.91 (SD = .91) was less than but not significantly less than

   3.0, the value representing neutrality. It is important to note in these findings that the

   population mean reported here was the lowest among the four research questions. The K-

   12 teachers who responded reported perceiving no significant difference in evaluation

   frameworks in terms of their overall implementation (i.e. observer, feedback, process).

   Questions related to the overall perception of the evaluation model were specific to the

   following aspects: more useful feedback, a more accurate picture of the teacher's ability,

   more opportunities for professional growth, and a better understanding of the framework

   as a whole. These findings support previous research regarding the lack of change in

   overall methods of evaluation. Research has suggested that since the principal became the

   primary agent responsible for teacher evaluations, methods have remained largely similar

(Attinello et al., 2006). The research here indicates teachers perceive they are not receiving more useful feedback or having opportunities for professional growth. Therefore teachers find that the TEAM evaluation framework is similar in terms of execution to the previous model, even though certain requirements of the framework require more detailed work. In essence, a principal still does the observation, the feedback is still the same, the observation is still of a one period, scripted lesson, and there is very little professional growth found in any follow up after the evaluation.

2. A significant difference was found in K-12 teachers' perceptions regarding the planning processes required under the TEAM evaluation framework compared to their previous evaluation framework. The sample mean of 3.14 (SD = .79) was significantly higher than 3.0, the value representing neutrality. The K-12 teachers who responded perceived there was a significant change in the way they approached planning their lessons under the TEAM evaluation framework compared to their planning process under their previous evaluation framework. The topics specifically dealt with in this research question were using the TEAM framework as guide more in the teachers' planning, creating more detailed lesson plans, and using student assessment data more frequently in planning of lessons. The TEAM evaluation rubric is a standards-based rubric. Standards-based rubrics provide detailed information as to what evaluators are looking for in evaluations. These standards also provide descriptors of what effective teaching looks like (Danielson, 2002). Therefore, teachers have a specific outline of factors considered effective teaching practices with which to use in planning of their lessons. Data reported from the teachers in this survey indicate teachers perceive they are using the TEAM framework as a more specific guide to their planning.

3. A significant difference was found in K-12 teachers' perceptions of the types of instructional strategies used under the TEAM evaluation framework compared to those they used under their previous evaluation framework. The sample mean of 3.26 (SD=.80) was significantly higher than 3.0, the value representing neutrality. The K-12 teachers who responded perceive they are using different instructional strategies since implementation of TEAM than they used under their previous evaluation framework. Questions on this survey relating to the use of instructional strategies were specific to the following topics: the use of higher order thinking skills, increased use of differentiated teaching strategies, and varied levels of questioning of students. Data from this survey indicated that teachers perceived a greater usage of higher order thinking skills in their instructional practices. Further data would indicate teachers varying the levels of questions they ask of their students during instruction as a result of the TEAM framework.

4. A significant difference was found in K-12 teachers' perceptions regarding the amount of time spent in preparation for lessons under the TEAM evaluation framework compared to time spent under the previous evaluation framework. The sample mean of 3.61 (SD = .81) was significantly higher than 3.0, the value representing neutrality. It should be noted that the reported sample mean for this research question was the highest of all four population means calculated. Questions on this survey instrument that pertained specifically to the issue of time in planning were specific to the following topics: an increase in planning time of more than 10 minutes per week, an increase in the amount of time spent adjusting lesson plans by more than 10 minutes per week, and the structure of their planning processes. The K-12 teachers who responded perceive that their time used

to prepare for lessons had increased by more than 10 minutes since the implementation of the TEAM evaluation framework compared to their previous evaluation framework. Further data indicated teachers perceived a more structured planning process with the implementation of the TEAM rubric.

<div align="center">Recommendations for Practice</div>

The findings and conclusions of this research have established a foundation for the following recommendations for assisting school systems, all of their regular K-12 teachers who are evaluated under the TEAM evaluation framework, and possibly the State Department of Education with the planning and improvement of the TEAM evaluation framework:

1. The teachers participating in this study found no significant overall difference between the TEAM evaluation framework and their previous evaluation framework. This is evidenced by the sample mean of 2.91 found through data analysis of survey questions related to research question 1. Therefore, school district staff should work to ensure that the evaluation process in their districts is used as a formative instrument rather than simply a summative judgment on teachers. Teachers need to view the evaluation process as helpful to them in their classrooms. In order to accomplish this district administrators may need further training on the appropriate roles of the evaluator in the instructional process.

2. Respondents to this study reported perceiving a change in their planning processes since the implementation of TEAM. School administrators should work to discuss with teachers exactly how they plan for instruction and find ways to support the process.

Change in a process as vital as planning for instruction should be examined and supported. Administrators can open dialogue among their staff to determine needs and possible problems caused by this change.

3. District and school administrators should ensure that sharing of effective instructional strategies takes place within their schools. Respondents reported a change in the types of instructional strategies used in their classrooms since implementation of TEAM. A sharing of effective strategies could benefit all teachers in their planning processes.

<p align="center">Recommendations for Future Research</p>

The results of this study indicate that perceptions of the TEAM evaluation framework were not significantly different from the perceptions of the previous evaluation framework teachers worked under. The following are recommendations for future research which may add to the body of research on teacher evaluation and more specifically the implementation of the TEAM evaluation framework in Tennessee:

1. This study should be replicated to include school districts from other regions of Tennessee in order to allow for a broader collection of data to evaluate if the findings hold true for a larger sample.

2. Further research should be conducted to examine specifically the different instructional strategies being used by teachers since the implementation of the TEAM evaluation framework. Such research should also evaluate if the TEAM framework may unintentionally place limits on teacher professional development and creativity through the application of standardized rubrics.

3. A qualitative study of a specific school would be valuable in examining the effects of the TEAM evaluation framework's implementation within that school based on the four research questions presented in this study.

4. A study to evaluate the impact on student achievement should be conducted after the third year of implementation of the TEAM evaluation framework. The goal of the framework was to increase student achievement in Tennessee schools by creating an evaluation system that improved teaching. Therefore, once enough student data are available, a study to evaluate possible effects on student achievement would be appropriate.

5. A study to evaluate the perceptions of teachers in rural school districts compared to those from city school districts should be conducted. This research could provide insight into the differences in the implementation of the TEAM framework between various school districts.

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APPENDIX A

TEAM Survey

A survey of

The impact of the TEAM Evaluation Framework on classroom teacher practices

Please respond to the following questions:

1. How many years have you been teaching?(Please give number or circle choice)

    _____   15+

2. What is your level of education?(Please circle your choice)

    Bachelors   Bachelors+30   Masters   EdS   Doctorate

3. What grade level (or levels) do you teach?(Circle all that apply)

    PK   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9-12

4. How long has it been since your last formal evaluation?(Please circle your choice)

    1 month   3-6 mos.   6-12 mos.   1-2 yrs.   2+ yrs.

5. What is your age? (Please list or circle choice, you may choose not to answer)

    _____   50+

Please rate your feelings on the following statements as they apply to you. Circle the answer with the number that corresponds to your feelings with 1 being Strongly Disagree and 5 Strongly Agree. The higher the rating the more you would agree with the statement.

6. The TEAM teacher evaluation framework has provided more useful feedback from evaluators than the previous model of teacher evaluation used by my district.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree

7. The TEAM teacher evaluation framework allows the evaluator to assess a more accurate picture of my teaching ability than the previous teacher evaluation model used in my district.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree

8. I have changed the instructional strategies I use in my classroom in a significant way due to the implementation of the TEAM framework. For example, I use more higher order thinking skills in my instruction.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree

9. The implementation of the TEAM evaluation framework has provided greater opportunity for professional growth for me than the previous evaluation model used in my district.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree

10. My formal evaluations represent typical lessons I would teach every day. These evaluations provide an accurate reflection of the differentiation and questioning I use in my instruction.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree

11. Since the implementation of the TEAM evaluation framework the time required for me to plan lessons for classes has increased by more than 10 minutes per subject/class.

1	2	3	4	5

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

12. I use the TEAM evaluation rubric to guide my planning of instructional strategies for typical lessons each day.

1	2	3	4	5

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

13. I understand the TEAM evaluation rubric criteria better than I understood the evaluation criteria under the previous evaluation model used in my district.

1	2	3	4	5

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

14. The time I spend adjusting lesson plans during a typical week of school has increased by more than 10 minutes since the implementation of the TEAM framework.

1	2	3	4	5

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

15. Generally I feel the TEAM evaluation framework is a more effective evaluation model than the evaluation model previously used in my district in determining quality teaching. For example, the TEAM rubric more accurately judges the use of differentiation as well as higher order thinking skills.

1	2	3	4	5

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

16. The TEAM evaluation rubric provides useful guidelines for developing lessons and requires me to utilize a variety of instructional strategies, such as high level questioning skills, I had not previously used in my teaching.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree

17. The TEAM evaluation rubric requires me to focus more on strategies related to higher-order thinking concepts than the previous evaluation rubric used in my district.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree

18. I have a more structured planning process for my lessons under the TEAM evaluation rubric as opposed to the previous evaluation model used in my district.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree

19. My lesson plans are more detailed under the TEAM evaluation frameworks than under previous models of evaluation.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree

20. I use more student assessment data to guide my planning of lessons than I did prior to the implementation of TEAM.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree

Please provide comments on any aspects of the TEAM Evaluation Framework you feel were not addressed in the survey questions:

_____

_____

_____

_____

ETSU

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IRB APPROVAL – Initial Exempt

March 4, 2013

Chris Bogart

RE: Teacher Evaluation and Classroom Practice:Teacher Perceptions in Northeast
Tennessee
IRB#: c0213.17e
ORSPA#: ,

On **March 2, 2013**, an exempt approval was granted in accordance with 45 CFR 46.
101(b)(2). It is understood this project will be conducted in full accordance with all
applicable sections of the IRB Policies. No continuing review is required. The exempt
approval will be reported to the convened board on the next agenda.

☐ xform New Protocol Submission; Permission letters from Washington County
schools, Kingsport City schools, Elizabethton City schools, Bristol City schools,
Sullivan County schools, & Unicoi County schools; Email Script; Survey;
References; CV

**Projects involving Mountain States Health Alliance must also be approved by
MSHA following IRB approval prior to initiating the study.**

Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks to Subjects or Others must be reported to the
IRB (and VA R&D if applicable) within 10 working days.

Proposed changes in approved research cannot be initiated without IRB review and
approval. The only exception to this rule is that a change can be made prior to IRB
approval when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the research
subjects [21 CFR 56.108 (a)(4)]. In such a case, the IRB must be promptly informed of
the change following its implementation (within 10 working days) on Form 109
(www.etsu.edu/irb). The IRB will review the change to determine that it is consistent
with ensuring the subject's continued welfare.

Full AAHRPP Accreditation

Accredited Since December 2005

VITA

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