

Spring 5-16-2017

Teacher Perceptions of an Evaluation Process: A Qualitative Case Study

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Concordia University Portland
College of Education
Doctorate of Education Program

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Teacher Perceptions of an Evaluation Process:

A Qualitative Case Study

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Concordia University – Portland

College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in

Teacher Leadership

Donna Graham, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions of the evaluation system currently used in their district. This study was guided by the following research question: How do teachers perceive the teacher evaluation process in a Midwestern Teacher and Student Advancement Program (TAP) school? The theoretical foundations used in this study were Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluating training programs. The researcher learned that Midwestern teachers in a TAP school perceived the evaluation system to have impacted their teaching in a positive manner and, at the same time, contributed to their stress level. Thirteen teachers participated in the study. Data sources included questionnaires, interviews, observations, and focus groups. The questionnaires, interviews, and observations were coded and used to determine the teachers' perceptions of the evaluation system. The results indicated that teachers perceived the system both positively and negatively. The findings of this study indicated that a positive impact of the evaluation system had a positive impact on teaching. Further, the researcher uncovered negative perceptions that might be addressed.

Keywords: teacher evaluation, evaluation system, instructional coaching, value added model, professional development, mindset, teacher perception, Teacher and Student Advancement Program (TAP)

Dedication

This project is dedicated to my family. Thank you to my sisters, Cheryl, Fran, and Sheila, who have cheered me on every step of the way. They know where I am from and who I am in a way that only sisters do, and their collective strength is a force to be reckoned with. I am forever thankful for their love and support. Thanks goes to my mother, who has taught me to work hard, persevere through hard things, and in the process, to find joy in the simple things in life like gardening, quilting, and pie-making. You have helped me define true beauty and faithfulness.

To my immediate family, you are my inspiration. My creative, artistic children, Kate, Kora, Aaron, and Leah, you will never know the depth of my love and thankfulness for you. Parenting you over the years has made me a better person. To JT, thanks for joining this crazy, quirky family; you are a perfect fit. Most of all, I dedicate this work to my husband, Scott. You encouraged me to embark on this journey, and you have supported me without waiver. Throughout our marriage, you have always dreamed big for me, causing me to consider new possibilities. You have been my ticket to see the world and experience a life beyond my dreams. I am forever grateful for you and what we have together. Finally, I am thankful to God, for this mind of mine and this deep thirst for learning.

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I remember an elementary teacher, Pam Sellers, who took me home with her every week to dust her furniture and pour confidence into me. She paid me, let me spend the night, and let me wear her make-up to school the next morning. I decided way back then that I wanted to be a teacher like her. And once I started this journey, I met so many other confidence builders.

Thank you to my Concordia committee for all their guidance through this exciting learning journey. My committee chair, Dr. Donna Graham, provided endless support and feedback for my learning and growth. My committee members, Dr. D'Angelo, and Dr. Swenk, also supported my growth with thoughtful questions and high standards of excellence. Because of the support of my committee, this degree is truly something of which I can be proud.

Special acknowledgment goes to many local educators and colleagues for supporting my learning. Thank you for encouraging me to share my learning as we effect positive change in our schools for the benefit of our students. It is an honor to work with the people that I do, who make me better. My current supervisor, Tammy Ummel, has been a wonderful professional guide as I embarked upon a new district role this year. A special thanks to Goshen Community Schools; what an honor it is to be a part of a district on the cutting edge of learning and whose focus remains steady on what is best for students. Shout-out to Donna Wik, my friend and personal cheerleader, the Freachers (friend/teachers) who continue to inspire my thinking, years after our formal meetings, and to Lisa Caskey, my weekly processing partner, who is a faithful friend. Thank you to the many principals I have worked for over the years who encouraged me to keep learning and investing in our profession. A special thanks to the three most recent principals, Paula Maurer, Ray Helmuth, and Tracey Noe, who called forth the leadership and coaching abilities within me. Thank you also to the teachers in this study for allowing me to

inquire and learn from their perceptions. Without their willingness to be forthright and vulnerable, this study would not have been possible. Finally, thank you to my kind editor, Judith Barnes, for her patience and expertise.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Teachers in the United States have experienced great change in the last 10 years (Darling-Hammond, 2013). These changes include, but are not limited to, shifts in state standards, increased student testing, and the introduction of merit pay or value added models (VAM). As well, teachers have experienced great increase in accountability related to their job evaluations (Papay, 2012). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to gain an understanding of the teachers' perceptions of the teacher evaluation process in Midwestern Indiana. This chapter is organized into background of teacher evaluation, statement of the problem, statement of purpose, research question, methodology, design, definition of terms, assumptions, limitations and delimitations, and summary.

Background of the Study

Understanding and improving education is not new (Ackerman, 2011). Many agree that there is more work to be done in education reform, "59% of teachers and 63% of administrators say their district is not doing enough to identify, compensate, promote, and retain the most effective teachers" (Brandt, 2011, p. 30), but there is disagreement about how that should happen. Some would argue that teacher evaluation needs to play a key role; others would suggest inequitable funding is the greatest problem (Darling-Hammond, 2013). This study focused on teacher evaluation and how teachers perceive that evaluation.

Education has become the focus of federal policy, and funding and teacher evaluation has been the tool for measuring effectiveness. As a result, most states are faced with new and/or revised evaluation tools for teachers and administrators (Darling-Hammond, 2013). Fair and transparent evaluation systems can impact effective teaching (Marzano, 2007), but Darling-

Hammond (2013) warned that when evaluations are poorly perceived, one risks losing effective teachers to frustration.

Indiana's education changes began in 2001 with the introduction of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002). This legislation focused on teacher accountability and the academic success of all students as measured by a school's adequate yearly progress (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2002). NCLB held four mandates: (a) teacher accountability for student achievement, (b) state autonomy to develop accountability systems, (c) educator's use of best practices in the classroom, and (d) parent choice of schools (USDOE, 2002). In response to these mandates, states and districts developed accountability systems to align with NCLB mandates and attempted to realign their curriculum to meet newly implemented state standards, create standardized assessments, and heighten certification requirements for teachers so that all teachers were highly qualified (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008). This precipitated an increased curricular rigor (Mathis, 2004) and brought shifts in most instructional practices (Neill, 2006).

The deadline for having all students in the United States proficient and thus No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was 2014. When data showed that this would not be possible, the USDOE initiated the reauthorization of the NCLB in 2011 and the Obama administration offered states flexibility from the original NCLB mandates. This led to states receiving federal flexibility waivers and designing their own accountability practices and programs (Ayers, Owen, Partee, & Chang, 2012; USDOE, 2015). This was the case for the state and district of this study. The teacher evaluation system used in the public school district of this study is the Teacher and Student Advancement Program (TAP). The TAP is a system of teacher evaluation and teacher training that tightly links ongoing teacher support to professional development and formal

evaluation feedback (Darling-Hammond, 2013). Teachers meet weekly for professional development sessions called clusters which are led by master and mentor teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2013). These trained master and mentor teachers also help carry the evaluation and coaching load with their principal in a collaborative effort. TAP is organized by a career ladder approach where teachers who are skilled in teaching can apply for positions as mentor or master and receive additional training in leading professional development, evaluation, and coaching, once moved into the position (Darling-Hammond, 2013). This qualitative case study allowed the researcher to explore the teacher evaluation situation from the point of view of the teachers. Yin (2014) explained that a case study enables researchers to conduct an exploration from an angle that is both holistic and real-world.

Statement of the Problem

There is limited research about teachers' perceptions of the evaluation process. This is true of evaluation systems in general, but also about the TAP system, specifically. Since Indiana districts face significant changes in teacher evaluation processes, this study provides information about how teachers perceive these changes. According to Darling-Hammond (2013), when evaluations are poorly perceived, one risks losing effective teachers to frustration. This study provides needed insight into teacher perceptions in Midwestern Indiana regarding their evaluations system. As this perception is understood, the risk that Darling Hammond (2013) referred to is minimized.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how teachers perceive the current evaluation system used in their district. The implementation of teacher evaluation policy was studied from several teachers' perspectives. The teachers in this study varied in years of

experience, content taught, and grade taught. The researcher's specific purpose was to explore teacher perceptions of the TAP evaluation system used in some Indiana schools as well as in other states. There is limited research about teacher's perceptions of the evaluation process. Since Indiana districts face significant changes in teacher evaluation processes, this study provides information about how teachers perceive these changes. Indiana's education changes are similar to the changes facing other states in the United States.

Research Question

This study focused on perceptions of teachers regarding the evaluation process at their school and the impact they perceived it had on their teaching. The researcher sought to answer the question, how do teachers perceive the teacher evaluation process in a Midwestern TAP school?

Rationale for Methodology

This study used a qualitative research method in order to understand how teachers perceived the evaluation system used in this stage of their careers (Creswell, 2014). It is generalizable for other teachers in this district adapting to the changes faced in teacher evaluation required under the provisions of the new policy in a Midwestern district (Yin, 2014). A qualitative methodology was employed for this study because it is the most appropriate paradigm to explore the experiences of teachers and obtain an understanding of the perspectives of the participants. Qualitative research recognizes the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in their interaction with the world (Creswell, 2014).

Research Design

The researcher used a case study design in order to understand how teachers perceive their current evaluation system (Creswell, 2014). The strategy of inquiry was a case study that

will contribute to understanding a Midwestern public school district that was adapting to the changes in teacher evaluation required under the provisions of the new policy (Yin, 2014). A single case study is an appropriate strategy of inquiry because the researcher is attempting to understand the real life experiences of teachers in a district that has implemented a new teacher evaluation model in a specific context (Yin, 2014).

Data gathering for case study research needs to focus on an individual's perceptions, in this case the teacher's perceptions of his or her current evaluation system. This was done using interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires. Teachers in the sample group were provided opportunities to explore, discuss, and openly share their lived experiences and perceptions related to experiences with their current evaluation program.

Yin (2014) explained that the rationale for learning about a small group and then using that understanding as a representative case is, "the lessons learned from these cases are assumed to be informative about the experience of the average person or institution" (p. 47). The objective for this case study was to learn about the real life experiences of teachers in the school's setting regarding their evaluation system and then transfer those understandings and experiences to other teachers experiencing changes in the way they are evaluated (Yin, 2014). Educators throughout the United States are involved in evaluation reform, and the district in this study represented a setting where the evaluation system was organized through the TAP. This study provides a snapshot of how teachers facing similar circumstances as others across the state, perceive the changes that resulted from the new evaluation model in a Midwestern district (Yin, 2014).

Definition of Terms correct all terms

Clinical supervision: Clinical supervision is one of two main categories of teacher evaluation, usually unidirectional from the top down as authoritative (Walsh, 2013). Walsh (2013) compared this type of evaluation to summative evaluation.

Developmental appraisal/Developmental evaluation plan: A developmental plan is used for ongoing teacher support that connects teacher evaluation to instructional coaching, ongoing support and staff development sessions (Darling-Hammond, 2013).

Developmental supervision: Developmental supervision is one of two main categories of teacher evaluation. A developmental model is based on empowering teachers and seeks to determine the level of support needed based on years of experience and current ability (Walsh, 2013). This model seeks to promote professional growth among all teachers. Walsh (2013) compared this type of evaluation to formative evaluation.

Evaluation system: An evaluation system is a system that includes a coherent, well-grounded approach to developing teaching, ideally created collaboratively by state leaders and district leaders with teacher's voices as a part (Darling-Hammond, 2013).

Formative evaluation plans: A formative evaluation plan is used for ongoing teacher support, and it connects teacher evaluation to instructional coaching, ongoing support and staff development sessions (Darling-Hammond, 2013).

Instructional coaching: Instructional coaching is a guidance process that involves training and support from one professional educator to another. It is job-embedded and ongoing, aligned to state standards, curriculum, and assessment. Its goal is effective instructional practices and increased student achievement (Institute for Instructional Coaching, 2016).

Intrinsic commitment: Intrinsic commitment is the internal motivation to stick to a goal, not dependent upon prizes, scores or other external motivators, usually linked to a belief system, theory or philosophy (Fullan, 2011).

Mindset: The mindset of an individual is the way he or she sees his or her own capacity to learn; a fixed mindset is one that views learning as given or inherited, a growth mindset is dynamic, one dependent upon hard work and continued improvement (Dweck, 2007).

Perception: A perception is one's understanding or opinion of the topic at hand.

Staff development: Staff development is a term used to name teacher training meetings.

Standards-based teacher evaluation: A standards-based teacher evaluation is an evaluation of a teacher's practice relative to explicit and well-defined district or state standards (Papay, 2012).

Teacher and Student Advancement Program (TAP): TAP is an evaluation model that uses three rubrics with 19 indicators of effective teaching practices. Additionally, this model has value added model (VAM) component. TAP includes a weekly professional development session taught by an on-site instructional coach (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2015).

Teacher evaluation: Teacher evaluation names a function of an educational organization assumed as a part of teacher supervision, designed to make judgments concerning teacher performance and competence for the purposes of personnel tenure and continued employment decisions. The process as a whole can lead to improvements in teacher performance, but often its results are summative conclusions about the teacher's ability to carry out instructional duties and responsibilities (Nolan & Hoover, 2005).

Value added model (VAM): Within a state's developed definition of teacher effectiveness, a part must be linked to student performance, per the USDOE (2010). The VAM is that measure of student performance (Schochet & Chiang, 2010).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations of the Study

The assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of this study are outlined in this section. The researcher made assumptions in approaching the research problem, and limitations were considered. The delimitations used in this study were determined with the objective of better understanding the perception of teachers regarding their evaluations system. The researcher attempted to name all assumptions, limitations, and delimitations encountered in the research process. Two assumptions were present in this study.

1. The researcher assumed that participants would give honest and forthright information and keep the confidences of others from their focus group meetings. Participants were made aware of their option to withdraw from the study at any time and with no ramifications.
2. It was assumed that the inferences made by the researcher were considered and revised honestly by participants. Transcripts of all conversations were made available to participants, and they were invited to adjust, clarify, or add to the written conversations.

Four limitations were present in this study.

1. The first limitation was the limit of the sample size. One Midwestern school district, 10 schools, all participating in one teacher evaluation system, and 10–12 participants of those schools were selected for the study. The goal of this study was to provide a voice for teachers in regard to the new evaluation systems being used in their state;

this study sacrificed quantity for depth and quality. The primary intention of this study was to better understand the perceptions of teachers regarding teacher evaluation, not to quantify it.

2. The second limitation of the study was confidentiality and rapport. Every effort was made to build trust and provide confidentiality; yet it could not be guaranteed when several participants were present in the focus groups. Although having a positive rapport between the participants and the researcher was beneficial, this varied according to who volunteered and who was selected for the study. Every effort was made to not let this limitation become a major concern.
3. A third limitation was that each of the 10 schools involved in the study were led by a different master teacher (a master teacher plans professional development and oversees the evaluation process as well as the teacher support). These master teachers varied in their expertise and skill in instructional coaching; this variation in expertise may have impacted the perceptions. It was important to give attention to this within the study and correlate variations to specific buildings. Descriptive statistics were used to accomplish this.
4. A fourth limitation was the bias of the researcher. The prejudices and attitudes of the researcher can bias the data if precautions are not taken. This can happen when the researcher interprets the responses from participants in interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups. There was an intent to stay neutral, and even then there remained a possibility that personal bias might influence the study. Recognition of this potential limitation helped the researcher to focus on being as neutral as possible during the study.

The following delimitations were within the researcher's control.

1. Delimiting factors included the choice of research questions. The number of questions included were limited to those easily covered within a one hour meeting.
2. The study was also delimited by the requirement that all study participants have at least two years' experience with the TAP evaluation program.
3. Delimitations of the study included the lack of participants and school sites for the study. The sample size was limited to the first 15 teachers to volunteer to participate. The setting was limited to one district so that the researcher could meet with all participants and study the problem from that district's perspective.
4. Inconsistent scoring or conflicts within value added model were not studied. These were rejected so that the study focused solely on teacher perceptions. Additional delimitation were the researcher's choice to not study the perceptions and/or training of the evaluator and the mindset of the evaluator.

Summary

As education has become the focus of federal policy and funding, teacher evaluation has been the tool used for measuring teaching effectiveness. Most states have been faced with new and/or revised evaluation tools for teachers and administrators (Darling-Hammond, 2013). This chapter outlined the background and causes of these changes in teacher evaluation processes. It was noted that due to limited research on how teachers perceive these changes in evaluation systems, there was a need for the proposed study.

This qualitative case study explored how teachers perceive the current evaluation system used in their district. The strategy of inquiry used a case study, representative of a Midwestern public school district adapting to the changes to teacher evaluation required under the provisions

of the TAP. Definitions of terms were listed in this chapter as were assumptions, limitations, and delimitations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Teacher evaluation in education is not new. However, more than ever before in the history of education, teacher evaluation is a front and center topic in the United States (Darling-Hammond, 2013). This is partially the case because schools are required, by states and districts, to have evaluation systems in place in order to receive funding (Darling-Hammond, 2013). This study explored teacher perceptions of the teacher evaluation process.

This chapter is organized into the following sections: introduction, background to the problem, conceptual framework, review of literature, and summary. The literature review begins with a general search for teacher job satisfaction contributors and the impact of the evaluation process on job satisfaction. Next, the following keywords were used: *teacher job satisfaction*, *teacher retention*, *evaluation process*, *teacher perceptions of evaluation*, *teacher efficacy*, *teacher motivation*, *staff development*, *teacher emotion and mindset*, and *servant leadership*. All searches were performed in the Search@CULibraries – Education Edition search bar in the Concordia University, Portland Library Find Articles tab. The following databases were accessed during the search of the above keywords: ProQuest Education, Wiley, ERIC, Google Scholar, JSTOR, and Science Direct Journals Complete.

Background to the Problem

Understanding and improving education has been the goal of many for a very long time; reform in education is not new (Ackerman, 2011). Still, many in education today agree that there is more work to be done in education reform. According to Brandt (2011), “59% of teachers and 63% of administrators say their district is not doing enough to identify, compensate, promote, and retain the most effective teachers” (p. 30). The disagreement is not about whether or not education needs to continue to refine and grow, the disagreement is in how that should

happen. Some would argue that teacher evaluation needs to play a key role; others suggest inequitable funding is the greatest problem (Darling-Hammond, 2013).

Education has become the focus of federal policy and funding; teacher evaluation has been a tool for measuring teaching effectiveness. As a result, most states are faced with new and/or revised evaluation tools for teachers and administrators (Darling-Hammond, 2013). Fair and transparent evaluation systems can impact effective teaching (Marzano, 2007), but Darling-Hammond (2013) warned that when evaluations are poorly perceived, losing effective teachers to frustration is a risk.

Conceptual Framework

For this study, the conceptual framework was drawn from Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs. Additionally, Kirkpatrick's (1996) conceptual framework, the four levels for evaluating training programs, was used. The focus of this study was to learn about the teachers' perception of the evaluation process.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory (Maslow, 1954) is an often-referenced motivation theory in management and scholarly literature (Kroth, 2007). Maslow (1954) named his list the *basic needs*: physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. He referred to these needs as basic goals of human beings. People move up the pyramid when their needs are met, and unsatisfied needs create motivation until they are met (Kroth, 2007). This model has often been used to help leaders create conditions for their employees that are conducive to optimal outcomes (Kroth, 2007). There are disagreements in research regarding whether Maslow's levels must be attained in order (Wininger & Birkholz, 2013). Maslow (1998) suggested that the order is not as rigid as may have originally been implied. Maslow also clarified that satisfaction

of each is not “all-or-none.” One does not need to have one need met completely before the next need emerges. People can be partially satisfied in all their basic needs and partially unsatisfied in all their basic needs at the same time (Maslow, 1998), but the unsatisfied portion is what drives the motivation or longing for more. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1954) related to the researcher’s study. Just as it has been used to help leaders create conditions for their employees that are conducive to optimal outcomes (Kroth, 2007), it can offer a framework for looking closely at the needs of teachers regarding their evaluations. For example, do teachers have love and esteem needs that need to be met in their evaluation system before they can attain self-actualization? When or if these love and esteem needs are not met, what perceptions are impacted or behaviors motivated?

Maslow (1954) introduced a hierarchy of human needs where five basic goals are organized in order of influence or domination: (a) physiological, (b) safety, (c) love, (d) esteem, and (e) self-actualization. As the lower order needs are met, there are next needs in line that emerge as motivators of behavior. The first four basic needs are deficiency needs: the individual feels nothing if basic needs are met, but feels a void or longing if basic needs are not met. In contrast, self-actualization is considered a higher or growth need that continues to motivate behavior after it is satisfied. As physiological needs are met, safety needs emerge as motivators (Maslow, 1954). As physiological and safety needs are met, love needs emerge as motivators (Maslow, 1954). Love needs include connections with people and a sense of belonging with others. When physiological, safety, and love needs are met, esteem needs become the motivators (Maslow, 1954). Esteem needs refers to one’s understanding of how others regard them. Finally, when all four basic needs are satisfied, self-actualization needs become the ongoing

motivators (Maslow, 1954). Self-actualization is when one operates at his or her fullest potential; this is a lifelong process.

In the midst of great educational shifts and changes, especially in the area of teacher evaluation, one could argue that some of teachers' esteem needs have been overlooked (Darling-Hammond, 2013). Darling-Hammond (2010) explained the cost of peer competition that was created in some schools after value added models (VAMs) were used. This led some teachers away from collaboration and genuine sharing of ideas in an effort to have their students score highest. This, in turn, led to isolation and loneliness. Hearing teachers' perceptions of their current evaluation system as this study proposed, puts one in a position to respond in a way that meets that need and moves educators closer to self-actualization. In following Maslow's (1954) hierarchy, one may view teachers as individuals having motives and needs that drive their behavior; in this way, Maslow's theory provides a lens for understanding teacher perceptions of their evaluation process.

Kirkpatrick's Four Levels for Evaluating Training Programs

Kirkpatrick (1959) introduced four steps for evaluating corporate training programs. Kirkpatrick introduced a common language or framework for evaluating training that measured the results or impact of training on an organization (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2005). Kirkpatrick proposed that evaluation had been a neglected area of practice and wrote articles to encourage training directors to increase their evaluation efforts (Kirkpatrick, 1959). As the cost of trainings began to rise, the system helped organizations determine whether or not they were worth the cost. Thus began the idea that leaders of trainings must provide measurable results to be deemed valuable. Although evaluation in education is not new, using teacher perceptions to

add to the understanding of the evaluation system is new. This new learning will poise those in leadership to respond accordingly.

The purpose of Kirkpatrick's (1987) practical framework was to clarify the meaning of evaluation and measure the effectiveness of the training on four levels: reaction, learning, behavior, and results. Reaction measures how participants feel about various aspects of the training, such as the content covered and the person delivering the training. This level equals a kind of customer satisfaction with the training one has been given. Learning measures improvement in the skills and knowledge that result from the training. "Some programs aim to improve trainees' knowledge of concepts, principles, or techniques. Others aim to teach new skills or improve old ones" (Kirkpatrick, 1987, p. 56), still others seek to improve target-changing attitudes. When changing behavior is the goal, one looks at the extent to which participants have been able to change their behaviors based on the training they received (Kirkpatrick) and measures the transfer of training success rate. Finally, results measure the outcome of the training. For example, is there higher productivity, higher test scores, or reduced turnover? The following possible rationales were given by Kirkpatrick for why one might want to evaluate a training program: to decide whether to continue it, to improve it, and to validate the training. Kirkpatrick's conceptual framework, the four levels for evaluating training programs, related to this study because comprehensive teacher evaluation systems include teacher training (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Papay, 2012; Walsh, 2013), and this training could be evaluated with Kirkpatrick's model. Hearing and understanding teachers' perceptions of their evaluation system was key in evaluating the evaluation system. Kirkpatrick proposed four levels evaluating any training: reaction (How do teachers in the TAP system react to/perceive the training within this evaluation system?), learning (How do teachers perceive the new learning they acquire within

the TAP system?), behavior (Are there certain behaviors that teachers explain in the interviews that are attributed to the TAP system?), and results (Is there evidence of learning from the TAP system?). Each of these levels was considered as this study gathered teachers' perceptions of their own TAP training. Beyond teachers' perceptions, this study looked for evidence that learning occurred from the evaluation system, and that behaviors changed. Finally, it looked at results or the effect the training had on the teachers and their students.

Evaluation is an uncomfortable subject in corporations outside education, just as it is inside of education. Perry (1993) interviewed training professionals from 28 companies to study their company's interest in higher-level training evaluations. These studies showed that most company professionals evaluated the training they received at no higher level than Kirkpatrick's Level 1—reaction. Two-thirds of the company professionals evaluated the training they received up to Level 2—new learning, and few evaluated at Level 3 behavior, or Level 4—results (Perry, 1993).

Summary

Maslow's (1954) theory can inform educational leaders as they consider the individual needs of the teachers they serve (Ackerman, 2011). Teachers, like all human beings, have the basic needs that Maslow described: physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. Schools, like other organizations, produce optimal results only when basic needs of all are considered. Likewise, Kirkpatrick's (1987) four levels of evaluating training (reaction, learning, behavior, and results) can inform educational leaders as they hear and seek to understand teachers' perceptions and look for ways to improve the evaluation process they are asked to implement. Further, as school leaders understand how teachers perceive the benefits and

limitations of the evaluation system, it assists them in fostering growth and improvements within their schools.

Review of the Literature

A review of the literature was done on effective teacher evaluation practices, models used to assess teacher practices, and teachers' perceptions of evaluation systems. A review of literature was also done on why teacher perceptions of evaluation programs matter and should be considered. Additionally, a historical understanding of teacher evaluation was sought. The goal was to gain a deeper understanding of what others have found to influence teacher perceptions of teacher evaluation systems, both positively and negatively. Based on the literature, the researcher derived the following definition of teacher evaluation: a function of an educational organization assumed as a part of teacher supervision, designed to make judgments concerning teacher performance and competence for the purposes of personnel tenure and continued employment decisions (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Frontier & Mielke, 2016). The process as a whole can lead to improvements in teacher performance. However, often results are summative conclusions about the teacher's ability to carry out instructional duties and responsibilities and do not include coaching and ongoing support; the improvements do not follow (Nolan & Hoover, 2005).

Hill and Grossman (2013) discussed the fact that teacher evaluations have recently become the focus of many districts and states as a way to address teacher accountability. Until *A Nation at Risk* was published in 1983, teacher performance was often measured by easily observable, quantifiable, and often superficial behaviors (Walsh, 2013). Although *A Nation at Risk* shifted the focus, recent decades have brought further change. Darling-Hammond (2013) explained,

Today, teacher evaluation is receiving unprecedented attention, in large part because new teacher evaluation systems are a requirement for states and districts that want to receive funding under the federal “Race to the Top” initiative or flexibility waivers under the No Child Left Behind Act. As teaching has become a major focus of policy attention, teacher evaluation is currently the primary tool being promoted to improve it. (p. 2)

Teacher evaluation is a timely subject. In most current debates about education reform, policy makers are focusing on the development or refinement of a system to measure teacher performance (Papay, 2012). Few argue that the old system of evaluation, where teachers were either never or rarely evaluated or where all teachers were deemed satisfactory, was adequate (Papay, 2012). Many agree that current evaluation systems that many districts have had in place are ineffective. Evaluations that do not happen or happen in a hurried or “pop-in” style serve little purpose; observations with no constructive feedback are not meeting the needs of teachers or students (Papay, 2012).

Hattie’s (2012) studies on teacher effectiveness highlighted practices that matter most in classrooms. Hattie challenged teachers to study effective teaching research and then study their own actions or inactions in relation to their students’ academic performance. He labeled teacher perceptions as “mind frames” and proposed that what matters most in the classroom is that teachers have the mind frame that it is their role to evaluate the effect that they have on learning.

With the current attention on accountability in education, teachers’ perceptions of the evaluation process must be regarded (Jiang, Spote, & Luppescu, 2015; Walsh, 2013). Although one of the goals of evaluation is accountability, many teachers and administrators desire evaluation processes that include a second goal of helping them develop their skill or hone their craft. This will help school’s attract, develop, and retain employees; this will ensure that

employees are growing and learning, and a culture of engagement and productivity is being built (Brandt, 2011).

Teacher Perceptions

Education reform mandates regarding teacher evaluation have brought about great change. These changes include increased student testing, and introduction of merit pay or VAM. As well, teachers have experienced great increase in accountability related to their job evaluations (Papay, 2012). These changes can cause concern for teachers who have been impacted most by the reform. According to Hall (2013), change concerns show up as feelings, thoughts, reactions, and perceptions. Hall and Hord (2015) revealed that these concerns show up in three predictable stages: self-doubt about one's ability, which then turns into familiarity and increased proficiency after several years. In the beginning of any change, it is typical that the one changing experiences self-doubt. As time passes and the proposed change become less new, this self-doubt in the learner is often followed by increased interest in the benefits of the change. Finally, this increased interest often leads to a mastering the change process. Hall and Hord's (2015) stages revealed that perceptions to change can change over time and increase in a positive way. This implies the need for patience and understanding on the part of those implementing the change. Positive change is not about forcing teachers to conform to the new mandates. It is more about allowing teachers to individually and collaboratively reflect, thus building trust, sharing visions, inviting risk taking, and making sense of the change so they can merge the change into their professional practices in a way that makes sense to them personally (Price, 2012). This takes time and patience.

According to Dweck (2007) a teacher's mindset, fixed or growth, can impact the teacher's perception of evaluations. According to Dweck's theory, teachers who possess a

growth mindset experience maximum benefit from the observational feedback they receive in an evaluation. Individuals with a growth mindset are more comfortable with continued learning and see themselves as a work in progress. These individuals see mistakes as opportunities to learn and grow; growth mindset teachers find evaluation feedback motivating and informative. The contrasting perspective is that of a fixed mindset. A person with a fixed mindset feels a need to be perfect from the beginning and sees opportunities for growth as indication of weakness (Dweck, 2007). These mindsets can be influential factors in teachers' willingness to implement input received in evaluation feedback.

Emotions have significant influence on teachers' response to educational reform efforts; these emotions range from compliance to conflict or opposition (Fullan, 2011). Zembylas and Barker (2007) explained that resistance is natural part of the process of change. Further, they proposed that there is valuable influence in the ambivalence and confusion that teachers have toward change; when given time, explanation and patience, it causes the change to be understood and implemented at a deeper level. Understanding how change impacts teachers and how they make meaning of the change gives insight to those implementing school reform (Zembylas & Barker, 2007).

In spite of teachers' frequent resistance to change, many agree that new evaluation instruments for teacher learning and teacher competencies are needed in U.S. schools (Marzano, 2012). There is an influx of change in states, districts, and schools to address this need. Reports and initiatives have highlighted two shortcomings of past evaluation efforts. Evaluation systems have not measured teacher quality accurately because they have not differentiated between effective and ineffective teachers, and they have not helped to develop highly-skilled teachers (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013; Marzano, 2012). To respond to the first need listed

above, there is an increase in attaching student test scores to teacher effectiveness. Although this is very controversial, the USDOE (2010) allowed states to develop their definition of teacher effectiveness but insisted that it must be based in part on student growth. Labeled VAMs of performance, the average gains of students taught by a given teacher, team, or school are often used now for performance measurement systems to identify instructional staff for special treatment, such as rewards and sanctions (Schochet & Chiang, 2010). According to Ryser and Rambo-Hernandez (2014), VAMs offer information about what specifically contributed to the growth, for example specific teachers or specific schools. Others maintain that although VAMs address one aspect of need, there is more to address. DiPaola and Hoy (2012) explained the need to also address professional growth of the teacher and thus student learning. “There is common agreement that the overall purposes of personnel evaluation are accountability and professional growth leading to student achievement” (DiPaola & Hoy, 2012, p. 147).

Fullan (2011) explained other needs that the teacher evaluation shifts must address, suggesting that in order for leaders to be effective in any change process, the proposed change must meet a certain criteria.

It has to (a) have an explicit purpose that creates a sense of making a difference, (b) mobilize people to find solutions to difficult problems, (c) use indicators of success that are measurable, and (d) be assessed “to the extent to which it awakens people’s intrinsic commitment. (Fullan, 2011, p. 20)

Understanding these teacher needs, as well as teacher perceptions and how they construct meaning within educational evaluation reforms, can provide valuable insight for educational leaders. In addition to implementing evaluation mandates, educational leaders also need to engage teachers in cultivating ownership and embrace of the reform policy. This can be done

through discussion, debate, feedback, and reflection, with the ultimate outcome of ownership of the change and long term sustaining the reform policies (Fullan, 2011; Roussin & Zimmerman, 2014).

Two Main Types of Teacher Evaluation and Their Purpose

According to Walsh (2013), there are two main categories of teacher evaluation: clinical supervision and developmental supervision. Although clinical supervision is time efficient, it lacks teacher voice, and communication is usually unidirectional from the top down as authoritative (Walsh, 2013). By contrast, the developmental model is based on empowering teachers and seeks to determine the level of support needed based on years of experience and current ability (Walsh, 2013). This model seeks to promote professional growth among all teachers (Walsh, 2013) and requires mutual trust and interaction. Walsh connected these two main categories to what others have termed as summative and formative teacher evaluation. Summative is often used for personnel decisions and formative is primarily used to inform professional development needs. Still others (Papay, 2012) suggest that both purposes can be merged, and evaluations can be used as both measurement tools to assess performance and as professional development tools to improve instructional practice. Papay explained his understanding of possible roles of teacher evaluation.

Evaluation systems can serve two main purposes. First, they can assess how effectively teachers are doing their jobs. In other words, they are measurement tools that districts can use to hold teachers accountable, removing teachers who do not meet the districts' standards and possibly rewarding top performers. Second, evaluations can provide valuable information to drive professional growth and, as such, can raise teacher effectiveness. As a formative professional development tool, evaluation provides

feedback on teachers' instructional strengths and weaknesses, highlights areas for improvement, and supports teachers' continued development. (Papay, 2012, p. 1)

Regarding these two roles, Papay (2012) proposed that leaders in education shift their primary argument now to the second role and focus on how to best use performance evaluations to improve teacher learning and thus student learning in schools. In other words, since it appears that teacher evaluation for accountability is here to stay, Papay suggested a shift of focus to determine how to best use this system in a developmental way. One of the keys to accomplish this is to listen to the perceptions of the teachers about the evaluation system they are experiencing. These perceptions will guide leaders in making shifts and changes in response to teachers' voices. When change is not possible, these perceptions will guide leaders in responding with empathy and explanation.

According to Wininger and Birkholz (2013), one of the major contributors to teacher job satisfaction is the opportunity for improving teaching. These opportunities for improvement could include being a part of staff development sessions that the teacher finds applicable, or having access to an instructional coach. This desire of teachers to improve their practice and grow as professionals is best met by developmental or formative evaluation plans (Darling-Hammond, 2013).

A crucial determiner of whether or not a teacher will utilize the evaluation results or accept input for further growth is the teacher's perception of the evaluative process (Walsh, 2013). This links teacher job satisfaction to the teacher's continued professional development that Papay (2012) proposed, but one of the gate keepers of whether or not a teacher will be open to that professional development (or feedback) is the teachers' perception of the evaluation

process. One cannot reach full potential of promoting change in teachers or in education until teacher perceptions are heard and responded to thoughtfully.

Walsh (2013) suggested a connection between teacher evaluations and student achievement, but the connector between the two was the teacher's job satisfaction. Walsh's chain of connection went like this: teacher evaluations impact job satisfaction, teacher job satisfaction impacts teacher effectiveness, and teacher effectiveness impacts student achievement. With that chain of impact in mind, there is added benefit of student achievement connected to teachers' perception of the evaluation process and its link to job satisfaction.

The Power of Developmental Appraisals

Some warn that the inevitable summative function of teacher evaluation built for accountability may actually slow efforts to motivate change in teacher behaviors and discourage needed collaboration and community (Hallinger, Heck, & Murphy, 2014, Hill & Grossman, 2013). However, Deneire, Vanhoof, Faddar, Gijbels, and Van Petegem (2014) found that when teacher appraisals were held in a developmental way, and their results were used to plan and deliver staff development, evaluation systems actually contributed to teacher job satisfaction. This job satisfaction impacts teacher effectiveness and teacher effectiveness impacts student achievement (Walsh, 2013). Developmental evaluations offer feedback that teachers can use to improve practice (Papay, 2012). This developmental element of teacher evaluation grows the capacity of teachers so that they have greater impact on student learning, but it also has positive influence on job satisfaction and thus affects talent retention (Darling-Hammond, 2013).

Professional development is defined by Guskey (2002) as "those processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so that they might, in turn, improve the learning of students" (p. 16). Hirsh (2009) proposed that professional

development include specific components: (a) analysis of data, (b) outcome oriented goals, (c) instruction for implementation of evidence-based strategies, and (d) coaching. These experts implied that professional development is ongoing and that it is connected to student outcomes.

Papay (2012) accused policy makers and researchers of focusing too narrowly on validity of evaluation with less regard for developing teachers. Papay proposed that if teacher evaluation is to improve student learning systematically, then teacher development must be a critical piece of it. This lack of focus on developing teachers, though it may be produced by valid and reliable measures, will not be as effective long term in its impact on student achievement. With this developmental focus, evaluation holds much more promise for comprehensive change instead of merely identifying the best and worst teachers (Papay, 2012).

Standards-Based Teacher Evaluation

As districts have been faced with increased evaluation mandates and increased displeasure with current ineffective evaluation systems, some have responded by developing or adopting standards-based evaluations (Papay, 2012). Such standards-based evaluation systems are rigorous and have produced data-driven classroom observations in which expert evaluators assess a teacher's practice relative to explicit and well-defined district standards (Papay, 2012). Teacher evaluation systems that are based on standards (sometime the same standards as state licensing and certification systems) can serve both evaluation needs of assessment and development simultaneously (Darling-Hammond, 2013). These standards-based systems are generally guided by systematic rubrics and observation protocols and minimize opportunity for observer subjectivity as they utilize specific evidence observed and linked to rubric indicators and descriptors (Danielson & McGreal; 2000, Darling-Hammond, 2013). Although rubrics may decrease subjectivity, Papay warned that completely limiting bias in standards-based

observations is not feasible because such observations rely on the human judgments of the one doing the observation. The specificity that these rubrics afford also impacts the kind of feedback that teachers receive and helps them (evaluators and teachers) in naming their next growth steps because of a common language that results between leader's and teacher's use of standards-based rubrics (Walsh, 2013). "Research has found that the frequent, skilled use of standards-based observation with feedback to the teacher is significantly related to student achievement gains, as the process helps teachers improve their practice and effectiveness" (Darling-Hammond, 2013, p. 53). One caveat to successful implementation of standards-based evaluation systems is the teacher's knowledge and understanding of the rubric used. The evaluation process should be fully explained to teachers ahead of time, evaluators need to be trained, and feedback needs to be timely and focused on the goal of improving instruction to increase student learning (Walsh, 2013).

Conditions for Positive Perceptions

Teachers' perception of their current evaluation process is impacted by many aspects of the process and by conditions around their introduction and training with it. First of all, teachers' understanding of the criteria used in their evaluation process impacts their perceptions (Deneire et al., 2014; Jiang et al., 2015; Mathis, 2015). Next, the perceived fairness of the evaluation process (Deneire et al., 2014; Jiang et al., 2015) impacts greatly the teacher's embrace of the process. Whether or not the evaluation process seems genuinely helpful to teachers also impacts their openness to its input (Deneire et al., 2014). Teacher perceptions are also impacted by whether or not the evaluation contains a quality judgement (Deneire et al., 2014) and is linked in some way to student achievement (Jiang et al., 2015; Mathis, 2015; Papay, 2012). When teachers know that they are highly effective and know specifically why they are effective, it can

be empowering (Brandt, 2011). Finally, when teachers have had input or a voice on how their effectiveness is determined and measured, their perception is positively impacted (Mathis, 2015; Walsh, 2013).

Hill and Grossman (2013) proposed conditions for evaluation systems that are more than accountability, and thus support teachers' growth; evaluations need to be subject-specific and include content experts in the process. According to Hill and Grossman, evaluations also need to be accurate and useful if they are to be perceived positively by teachers. Hill and Grossman concluded that when any of these conditions are missing, teacher perceptions are impacted.

Walsh (2013) explained that a teacher's perception of the evaluation process is related to his or her perception of the evaluator. These perceptions of the evaluator are crucial in determining the teacher's receptiveness to feedback; receptivity to feedback is a necessary and needed first step in growth. Rivara (2015) found that teachers want to improve their practice and viewed the evaluation process as means for this to happen when the role of the evaluator was aligned to more of a coach than a judge. Educational leaders are in a servant-leadership profession; they are involved in training and developing individuals and organizations (Bennett, 2001). Servant attributes are especially important when leaders are involved in the evaluation process; as these servant leadership attributes enhance the teacher's perception of the leader, the teacher becomes more perceptive to the evaluation feedback (Bennett, 2001).

Evaluation Systems

According to Darling-Hammond (2013), one needs a systemic approach to teacher evaluation. The goal of the teacher evaluation system should be to create a coherent, well-grounded approach to developing teaching. This should be created collaboratively by state leaders and district leaders with teachers' voices as a part (Darling-Hammond, 2013). A part of

this systemic approach is a professional development component that is linked to the evaluation that offers ongoing opportunities for ongoing and applied learning (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Papay, 2012). When education leaders choose a method of evaluation, considering a systemic approach far exceeds choosing the measuring tool. The measuring tool and method should be connected to solid student curriculum, and present an ongoing opportunity for teacher support and learning as well as monitoring student achievement in a coherent way. School systems must ensure that their teacher evaluation is connected to—not isolated from—daily teaching that happens in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2013). A successful system must also address next steps for teachers who do not improve with feedback and assistance (Darling-Hammond, 2013).

Teacher and Student Advancement Program

The teachers in this study were in a district that used the TAP evaluation system. Introduced in 1999, “the TAP System has grown significantly as a comprehensive educator evaluation and support model for increasing educator effectiveness” (NIET, 2015, p. 4). Darling-Hammond (2010) referred to TAP as a “well developed example of a highly structured teacher evaluation system that is based on the standards of the National Board of Education” (p. 224). The TAP evaluation model uses teacher evaluation scores based on three rubrics that outline 19 indicators of effective teaching practices. Additionally, this model has VAM component. TAP includes a weekly professional development session taught by an on-site instructional coach called a master teacher. A key component of the professional development is instruction around the implementation of a student strategy that has been chosen in response to the campus’ greatest data need and field tested with the school’s population, by the master teacher. Implementation of the school-based student strategy is rolled out with weekly coaching

and support from the school’s leadership team. Another important aspect of the TAP system is that teacher evaluations are followed by one-on-one coaching sessions that name a refinement and reinforcement linked to the rubrics that outline effective teaching practices. The scores from the evaluation and the specific refinement/reinforcement are tracked in a data bank and these campus trends are also used to plan the weekly professional development sessions (NIET). In this way, there is continued instruction given on the effective teaching practices that teachers are used in teacher evaluations. This instruction is embedded and aligned to the student strategy learning as reflected in Table 1.

Table 1

Core Elements of a TAP Evaluation System

Element	Description
Multiple career paths	Career teachers can apply to become a master or mentor teacher. These positions receive additional compensation for training, coaching, and evaluating teachers. Additionally, they serve on the building’s leadership team.
Ongoing professional training	Weekly cluster meetings are held on site, led by master and mentor.
Instructionally focused accountability	Coaching follows each training meeting as teachers implement what was presented.
Performance based compensation	Teachers are observed and evaluated in their classrooms 3-4 times a year. These classroom evaluations are complemented by analyzing student achievement growth.

Source. National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (2015)

Summary of Chapter 2

Teacher evaluation is an important topic as teacher evaluation plans are required for school funding. This chapter began with an overview of how education has become the focus of federal policy and funding; and as a result, change has come to teacher evaluation as a tool for measuring effectiveness. These changes have required adjustment from teachers. This study solicited the perceptions of teachers about their current evaluation system. This chapter outlined the background of the problem that occurred with changes in teacher evaluation systems and linked this study to conceptual frameworks of Maslow (1954) and Kirkpatrick (1987). Finally, a review of literature was presented. The review began with the ineffectiveness of past teacher evaluation systems. As state, district, and school leaders adjusted evaluation programs, teachers were required to adjust. Teachers' perceptions were researched, and it was noted that teachers respond to change in four predictable stages. Next, fixed mindsets and growth mindsets were explored in teacher responses. Understanding how change impacts teachers is an important consideration of education leaders. This requires time and patience. There are two main types of evaluation in this study—clinical and developmental. The power of the developmental approach was outlined and standards-based approaches were highlighted. Conditions for positive perceptions in teachers were outlined. Finally, an evaluation system, TAP, was described. It is important for educational leaders to understand teacher perceptions of their evaluation systems and in doing so, leaders can meet the demands of the accountability system and also contribute to the teacher's desire for professional growth. The result is increased job satisfaction and these conditions will have a positive impact on student achievement.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to gain an understanding of the teachers' perceptions of the teacher evaluation process in Midwestern Indiana. Teachers in the United States have experienced great change in the last 10 years (Darling-Hammond, 2013). These changes include shifts in state standards, increased student testing, and introduction of merit pay or value added models (VAM). As well, teachers have experienced great increase in accountability related to their job evaluations (Papay, 2012). This chapter outlines the methodology of the study including the research question, purpose and design, research population and sampling method, and the sources of data to be used. Finally, the limitation, assumptions, and delimitations of the proposed study are listed.

Statement of the Problem

There is limited research about teacher's perceptions of the evaluation process. Because Indiana districts face significant changes in teacher evaluation processes, this study provides information about how teachers perceive these changes. Indiana's education changes are similar to the changes facing other states in the United States. These changes began in 2001 with the introduction of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002). This legislation focused on teacher accountability and the academic success of all students as measured by a school's adequate yearly progress (USDOE, 2002). NCLB held four mandates: (a) teacher accountability for student achievement, (b) state autonomy to develop accountability systems, (c) educator's use of best practices in the classroom, and (d) parent choice of schools (USDOE, 2002). In response to these mandates, states and districts developed accountability systems to align with NCLB mandates and attempted to realign their curriculum to meet newly implemented state standards,

create standardized assessments, and heighten certification requirements for teachers so that all teachers were highly qualified (DuFour et al., 2008). This precipitated an increased curricular rigor (Mathis, 2004) and brought shifts in most instructional practices (Neill, 2006).

The deadline for having all United States students to proficient and thus NCLB was 2014. When data showed that this would not be possible, the USDOE initiated the reauthorization of the NCLB in 2011 and the Obama administration offered states flexibility from the original NCLB mandates. This led to states receiving federal flexibility waivers and designing their own accountability practices and programs (Ayers et al., 2012; USDOE, 2015). This was the case for the state and district of this study. The teacher evaluation system used in the school of this study was the TAP.

Research Question

This study focused on perceptions of teachers regarding the evaluation process at their school and the impact they perceived it has had on their teaching. The researcher sought to answer this question:

How do teachers perceive the teacher evaluation process in a Midwestern TAP school?

Research Methodology

Qualitative research inquiry was the method chosen for this study based on the objective to capture in-depth and detailed explanatory data on the perspectives (views and reflections) and understandings within a specific setting (Yin, 2014). This method helped the researcher study the natural context of the participant and empower the participant by giving them a voice (Creswell, 2013). Creswell explained that qualitative researchers keep a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about a problem or issue.

The researcher used qualitative research method in order to understand how teachers perceived the evaluation system used in this stage of their careers (Creswell, 2014). It is generalizable for other teachers in this district adapting to the evaluation changes under the provisions of the new policy in a Midwestern district (Yin, 2014). A qualitative methodology was employed for this study because it was the most appropriate paradigm to explore the experiences of teachers and obtain an understanding of the perspectives of the participants. Qualitative research recognizes the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in their interaction with the world (Creswell, 2014).

Purpose and Design of the Proposed Study

The purpose of this study was to explore teacher perceptions of the TAP evaluation system used in some Indiana schools as well as in other states. According to Ladd (2016), if a “teacher evaluation system aims to improve practice and identify areas for professional growth, it is important to understand teachers' perceptions on the new system” (p. ii). Since Indiana districts face significant changes in teacher evaluation processes, this study provides information about how teachers perceive these changes. Indiana’s education changes are similar to the changes facing other states in the United States. These changes began in 2001 with the introduction of the NCLB act. This legislation focused on teacher accountability and the academic success of all students as measured by a school’s adequate yearly progress. (USDOE, 2002). NCLB held four mandates: (a) teacher accountability for student achievement, (b) state autonomy to develop accountability systems, (c) educator’s use of best practices in the classroom, and (d) parent choice of schools (USDOE, 2002). In response to these mandates, states and districts developed accountability systems to align with NCLB mandates and attempted to realign their curriculum to meet newly implemented state standards, create

standardized assessments, and heighten certification requirements for teachers so that all teachers were highly qualified (DuFour et al., 2008). This precipitated an increased curricular rigor (Mathis, 2015) and brought shifts in most instructional practices (Neill, 2006).

When data showed that it would not be possible to literally have no child left behind by 2014, the USDOE initiated the reauthorization of the NCLB in 2011, and the Obama administration offered states flexibility from the original NCLB mandates. This led to states receiving federal flexibility waivers and designing their own accountability practices and programs (USDOE, 2015). This was the case for the state and district of this study. The teacher evaluation system used in the school district of this study was the TAP.

This qualitative case study allowed the researcher to explore the teacher evaluation problem from the point of view of the teachers. Yin (2014) explained that a case study enables researchers to conduct an exploration from an angle that is both holistic and real-world. The researcher collected data through interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups.

A strategy for gathering data for this case study was developed by following a process designed by Creswell (2013). The goal of Creswell's process is to help a researcher to visualize the activities in the process of collecting data for a qualitative case study. The activities include locating individuals, gain access and establishing rapport, purposefully sampling, collecting data, recording information, resolving field issues, and storing data (Creswell, 2013).

This qualitative case study design contextualized experiences of teachers through statements, meanings, and a general description of their perceptions. Qualitative research methods rely on the interpretations of the researcher within multiple frameworks to explore human experiences (Jackson, 2010). These explorations frequently take place in the setting of the participant and with tools that allow for immersion into the participant's world (Creswell,

2012; Jackson, 2010). In contrast, ethnography and grounded theory employ elements outside the lived experiences of participants to examine issues; therefore, their application to this study would not be as effective (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010).

Research Population and Sampling Method

The population for this study included educators from a Midwestern school district in Indiana. This urban district included 10 schools and employed 439 career teachers, 47 mentor teachers, and 16 master teachers. The diverse student population included approximately one third English language learners. Most of these language learners were Latino students. Career teacher participants were selected using a random purposeful sampling procedure (Creswell, 2013).

Creswell (2013) suggested that researchers include five to 25 individuals who have experienced the subject of their study. The sample size consisted of 13 educators who had been employed in the district no fewer than two years and were currently employed in the system. Additionally, interviewees must have worked at least two years under the TAP evaluation system. Initial invitation to participate in this study was sent by email to a random group of educators who taught kindergarten through Grade 12 in the district. The first 12 who responded and met the above listed requirements became participants.

Sources of Data

Data gathering for case study research needs to focus on an individual's perceptions, in this case the teacher's perception of his or her current evaluation system. This was done using questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. Teachers in the sample group were provided opportunities to explore, discuss, and openly share their lived experiences and perceptions related to experiences with their current evaluation program.

Permission was requested to send a mass email to all teachers in the 10 school district from the superintendent of the district. Once permission was granted, an introductory email to potential participants from the College Institutional Research Department (Appendix A) was sent. Following that email, another one was sent inviting career teachers to participate by completing the attached questionnaire (Appendix B). The first 12 career teachers to respond who met the participant requirements were selected. Participant requirements included at least two years teaching under the TAP evaluation system in the district of study.

Initial data collection was conducted by use of questionnaire (Appendix C). The goal of this tool was to gather initial information about the participant. This included demographic information and the best and worst times to contact the participant. Also included was questions regarding the teachers' tenure and teaching assignment. Finally, teachers were asked one question about their overall perceptions and attitudes about the TAP evaluation process.

After the questionnaires were returned, the researcher selected the first 12 to respond who met the criteria listed. Selected participants were contacted via telephone (Appendix D) to set up an interview appointment. The study was described to the potential participants during this phone call and the process of building rapport began. This phone call also served to answer any questions that potential participants might have had. All potential participants were informed that as potential participants, they could choose to proceed or withdraw. The goal was to have a minimum of 10 participants.

Next, data were collected from face-to-face interviews with a semi-structured design. Interviews followed the established interview protocol (Appendix E) and began with the informed consent form (Appendix F). The researcher gave participants contact information in case they wanted to get in touch after the meeting. An explanation of the purpose of the study

was reviewed; this was followed by the terms of confidentiality, explanation of the format, and expected time frame. Finally, participants were asked if they had any questions before the interview began. All conversations were audio recorded and periodically checked throughout the interview to ensure proper recording was taking place.

Seidman (2006) outlined a procedure researchers should use for interviews where the participant is placed in the center of the research as the most important focus. According to Seidman (2006), face-to-face interviews are powerful in the insight they afford the researcher about the actual experiences of participants. In this semi-structured design, the researcher began each interview with this standard question, “How have your experiences with the TAP teacher evaluation process influenced, or not influenced, you as a teacher?” This initial question was followed by one or more individually tailored questions to get clarification or to probe for further understanding of the response given by the participant. The following questions were then asked:

1. Compare your experiences with this evaluation process (TAP) to a prior evaluation process you experienced.
2. Explain any training you received regarding the TAP evaluation tool used in your evaluation.
3. What happens before, during, and after an evaluation in the TAP evaluation process?
4. How knowledgeable are you regarding the TAP evaluation rubric used in your evaluations?
5. What makes this evaluation tool a valid or invalid measure of your teaching?
6. How do you know that your evaluator is knowledgeable or not knowledgeable about the rubric used in your evaluation?

7. Tell about how your teaching has or has not changed as a result of the TAP evaluation process. Give specific examples.
8. Given the current state mandates regarding teacher evaluation, and in keeping with them, is there anything you wish your district would adjust with your current evaluation system?
9. Dweck (2007) explained that one's mindset about learning is connected to how feedback will be perceived and utilized. She explained that one has a fixed mindset (I know what I know and cannot change) or growth mindset (I can always improve and grow and change). Which mindset do you most naturally have? Has this evaluation process impacted or not impacted your mindset?

Per Creswell (2013), interviews between the researcher and participant made up some, if not all, of the qualitative data analysis. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format. This provided necessary guidelines and aided in consistency of themes. This also allowed the participant and the researcher to explore related topics and patterns that emerged within the basic questions. Interviews lasted a minimum of approximately 45 minutes and no longer than 60 minutes.

Following each interview, all data were transcribed, coded, and interpreted. Data that were audio taped were transcribed and coded in accordance to the accepted practices of qualitative research for education as described below. The coding system was used to link participant responses to the research question, "How do teachers in a Midwestern TAP school perceive the evaluation process?" The following steps were followed: (a) define the unit of analysis—word, sentence, phrase, piece or chunk of information; (b) develop coding framework; (c) reduce the data to cancel identical statements; (d) develop a system of categories using

inductive or deductive procedure; (e) assign data to categories (code the data); and (f) revise coding based on data (encode and recode).

Upon receiving permission to conduct research (Appendix J) an initial invitation was sent to all potential participants in the study. The first 15 candidates to respond, who met the criteria, agreed to questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. Groups were randomly divided and an email was sent to set up a group meeting time (Appendix G). The purpose of the focus groups was to gain deeper understanding of teachers' perceptions through their conversations with each other. Two focus groups with five participating teachers were held in the researcher's office. This provided a practitioner's perspective to the phenomenon of teacher evaluation and its possible impact on the teacher's job satisfaction. The data gathered in focus groups were used in triangulation with the questionnaire data and the interview data. The informed consent form (Appendix I) was prepared and taken to the focus group and confidentiality of all members was stressed. A list of pre-planned semi-structured questions were used that were similar to the interview questions and connected to the research question, "How do teachers in a Midwestern TAP school perceive the evaluation process?" The researcher was the moderator as well as the study's researcher. Specific questions were crafted before focus groups were held and the researcher attempted to limit them to one topic per meeting. General questions were asked before specific questions, and positive questions were asked before negative ones.

Focus groups followed the established protocol (Appendix H). They began with individual self-introductions followed by an explanation of the purpose of the study, the terms of confidentiality, an explanation of the format, and the expected time frame. Specific conversation patterns were outlined and followed: one person talked at a time and rotated for first responders. If someone wanted to add to what a participant had shared, indication were made by raising the

hand. There was opportunity for passing on a question by any participant at any time during the focus group discussion. Any participant could cease participation at any time during the focus group without penalty. Participants were given the researcher's contact information for the interview in case they wanted to get in touch after the meeting. Finally, participants were asked if they had any questions before the group began. Everything was recorded and periodically checked throughout the focus group to ensure proper recording took place. All focus groups followed a prescribed list of open-ended questions (Appendix H).

Following each focus group, all data were transcribed, coded, and interpreted. The following steps were followed: (a) defined the unit of analysis: word, sentence, phrase, piece, or chunk of information; (b) developed coding framework; (c) reduced the data to cancel identical statements; (d) developed a system of categories using inductive or deductive procedure; (e) assigned data to categories (code the data); and (f) revised coding based on data (encode and recode).

Pseudonyms were used in transcribing the focus group conversations and all transcribing was done by me. Transcriptions were made available to participants and they were given opportunity to make revisions or deletions. A clear timeline was set for the participants' feedback.

Limitations, Assumptions, and Delimitations

Four limitations were present in this study.

1. The first limitation was the limit of the sample size. One Midwestern school district, 10 schools, all participated in one teacher evaluation system, and 10 participants of those schools were selected for the study. The goal of this study was to provide a voice for teachers in regard to the new evaluation systems being used in their state;

- this study sacrificed quantity for depth and quality. The primary intention of this study was to better understand the perceptions of teachers regarding teacher evaluation, not to quantify it.
2. The second limitation of the study was confidentiality and rapport. Every effort was made to build trust and provide confidentiality; yet it could not be guaranteed when several participants were present in the focus groups. Although having a positive rapport between a researcher and participants is beneficial, this varies according to who volunteers and who is selected for the study. Every effort was made to not let this limitation become a major concern.
 3. A third limitation was that each of the 10 schools involved in the study were led by a different master teacher (a master teacher plans professional development and oversees the evaluation process as well as the teacher support). These master teachers vary in their expertise and skill in instructional coaching; this expertise may have altered the perceptions of the teachers with whom they work. It was important to give attention to this within the study and correlate variations to specific buildings.
 4. A fourth limitation was the bias of the researcher. The prejudices and attitudes of a researcher can bias the data if precautions are not taken. This can happen when the researcher interprets the responses from participants in interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups. There must be an intent to stay neutral, and even then there remains a possibility that personal bias might influence the study. Recognition of this potential limitation helped the researcher to focus on being as neutral as possible during the course of the study.

The researcher assumed that the randomly selected participants in this study represented the greater teacher population of their district. It was assumed that participants answered honestly. Confidentiality was upheld and participants were made aware of their option to withdraw from the study at any time with no ramifications. It was assumed that the researcher's inferences fairly and accurately represented the participants. Transcripts of all conversations were made available to participants, and they were invited to adjust, clarify, or add to the written conversations.

The following delimitations were within the researcher's control. Delimiting factors included the choice of the research questions and the population chosen to investigate. Other related problems could have been chosen in relation to teacher evaluation but were rejected so that the study could focus on teacher perceptions. Other related problems for another researcher might be the perceptions and/or training of the evaluator and the mindset of the evaluator.

Ethical Issues of the Research Design

Permission was sought from the superintendent of the district where participants were employed. Informed consent forms were utilized for all participants. The consent form stated that participants had certain rights of review, agreed to be involved in the study, and acknowledged that their rights were protected. Anonymity of all participants was protected by numbering the returned questionnaires and keeping the responses confidential. Respondents were given an alias for the description and for reporting results. All study data, including the questionnaire forms, interview tapes, and transcripts were kept in a secure location for the duration of the study and will be destroyed after two years. Summaries of the data may be shared but are not traceable to individual participants.

Summary

This chapter outlined the details for a qualitative research study that sought to answer the central research question, how do teachers in a Midwestern TAP school perceive the evaluation process? The proposed steps in this chapter informed the reader of the details of the study including methodology, design, population, sampling, sources of data, and data collection as well as analysis of the data, a discussion of possible limitations, and ethical issues. This steps outlined in this chapter were followed by the researcher in addressing the central research question.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of career teachers regarding the current evaluation system used in their district. The implementation of the teacher evaluation program was studied from 13 teachers' perspectives. These teachers varied in years of experience, content taught, and grade taught. The specific evaluation system used in the setting of this study was the TAP program. TAP is also used in some other Indiana schools as well as in other states.

As most states face new or revised teacher evaluation expectations for federal funding (Darling-Hammond, 2013), teachers are adjusting to new ways of measuring their effectiveness. The researcher noted limited research on how teachers perceived these changes in their evaluation processes. This study addressed this gap in literature by exploring the topic from the career teacher's point of view. Since Indiana districts faced significant changes in teacher evaluation processes, this study will provide information about how teachers perceived these changes. Indiana's education changes are not unique to Indiana (Darling-Hammond, 2013).

The setting for this qualitative study was a Midwestern school district in Indiana. This urban district included 10 schools and employed 439 career teachers, 47 mentor teachers, 16 master teachers, and one district executive master teacher. The diverse student population included approximately one-third ELLs. Most of these language learners were Latino students. Career teacher participants were selected using a random purposeful sampling procedure (Creswell, 2013). Data collection involved scheduling individual interviews, focus group discussions, and providing questionnaires. The sample size for the interviews consisted of 13 participants.

This study used a qualitative case study research design to answer the research question that framed the study. The following research question was used to guide the process of data collection and to fulfill the purpose of the study, how do teachers in a Midwestern TAP school perceive the evaluation process?

Chapter 4 begins with descriptive data, followed by the data analysis procedure. The chapter includes the presentation of the results, which are based on the research question of the study. Finally, Chapter 4 concludes with a summary.

Descriptive Data

For this study, teachers were selected from one district only. Participants for the study were selected using a random purposeful sampling procedure (Creswell, 2013). An initial email was sent to all teachers in the district by the superintendent of schools, inviting them to participate. Each interested candidate answered a brief questionnaire about demographics and gave one general overall description statement of the TAP evaluation process. The questionnaire consisted of three questions (Appendix C). Criteria for being selected as a participant in this study included two years teaching experience in the district and two years under the TAP evaluation process. The first 15 teachers to respond who met this criterion were selected as participants. These individuals were contacted by email and a date and time was agreed upon for interviews. Two participants dropped out of the study due to scheduling conflicts. The sample size for the individual interviews consisted of 13 participants, ranging in years of experience from two to 42 and in grades taught from kindergarten to high school. General education, special education, and related arts teachers were included in the sample. Both men and women were represented. Table 2 reflects a summary of demographic data for the participants in the individual interviews. Individual interviews were held face-to-face, one-on-one. Following the

interviews, these same participants were randomly divided into groups of five and eight to make up the two focus groups. Data were collected and transformed into transcripts for both the individual interviews and focus group discussions. All transcripts were then returned to participants with a request to edit and revise input and return to me.

To collect data and answer the research question that guided this study, an individual interview with each teacher was conducted with the use of a planned guide consisting of 10 questions (Appendix E). All interviews were held in the researcher’s private office. The average time of each interview was approximately 30 minutes. The interviews were conducted for a total of 6.36 hours, and produced 68 double-spaced transcript pages.

Table 2

Demographic Data for the Individual Interview Participants

Demographic	<i>N</i> = 13	Percentage Breakdown
Type of Teacher		
General Education	10	77%
Special Education	1	8%
Related Arts	2	15%
Gender		
Male Participant	3	23%
Female Participant	10	77%
Level		
Elementary	10	77%
Middle School	1	8%
High School	2	15%
Years of Teaching Experience		
Under 5 years	2	15%
5-10 years	5	38%
11-20 years	2	15%
Above 20 years	4	32%

To collect data and answer the research question that guided this study, two focus group discussions were conducted. The sample for the focus group discussions and the sample for the individual interviews was made up of the same 13 participants. These discussions were conducted with the use of an interview guide consisting of five questions (Appendix F). The discussions were held in the conference room at the researcher's place of employment. The two focus group discussions were conducted for a total of 1.75 hours and produced 26 double-spaced transcript pages. One of the focus groups was composed of five teachers, and the other focus group consisted of eight teachers as the participants.

Data Analysis Procedures

After participants were selected, interviews and focus groups were scheduled. All interviews were recorded and transcribed into transcripts. The researcher sent the transcripts to participants for proofing and editing. Upon their return, the researcher coded the transcripts in NVivo software for organization and analysis of the data. The data was coded in NVivo in a systematic method, and the researcher's personal judgement was the key factor in the analysis of the data. The researcher developed the process of coding, the use of words and the definition of the words, based on the researcher's understanding of the words, experiences, and their context. The first coding was open coding as the researcher read through each interview and coded all positive and negative perceptions of the teacher evaluation process. Open coding also allowed the researcher to identify patterns that formed categories. The first two broad categories were positive and negative perceptions. Table 3 shows the number of positive to negative perceptions for each participant. This initial coding revealed 111 comments that showed positive perceptions of TAP and 93 comments that showed negative perceptions. One hundred percent of the participants shared at least one positive and all but one participant shared at least one negative

perception of TAP. One theme under positive perceptions was the positive impact that TAP has had on the participants’ teaching. One hundred percent of participants reported that their teaching had been impacted positively by the TAP process. Another theme was the mention of the TAP rubric and the participants’ positive regard for the common language and the common vision for effective teaching that it brought. The researcher noted themes within the negative perceptions. Specifically, subjectivity and inconsistency of scoring was a concern repeated by participants. Additionally, the stress that the evaluation system has caused teachers was a noted theme.

Table 3

Perceptions of TAP

Participant	Positive Comments	Negative Comments
Teacher 1	13	3
Teacher 2	9	0
Teacher 3	10	1
Teacher 4	9	8
Teacher 5	7	8
Teacher 6	12	4
Teacher 7	6	13
Teacher 8	7	5
Teacher 9	4	10
Teacher 10	8	15
Teacher 11	10	5
Teacher 12	6	5
Teacher 13	9	16
Total	111	93

The second round of coding was conducted by reading through all positive comments and tagging all that referred to change and/or impact to teaching that resulted from the evaluation process. This second analysis revealed 43 references of how teaching had been positively impacted by the TAP process. One hundred percent of participants reported that their teaching

had been positively impacted by the TAP evaluation process. Participants' responses did not vary with years of experience.

Next, all suggestions for district leaders regarding the evaluation process or desires for specific changes in the process were identified and coded. This analysis showed 76 suggestions/warnings regarding the evaluation system. Some of these comments were found within the negative perceptions, and others were found outside of the negative perceptions and could be regarded as general cautions. Thus, this theme was renamed *cautions*. This title encompassed both positive and negative cautions and became an important piece that represented the participants' perception of the evaluation process.

Finally, a word and phrase frequency was done to further understand trends in the data. An open word frequency was done. This helped the researcher to see the 100 most dominant words used in the interviews. The words *score* and *stress*, both connected to trends in the negative perception data, were listed fewer times than *rubric* and *growth* and both connected to trends in positive perception data. The frequency of the word *mindset* led the researcher to then analyze data regarding the participants' self-perception of their own mindset. Dweck (2007) explained that one's mindset about learning is connected to how feedback will be perceived and utilized. Participants were asked if they most naturally had a fixed or growth mindset. Further, each participant was asked if the TAP evaluation system impacted his or her mindset. Ten participants reported having a growth mindset, and nine of those 10 reported that TAP had impacted their mindset. Table 4 displays the mindset data.

Table 4

Self-Perceived Mindset of Participants

Self-Perceived Mindset	<i>N</i> = 13	Percentage Breakdown
Mindset		
Growth	10	77%
Fixed	1	8%
Both	2	15%
Mindset impacted by TAP		
Yes	9	70%
No	2	15%
Unsure	2	15%

The following outline explains the steps used in the process of coding and analyzing the data for this study. Coding was done exclusively by me. The coding was done in a four step process that included: initial read through, open coding, research question review and code connection, and completion of coding.

Initial read through. The researcher began by carefully reading through and reviewing each transcript from the individual interviews and focus group discussions. This afforded the researcher an opportunity to read through the raw data to gain an overall understanding of each individual participants' view and how it fit into the whole study. In this initial read through, the researcher developed ideas that led to the themes and trends from the participants. This overall understanding of the whole group of input allowed the researcher to determine how the data should be organized and coded.

Open software coding. The researcher used open coding to analyze the data, which allowed the researcher to place the data into categories. Each transcript from the individual interviews and focus group discussions was read line-by-line. The researcher highlighted the

transcripts during the line-by-line analysis, initially coding the positive and negative perceptions. Open coding into these two opposing views allowed the researcher to quantify the number of positive to negative perceptions. The researcher coded 111 positive perceptions and 93 negative perceptions. Next, patterns that formed sub-categories within these two broad categories were also identified. The researcher made connections between the categories and sub-categories. Two sub-themes or trends emerged from each of the two initial categories. Overall, four thematic categories emerged from the two main open categories of positive perceptions and negative perceptions. They were (a) impact and changes to teaching practices, (b) TAP rubric, (c) subjectivity and inconsistency of scores, and (d) stress. A fifth thematic category emerged from both the positive and negative perceptions. It was first named (e) suggestions and warnings regarding continued practice, and then renamed (e) caution. This final category contained important pieces of data that helped answer the research question. These themes are described further in the Results section of this chapter.

Research question review and code connection. The research question was reviewed. The list of open codes that was developed from the line-by-line analysis of the transcript were evaluated based on their connection to the research question and potential for contributing to its answer. The researcher evaluated each code on its connection to the research question, and if it was not closely enough related to the research question, it was set aside. One open code that was discarded at this point was participants' perceptions of state and federal mandates. Although it was noted that state and federal mandates had influenced the evaluation system being used, the data did not specifically answer the research question.

Completion of coding. In the final stage of the coding and analysis process, the researcher synthesized the input of all participants and asked questions of the data. This led to

drawing conclusions, and ultimately uncovering the answer to the research question from within the data. The answer is outlined in the Results section of this chapter.

Results

This section contains the presentation of the results of the collected data. The organization of the results is based on the research question of the study. Illustrative figures and direct quotes from the participants are used to strengthen the presentation of the results. To satisfy the purpose of the study, the following research question was addressed and used to report the findings that follow: How do teachers in a Midwestern TAP school perceive the evaluation process?

To answer this research question, open coding was used to analyze the data. The researcher used open coding to compare, conceptualize, and place the data into categories. The list of open codes was composed from analysis of all interviews and then those same codes were used to analyze all focus group discussions and questionnaires. The open codes allowed the researcher to compare the transcripts based on their similarities and relationships with each other. The researcher completed this work using NVivo software which allowed for line-by-line analysis, naming of codes, and organization of data. A parent code was created for both positive and negative perceptions. The researcher used the terms parent code and child code within NVivo to refer to main themes and sub-themes. These parent codes represented a broad category of interrelated ideas or information. Codes that would fit within the parent codes were child codes and these allowed the researcher to place subthemes within the broader categories. Parent codes that were originally generated in the first round of open coding stage were then subsumed to the appropriate thematic category based on similarities in content.

Through listening, transcribing, analyzing, coding, and then analyzing the responses and revisions from participants, five thematic categories emerged. They were (a) impact and changes to teaching practices, (b) TAP rubric, (c) subjectivity and inconsistency of scores, (d) stress, and (e) caution and suggestions. These thematic categories are described and explored in the following section.

Impacts and changes to teaching. The first thematic category that was developed as a child code to the parent code of positive perceptions was labeled impacts and changes to teaching. This theme related to the research question; 100% of participants reported that their teaching had improved since implementing the TAP process. There were 54 references to improvement coded within the data which made up the largest child code under positive perceptions. This thematic category pertained to how the teachers perceived their work to have changed since the implementation of the TAP process. When asked if their teaching had been impacted by TAP and if so, how, most of the participants described the impact by listing specific areas of effective teaching practices that had changed. The impact to lesson targets and learning goals in instruction emerged as the most widely perceived impact on participants' teaching. Some participants listed more general statements, such as, "It has made me a better teacher. I would not be where I am without TAP, I have seen growth," and "The TAP evaluation process has helped me learn and embrace best teaching practices; with every observation I feel I grow a little more as a teacher." Some participants, although admitting that TAP has made them a better teacher, wanted to clarify that they old system of evaluation made them feel better about themselves, "It felt a lot better, but I am not sure it improved my teaching like the current system,"

The participants attributed the impacts and changes in their teaching to several factors within the TAP structure beyond just the evaluation. Those included weekly cluster professional development meetings, pre-conferences and post-conferences before and after observations, other coaching conversations, the TAP rubric, and the common language and vision that TAP afforded. Table 5 shows the specific areas of teaching that participants listed as having been impacted by TAP.

Table 5

TAP Impacts on Teaching

Specific Impact	Number of References
Area impacted	
Lesson goal/target	10
Lesson structure	7
Lesson assessment	7
Standards and objectives	3
Visuals/presentation of content	5
Expectations	3
Academic Feedback	4
Grouping	6
Questioning	4
Differentiating for all	3
Thinking	2
Total	54

TAP rubric. The second thematic category that was developed in relation to the research question was labeled the TAP rubric. This thematic category was a child code under the parent code of positive perceptions. This category pertained to the high regard that participants expressed for the evaluation rubric. Many of the participants referred to the common language that came to their building through the training on, and use of, the rubric. According to

participants, “with the rubric, came a common vision for effective teaching practices.” The areas of impact listed in Table 6 are indicators or descriptors from the TAP rubric. When asked during the two focus group discussions what the best part of the TAP evaluation process had been, the participants referenced the rubric 10 different times. One participant said,

I think the rubric gives us a common language. When you get feedback, it isn’t generic, we know the same language now, the parts of the rubric, and we have studied them together so when they say here is where you are doing well and here is where you need to grow, we know what that means and what that looks like.

Another teacher contributed, “I love that this rubric is so specific, not only under categories but there is an exact description in the rubric of what it is you are doing well and what your next step might be.” Finally, “I would not be where I am today as a teacher without that rubric” connects the TAP rubric to this participant’s positive perceptions of teaching. Table 6 presents 10 references regarding the TAP rubric made during the focus group discussions. There were no negative perceptions shared about the rubric.

Table 6

TAP Rubric References Made by Participants in Focus Group Discussions

Participant	Comment
Focus Group A	
Teacher 6	The most helpful part was the TAP rubric, learning from the rubric was helpful.
Teacher 10	The best part of TAP encompasses the rubric within a relationship, I think with the rubric we kind of have a common ground or common language to talk about our teaching.
Teacher 13	The rubric is based on a common language around best practice. I like that it has made me a better person. It keeps me on my toes.
Teacher 8	I think the TAP rubric fits with higher expectations for students.
Focus Group B	
Teacher 9	I love that the rubric is so specific not only under categories but there is exact description in the rubric of what it is you are doing well and what your next step might be.
Teacher 12	I appreciate the rubric. It helps keep me focused. The rubric has kept me organized. My lesson plans are better. Classes flow better and more is accomplished. I love that rubric.
Teacher 2	The rubric gives us a common language. When you get feedback it isn't generic, we know the same language the parts and we have studied them together so when they say here is where you are doing well and here is where you need to grow, we know what that means and what that looks like.
Teacher 7	It's as good a rubric as you can get for such a subjective action as teaching and as we get better at understanding it and implementing it, I think the whole process gets better and smoother.
Teacher 1	The rubric has made me a better teacher. It's all a part of who you are right now and I can't imagine doing it without the rubric. That has been the good part of it.

Table 6 (continued)

Participant	Comment
Teacher 4	I have definitely become a better teacher because of the rubric, just learning how connected it all is and how standards and objectives are connected to presenting instructional content and that's connected to expectations and on and on. That has made a tremendous impact on me as a teacher and on what I look for in student work.
Total	10

Subjectivity and inconsistency in scoring. The third thematic category that was developed in relation to the research question was labeled subjectivity and inconsistency in scoring. This thematic category was a child code under the parent code of negative perceptions. This category pertained to teachers' perceptions of their evaluation scores across time and their perceptions of inconsistencies across the district, between buildings. Within their TAP implementation, teachers are evaluated by administrators, master teachers, and mentor teachers. If teachers have three evaluations per year, one is done by each of the above. First and second year teachers and those on an improvement plan have four evaluations per year and the fourth is done by the administrator. All other teachers can opt for a fourth evaluation if they want it, and it will be done by the administrator. Table 7 shows the breakdown of various perception discrepancies in this theme.

Table 7

Perceptions of Subjectivity and Inconsistency in Scoring

Perception	Number of References
Individual scoring discrepancies	8
Inconsistency between observers	3
Inconsistency over time	5
District scoring discrepancies	3
Inconsistency between buildings	3

Stress. The researcher developed the fourth thematic category in relation to the research question and labeled it stress. This thematic category was a child code under the parent code of negative perceptions. This child code was the largest subcategory of negative perceptions. This category pertained to teachers' self-reflection of their own physical and emotional responses to the evaluation system. Figure 1 displays the two largest contributors of stress, which according to the participants' perception was (a) the scores or the evaluation events, and (b) the rate or pace of learning and expectation of implementation change. Both categories are described in the Findings section of this chapter.

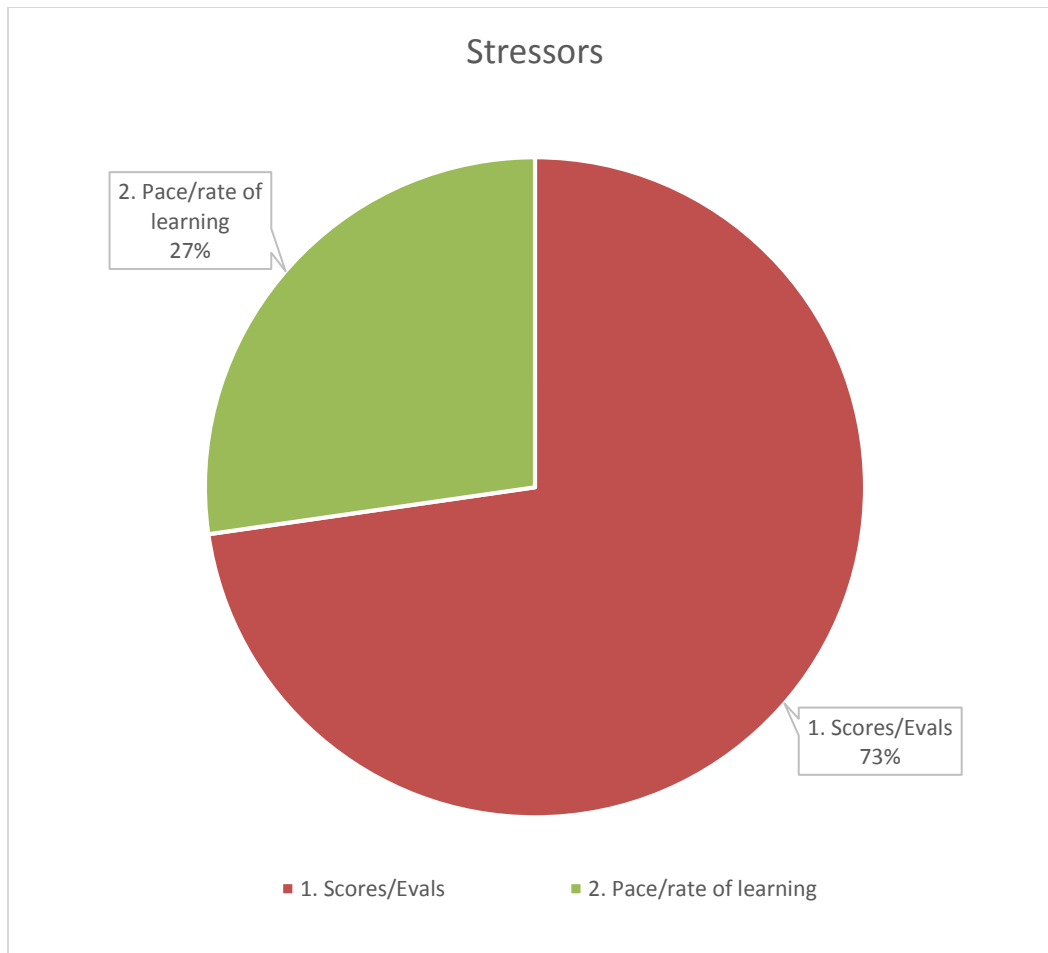


Figure 1. Stressors

Cautions and suggestions. The fifth and final thematic category that was developed in relation to the research question was labeled cautions and suggestions. Unlike the previous four categories, this thematic category did not come solely from negative perceptions or positive perceptions. This category pertained to teachers’ desire to give input to their district leaders regarding the evaluation process. Each interview and focus group closed with the open question, “Is there anything else you wish your district knew or understood about your perceptions of this evaluation system?” One hundred percent of participants were willing to give suggestions and cautions about the future of the TAP implementation. Cautions and suggestions are reflected in Table 8.

Table 8

Subcategories of Start, Stop, Continue, and Consider

Start	Stop	Continue	Consider
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Non-general educations evaluations done by someone trained in like content. 2. Related arts cluster with those in like content. 3. More consideration for non-general education teachers' job requirements so that the evaluation mirrors their job. 4. Leadership teams need to talk more about what they are learning regarding the rubric so that career teachers can grow along. 5. Find more ways to honor teachers' hard work, aside from evaluation and scores. 6. Find ways to compensate for the student variable factor in evaluations. 7. Find ways to make the requirements and training for masters and mentors more known to those they supervise. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stop peer evaluations. 2. Take numbers out of the evaluation process. 3. Stop having evaluations done by those who cannot follow up, both before and after the evaluations (administrators). 4. Stop pulling teachers from students to evaluate and coach. It is too taxing on students to have frequent guest teachers. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Let's keep TAP, adjusting it now would be too stressful. 2. Keep peer evaluations. 3. Keep a variety of evaluators. 4. Keep hiring masters who have a variety of grade level teaching experiences. 5. Keep a district coach to aid in consensus across the district. 6. Continue to grow and change the rubric as we learn more. 7. Our strategies have become more flexible and easier to overlay and apply to any content area. Continue this trend. 8. Masters have gotten better at differentiating for all students. Continue this trend. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider more opportunities for feedback on the evaluation process. 2. We need more coaching opportunities. 3. Consider a slower pace for new learning. 4. Consider fewer evaluations, especially for above proficient teachers. 5. Consider shorter unannounced windows. 6. Consider the discrepancy between Elementary teachers who plan up to 6 different lessons and day and High School where the same content is taught several times a day. Compensate Elementary teachers by shortening unannounced window or stating which content will be evaluated. 7. Consider the stress caused by moving someone into the next window when scheduling didn't work out. 8. Consider the cost. Is there another program that cost less and gets the same results? 9. Consider the stress. 10. Consider taking the 5's out of the rubric and converting it to a 3 or 4 point scale.

Within participants' suggestions and cautions, the researcher was able to further categorize into four subcategories: (a) start, (b) stop, (c) continue, and (d) consider. There was a common theme regarding the need for school leaders to continue to look for ways to affirm teachers outside of their evaluations and data. Coding cautions and suggestions made the researcher aware of the discrepancies among teacher perceptions. What some participants wanted to change, others wanted to continue. An example of this follows regarding the dynamic nature of the understanding of the rubric. Some participants suggested it needs to stay consistent over time, and others valued the shifting and considered it evidence of growth. In a focus group discussion one teacher said, "Can we continue to grow and change the rubric as we learn more? I hope so." Another participant suggested that the changing target was demotivating, and a third linked the changing target to cause for nervousness,

Evolution of understanding is good, but it has to be the whole staff. And you have to trust. Some things I did earlier would not have scored as high as what they will now with our current TLT's [TAP leadership team's] understanding, because they are using a different lens now. What makes people nervous is not the rubric but our [their changing] interpretation of it.

Another discrepancy among participants was about who should be doing the evaluations. Some participants shared their displeasure with peer evaluations and others preferred those over administrators because the relationship was deeper and more authentic, and those peers were currently in the classroom so that their teaching advice was more applicable. A common concern was that administrators could not spend time in the classroom getting to know the teacher and students before evaluations, nor could they follow up on the feedback that they gave. These time

limitations made the administrator's evaluations less helpful and more stressful to some participants.

There was disagreement among participants about the continuation of this specific evaluation system. Two participants suggested their desire for school leaders to consider another program that would be less expensive and less stressful. However, this was not a unanimous perception among participants; "Let's keep TAP, adjusting it now would be too stressful" contributed a participant.

There was a reoccurring suggestion for consideration of unique needs of non-general education teachers and the desire to have someone trained in their field do their evaluations. This group included special education teachers and related arts teachers. These teachers stated a desire to meet with others in their field for their professional development clusters. It was noted that some schools in the district do accommodate this clustering need currently, and others do not. This group also suggested that more consideration be given to their unique job requirements, such as writing IEPs and meeting with parents. Evaluating these areas would help the evaluation mirror more accurately their jobs.

Research Question

The discussion and analysis below reveals how the research question was answered by the data. This section demonstrates how the themes that emerged from the data analysis were connected to the research question, How do teachers in a Midwestern TAP school perceive the evaluation process?

All five thematic categories that were developed were relevant to this research question. The thematic categories were (a) impact and changes to teaching practices, (b) TAP rubric, (c) subjectivity and inconsistency of scores, (d) stress, and (e) cautions and suggestions. The

thematic categories are discussed to illustrate how these teachers in a Midwest school district perceived the evaluation process. The presentation of results includes a summary of the coding results that was generated to capture the experience of the sample.

Thematic Category 1: Impact and changes to teaching practices. The first thematic category that was developed relating to the research question was labeled impact and changes to teaching practices. This thematic category pertained to how teachers perceived their teaching to have been impacted by the evaluation process. When asked if TAP had impacted their teaching, all participants described positive ways that their teaching had been impacted by the TAP evaluation process. This led the researcher to conclude that one perception that the participants had of TAP is that it had been helpful. Teacher 10, a general education elementary teacher, stated in his interview that his teaching had improved a lot since TAP was implemented, “It has made me better. I would not be where I am without it.” Teacher 10 went on to explain in the focus group:

Before I would not have had a learning target. I knew what we were learning but the students didn't. Now that seems so duh. I didn't communicate that to the students. One of the things I love on the rubric is feedback, that has shifted for me is student to student feedback. I think a lot more about how they can fish instead of me just doing the fishing for them. How can I get them to do the work? I think questioning has shifted, and presenting instructional content. I don't always tell the target, sometimes they have to help me figure it out. Sometimes they come up with a better target than I had written down, they do a better job. Really I am more in tune with what I want them to learn, the assessment and all.

Teacher 11, another general education elementary teacher, said her teaching had definitely changed for the better since TAP implementation. Teacher 11 described how one of her shifts impacted student learning:

The TAP Rubric is very clear on ways to become a better teacher; and I have seen that. When I first started using it, it was intimidating. This last time my focus was presenting instructional content, I worked on creating visuals and researching different aspects. I already knew the importance of visuals, especially to language learners; however, I learned about different ways to incorporate visuals into my teaching. I saw student engagement increase, as well as their scores.

Teacher 11 went on to describe the biggest shifts for her over time and explained why she is consistent now in applying this new learning. Teacher 11 said,

The biggest thing I use on the rubric is lesson structure and pacing, having a clear beginning, middle, and reflecting at the end even if I am going to continue it in another lesson. So students know the process now, and are in the routine of understanding what they are going to learn, why they need to learn it, and just how well they have learned within that lesson. Students know there will be an exit question at the end of the lesson. Those exit tickets, that I use regularly now, were the biggest “ah ha” moment I had when we first began with TAP.

Both Teachers 8 and 9 referred to their lesson objective being communicated more clearly now and organized around the goal. Teacher 12, a related arts teacher, also pointed out the organization and focus had been strengthened in her lesson planning:

My teaching has changed in that I am much more cognizant of what I want the students to learn. I am much more organized by using a learning board with an objective (target),

agenda, tools, and exit ticket to help myself and students be better organized; to know what and how they will learn what I want them to learn. I am better able to track data more efficiently than I have in the past. Data has been and will continue to be visually and audibly gathered in addition to the Exit Tickets on paper. I now use my own lesson plan template, which includes all the parts of the TAP rubric. Having the rubric in template form helps me make sure I am consistently utilizing it throughout all lessons and grade levels.

A middle school teacher referred to her lessons' increase in rigor that resulted from her work in TAP and how the increased role of data prompted her to differentiate in more deliberate ways. Teacher 2 discussed the step-by-step support she received from her coaches and the impact of the school-wide focus:

My teaching has grown a bunch. A lot of it was from TAP, as we are learning what it should look like. It helped me take one step at a time, focus on one area at a time. I would have tried to do it all at once. But they helped me take one step at a time, and the rubric is so connected so it impacted many other areas too. It helped me to focus as it gave me little pieces to focus on. Then those became my strength as I worked on them. Questioning and lesson structure and pacing both were impacted. I think for a while when we were just taking one small focus at a time, our coaches worked hard to show us what it looked like. Whole school focus is amazing. Every year I see the students getting stronger from the school wide focus.

Teacher 3 described the impact that the process has had on her teaching, "The TAP evaluation process has helped me learn and embrace best teaching practices, with every observation I feel I grow a little more as a teacher." She further described the impact she sees

that TAP has on students, “It puts a lot of responsibility for learning back on to the students.”

Teacher 4 credited TAP’s professional development which is built around the teacher evaluation data, for her growth:

I have seen teachers’ eval data used strategically and effectively in my building to plan cluster or PD so that we can address those needs as a group. That has raised the level of my teaching. I have improved in the gradual release of modeling, in every lesson I have that included now. Differentiation and grouping is more specific. How will I challenge those who have met the objective, how will I help those who struggle? My use of visuals is stronger now. I try to model the kind of thinking my students need to use in order to master the objective. All of these are becoming automatic for me now as I plan strong lessons.

Teacher 5, a high school teacher, noted that the leaders in his building had improved in differentiating strategies for all teachers and all students, and that in turn had helped him improve:

I keep thinking of the two indicators I have tried to work on constantly—grouping and questioning. There are other areas of the rubric that have also been helpful, but those two, when I look at where I started and where I am, have shifted a lot. The class that I teach requires a lot of explaining but the grouping and the line of questioning that I use are very important and that applies to the highest level of classes and the lowest.

Teacher 6 was another high school teacher who agreed with Teacher 5’s assessment of their leaders, “It seems like the leadership has respected our needs. Now it seems like there is more choice and it’s more applicable to me and where I am.” She went on to explain how her teaching had improved,

My teaching has greatly improved because of TAP, I was new to teaching and had to learn the art and science of teaching and TAP gave me some meat to it and direction. I am much more organized in how I present information to students. Having an objective, and knowing what we are accomplishing and following up to know if it is accomplished.

Thematic Category 2: The TAP rubric. The researcher developed the second thematic category relating to the research question which the researcher labeled the TAP rubric. This thematic category pertained to the participant's perception of ways in which the rubric had been helpful in guiding them to effective teaching practices and gave them a common language for reflecting upon and discussing their teaching. Teacher 10, an elementary general education teacher, explained it this way, "I think with the rubric we have a common ground or common language to talk about our teaching." Teacher 2 agreed,

The rubric gives us a common language. When you get feedback it isn't generic, we know the same language, the parts of a lesson and we have studied them together so when they say here is where you are doing well and here is where you need to grow, we know what that means and what that looks like.

Teacher 9, a related arts teacher, spoke of the rubric's language, "I love that the rubric is so specific not only under categories but there is exact description in the rubric of what it is you are doing well and what your next step might be." Others spoke of the rubric as a guide or a map for improving their teaching. Teacher 4, an elementary general education teacher, said,

I have definitely become a better teacher because of the rubric, just learning how connected it all is and how standards and objectives are connected to presenting instructional content and that's connected to expectations and on and on. That has made a tremendous impact on me as a teacher and on what I look for in student work.

Teacher 12, a related arts teacher, also spoke of the rubric as a guide, “I appreciate the rubric. It helps keep me focused. The rubric has kept me organized. My lesson plans are better. My classes flow better and more is accomplished. I love that rubric.”

Teacher 1, an upper elementary general education teacher, agreed, “I agree that the rubric has made me a better teacher. I don’t know how I did it before. Those steps [to planning], the goal, it’s all a part of who you are right now and I can’t imagine doing it without the rubric.”

Teacher 6, a high school teacher who started her career on an emergency license, talked about the importance of the rubric as she transitioned to teaching. She shared,

“It’s been huge for me because I came in not knowing how to teach or what to teach. I came in on an emergency permit. So the evaluation system, the rubric especially, gave me kind of a visual of teaching, a starting point. It was like all the lessons I taught before the rubric, I started looking at them through the lens of that rubric and I began to see how much better they could be, how much more focused they could be. They weren’t just done for the sake of doing them. I am kind of an unstructured personality and so the rubric was a really helpful structure for me. My teaching is way better now than when I started.”

Finally, Teacher 13, a middle school special education teacher, reported that “The rubric is based on a common language around best practice. I like that it has made me a better person. It keeps me on my toes.”

Thematic Category 3: Subjectivity and inconsistency. The researcher developed the third thematic category relating to the research question which was labeled subjectivity and inconsistency of scores. This thematic category pertained to the ways in which the career

teachers perceived variation in scoring between the different evaluators who did their own evaluations, and inconsistency between how things were done in different buildings, across the district. This topic was in the top two concerns raised in the parent code of negative perceptions regarding the TAP evaluation process. Teacher 10, an elementary general education teacher, spoke about differences he perceived among those who evaluated him. He described some evaluations as being more summative, while others felt more formative and a part of an ongoing process. Teacher 7 spoke of the differences in the amount of time that different evaluators were in her classroom. She said, “There is not time to develop relationships with all those who will be evaluating you. There just isn’t time for everyone to be in my room as much as I’d like to coach me and that makes a difference.” Teacher 7 continued, “It is more helpful when I am evaluated by someone who has spent time in my classroom.” Teacher 10, 5, and 13 agreed.

Teacher 10 spoke of another inconsistency, the shifts over time in what his evaluators were looking for and the impact that this has had on his scores over time. He said,

It’s likely that it’s the evaluator’s learning along with me but the target is shifting a bit. I am in favor of TAP but this is my perception, as we get better at knowing what to look for it gets harder to score. Professionally, I know I can still grow. But I feel like I have topped out on the scoring. It’s frustrating because from year 1 to year 6 I have grown so many times over. But my scores don’t show that extreme growth. They aren’t as high as I want them to be. Maybe our work is so broad it’s hard to move them up because there is a broad range for a score of 3.

Teacher 10 later referred to this again in the focus group conversation,

My learning has gone up drastically but my scores do not reflect that. My teaching and my helping of my students has improved almost vertically. But my scores have not done

that. Sometimes they have even gone down. A negative impact is that I may have plateaued, I am realizing that the 3 is so wide and deep and then the 4 and 5 feel like little bitty slices out here. I become frustrated perhaps like a student might. Show me what a 5 looks like for this area so that I can keep getting better. It feels so elusive. We can talk about it, but I want to see it. I really want to get better, but sometimes I fight complacency because it doesn't always feel possible to get a 4 or 5.

Teacher 9, an elementary related arts teacher, described this shift over time,

The interpretation of the rubric is not static. There is always a bit of a new twist. This could show growth but it is also a negative because when you look back over the years your early scores mean something different than your scores now. Our administrators have changed and our master has changed and each person interprets things a little differently. As clear cut as the rubric is, you can still interpret it differently.

Teacher 13, a middle school special education teacher explained that she perceived the scores to be subjective.

The scoring and the post conference can still be subjective because you are not allowed to give feedback in your post conference. Even if you really disagree with the score, it is not changing. This makes it subjective, because it is the perception of the observer on some parts.

Teacher 5, a high school teacher, raised concern with the variation he perceived across the district in how TAP was implemented, "I have noticed the inconsistency between buildings. It seems like there are three programs in our district, the elementary TAP, the middle school TAP and the High School TAP." Teacher 9, an elementary related arts teacher, agreed and referred to

discussions at her district related arts meetings as indication of how differently things were done at each elementary school, “I see a discrepancy among all of the schools. That is unfortunate.”

Teachers 9 and 12, both related arts teachers, agreed that there was a discrepancy in how the cluster content applied to their teaching compared to the general education teachers.

Teachers 9 and 12 both described experiences when an evaluator, who was not an expert in their content, gave them a refinement area that did not fit well into their content. Teacher 9 explained,

This makes it invalid, it is done by someone who doesn't understand my content and has never taught my content. Specialty classes and our curriculum are very different from academics. Generally I am given a refinement that has nothing to do with my content area.

Both expressed a desire to have someone in their content evaluate them. Both also expressed a desire to have cluster meetings with those of like content. Their perceived disconnect between their class content and the content of cluster influenced these desires. “We have to work extra hard to connect it all to our class,” stated Teacher 9. Teacher 12 added, “Sometimes it takes me a long time to connect it to my area of expertise. Good teaching is good teaching, but I could use specialty help in my particular area.”

Thematic Category 4: Stress. The researcher developed the fourth thematic category relating to the research question labeled stress. This thematic category pertained to how teachers perceived their bodies to have been impacted physically and emotionally by the evaluation process. When asked what the hardest part of the TAP implementation had been, the number one response was related to the stress that comes with the evaluation process. This finding lead the researcher to conclude that one perception that the participants had of TAP was that although

helpful, as portrayed in Thematic Category 1, it was also stressful. Teacher 1, a general education elementary teacher referred to the stress when she stated,

I am a true advocate of this evaluation system. That being said, it is still one of the most stressful things. The idea of having someone come in and completely script everything during a lesson is very nerve wrecking. I wish at the end when they walk out, I could say to myself, I nailed it, but there is always a next step. That part of it so frustrating to me. I still, after all these years get physically sick about it.

Teacher 7 described this stress further,

I think the most difficult part is that it sometimes feels like you are not good enough, like you are never going to be good enough. While we recognize that there is always room for growth, always space for improvement, always more that can be done, because the post conference tends to focus on the refinement, the teacher can easily overlook the positive and lose confidence in their abilities. For a long time I thought that this was my own personal problem, but an open conversation among our staff recently revealed that this loss of confidence after an evaluation is common.

She went on to admit, “It sounds crazy dramatic, but the truth is, that observations hit us at an emotional level. Getting past the emotions and being able to look objectively at the lesson is necessary for true improvement.” Teacher 7 concluded by noting that the stress was higher when the person who is evaluating had not been in your classroom as much.

Teacher 4, an elementary general education teacher, also spoke of the stress and its impact on her ability to respond to students during an evaluation as she normally would. She said,

There are a lot of student variables that can change any of the best laid plans that a teacher has, and the threat of those variables impacting a score that determines my effectiveness, causes quite a bit of anxiety for me. The anxiety caused by the pressure to include as much of the rubric as possible can affect my ability to think clearly about responding to students throughout that lesson, like I normally would under relaxed non-pressured circumstances.

Teacher 4 went on to add,

Sometimes it feels like extra stress, when there is already a lot of stress and expectation in education about how to meet the needs of all students and then you have this added layer multiple times a year. I get extremely stressed and physically sick during my evaluations. You can't live at that heightened level of stress for a long period of time and be the same person I want to be.

Five of the 13 participants wondered if there might be another, less stressful way, to evaluate teachers, "Can we find another way to grow with less stress?" concluded Teacher 4.

Thematic Category 5: Cautions and suggestions. The researcher developed the fifth thematic category relating to the research question labeled cautions and suggestions. This thematic category pertained to how teachers perceived the current implementation of the evaluation process in their district. The last question of each interview and focus group was open ended, and asked if there was anything else about their perceptions of the evaluation process that they wanted to share. The researcher discovered that 76 suggestions or cautions existed across all discussions. All participants contributed at least one caution or suggestion. This led the researcher to assume that all participants had a vested interest in the evaluation process, and all had developed an agency for its improvement. It was noted that these

suggestions and cautions came from both parent codes of positive and negative perceptions, as well as neither parent code and thus was considered neutral. It was also noted that some of the participants' suggestions for what to continue, discounted their peers' requests for something they wanted stopped. The suggestions and cautions were sub-categorized into four child codes (a) start, (b) stop, (c) continue, and (d) consider.

Teachers 9 and 12, both related arts teachers, requested that the district consider a related arts cluster as well as someone trained in their content area to do their evaluations. Teacher 9 suggested that peer evaluations be discontinued, and Teachers 2 and 3 requested that they continue. On this subject, Teacher 9 explained,

I would take out peer evaluations, first thing. There is too much tension created by peers evaluating each other. Especially if the observer is younger and with less experience and they are critical of you but they have never been in your shoes. Or if it's someone you have to work with every day and they make comments you don't agree with.

Teacher 3 countered,

I am the opposite. I like having a mentor from my grade level or neighboring grade level evaluate me because I know they are understanding the content I am teaching. Plus I can also go watch them as they teach.

Teacher 5 suggested administrators stop doing evaluations unless they could be in the classrooms more,

The evaluations that have felt least helpful are the ones where you don't see that person any other time. I know it's an evaluation of that one lesson, but a refinement is better if you have seen that teacher work with students over time.

Teacher 7 agreed. However, it was noted that this would mean more peer evaluations, which Teacher 9 requested be stopped.

The topic of scores came up many times. One teacher, Teacher 5, liked the scores because, “being of a scientific mind, I like the quantitative data.” Although others suggested that the scores be discontinued or minimized somehow, “The numbers don’t recognize all that goes into the art of teaching human beings in that there are a lot of things that we deal with every day that go beyond the academic goals,” explained Teacher 4. Teacher 4, an elementary teacher, also admitted she did not know how that would work, “one of the things I wish could change, though I haven’t figured out yet how it should change, is the whole numbers thing.”

Teacher 10, an elementary teacher cautioned, “The stress level needs to be considered. My brother-in-law and my wife teach in different districts with different evaluation systems and their stress level is notably lower.” Teacher 1, another elementary teacher, cautioned about the importance of trust, “It can go south quickly if there is any type of question on whether or not you can trust the person who is evaluating you. Trust is key.”

Six times the topic of rate of learning or pace of professional development was brought up as a caution. Teacher 4, an elementary teacher, explained,

I get weary when I am constantly pushed to new terrain before I feel satisfaction or achievement with what I’ve previously learned. I am a very detailed person, and when the details of parts keep stacking up before the concept is internalized, it becomes overwhelming.

Later, teacher 4 added,

It has to do with the rate of growth that the professional development seems to demand.

That is something that has been frustrating to me. I like to grow, but the push for growth

has been at a faster pace than the time I would like to take to process and internalize the growth. I like to work at something and get it to the point of knowing that, yes, I've got it! Often we are moving on to something new before I feel satisfaction of taking on growth for the last initiative. Maybe that is part of the whole deal; there are students that probably feel that way. I guess maybe I can get that additional practice when we spiral back to review old strategies. Sometimes we move on before I internalize the strategy and begin putting it into my teaching naturally.

Teacher 9, a related arts elementary teacher, agreed with this caution, "At times the pace of teaching seems too rigorous to excel. I think a steady step incline is better than a steep incline for self-improvement."

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of career teachers regarding the evaluation system used in their district. This chapter illustrated the findings as they related to the research question. Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. A sample size of 13 participants was used. Data were analyzed within NVivo using open coding of parent and child codes.

Five major thematic categories emerged in response to the data collection and analysis procedure and were aligned directly with the research question. The results indicated that all participants perceived their evaluation system to have impacted their teaching in a positive way, thus Thematic Category 1. Likewise, all participants found the TAP rubric to be helpful in creating common expectations and a common language in their reflection of lessons and coaching, as indicated in Thematic Category 2. The results also indicated that many participants perceived the implementation of TAP to be inconsistent across the district and subjective in some

cases. This was indicated in Thematic Category 3. Finally, nearly all participants perceived TAP as stressful which was noted in Thematic Category 4, and 100% of participants were willing to give suggestions and cautions about the future of the TAP implementation.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The TAP provides a structure for schools and districts to provide professional development connected to teacher evaluation. Now more than ever before in the history of education, teacher evaluation is a front and center topic in the United States (Darling-Hammond, 2013). This is partially the case because school leaders are required, by states and districts, to have evaluation systems in place to receive funding (Darling-Hammond, 2013). Although TAP meets the mandates of state and national education accountability requirements, there is limited research on how teachers perceive the evaluation system.

According to the literature, few studies have explored teacher perceptions of their evaluation system. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to research teacher perceptions, and then present the summary, with conclusions and recommendations based on the findings from that research. The researcher sought to answer the question, how do teachers in a Midwestern TAP school perceive the evaluation process? Because research is limited on this topic, this study is important to the field of education as it gives direction to how these perceptions could guide and inform future decisions in teacher evaluation and teacher training. This study contributes to building an understanding between education leaders and teachers. This study contributes to the body of knowledge necessary to address the ongoing need of balancing teacher accountability and honoring the education profession.

This chapter contains a detailed discussion concerning the findings of the study in light of the existing and known literature about teacher perceptions of their evaluation process. The discussion focuses on the contribution of the findings to the literature and in the academic field. As well, it also contains the conclusion of the study and how these conclusions could influence

the professional development and evaluation of teachers. The limitations of the study, along with the practical and future implications, are discussed. Finally, a discussion of the recommendations for future research, as well as for the effective practice of teacher evaluation and professional development, is included.

Summary of the Study

Studies show that fair and transparent evaluation systems can impact effective teaching (Marzano, 2007) but Darling-Hammond (2013) warned that when evaluations are poorly perceived, we risk losing effective teachers to frustration. The goal of this study was to explore the perceptions of teachers about their current evaluation system. The investigation concerning teacher evaluation assisted the researcher in understanding teacher perceptions and determining what adjustments could be made within existing state and federal mandates that honor teachers and benefit districts. The information generated from the results of this study contribute vital input for districts making decisions about their evaluation practices. Furthermore, the data gained from this study can be useful in understanding the specific impact of the evaluation system on teaching.

Using the concepts of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1954) the researcher analyzed the degree to which the teacher evaluation system had influenced the teachers' basic professional and personal needs. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is an often-referenced motivation theory in management and scholarly literature (Kroth, 2007). Maslow named his list the basic needs—physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. He referred to these needs as basic goals of human beings. People move up the pyramid when their needs are met, and unsatisfied needs create motivation until they are met (Kroth). This model has often been used to help leaders create conditions for their employees that are conducive to optimal outcomes

(Kroth, 2007). The researcher acknowledged what Maslow had clarified; there is not an all or none satisfaction (Maslow, 1998) and the stages are not always experienced in order. In this study, the researcher explored the perceptions of teachers regarding the evaluation system and its connection to their basic needs and motivation.

Kirkpatrick (1959) introduced four steps for evaluating corporate training programs. Kirkpatrick introduced a common language or framework for evaluating training that measured the results or impact of training on an organization (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2005). One of the purposes of Kirkpatrick's (1987) practical framework was to measure the effectiveness of professional training on four levels—reaction, learning, behavior, and results. In this study, the researcher explored the perceptions of the teachers regarding their evaluation process by looking at their reactions toward the program and their learning; their behavior was tied to their reactions and the results were tightly connected to their learning. Beyond teachers' perceptions, this study looked for evidence that learning occurred from the evaluation system, behaviors changed, and finally, it looked at results or effect the training had on the teachers' and their students.

This qualitative case study collected data from two focus groups and individual interviews and questionnaires from teachers who had taught under the TAP evaluation system for at least two years. The sample size for the individual interviews consisted of 13 participants. For the focus group discussions, Focus Group 1 consisted of five teachers and Focus Group 2 consisted of eight teachers. In the analysis of data, the researcher utilized open coding process. Open coding process was done using NVivo qualitative software. Open codes are codes that help the researcher organize and represent the experiences and perceptions of the participants, organized around different labels or names. In this stage, parent codes were created to represent broad categories of interrelated ideas or information; positive and negative perceptions were

coded as parent codes. This analysis technique allowed the researcher to determine the emerging sub-thematic categories or child codes and themes corresponding to the following central question, How do teachers perceive the teacher evaluation process in a Midwestern TAP (Teacher and Student Advancement Program) school? These emerging themes are presented in this chapter within the context of the existing and known literature about teacher evaluation. The researcher articulates the contribution of the findings to the current practices with teacher evaluation and the recommendations that could improve the evaluation program.

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

A crucial determiner of whether a teacher will utilize the evaluation results or accept input for further growth is the teacher's perception of the evaluative process (Walsh, 2013). There is minimal awareness and understanding concerning teachers' perceptions of their evaluation system and how those perceptions can positively inform evaluation processes in the future. Research about teacher evaluation has focused on the need for accountability and justification for or against state and district mandates that are connected to funding (Darling-Hammond, 2013). To address this limited research information about teacher perceptions, the researcher collected data and related the findings to the known literature on evaluations. The participants in this study shared both positive and negative perceptions and offered cautions and suggestions to educational leaders regarding future decisions with teacher evaluation.

Perceptions of teachers about their evaluation system. Five thematic categories emerged through the coding. These categories give input to Research Question 1, How do teachers perceive the teacher evaluation process in a Midwestern TAP (Teacher and Student Advancement Program) school? These five thematic categories are listed and described below.

Thematic category 1: Impact and changes to teaching practices. Per Wininger and Birkholz (2013), one of the major contributors to teacher job satisfaction is the opportunity for improving teaching. Fair and transparent evaluation systems can impact effective teaching (Marzano, 2007). According to Papay (2012), evaluations can be used as both measurement tools to assess performance and professional development tools to improve instructional practice. Based on the data presented, participants perceived the evaluation process to be helpful in improving their teaching. One hundred percent of participants described ways that their teaching had improved since the district began the TAP program five and one-half years ago. Of the 111 positive perceptions coded, 43 were in reference to the improvements participants had experienced in their own teaching. This was the most frequent positive perception coded. As participants described how their teaching had been positively impacted by the evaluation process, years of experience did not vary the way that the evaluation program had changed their practice. When asked to name specific areas of impact, participants listed effective teaching practices such as receiving academic feedback, learning targets or lesson goals, activities, and materials, and planning and assessment. Although one of the goals of evaluation is accountability, many teachers and administrators desire evaluation processes that include a second goal of helping them develop their skill or hone their craft. This will help school districts attract, develop, and retain employees; this will ensure that employees are growing and learning and a culture of engagement and productivity is being built (Brandt, 2011).

Per Kirkpatrick (1987), learning measures improvement in the skills and knowledge that result from the training. “Some programs aim to improve trainees’ knowledge of concepts, principles, or techniques. Others aim to teach new skills or improve old ones” (Kirkpatrick, 1987, p. 56), still others target changing attitudes. When changing behavior is the goal, one

looks at the extent to which participants have been able to change their behaviors based on the training they received (Kirkpatrick, 1987) and measures the transfer of training success rate. Kirkpatrick's proposed four levels for measuring the effectiveness of professional training were reaction, learning, behavior, and results. Three of Kirkpatrick's levels were present in the perceptions that led to these thematic categories, reaction, learning, and behavior. All participants shared positive reactions to what they had learned through the professional development that led up to the evaluation and the TAP rubric used in the evaluation; all participants could describe specific ways this learning changed or impacted positively their teaching. The researcher noted that in the six years since implementing the TAP process, the district's student achievement grade awarded from IDOE had gone from a D to a B, thus meeting Kirkpatrick's fourth level, results.

Thematic category 2: TAP rubric. Fullan (2011) explained that a change process must use indicators of success that are measurable. The second most frequent theme coded was the TAP rubric. This thematic category was developed under the parent code positive perceptions. Based on the data, participants perceived the rubric used in the TAP evaluation process as a positive tool that contributed to their growth and improvement. Ten of the 13 (77%) participants referred to the value of the rubric. Specifically, the rubric was perceived to have contributed to a common language among staff and specificity in coaching and feedback. It had also aided participants in lesson planning. The specificity that rubrics afford also impacts the kind of feedback that teachers receive and helps them (evaluators and teachers) in naming their next growth steps because of a common language that results between leader's and teacher's use of standards-based rubrics (Walsh, 2013). Participants explained how the weekly cluster meetings (professional development sessions) were used to teach the 19 indicators of the rubric and

corresponding descriptors. Further, participants noted that coaching sessions, as well as pre-conferences and post-conferences of their evaluations, were focused on the rubric. Two of Kirkpatrick's (1987) levels for measuring the effectiveness of professional training were connected to this thematic category—reaction and learning. Related to the TAP rubric, participants had a positive reaction as it contributed to their learning. No participants shared a negative perception of the TAP rubric.

Thematic category 3: Subjectivity and inconsistency of scores. The perceived fairness of the evaluation process (Deneire et al., 2014; Jiang et al., 2015) impacts greatly the teacher's embrace of the process. A theme was coded related to the perceived subjectivity and inconsistency of the evaluation scores. This thematic category was developed under the parent code negative perceptions. Based on the data, some participating teachers had negative perceptions of evaluation scoring. There were eight coded references to subjectivity in the scores. Participants shared negative perceptions of inconsistency among the three evaluators they worked with during a particular year. When asked what leadership teams do to address inter-rater reliability, some participants were aware of the steps their teams take, although not all participants were aware of these. According to Papay (2012), although rubrics may decrease subjectivity, completely limiting bias in standards-based observations is not feasible because such observations rely on the human judgments of the person who is doing the observation.

Another area of concern in scoring was related to how the leadership teams' learning had made it more difficult to increase scores in some rubric indicators; as evaluators deepened their learning over time, their criteria for scoring became more stringent. These impacted teachers' increase in scoring over time. Some participants explained that their trend line in increased scores over time did not reflect at all their steep learning curve since the beginning of TAP

implementation. This lack of correspondence contributed to participants' negative perceptions and frustration with the scoring system. Some participants described this as demotivating. Participants admitted that there were advantages to the dynamic understanding of the leadership team regarding the rubric, but the impact on growth in scores over time was a negative point. The lack of consistency in scoring from building to building across the district was also a concern to some participants.

Thematic category 4: Stress. The most frequent sub-theme under the parent code of negative perceptions was stress. There were 18 references coded regarding the stress that teachers experience under the TAP evaluation program. Based on the data, most teachers perceived the evaluation system added stress to their jobs, even though it had also made them more effective. Even the most positive participants—those who wanted the TAP evaluation system to stay in place—suggested ways that stress could be minimized. Some teachers described the feeling of never being “good enough” at their job because of an ever-looming next step. These feelings contribute to self-doubt in one's ability. During great educational shifts and changes, especially in the area of teacher evaluation, one could argue that some of teachers' esteem needs had been overlooked (Darling-Hammond, 2013). Per Hall (2013), change concerns show up as feelings, thoughts, reactions, and perceptions; Hall and Hord (2015) revealed that concerns with change show up in four predictable stages: self-doubt about one's ability, which then turns into familiarity and increased proficiency after several years. In the beginning of any change, it is typical that the one changing experiences self-doubt. As time passes and the proposed change become less new, this self-doubt in the learner, is often followed by increased interest in the benefits of the change. Finally, this increased interest often leads to a mastering the change process. Hall and Hord's stages revealed that perceptions to change can

change over time and increase in a positive way. This implies the need for patience and understanding on the part of those implementing the change. Positive change is not about forcing teachers to conform to the new mandates, but more about allowing teachers to individually and collaboratively reflect, thus building trust, sharing visions, inviting risk taking, and making sense of the change so they can merge the change into their professional practices in a way that makes sense to them personally (Price, 2012); this takes time and patience.

According to Maslow's (1954) theory, physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization are basic human needs. This thematic category is linked to the basic human need for esteem. When teachers do not feel highly valued or esteemed for their hard work and contribution to education, it can impact their motivation to do better (self-actualization) (Maslow, 1954). Some participants described the physical impacts of the evaluation windows as losing sleep and feeling nauseous. These stress-induced physical symptoms can be connected to Maslow's basic physiological level of need. As educational leaders respond to this basic need for physical health, teachers are free to move on to higher levels of motivation. The coding revealed two main causes for stress—scores, and the rate or speed of expected learning. The stress related to scores is tightly connected to Thematic Category 3, subjectivity and inconsistency. However, it also included an element of distress in quantifying the art of teaching that deals with many different variables in student emotional, physical and leaning needs.

Some teachers described a need for a slower pace for new learning which would allow teachers to internalize one strategy or effective teaching practice before moving to another one. These teachers described the pace to be robust and tiring over time, referring to the weekly professional development sessions, the evaluations, and the various coaching meetings. They

perceived the evaluation process to be a forced-learning pace that makes learners weary over time.

Thematic category 5: Cautions and suggestions. There were 76 references coded in which participants gave advice regarding their evaluation system. This was in the form of caution and suggestions. Based on this evidence, participants perceived the evaluation program to need adjustment but to also be worthy of adjusting. There was an element of hope in their perceptions as they shared advice for making it work smoother. There was not a tone of hopelessness or “let’s get rid of this all together,” as participants acknowledged how it had helped them become more effective teachers. Suggestions varied from logistical details like number of evaluation, percentages of announced to unannounced evaluations, and fewer weeks in an unannounced window, to items of more theoretical concepts such as having related arts teachers be evaluated by experts in their own field, and finding ways to have the evaluation process more closely mirror the job description of special education teachers. This desire to be heard and contribute to the process related to Maslow’s (1954) level of esteem. Teachers want to know their perspective and profession is valued by educational leaders, both federal and state leaders, as well as local educational leaders. They want their voices to be heard.

Understanding these teacher needs, as well as teacher perceptions and how they construct meaning within educational evaluation reforms, can provide valuable insight for educational leaders. In addition to implementing evaluation mandates, educational leaders also need to engage teachers in cultivating ownership and embrace of the reform policy. This can be done through discussion, debate, feedback, and reflection, with the ultimate outcome of ownership of the change and long term sustaining the reform policies (Fullan, 2011; Roussin & Zimmerman, 2014).

Implications

To address a gap in literature, this research was conducted to develop insight into the perceptions of teachers regarding their evaluations system. Specifically, this qualitative case study was designed to examine how teachers perceived the TAP evaluation system. The implications of the research for education leaders are discussed by linking to the research question and organized by theme. The following sections discuss theoretical, practical, and future implications for academic scholars and education practitioners. This section also evaluates the strengths, weaknesses, and credibility of the study.

Theoretical implications. This study utilized two theories: Maslow's (1954) theory of hierarchy of needs and Kirkpatrick's (1987) levels for measuring the effectiveness of professional training. According to Kirkpatrick's levels for measuring the effectiveness of professional training, the evidence shows all four levels are present in this study—reaction, learning, behavior, and results. There was a mostly positive reaction to the training, which led to learning, changed behavior in teaching, and increased results in student achievement. According to the data and Maslow's basic list of human needs, there is a constant reflection needed in this program on meeting teachers' esteem needs; how can one affirm teachers for their contribution to the profession outside their quantifiable scores and also celebrate their growth in scores? As well, concerning stress and its implications on one's physical and emotional health, leaders would do well to address stressors within their control that can have an impact on one's physiological needs. These include but are not limited to (a) keep scheduled evaluations within arranged windows, (b) hold post-conferences within the recommended time lapse following the evaluation, (c) be present in classrooms before evaluations so that your presence in the classroom is not unusual to teachers or students, (d) follow up after an evaluation's post conference and

over time to ensure the message, “This is important to me and to your students outside of your evaluations and I am committed to helping you accomplish it,” and (e) look for ways to connect all of the processes of TAP—the weekly cluster learning and its follow up, the evaluation pre-conference and post-conference, and other coaching opportunities.

Practical implications. This qualitative case study extends the findings of 13 teachers concerning their perceptions of their evaluation system. With the results of the study, the researcher proposed issues that could be practically addressed using the emerging data. Further, the researcher enumerated these issues and implicated practical recommendations to elevate the standard of teacher evaluation. These implications are discussed within the section that follows.

Role of school leaders. It is evident that teacher evaluations will continue to be a significant part of public education. With this in mind, school leaders can look for ways to ensure teachers are affirmed outside of the quantitative evaluation data. Leaders would do well to look for and name teacher accomplishments outside of evaluation data as well as celebrate growth within evaluation data. Leaders need also to seek input from teachers on all topics that are negotiable, thus communicating esteem for the teachers’ opinions and voices. Finally, leaders would positively impact teacher perceptions with increased transparency about decisions and considerations made. For example, some participants perceived the inter-rater reliability to be lower than it is in actuality, according to the data. Some teachers are not aware of what teams do to address and build inter-rater reliability, nor are they aware of how it is measured or monitored. If they knew the data and the steps taken to measure, monitor, and address it, perhaps their perceptions would be more positive. Additionally, some teachers were not aware of the training and assessment evaluators go through to prepare for evaluating others. This knowledge would build credibility and trust from teachers. Finally, some teachers were not

informed on how mentors and masters were selected or what the requirements were for such positions. Again, this knowledge would contribute to credibility and trust from teachers.

Future implications. The researcher identified few limitations in the present study. One limitation was the limit of the sample size, which was composed of one Midwestern school district, 10 schools all of which participated in one teacher evaluation system, and 13 participants selected for the study. The goal of this study was to provide a voice for teachers in regard to the new evaluation system being used in their district. As a result, the researcher was able to generate a total of 13 teachers only. This weakness in the sample population may be strengthened in future studies by expanding the geographical location from one school district to two or three more districts. An examination of other evaluation programs may further enrich the current understanding on this phenomenon.

Another limitation was that each of the 10 schools involved in the study was led by different master teachers (a master teacher plans professional development and oversees the evaluation process as well as the teacher support). These master teachers vary in their experience, expertise, and skill in instructional coaching; this variation in expertise may impact the perceptions. Future studies could give attention to this by correlating variations to specific buildings. Descriptive statistics could be used to accomplish this.

The researcher's potential bias was a possible limitation. The researcher's prejudices and attitudes could bias the data if precautions had not been taken. This can happen when the researcher interprets the responses from participants in interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups. There must be an intent to stay neutral, and even then there remains a possibility that personal bias might influence the study. Recognition of this potential limitation helped the researcher focus on being as neutral as possible during the course of the study. Future studies

could be done by a researcher outside of the district and the evaluation system being researched. This could ensure further distance between the interest of the researcher and the evaluation program and district.

Although limitations existed, the researcher was able to achieve the research purpose and reach the data saturation point required in answering the research questions of the study. A salient contribution of this study was the evidence concerning the contributors to negative and positive perceptions. These strengths may guide policy makers and education leaders in developing and continuing effective and appropriate teacher evaluation programs.

Strengths and weaknesses. This study focused on current perceptions of one evaluation system in one Midwestern district. The results of this study may not be representative of all teachers in this evaluation system or teachers from another evaluation system. The size of the study and the number of participants was a weakness of this study. Although this was a weakness, the study may provide insight into the needs and ideas of teachers. Therefore, although weaknesses existed, the researcher was able to achieve the research purpose and contribute evidence concerning the perceptions of teachers regarding their evaluation systems. These strengths can be used to guide policy makers and education leaders as they adjust and develop effective evaluation programs that honor teachers. Understanding the perceptions of the participants in this study can inform our understandings of teachers at large and their evaluation perceptions.

Recommendations

In this section, the researcher recommends studies that future researchers could contribute to the subject of teacher perceptions of evaluation. This section also summarizes the practical

applications of the results of the study. These recommendations highlight the overall importance and conclusion of the study.

Recommendations for future research. Future research could be done with a larger sample group, or a sample group from various districts and using other evaluation systems. Another helpful study would compare teacher perceptions of various evaluation systems within the same study so as to compare the evaluation programs. A comparison study of different evaluators within the same program could offer further insight by comparing the perceptions of teachers evaluated by them. This could help identify the characteristics desired in evaluators.

Recommendations for evaluators. This study implicated two major contributors to positive perceptions—the TAP rubric and changes to teaching. Participants clearly valued the common language and clear expectations afforded through use of the rubric. It is recommended that this push toward common language and high expectations through weekly professional development be continued so that positive changes to teaching continues to be the pattern. This study implicated two major contributors to negative perceptions regarding the teacher evaluation program—stress and scoring subjectivity and inconsistency. Evaluators must work diligently to align their scoring expectations and practices with others on the team. This could be attempted through systematic paired observations, frequent conversations and input from other evaluators on the team, and group scoring of videotaped lessons. Not only do these practices need to be happening regularly to build and sustain inter-rater reliability, they need to be communicated to teachers. Teachers need to be made aware of what leadership teams are doing to address scoring inconsistencies and subjectivity. Evaluator scores need to be monitored and compared across leadership teams to ensure consistency.

Another inconsistency of concern was change over time in expectations as leadership teams study and develop deeper understanding of the rubric. Although this is a healthy process and was acknowledged as such by participants who admitted to not wanting a stagnant leadership team that was not learning and growing, it still presents frustrations when teachers are not kept up to date on the changes. The key to addressing this challenge is communication and training for teachers around the changes.

Stress was the most coded theme in negative perceptions. Leadership teams will want to consider how to address the added stress that evaluation systems have added to the teaching profession. Stress management workshops might be helpful in addressing this need. Clear communication of expectations and clear timelines for evaluations will minimize added stress. Continued training on what to expect during the evaluation process will minimize surprises that cause stress. Participants in this study noted that more frequent contact from the evaluator before an evaluation helps to alleviate some of the stress. Strong relationships between the teacher and the evaluator was another key to stress management.

Recommendations for school administrators. Finally, the *cautions and suggestions* coded theme of this study should be considered by administrators as they implement or adjust their implementation of this evaluation system. The data is categorized into sub-categories: *start*, *stop*, *continue*, and *consider* and could inform administrators' upcoming decisions. Although some points are outside of the administrator's control due to state and federal mandates, others could be considered and accommodated. All points in this section could deepen understanding/empathy between leaders and teachers.

The first sub-category is made up of suggestions for what participants wished their administrators would *start*. Non-general education participants requested that consideration be

given to their area of expertise. This, they suggested, could be done by having someone in their field trained to do their evaluations and coaching, which would make it more tailored to their expertise. Further, they requested that they be grouped with other specialist teachers for their cluster meetings (professional development sessions). It was noted that when related arts teachers were divided among several groups they started to feel like add-ons or after thought to the professional development topic. Finally, non-general education participants requested that their evaluation more closely mirror their full job description. For example, if a percentage of their time was spent writing individual educational plans, then the same percentage of their evaluation plan would evaluate that aspect of their job performance.

Another section of the *start* sub-category addressed the need for communication from the leadership team. Participants requested that they be made more aware of the learning that leadership teams do regarding the TAP rubric and effective teaching practices, so that they can grow in their understanding along with the school leadership teams. Participants also expressed a desire to know more about how masters and mentors were selected and trained. This, they admitted, would deepen their respect for the process. Participants spoke of a desire to be affirmed beyond their evaluation scores and the artistry of their teaching honored.

The *stop* category represented areas of the evaluation process where practices were in place that participants would like to see end. This sub-category was the most inconsistent. What some participants wanted to end, others were adamant about ending the opposite. For example, some participants wanted peer evaluations to end due to their lack of experience or training, and others wanted administrator evaluations to end because they had been out of the classroom too long. Both extremes are not possible as one discounts the other, yet being aware of these mixed desires could deepen empathy among administrators.

The *continue* sub-category confirmed that most participants in this study, although they suggested changes, desired that TAP not be replaced by another evaluation system. Participants acknowledged that continued growth of the leadership team's understanding of the rubric and effective teaching practices was important. It was noted that master teachers with varied teaching experiences should continue to be hired, and district consistencies continue to be established. Finally, it was noted that over the six years of TAP implementation, the strategies had become more flexible and differentiated and should continue in this trend.

The last sub-category, *consider*, described the desired shifts in the evaluation process. Participants desired more coaching opportunities and an overall slower pace for new learning. Further differentiation for the most proficient teachers was suggested, as well as more informal input on the evaluation process along the way, throughout the year, outside of formal surveys. There was an expressed desire that leaders consider the stress caused by moving teachers into later windows than originally scheduled. Consideration was requested regarding the differences between elementary plan time compared to departmentalization of middle school and high school. Elementary participants requested that district leaders consider shortening their evaluation windows to compensate for this difference.

All participants in this study contributed at least one caution or suggestion for their administrator. This indicated to the researcher that all participants had an interest in improving the evaluation process and had ideas for how TAP could be improved. Hearing these suggestions will deepen the work relationships between administrators and teachers in this district.

Summary

This chapter contained a detailed discussion concerning the findings of the study in light of the existing and known literature about teacher perceptions of their evaluation process. The discussion focused on the contribution of the findings to the literature and in the academic field. As well, it also contained the conclusion of the study and how these conclusions could influence the professional development and evaluation of teachers. The limitations of the study, the practical and future implications to the practice of teacher evaluation, and professional development were discussed along with recommendations for future research.

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**Appendix A: Introductory E-Mail to Potential Participants from College Institutional
Research Department**

You will be receiving an e-mail from a Concordia University, Portland Oregon doctoral student, Lisa Puckett. The e-mail will be sent from her school e-mail account to your school email account. We are sending this e-mail to confirm her contact with you is for the purpose of her doctoral study on the topic of teacher perceptions of evaluation processes. If you have any questions, please contact our office.

Sincerely,

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Appendix B: E-Mail to Potential Participants

The purpose of the e-mail is to gather demographic information for all potential participants.

Dear GCS Teacher,

My name is Lisa Puckett and I am a doctoral student at Concordia University, Portland Oregon. Completing a research study was a part of my doctoral studies. My study will focus on teachers currently working in a TAP school. I wish to study the perception of teachers regarding their current evaluation system. The study will also explore how this evaluation system has impacted your teaching practices.

As the first part of the study, I am gathering demographic information through the attached questionnaire. This questionnaire should take 5 to 10 minutes to complete and return to me. Following my receipt of your questionnaire, you will receive an email from me. Some of you will then be contacted by phone to schedule an interview time and a focus group session.

Your participation in this study will be confidential. Your name will not be connected to your responses.

My research study is projected to last during the 2015–2016 academic year. Thank you so much for considering this opportunity. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at any time via e-mail at XXXXXXXX or by phone at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Sincerely,

Lisa Puckett

Appendix C: Questionnaire

Name:

Current grade level:

Years taught under the TAP evaluation system:

Total years of teaching experience:

Phone number:

Email address:

What is your preferred contact method? (Email, phone call, or text)

What is your preferred time of contact?

In a sentence, describe your current perception of the TAP evaluation process.

Appendix D: Script for Call to Potential Interview Participants

Hello, this is Lisa Puckett. I sent you an e-mail on (date e-mail message sent) about the research I am completing about teacher perceptions of the TAP evaluation program. As a part of this research I am conducting interviews that will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes. Prior to completing the interview, you will need to complete a consent form for participation. Do you have any questions about the study or interview or consent form? Following a discussion of any questions, ask what days and times could work for the interview and schedule an interview appointment.

Appendix E: Teacher Evaluation Perceptions – Interview Protocol

Interview Date and Time-

Interview Location-

Name of Interviewer-

Name of Interviewee-

By signing below, I verify completion of the participant informed consent form.

Name _____ Date _____

Opening Questions:

How many years have you been teaching?

Why did you go into teaching?

Questions:

1. Compare your experiences with this evaluation process (TAP) to a prior evaluation process you experienced.
2. Explain any training you received regarding the TAP evaluation tool used in your evaluation.
3. What happens before, during, and after an evaluation in the TAP evaluation process?
4. How knowledgeable are you regarding the TAP evaluation rubric used in your evaluations?
5. What makes this evaluation tool a valid or invalid measure of your teaching?
6. How do you know that your evaluator is knowledgeable or not knowledgeable about the rubric used in your evaluation?
7. Tell about how your teaching has or has not changed as a result of the TAP evaluation process. Give specific examples.

8. Given the current state mandates regarding teacher evaluation, and in keeping with them, is there anything you wish your district would adjust with your current evaluation system?
9. Dweck (2007) explained that one's mindset about learning is connected to how feedback will be perceived and utilized. She explained that one has a fixed mindset (I know what I know and cannot change) or growth mindset (I can always improve and grow and change). Which mindset do you most naturally have? Has this evaluation process impacted or not impacted your mindset

Closing question: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Closing statement: Please remember your responses are confidential and will not be reported as a response tied to your name. You will receive an e-mail of the transcript of your interview for you to approve.

Thank you for your participation.

(Eliot & Associates, 2005)

Appendix F: Informed Consent Form

Concordia University – Portland Institutional Review Board
Approved: October 19, 2016; will Expire: October 19, 2017

CONSENT FORM

Research Study Title: Teacher Perceptions of an Evaluation Process: A Qualitative Case Study

Principal Investigator: Lisa Puckett

Research Institution: Concordia University, Portland, OR

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Donna Graham

Purpose and what you will be doing:

The purpose of this survey is to explore how teachers perceive the current evaluation system used in their district. Limited data exists about teacher's perceptions of the evaluation process. Since Indiana districts face significant changes in teacher evaluation processes, this study will provide information about how teachers perceive these changes. We expect approximately 10 volunteers. No one will be paid to be in the study. We will begin enrollment in October, 2016 and end enrollment November, 2016. To be in the study, you will fill out a questionnaire, meet with me for a personal interview, and meet with me in a focus group. Doing these things should take less than 4 hours of your time.

Risks:

There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your information. However, we will protect your information. Any personal information you provide will be coded so it cannot be linked to you. Any name or identifying information you give will be replaced by a pseudonym. When I look at the data, none of the data will have your name or identifying information. We will only use pseudonyms to analyze the data. We will not identify you in any publication or report. Your information will be kept private at all times and then all study documents will be destroyed 3 years after we conclude this study.

Benefits:

Information you provide will help those in education and beyond understand how teachers perceive the evaluation process.

Confidentiality:

This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if you tell us abuse or neglect that makes us seriously concerned for your immediate health and safety.

Right to Withdraw:

Your participation is greatly appreciated, but we acknowledge that the questions we are asking are personal in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage with or stop the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If at any time you experience a negative emotion from answering the questions, we will stop asking you questions.

Contact Information:

You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions you can talk to or write the principal investigator, Lisa Puckett. If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board.

Your Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

_____	_____
Participant Name	Date
_____	_____
Participant Signature	Date
____ Lisa Puckett _____	9/16/16__
_____	_____
Investigator Name	Date
_____	_____
Investigator Signature	Date

Investigator: Lisa Puckett
c/o: Professor: Dr. Donna Graham
Concordia University – Portland
2811 NE Holman Street
Portland, Oregon 97221



Appendix G: E-Mail Message to Focus Group Participants

Dear (Teacher name)

Earlier in the academic year I contacted you about the research study I am conducting about teacher perceptions of the current evaluation program. As stated before, I am completing interviews and working with two focus groups. You have been randomly divided into this focus group. Participation is voluntary. Participating or not participating in this focus group will not impact your teacher evaluations or your teaching tenure.

If you would be willing to participate in the focus group, please reply to this e-mail. I will contact you to confirm the meeting time and place for the focus group after the meeting has been scheduled. You may also reply to this e-mail with any questions or concerns you have about this process. If you prefer to contact me by phone, please call XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Sincerely,

Lisa Puckett

Appendix H: Teacher Evaluation Perceptions – Protocol for Focus Group

Group Date and Time-

Interview Location-

Name of Interviewer-

Name of Interviewee-

By signing below, I verify completion of the participant informed consent form.

Name_____ Date_____

Opening Questions for Group Introductions:

How many years have you been teaching?

What do you like most about teaching?

Questions:

1. What is the most difficult part of this evaluation process?
2. What is the best part of this evaluation process?
3. How has the current evaluation system impacted or not impacted your teaching practice?
4. If you were designing a teacher evaluation model, in keeping with the state's mandates, how would it differ from the TAP model?
5. My goal in this research is to understand teacher perceptions of the TAP evaluation system.
Is there anything you would like for me to know and understand about your perceptions?
6. Closing statement: Please remember your responses are confidential and will not be reported as a response tied to your name. You will receive an e-mail of the transcript of your interview for you to approve.

Thank you for your participation.

(Eliot & Associates, 2005)

Appendix I: Informed Consent Form for Focus Group Attendees

Concordia University – Portland Institutional Review
Board Approved: October 19, 2016; will Expire: October 19, 2017

CONSENT FORM

Research Study Title: Teacher Perceptions of an Evaluation Process:
A Qualitative Case Study

Principal Investigator: Lisa Puckett

Research Institution: Concordia University, Portland, OR

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Donna Graham

Purpose and what you will be doing:

The purpose of this survey is to explore how teachers perceive the current evaluation system used in their district. Limited data exists about teacher's perceptions of the evaluation process. Since Indiana districts face significant changes in teacher evaluation processes, this study will provide information about how teachers perceive these changes. We expect approximately 10 volunteers. No one will be paid to be in the study. We will begin enrollment in October, 2016 and end enrollment November, 2016. To be in the study, you will fill out a questionnaire, meet with me for a personal interview, and meet with me in a focus group. Doing these things should take less than 4 hours of your time.

Risks:

There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your information. However, we will protect your information. Any personal information you provide will be coded so it cannot be linked to you. Any name or identifying information you give will be replaced by a pseudonym. When I look at the data, none of the data will have your name or identifying information. We will only use pseudonyms to analyze the data. We will not identify you in any publication or report. Your information will be kept private at all times and then all study documents will be destroyed 3 years after we conclude this study.

Benefits:

Information you provide will help those in education and beyond understand how teachers perceive the evaluation process.

Confidentiality:

This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if you tell us abuse or neglect that makes us seriously concerned for your immediate health and safety.

Right to Withdraw:

Your participation is greatly appreciated, but we acknowledge that the questions we are asking are personal in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage with or stop the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If at any time you experience a negative emotion from answering the questions, we will stop asking you questions.

Contact Information:

You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions you can talk to or write the principal investigator, Lisa Puckett. If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board.

Your Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

_____	_____
Participant Name	Date
_____	_____
Participant Signature	Date
____ Lisa Puckett _____	9/16/16__
_____	_____
Investigator Name	Date
_____	_____
Investigator Signature	Date

Investigator: Lisa Puckett
c/o: Professor: Dr. Donna Graham
Concordia University – Portland
2811 NE Holman Street
Portland, Oregon 97221



Appendix J: IRB Letter of Approval to Conduct Research



DATE: October 19, 2016

TO: Lisa Puckett
FROM: Concordia University - Portland IRB (CU IRB)

PROJECT TITLE: [960429-1] Teacher Perceptions of an Evaluation Process: A Qualitative Case Study

REFERENCE #: EDD-20160916-Graham-Puckett

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: October 19, 2016

EXPIRATION DATE: October 19, 2017

REVIEW TYPE: Administrative Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Concordia University - Portland IRB (CU IRB) has APPROVED your submission. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Administrative Review based on the applicable federal regulations. The CU IRB conducted an IRB review – and approved your project. At the same time, the CU IRB deemed that the project could have been exempted from IRB review according to federal regulations. The research appears to fit the category of Classroom Educational Research, which is described below*. Whether or not to grant this exemption is at the discretion of the local IRB(s). Therefore, if you are conducting research within another institution, you will have to present this research to that institution and follow their procedure and decision on the review process they require before you can begin your research.

You are responsible for contacting and following the procedures and policies of Concordia University and any other institution where you conduct research.

Attached is a stamped copy of the approved consent form. You must use this approved consent form. Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and obtaining of informed consent. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. The form needed to request a revision is called a Modification Request Form, which is available at www.cu-portland.edu/IRB/Forms.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please email the CU IRB Director directly, at obranch@cu-portland.edu, if you have an unanticipated problem or other such urgent question or report.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of October 19, 2017.

You must submit a close-out report at the expiration of your project or upon completion of your project. The Close-out Report Form is available at www.cu-portland.edu/IRB/Forms.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. OraLee Branch at irb@cu-portland.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

*** Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 Exemption Category Classroom Educational Research, as summarized by the CU IRB:** Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices such as: (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies; or (ii) research on the effectiveness of, or the comparison among, instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods. As noted above, research must be conducted in "established or commonly accepted educational settings" and involve "normal educational practices" to be exempt under this category. The study must not contrast one group with and the other without the instructional strategy, and must not divide into subpopulations based upon race, gender, or other protected class. In the United States, the exemption for procedures involving survey, interview or observation does not apply to research with children under the age of 18, except for when the investigator(s) do not participate in the activities being observed. Whether or not to extend this exemption is at the discretion of the local IRB(s).

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Concordia University - Portland IRB (CU IRB)'s records. October 19, 2016