PRINCIPALS’ ADAPTATIONS of DISTRICT POLICIES
for TEACHER EVALUATION

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Signature Page

DISSERTATION: PRINCIPALS’ ADAPTATIONS of DISTRICT POLICIES FOR TEACHER EVALUATION

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Dedication

For my parents, Phil and KarAnn Despard, I dedicate this work to you. You have always been role models in my education endeavors. You have constantly instilled the value of education and hard work and have shown that it pays off. I appreciate everything you have done for me over the years. Thanks for encouraging and believing in me! I love you both!
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Abstract

This dissertation examines the problem of providing meaningful teacher evaluation in an era in which teacher and student expectations have changed dramatically due to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). School administrators are often not able to carry out effective and meaningful teacher evaluations when the models they are obligated to use do not assess what is expected of teachers and do not reflect the goal of improving current student learning.

The questions for this study ask how administrators can carry out teacher evaluation in ways that are consistent with policy and what methods evaluators use to create comprehensive and useful teacher evaluations. The study asks if there are modern teacher evaluation methods or models that can be incorporated into traditional models that can provide the thorough evaluation process that education today needs today.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

An effective evaluation process, when appropriately administered, has been found to positively influence teaching and learning (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2013; Kersten & Israel, 2005; Stronge, 2006; Stronge & Ostrander, 2006; Tucker & Stronge, 2006; Zepeda, 2006). Unfortunately, supervisor effectiveness in evaluating and providing positive and timely feedback to their subordinates has been found to be inconsistent (Blankenship, 2014; Jacob & Lefgren, McGuinn, 2013; Mendels, 2012; Mielke & Frontier, 2012; O’Pry & Schumacher, 2012; Patrick, 2014).

This dissertation examines the problem of providing meaningful teacher evaluation in an era in which teacher and student expectations have changed dramatically due to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). School administrators are often not able to carry out effective and meaningful teacher evaluations when the models they are obligated to use do not assess what is expected of teachers and do not reflect the goal of improving current student learning (Marzano, 2009, 2012; Stronge, Tucker, & Hindman, 2004).

The research literature indicates that teacher evaluation practices and policies vary greatly between evaluating administrators, school districts, and states (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, & Orr, 2007. Some states and school districts have responded to increased federal expectations and state policy changes aimed at increasing teacher quality through consistent and thorough teacher evaluation (Béteille & Loeb, 2009).
Thorough and honest teacher evaluation is an integral part of quality education for students in a school district. Yet, often, teacher evaluation in not completed in a manner that provides teachers with useful and valuable feedback that improves instructional practices. Sometimes, teacher evaluation is seen as a chore, something that must be done to be in compliance, and it is not looked at as providing tools that can improve current teacher practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Marzano, 2009, 2012).

The teacher evaluation system in the United States has changed over the years (Brandt, Thomas, & Burke, 2008; Hull, 2013). With an overhaul to the teaching profession due to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and related assessments, changes appear to be on the horizon. The CCSS asks for instructional shifts that change what teachers are teaching, and more importantly ask teachers and students to expect learning to happen in a very different way. The complete paradigm shift in education has left the educational community wondering if current teacher evaluation can support teachers with the new expectations placed upon the profession (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012).

The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation and the state accountability systems have placed greater responsibility on superintendents and principals for initiating reforms and enhancing student learning (Marzano, 2013). A comparative review of school leadership by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2012), found that evaluating teacher quality is the core of effective leadership. According to Davis, Ellett, and Annunziata (2002), school-based administrative and professional leadership play essential roles in determining the meaning and value of teacher evaluation in schools, and how teacher evaluation can
improve teaching and learning. However, practitioners, researchers, and policy makers agree that most current teacher evaluation systems do little to help teachers improve (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2012). For instance, Milanowski, Kimball, and Odden (2005) state that many districts use an unsystematic evaluation practice sometimes characterized as ‘drive by’ evaluations. In fact, according to Kyriakides, Demetrious and Charlambous (2006), one of the major problems faced by most K-12 educational systems is the need to develop a valid personnel evaluation system. Additionally, many principals shy away from making evaluating teachers a priority because they seek to avoid conflict, feel ineffective, or view the evaluation process as to time-consuming (Conley, 1991). Yet, Sullivan and Zirkel (1999) state that school districts have to hold principals clearly accountable for effectively evaluating teachers.

Over the last few decades, teacher evaluations have assumed increasing importance (Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Pease, 1983). Following A Nation at Risk, No Child Left Behind, and Race to the Top, accountability is at the forefront with specific concerns about the quality of classroom teaching and teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012). The implementation of the Common Core State Standards and the corresponding shifts in student and instructional expectations means that the time has come for school districts to overhaul antiquated teacher evaluation systems. Yet, few districts take seriously the teacher evaluation system as an accountability measure, partly due to its perceived poor validity (Peterson, 2006). It follows, then, that three factors call for a change in teacher evaluation: accountability for increased student achievement and highly effective teachers, the need for principals and district superintendents to effectively
implement change in their school districts, and the need to determine the key components of an evaluation system that would improve teacher effectiveness and impact student learning.

The key components of current teacher evaluation practices have been grounded in research described by Danielson (2011) and Marzano (2012). They also identify what is needed for an evaluation system that responds to accountability demands for improved teacher effectiveness and increased student achievement. To increase student achievement and improve teacher effectiveness and respond to the demands of NCLB, an evaluation system should consider the perspectives of teachers, students, and school-based leadership in the evaluation process.

The questions for this study ask how administrators can carry out teacher evaluation in ways that are consistent with policy and what methods evaluators use to create comprehensive and useful teacher evaluations. The study investigated modern teacher evaluation methods or models that could be incorporated into traditional models that can provide a thorough evaluation process that education needs.

**Overview of Teacher Evaluation**

Teacher evaluation is a requirement in every state. Teacher evaluation policies vary across the country, which contributes to differences in teacher evaluation practices and procedures (Hull 2011). The type of teacher evaluation, the frequency of the evaluations, and what is evaluated varies significantly among states (Davis, 2010).

In California, teachers are required to be evaluated annually until a teacher reaches permanent status (or what is referred to as reaching tenure). For permanent teachers, evaluation is required at least every other year, and, for teachers with permanent
status who have been employed at least 10 years with the school district and have been
designated as highly qualified, evaluation is required at least every five years (California
Education Code §44664, n.d., pp.1055-1056). California is one of 45 states that requires
formal evaluation of teachers’ performance; however, it is one of 30 states that does not
require evaluation on an annual basis. California does not require evaluators to receive
formal training (Education Week, 2012).

**Types of Teacher Evaluation**

According to a history of teacher evaluation by Marzano, Frontier, and Livingston
(2011), clinical supervision has become the most influential evaluation model. Marzano
et al. explain that clinical supervision was originally developed in the 1950’s by Morris
Cogan at Harvard’s Master of Arts in Teaching program. Cogan sought to provide
observation and opportunities for discussion with student teachers. The approach was
referred to as a “cycle of clinical supervision” (Marzano et al., p. 17).

Although clinical supervision remains the most common teacher evaluation
model, other models have emerged that are based on professional and performance
standards for teachers associated with content standards. The goal of such models is to
help teachers self-assess and reflect on their practice while connecting to organizational
goals (Glickman et al., 2013). These models generally use a rating scale in order to guide
growth of teaching proficiency (Danielson, 2011; Marzano, 2012) and to create a
common language used among educators during the evaluation process (Marzano 2012).

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework that will be used in this study is *sensemaking in
organizations* as developed most notably by Weick (2012). Sensemaking derives from a
cognitive psychology perspective on understanding how people make sense and meaning of complex, ambiguous tasks, such as a new policy or practice (Sharma, 2006; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Sensemaking will be used to understand the perspective of principals as teacher evaluators about how they make sense of using an old evaluation model while being asked to evaluate teachers on new standards and student expectations (Coburn & Stein, 2006; Sharma, 2006; Spillane, Reiser, & Gomez, 2006).

Drawing on cognitive science, sensemaking is predicated on the assumption that people act on the basis of what has meaning for them (Spillane, Diamond, et al., 2002; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). Understanding how principals make sense of this complex, ambiguous task would be informative in planning new, more appropriate approaches. Sensemaking as a theoretical framework also guides the methods of the study, inquiring how administrators interpret and make sense of evaluation policies, models, and practices in their own contexts.

**Research Questions**

*Overarching question:* How are administrators providing effective feedback during teacher evaluation to improve student learning?

Research question 1: How are evaluating administrators using old models within new requirements for teaching the CCSS?

Research question 2: What do evaluating administrators know about evaluation models?

Children’s access to high-quality teachers, especially low-achieving children, and the importance of teachers to student achievement are social justice issues as seen in Vergara v. California (2014). The findings of this study will have implications for local
policy makers about identifying effective teacher evaluation policies and providing the conditions and support for effective implementation by local administrators to improve classroom teaching and learning.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terminology will be defined in order to clarify important items referenced in this study.

**Common Core State Standards (CCSS):** A set of learning standards to create a clear and consistent understanding of what students are expected to learn throughout the school year. The CCSS are designed to provide teachers with a guideline of what skills and knowledge that students need, so they can properly prepare students for future success.

**Evaluation:** A systematic process to determine the merit value, significance, or worth of someone or something. Product, policy, personnel, and programs are different evaluation types. Information and data are used to monitor progress, effectiveness, and can lead to best practices for the evaluation type (American Evaluation Association, 2014).

**Evaluator:** “Anyone who accepts and executes responsibility for planning, conducting, and reporting evaluations” (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 2009).

**Teacher evaluation:** Collecting and using information to judge [a teacher’s] worth. There are two types of evaluation: formative and summative (Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Pease, 1983).
Summary

Teacher evaluation is an important, complex aspect of administrative responsibilities for high quality teaching. However, practices and policies of teacher evaluation vary greatly across states, districts, and administrators (Darling Hammond et al., 2007). Since the Common Core state standards have changed the expectation for teachers, traditional evaluation practices need to be examined to assure that administrators can provide effective feedback to improve student learning. A cognitive perspective called sensemaking provides a theoretical perspective for investigating how people make sense and make meaning the contradiction between outdated policy or practice and new expectations (Sharma, 2006; Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005). This dissertation examines how local administrators make sense of a model that may be outdated for carrying out reforms in expectations for teachers and students.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the study. Chapter 2 presents a review of current literature from several disciplines and areas of study related to teacher evaluation. Among the topics reviewed are history and variety of teacher evaluation models and sensemaking theory. Key aspects of state and federal policies including No Child Left Behind and the Common Core State Standards are discussed as related to teacher quality, performance, and effectiveness. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology and design for this study. Chapter 4 provides the study’s findings. Chapter 5 provides a summary of findings and implications of the study including recommendations for practice and local policy.
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This review of literature is divided into five sections. The first section looks at an historical account of teacher evaluation from the beginnings of public education in America in the mid-1600’s to current changes in teacher evaluation. The second section describes teacher evaluation processes that are common across the country and found in most public school settings. The policies that have shaped this process are also examined. The third section explores some recent shifts in public school teacher evaluation that are in place in several school districts across the country. Key ideas behind those shifts that have garnered attention and gained some traction in recent years will be reviewed. The fourth section summarizes the literature and discusses the recent shifts in teacher evaluation. The last section talks about sensemaking and the use of sensemaking in qualitative research.

Historical Overview of the Teacher Evaluation Process

American communities built schools as early as 1642 to teach youth the values of the community as well as the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Interestingly, these essential purposes have not significantly changed in more than 300 years (Markley, 2004; Marzano et al., 2011). Since the earliest years, outside or supervisory administrators evaluated most schools. Supervision was used to assure the quality of schools for the communities that sent their children to be schooled (Duffy, 1998). Supervision in public education still serves that purpose. Duffy (1998) organized the historical development of teacher evaluation into four broad periods: administrative inspection, efficiency orientation, cooperative group effort, and research orientation.
**Administrative inspection period.** In the earliest years (1642-1875) schools were assessed, not teachers (Duffy, 1998). Committees of clergy and community members inspected schools and reported their quality to the community. As the number of schools expanded, regional inspectors evaluated schools and filed a report. Later, schools grew to have several teachers, one of whom was considered the principal teacher that was the origin of the word principal (Marzano et al., 2011). School inspections continued to be conducted by administrators. Later, the principal evaluated teachers as a form of quality assurance for the administration and community.

**Efficiency orientation period.** In the early part of the twentieth century Frederick W. Taylor argued that scientific study could determine the proper method of doing every job (Spring, 2010). The key consequence of what became known as Taylorism was that management was responsible for determining the best method and directing actions of the workers uniformly. Under Taylorism, management assumed more duties by reducing teachers’ responsibilities and decision-making. This general concept led to the standardization of educational methods and processes (Marzano et al., 2011). Standardization is a business concept with the goal of cost-effectiveness. Standardization in schools resulted in standardized curriculum, attendance procedures, hiring practices, teacher training procedures, student evaluations, and teacher evaluations, with limited evidence of effects on teaching and learning.

Ellwood Cubberley further encouraged the factory metaphor in his book on *Public School Administration* (1929). Schools from this perspective are factories in which raw materials (children) are to be shaped and fashioned into products that meet the various demands of twentieth century civilization. Further, it is the business of the school
to build its products (children) to the specifications laid out (p. 338). Based on the factory metaphor, Cubberley laid out a set of principles for school administrators that emphasized measurement and analysis of data to ensure that teachers and schools were productive (Marzano Research Laboratory, 2011). This laid the foundation for teachers to receive grades such as letter grades from an A-F scale to indicate their performance for a variety of criteria. Teacher ratings and checklists evolved through the subsequent historical periods of Efficiency Orientation, Cooperative Group Effort, and Research Orientation, and ultimately became the primary evaluative activities of the principal (Duffy, 1998). The factory style approach has been tinkered with in various ways but remains the dominant model of twenty-first century education in the United States.

It is difficult to be critical of Cubberley given the historical context. Cubberley supported the business factory model because of the enormous success that industry was having at the turn of the century. From 1897 to 1907 the country experienced an unprecedented period of industrial development and national prosperity (Cubberley, 1929). As a professor at Stanford, he advocated for effective public schooling in America and became one of the leading scholars of educational administration of the 20th century (Newman, 1992). In the early part of Cubberley’s career there were no formal textbooks on educational administration, and most universities even lacked education departments (Newman, 1992).

Education in the 20th century can be viewed as an experiment about whether successful business practices can serve as successful educational practices. In later years, the analogy of educational process to industrial production brought criticism to Cubberley’s ideals. Lawrence Cremin, author of *The Wonderful World of Ellwood*
Patterson Cubberley (1965) attacked Cubberley’s historical record. He described Cubberley’s educational views as anachronistic, evangelistic, sexist, and autocratic (Cremin, 1965). While it is tempting to attack Cubberley’s educational views, it is important to remember that social norms change from generation to generation. Cubberley sought to free educational administration from technical ignorance and external political pressures. He advocated giving power to technically-trained educators, and he also urged improved teacher training (Newman, 1992).

Cooperative group effort. Spring (2008) claims that school staffs and teacher unions across the United States have worked for decades to counter the top-down management structure as it was implemented in the early 20th century. Scientific management or Taylorism promised to replace the unsystematic actions of workers with a planned and controlled work environment (Spring, 2008), and current teacher evaluation is still grounded in that model (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). The tradition of principals evaluating teachers is ingrained in the current models of teacher evaluation; however, there are other alternatives to the scientific management or efficiency orientation.

In the 1940’s, educators and researchers emphasized teacher traits, such as voice, appearance, emotional stability, trustworthiness, warmth and enthusiasm as the criteria that became the centerpiece for evaluating teachers (Danielson & McGreal 2000). However, there was no real evidence that linked the traits of the 1940’s to good teaching or student learning. According to Danielson and McGreal (2000), it was not until the 1960s that a coherent focus on teacher appraisals began to emerge.
Research orientation period. The push to enhance basic skills acquisition and improve science and mathematics teaching, has pushed for research about what teachers do or can do to improve basic skills (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Accordingly, during the 1970’s significant advances in clinical supervision developed to improve instruction. Researchers developed classroom observation instruments to have a more accurate depiction of what teachers were doing in the classrooms (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

Clinical supervision was improved through the Research Orientation period. Clinical supervision involves evaluating teachers with the purpose of improving performance and making teacher evaluation more meaningful. Emerging from the seminal work of Robert Goldhammer in the late 1960s and Morris Cogan in the early 1970s, clinical supervision is the most prevalent model of teacher evaluation (Nolan & Hoover, 2011). The standardized, articulated approach includes goal setting, a pre-observation conference, in-class observations, and a post-observation conference (Glickman & Kanawati, 1998; Neville & Garman, 1998; Smith and Andrews, 1989). Teachers generally only receive summative reports that are written entirely by their supervisors. The evaluation protocol is generally followed twice a year for probationary teachers. Checklists and observations inform this practice.

Clinical evaluation processes are negotiated with the teachers’ unions to assure fairness. Clinical evaluation also assures due process, as presented by Lessinger and Salowe (2001). At present, laws mandate this framework as a protection of the employment rights for public school teachers. Due process consists of five elements: known expectations of what is required to be achieved, documented assistance in meeting the expectations, timely knowledge of results, feedback from the results to construct
necessary corrective action, and many chances to be successful through repetition of all
the previous elements. (Lessinger & Salowe, 2001). Clinical supervision is difficult to
change because it meets the legal demands of due process and is included in
legislation. In clinical supervision, the principal completes a summative, year-end report;
the teacher can sign the evaluation report, elect to not sign, or write a response to the
personnel file. In most teacher evaluation, the principal has all the power, and the teacher
has all the vulnerability.

Most teaching and evaluation still happen in isolation: one teacher with students
and one teacher with one evaluator. Some research shows that teacher evaluation focuses
inordinately on what evaluators see teachers doing and not enough on what students are
learning (Iwanicki, 1998; Nolan & Hoover, 2004). However, as Peterson (2000) reports,
“Administrator evaluation of teachers enjoys strong acceptance by precedent. After all,
this is the way teachers have been evaluated in this country for well over 100 years” (p.
204). At its best, administrative observation in supervision practices is unlikely to
capture true teaching quality; the observer will rarely see the best or worst teaching on
the day of evaluation.

Danielson & McGreal investigated the effects teacher classroom behavior has on
student achievement, finding that there was a definite correlation between classroom
instruction and student achievement (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Milanowski et al.,
2005). As a result of the research, a set of fundamental teaching skills became a part of
recent frameworks for teaching that provides a communication link between the school
system and teachers, specifically in the form of teacher evaluation (Darling-Hammond &
Wise, 1985). Madeline Hunter and her colleagues from the University of California Los
Angeles use a behavioristic perspective on learning theory. Hunter and her colleagues developed prescriptive teaching practices designed to improve teacher decision-making and enhance student learning (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). The Hunter model consisted of a seven-step lesson design: (1) anticipatory set, (2) statement of objective, (3) instructional input, (4) modeling, (5) checking for understanding, (6) guided practice, and (7) independent practice (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

While Hunter’s structured classroom model is an important component of the teacher’s instructional strategies, it is only a part of what is seen now as effective teaching (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Hunter’s instructional model encouraged effective teaching and made an impact during the 1980’s to such a degree that state policymakers and local school districts used evaluation criteria based on the seven instructional components.

Teacher evaluation attracted a greater interest when the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (1983), which recommended a fresh look at teacher evaluations. Additionally, teachers were to be required to meet high educational standards, to demonstrate competence in academic discipline(s), and use performance-based strategies (Darling-Hammond & Wise, 1985). However, some evaluation instruments that were developed consisted of rating scales and checklists.

The criteria promoted a summative orientation toward evaluation that persisted into the 1990s that was simply not effective in every case (Danielson & McGreal, 2000 and Darling-Hammond, 2013). The focus was then turned to a formative evaluation system to support teacher growth and development as well as meeting the accountability
demands of the state and federal government. According to Danielson and McGreal (2000), to have an effective formative evaluation for teachers, the evaluation system had to have these six specific conditions: (1) collaborative decision making and a rethinking of the traditional view of the teacher evaluation, (2) increased adult professionals (i.e. teachers, having an active role in the instructional improvements and positive reinforcement as well as support commensurate with their effort and productivity, (3) increased awareness and complexity of teaching, content pedagogy as well as data collection and self-reflection for effective teaching), (4) increased need to differentiate both professional development and teacher evaluation to better fit the pedagogical stages that characterize the teaching staff, (5) understanding effective professional development and its link to the teacher evaluation, (6) moving from the traditional evaluation of classroom observation to a more transforming practice of evaluating teachers by having peer and administration help teachers reflect on their instruction or giving teachers options for peer coaching, conducting action research projects, portfolios, or self-directed professional development (Darling-Hammond, 2013).

Moreover, formative evaluations were developed to shape how schools and districts engage in designing new evaluation systems (Danielson & McGreal, 2000) and provide information that shapes teacher practice (Peterson, 2006). In the late 1980s and 1990s a new view of teaching and learning emerged for teacher evaluation that would lead to improved job performance (Peterson, 2006).

Based on these purposes for teacher evaluations, Popham (1988) reports that there are six approaches to teacher evaluations that have been developed over the past 30 years to improve teaching and learning. They are: (1) evaluation for enhancing instruction:
Concerns over the United States economy and the increased pressure for students to compete in the changing job market have shifted the field toward effective teaching and the need for teacher evaluations to improve job performance and student learning (Danielson and McGreal, 2000).

Common Teacher Evaluation Systems

Engaging in both formal and informal evaluations of classroom teaching and learning has become common to most administrators (Davis et al., 2002). Yet having a system for principals and district personnel to use that supports teacher effectiveness and improves student learning is what is still lacking in K-12 public education. According to Donaldson and Donaldson (2012), despite the less than stellar track record, teacher evaluation has taken center stage in recent efforts to reform public schools in the United States.

According to Milanowski et al. (2005) and Sanders and Rivers (1996) found that if a student has three top-rated teachers in consecutive years, the cumulative gain in achievement was substantial in comparison to a student assigned three lower-rated teachers. Jacob & Lefgren (2008) found that principals can identify effective teachers through teacher evaluation and provide a significant predictor of student achievement.
Marzano and Toth (2013) explained that if students are not demonstrating knowledge growth in a particular teacher’s classroom, then the teacher is ineffective.

**Joint evaluation goal setting.** Darling-Hammond et al. (1983) and Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin, & Berstein (1984) report that teacher evaluation could be used to improve personnel decisions and staff development. The evaluation should serve the individual teacher and the organization through providing improvement in performance as well as accountability (Wise et al., 1984). Using improvement and staff development, the focus is on teacher effectiveness through creating internally verifiable knowledge rather than imposing external rules of behavior. With increased performance and organizational effectiveness for teachers in their evaluation an approach focused on improvement increased: (a) convergence between teachers and administrators in accepting the goals and means for task performance, (b) raised levels of personalized interaction and resource exchange between administration and teachers, (c) lowered prescriptiveness of work tasks, (d) improved teachers’ perceptions that evaluations are soundly-based and that the evaluation is linked to rewards or sanctions, and (e) increased teacher input into the evaluation criteria as well as diversity to evaluation criteria (Wise et al., 1984).

**Standards-based evaluation.** According to Barth (2002), schools exist to promote learning among all their members, and this includes teachers learning through their evaluation system. Milanowski et al. (2005) state that if we believe that quality instruction makes a difference, it requires an accurate and reliable system of measuring instructional behavior with evidence that the behavior we hold teachers accountable for is related to student learning. Therefore, a standards-based teacher evaluation system is
analogous to standards for students and is its logical complement (Milanowski et al., 2005).

As described by Milanowski et al, a standards-based teacher evaluation system provides a comprehensive description of desired teacher performance, it’s a competency model that describes what teachers should know and be able to do in order to facilitate student achievement. The standards-based teacher evaluation does not compare teachers to each other. This approach to evaluation compares multiple forms of evidence on teacher performance to a set of detailed rating scales based on the standards that describe levels of teacher performance on the standards. This rating scale is called a rubric that is criterion referenced. Standards-based evaluation can contribute to a shared conception of good teaching since the standards provide a clear set of expectations and a vocabulary to discuss instruction. Additionally, the goal of the standards-based evaluation system is to provide better signals for teachers seeking to improve their performance and to improve teacher capacity and influence instruction, which is likely to be the strongest means under a school’s control to pursue the end of higher student achievement (Milanowski et al., 2005).

**Student performance in teacher evaluation.** Donaldson and Donaldson (2012) reports that teachers make a crucial difference in students’ academic performance. Yet, teacher quality through performance evaluations has made little ground in terms of teachers’ instructional improvement. Donaldson and Donaldson (2012) studied components of an evaluation that used student growth on academic performance measures and observation-based data. The goal was two-fold, to improve teacher instructional practice and increase student growth on state tests.
The study the following components were found to be effective components for a teacher evaluation: (a) personal goal setting by the teacher with the administrator, (b) teachers having a direct role in developing the evaluation system, (c) use of student performance data in the teacher’s goals. Teachers having real consequences for achieving or failing to achieve their student performance goals seemed to produce demonstrable changes in teacher behavior (Donaldson & Donaldson, 2012).

Duke (1995) emphasizes that the two primary purposes for teacher evaluation are accountability and professional growth. He analyzes the individual characteristics associated with professional growth and organizational characteristics that facilitate growth. Through Duke’s (1990) analysis of the characteristics of individual and organizational growth, he determined that a growth-oriented teacher evaluation is what fosters the cultivation of uniqueness and virtuosity. The outcomes of the growth-oriented teacher evaluation system can be: (a) teachers have high expectations for themselves, (b) teachers are willing to take risks, (c) teachers have a positive orientation toward change, (d) teachers prefer growth opportunities over cash rewards, (e) teachers have an awareness of needed professional development, (f) teachers set tangible professional goals at the beginning of the evaluation cycle each year.

**Teacher effectiveness.** According to Sanders, Wright, and Horn (1997), effective teachers appear to be effective with students at all achievement levels regardless of the level of heterogeneity in their classrooms. Students who have ineffective teachers will not progress academically regardless of how homogeneous they are. Although within class variation students is an important factor in educational outcomes, the authors claim that
more can be done to improve education by improving the effectiveness of teachers than by any other factor.

School-based administrative and professional leadership plays an essential role in determining the meaning and value of the teacher evaluation in schools (Davis et al. 2002). According to Davis et al. (2002) leadership makes the difference between perfunctory summative teacher evaluations and meaningful assessment of the teaching and learning process that has the potential to enhance the quality of teaching and student learning. Davis et al. say that a model teacher evaluation has components that emphasize teacher and administrator collaboration, share a common voice, professional growth, and a practice of self-assessment. Additionally, if the evaluation system is to be effective, then there has to be an integration of: (a) new conception of school leadership that fosters supportive cultures and a learning organization, (b) reflective professional practice by educators that is linked to actual practice, reflecting a radical shift in leadership style, and 3) leadership which develops relationships (Davis et al., 2002).

According to Peterson (2004) teacher quality is determined in a subjective way, but the determination is a kind of *expert* subjectivity that embraces scientific thinking. Moreover, gains in student scores on standardized tests, professional growth, and performance define many current views of teacher effectiveness in what may be viewed in a more objective manner. However, the key components to teacher evaluations should aim to improve performance, identify deficiencies in teachers, compare teachers, and use mandated practices. Additionally, Peterson states that leaders should document current effectiveness, highlight teacher success, and give teachers a choice in data gathering.
New Models of Teacher Evaluation

The shift from traditional supervision places more importance on the effects of a changing populace, the complicated nature of teaching, professionalism of teachers, and the need to continually improve schools. To move to new models of supervision requires a departure from lockstep practice (Danielson, 2011; Papay, 2012). These changes are difficult to realize as a result of resistance to change, politics and a lack of resources, including time and money. There are several representations of these changes but few places where these new approaches are in use. In this time of continual change in school, new models of supervision could guide teachers’ growth while addressing accountability. For instance, teachers viewing student outcomes may commit to experimenting with new methodologies and using transformative or new evaluation practices to guide their praxis with students. Three types of teacher evaluation are changing traditional evaluation.

Charlotte Danielson Teacher Evaluation Model. The Charlotte Danielson Teacher Evaluation Model (Danielson, 2007) has emerged to be a very popular design. The Danielson model defines good teaching and uses a common language that educators can follow. Teachers and administrators find her to be a reliable source. Grounded in research, Danielson published *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching* in 1996. This book was popular and widely used in the late 1990’s and 2000’s before legislative action in states began an overhaul of teacher evaluations. The book was updated in 2007, which was well timed with the Race to the
Top federal funding competition under the Obama administration. The Danielson Model was viewed as a tried and tested framework that was readily available for school districts to evaluate teachers.

A key reason for having a multi-tier evaluation system is what Danielson (2007) calls a question of fairness. Under past evaluation systems all teachers who went about their jobs without causing any major problems would be lumped into the “satisfactory” category. This meant that an incredibly large group of teachers were consistently rated as the same when clearly there are some who were better at teaching than others. There would also be a very small number of teachers that were rated as “un-satisfactory” when it would be clear that there were many more teachers who needed help but had not done anything extreme enough to get the “unsatisfactory” grade.

Danielson makes a good case for why we have systems for teacher evaluation. Her first point of emphasis is to provide a clear definition of the what of teaching and then have instruments and procedures that provide evidence of the how of teaching (Danielson, 2007). Using this definition helps evaluators to make accurate judgments based on the evidence of teaching. In turn, this will help guide professional development for teachers to understand and execute the methods being evaluated in good teaching practices.

Danielson (2007) explains why it is important to assess teacher effectiveness. First and foremost, teaching is a fulfillment of public trust. Parents trust that teachers will provide safety and learning for their children. Public money provides for the salary of teachers as compensation for this public trust. Another reason for assessing teacher effectiveness is to comply with state law. Even before states passed
legislation calling for more stringent teacher evaluation, laws were in place providing for quality teachers in each state. Observations have almost always been a part of American education. State law requires effective teachers. Since teaching can be complex and challenging, Danielson (2007) claims that professional development is essential, and a more specific way to measure effectiveness can assist in identifying areas of needed improvement.

The Danielson model (2011) of teacher evaluation is divided into four domains: planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. Under each domain, the teacher is then evaluated on a four-tier evaluation scale of Unsatisfactory, Basic, Proficient, and Distinguished. This four-tier scale effectively eliminates the old method of satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

**Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model.** The primary purpose of the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model is to enhance the pedagogical skills of teachers (Marzano, 2011). The model itself is designed to link student achievement, teacher pedagogical skill, and evaluation together. Like the Danielson model, there are four domains in the Marzano model. The domains are strikingly similar in different order: Domain 1 is Classroom Strategies and Behaviors, Domain 2 is Planning and Preparing, Domain 3 is Reflecting on Teaching, Domain 4 is Collegiality and Professionalism. For each domain, Marzano has books such as *The Art and Science of Teaching* that further support each category. A summary of the four Marzano domains is provided below.
Figure 1 shows Marzano’s Model from *The Art and Science of Teaching* (Marzano, 2007, p. 1). The model is composed of four domains and 60 elements within the domains.

A key difference in the Marzano Model is the use of a five-part scale to rate teachers instead of the four-part scale used in the Danielson model. The categories are labeled Innovating (4), Applying (3), Developing (2), Beginning (1), and Not Using (0). Within each category of each domain, the Marzano scale provides examples detailing what it takes to earn that rating. A component of the Marzano (2011) Teacher Evaluation Model is well-designed rubrics. The rubric is clear and functional. For example, when a principal is evaluating a teacher, there is a checklist for teacher evidence and a checklist
for student evidence. There is a section for observation notes and a summary of what it takes to get a certain score.

A good question in regard to teacher evaluation is whether or not veteran teachers should be evaluated in the same fashion as beginning teachers. Marzano addresses this question by including stages of development guideline as part of the evaluation system. Teachers are divided into stages of Initial Status, Professional, Mentor, and Master. Each stage includes benchmarks as to which score a teacher should earn for each domain. It is common for beginning teachers to be given the most challenging teaching assignments at the lowest performing schools with very little support.

**CEL 5D+ Model.** The third new teacher evaluation option for school districts is the CEL 5D+ Model. The Center for Educational Leadership (CEL) is a service arm of the University of Washington College of Education. Established in 2001, the CEL began with a mission to create research-based programs focused on improving the quality of learning and leadership in our nation’s schools (Hargreaves & Fink, 2012). In 2007, CEL created a teacher evaluation system called the 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning (5D+). At the core of the CEL 5D+ Evaluation Model are five dimensions called Purpose, Student Engagement, Curriculum and Pedagogy, Assessment for Student Learning, and Classroom Environment and Culture. There are thirteen sub dimensions: Standards, Teaching Point, Intellectual Work, Engagement Strategies, Talk, Curriculum, Teaching Approaches and/or strategies, Scaffolds for Learning, Assessment, Adjustment, Use of Physical Environment, Classroom Routines and Rituals, and Classroom Culture. From these dimensions and sub-dimensions a rubric was developed that captures a teacher’s level: A novice instructional leader (1), an emerging instructional
leader (2), A developing instructional leader (3), and an expert instructional leader (4). Like the Marzano and Danielson models, the CEL 5D+ Model matches the eight criteria of requirements for teachers in the state of Washington.

A key objective of the CEL 5D+ evaluation tool is to differentiate between novice and expert teachers. Novice teachers are not as advanced in the content of what they teach and sometimes might teach inaccurate information. Expert teachers know the content extremely well and are able to articulate thought-provoking questions to generate student interest and understanding. Novice teachers sometimes lack patience and make rash evaluative judgments, while expert teachers use a wide array of evidence to pose questions that will help form strategies and actions. Expert teachers are more aligned in leadership action and tend to be more metacognitive in decision-making. The CEL 5D+ Model highlights the evaluative process as a whole.

This model was used to create a user-friendly online tool that could be administered anywhere. The Marzano and Danielson models have since used technology to be user friendly, but the CEL 5D+ Model was user friendly from early on. The evaluative process involved using a website to watch a twenty-minute lesson and write a response to three questions. After submission of the response it would be sent to the University of Washington where two UWCEL staff would independently rate the responses using the four-point rubric. The University of Washington claims to have a 92% inter-rating reliability (Hargreaves & Fink, 2012). The CEL research suggests that years of experience do not necessarily make a big difference in instructional expertise (Hargreaves & Fink, 2012). A key component in regard to the new teacher evaluation instruments is evaluator consistency. In one study of the CEL 5D+ Model, it took faculty
four hours practicing with the evaluation tool to gain a consistent, shared evaluation of the teacher’s performance (Fink, 2012).

All three of the popular newer evaluation systems require the building principal to evaluate the teacher. Philosophically, this might not be ideal if you consider the potential of peer evaluations, student input, or parent input. Having an evaluation performed by the building principal provokes political based, top-down management. Many principals have limited classroom experience and their strengths often lay in others important elements of school life such as safety, discipline, maintenance, and facilitation of meetings. A well-rounded and thorough teacher evaluation is expected to take up time if done correctly. Making time for such effective evaluations is difficult for principals of whom so many demands are made. The number of administrative evaluators compared to teachers to be evaluated in each school is staggering.

**Transformative Supervision**

Starratt and Howells (1998) compared traditional and transformative supervision and evaluation. Transformative evaluation shows high regard for teacher knowledge and calls for teachers to self-evaluate. Pajak (2000) described the contrast between traditional and emerging practice in evaluation and supervision. He described the family of supervisory practices closely related to transformative work as developmental or reflective. Supervisors and teachers need to take risks in a supportive environment, if they are to move toward justice and equity. He concluded the attributes required for emerging supervisory practice to be successful are complex. Reflection and introspection require an environment of commitment and trust. Trust builds with congruence between statements and actions. Trust grows in an environment that values teachers as
professionals. An environment of trust is necessary to support transformative reflection that examines deeply held beliefs (Costa and Kallick, 2000). Exploration of these beliefs is uncomfortable, and will not promote equity on its own. Pajak’s (2000) work is aligned with Knowles’ (1984) work in adult learning theory. Knowles has the belief that adults must participate in their own learning and growth; they can serve as resources to themselves and others. If teachers hold answers, they can be empowered in a school environment with certain practices in place.

Recent developments in the field of teacher evaluation also address adult learning engagement and include peer coaching, cognitive coaching, portfolio development, three-minute walk-throughs (Derrington, 2011), multiple measures, using rubrics to assess a proficiency level, using testing outcomes to measure teaching effectiveness, national teacher certification processes, and other effective measures. Current approaches do not allow teachers the right and responsibility to conduct their own evaluation and evaluate their own teaching. Nor do these approaches call for the examination of teacher belief systems, the ability to be effective reaching across difference, or continuous improvement behaviors of trust, risk taking, and inquiry (Costa & Kallick, 2000). Although moving beyond traditional models, these processes still do not specifically address sustainable, whole school reform.

At its best inclusive teacher evaluation can be formative, supporting teacher development and whole school improvement. If formative, teacher evaluation can lead to substantive teacher growth, enhanced student outcomes, and school improvement focused on student learning (Danielson, 2012; Iwanicki, 1998; Nolan & Hoover, 2011; Peterson, 2000). Conversely, teacher evaluation can be a ritualized, power-laden, mandatory, rule
governed experience (Peterson, 2000). In most teacher evaluation practices, teachers play the role of factory workers in a quality-assurance model who must be monitored.

To impact a whole school, teachers need to be less isolated, treated as professionals, and afforded opportunities to share. Most teachers do not observe other teachers teaching; they often see other adults only at lunchtime (Short & Greer, 2002). Naming isolation and the poorly defined process, Palmer (cited in Peterson, 2000) observed, “Consider the way teaching is evaluated. When we cannot observe each other’s teaching, we get evaluation practices that are distanced, demoralizing, and even disreputable….Teachers have every right to be demoralized by such a simplistic approach” (p. 142).

Demoralization of teachers can be pervasive in schools facing challenges such as students in poverty, those who are second language learners, or those with other special needs. Heisinger’s (1994) study focused on what teachers recognized as important in their own professional development. Teachers reported the following aspects of their professional development, listed in descending order of importance: self-actualization, social opportunities, basic learning, status improvement, and security needs (Heisinger, 1994, p. 3). He recommended that “Staff development activities should incorporate opportunities for collegial interaction among teachers” (p. 233). Similarly, the interview study of Kauchak, Peterson, & Driscoll (1985) found that teachers believe principal supervisory visits are perfunctory, brief, infrequent, not applicable, a nuisance, and not rigorous. Teachers find evaluative visits helpful when principals reassure and support them or when they believe the principal has expertise. Otherwise, teachers said that evaluative visits did not improve instruction. Overcoming isolation, moving from a
preoccupation with inspection toward facilitated growth, from a micro to a macro conceptualization of supervisory context, and creating community are essential to effective teacher evaluation practice (Glickman & Kanawati, 1998).

Adams and Kirst (1999) proposed suggestions about how evaluation can change. Leaders need to break up the atomistic accountability of teachers operating behind classroom doors. Isolated teachers do not discuss what teachers are collectively accountable for, thus, they cannot participate responsibly in school (and state) efforts to improve student achievement (p. 486). They say that opening the doors and the walls between classrooms and allowing space and time to talk about teaching in sustainable ways requires committed leaders working openly with teachers in continuous collegial exchange. Schools are often loosely coupled systems with inherent teacher isolation, so building shared leadership in schools is a novel and connecting idea (Adams & Kirst, 1999)

Change calls for a move from traditional to transformative supervision, a framework that includes professional development, quality teacher practices, informative supervision, and trusting relationships. It calls above all for collaboration. Transformative evaluation is the new frontier of supervision. Perhaps, most importantly, this approach acknowledges that teaching is complex and uncertain. A transformative evaluation approach lessens isolation, connects teacher efforts to school improvement, and considers diversity. It calls for new behaviors on the part of principals and teachers. Administrators need to act as partners with teachers, build trust, and seek ways to connect teacher evaluation to overall improvement.
Leadership capacity for transformative evaluation. Blankstein (2004) advocates that professional learning communities build shared leadership skills. In professional learning communities, teacher leaders gather staff input and entertain all ideas, even if they initially seem absurd. They collaboratively identify ideas to keep and those to discard. They routinely plan and set goals, openly review actions and then set new goals in a continuous improvement cycle (Chenoweth & Everhart, 2002; Costa & Kallick, 2002). Sergiovanni (1995) termed this leadership density and Lambert (1998) calls it leadership capacity. Collaboration requires learning about leadership and taking actions congruent with desired outcomes (Greenfield, 2004).

Studying leadership characteristics of principals, Greenfield (2004) included the following attributes: communication, vision, initiative, comfort with risk, data analysis, energy, and determination. These attributes describe all school leaders, from principal to custodian. Increased leadership density can help schools navigate the dips and valleys of change. At the center of the assumptions of this study is the assertion that teachers involved in the study are high performers. That is, they are of contract status and have been involved in school improvement efforts. They may serve as department chair or as a member of a school improvement committee. They gladly extend themselves to take on new tasks, if the tasks support the improvement of school for students, colleagues, or the school community. These teachers seek to improve their ability to reach students, to learn about their own practice and to self evaluate. It is this context and commitment that stretches the teacher to become a teacher leader in a classroom or school environment (Greenfield, 2004).
Theoretical Framework

Although ideas and concepts of the term sensemaking began in the early 20th century, Karl E. Weick derived the foundational theoretical framework to comprehend aspects of sensemaking (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 1995). Sensemaking is not a single theory (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 1995), instead it is a process that determines the meaning of what is being interpreted (Ancona, 2012; Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). This study uses Weick’s (1995) sensemaking theoretical framework as the processes for comprehension and organization of the factors that impact teacher evaluation.

To fully comprehend Weick’s (1995) sensemaking framework, he lists seven properties that describe the process of understanding constructs and how the sensemaker interprets these constructs. The properties distinguish sensemaking from other explanatory processes. These seven characteristics help understand, interpret, and attribute phenomena to sensemaking:

- Grounded in identity construction
- Retrospective
- Enactive of sensible environments
- Social
- Ongoing
- Focused on and by extracted cues
- Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy

the sensemaker” (p.18). The sensemaker builds on identity through interaction with others (Weick, 1995). Each sensemaker’s personality is developed by the communications with other individuals. Therefore, the meaning of constructs will change based on experiences with others. Weick (1995) stated, “Depending on who I am, my definition of what is out there will also change” (p.21).

**Retrospective.** Retrospective sensemaking stems from Schutz’s (1967) definition of meaningful *lived* experience. Weick (1995) focuses on the term *lived* as stated in the past tense to “capture the reality that people can know what they are doing only after they have done it” (p. 24). Weick explains that actions happen in the present; however, in order to reflect upon them it is necessary to look back after they have occurred. According to Weick (1995), an action can become an object of attention only after it has occurred, meaning that actions are focused on after they have happened.

Retrospective sensemaking occurs when reflecting back on an action; however, there are multiple things happening during the time of reflection that may give the sensemaker multiple interpretations of the action. Therefore, Weick (1995) states that there are three key things to remember when investigating sensemaking: “relatively short time spans between act and reflection; retrospection makes the past clearer than the present or future; and the feeling of order, clarity, and rationality is an important goal of sensemaking” (p. 29). These three things will keep the memory fresh when reflecting and only a few things will be in mind which will avoid multiple interpretations of the event. By understanding the past and achieving clarity and rationality, the sensemaker will have completed retrospective processing.
**Enactive of sensible environments.** Weick (1995) discusses the term *enactment* used to explain that people construct the environment they face. People enact restrictions within their environments because they expect it and then have to abide by these restrictions. “People create and find what they expect to find” (p. 35), like a self-fulfilling prophecy. There are two considerations that Weick states in enacting sensible environments. The first is “The idea that action can be inhibited, abandoned, checked, or redirected, as well as expressed, suggests that there are many ways in which action can affect meaning other than by producing visible consequences in the world” (p. 37). Actions do not always have to result in the outcomes, since they can be inhibited, abandoned, checked or redirected. The second is that people need the idea that the world has fixed and stable references for confidence and stability (Weick, 1995).

**Social.** Weick (1995) explains that the term sensemaking invites people to think of it as an individual reflection. However, sensemaking does include socialization. The social process in sensemaking allows for shaping the interpretations of the sensemaker. Even though a person undergoes the process of sensemaking on their own, they are socializing through interactions with others in defining what is happening or has happened. “Sensemaking is never solitary because what a person does internally is contingent on others” (p. 40).

**Ongoing.** Weick explains that sensemaking is a process that doesn’t start or stop because people take moments from time to interpret the situation. Moments are really a continuous flow, and the flow is interrupted by reflecting on those moments. Emotions are induced by the interruption of flows. These feelings, or emotional responses to a reflection of a moment, influence sensemaking. He describes emotion as “what happens
between the time that an organized sequence is interrupted and the time at which the interruption is removed, or a substitute response is found that allows the sequence to be completed” (p. 46). When interruption occurs an emotion is displayed; however, this emotion can be positive or negative depending on why the action sequence was interrupted. The emotions affect sensemaking as they impact other properties in sensemaking.

**Focused on and by extracted cues.** Weick (1995) explains *extracted* cues as “The ‘what’ that I single out and embellish as the content of the thought is only a small portion of the utterance that becomes salient because of context and personal dispositions” (p. 62). He explains that the sensemaker must first notice cues for them to be *extracted*. Once noticed the cue is interpreted; however, the context affects the interpretation.

**Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy.** As described by Weick (1995) “Accuracy is nice, but not necessary” (p. 56). Sensemaking is driven by reasonableness, plausibility, and pragmatics. Accuracy is not a priority in the process of sensemaking due to deconstructing of continuous flows and the interpretations. Each interpretation may have multiple meanings which undermines the concept of accuracy.

**Conclusions from the Research Literature**

Kyriakides & Demetrious (2007) summarized a critical problem faced by most educational systems as the need to develop a valid teacher evaluation system. They report that in the past few years many states have made changes to their teacher evaluation systems to incorporate multiple measures of teacher effectiveness and student performance information. This will continue to change in years to come due to changes
in of the CCSS. Local Education Agencies need to make changes in teacher evaluation in order to effect the improvement in instruction and student performance that is expected of schools.

According to Duke (1995) there is no doubt that some have grown dissatisfied with traditional teacher evaluation. For politicians critical of public schools, and their allies, teacher evaluation symbolizes a *get tough* strategy to ensure that incompetent teachers are removed from classrooms. For teachers, and, to some extent, school administrators, teacher evaluation reform constitutes an opportunity to improve school climate, promote professionalism, and provide constructive feedback to teachers as they undertake ongoing professional development (Duke, 1995, p. 185). While teacher evaluation can be used as a get-tough strategy, that approach is antithetical to building a climate for professional growth. A negative environment does not engender an open dialogue. The teacher experiencing negativity is likely to withdraw from the supervisor. Nonetheless, teacher evaluation can be an improvement opportunity.

Due to its history, range of purposes, poor definition, and power structure, teacher evaluation is often meaningless, especially for high performing teachers (Peterson, 2000). Teacher evaluation determines if a teacher works, gains highly qualified status or loses employment. The high stakes nature of these outcomes also does not lend for open exchange focused on the practices of the teacher and the resulting abilities of the students. Historically, teacher evaluation has not helped teachers improve their professionalism, and is seldom included in school improvement efforts (Iwanicki, 1998). Harris (1998) asserted that in the field of school supervision research, teacher evaluation may be the most conflict-prone.
While it is yet to be determined what the future of teacher evaluation will hold, it is clear that a shift in the traditional teacher evaluation process in education is underway. The Common Core State Standards have given districts the perfect opportunity to change the evaluation process for the better in order to reflect what is really important in schools: effective student learning. Improving the quality and effectiveness of American schools cannot be achieved without better and more effective teacher evaluation.

**Summary**

The literature on teacher evaluation describes the historical development of approaches to supervising, monitoring, and evaluating teacher performance. Duffy (1998) described the historical development of teacher evaluation into four broad periods: administrative inspection, efficiency orientation, cooperative group effort, and research orientation. From the earliest approaches, teacher evaluation has maintained consistent characteristics of being top-down, required as a primary responsibility of principals, and regulated by states and districts. Federal reforms affect the conceptions of teacher evaluation and student learning and inconsistencies as levels of the educational system challenge administrators to meet different requirements and expectations. While recent reforms describe cooperative processes and using research to guide teacher evaluation, there is a need to understand how principals are making sense of this complexity and contradiction in their practices of teacher evaluation.

Chapter 3 describes the research questions and methods. Chapter 4 provides the findings, and Chapter 5 is the conclusions and implications.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate how school principals make sense of and adapt to ambiguity and possible contradictions between traditional district policies for teacher evaluation and federal reform policies to improve teaching and student learning. Based on the review of the literature, two research questions guide the methodology.

Research question 1: How are evaluating administrators using old models within new requirements for teaching the CCSS?
   a. What training is provided by the district for principals on teacher evaluation?
   b. What training is provided on the specific evaluation model used in the district?
   c. What training is provided about providing feedback to teachers in regards to making the feedback useful?

Research question 2: What do evaluating administrators know about evaluation models?
   a. Have you found tools that you use to help you through the evaluation process
   b. What do you use aside from the district provided evaluation form when conducting evaluations?
   c. Have you created any forms or tools that help you provide a robust evaluation with feedback to help the teacher? Please share with me what you use?

Research Design

In order to gather data that responds to the research questions, interviews and artifacts such as district policies, evaluation checklists, and other forms or methods of
teacher evaluation were the primary forms of data. Because of differences across districts, the focus on how principals are making sense of complex, contradictory policies indicated a focus on a single district as a case study (Creswell, 2012). A single case study provides the case boundary and a consistent set of policy directives to compare strategies within the district across schools that are all subject to the same external and internal policy context.

Using sensemaking as the theoretical framework indicates the use of qualitative methods to determine what and how the research participants made sense of the situation under study. Creswell (2008) defines qualitative research as follows:

Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under a study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns and themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of the participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and it extends the literature or signals a call for action. (p. 37).

Qualitative studies enable the researcher to gather information directly from people, including nuances that might not be revealed through more structured data collection such as surveys. However, the time intensive nature of data collection and analysis means that fewer participants can be included. For this study, the design and methods were consistent with the sensemaking theoretical framework of gathering
detailed information from key individuals who carry out the phenomena under investigation.

Lichtman (2013) identified common elements found in various definitions of qualitative studies as follows: “Qualitative research is a way to study the social interactions of humans in naturally occurring situations. The researcher plays a critical role in the process by gathering data and making sense [emphasis added] of or interpreting the phenomena that are observed and revealed” (p. 12).

Merriam (2009) stresses, “a central characteristic of qualitative research is that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds” (p. 13). This means that qualitative researchers are interested in how people understand their experiences, how people socially construct the world around them, and what meaning they give to their experiences, which is parallel to the research on sense making reviewed in the foundational literature by Weick (1995). Merriam describes related methods as having been derived philosophically from constructionism, phenomenology, and symbolic interaction and as being used by researchers who are interested in "(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences. The overall purpose is to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences" (p. 23).

**Case Study Research Setting: Shady View School District**

The setting of this study was the researcher’s school district in which I serve as the principal of a large K-8 school. The district is described using the pseudonym of Shady View School District. Shady View School District is a mid-sized district located in the San Gabriel valley east of Los Angeles. It serves an estimated 15,000 students. The
district has had years of declining enrollment reducing the student count by about 10% each year.

Shady View School District has eleven elementary schools, three K-8 schools, two intermediate schools, two high schools, one continuation high school, and one adult school. The schools are located throughout five surrounding cities populated by diverse cultures, languages, and socioeconomic level residents. An estimated 66% of Shady View students receive free or reduced lunch. The English learner population is composed of 4,027 students, most of whom are Spanish speakers. Approximately 75% of English learners speak Spanish, 11% speak Mandarin, 4% Cantonese, and 3.5% speak Tagalog.

Participant Selection

Lichtman (2014) says that a “purposeful sample is chosen in which participants meet the criteria you have identified” (p. 250). The researcher described the study at meetings of principals in the district and asked for volunteers who were elementary or K-8 principals with at least three years of experience in the district evaluating teachers. In addition, I used snowball sampling in the event some principals were not at the meetings. According to Creswell (2012), snowball sampling is when the researcher asks others to nominate participants who meet the criteria for the study. The following brief descriptions of the participants in the study are provided to give some context about their responses in Chapter 4.

Principal A of Elm Academy K-8. Elm Academy has an enrollment of over 600 students ranging from transitional kindergarten to eighth grade. The students and the community are predominately Hispanic and Asian, and over 50% of the students are socioeconomically disadvantaged and receive free and reduced lunch. Spanish is the
predominant second language. Principal A has been an administrator for over 10 years and has been the principal evaluating teachers at Elm for over three years.

**Principal B of Oak Intermediate.** Oak Intermediate serves a predominantly Hispanic population with over 600 students enrolled in seventh through eighth grade. An estimated 79.5% of the students at Oak Intermediate are socioeconomically disadvantaged and receive free and reduced lunch. The school is located in a lower socioeconomic status area surrounded by single family homes close to local business and warehouses. Principal B has been in the district over 20 years and has over three years’ experience evaluating teachers.

**Principal C of Pine Elementary.** Pine Elementary serves a predominantly Asian and Hispanic population composed of over 600 students with over half socioeconomically disadvantaged and receiving free and reduced lunch. The school is located in a middle class area of single family homes. Principal C has been evaluating teachers for over 3 years.

**Principal D of Spruce Elementary.** Spruce Elementary serves a predominantly Hispanic population in which over 90% of the students are socioeconomically disadvantaged and receive free and reduced lunch. The school is located in a lower class area of single-family homes. Principal D is also a long-term employee of the district and has evaluated teachers for over three years.

**Principal E of Evergreen Elementary.** Evergreen Elementary serves a predominantly Asian and Hispanic population of less than 500 students, with over half socioeconomically disadvantaged receiving free and reduced lunch. The school is located
in a middle class area of single-family homes. Principal E has been an administrator in the district for over ten years and has conducted teacher evaluations for over three years.

**Principal F of Birch Elementary.** Birch Elementary serves a predominantly Asian and Hispanic population of less than 500 students and more than ¾ are socioeconomically disadvantaged and receive free and reduced lunch. The school is located in a lower middle class area of single-family homes and apartment complexes close to a major retail and industrial area in one of the most densely populated areas of the district. Principal F is a long-term employee of the district and at the school. He has evaluated teachers for over three years.

**Principal G of Maple Elementary.** Maple Elementary serves a predominantly Hispanic population composed of less than 500 students with almost half categorized as English learners. Over 50% of the students are socioeconomically disadvantaged and receive free and reduced lunch. The school is located in a middle class area with single family homes and apartment buildings. Principal G been employed in the district over 10 years and has evaluated teachers for over three years.

**Interviews**

Researchers rely on interviews to find out information that cannot be directly observed, such as feelings, thoughts and intentions (Merriam, 2009). The purpose of using interviewing in research studies is also to allow the researcher to enter into another person’s perspective (Merriam, 2009). According to Creswell (2012), “researchers ask one or more participants general, open-ended questions and record their answers. The researcher then transcribes and types the data into a computer file for analysis” (p. 217).
According to Lichtman (2013), qualitative interviewing is one of the primary techniques researchers use to gather data.

For this research study, I conducted the interviews with the seven principals who volunteered for the study using a semi-structured interview protocol (See Appendix A). The interviews were recorded and transcribed for coding. One participant was unavailable for an in-person interview due to a planned vacation. He responded to all questions orally and sent an audio file to me. The audio was then transcribed and a follow-up phone interview took place in order to elicit more detail and clarification of a few answers.

The interviews were scheduled after the school year had finished and school was no longer in session. All interviews lasted about sixty minutes. They were conducted at each principal’s school site or a place that was chosen by the participant for convenience and privacy.

Each question was open-ended to allow the participants to elaborate on the questions as desired. I asked them to expand on their answers if I needed further clarification. Two follow-up phone interviews were required for clarification. One follow-up interview took place because the audio did not record the complete interview after an interruption. A second follow-up phone interview was for clarification.

Data Analysis: Coding

According to Saldana (2009) “A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3). The codes allowed the researcher to find themes and base recommendations on the themes that
emerged throughout the study. Creswell (2012) encourages the following steps that are most pertinent to this research study:

- Get a general sense of the data—explore the data by reading the transcripts several times, adding memos when needed.
- Pick one document at a time to analyze.
- Code documents by setting context, perspectives, participant’s way of thinking, processes, activities, strategies, and social structures.
- After coding all the text, make a list of all of the code words and narrow down to 25 to 30 codes.
- Reduce the codes to themes (p. 244).

He stresses the importance of coding for themes since “the identification of themes provides the complexity of a story and adds depth to the insight about understanding individual experiences” (p. 511). After coding the data, Creswell (2012) encourages the researcher to choose five to seven themes for each research question in order to tell the story (p. 511).

After reviewing the transcripts several times, I looked for common themes across participants. I chose five common themes for each of the two research questions, and I identified two big ideas to use in the discussion portion of the study.

**Role of the Researcher**

I am currently a K-8 Principal in the case study district. I have been a principal in the school for over five years and had the opportunity to work with other principals and establish good professional relationships to discuss and share ideas, materials, and strategies. The advantage of having worked in the district in which I will conduct my
research is that I have established a high level of trust with many of the participants. The participants may be more willing to be candid and open with their answers, feelings and beliefs.

Creswell (2012) encourages the researcher to preface all interactions with participants in ways that enable trust and openness by:

- Informing all participants of the purpose of the study [in this case, investigating how the principals were making sense of the teacher evaluation system and their own practices];
- Using ethical research practices (refraining from any deceptive practices);
- Sharing the researcher’s information with participants [including role and perspective on the situation as a problem to be addressed by each principal]; and
- Collaborating with participants (p. 382)

**Summary**

This chapter described the research study design, the methods, the setting, data sources, data collection, data analysis, and the role of the researcher. Chapter 4 presents the findings.
Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate how current administrators make sense of current evaluation models and how they supplement the traditional teacher evaluation process in order to gather important information, evaluate what is observed and provide useful feedback to the teachers that can be of value to the teacher to improve instruction. The theoretical framework of sensemaking indicates that investigating what educators know, how they interpret their responsibilities, and barriers they perceive will inform research, local policies, and practices of effective teacher evaluation.

Research Questions

The following research questions framed the purpose of the study. These research questions explored the topic of how administrators adapt district’s policies on teacher evaluation to meet the needs of their staffs and provide useful feedback to their teachers.

Research question 1: How are evaluating administrators using old models within new requirements for teaching the CCSS?
   a. What training is provided by the district for principals on teacher evaluation?
   b. What training is provided on the specific evaluation model used in the district?
   c. What training is provided about providing feedback to teachers in regards to making the feedback useful?

Research question 2: What do evaluating administrators know about evaluation models?
   a. Have you found tools that you use to help you through the evaluation process
b. What do you use aside from the district provided evaluation form when conducting evaluations?

c. Have you created any forms or tools that help you provide a robust evaluation with feedback to help the teacher? Please share with me what you use?

Responses to Research Question One

The first research question asked: How are evaluating administrators using old models within new requirements for teaching the CCSS? The interview questions were:
a) What training is provided by the district for principals on teacher evaluation? b) What training is provided on the specific evaluation model used in the district? c) What training is provided about providing feedback to teachers in regards to making the feedback useful? The five themes that were identified across respondents were need for training, district training focus on compliance, principals know the importance of compliance and going beyond compliance, courageous conversations, need for training in effective feedback and communication about data, are explained from the data in detail in the following section.

Theme one: Need for training. Principal A shared the importance of his/her belief that training was not a priority in the past several years. S/he has been a principal at the same school for 10+ years. S/he remembers a time that there were some in-depth training about teacher evaluation and feedback, but it was over a decade ago. Most of the principals in the district were not principals or not even in the district at that time. This belief is evident when s/he stated,

I remember we used to go meet them at the PRC, which was our education center with all other principals. It was kind of part of our principal’s meeting, and it was
more about if a teacher needs help with this, this is what you would say; if you
need to pair up a teacher, who should you pair them up with; if you need to find
information, call us if you need to get through this and more that kind of stuff and
then also on specific things that were coming out. So right now if that were
happening, we would be getting information on how to talk to your teachers about
common core, what to look for on common core, what things should be there and
what’s missing, and we’ve gotten a lot of information but it’s more about here’s
the PowerPoint and talk to your teachers through this. We really haven’t gotten
anything on coaching evaluation. I mean I don’t feel we have.

The response of the Principal C of Pine Elementary was similar. S/he recalled
that the last time he remembers training of this sort was when he was a vice principal,
As far as training about how to observe teachers, there hasn’t been one in a very
long time. The very first year I was an assistant principal. I remember I went to a
professional resource center and got some training from district teachers on
special assignments, I believe there were programs/something, but they were
coaches, and they helped us as administrators.

S/he recalled that the training has not been focused on how to make sure the evaluations
are productive.

Principal D of Spruce Elementary shared similar thoughts. S/he recalled that
there has not been any training about the quality of teacher evaluations since he was a
vice principal 10+ years ago.

As the vice principal, we had a couple of training days about scripting so this is
done in the old days with the professional PRC, and so basically, we have
conversations about different ways to observe and note take, and really that’s what it was about, updating skills on when you’re watching somebody teach. Fast-forwarding afterwards a few different times in the last eight years, the personnel person has gone over the evaluation tool and we’ve had conversations around the tool, but that’s pretty much it.

Finally, Principal F also noted that an inconsistent training for principals has been a theme in the district for the past several years. S/he shared an example of this when he said,

Not very much training specifically on a tool. We've had over the last number of years, we've had some changes in our district leadership. So there's been different evaluations or different interpretations of the tool and process that we use. Most people coming in have been from the outside. So therefore, they look at our tool, they scratch their head, and they're kind of say, “What this is”. This is the training and the training really has been around timelines, making sure that the compliance aspect of the evaluation is very clear and understood and that we don't miss time lines from a contractual standpoint, but the actual training regarding the use of the tool, effective use of the tool really hasn't taken place as a district.

Principal B, the school principal of Oak Intermediate, explained:

This is, you know, after three years of being an administrator or as a principal, two years of being assistant principal, my only training that I’ve had has been very sporadic in terms of in a meeting with all of district leadership in the same place, reviewing our forms. And then to me, it has always been very informal. We’ve had many different assistant superintendents of HR give us their own take,
but their training has been more on how to better take notes on those forms. So I really have very little training in terms of the purpose of evaluation or our vision in terms of evaluation, what we hope to attain from evaluation. So, to answer that question, I feel that I’ve had very little training.

Theme one was shared by all the principals who were interviewed. The specific notations above were from the principals who have been principals in the district the longest and remember back to a decade or so ago when there was some formal training about how to provide a useful evaluation and how to help guide teachers. The consensus was that the training has been focused on compliance with the contractually required evaluation form. There has been little or no recent trainings about evaluation models or tools to update the forms and processes.

**Theme two: District training focus on compliance.** The second theme highlighted from the data in regards to question one illuminated that most of the training that has been received over the recent history has been strictly focused on the process and timelines of the evaluation cycle. The process and timelines are very important in a legal sense, so the district has made sure to stress the process of the evaluation cycle. The principals who were interviewed talked about training or reminders of the timelines of when pre-observation must be done, when the first and second evaluations must be done, and when the end of year summative evaluations are to be completed. They also noted that there have been conversations as far as what specific forms to use when and who is to be evaluated with what form.

Principal G from Maple Elementary, who has been a principal in the district for five years, specifically noted,
Each year, we get a booklet on the teacher evaluation process, typically our assistant superintendent of HR goes through process of evaluation from the timelines to the responsibilities of formal evaluations and all the way through until the [Inaudible] the documents that are used. That's kind of the training that's provided.

The principals noted that the district has provided regular training on the process of the evaluation cycle continued throughout most of the interviews. Principal E, also provided some insight to this matter. S/he explained,

Training has been focused on how to use the tool. We were given a manual for classified and certificated evaluations for teachers. There were some rubrics in it for how to rate teachers, but we’ve had two different HR people since then. The talk was about using the tool that is basically a checklist in order to then fill in the final evaluation, which is a grading scale and we have the 3-scale, the 4-scale, the non-permanent path, and the project-based alternate.

We see that many principals thought that the district explained the process of the evaluation cycle well to the principals but it was focused around the compliance aspect of teacher evaluation.

The problem for principals who are newer to their role or to the district is that they have received little training on the application of the evaluation tools for the district. Those who have been in administrative roles in the district for many years remember a time when their was formal training by district staff on how to better use the teacher evaluation process to help teachers or to help administrators be more effective in their evaluations. Since the district has had a lot of turnover at the district level, new district
office leaders have trained all evaluators to assure that the process as collectively bargained is followed, but the district has not gone deeper in regards to feedback.

**Theme three: Principals know the importance of compliance and going beyond compliance.** The third theme highlighted from the data in regards to question one highlighted the importance of the district focus on the legal aspect of teacher evaluation. California Education Code specifies how often teachers are to be evaluated, and the importance of following the law and meeting timelines has been stressed by the district. When it comes to missing the timelines of the required evaluation cycle, districts want to make sure that all timelines are met when it comes to any disputed evaluation.

Principal D reflected on his 10+ as an administrator in the district,

> The training we have had really was around according to the contract language. This is the evaluation tool we have. This is the different ones that we have for the different types of teachers or were they having the appropriate area or permanent status and then conversation around this is how you’re supposed to market the school, but in that conversation, it was very apparent that it wasn’t uniform. It’s not about the way it is used is uniform like the way we were told it’s supposed to be, and again, it’s really just about completing that form with some conversations about identifying teachers who need to improve and how to use, or what tool, for that.

Similarly, Principal A, stated that s/he does remember times in the past when the trainings were not focused on legal aspects, but in recent memory, the training has almost exclusively been around the legal aspects of the evaluation process. S/he shared,
I’ve been an administrator in this district for 10+ years and really two different kinds of trainings have been offered. One is for the formal evaluation, and I would say we have received more training on a more casual non-evaluative principal coach kind of method. So, there are two things that we’ve been training on. Every year, we get training on evaluation, which basically is just going over documents. As a new principal and as a new vice-principal, I don’t remember ever getting training on what are things you could say to a teacher and what are the options you could give. It’s always, “Here are the documents, use the binder to keep the documents, you do this if this happens, and this if this happens,” but nothing really on the communication and personal aspect of it.

Seven administrators interviewed shared similar perspectives. They all felt that it was important to make sure that everyone is well versed on the legal requirements of the evaluation process. Missing a timeline can be very costly to the district, particularly for a less than satisfactory evaluation. Since the district site administrators have had extensive turn-over in recent years, it is imperative for them to be well versed and diligent about the legal aspects that must be followed when it comes to teacher evaluation. However, the consensus also was that training on the other part of the evaluation process are needed. For newer administrators, principals and vice principals, it is equally important to train them all on how to make an evaluation valuable for the administrator as well as the teacher.

**Theme four: Courageous conversations.** The fourth theme highlighted from the data in regards to question one illuminated the importance having those courageous conversations with some training that has been provided in the past. Trainings have been
provided, at times, with all administrators, but have also been completed individually with either district consultants or principal coaches. Principal E explained training s/he has done,

Training has not been from the district. I have had training from a specific trainer. I went to, I think it was four or five sessions with her, and it was more about coaching and how to move the teachers forward and knowing the personality of your teachers in order to ask the right questions so that they didn’t become defensive and how to work more collaborative with them. They also did a brief for ARA, I think a 2-hour version of it, but I think the 8 to 12-hour are just a lot more valuable.

I asked her to explain who s/he was was talking about and s/he shared,

This specific trainer was brought in by the district to do PD, and they actually served as a coach for some of the elementary principals, myself included. They provide work with other trainers during their principals’ breakfasts and the breakfast focused on coaching conversations with tutors. It’s changed the way I go into an evaluation or a post observation in that I will usually ask what they saw in it, which is always the classic “How do you think it went?” This has always been part of my repertoire, but it’s also learning how to lead teachers to seeing the same things I did with the questioning and not having it be an adversary or where I’m nitpicking and saying, “You didn’t do this, you didn’t do this”. It’s sort of that value-added collaborative coaching model versus a checklist model. Not that I use the checklist, I use a variety of different things where I was still scripting, and that’s been my main push just because I feel like that data is the data is the data so
you can refer to them and say, “Okay. So here, I noticed this. What was going on in your head at this point in time?” And we can really have a conversation because they can see what was happening in the classroom at that point so the questioning piece and how the key part is how you phrase the questions is important.

Principal A, had different experiences,

We also had outside people come in like a trainer who talked to us a lot about courageous communication, how to say the things you need to say and I just went through my office and I found a lot of their material, and I still couldn’t let go of it. I felt that is a lot more powerful than just going over tools. What was great about that training, specifically, and they did work with us even to probably as recent as five or six years when another trainer was here. What was great about that is that we met as a group of principals and then at that time, it was voluntary. Only the principals who wanted to do this met. I think there was only eight or nine of us and then they would meet with us on leadership teams and then we’d go back with just the principals and then their leadership teams, everybody in the room. So it was passing on the evaluation. The coaching piece from just a principal to the teachers saying, “If you see things that teachers need help with, you need to have these courageous conversations, you need to offer help, you are also the leader. There’s just not one person who should be evaluating coaching. We should all be helping each other every day in and outside of the classroom”. So we did a lot about like I said the steps to communicating, how to ease into
telling someone you need to change something, and the process to change in the classroom and in instruction like that.

All the principals interviewed seemed to share the same sentiment. All echoed that an important piece of an effective evaluation is being able to have the courageous conversation. Specific training on this seemed to help experienced principals. Since this has not happened in quite some time, the feeling was that training on how to have these conversations is most definitely needed. Principal F shared,

I think the pieces that have been valuable have just been through either reading and experience, working with colleagues and that it's addressing the needs of your teachers by providing that specific feedback. So, the evaluation tool is more of a contractual tool to document. It's more of the contractual to an obligation to use this tool, but I guess it depends on what your purpose is. So, the evaluation tool can be their evaluation of giving that or official feedback to the employee that goes under the HR record, but that's probably not the most effective piece. I think most of your staff is most concerned about that because that's their official "Did I do well or not?" For the most part, most of our teachers if they're working hard, working forward, they're going to get a good evaluation. The feedback aspect that it really comes in the ongoing conversations you have with teachers, and that's I think that's the important piece and that's not really something that is built with the tool, but that's probably important. We had more conversations, the most important task was having crucial conversations or having those difficult conversations, coaching conversations with individuals, with the employees. That
is actually more valuable to move things forward in the actual tool we have as a
document because that's just a compliance aspect.

The principals felt that being able to have those effective conversations to help move
teachers forward is imperative to improving the success the teachers are having with their
students. Courageous conversations are challenging to conduct, so it is important that the
district prepares the administrators to have these conversations and not avoid having
them.

**Theme five: Need for training in effective feedback and communication**

about data. The fifth theme highlighted from the data in regards to question one was
that three principals referred to the value of additional training on conducting
observations. At some point in the past, the district provided some training on scripting
which several principals mentioned they still use. Scripting provides data that they can
share with the teachers. Principal E shared,

Not that I use the checklist, I use a variety of different things where I was still
scripting, and that’s been my main push just because I feel like that data is the
data is the data so you can refer to them and say, “Okay. So here, I noticed this.
What was going on in your head at this point in time?” And we can really have a
conversation because they can see what was happening in the classroom at that
point so the questioning piece and how the key part is how you phrase the
questions.

Similarly, Principal B shared that s/he uses scripting as well for data from the
classroom observations to have the conversations with the teachers. S/he recalled,
What I've done is, you know, because I have--because our assistant principal is, he was coaching, a coach for many years, he showed me how he does lesson transcribing, and that is now the tool that I use to supplement our current structure. So, when I go into observe a lesson, I transcribe. I fully transcribe the lesson very objectively. After I do transcribing, I provide that lesson ahead of time to the teachers. That way, they can read as if I had, as much as I can, make it seem like I videotaped the lesson. That way, they can see some of the nuances that I saw that they don’t even see. And then, I ask a series of prompting questions when they come meet me. So, that’s how I supplement our current form, which is through a lesson transcribing.

I asked how s/he does this and what he does with the scripting after the lesson observation is complete. She said that it was the way to help people see what the observer is seeing. An outsider might give perspective to the conversation and help the teacher put themselves in the shoes of the students. S/he explained,

What I'll do is, once I read the transcription myself and I can really focus on what I saw, because at the moment, my focus is just catching everything. I'm not evaluating anything. I don’t want to get feedback or opinions, just transcribe. Once I read that transcription, what I do is, then I focus on where. Does it align to our areas of focus? Do I see now some areas of growth? And what I'll do is, I craft some questions for the teacher if I see that the kids are disengaged or if I noticed that the kids. Maybe the class was disengaged and the teacher never really checked to make sure the students were following that particular lesson. Then I'll ask some prompting questions in regards to student engagement, or checking for
understanding. If the students demonstrated that they missed the whole point, then I'll ask some questions about the lesson objective, or lesson planning. So depending on what I see, then I'll craft some guiding questions based on whatever needs were there.

Five other principals described the value of having data that was not opinion seemed to help in the conversations with teachers. Scripting or transcribing the observations explained of as a way to be able to point out what was seen or what was observed without judgment, as another kind of data that could be useful to the teachers.

The district had some training on scripting at some point in the past, but respondents said other training, have not been provided in the last six to eight years.

**Summary of Responses**

In the past the district provided principals and other administrators training evaluation. More time was dedicated to helping guide the administrators on how they can be more effective. In recent years, the training has been focused on the district and state requirements for teacher evaluation. Many of the administrators in the district are rather new, and the district has spent their training on making sure everyone is meeting the deadlines and not missing any essential requirements.

**Findings for Research Question Two**

The second research question asked: What are principals using to supplement the current district adopted evaluation process? The data indicated five themes; these leaders build relationships, visibility, stay organized, collaborative and joint goal setting for clarity, and are using standards to guide evaluation and improvement.
Theme one: Build relationships. The first theme highlighted from the data relating to research question two illustrated that an important principal practice to have effective evaluations is to focus on building relationships with the staff. When a good relationship is built from the very beginning, an observation and the evaluation cycle can go very well since the relationship has already been established, and the teacher will value the feedback. Principal F said,

That is where your relationships, your relationships with your teachers is very important to know which teachers need something more formal. If you're in school that's very militant, very contractual, then yes you have to actually, you'll have to do it in the documentation. I think it depends on who the teacher is in their level of expertise. Most teachers want to do well. Most teachers want to be good at what they do but there are so many different ways of doing it. Sometimes, they've been doing it for a while, they may not even see or notice what they're doing well or they might think that everything they're doing is well. So, I think in those cases it really is about asking the question, asking why they do what they do, are they getting results, giving them some alternatives and asking some, in some cases to see an alternative.

Principal D, agreed with this sentiment and recalled,

First off, it depends on the relationship with me because are they willing or able to receive it well because with some people, they feel like you’re always looking for something to call them out on and so they’re kind of closed or defensive, so that’s one piece. The other piece, I think, is just their general openness at examining their craft and then the other piece is doing that for enough time for it to stick.
Principal G noted,

As I listen to them and watch them teach, see how I sit in on grade level meetings and talk and hear them discuss how they're implementing strategies, and that gives me insights on their understanding and knowledge and use of different tools that we've implemented in our school. And that, yes, it helps me again. I use that information, kind of in the back of my brain type of things I can say when I have discussions with the teachers I can say, “I was at your meeting, you know, a couple months back and remember you were talking about this and how is this working out. Do you need some more support with that”?

Showing the teachers that the relationship you have with them is important and allowing them to understand that the principal has trust in them hopefully will allow them to trust the principal and be open for great conversations.

Theme two: Visibility. The second theme highlighted from the data relating to research question two illustrated that an important principal practice is to be a visible leader. Six principals that were interviewed discussed that when teachers see them in their classrooms, the teachers feel that the principal has a good sense of what happens in the class on a regular basis. Therefore, principals are able to give the teachers accurate feedback on ways to improve or streamline processes. Principal E gave examples of why s/he feels it is important to be visible.

I think that it is so important to be in classes often. I remember back to when I was a new teacher in another district and the vice principal came into my class for my formal observation. It was his first time in my class all year long. I was
thinking to myself, “How could he possibly be able to know what happens in my class on a daily basis?” When I became an administrator, I made it a point to visit all classes often. When I have a good sense of what happens in the classroom or what kind of things are going well or may need slight improvement, it helps me be able to give teachers feedback that they will receive well.

The principals all seemed to feel it was important for the principal to be in classes as much as possible to be able to have the pulse of the school. Principal B of said s/he tries to be in every classroom once a week. S/he explained,

I do many, many formal and informal observations. I try to get through every classroom at least once a week. During informal walk-throughs, what I do is, I will always focus on an agreed-upon focus for the year. That's school wide. I'll use tools such as Google forms, so I'll give you an example. This year one of our focuses was to provide more opportunities for students to collaborate in a structured format beyond just random student conversations. The lesson had to be structured, had to be in place. What our staff was trained on was utilizing Kagan structures and AVID structures, which are very similar in terms of student collaboration. So, with my leadership team, we've created some, what we believe would be evidence of those structures being implemented, and we've created a checklist and during informal walk-throughs, literally I would walk by classrooms, and if I saw any of those evidences, I would just check them off. And then I would provide a copy of that to the teacher himself as well as school-wide data. It was noticeable in eight of the ten classrooms this year. It was noticeable more in the morning, whatever that may be. However we can break that down.
It was apparent through the data that the principals felt that the more they were in the classrooms the better they were able to provide feedback to their teachers. This can be a challenge with large schools, schools without co-administrators, as well as with the multitude of other demands from district, staff, parents, and teachers place on the time of a principal, but making the sacrifice to be in the classes is worth it.

**Theme three: Stay organized.** The third theme highlighted from the data relating to research question two illustrated that an important principal practice is to stay organized. Each of the principals created their own unique way to accomplish this, however, each one talked about how vital it is. When they were organized, they felt they were able to keep track of what, who, and how many times teachers were observed. Their notes and suggestions were also kept organized making the feedback to be more valuable. Principal B explained,

Since all the data from his informal observations are organized and shared with teachers immediately, when the end of the year comes the summative observation can be much more thorough because the whole years worth of informal observations are organized. Principal D also described his approach,

I’ve done all kinds of different things from several years ago and logged where I’ve had a calendar or a table where I was keeping track of who I was visiting in and what subject area. I try to, over a month's period, be sure that I’m going through classrooms at a reasonable rate, and visiting the people that I feel I need to more often than the other people. We use those kinds of things and then, in the last few years, I’ve moved all that to electronic tools. I’ve got Google forms that dump into a spreadsheet, which I can then again monitor and look at. Here’s
everything I’ve talked to one teacher about, or here’s all the times I’ve talked to this teacher about, or how many times have I been into ELD classrooms. I’m able to look at that that way, so I am using a variety of tools to organize myself going to classrooms, monitor where I’m going, and then also indicating notes to myself what feedback, written or verbal, I’d given to teachers.

Principal A from Elm Academy added,

We have a little form, and then it was like carbon copy that we leave as we did and then I’d keep the carbon copy and then I’ll keep a log on a clipboard to show how many times I went into that classroom. So, we used to do that before the technology, the apps. It’s not almost seems like I’m going to go away from that again because according to this new training we received, most of my time should be in the classrooms, so that would be just too much. You’re not to keep track of everything because we’re supposed to be in there two out of five days a week.

Principal E explained that it was important to stay organized, yet make sure your feedback is authentic,

I've used a variety of tools over the years and I don't think there's any one, one particular tool that stands out more than the other. I've used walkthrough forms, I've used coaching forms, reflected conversations. I came in. I noticed that you were teaching this standard. I saw this. It's type of engagement. I might have a reflective question at the end and I'm wondering when you do such and such and you're focusing on this when you decide to take it to the next level or when do you decide to use these. So, sometimes those reflective question pieces are good
but it's not an authentic because you're just trying to do that to walk through then it's more with burden actually for teachers when do you have time to do that.

**Theme four: Collaborative and joint goal setting for clarity.** The fourth theme in the data relating to research question two illustrated that an important principal practice is to communicate and reflect on data. The principals all believe that they have to communicate the data for reflections and shared understanding. They described being reflective is an important part of growth. If they model reflection and help teachers to be reflective, the evaluation process can be very useful to all. Principal G explained,

I'll give them feedback on those specific areas when I'm in their classrooms. Also, the district initiatives like The Standards for Mathematical Practice, any of the common core tools that we're using, I give them feedback on those, too. And I've added those to my Google Form, so it makes it very easy to add documentation and information about them or for them about what they've done well and areas to improve. It's been the first year that I have used this Google Form this year, and it seem to be really working well with the teachers. They enjoy the feedback, and it also gives me a documentation of my visits in their classrooms. Then I can reflect upon that when I do my more formal observations and at the end of the year when I have to put together their final evaluation, I have that to look back on as well.

Principal D pointed out,

I always try celebrate a couple of things and something for them to pay attention to, and so, I try to pick things that are big items. So for example, questioning was a big piece, so when I noticed opportunities that were missed that’s something I would point out. I would let them know when you did X, Y,
and Z, you were able to get the students to do this but if we want to push a regular, if we want to develop deeper questions, there’s an opportunity to ask this type of question, or this type of question and use these types of processes, so it’s a little bit prescriptive in that regard and then so depending on the teacher and how that person was progressing, I might say, “I’ll look for this the next time I come back” and I would make sure I did come back and I would look to see if that person is working on that. When I felt that they were doing well, then I’ll let them know that; when I felt that they weren’t, then I usually made that conversation. So that the intermediate point was usually more written back and forth, but then after that, it became a conversation if I felt they probably are not getting it.

Having data to reflect on is a valuable piece of moving a school and a teacher forward in instructional practice. The interviewees found that the more reflective a teacher can be, the more open they are to positive feedback that will help them take their students forward. Principal B explained,

What's going to happen is, we have holistic data, and we have school-wide data. We're going to meet in the beginning of the year. My leadership team comes in a week before, and we look at that data, and we'll make a determination. The leadership will say, "You know what, I think we made progress towards that goal, maybe we should renew that goal and do it again". Or maybe they feel that the goal was not productive, so maybe we'll switch goals, maybe we'll do something different. So what we'll use is, we'll use student data and we'll use feedback from the staff, because at the end of the year we did take feedback surveys from the staff, if they felt those strategies were successful? Did they have a difficulty
implementing them? Did they want more training? Whatever. So we have a lot of
data to make decisions for the following year. And that will happen in early
August. It is important for us to talk about the data and make it clear expectations
around data.

Having data that the school can examine and reflect on either individually, or
together, is very valuable. Creating a data-focused staff that examines data as a
whole or on an individual basis can make tremendous growth in student
achievement.

**Theme five: Using standards to guide evaluation and improvement.** The fifth
theme highlighted from the data relating to research question two illustrated that an
important principal practice is to be genuine and clear about expectations. The principals
said having clear expectations based on standards set forth for the whole staff or for
individual teachers allows teachers to fully understand expectations and be able to
monitor progress. At times, these expectations are school wide goals or district initiatives
for improvement, and other times, these are principal goals for individual teachers or
goals that the teacher have created for themselves as part of a goal setting process.
Principal C from Pine Elementary explained,

The last couple of years, I've informed the teachers the things we're working on,
but I'm introducing coaches and coaching. I've asked them, "These are the things
that are out there. These are the things that we're working on. These are things
that other people are working on. Maybe there's something else you're interested
in? Let me know something that you're working on trying to get better at." And
my purpose for that was not for evaluation, not to “ding them” on it because I
know they're trying, I would want to know what it is they're interested in learning or getting better at so that I could let the coach know. And the coach could then provide some guidance or assistance if they're ready for it.

Principals shared that aside from teacher-created goals or district goals, often teams within the school will create goals that can be clearly expressed and identified.

Principal G explained,

So, we've done some work as a school around questioning students, and I've added that also to my teacher evaluation and feedback that I give them on the questions that they're asking. Are they planned? How deep are the questions? DOK level. Are they rigorous enough? Are they challenging enough? Are they getting kids to really think rather than just regurgitate information? And I've definitely given feedback on that. So, I do add some of the district initiatives, like accountable talk, and technology integration. But some of those as well are my school's goals and then we've added a couple of our own. And especially with Avid, all the pieces that we used for Avid, I give them feedback on those items.

Principal A expressed,

I have been using an app going into the classrooms that is called the Classroom Walkthroughs. We’ve been using it not just for the people being evaluated but everyone but really concentrating more on the people being evaluated and you’re able to put there your areas of focus, what you’re looking for, classroom environment, strengths, areas of improvement, and from your phone, as you’re doing the classroom walkthroughs, you could email them the feedback sheet. So,
we have been using that as of late, having a lot of discussions, and talking a lot with those teachers…

This was a theme that was very evident in each interview. Having goals that are clear and giving the teachers genuine feedback related to these goals put teachers in a receptive frame of mind. With clear joint goals setting, principals were able to give feedback that is genuine and viewed from a positive frame of mind allowing that teacher to take the next step. Principal F pointed out,

For example, as a school site, we made some formal agreements about things that I am working on with you and then like conversation might be within the teachers and seeing those things or even sometimes with the staff. I'm not seeing these things. We have formal agreements to do that. I will be specifically looking for these things over the next several weeks to kind of reemphasize that because breaking habits are... breaking old habits and creating new habits is difficult for all of us. How do I help them move forward and make it more of a process of the learning rather than that more intense and show them?

**Emergent Themes in Study**

Data collection for this part of the study included seven interviews. The seven interviews were conducted with the principals and the researcher. Once the interviews were concluded, the data were professionally transcribed and coded. After coding concluded, emergent themes arose from the study. The themes are separated according to each research question.
Summary

This chapter summarized the results of the data collection and analysis. Seven participants agreed to be a part of the interviews. Emergent themes were derived from the data to describe and analyze how principals use or adapt district policies to make the evaluation process accurate, organized, and valuable to the teacher. Principals described the practices as important to their teachers to improve student learning.

The first research question asked: How are evaluating administrators using old models within new requirements for teaching the CCSS? The five themes that were: a) need for training, b) district training focus on compliance, c) principals know the importance of compliance and going beyond, courageous conversations, need for training in effective feedback and communication were explained from the data.

The second research question asked: What are principals using to supplement the current district adopted evaluation process? The data indicated five themes; these leaders build relationships, visibility, stay organized, collaborative and joint goal setting for clarity, and are using standards to guide evaluation and improvement were explained from the data.

Chapter 5 will discuss conclusions and implications of the research questions.
Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

This chapter is divided into four major sections: summary of the study, conclusions, implications, and concluding reflection. The first section, summary of the study, provides the restatement of the problem, a review of the procedures used in the study, and a restatement of the specific research questions. The second section, conclusions, includes the highlights of the major findings and addresses each of the research questions. The next section discusses the implications of the major findings. The final section illustrates the concluding reflection.

Statement of the Problem

This dissertation examined the problem of providing meaningful teacher evaluation in an era in which teacher and student expectations have changed dramatically due to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). School administrators are often not able to carry out effective and meaningful teacher evaluations when the models they are obligated to use do not assess what is expected of teachers and do not reflect the goal of improving current student learning (Marzano, 2009, 2012; Stronge, Tucker, & Hindman, 2004).

Sensemaking in Teacher Evaluation

Using the theoretical framework of sensemaking these principals explained how they carried out the district model meeting all requirements and they developed slightly different ways with some new tools that met the requirement of increased expectations for teachers. For example, one principal shared individual training on having courageous conversations with teachers and learning to be collaborative during the evaluation cycle. Another principal stated the importance of being visible. S/he shared that they make it a
point to visit every class once a week. They felt that when teachers feel that the principal really has an idea of what happens in the class on a daily basis they are more open to suggestions on how to increase student learning.

As a group these principals expressed interest in working together to improve the district while understanding the complexity needed to carry this out. The educational landscape has changed dramatically since the advent and implementation of common core but the group of principals interviewed is a group of dedicated professionals who have gone beyond the requirements to make sense of the evaluation process since Common Core. The answer was not a new evaluation model as found in the research. Instead this group found the answer is using the expertise that exists in this district and working together to make the progress that the principals and teachers desire. Education is an ever changing field, but the expertise exists within the district to make the changes needed to improve student learning. Coming together can be the solution. Principals are not in it alone even though they may be the only administrator at their school. I am excited to see the passion demonstrated by the group of principals interviewed and know our students are in capable hands of caring principals and teacher who will work together to provide the dynamic education our students deserve.

The specific research questions

The following research questions helped frame the purpose of the study. These research questions enabled the researcher to fully explore the topic of adaptations that principals use to supplement the district adopted teacher evaluation process in order to provide effective feedback to the teachers in order to help improve student learning.
The first research question asked: How are evaluating administrators using old models within new requirements for teaching the CCSS? The five themes were: a) need for training, b) district training focus on compliance, c) principals know the importance of compliance and going beyond, courageous conversations, need for training in effective feedback and communication were explained from the data.

The second research question asked: What are principals using to supplement the current district adopted evaluation process? The data indicated five themes; these leaders build relationships, visibility, stay organized, collaborative and joint goal setting for clarity, and are using standards to guide evaluation and improvement and were explained from the data.

**Courageous Conversations**

The themes identified for both question one and question two all directly related to the first big idea: having courageous conversations. The emphasis placed on the leadership role of the principal has changed over the past 30 years (McEwan, 2003). Principals are no longer managers; they need to be instructional leaders. According to Shellard (2003), instructional leadership refers to the knowledge and skills that principals possess to effectively support their teachers through the school’s academic program. Principals report that teacher support is the number one factor of being an effective leader and this can be achieved with having the courageous conversations when necessary. Supporting adult growth is important because it contributes to student achievement (Drago-Severson, 2009). Having courageous conversations shows that the leader is committed to adult learning and helping the teachers grow which will help student learning. Principals’ benefits from learning the practices and skills that teachers
are learning because they are the ones who have the opportunity to provide feedback, coaching, and mentoring. It is vital for school districts to provide professional development opportunities for principals as well as time and resources for reflective practice with other principals (Drago-Severson, 2009). Principals often learn from each other and should not work only in isolation. Even though there is only one principal per school, principals must use the expertise of others, particularly when facing the challenge of having a difficult conversation or something that the principal needs to address for the first time.

**Build Relationships**

The themes identified for both question one and question two all directly related to an additional big idea: building relationships and trust. Building trust and respect from members of the community is key (Bolman & Deal 2013). Principals who demonstrated the belief that students should come first allowed them to develop trusting relationships with teachers, parents, and students and as a result built trust. Principals should always follow through with their words, and find answers to questions that are posed to them, even if not immediately available. This demonstrates a willingness to go above and beyond, thus developing strong relationships. Warrilow (2009) described that personal and individual attention shows appreciation and benefits the organization as a whole. This can help principals gain the trust of their teachers, which will have lasting benefits. Being genuine with actions, whether it is giving staff recognition or staying late at night to help solve a problem, build trust with the staff which leads to a stronger development of relationships. Teachers appreciate leaders who go out of their way to do the little things. Building trust from the beginning can build strong relationships with all members.
of the school community. The study has illustrated that this is where a lot of principals have invested time and found success. Relationships matter and those relationships show through as I analyzed the success stories as part of this study.

Using Standards to Guide Evaluation and Improvement

The themes found for both question one and question two directly related to a final big idea: that principals should focus on using standards to guide evaluation. The principals who mentioned that they have seen great progress do so by establishing goals and monitor these goals based on standards. One way to do this is to establish school-wide goals. These goals do not have to come from the principal. The leadership team can create these goals, instead, which is a representative group of the entire staff. Principals are the key factors in creating a collaborative and teaming staff. Collaboration is critical to a successful program. By creating time and structures for team to collaborate effectively, teams can focus on monitoring progress towards standards and looking at data to help guide them towards next steps. Warrilow (2009) described that personal and individual attention shows appreciation and benefits the organization as a whole. By giving teams this time, it shows that principals are giving the necessary time for teams to focus on the school-wide or individual goals based on standards.

Discussions for Research Question One

The five themes from research question one are reviewed below with support from the literature. All five themes summarize how important teacher evaluation is and how principals make sense of evaluation to met the needs of their schools and their particular staffs.
**Theme One: Need for Training**

The first discussion is the need for more professional development specialized in addressing the needs of principals in providing effective feedback to teachers in order to improve student learning. According to Drago-Severson (2009), there is a direct link that exists between supporting adult learning and enhanced student achievement that only principals as instructional leaders can provide. Principals can enhance the quality of teaching by providing teachers opportunities that they need to be successful. Alford and Niño (2011) believe that a principal sets directions, develops people, and implements structures that facilitate learning. Any district should provide the administrators the tools they need to make this happen. Most principals were once teachers, however, as teachers transition into administrators, training must take place to help them be successful in their roles. When principals are properly equipped to help their staffs improve instruction and student learning, they can make big strides in the overall quality and success of student learning.

**Theme Two: District Focus on Compliance**

The second theme that emerged was that training for administrators in the area of teacher evaluation is too often focused on the process of the teacher evaluation cycle. California Ed Code dictates who is evaluated and a minimum when it comes to the frequency of teacher evaluations. For new administrators, this is very important. It is imperative that the process and timelines are followed. Administrators must make sure they are conducting the evaluations of the right teachers who are required to be evaluated and must meet all deadlines for observations as well as summative evaluations. However, the process is not the only thing that is important. Instead of only focusing on the process,
schools district and principals should also focus on the application of the process. An
effective teacher evaluation system that includes useful feedback to the teacher can bring
about great improvement in student learning. At times, this feedback can be about things
that the teacher was not even aware of, yet when looked at objectively from an outsider
point of view, can be improved.

**Theme Three: Principals Know the Importance of Compliance and Going Beyond**

The third theme that emerged from question one surrounded the legal concerns
that come with the evaluation process in a district. The evaluation tool and protocol are
collectively bargained with the teachers union and must be followed. However, similar to
theme two, the focus must go beyond the legal concerns relating to the evaluation
process. Going beyond the legal requirements and concerns allows for truly authentic
evaluations that are built on the relationships that the principal has developed with the
teachers. The authentic evaluations will help move the organization forward and improve
student learning. Great teaching can help student reach their potential and improve the
entire school. The vast majority of teachers want to be successful, but too often teacher
evaluations are seen as a chore or just something that needs to be done for compliance
purposes. As instructional leaders it could not be more important to go beyond the legal
requirements of teacher evaluation. Principals understand how important evaluation is
and want to go beyond compliance and make sense of the heightened expectations while
still following rules and requirements as collectively bargained and required by
Educational Code.
Theme Four: Courageous Conversations

Having difficult conversations is hard for many to do, especially school administrators. School administrators understand the importance of maintaining a positive school culture, but problems cannot be ignored. Often problems arise because they have been ignored for so long. At times, the problems that exist are not even known to be problems. When courageous conversations happen after the school leader has established the trust of the staff, they can be addressed head on, fixed, and then will no longer be a problem. Principals have often relied on the expertise of their peers. As principals have used their form of sensemaking to make the evaluation process valuable a great group of experts has been created.

Theme Five: Need for Training in Effective Feedback and Communication

One way that the principals who were interviewed shared that allowed them to be more objective was the value of additional training such as scripting or other training on the feedback process. Scripting happens when the observer transcribes the lesson or portion of the lesson observed exactly as it is delivered. The scripting does not allow for opinion or bias if followed. Scripting just notes the actual observable data. This might include how often the teacher checks for understanding, how many students were called upon, how often the teacher moved around the class to monitor on task behavior, etc. When the lesson is complete, the observer can analyze the data and provide feedback based on what was observed. The data are also shared with the teacher being observed. This gives the teacher real data to be able to have a conversation and reflect on.
Discussions for Research Question Two

The five themes from research question two are reviewed below with support from the literature. All five themes summarize how important school culture is and how it can affect evaluation and student learning.

**Theme One: Build Relationships**

Principals noted that to make sense of what is truly happening in the classrooms and to be able to give authentic feedback to their teachers it must start with the principal earning the trust of the staff and building those relationships. Most times, trust is not automatically given. Most teachers have had a variety of principals or vice-principals evaluate them over the years. The teacher must trust the principal to truly take any suggestions. Principals stated that the goal of providing effective feedback was for the teachers to understand that the evaluation is not meant to be a gotcha. Principals must build the trust of their staff to show that they are well intentioned and want what is best for the teachers and the students alike. When the principal has spent the time building the relationships, the trust will go a long way. When teachers feel valued they know that any observations or ideas are coming from a place of sincerity.

**Theme Two: Visibility**

The principals interviewed shared that one important factor that helped them make sense of what was happening on a daily basis in their school was to be visible. One principal shared when she was a new teacher having her first observation, it was the vice-principals very first time in her classroom all year. How can an administrator make a judgment on the effectiveness of a teacher if their only source for forming their opinion is in one 45 minute observation? The principals said that they can make sense of what
strengths and areas of growth are for a particular teacher if they are in the classes more often. The principals shared that they try to be in the classes as much as possible. One principal mentioned his goal is to be in every classroom at least once a week. The other principals echoed similar aspirations, although with large schools and extenuating circumstance, that is not always possible. By being in each class and even on the playground, a principal might be able to give suggestions or ideas to the teachers before a formal observation cycle even starts.

**Theme Three: Stay Organized**

Staying organized is discovered in this study to be another key factor that principals note as a way they have made sense of providing feedback to teachers. Each of the principals created their own unique way to accomplish this, however each one talked about how vital it is. When they were organized they felt they were able to keep track of what, who, and how many times teachers were observed. Their notes and suggestions were also kept organized making the feedback to be more valuable. Principals in this study understand the importance of collecting data in an organized fashion and keeping track of progress. Principals noted that when good process is in place then principals and teachers can help each other make sense and identify areas that need to be addressed.

**Theme Four: Collaborative and Joint Goal Setting for Clarity**

Being collaborative and being able to reflect with teachers is something that every principal interviewed mentioned. When observations or feedback is given on purely subjective opinions is something that does not protect the relationships with teachers and even can destroy the trust that was built. Having standards based goals or other data
sources can help show the teachers a clear picture of what was observed. When feedback is based on the goals that were collaboratively set the principal has gathered through numerous conversations with the teacher or class walkthroughs it helps give validity to the observation. With this data the principal can help the staff and individual teachers be reflective about the collaboratively set goals. Being reflective is important for any professional who constantly wants to improve. The ability to be reflective was also noted by several principals as something that must take place for themselves as well. When a principal can also take feedback or look at data to reflect inwardly, the principal can also find ways that they can improve their own practice. The principals mentioned that being reflective helps them make sense of how they can help teachers improve student learning and help teachers’ progress towards their goals.

**Theme Five: Using Standards to Guide Evaluation and Improvement**

The last theme that was another that was consistently mentioned was to be using standards to guide evaluation. A few principals mentioned that difficulty could arise when the message is not clear. Problems also exist when administrators are not using standards as the basis feedback, or evaluations. Expectations must be clearly communicated and consistent. Sometimes the expectations are set forth by the district or school board and not from the school site, but how those expectations are to be met should be clear and based on standards. Other times, the school site sets their own goals. When these goals are set based on standards, they should be clearly communicated, and all those that are held accountable should know exactly what that means.
Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Due to the nature of this qualitative study, the scope of the study was limited to the experiences of seven school principals. However, the results can further assist the development of new or improvements to existing evaluation procedures in the school district. The following are recommendations for policy and practice:

- All evaluating administrators should receive regular training on providing effective feedback to teachers that will help student learning.
- Administrators should be given training every two years about the importance of building relationships and standards based evaluations with their staff.
- The district has principals who have created expertise in the area of evaluation through experience. This expertise should be shared through trainings or mentoring with newer principals or administrators.

In some schools, the relationship between the principal and the school staff can be very adversarial. Principals must understand that building relationships is a key to any successful school. The training can include team-building activities that principals can do with their staffs as well as strategies that can be used to build the trust with your staff.

- Principals should have ongoing professional development through that promotes creating and maintaining a positive school culture, and this should also be included in any administrative programs in universities.
- Principals need to make the time to get together and share expertise. Many principals have great knowledge or working systems that need to be shared.

The study showed that creating a positive school culture is critical to student achievement. Therefore, it is a policy recommendation to require ongoing professional
development to educational leaders that focuses on the importance of positive relationships. Making relationships a priority will put trust and visible leadership to the forefront of principal priorities.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Due to the nature of this qualitative study, the scope of the study was limited to the experiences of seven principals within one district in Southern California. Other possibilities for further studies are listed below.

- Study the ways teacher evaluation is successful across school districts.
- Study the effects that positive relationship building has on a school.
- Study the ways the building a collaborative data driven community is built through better feedback to teachers.

This study was limited to research that was conducted over a period of several months. The study would benefit from having a longitudinal analysis of the principals, dependent on the principal remaining at the school site. A longitudinal study would allow more in depth research on the ways principals adapt district policies to meet the needs of their teachers.

- Expand this study to high school principals.

This study was limited to seven elementary and middle school principals. It would be beneficial to identify if the themes would cross over to high school leader. There would be benefits in understanding if high need schools all need a similar type of leadership.

The focus of this study was to identify the ways that principals adapt district policies on teacher evaluation in order to provide useful feedback to their teachers. An
additional study would identify the specific beliefs and actions that teachers would find useful in the feedback they receive. This would require a longer length of time to analyze the opinions and thought of several teachers throughout several schools.

**Concluding Reflection**

Schools have an obligation to provide high quality education to all children in our country. A high quality education often depends on the behaviors of the school principal. Therefore, principals must make it a priority to give thoughtful, honest, clear, and measurable feedback to their teachers to improve student learning. Principals can no longer think of teacher evaluation as another checklist item that must be taken care of by March fifteenth. Principals have a moral imperative to have the absolute best any teacher can give. This can only be achieved when principals make it a priority to be visible, find out what is happening in each classroom, and help the teachers grow and become reflective on their practice with the mission of consistent improvement of student learning. Principals have often relied on the expertise of their peers. As principals has used their form of sensemaking to make the evaluation process valuable a great group of experts has been created.

This study demonstrated that there are not specific adaptations that can be used across the board. The study revealed that every school is different, every teacher is different, and every principal is different. Principals must do what works for their staff. When principals build the relationships with their staff, they are able to discover the needs of the teachers and how the principal can better support the teacher.

The interviews each demonstrated that there are ways that every principal adds to the district evaluation process to help make sense of the every changing educational
landscape. The specific evaluation tool used by Shady View School District was written long before the Common Core state standards were adopted and in all likelihood will be around in some iteration long after they are gone because of the collective bargaining process. However, one thing that will not change is the passion that principals must have to help give their teachers every opportunity available at the principal’s disposal to improve student learning. Our future generations are depending on it. This study has provided a profound opportunity to learn about the importance of going “above and beyond” to help teachers grow. Almost every teacher wants nothing more than to be successful. It is our job as principals to help him or her achieve this goal. Although this study did not conclude exactly as expected, I am proud to work with such a group of dedicated professionals who have really taken the time to become experts in their own way and have made sense of the ever-evolving landscape of teacher evaluation, and are determined to help teachers be successful in their endeavor to help our wonderful students.
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Appendix A: Principal Interview Guiding Questions

Interview Guiding Questions

*Overarching question:* What tools are administrators using to be able to provide effective feedback on teacher evaluation to improve student learning?

Research question 1: How are evaluating administrators using old models within new requirements for teaching the CCSS?

a. What training is provided for principals on teacher evaluation?

b. What training is provided on the specific evaluation model used in the district?

c. What training is provided about providing feedback to teachers in regards to making the feedback useful?

Research question 2: What do evaluating administrators know about evaluation models?

d. Have you found tools that you use to help you through the evaluation process?

e. What do you use aside from the district provided evaluation form when conducting evaluations?

f. Have you created any forms or tools that help you provide a robust evaluation with feedback to help the teacher? Please share with me what you use?