# From Traditional to Transformative Evaluation

## Promoting Teacher Excellence through a Learning-Oriented Process

by

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ABSTRACT

This action research project engages questions about the relationship of teacher evaluation and teacher learning, joining the national conversation of accountability and teacher quality. It provides a solid philosophical foundation for changes in teacher evaluation and staff development, and analyzes past and current methods and trends in teacher evaluation.

Set in the context of a suburban elementary charter school, the problems of traditional evaluation methods are confronted. The innovation proposed and implemented is Teacher Evaluation for Learning, Accountability, and Recognition (TELAR), a teacher evaluation system designed to support learning and accountability. TELAR includes multiple data points and perspectives, ongoing feedback and support, an evaluation instrument centered on collective values and a shared vision for professional work, and an emphasis on teacher reflection and self-assessment.

This mixed-methods study employs both qualitative and quantitative measures to provide an enriched understanding of the current problem and the impact of the change effort. Results suggest that TELAR 1) helps teachers re-define their role as professionals in their own evaluation, positively increasing perceptions of value, 2) promotes a culture of learning through a focus on shared values for professional work, a spirit of support and teamwork, and continuous improvement; and 3) empowers teachers to assess their own practice, self-diagnose areas for growth, and generate goals through a continuous process of feedback, reflection, conversation, and support. Implications for practice and future studies are presented.

# DEDICATION

This three-year journey is dedicated first to my family. Dan, Peri, and Courtnie, without you, I could not have completed this work or have felt free to explore my passion for learning in this way. You will forever be my source of inspiration and the center of my life's work. Dad, you always make me feel like the most important person in the world. You created a love of learning in me from the very beginning and let me know I could accomplish anything. Thank you.

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# Chapter 1

## LEADERSHIP CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THE ACTION

Since the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk*, public schools have been in crisis as educators and legislators continually seek to provide high quality education in a measurement-driven environment (Sosanya-Tellez, 2010). As a result, a wave of reform initiatives took over the education community, with student assessment and research-based curricula taking center stage of the discussion. One thing was noticeably absent: the classroom teacher. Three years after *A Nation at Risk*, the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession issued a pivotal report, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*. The report's leading recommendation focused on teacher quality and led to the establishment of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) (http://www.nbpts.org/UserFiles/File/what_teachers.pdf).

The Board, founded in 1987, received a broad base of support from governors, teacher union and school board leaders, school administrators, college and university officials, business executives, foundations, and concerned citizens. This nonprofit, non-partisan organization is currently governed by a 63-member board of directors, the majority of whom are teachers. These professionals claim, "The world-class schools the United States requires cannot exist without a world-class teaching force; the two go hand in hand." They further state, "Many accomplished teachers already work in the nation's schools, but their knowledge and skills are often unacknowledged and underutilized. Delineating outstanding practice and recognizing those who achieve it are important first steps in shaping the kind of teaching profession the nation needs." They assert that "the single-most important action the nation can take to improve schools is to strengthen

teaching" (http://www.nbpts.org/UserFiles/File/what_teachers.pdf). Many have echoed this notion. Stronge and Tucker (2003) add, "Without capable, highly qualified teachers in America's classrooms, no educational reform process can possibly succeed" (p. 3).

A growing, coherent body of literature supports the now widely accepted understanding that teacher quality matters (Borman & Kimball, 2005; Odden, 2004; Nye, Konstantopolous, & Hedges, 2004; Kimball, et al., 2004; Milanowski, 2004; Odden, et al., 2004). Clear connections of quality instruction to improvement in student achievement are indicated in a robust accumulation of scholarly literature (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Gamoran, et al., 1997; Sanders & Horn, 1998; Westbury, 1993). The focus on teacher quality has led to many studies investigating the impact of certain variables on teacher effectiveness, including the leader's role in effecting instructional practice that directly influences student learning (Supovitz, et al., 2009), promoting the feedback and reflection of teachers (Runhaar, et al., 2010), and creating a learning environment for teachers (James & McCormic, 2009; Louis, et.al, 2010).

Until recently, teacher evaluation as a tool for instructional improvement has been cast aside and largely ignored in research (Danielson, 2002; Iwanicki, 1990; No Child Left Behind Act, 2002; Tutyens & Devos, 2011; Keeping & Levy, 2000). Stronge and Tucker (2003) state that "because teaching matters, teacher evaluation matters" (p.3). They explain that "without high quality evaluation systems, we cannot know if we have high quality teachers" and that "a premium must be placed on high quality teacher evaluation systems to a degree that didn't exist heretofore" (p.3).

The subject has now moved to the forefront of the nation's education agenda, particularly in light of the United States federal government's 2011 Race to the Top

reform (http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/fact-sheet-race-top). In response to the initiative, the state of Arizona passed legislation in 2011 that mandates the use of teacher evaluation as an accountability measure that includes student performance data (http://www.azed.gov/blog/2011/09/13/attention-teachers-and-principals/). The law speaks to the imperative of quality teaching and allows local districts a measure of autonomy in creating a system that aligns with a school's site-based mission and goals.

While accountability is necessary, several point out that the goal of teacher evaluation is to improve teachers' effectiveness and support their professional development (e.g., Beerens, 2000; Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Fletcher, 2001; Stronge & Tucker, 2003; Stronge, 2006). Many doubt that teacher evaluation procedures will be able to reach this goal (e.g., Colby, et al., 2002; Davis, et al., 2002; Frase, 2001; Kleinhenz & Ingvarson, 2004). Frase and Streshly (1994) put forth four problem areas within the current practice of teacher evaluation in schools. First, there is a common inflation of ratings, allowing incompetence to go formally unidentified for a number of reasons (e.g., discomfort with confrontation, lack of skills, time consuming). Second, there is a lack of meaningful feedback for teachers to improve their practice. Third, the results of teacher evaluation are not aligned to the teachers' professional development. Finally, evaluators are reluctant to assume responsibility for evaluations, whether for lack of time, training, or accurate, useful data (Frase & Streshly, 1994; Tucker, 1997).

I have tangled with the beast known as teacher evaluation. In the past, I have experienced the elation of receiving "excellent" marks as a teacher, felt the emptiness of realizing they were of no consequence, and wondered how to improve as a result. As an administrator, I have stared at a variety of evaluation forms, wondering what I really

knew about a teacher and agonizing over how to assist in a meaningful way. Yet, each year I push through, forcing the data to comply with the mandate. In the end, I have a stack of papers that tell me that 95% of my teachers are "satisfactory." I know differently, but the forms speak.

## Context and Rationale

We are a young suburban elementary charter school in Arizona that is founded on the belief that public elementary schools can produce world-class results. As the school's founder and director, I assembled a core team of highly skilled teaching professionals who possessed a clear commitment to the organization's vision. Collectively, we strove for effectiveness. From our first year of operation, we performed impressively, earning positive recognition and the highest rankings by the State Department of Education.

While our efforts were fruitful, our operations were inefficient. We struggled with underdeveloped systems, protocols, and practices - an expected challenge in our early years. Theories of organizational development center on the stages of birth, growth, and development in the life cycle of an organization (Quinn & Cameron, 1983; Hasenfeld & Schmid, 1989, Bailey & Grochau, 1993; and Adizes, 1979). Charter schools, in particular, grow in a consistent order within four stages prior to maturity: entrepreneurial, development, formalization, and stability. In the entrepreneurial years, management structures are informal, decisions are made quickly and instinctively, and leaders center on the acquisition of resources. During development, some level of stability is achieved, but little planning or coordination occurs. In this stage, informal lines of communication are established as staff begins to grow. Leadership is personalized and decisions remain largely intuitively based. In the formalization stage, where our school lies, the focus

moves toward efficiency. Here, schools establish a formal structure with well-operating systems and a solid set of rules, procedures, and policies.

Our lack of a meaningful and efficient teacher evaluation system became apparent in our transition from development to formalization. We experienced problems of evaluation practice similar to what the literature supports. During our developmental years, we worked from borrowed evaluation procedures that centered on one formal planned lesson observation and one follow up conference with the administrator. This one-shot clinical approach yielded very little information for me, particularly as I worked to evaluate a teacher's performance at the end of the year. While I often conversed with teachers throughout the year, there was rarely a point of convergence that led to a plan for improvement. Intuitively, I was able to assess some needs, but too often my approach was incoherent or untimely, mainly for lack of data, time, or structure. As a result, professional development decisions were not always connected to the real problems teachers faced. I felt I was not able to tap into the full capacity of what teachers had to offer, nor was I able to provide proper guidance. I believed I was missing the potential of the evaluation process.

Informal discussions and formal teacher surveys of years past let me know that teachers felt administration was not in the classrooms enough, that performance was not effectively or accurately assessed, and that differences in expertise among teachers were not recognized. Teachers did not regard evaluation as a process for improvement. They remarked that their evaluation looked essentially the same year after year. Some teachers expressed frustration that regardless of differences in effort or outcomes, each teacher would walk away with a "satisfactory" mark, a contract, and equal performance pay. I

began to notice that top performers were losing their drive for distinctive performance and that underperformers were unseen and unsupported. Essentially, teacher evaluation had become an exercise of working the system. Like others using similar evaluation programs, our teachers learned how to perform a show for 45 minutes during their formal observation once a year.

Among our teachers, there is notable variance in experience, teaching style, and expertise. They differ in scholarship, leadership, contribution, and student outcomes. Some are veteran teachers with more than 18 years of teaching experience, and some are brand new to the profession. Some are new to our school, and others were with us from the beginning. Some of our teachers come from district schools, and others from private or charter schools. Where some were recruited locally, others were found across the United States. More than half have Master's degrees, one pursued a Doctorate, and one recently obtained National Board Certification. One of our teachers was nominated for and awarded the 2010 Arizona Teacher of the Year for charter schools. Each has something unique and remarkable to contribute.

As Head of School, I am responsible for not only developing the performance capacity of teachers, but also meeting state and charter accountability goals as set forth in our contract with the State Board for Charter Schools. As I considered our condition related to poorly developed systems, I began to think more about teacher evaluation as a viable tool for growth and accountability. The challenges we faced, coupled with an intense study of existing evaluation systems, learning theories, and possibilities, led me to design a study focused on the needs of our building. The purpose of my study was to

change the way teacher evaluations were conducted in my school and a gain deeper understanding of the impact on teacher perspectives, learning, and practice.

## Innovation

My investigation of teacher evaluation led me to create a formal system for our school that recognizes theories of development and learning, incorporates elements of effectiveness set forth by research, and centers on the values we, as a staff, collectively hold regarding education and professional work. My goal was to transform evaluation from an event of one-sided judgment to a process for learning while maintaining school and teacher accountability. The system, Teacher Evaluation for Learning, Accountability, and Recognition (TELAR), incorporates the supervisory practices of learning-oriented assessment (Tang & Chow, 2007), the principles of reflective development (Glickman, 2001), and the key features of effective evaluation systems as set forth by Stronge (2003), including the guiding assumptions and standards as outlined by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1988).

TELAR incorporates formative assessment (learning) in a summative context (accountability) (Stronge, 2003; Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Tang & Chow, 2007). Features of TELAR include the following:

- An ongoing, systematic process for feedback and support, tied to teacher needs and connected to professional development
- A focus on reflective assessment
- Multiple data points and perspectives

- A value-centered holistic evaluation instrument designed to 1) support the school's mission; 2) honor the complexity of teaching; 3) allow for differentiation of performance, and 4) serve as the basis for administrative decisions, such as performance pay and contract renewal (see Appendix B).

An illustration of the differences between traditional evaluation and TELAR is included in Appendix C.

**A Comprehensive Leadership Approach**

To ensure the system could meet its goals of learning and accountability, the school formed an administrative "triad" to serve different roles and to provide multiple perspectives. The Dean of Academics provides ongoing feedback and support for teachers, curriculum expertise, and professional development planning. Formative in purpose, the Dean participates in regular conversations about practice with teachers, fosters inquiry, and systematically works with teachers to identify areas of need and build opportunities for deliberate practice. The School-wide Enrichment Specialist (SES) focuses on culture, ensuring teachers work and learn in a productive and energizing environment that promotes well being. The SES observes and supports instruction through an accountability lens, ensuring fidelity to culture (who we are) as related to school performance goals. The Head of School centers on accountability to stakeholders and school goals that relate to core business processes – the people, the operations, and business strategy. In this division of leadership duties, no one person is responsible for both formative and summative aspects of evaluation, as is the case in traditional evaluation methods.

Weekly, the Head of School, Dean of Academics, and the SES meet to converse about teacher performance. Data from walkthroughs, administrative reflective logs, formal and informal lesson observations, peer observations, student achievement, and parent surveys are presented and discussed. These data are utilized in the formation of a teacher's summative evaluation, held twice per year.

**In Partnership with Teachers**

Aligned with the school's mission and centered on common values regarding education and professional work, a newly-designed performance matrix serves as the summative instrument for evaluation. Created with teacher input, the matrix sets forth professional standards with regard to instruction, leadership and contribution, collegiality and work environment, professional excellence and self development, student achievement and classroom outcomes, and parent community. This shared understanding of expectations creates a common language of professionalism and provides a basis for teacher reflection and self-assessment. Teachers come to evaluation sessions prepared with a written reflection, which serves as the springboard for discussion.

The summative evaluation session with the Head of School continues the critical dialogue, reflection, and feedback that occurs during the formative process and includes the identification of needs and areas for support. At the end of the year, the Head of School uses the instrument as a final evaluation that informs decisions regarding contract renewal, salary, performance pay and bonuses, teacher leadership, and specialty assignments. As well, it enables the administrator to report to stakeholders, including the State Department of Education, the condition of instruction and performance at the school in a differentiated, multi-faceted manner.

## Research Questions

As this study set out to examine the impact of a new teacher evaluation system on teacher practice, I based my research on the following questions:

- How and to what extent does TELAR impact teacher perceptions of evaluation?
- How do teachers view and participate in TELAR?
- How and to what extent does (TELAR) impact teacher learning and practice?

Chapter 2

# REVIEW OF SUPPORTING SCHOLARSHIP

The literature review that follows examines the notion that teachers can learn and grow professionally as a result of the process of teacher evaluation. Because this study approaches learning in the context of the teaching practice and is embedded in organizational structures of public education systems reliant on individual processes, theories of adult learning and social practice are explored.

## Theoretical Framework

### Constructivism

Constructivism as a paradigm or worldview posits that learning is an active, constructive process (http://www.learning-theories.com/constructivism.html). According to this theory, people actively construct or create their own subjective representations of objective reality through linking new information to prior knowledge. Learners test new knowledge, attained from personal experiences and hypotheses of the environment, through social negotiation.

Social Development Theory, put forth by Russian Psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978), is one of the foundations for constructivism. It asserts three major themes: 1) social interaction plays a fundamental role in the process of cognitive development; 2) learning involves others who have a better understanding or a higher ability than the learner (e.g., teacher, coach, peers); and 3) learning occurs in the "Zone of Proximal Development," or "Vygotsky's Space," which is the space between one's ability to perform a task under guidance and the ability to perform independently http://www.learning-theories.com/vygotskys-social-learning-theory.html).

Vygotsky focused on the connections of people and the socio-cultural context in which they act and interact in shared experiences (Crawford, 1996). In his view, information is not something that is transmitted to a learner; rather, meaning is constructed through collaboration. Drawn from Vygotsky's work, Harre and Gavelek developed a model showing how individual development is achieved through participation in social processes (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996; McVee, Dunsmore, & Gavelek, 2005). In their framework, interactions are conceptualized as a process of four phases through which cultural practices are individually internalized, transformed in the context of individual needs and uses, and then externalized, or shared, in ways that may be adopted by others. The process is viewed as cyclical and evolutionary, in that learning and change operate in a cumulative and transactional way at both individual and collective levels (Gallucci, 2007).

According to Galucci, individuals first appropriate, or take up, ways of thinking through interactions with others. These new ways of thinking can create "disturbances" in existing practice (Engestrom, 2001). To rectify these tensions, individuals then reinterpret, or transform new thinking about concepts and practices within their individual contexts, creating ownership. These situations constitute sites for individual learning and innovation as people transform new ideas to practice. If learning is viewed as part of a system, individual learning is then broadened to the organizational level through the demonstration or discussion of new understandings and practices among professionals. As these transformed practices are published, they become conventionalized, forming the basis for appropriating new ways of thinking. Thus, the

cycle begins again, setting people and organizations on a path of continuous improvement and development (Galucci, 2007).

**Situated Cognitive Theory**

The situated perspective of cognitive theories is based on the principles that cognition is situated in particular contexts (i.e. the settings and applications that would normally involve that knowledge), is social in nature, and is distributed across the individual, other persons, and tools (Lave, 1988; Clark & Hollingsworth, 2002; Putnam & Borko, 2000). Although relatively new in educational research, these themes have roots in the work of Dewey and Vygotsky in the late 19th Century. Greeno and colleagues (1996) weaved these principal themes together in characterizing the situated perspective of cognition. They state that "success in cognitive functions such as reasoning, remembering, and perceiving, is understood as an *achievement of a system*, with contributions of the individuals who participate, along with tools and artifacts; meaning that thinking is situated in a particular context of intentions, social partners, and tools" (p. 20). According to Putnam & Borko (2000), a situated perspective on learning can provide important conceptual tools for exploring the complex relationships between knowing and context and for taking them into consideration as we design, enact, and study programs to facilitate teacher learning.

Early cognitive scientists viewed knowing as an interpretation of symbols inside the mind, and learning as the application of knowledge and skills thought to be useful in a variety of settings (Greene, et al., 1996). Situated theorists challenge this assumption and posit that how an individual learns a particular set of knowledge and skills and the situation in which a person learns become a fundamental part of what is learned. Thus,

the focus is on interactive systems that include individuals as participants, interacting with each other as well as materials and representational systems (Cobb & Bowers, 1999; Greeno, 1997). They include that authentic learning for teachers is found in the "the kinds of thinking and problem-solving skills fostered by an activity" (p.2) within a learning environment or setting.

Psychologists and educators are recognizing that the role of others in the learning process goes beyond providing stimulation and encouragement for individual construction of knowledge (Resnick, 1991). Rather, interactions with others in one's environment are major determinants of both what is learned and how learning takes place. This socio-centric view (Soltis, 1981) holds that what we take as knowledge and how we think and express ideas are the products of interactions with groups of people over time. Through discourse, individuals are provided cognitive tools (ideas, theories, and concepts) which they appropriate as their own through their personal efforts to make sense of experiences. Some have conceptualized learning as coming to know how to participate in the discourses and practices of learning (Cobb, 1994; Lave & Wenger, 1991). This perspective emphasizes that learning is as much a matter of enculturation into a community's ways of thinking and dispositions as it is a result of explicit instruction in concepts, skills, and procedures (Driver, et al., 1994; Resnick, 1988; Schoenfeld, 1992).

Cognition, according to situated theorists, is not solely the property of individuals but is "distributed, or stretched over" (Lave, 1988) the individual, others, and various artifacts. They posit that the distribution of cognition makes it possible to accomplish cognitive tasks beyond the capability of any one person. Thus, schools would do well to

combine the skills and expertise of many within a community in the quest for instructional improvement and learning. In consideration of schools, Marx and colleagues (1998) called for research to determine the structures and scaffolds necessary to support teacher learning. They state that a "careful analysis of how teachers learn and how they incorporate their learning into their daily practices will enable designers to create systems tailored to different teacher learning needs" (p. 41).

## Review of Literature on Teacher Evaluation

Scholar and educator Angela Steward states, "Any way of working can be made more effective. What you do must be evaluated…by sharing your experiences and taking learners' views into account. Learning from these evaluations and making changes requires risk-taking, practice, and taking control of the learning environment" (2009, p.88). These sentiments incite thought toward the design, functions, and purposes of teacher evaluation as part of a system, on which scholarly research sheds light.

### Design

New perspectives on design include a strong move toward rigorous and regular feedback, teacher support and development, multiple measures, and accountability. A nation-wide study conducted by researchers from The New Teacher Project (2012) produced findings on teacher evaluation practices that distilled to a set of lessons learned. They found that 1) teachers are struggling with fundamental instructional skills; 2) that classroom observations alone are not sufficient to assess performance; 3) that student performance must be included in the assessment of teacher effectiveness, and 4) that several strong measures of performance will produce the most accurate results. They believe effective system design can indeed unleash untapped potential in teachers.

Several recommendations for system design are offered, to include rigorous expectations, multiple measures, regular feedback, and significance (http://tntp.org/assets/tools/Evaluation_3.12_Final_2.pdf).

Similarly, researchers from the Brookings Brown Center Task Group on Teacher Quality (2011) note that the new generation of teacher evaluation systems seeks to make performance measurement and feedback more rigorous and useful. To this end, new systems typically incorporate several sources of information on teacher performance, including such metrics as systematic classroom observations, student and parent surveys, measures of professionalism and commitment to the school community, more differentiated principal ratings, and test score gains for students in each teacher's classrooms. They assert that measures should demonstrate "meaningful variation that reflects the full range of teacher performance in the classroom" (http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2011/0426_evaluating_teachers.aspx).

Finally, many are emphasizing holistic, value-centered approaches to teacher evaluation, ensuring we think beyond test scores and reach out to what we value most in education (Gabriel & Arlington, 2012; Beerens, 2000). Researchers from the MET project (2012) pose several questions for broadening our view of teacher effectiveness and designing tools for evaluation: 1) Does evaluation inspire responsive teaching or defensive conformity? 2) Does evaluation reflect our goals for public education? 3) Does evaluation encourage teachers to use text in meaningful ways – to promote literate thought in students? 4) Does evaluation spark meaningful conversations with teachers? And 5) Does evaluation promote valuable, authentic education experiences? Beerens

(2000) puts forth that nurturing teachers and viewing them as professionals is the foundation for success in any evaluation system.

**Purposes of Evaluation**

In considering evaluation design, many point out that a clear sense of purpose should govern (Haefele, 1993; Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Recently, 3000 teachers across the nation were asked what the purpose of evaluation should be. On a scale showing "measurement" on one end and "development" on the other, teachers indicated where evaluation should fall. Results showed that teachers believe evaluation should be 80% development and 20% measurement (Marzano, 2012), illuminating the idea that both play important roles in evaluation. Measurement and development have seemingly dueling purposes and outcomes, which raises the question, how do we accomplish both in a system of evaluation? An examination of the functions of formative and summative evaluation provides guidance.

Formative evaluation occurs frequently and over time, focusing on professional growth, constructive feedback, recognition and reinforcement of outstanding practice, direction for staff development, and the unifying of teachers around student learning. Summative evaluation, on the other hand, provides a means for accountability and quality assurance, serving as a basis for organizational decisions, such as screening out unsuitable candidates, dismissing incompetent teachers, or providing legal evidence for personnel actions. In summative design, evaluations are considered judgments to be made purely objectively and in hierarchical fashion. Formative design gives way to the more human aspect of performance, placing the supervisor in a more facilitative, coaching role rather than one of a judge (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

It has been argued among professionals and policy makers that the purposes of summative and formative evaluation are incompatible - that quality assurance and professional growth cannot co-exist in one system (Danielson & McGreal, 2007). However, Danielson and McGreal (2000) assert that it is possible to merge the two into one system; in fact, they argue they are complementary and strengthen one another. They establish that evaluation should be viewed as a continuous process and include the characteristics of differentiation, a culture of professional learning (i.e., a collaborative culture of professional inquiry; a spirit of support and assistance; and the presumption of competence and continued professional growth); and the measurement of the various aspects of the domain of teaching, with a focus on activities most closely tied to professional learning, including self assessment (p.30). Tang & Chow (2007), at the conclusion of their study on formative practices, recommended that learning-oriented, or formative, assessment practices be researched in a summative context to generate deeper insights on supervision and evaluation.

Many support the notion that true pedagogical development comes from teacher self-reflection that results in clear goals for improvement (Marzano, Frontier, and Livingston, 2011; Downey, et.al, 2010). Tang and Chow (2007) suggest that learning-oriented assessment practices make it possible for teachers to construct professional knowledge and enhance self-regulated learning toward a growth orientation. Learning-oriented practice consists of two facets: first, developing a shared understanding of the assessment criteria, and second, encouraging, supporting and empowering the teacher to take on an active role in making judgments on performance and setting targets (p. 1080).

## Adult Learning

In order to understand the connections of teacher evaluation to teacher development, it is important to understand how teachers learn. In his review of adult learning literature, Smylie (1995) identifies five characteristics of adult learning in the workplace: it is a lifelong experience; it occurs across settings and circumstances (e.g., formal and informal learning); it is affected by the individual's past experiences; it is problem oriented; and adults play an active role in their learning. Taking a situated cognitive perspective on adult learning, knowledge must be presented in an authentic context (i.e., the settings and applications that would normally involve that knowledge) and learning is acquired through social interaction and collaboration (Lave, 1988; Clark & Hollingsworth, 2002; Putnam & Borko, 2000). A discussion of these understandings as they relate to teacher evaluation follows.

**The role of feedback.** Many authors agree that good feedback about the quality of performance is essential for learning (Frase, 2001; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Vollmeyer & Rheinberg, 2005) and can lead to significant improvement in classroom performance (Stronge and Tucker (2003). Tang and Chow (2007) identify the communication of feedback, such as that given during supervisory conferences, as crucial for teachers' professional learning. It is argued, however, that not all feedback generates improvement in teacher performance (Kluger & Denisi, 1996). Only when feedback is perceived as useful does it lead to teacher learning and change in practice (Keeping & Levy, 2000). Roberts (1994) suggests that perceptions of feedback utility (how useful, informative, timely, and influential it is) are related to the degree a teacher perceives a suggestion to fit class needs and the ability of the teacher to enact the suggestion.

Further, perceptions of utility are strongly correlated with the acceptance and use of a system – and unless there is acceptance and use, any system is "doomed to failure" (Keeping & Levy, 2000, p. 709).

Many contend that supervisors need to choose appropriate approaches in order to address a teacher's developmental needs and the nature of the situations (Cooper, 1994; Glickman, et.al., 2004; Ralph, 2002). They assert that emphasis must be on the learner's role in making judgments of their own work so that they can "make more sense of, and assume greater control over, their own learning and become more self-monitoring" (Sadler, 2005, p. 185). In the process of communicating quality feedback, judgments are made about the match between evidence of achievements and standards (Knight, 2002). Quality feedback that promotes learning includes non-evaluative descriptions of a teacher's work, evaluative comments linked to high-quality criteria, and setting targets for improvement (Sadler, 1989, 1998). Essentially, quality feedback can help the learner identify and close the gap between his or her current level of achievement and a higher level of attainment, but only if it is based on evidence. (Tang & Chow, 2007; Kilbourn, et.al, 2005).

**The role of reflection**. Mezirow (2004), in his Theory of Transformational Learning, puts forth that meaning is understood and developed through reflection (2000). He explains that learning occurs as we reflect on the content and premise of the problem, as well as the process of problem solving. As we question our own points of view, we look and reflect upon alternate points of view and often create new, more reliable and meaningful ways of knowing that may be different from our old views. Through reflection, we are able to understand ourselves more and then understand our learning

better. He states: "Becoming aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others allows one to assess their relevance for making an interpretation (Mezirow, 2000, p.4).

Downey and Frase (2003) emphasize the value of teaching professionals making adjustments in practice based on individually gathered input and reflection. They, too, advocate for quality appraisal processes that focus on growth, but seek that growth primarily through reflective questioning and in a climate of "expecting rather than inspecting and respecting rather than directing" (Downey, et.al, 2010). In the construction of professional knowledge, Tang and Chow (2007) emphasize the teacher as an active participant in the supervision process. They state that it is not about knowledge being handed down by a supervisor, but rather "interrogating theoretical forms of knowledge with practical knowledge generated out of lived experience and embedded in (the teacher's) practice" (p. 1080).

**The role of discourse**. Charlotte Danielson (2010) makes it clear that evaluators need to be able to engage teachers in productive conversations about practice (p. 39). Drawing upon the notion that learning is acquired through social interaction, studies of discourse have emerged that link the quantity and patterns of dialogue to performance management. These studies suggest that "with remarkable consistency, the data confirmed that communication indeed plays a critical role in building successful teams. In fact, we've found patterns of communication to be the most important predictor of a team's success. Not only that, but they are as significant as all the other factors – individual intelligence, personality, skill, and the substance of discussions – combined (Pentland, 2012).

One study, conducted by Wooley, et al., (2010), sought answers to questions regarding the appropriate balance between presenting information and facilitating teachers' construction of new knowledge and practice. Their research approached the dilemma of wanting to see a teacher's practice change in a particular direction while empowering teachers to be meaningfully involved in determining the changes. They determined the balance was struck in drawing upon the unique sets of knowledge and skills offered by researchers and teachers. As a result, ideas emerged that were "joint productions" that furthered the understanding of all participants. Both researchers and teachers came away with new insights about teaching and learning, and the collective intelligence of the group increased.

**The Complexities of Teaching**

Current research emphasizes the strong contextual nature of teaching - that it is a highly complex process that defies traditional methodology for assessing or assisting teachers. Given its complexity, richer forms of data collection and more self-reflection on the part of the teacher are necessary activities for effective instruction. A one-time lesson observation is simply not enough to assess the quality of instruction or capture all that a teacher is and does as a professional; nor is one leadership perspective sufficient (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

The NBPTS (1987) provides insight into the complexity of the teaching profession in their articulation of the five core propositions that frame accomplished teaching. They outline the profile of the well-rounded teaching professional, which includes attitudes, skills, and dispositions beyond the classroom. This enumeration suggests a broad base for expertise in teaching but cannot reveal the complexities,

uncertainties, and dilemmas of the work. The Board states that "The formal knowledge teachers rely on accumulates steadily, yet provides insufficient guidance in many situations. Teaching ultimately requires judgment, improvisation, and conversation about means and ends. Human qualities, expert knowledge and skill, and professional commitment together compose excellence in this craft" (http://www.nbpts.org/UserFiles/File/what_teachers.pdf).

A team of teacher educators in Hong Kong developed a framework that honors the complexity of the teaching professional. Their creation is based on three domains, namely professional attributes, teaching and learning, and involvement in the education community. They put forth that these are key aspects of a teacher's work; and that by laying them out, teachers can have a fuller understanding of where they are in professional maturity (Tang & Chow, 2007).

**Leadership and Evaluation**

Keeping & Levy (2000) emphasize that unless an evaluation system can be implemented well, the design is of no consequence. As the reliability of teacher evaluation results have been called into question (TNTP, 2012), much discussion has taken place on the subject of who is evaluating the teachers. Recommendations center on the use of multiple evaluators who can converge on judgments based on various perspectives and pieces of data. Many assert that no single person can accomplish all that is required to effectively implement the formative and summative pieces involved in the process of evaluation (Tang and Chow, 2007; Beerens, 2000).

In the overall body of school leadership research, there are two main theories that frame approaches to practice: Instructional Leadership and Transformational Leadership.

Instructional leadership focuses on behaviors that are associated with the direct supervision and monitoring of instruction. Transformational leadership is associated with the characteristics of leaders that inspire and empower followers to perform well and rally around school vision and goals. Generally, there is discord between the two theories pertaining to the style or approach that is most effective for teacher learning and performance (Tutyens & Devos, 2011).

On the one hand, many authors agree on the importance of providing strong instructional leadership through behaviors and interactions that directly support teachers in improving their craft (Colby, et.al, 2002; Robinson, et al., 2008; Blasé & Blasé, 1999). On the other hand, many claim transformational leadership, or charismatic, capacities that "foster capacity development and higher levels of personal commitment to organizational goals on the part of leaders' colleagues" are critical (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999, p. 453; Beerens, 2000). Research conducted by Tuytens and Devos (2011) demonstrates that all perceived leadership variables associated with both instructional and transformational leadership directly influence the perceived utility of feedback and indirectly influence the professional learning of teachers. They assert that both instructional and transformational leadership are important in the context of teacher evaluation. In agreement with their findings, Robinson (2010) found that leaders must possess strong relational trust, strong problem solving capacity, and strong content knowledge in order to affect teacher learning as a result of the evaluation process.

# Chapter 3

# RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of my action research was to provide a meaningful, beneficial, and manageable process for both teachers and administration. The purpose of my investigation was to better understand the impact of my change effort on the participants in my study with regard to teacher perceptions, learning, and practice. Features of my research design are based on action research and mixed-methodologies.

## Setting

This study took place in a small, suburban, one-site charter school that operates autonomously under contract with the State Department of Education. The school educates approximately 480 students in grades Kindergarten through Sixth. An open-enrollment school of choice, students are selected through a lottery process. A majority of families are Caucasian (82%) and few are identified at the poverty level (12%). The instructional staff consists of a total of 19 classroom teachers and 4 specialty teachers (Music, Art, Physical Education, and French).

## Participants

The total instructional staff, five of whom were new to the campus, was asked to participate. All classroom teachers are appropriately certified and designated Highly Qualified by the State Department of Education, with specialty teachers requiring expertise in their respective content areas. Teachers range in age from 22 to 50 with 0 to 19 years of experience. One quarter of our teachers have five or less years of experience and 17% have 15 or more years of experience. Three of the 18 teachers are male. Each was hired for his or her alignment to the core mission, vision, and values the school

espouses. Data were collected on all teachers, but only those who granted permission were represented in the data analysis.

As Head of School, my role was that of researcher and participant. Other core participants included the Dean of Academics and the School-wide Enrichment Specialist, both informing the practice of evaluation and serving to carry out tasks associated with the implementation of the innovation. Each administrator in the triad has over 14 years of experience in education, with a collective total of 47 years. The Head of School has 7 years of administrative experience, and both the Dean and the Enrichment Specialist have 1 year of experience at the administrative level.

## Timeline of Implementation

The action research study took place over the first four months of the 2012-2013 school year. Beginning with pre-service week in August, teachers provided input into the design of the summative instrument based on a shared vision of professionalism and excellence at the school.

From August through November, the formative piece of the evaluation system was implemented: "Administrators will participate in regular walk-throughs with teachers and conduct reflective conversations or feedback sessions depending on the need and level of an individual's proficiency" (TELAR, 2012). This task was primarily conducted by the Dean with secondary support from the Head of School. The Dean organized and implemented specific supports for teachers as determined by the data, including co-teaching experiences, modeling, and observations by herself and peer teachers. The School-wide Enrichment Specialist (SES) and Head of School served as secondary support in this capacity.

During the months of September and October, the Head of School conducted formal lesson observations. In September, teachers with three or more years at the school were scheduled. In October, teachers in their first or second years with the school were scheduled. This allowed more time with the formative piece for less experienced teachers. Each teacher individually participated in a reflective conference with the Head of School within two days of his or her observation to discuss instruction, reflect on practice, and consider ways to improve.

Weekly, the Head of School, Dean, and SES met to reflect upon data collected during the week. Administrative reflective logs were completed jointly and recorded in teachers' data folders. The administrative triad provided perspective from the primary capacity in which they serve. These data informed the direction of administration during both the formative and summative components of the evaluation process.

In December, the summative component of the evaluation system was implemented. Teachers engaged in a formal process of self-reflection, constructing a written narrative and scoring for each category of the matrix. Teachers met for a performance review with the Head of School, who was prepared with a scoring and narrative on teacher performance based on data collected through the first half of the year. The mid-year assessment served as a checkpoint for teachers to understand administrator perspectives of performance. The conversation was balanced between the teacher and Head of School, with each participating equally. Resources were set for support, and formal improvement plans were constructed for those teachers who required them. Teacher data from the matrix were placed on a spreadsheet, showing strengths and areas of need for individuals as well as the group.

## Methodology

This study employs action research using a mixed-methods design. Action research, as defined by Mills (2007), is "any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, school counselors, or other stake holders in the teaching/learning environment to gather information about how well their students learn" (p. 5). Kochendorfer (1997) identified several reasons action research is performed, including changing practice, creating new understandings, developing new relationships, and seeking answers to problems. Others speak to closing the theory-to-practice divide (Hinchey, 2008; Stringer, 2007).

Mixed-methods research design combines both quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a research study. Researchers employ mixed methods design to broaden understanding or to use one approach to better understand, explain, or build on the results from the other (Cresswell, 2009). The mixing of the two might be within one study or among several studies in a program of inquiry. Many different terms are used for this approach, such as integrating, synthesis, quantitative and qualitative methods, multi-method, and mixed methodology, but recent writings use the term mixed methods (Bryman, 2006; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Mixed methods research is relatively new in the social and human sciences as a distinct research approach (Cresswell, 2009). Several sources identify its inception in psychology and in the multi-trait, multi-method matrix of Campbell and Fiske (1959), which led to an interest in converging or triangulating different quantitative and qualitative data sources (Jick, 1979). From there, mixed methods developed into a distinct methodology of inquiry (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie,

1998). There is a growth of interest in mixed methods research as expressed in books, journal articles, diverse disciplines, and funded projects (Cresswell, 2009). Challenges this form of research include the need for extensive data collection, the time-intensive nature of analyzing both text and numeric data, and the requirement for the researcher to be familiar with both quantitative and qualitative forms of research (Cresswell, 2009).

As the goal of my investigation was to understand, describe, discover, and generate meaning, emphasis was given to qualitative research for overall design. Characteristics of design were flexible, evolving, and emergent to reflect the constructivist philosophical underpinnings of my approach (Cresswell, 2009). Research methods were used to investigate how teachers are influenced by the process of evaluation. Martin Greller (1978) found that ownership was the factor most strongly related to a subordinate's reaction to an appraisal, and Keeping and Levy (2000) assert that reactions determine acceptance; and unless there is acceptance of a system, no system, no matter how well crafted, can be effective. Data were collected on perceptions, reactions, and responses to evaluation.

## Data Collection

Data for this study were collected to measure the impact of TELAR on teacher perspectives, use, learning, and practice. Each source was chosen to inform or explain the others in enriching and extending ways for the purposes of complementarity and development. Although this study primarily includes qualitative measures, equal weight was given to both qualitative and quantitative data. Due to time constraints of the data collection period, data were collected concurrently. Following is a presentation of data

sources, their justifications for use, and a description of how data were collected. A summary of sources and connections to the research questions is included in Appendix D.

**Survey**

The purpose of survey research is to generalize from a sample to a population so that inferences can be made about some characteristic, attitude, or behavior of the population (Babbie, 1990). Although results cannot be generalized due to the narrow characteristics of participants in the study (Cresswell, 2009), the use of a survey is a preferred instrument of data collection, as there is economy in design and rapid turnaround in data collection.

Many studies of appraisal reactions, including perceptions of utility, satisfaction, anxiety, and derogation, have utilized surveys as a primary source for data collection (Greller, 1978; Tang & Chow, 2007; Marks & Printy, 2003; Vollmeyer & Rheinberg, 2005; Waldman, et al., 1987; Tutyens & Devos, 2011; Giles & Mossholder, 1990). The survey used for my study was based on the instrument validated by Greller (1978) for appraisal reactions. With the understanding that a modified instrument may not hold its original validity and reliability determination, I piloted the new instrument in the spring of 2012 to establish content validity and to improve the questions, format, and scales. The instrument, administered to a similar population of teachers (n=22), was found to have high reliability (alpha = 0.96).

The survey contains 30 closed-ended and 7 open-ended items. Closed-ended responses use a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Each item falls within four constructs: *Utility*, *Feedback and Support*,

*Response, and Leadership*, which are related to the intended outcomes of the innovation and the study's research questions.

The first construct, *Utility*, measured participants' perceptions of the value of the system in promoting professional growth and understanding of performance. Items in this construct focused on the summative evaluation session and directly inform research question 1. The second construct, *Feedback and Support*, measured participants' views on the usefulness of the formative process in deepening reflection, connecting to needs, and supporting progress toward the summative evaluation. This construct informed both research questions 1 and 2. The third construct, *Response*, measured responses to the evaluation process, particularly in learning and practice, as set forth by the NBPTS (1987) (teachers critically examine practice, deepen knowledge, expand their repertoire of skills, and apply learning to practice). Open-ended questions, included in the *Response* construct, prompted participants to indicate specific ways in which learning and practice shifted. Within this construct, research questions 3 and 4 are addressed. The fourth construct, *Leadership*, captured participants' perceptions of transformative leadership behaviors (that are not related to direct instructional supervision) that may impact responses to evaluation. Demographic data was also included, but was sufficiently general so as to not identify a participant through the data.

The survey was created in SurveyMonkey® and transmitted electronically in July 2012 and again in December 2012 to each participant. This mode of delivery was chosen for ease of collection, privacy, availability of data, efficiency of time, and minimal cost. The use of this software also allowed me to generate results and report them back as descriptive statistics and graphed information using IBM SPSS 20 statistical software.

As a means to allow pre- and post-survey comparisons and maintain confidentiality, participants were asked to generate a unique four-digit number for identification purposes. Qualitative data provided by the open-ended questions were downloaded electronically and kept in a secure location. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix E.

**Interviews**

Pre and post innovation interviews were conducted to address issues relevant to the primary research questions and provide depth and clarity to the data provided on the surveys. This source of qualitative data includes questions that were open-ended and presented in a semi-structured framework. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed using transcription software, with files kept in a secure location to assure complete confidentiality. A copy of interview questions is included in Appendix F.

**Teacher Reflection Narratives**

Written narratives presented at the evaluation session provided a summative self-assessment in relation to each area of the performance matrix. Qualitative data gathered from the narratives were expected to produce evidence related to the research questions of teacher learning and practice.

**Field notes**

As a researcher and practitioner, I wanted to document my impressions during the innovation period. Many opportunities to observe and reflect took place over the course of the change effort, and notes taken in a journal have the potential to lend depth and clarity to the data from other sources.

**Potential Threats to Validity**

The legitimization of a mixed methods study relates to many phases of the research process, from philosophical issues, to drawn inferences, to the value of the study, to the strategies chosen (Onwuegbusie & Johnson, 2006, p. 55). Potential internal threats to validity for my study include history, maturation, mortality, Hawthorne Effect, Novelty Effect, and Experimenter Effect. Mortality was of particular concern, as 3 of the 19 initial participants did not remain in the study for various reasons - one left the building and profession one month in, one left for maternity leave and was absent 6 weeks, and another did not meet scheduling deadlines for observations and evaluations. A summary of threats to validity, including actions taken to address them, is provided in Appendix G.

Overall, researcher bias, accuracy of findings, and consistency of approach are issues. Every researcher brings to a study his or her own world view, personal experience, and expectations. Situated cognitive theory sheds light on reducing the influence of the researcher. According to this theory, as researchers trying to understand what teachers know and how they learn, careful attention must be paid to the support and guidance provided. Behaviorists, with their focus on process-product, avoid the issue through strict objectivity, being removed and simply recording observations without influence. With the shift to situated cognitive perspectives, researchers understand they are inevitably part of the contexts they seek to understand. With my participative role as a research-practitioner, rather than pretend to be objective, I carefully considered my role in influencing and shaping the phenomena of my study and ensured anonymity where possible and reassurance of the purpose of the study when teachers were face to face.

Chapter 4

# ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The previous chapter addressed the design of the study and how data were collected. This chapter details my analysis and centers on the results of the study. Quantitative results from closed-ended survey responses are stated and explained using descriptive and inferential statistics. Qualitative results from open-ended survey items, interviews, and written reflection narratives are presented in the form of themes, theme-related components, and assertions. Table 1 shows an inventory of data sources collected and the amounts of records involved in the analysis.

Table 1

*Inventory of Qualitative Sources, Descriptions, and Data counts*

| Source | Description | Content Coded |
|---|---|---|
| Open-ended survey comments | Teachers responded to 7 open-ended comment sections on both pre and post surveys (3 in the response construct, and 3 independent of constructs). The survey was completed anonymously. | 14 typed pages, single spaced |
| Audio recording Transcriptions of semi-structured interviews | Teachers provided verbal responses to three questions pertaining to perceptions of and responses to evaluation, pre and post innovation. | 38 typed pages, single spaced |
| Written reflective narratives | Teachers provided written reflective narratives based on the performance matrix, post innovation. | 36 typed pages, single spaced |

## Method

This research study adopted an inductive, constant comparative method as the primary mode of analysis. Using a concurrent triangulation strategy for analysis, I collected complementary quantitative and qualitative data and compared the sets to determine instances of convergence, differences, or some combination. The mixing of data occurred as the two databases were integrated or merged (Cresswell, 2009, p. 213). An illustration of the strategy is shown in Figure 1.

| QUAN | + | QUAL |
|---|---|---|
| QUAN<br>Data Collection<br>↓<br>QUAN<br>Data Analysis | Data Results Compared<br>↔ | QUAL<br>Data Collection<br>↓<br>QUAL<br>Data Analysis |

Figure 1: *Concurrent Triangulation Design*

**T**he primary rationale for triangulation is to "increase the validity of construct and inquiry inferences by using methods with offsetting biases, thereby counteracting irrelevant sources of variation and misinformation or error." According to Greene (2007), the primary rationale for triangulation is to "increase confidence in inquiry inferences where results provide consistent or convergent information" (p. 100). For the purposes of complementarity, data were compared across sources to elaborate, enhance, deepen, and broaden the overall interpretations and inferences (Greene, 2007).

Advantages to concurrent triangulation design are that it is familiar to most researchers, it can result in well-validated and substantiated findings, and data can be gathered in a shorter time period than a sequential approach. Limitations include difficulty in comparing results of data from different analyses and resolving discrepancies (Cresswell, 2009).

## Quantitative Data Analysis and Results

In this study, the teacher survey served to better understand teacher perceptions of and responses to evaluation. I first determined the reliability of the survey by calculating the Cronbach Alpha using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). In order to be considered reliable, each construct should meet the generally accepted level of .70 or greater (Cronbach, 1951). The overall survey had a reliability of .96. Results are provided in Table 2.

Table 2

*Cronbach Alpha of Individual Constructs*

| Construct | Item Numbers | Cronbach Alpha |
|---|---|---|
| Utility | 3 – 8 | .87 |
| Feedback and Support | 9 – 16 | .85 |
| Response | 17, 18, 20, 22 | .84 |
| Leadership | 24 – 33 | .88 |

To gain understanding of the impact of my innovation, I then analyzed my quantitative data using descriptive and inferential statistics (Gay, et al., 2009). Individual construct scores were computed as the mean of all items in the construct, then using

SPSS, I calculated the means and standard deviations for each construct. I assigned values of 1 - 4 to the Likert scale of the survey, with a score of 4 indicated the strongest agreement. I interpret a score of 3.50 – 4.00 to mean the teacher strongly agrees with the statement; a score of 2.50 – 3.49 to mean the teacher somewhat agrees; a score of 1.50 – 2.49 to mean the teacher somewhat disagrees; and a score of 1.00 to 1.49 to mean the teacher strongly disagrees. Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations for each construct.

Table 3

*Pre/Post Survey Constructs and Descriptive Results*

| Construct | Pre | | Post | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | SD | M | SD |
| Utility | 2.88 | .72 | 3.47 | .50 |
| Feedback and Support | 3.01 | .57 | 3.38 | .37 |
| Response | 2.66 | .90 | 3.14 | .55 |
| Leadership | 3.47 | .75 | 3.79 | .33 |

Finally, I conducted paired samples t-tests to evaluate whether the differences between pre and post survey scores for each construct were statistically significant. The results showed that post survey *means* were significantly higher from pre survey means for the constructs of *Utility*, *Feedback and Support*, and *Response*; however, the means for the construct of *Leadership* were not significantly different. This suggests change occurred as a result of factors outside of the teachers' views of leadership. Table 4 presents the results of my paired-samples t-test.

Table 4

*Paired-Samples T-tests*

| Construct | *t* | *p* | *df* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Utility | 3.07 | .010* | 12 |
| Feedback and Support | 2.22 | .047* | 12 |
| Response | 2.35 | .035* | 13 |
| Leadership | 1.38 | .196 | 11 |

*Significant p<.05

The first construct, *Utility*, contains six questions pertaining to how strongly the teachers felt their evaluation session was useful in promoting performance awareness and improvement, an understanding of value to the organization, and goal setting. The results show that prior to the innovation, teachers in my study were somewhat in agreement that teacher evaluation was useful ($M$ = 2.88, $SD$ .72). At the conclusion of the innovation, analysis showed the teachers more strongly agreed ($M$ = 3.47, $SD$ = .50) and that the shift in perceptions of utility were significant ($p$ = .010).

Construct 2, *Feedback and Support*, contains eight questions designed to gather information on how supported teachers feel and how meaningful they consider their feedback. The items in this construct speak to frequency of communication, promotion of critical thinking, specificity and accuracy of feedback, and connection of support to needs. Prior to the innovation, the data show teachers felt supported and that feedback was meaningful, although they bordered on the low end of agreement ($M$ = 3.01, $SD$ =

.57). After the innovation, the level of agreement increased in this construct ($M$ = 3.38, $SD$ = .37) to a significant degree ($p$ = .047)

Construct 3, *Response*, contains seven questions specifically pointing to the learning responses of teachers as a result of their evaluation session. Learning responses are defined as critically examining practice, deepening knowledge through seeking resources, expanding repertoire of skills, and applying new knowledge to practice (NBPTS, 2000). Each response is designed to provide insight to Question 3 of my research: How and to what extent does a new evaluation system affect teacher learning and practice? The analysis shows that prior to the innovation, teachers somewhat agreed that evaluation prompted a learning response ($M$ = 2.66, $SD$ = .90). After the innovation, the teachers more strongly agreed to the same ($M$ = 3.14, $SD$ = .55) to the extent that it was significant ($p$ = .035).

The ten questions in Construct 4 were to gather teacher perceptions of *Leadership*. As a researcher, I wanted to understand whether leadership perceptions would impact a teacher's perception of or response to evaluation. The data show that prior to and after the innovation, teacher perceptions of leadership remained relatively the same (pre: $M$ = 3.47, $SD$ = .75; post: $M$ = 3.79, $SD$ = .33). While the shift in means moved from somewhat to strongly agree, the difference was not considered significant ($p$ = .196). These scores indicate that perceptions of leadership were not a determining factor in creating the differences in perceptions of and responses to evaluation in this study.

## Qualitative Data Analysis and Results

To add depth and contextually rich information to the quantitative data, qualitative data were gathered from multiple sources (open-ended survey questions, teacher interviews, teacher reflection narratives, field notes), and analyzed using grounded theory. The purpose of my qualitative analysis was to develop themes, theme-related components, and assertions**.** Following, I explain the purposes and attributes of the sources, detail my analysis, and present my findings.

All data were coded and categorized to reveal similar evidences that would describe findings from my innovation and lead to the identification of themes (Gay, et al., 2009). Using Dedoose software, I uploaded the raw data and began highlighting key words, phrases, and ideas, creating codes that captured the information. I constantly compared new data to previous data, adding and reassigning codes until saturation (no new relevant insights) was met. I then re-grouped and collapsed the codes to make them more manageable and meaningful. Using selective coding based on my research questions, I grouped the codes into three main categories that fell within purposes and outcomes of evaluation and feelings and attitudes toward evaluation.

To assist in the development of themes, I utilized two analytical tools in Dedoose. First, I used a code co-occurrence chart, which shows the number of times a particular code occurred with another code. This was useful in understanding relationships of one code to another in context and determining the most frequently occurring pairs. For instance, *reflection* and *positive experience* co-occurred 13 times in the post innovation data, suggesting that positive experiences increase when reflection is present in the evaluation process. Next, I used a code application chart, which displays the frequencies

of codes within and across data sources. For instance, *teacher improvement* occurred 16 times and among 78% of the teachers in the post innovation data, twice the amount of times than pre innovation data. This suggests a greater awareness of and connection to the improvement of practice through the evaluation process. Also, *team effort* was mentioned 5 times in the post innovation data, but not at all in the pre innovation data. This indicates a new understanding of mutual and participatory roles for teachers in evaluation.

Within the framework of my research questions, the following themes emerged: (a) teachers as professionals; (b) teachers as reflective practitioners; and (c) teachers as partners in accountability. Table 5 presents themes, theme-related components, and assertions. Following is a description of each assertion and the data that surround them.

Table 5

*Themes, Theme-related Components, and Assertions from Qualitative Sources*

| Theme | Theme-related Components | Assertions |
|---|---|---|
| Teachers as professionals | Re-professionalizing the teacher<br><br>Positive climate (replacing the 'gotcha' mentality with positive supports<br><br>Authentic collaboration – teachers take an active role in the process | TELAR helped teachers redefine their role as professionals in their own evaluation |
| Teachers as reflective practitioners | Reflection and learning<br><br>Reflection and practice<br><br>Reflection and goal setting | TELAR provided multiple opportunities for teacher reflection, which promoted teacher learning and refined practice |
| Teachers as partners in accountability | Two-way conversation, not one-way judgment.<br><br>Systematic process for improvement, based on shared goals, common vision, and balanced responsibilities<br><br>Two-way ownership and accountability | TELAR helped equalize the accountability of teachers and administrators for the achievement of teacher and school goals. |

**Assertion 1: TELAR Helped Teachers Re-define Their Role as Professionals in Their Own Evaluation**

In the qualitative data, teachers emphasized the precarious situation of evaluation – that teachers are professionals who truly put their heart into their work, and that the evaluation of this work is difficult. The teaching practice is highly personal, and teachers

desired that evaluation reflect the same. One teacher, Ms. C., who is new to our school this year, but not new to the profession, commented:

> Sometimes it's hard with teaching, because people who teach are so passionate about what they do and so it's hard to hear, sometimes, the feedback on how you're doing, because you're just pouring your heart into it and then all of the sudden, it becomes this data and a score. It's really hard sometimes to, you know, just do something you love and then have it rated. So I think for me, sometimes that makes me feel like, 'Oh, wait – what? But I'm working so hard and I love what I do!'

These sentiments, combined with evidences from other sources, set the framework for the first theme, teachers as professionals. In constructing this theme, I looked to the qualitative charts in Dedoose for insight. The teacher as a professional co-occurred 47 times with other codes in the post innovation data. These codes included *conversation, growth/improvement, process, holistic, confidence, reflection, passion, personalized, teacher involvement, team effort, encouraged, inspired, supported*, and *appreciated* – all of which helped to frame and define the concept of the teacher as a professional. The most frequent co-occurrences were *growth/improvement* and teacher *involvement/team effort*. *Growth and improvement* co-occurred with *professional* 11 times and across data sources 133 times. *Teacher involvement/team effort* co-occurred with *professional* 10 times and across data sources 95 times. These data suggest that when teachers are involved in evaluation, they feel more professional and view the process as an opportunity for growth. Ms. N., a 12-year veteran teacher who had been

with our school since inception, captures the essence of this idea well in an interview conducted one month after her mid-year review:

> I see teacher evaluation as a way of developing. It is finding a way to get input and feedback from people that are observing and to understand what they feel I'm doing well in the classroom and in instruction. Also, providing a conversation of what I can maybe do to improve, not just in instruction, but as a professional. What I like recently is that in our conversation, we came prepared with the matrix and some reflection on our part. I guess I'm involved in evaluation – it's not just one-sided, where administration would come in and just say, 'This is what I saw and noticed, and this is what I want you to do before next time.' I think I'm involved in the process. And I like that.

In her sentiments, Ms. N. describes the TELAR evaluation system as a conversation between professionals that is grounded in personal reflection. She does not see evaluation as a top-down process, but one in which she is involved as a "professional."

Another teacher, Ms. H., speaks to the value of teacher involvement and includes its connection to positive feelings about the process. Ms. H. is a 10-year veteran teacher who had been at our school since our opening year. In an interview following her mid-year review, she states,

> I think it's become more about the reflective process and I like to see that. It's become less about what I've seen in other schools where you come in and you sit and they kind of tell you everything they've seen you do or not

> do, positive or negative. It's become more about you thinking about what you're doing – to reflect on that and where you can improve – and then having a two-way conversation that allows you to become that better professional versus it being more punitive and more 'gotcha' to try to catch what you're doing wrong. It's more about what you can do better.

Ms. H. speaks of TELAR as a process that places the emphasis on reflection – one that incites thought regarding current and desired levels of performance and promotes two-way conversation for becoming a "better professional." She expresses her satisfaction with the shift. She also describes the traditional mentality of feeling like evaluation is a chance for an administrator to "catch" what a teacher is doing wrong. This "gotcha" mentality is one that diminishes morale and negates the purpose of evaluation, which is to promote improvement as a professional.

Many teachers describe the shift in evaluation from an administrative task which is done to them to a joint process that is accomplished with them. Beyond the teacher simply being involved in evaluation through providing input, TELAR offers the opportunity for authentic collaboration in a professional setting. This conversation for improvement centers on a specific plan and involves both the administrator and the teacher as valid contributors. One teacher, Mr. M., a 12-year teacher new to our school, expressed the following in his post-innovation interview:

> I think from an administrator's standpoint, at least here, it's about you, the teacher, looking at yourself. I've never been in an evaluation process where I've had to evaluate myself. It was just going in and being told 'Here's what you do right, here's what you do wrong.' So I see it more

> self-reflective here, which I appreciate. Obviously you reflect to see where you're strong in your own case and what you need to improve on – it gives you a chance even before the conversation to think about what you can do to improve yourself. And it feels good having that conversation, because it can confirm what you think about yourself because you've thought about it. It's not just being told what to do. It can confirm your positives as well as confirm your negatives and you may have a plan to improve yourself. It gives the evaluator a chance to give their two cents, too, and either agree with the plan you have, or 'how about we work at going about it this way instead, and see how that works.'

Here, Mr. M. highlights the conversations that come about as a result of true collaborative processes and implies a level of professional involvement by stating, "It's not just being told what to do."

Across multiple sources, teachers suggested that evaluation provides opportunities for teachers to examine where they are and where they want to be as professionals. It can serve as a motivating force toward moving out of one's comfort zone and reaching into new levels of performance. Centering on professional opportunity, Ms. U., a six-year teacher with four years at our school, explains:

> I think what is the most important part is that you're coming into a situation where you're not settling for mediocrity. Rather, you are trying to achieve something greater than when you walked in the door. I think that being evaluated in certain circumstances or situations gives you the

> opportunity to grow with your peers and not stay at a comfort level. Because in education, I think some people get to that point that they're just gonna be the same and ride out that storm for the next twenty years and I think with evaluation it kind of makes you want to get better.

In her comment, Ms. U. describes how a career in the teaching profession can typically play out – it can either be stagnant or progressive, and evaluation can play a part in determining the trajectory. She suggests that TELAR allows a teacher to "not settle for mediocrity," but that it plays a role in continuous improvement. She continues:

> I think it's just about learning more about who I am, who I was, and where I want to go next. And I think that if the evaluation piece wasn't there, then you'd stay with what you know. There would be nothing that you're gaining as an educator or professional in any situation - in any occupation.

Teachers, when speaking of themselves as professionals and their feelings toward the process of evaluation, focus on the complexity of the teaching profession – that it is not just about instruction, and that instruction is not just about one observation. The teacher, as a professional, performs a multitude of functions that not only affect students' lives academically, emotionally, and socially, but also impact the professional lives of their colleagues and climate of the school. This holistic view of the professional is embraced by teachers and administrators alike. As offered by Mr. M. in his interview two weeks after his mid-year evaluation:

> My conception of evaluation has changed since I've been here. I used to correlate observations with evaluations, because in the past, that's kind of what it was – it was an evaluation of the observation, and it really wasn't all encompassing - here's you as a teacher, here's what you see about yourself, here's what we see about you. Rather, it was more about the lesson that was observed, not necessarily all of me. So I like that concept of it better.

Mr. M. accentuates the holistic nature of the profession and points out that evaluations are not a one-time event about a lesson observation, but a process that includes multiple data points. He describes a difference between prior, traditional experiences and his new experience as a new teacher at our school and expresses satisfaction with the concept.

Feelings about the process of evaluation were abundant across the data. Many teachers spoke to the role administration plays in easing the fear and anxiety of teachers toward evaluation. The data indicate that administrative approach is a seminal factor in how evaluation is perceived and used by teachers. One teacher, a 19-year veteran with 4 years at our school, expresses her feelings about the process as follows:

> I also felt supported and appreciated. My Head of school (evaluator) made observations that affirmed my teaching. She also made me feel like an important member of the staff and inspired me to continue to grow as an educator. The evaluation inspired me, encouraged me, and helped me. I left feeling supported, appreciated, and affirmed.

Another teacher, two years into the profession and new to our school, speaks to putting "value back into evaluation" and the role of administration in communicating that value. She adds:

> It's putting the value back into evaluation. It's something you shouldn't view as negative. It's really there for you to help you grow and just be reflective on your own craft. And I think a lot of it depends on the administrators and how they make their staff feel about evaluations. If the administrators really make the staff comfortable and let them know truly what the purpose is for them and the school, it makes teachers more receptive and not afraid of them.

In brief, teachers are viewed as professionals at our school, and the TELAR evaluation system complements this view. Through the process, teachers are afforded opportunities to be involved, to have input, and to share in two-way conversation about professional practice. With authentic collaborative processes focused on multiple data points and grounded in teacher reflection, a positive climate prevails and evaluation is viewed as an opportunity for growth. Essentially, TELAR re-professionalizes the teacher. It places the emphasis on their development and replaces a "gotcha" mentality with positive supports.

**Assertion 2: TELAR Provided Multiple Opportunities for Teacher Reflection, Which Promoted Teacher Learning and Refined Practice**

As data were collected, it became increasingly apparent to me that reflection is a more powerful player in teacher learning than I had anticipated or known. In reviewing my researcher's journal memos, I found several notations of the critical role of reflection

in learning. One excerpt, written at the conclusion of the data collection period and following the post-interviews, reads,

> Prior to the innovation, I expected that learning would be found in direct, tangible ways, such as seeking a colleague, attending formal training, or reading professional text. What came is a new understanding of reflection and the significance of examining the relationship of one's actions to outcomes. The strongest revelation in the data to me, as the researcher, involves the negotiation of external information about one's performance with internal information to cause a particular learning response in the teacher. Actions toward improvement came about as a result of teachers examining and questioning their own practice and thinking about existing and desired states of performance - prompted by the process of evaluation, but not directed by evaluation.

Many teachers spoke to feedback, reflection, and the value of perspective in gaining awareness of one's own performance. The code *Reflection* co-occurred 92 times across data sources, particularly tied to the following: *professional, goals/targets/focus areas, feedback, insight/perspective, change in practice,* and *growth/development*. These codes became the framework for the theme, teachers as reflective practitioners. The following statement by one teacher, Ms. P., new to our school, but with 7 years in the profession, captures the essence of the theme. When asked of her conceptions of teacher evaluation following her mid-year evaluation, she stated:

> I've worked in two different places, so I have two different conceptions. Now, I feel like it's really just a reflective practice - an opportunity for

> professionals to get together and discuss strengths, weaknesses, areas of growth, next goals, next steps - versus kind of like stagnating in 'you're fine!' 'It's good!' 'It's okay!' It's always about a really open, candid discussion about 'Alright, let's keep tuning and honing and being thoughtful and moving forward.' So that's my current view of teacher evaluation. It almost feels like evaluation isn't the right word. It feels like, kinda like, teacher-guided reflection."

Here, Ms. P. connects reflection to examining strengths and weaknesses, determining goals for improvement, and moving forward. For her, evaluation is a guiding process focused on teacher reflection – one that breaks from the "satisfactory" outcomes that arise out of traditional evaluation methods. Finally, Ms. P. speaks to the value of awareness that comes from an outside perspective and the role it plays in the reflective and improvement processes. She continues:

> I think it's just recognizing the areas that you need to work on. So when someone is able to sit in and kind of highlight things that you did well or things that you might need to improve on, you could definitely reflect on it and then maybe go seek another colleague or go ask for feedback or maybe just even pay attention to your instruction and your lessons and be more aware of the things you say or things that you do that maybe you just did not even think of before. So it's just being more aware of your daily instruction and things that could enhance it to make it better for the kids.

Here, Ms. P. illuminates a cycle of learning that begins with awareness, moves to reflection, and culminates with action. Connecting new awareness to a change in

practice, teachers spoke to being able to discover issues and correct deficiencies by asking questions of practice in the evaluation session and capitalizing on strengths in order to build expertise. Ms. H. expressed,

> I think for me, it caused me to reflect on what I needed to change. But I think it's changed some of my instruction in my classroom because of things that I saw as maybe deficiencies – but not in a bad way, just things that could be better.

Supporting my own reflections from field notes, Ms. H. demonstrates here that evaluation prompts reflection, which incites change in practice. Her action came about as a result of her own reflection of deficiencies - not because an administrator directed her specifically to do something. It becomes clear that teachers prefer to think about practice informed by outside perspectives and make decisions for improvement. It perpetuates the point that teachers need to play an active role in their development, rather than simply be told what to do.

Most every teacher across all sources of data discussed the role of feedback in improvement. They spoke to how direct feedback and suggestions cause a teacher to negotiate information regarding current levels of performance. Again, this process seemed to lead one to action, or refinement in practice. Ms. D., a six-year teacher with four years at our school, described it this way in her post-innovation interview:

> This year when I had my evaluation, you did give me actual feedback directed towards the lesson and gave me examples of things that you had seen in other classrooms - and it really made me think about my instruction and something I was doing and I tried it and it's working with

> my kids and I believe it actually improved their understanding. But I've never had an administrator share… It was just kind of 'you're doing this, you're doing this, you're doing this' and you're checking a box. And then it was over. There was no feedback, there was no reflection; there was no conversation, there was just nothing.

Again, the role of reflection is highlighted – this time, connected directly to feedback. Ms. D. indicates that through specific feedback, she was able to reflect upon her practice. Such reflection was the cause of a change that to her, improved her practice and created a benefit for her students. She emphasized the value of feedback, reflection, and conversation in the formative processes of evaluation in subsequently making a difference in her instruction and outcomes in her classroom.

Another salient point that emerged from the data was the value of goal setting in teacher improvement within the process of evaluation. Although no directive was given to make, keep, or present goals, most every teacher spoke to goals, targets, or areas on which to focus for growth. These data on goal setting were explicitly tied to *reflection* and *improvement*, co-occurring across sources 32 times. At the conclusion of the data collection period of my research, I noted the following regarding reflection and goal setting:

> Evaluation brings perspective and awareness, which causes a teacher to objectively analyze and understand his or her practice. This understanding leads to a vision for improvement, which allows the teacher to naturally

> consider goals that help close the gap between existing and desired states of performance.

Ms. C. explicitly states goal setting as the purpose of evaluation. As a three-year teacher in her second year at our school, she offers insight on continuous improvement through goal setting as a result of the evaluation process. She expresses the following:

> I think that the purpose of evaluation is to ultimately set goals for bettering yourself professionally and having somewhat of an objective on your skills - and helping you kind of build those goals for yourself and moving you forward. It should always come back to student growth and achievement and what they need. Evaluation should direct teachers to better meet those needs.

Ms. C., following her mid-year evaluation in an interview, puts forth that evaluation should be tied to improvement in a strategic way, stating that the ultimate purpose is for greater student outcomes. Extending this thought, Ms. P. recognizes that all teachers have room to grow, and that goals are not just for weak areas. She includes,

> Once again, it's about identifying strengths, next steps, and areas where we can continue to branch out and grow. It's not necessarily focused on weaknesses; it's about branching out and improving in the exceptional areas, as well. So it's basically just a reflection in setting goals and evaluating where you are and continuing forward being the best that you can be.

*Goal setting*, as stated, co-occurred across data sources with various codes such as *teacher involvement/team effort, professional development,* and *positive feelings*. Here, Ms. P. sums up all three:

> Prior to this, there wasn't a lot of opportunity to professionally go and get training or reinforcement in specific areas. Now I feel like I have more opportunities to think of and identify something on my own. I actually have an outlet to go to have that supported, so when I do come up with goals here in areas that I want to continue on forward and I can talk to administration and be like, 'Hey, this is a really great thing that I would love to pursue further!' and I would be completely supported in that. So that's pretty neat. It's a neat feeling. It's different.

According to these sentiments, TELAR provides opportunity to discover areas for growth and proactively seek ways to improve, including formal trainings. It becomes apparent that involving the teacher through reflection and goal setting processes are sometimes not enough to complete the picture for improvement – there must be resources and follow up from the administrator in order to support the teacher as a professional in his or her direction. Regarding the administrator-teacher partnership, another teacher added in the post – survey responses, "I liked being part of my goal-setting processes. I dislike when administrators have set goals for me without my input." Again, thoughts about feeling positive about the experience and the power of teacher input were voiced.

In sum, the teacher as a reflective practitioner is supported in the process of evaluation through TELAR. Learning and application, particularly change in practice, occurs primarily as a result of reflection. Reflection is enhanced through feedback,

creating an awareness of strengths and deficiencies with visions for improvement. Goal setting becomes explicitly tied to the reflective process as a natural outcome for teachers in their desire to move forward professionally. Thus, learning, change in practice, and goal setting are embodied in reflection, and each is a key component of TELAR.

**Assertion 3: TELAR Helped Equalize the Accountability of Teacher and Administrators for the Achievement of Teacher and School Goals**

I have always believed in teachers as professionals who love what they do and are capable of great things, even beyond what they think they can achieve, and that it is my responsibility to provide proper supports and structures to that end. Improvement and accountability, in this manner, are only accomplished as a true partnership – each has to play his or her part. This is essentially the impetus for my study. In my researcher's notes, I expressed the following. It is what I essentially told teachers in their evaluation session, not as a script, but from the heart:

> Evaluation is not a case of 'me measuring you,' but a conversation between professionals. I respect you as the expert in your classroom. I don't teach in your classroom every day or know your students as learners in the way that you do – nor could I. Even if I could observe you every day, I still would not be able to capture all that you do and know as a professional. It is inside you. We both play a role in improvement. I can provide perspective, and in some cases direction. You can use that information, along with your own, to examine where you are and where you'd like to be. I will provide supports to help get you there. We are both committed to your development, as well as to the vision, mission, and

> values of the school. As professionals, we want the same things and are equally accountable to those ends.

The code *accountability* co-occurred 25 times across data sources with codes such as *important/necessary, plan*, and *supported*. Teachers expressed favor in being held accountable for performance. In the post-survey open-ended questions, when asked what an effective evaluation system accomplishes, twice as many teachers spoke to accountability in the post data than in the pre data, with just as many speaking to teacher growth and development. This suggests that when teachers feel supported, professional, and safe, they are not afraid of accountability. Ms. G. expressed the following in her post survey response, which occurred after her mid-year evaluation:

> I really appreciated it. I know it must take a lot of time and energy, but I believe it is so important. It provides accountability for the school and the teacher. It makes me, as an educator, feel safe in that my Head of School knows my teaching style, my abilities, and takes the time to support me."

Holding teachers accountable to school and individual goals is necessary to provide meaning and consequence in the process. Many expressed a need and desire for accountability. When asked what she believed the purpose of teacher evaluation to be, Ms. D., in her post-innovation interview, simply stated, "to make teachers accountable." Mr. M. elaborated as follows:

> In the past, not much change happened with me as a result of evaluation, because it seemed like the evaluation would come in May, so it really didn't make a difference and in the summer it kind of goes away. But here, it's more concrete, in writing, and it's a plan. It's there in black and white. It's self-reflective and

you have a little bit more ownership. It was made by me and backed up by administration, which makes it even more necessary."

Ms. G. expressed the importance of accountability on both school-wide and classroom levels. She adds:

> I think it's important for administration to make sure that the staff is doing what they're supposed to be doing. It's also a good idea for the Head of School or whomever to walk in and just see what's going on in the school to see if there is a school-wide issue, or notice patterns among teachers, or notice things that may need fixing. Things like that.

Here, Ms. G. speaks comfortably about the need for a system of accountability. Her comments suggest that TELAR provides a way to negotiate matters of accountability in a positive, professional climate where both teachers and administrators work toward school goals.

With regard to teachers as partners in accountability, it appears that the more teachers feel involved in the process of evaluation and assert themselves as co-developers of their own professional development, the more they view evaluation as useful a useful tool for growth, and the more they are willing to accept it as a tool for accountability. The focus moves from the administrator as a judge to the administrator as a partner for improvement. In brief, TELAR promotes ownership in evaluation and subsequently accountability for results.

## Summary of Analysis

To summarize, the qualitative data brought richness to the quantitative findings and harnessed the complexities of teacher evaluation in relation to my research questions

of perceptions, purposes, and outcomes. Overall, the data tell a story of teachers redefining their role as professionals in their own evaluation, of having cause to deeply and systematically reflect on their practice, of making adjustments based on self-assessments and negotiations of outside information, and of bringing teachers and administrators together as partners in accountability. Essentially, when teachers were brought in as partners through authentic collaboration and provided meaningful opportunities for reflection, they embraced the process, used it to grow and develop professionally, and accepted the accountability that naturally flows from shared ownership for individual and school improvement.

# Chapter 5

# FINDINGS

In the previous chapter, I presented the results of my study from both quantitative and qualitative sources. Here, I use the findings from the analysis to synthesize assertions that respond to the research questions posed in Chapter 1. The assertions presented in this chapter are the result of triangulating the data from those sources which best inform each research question. These assertions, grounded in data, are informed by Erickson's method of analytic induction, a process of assembling confirming evidence from the data, searching for disconfirming evidence, and weighing the evidence to assure that each assertion is warranted. (Erickson, 1986; as cited by Greene, 2007).

## Assertions

This action research study was designed to investigate whether a teacher evaluation system that focuses on a holistic and shared view of the professional, integrates feedback and support, incorporates multiple points of data, and promotes the teacher as a reflective contributor would benefit the teachers at my school. I was particularly interested in the impact of evaluation on teacher perceptions, use, learning, and practice and its implications for leadership. The study was designed using theories of constructivism and social cognition and informed by relevant literature. With these considerations, I make the following assertions:

1. TELAR helps teachers re-define their role as professionals in their own evaluation, positively increasing perceptions of value.

2. TELAR promotes a culture of learning through focusing on shared values for professional work, a spirit of support and teamwork, and continuous improvement.

3. TELAR empowers teachers to assess their own practice, self-diagnose areas for growth, and generate goals through a continuous process of feedback, reflection, and conversation, and support.

**TELAR and the Teacher as a Professional**

My first and second research questions, "How and to what extent does TELAR impact teacher perceptions of evaluation?" and "How do teachers view and use TELAR?" were informed by data collected on surveys, interviews, and written reflections of teachers. Regarding perceptions and use of evaluation, I assert that TELAR helps teachers re-define their role as professionals in their own evaluation, positively increasing perceptions of value.

Teachers in this study were viewed as partners and active participants in their evaluations and afforded multiple opportunities to engage in authentic collaborative processes. The word *assess* comes from the Latin root meaning *to sit beside*. As teachers 'sat beside' administration as partners for growth and improvement, positive shifts in attitudes toward the value of evaluation occurred. This was evident across data sources. The post survey scores for the construct *Utility* were significantly different than the pre survey scores, meaning the average response of teachers increased measurably with regard to overall value.

As partners in evaluation, teachers felt a part of the learning organization and that their craft was respected. TELAR shifted the focus of one-sided judgment to a two-sided

conversation between professionals. In this study, teachers repeatedly referred to evaluation as a conversation, offering comments such as "It becomes more about thinking about what you're doing, reflecting on that, then having that two-way conversation that allows you to be a better professional" and "Evaluation is particularly useful in that I am able to reflect on my own practice and have a conversation with administration about my perspectives." Through two-way conversation, teachers have the opportunity to ask questions that engage professional judgments, inquiry, and reflection. They expressed appreciation for having input in their goal setting, for being an active participant, and for feeling supported and safe. As noted in the results, teachers specifically stated, "I appreciate having input on my goals. I dislike when administration sets goals for me;" It's not an administrator coming in with a check sheet and they go ahead with 'you meet this, you meet this, you meet this, you don't meet that;" and "I left feeling supported, appreciated, and affirmed." The overall message was that teachers felt evaluation is something that is accomplished with them, not done to them.

The process of evaluation increased teachers' understanding of their value to the organization. In the post survey, the highest response in the *Utility* construct occurred on question 7, "As a result of my evaluation session, I have a clearer understanding of my value to the organization" (m = 3.86). This is in stark contrast to the pre survey, on which teachers provided the highest response to question 4, "As a result of my evaluation session, I have a clearer understanding of my strengths" (m = 3.05). Having an understanding of strengths is important, but to me, real returns occur when teachers understand their value.

## TELAR and Teacher Learning and Practice

Question 3 of my research involves teacher responses to evaluation. Specifically, I asked, "How and to what extent does TELAR impact teacher learning and practice?" In this vein, I sought to examine levels of reflection, instances of deepening knowledge through seeking resources, specifics of expanding one's repertoire of skills, and evidences of applying new learning to practice. Regarding teacher learning and practice, I assert the following: TELAR promotes a culture of learning through focusing on shared values for professional work, a spirit of support and teamwork, and continuous improvement; and TELAR empowers teachers to assess their own practice, self-diagnose areas for growth, and generate goals through a continuous process of feedback, reflection, conversation, and support. This cycle of learning is grounded in and informed by a shared vision for success and common values regarding professional work.

**Promoting a culture of learning.** Danielson (2012) states that a culture of professional learning (i.e., collaborative culture of professional inquiry, the spirit of support and assistance, the presumption of competence and continued professional growth) with an emphasis on continuous improvement is necessary in order for an evaluation system to be effective. As recognized in my researcher's journal, teachers are viewed as capable professionals and the experts in their classrooms. They are consulted, asked questions of practice, and offered perspectives as a professional colleague with the intent of bringing about awareness. I view my role as one that incites their development no matter where they fall on the performance spectrum. All teaching professionals can improve and be inspired in some way.

Across data sources, teachers consistently expressed feeling supported, encouraged, and respected as professionals in the process of evaluation and on their path toward learning and growth. As noted by one teacher anonymously,

> "I feel empowered as an educator because my administration knows my teaching practices. It is a safe feeling to know that I am appreciated, supported, and encouraged to continue to grow in professional knowledge."

Leadership was mentioned repeatedly as a factor in how evaluations are viewed and ultimately used. Teachers expressed the importance of leadership in feelings of purpose, direction, and safety. Every action by the leader in the process of evaluation must point to the purpose – teacher development. It must be communicated and demonstrated consistently. One teacher reminds us,

> It's putting the value back into evaluation. It's not something you should view as negative or counting against you. It's really there for you and to help you grow and be reflective on your own craft. And I think it also depends a lot on the administrators and how they make their staff feel about evaluations and how they make their staff perceive evaluations. If the administration really makes the staff comfortable and lets them truly know what the purpose of the evaluation is for them and their school – find the right way to approach evaluations – then teachers, I think, would be more receptive and not afraid of them. They would just see that it's a valuable piece of their craft.

From the survey, teachers noted positive feelings about leadership in the process. While there was a positive shift in responses to questions of leadership between the pre and post survey, the difference was not significant. I hoped perceptions of leadership were strong both prior to and following the innovation, as I did not desire their perceptions of me to be a causal factor in their response to evaluation. I found interesting shifts on particular items in the data, however, as a result of the innovation. At the beginning of the year, teachers felt the strongest agreement toward items 24, 25, and 29: My Head of School encourages my development; My Head of School wants me to be successful; and My Head of School has a sense of mission which he/she transmits to me. After the innovation, items 24 and 25 remained as strongest, along with item 28: My Head of School supports me in my professional goals. It is evident that wanting one's success and having a mission aren't enough. Teachers must be supported in their goals.

In the spirit of support and assistance, Bambrick-Santoyo (2012) tells us that in evaluation, we must coach for growth – not for scores. He states, "To improve the team, you don't study the scoreboard; you go out and practice" (p. 30). TELAR, in its presumption of continuous improvement and in its embedded and ongoing processes of feedback and reflection, pays attention to how well teachers are growing, adjusting, and developing desired skills and behaviors. One teacher in my study expresses it perfectly:

> It just has to be very personalized to the individual… I think that if a lot of people would take that preconceived notion of 'I need to get a perfect score' and just kind of remove that and look at ip as something valuable to

them, I think they would be more relaxed and look at the benefits of it as opposed to 'how is this going to count against me?'

**Empowering teachers to self-assess and generate goals.** Returning to the literature and the intent of my study, the ultimate goal of evaluation is teacher development (e.g., Beerens, 2000; Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Fletcher, 2001; Stronge & Tucker, 2003; Stronge, 2006). The research questions regarding impact on learning and practice ultimately speak to the process of building expertise. Anders Ericsson, world-renown expert on expertise, explains that expertise emerges through deliberate practice – the process of focusing on areas for improvement and refining practice through repetition and response to feedback (2006). Furthering this notion and speaking to talent development, Bambrick-Santoyo states, "If you start from the premise that teacher evaluations are meant primarily to drive teacher development, then regular feedback is essential. The relentless loop of feedback, corrections, and improvement that builds true talent can't happen once every six months" (p. 29). The importance of embedded processes for an ongoing cycle of feedback, reflection, professional conversation, identification of needs, and support, becomes clear. The data show that TELAR supports this process for improvement and the building of expertise.

At the core of the learning cycle is the performance matrix, which represents a holistic understanding of the teaching craft. Developed from our shared vision, values, and beliefs about the education we want for our children and the kind of professionals we wish to be, it provides a common language for professionalism and competency for our school. As noted in the literature review, having a common language enables teachers to understand their own practice and have a clear vision for where to improve, leading

teachers to be intrinsically motivated to embark on a pathway that leads to expertise (Mielke & Frontier, 2012). Through conducting summative and formative conversations based on the matrix, our teachers were able to gain greater awareness of practice and set goals for improvement. Within the learning cycle, teachers are supported in finding their own way, taking ownership for their growth, and increasing their autonomy as professionals. Meilke (2012) asserts that teachers are adept at identifying specific areas of need and pathways to improve, and that honoring teachers as self-directed learners encourages them to tackle more rigorous improvement goals. The application of TELAR in this study reflected similar findings.

I am reminded of the contention of many that supervisors need to choose appropriate approaches in order to address a teacher's developmental needs and the nature of the situations (Cooper, 1994; Glickman, et.al., 2004; Ralph, 2002). They assert that emphasis must be on the learner's role in making judgments of their own work so that they can "make more sense of, and assume greater control over, their own learning and become more self-monitoring." The following statement in the qualitative data reinforces this notion:

> Now I feel like I have more opportunities to think of and identify things on my own. I actually have an outlet to have that supported. So if I do come up with goals in areas where I want to continue forward, I can talk to administration and be like, 'hey this is a really great thing that I would love to pursue further.' And I would be completely supported in that. So that's pretty neat. It's a neat feeling. It's different.

Using a holistic matrix that focuses on values instead of detailed indicators of instruction allows both teachers and administrators to generate authentic questions of practice through conversations about things that are collectively important (Mielke & Frontier, 2012). Instead of a final 'You do this, you do this, you do this' with a checklist, as one of my teachers noted, teachers and administrators collaboratively begin the process of comprehensive assessment, which involves identifying areas for growth, obtaining feedback, reflecting, and engaging in professional discussion to help clarify how they should invest their efforts to grow in the profession.

TELAR invites increased opportunities for professional conversation as a key component of evaluation. Returning to the literature on socio-centric views, we are reminded that through discourse, individuals are provided cognitive tools (ideas, theories, and concepts) which they appropriate as their own through their personal efforts to make sense of experiences. Some have conceptualized learning as coming to know how to participate in the discourses and practices of learning (Cobb, 1994; Lave & Wenger, 1991)

Within the construct of *Feedback and Support*, teachers were asked such questions as, "I often converse about my work with colleagues," "When conversing about my work, I am asked probing questions that really make me think," and "The feedback I receive is specific to my needs." On the eight questions, teachers showed a marked increase in agreement overall. The item showing the strongest agreement was "I often converse about my work with colleagues." Teachers expressed in interviews the value of two-way conversation over in the data. As one teacher mentioned, "It feels good having had conversation to think about what you can do to improve yourself."

Danielson (2012) reminds us that professional learning is *learning* – and learning requires the learner to be an active participant in the process. This supports theory on how adults learn, in which adults play an active role in their learning. TELAR advocates a partnership between teachers and administrators so that learning and accountability toward goals is shared. The main role of the teacher is that of self-assessor. Consulting the literature on learning-oriented assessment, Tang and Chow (2007) remind us that learning-oriented practice consists of two facets: first, developing a shared understanding of the assessment criteria, and second, encouraging, supporting and empowering the teacher to take on an active role in making judgments on performance and setting targets (p. 1080). TELAR accomplished these facets.

The results from the data demonstrated that reflection was the root of action for teachers. Conversations that included outside perspective, meaningful feedback, and questions of practice created "tension" between what is currently known with new information, as noted in Social Cognitive Theory. This notion of cognitive tension is illuminated by Galucci's perspectives of constructivism from the literature review, which reinforces that individuals first appropriate, or take up, ways of thinking through interactions with others. These new ways of thinking can create "disturbances" in existing practice (Engestrom, 2001). To rectify these tensions, individuals then reinterpret, or transform new thinking about concepts and practices within their individual contexts, creating ownership. These situations constitute sites for individual learning and innovation as people transform new ideas to practice. He refers to this as a cycle for continuous improvement.

As teachers negotiate this tension, it causes them to reflect and identify their own areas for improvement. This reflection leads teachers to work toward desired states of performance. In essence, change in practice came about not because they were told what to do; rather, it appeared teachers made changes as a result of deciding what they could do. This opportunity to reflect was repeated over and over as being a positive and useful practice. One teacher stated, "What is most useful to me about evaluation is being given an opportunity to reflect on my own performance and compare the administration's evaluation of me. Another added, "It is useful to have time to reflect after the evaluation - to have another perspective, or set of eyes, to provide direction and support."

Again, in that comparison, or that tension of existing and new data, teachers reported making changes to practice. As one teacher said, "There are small areas of refinement that I've worked on after my evaluation where I've gone back and I've really thought about it." Another explained,

> For me, it caused me to reflect on what I needed to change. I've gotten some feedback from administration about the little things I need to change – it's changed some of my instruction in my classroom because of things I saw as maybe deficiencies.

Thinking of the literature on the connection of reflection to changes in practice, Downey and Frase (2003) emphasize the value of teaching professionals making adjustments in practice based on individually gathered input and reflection. They advocate for quality appraisal processes that focus on growth, but seek that growth primarily through reflective questioning and in a climate of "expecting rather than inspecting and respecting rather than directing" (p. 139). Again, a culture that includes a

presumption of professionalism and growth lends itself to teacher improvement. This is afforded by TELAR.

The value of feedback in the process of reflection cannot be underestimated. One teacher stated that a strong point of evaluation was "being made aware of my perceived strengths as a teacher as well as areas for growth. Without this feedback, it is hard to feel first, confident, and then second, know where to improve as a professional." Speaking to what is most useful about evaluation, one teacher wrote, "It is useful to discover what others see in you when you might not see it in yourself." TELAR increased awareness of practice, which led to teacher improvement. Returning to the literature, many support the notion that true pedagogical development comes from teacher self-reflection that results in clear goals for improvement (Marzano, Frontier, and Livingston, 2011; Downey, Steffy, Poston, Jr., & English, 2010). In this study, feedback was almost always tied to support and a plan for improvement. This supports Social Development theory, put forth by Vygotsky (1978). As we know, this theory is one of the foundations for constructivism and emphasizes social interaction in cognitive development; a more knowledgeable other (e.g., a coach), and Vygotsky Space, which is the space between one's ability to perform a task under guidance and the ability to perform independently (http://www.learning-theories.com/vygotskys-social-learning-theory.html). On the value of feedback and support, one teacher explained, "When feedback is given to me with specific goals, or priorities for me to focus on, that is the most useful." From the survey data, it was often noted that feedback is not just checking a box – meaningful feedback must be targeted and toward improvement. As mentioned by one teacher,

> Before this year, I haven't ever taken a direction professionally as a result of teacher evaluation. I mean, not with the feedback that I've received during it. From my own reflection I have, but not from anything that I've received back from anybody. I've never had an administrator ever share – it was just kind of 'You're doing this, you're checking a box, you're doing this, you're doing this, you're doing this – and then it was over. There was no feedback; there was no reflection; there was no conversation; there was just nothing.

## Summary of Findings

Revisiting the purpose of my action research, which was to investigate the impact of a new evaluation system on teachers, I found that TELAR benefitted teachers in multiple ways.

Setting the stage for the positive views and use of TELAR is the presumption of professionalism. Teachers were viewed as partners and active participants in their evaluations and afforded multiple opportunities to engage in authentic collaborative processes; and as partners in evaluation, teachers felt they were a part of the learning organization and that their craft was respected. TELAR shifted the focus of one-sided administrative judgment to a two-sided conversation between professionals; essentially, teachers felt evaluation was something done with them, not to them. They expressed appreciation for having input in their goal setting, for being an active participant, and for feeling supported and safe; and in this process, increased their understanding of their value to the organization.

TELAR was designed with a learning orientation, which consisted of developing a shared understanding of the assessment criteria and encouraging, supporting, and empowering teachers to take on an active role in making judgments on performance and setting targets (p. 1080). TELAR accomplished these facets to some extent. Across data sources, teachers expressed the importance of leadership in understanding the purpose of evaluation, their direction, and their safety. There was a shared vision for professionalism and performance and a focus on values, which enabled teachers and administrators to generate authentic questions of practice through increased conversations about things that are collectively important. Teachers had a clear vision for improvement, which led to individual goal setting and administrative support toward those goals.

TELAR created greater awareness of performance and increased reflective practice. Conversations that included outside perspective, meaningful feedback, and questions of practice created "tension" between old and new information, as described by Social Cognitive Theory. This tension brought about increased reflection – and reflection was the root of action for teachers. Teachers recognized gaps and made changes to practice based on their own assessment of need, not because of a directive handed down by administration. Returning to the main purpose of teacher evaluation, which is to develop teachers, the data show that reflection positively led to change in practice.

# Chapter 6

# CONCLUSION

Goethe, noted German writer and poet, once said, "If you treat a man as he is, he will remain as he is. But if you treat him as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become what he ought to be and could be." This quote is written into our charter as a core belief about people. The essence of my role as Head of School is to promote potential – to help people around me – staff and students alike – to become what they ought to be and could be. I view teachers as professionals capable of great work. A presumption and expectation of professionalism guides my work with teachers and informs my approach to teacher evaluation. In the days prior to the start of school, I watched with admiration as teachers busily went about preparing for the year. Thinking in the realm of evaluation, I recorded my thoughts:

> Our teachers work hard. They were hired because they are capable professionals and have been specially trained and prepared. They are genuinely passionate about what they do and about their role in moving the school's mission forward. This passion motivates them intrinsically. They want to do their best possible work and grow professionally. If they can be treated as the professionals they are in the realm of evaluation, they can feel empowered to perform their best work and grow professionally.

I believe teachers are passionate people who are wired toward learning and progress – and when treated as the professionals they are and can become, they rise to the call and become partners in their own development. The ultimate goal of evaluation is to build expertise, because expertise matters. With strategic support from administration in

providing resources, systems, and structures for ongoing development, teachers are afforded multiple opportunities to critically examine their practice using their own professional eye – and negotiate this information with the informed perspective of others – and ultimately make changes for improvement. It is through the process of deliberate, informed practice – informed by internal and external perspectives - that teachers can systematically improve.

## Discussion

In reflecting on this study at its conclusion, I think about a statement made by Bambrick-Santoyo (2012). He declared, "If the goal of evaluation is to grow great teachers to drive student excellence, the traditional model has failed." He speaks to practices involving the one-shot, annual lesson observation, the exhaustive list of indicators, and the administrator acting unilaterally in making judgments on performance, without teacher input or discussion. I am reminded of the call to action by Marx and colleagues (1998) to determine the structures and scaffolds necessary to support teacher learning. They state that a "careful analysis of how teachers learn and how they incorporate their learning into their daily practices will enable designers to create systems tailored to different teacher learning needs" (p. 41). In creating and studying TELAR, I set out to break from traditional practices and put forth structures and scaffolding that support teacher learning as a daily practice.

In this journey, I have become a Head of School that truly understands the value of critical and systematic thought and of the value of solving problems in my context. In this study of teacher evaluation, I have learned the importance of value-centered instruments that reflect school goals and a holistic look at a professional, of multiple

perspectives and multiple data points, and the critical nature of ongoing feedback and support. Most importantly, I understand the non-negotiable component of accessing the mind and ideas of the teacher in authentic, collaborative processes that prompt reflection. When the teacher is a professional partner in the process, ownership and use of evaluation increases, as well as accountability for individual and school goals. At our school, this system is a step in a promising direction.

In qualitative research, one is not able to "answer" the questions – only to get closer through examining the rich, contextual information that leads one to make assertions. My research questions of impact have been informed by this study in deep and meaningful ways. Through this process, I have grown to understand more fully the nuances of evaluation in developing talent. Change does not happen in a day, nor does it happen in four short months. Improvement is continuous. My study of evaluation will continue as I gain further understandings and re-evaluate my views and practices based on the needs of my teachers.

## Considerations for Future Research

This was a broad-based study with multiple, complex factors for consideration. If I were to reconfigure this study, I would scale it down to center on monitored and documented changes in teacher practice as a result of evaluation. Further, Daniel Pink's (2006) perspectives on motivation have been illuminated as a result of this study. He puts forth that in work that involves high cognitive processes, such as that of a teacher, people are motivated when they are afforded autonomy, supported in mastery, and engulfed in purpose. TELAR, in my view, promoted all three. It became an interesting

phenomenon with regard to motivation. It made me think about a teacher's motivation to act and to improve.

Possible areas for measurement would be ties to motivation and actual changes in practice that are observed, not just noted by teachers. I would also isolate the factor of performance pay, measuring effects of when it is tied or not tied to evaluation. Another interesting area to measure would be perspectives of administration with regard to utility and manageability.

## Final Thoughts

The best thing that has come from this study for me, as a Head of School, is a new view of teacher evaluation. It is no longer the beast of the past that stole my time and resources and gave nothing in return. Although it remains a work of thoughtful attention and deliberate action, it is worth the investment. One teacher provided encouraging sentiments:

> I really appreciated it. I know it must take a lot of time and energy, but I believe it is so important. It provides accountability for the school and the teacher. It makes me, as an educator, feel safe in that my Head of School knows my teaching style, my abilities, and takes the time to support me."

I recognize that my role in this study involved an inherent limitation in that I was the Head of School, the evaluator, and the researcher. I know there is much to learn and refine in my work to build talent through the process of evaluation, but I now understand that the investment has merit. Building an evaluation system that fosters professional learning and growth takes time, and I eagerly look forward to using the understandings

gained from this study to improve upon my practice of evaluation and my efforts to build talent.

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# APPENDIX A

# IRB/HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

| | |
|---|---|
| **To:** | Ronald Zambo<br>FAB |
| **From:** | Mark Roosa, Chair<br>Soc Beh IRB |
| **Date:** | 07/24/2012 |
| **Committee Action:** | **Exemption Granted** |
| **IRB Action Date:** | 07/24/2012 |
| **IRB Protocol #:** | 1206007981 |
| **Study Title:** | From Traditional to Transformative Evaluation: Promoting Teacher Excellence through a Learning Oriented Process |

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(1) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

# APPENDIX B

# TEACHER PERFORMANCE MATRIX

| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Instruction** | **Multiple observation forms indicate mastery or excellence across a majority of instructional categories, consistent engagement with children, consistent use of research-based strategies across content areas, consistent use of data to inform instruction.** | | **Multiple observation forms indicate satisfactory performance across all instructional categories, notable engagement with children, evidence of research-based strategies and data-informed instruction.** | | **Multiple Observations Forms indicate need for improvement in average of 3 instructional categories per form, little engagement with children, lack of research-based strategies or data-informed instruction.** |
| **Leadership/ Contribution** | **Is a consistent leader in faculty events and learning, seeks ways to support colleagues, actively promotes vision of school. Takes strong initiative to start or lead a substantial or ongoing school initiative.** | | **Is an occasional leader, actively participates in meetings and learning, shares resources, and supports colleagues when asked to do so. Supports vision of school, participates in school initiatives.** | | **Weak participation in faculty events and learning or is negative about such events. Does not consistently support or share with colleagues. Weak participation in school initiatives, lets assigned activity degenerate.** |
| **Professional Excellence and Self Development** | **Is consistently resourceful, scholarly, and reflective in practice. Seeks opportunities for growth, applies learning to practice, adopts an active inquiry stance. Goals are transparent, real, and communicated, with a focus on continuous improvement.** | | **Is resourceful, scholarly, and reflective in practice. Accepts opportunities for growth and often applies learning and inquiry to practice. Sets goals that meet school requirements.** | | **Shows little resourcefulness, scholarship, or use of reflective practice. Shows little initiative for professional growth. Rarely applies learning or inquiry to practice. Goals are a weak tool for improvement.** |
| **Collegiality and Work Environment** | **Consistently seeks and actively builds strong, positive relationships among colleagues, including administration. Leads a healthy and productive work environment—a model of professionalism.** | | **Maintains positive relationships among colleagues, including administration. Supports a healthy and productive work environment.** | | **Does little to support or contribute to positive relationships among colleagues, including administration, and does not foster a healthy and productive work environment.** |
| **Student / Class Performance Outcomes** | **Compelling evidence that students have made superior academic progress for year according to multiple measures.** | | **Evidence that students have made adequate academic progress for year according to multiple measures.** | | **Little or no evidence of academic progress or evidence of students' failure to meet academic progress.** |
| **Parent Community** | **Very positive and consistent objective feedback on survey forms and in parent and student meetings, attends school events, demonstrates consistent activity with PTO, conducts student- focused conferences with data, demonstrable effort to know students and parents.** | | **Clear majority of positive objective feedback on survey forms and in parent and student meetings, occasionally attends schools events, involved with PTO, conducts student-focused conferences with data.** | | **Notable objective trend in negative feedback on survey forms and in parent and student meetings, minimal or no attendance of school events, minimal or no involvement with PTO, conducts conferences with weak student focus or data.** |
| **Professional Obligations/ Deadlines** | **Solid attendance, always on time for classes, regularly extends beyond contract hours, meets all filing and reporting deadlines** | | **Solid attendance, is present during contract hours, is rarely late for class, files on time** | | **Inconsistent or excessive absences, tardiness, and/or missed filing deadlines for grades and reports** |

# APPENDIX C

# DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TRADITIONAL EVALUATION AND TELAR

| Traditional | Transformative (TELAR) |
|---|---|
| Summative (toward accountability) | Formative (toward development) and summative (toward accountability) |
| One observation – one data point | Multiple observations, multiple data points |
| One feedback session | Ongoing feedback and reflective discourse between administrators and teacher and among teachers (discourse community) |
| One administrator | Three administrators (for academics, culture, and business strategy) |
| Limited and/or sporadic support | Ongoing support connected to teacher needs |
| Weak, if any, connection to professional development plan | Data builds professional development plan |
| Teacher as non-participant | Teacher as self-evaluator |
| Narrow focus on instruction with prescriptive, specific behaviors to perform/observe | Holistic view of teaching professional with clear and rigorous expectations |
| Does not include student achievement data | Includes student achievement data |
| Binary rating – satisfactory or unsatisfactory | Differentiates performance, showing areas of distinction and areas for improvement |

# APPENDIX D

# SUMMARY OF DATA SOURCES

| **Research Questions** | **Surveys Pre/Post (QUAN/ qual)** | **Interviews (qual)** | **Written Reflective narratives (qual)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| How and to what extent does TELAR affect perceptions of teacher evaluation? | X | X | X |
| How do teachers view and participate in TELAR? | X | X | X |
| How and to what extent does TELAR affect teacher learning and practice? | X | X | X |

# APPENDIX E

# SURVEY

Dear Teachers,
As part of a study on teacher evaluation, this survey has been prepared to gain a better understanding of your perceptions of the evaluation process. Please take a moment to offer your perspectives. Results are not tied to your identity in any way. You will be asked to create a 4digit personal identifier that will link this survey to a future survey at the conclusion of the study. Results will be used to inform my research and will be published. Completion of the survey is expected to take less than seven minutes. Thank you for your participation.

1. Please enter a 4-digit identifier using your mother's initials and day of birth (ex: SP07).
2. Please indicate the number of years you have taught (including this year).
   1-4 5-8 9-12 13+

The following questions pertain to your most recent evaluation session. (Construct: *Utility*)
3. As a result of my evaluation session, I learned how I can do my job better.
4. As a result of my evaluation session, I have a clearer understanding of my strengths.
5. My evaluation session helped me understand how I can improve professionally.
6. My evaluation session was useful in setting goals with which I can work.
7. As a result of my evaluation session, I have a clearer understanding of my value to the organization.
8. As a result of my evaluation session, I learned things about my performance that I hadn't considered before.

The following questions pertain to feedback and support you receive throughout the year. (Construct: *Feedback and Support*)

9. I often converse about my work.
10. When conversing about my work, I am asked probing questions that really make me think.
11. When conversing about my work, I am offered specific improvement suggestions.
12. The feedback I receive is useful to me.
13. The feedback I receive is supported by data.
14. The support I receive is specific to my needs.
15. The support I receive connects to real problems I face in my classroom.
16. The support I receive helps me improve.

The following questions pertain to your response to evaluation (Construct: *Response*)

17. As a result of the evaluation process, I have critically examined my practice.
18. As a result of the evaluation process, I have sought resources (literature, experts, colleagues) to deepen my knowledge of a topic.
19. How specifically have you done this? Place "N/A" if you cannot answer this question.
20. As a result of the evaluation process, I have expanded my repertoire of skills.

21. How specifically have you done this? Place "N/A" if you cannot answer this question.
22. As a result of the evaluation process, I have incorporated new findings into practice.
23. How specifically have you done this? Place "N/A" if you cannot answer this question.

The following questions pertain to your perceptions of leadership in the evaluation process (Construct: *Leadership*)

24. My Head of School encourages my development.
25. My Head of School wants me to be successful.
26. My Head of School listens to my point of view.
27. My Head of School listens to my concerns.
28. My Head of School supports me in my professional goals.
29. My Head of School has a sense of mission which he/she transmits to me.
30. My Head of School inspires me with his/her vision of what we may be able to accomplish if we work together.
31. My Head of School inspires enthusiasm about assignments.
31. I trust the capacity and judgment of my Head of School to overcome any obstacle.
33. My Head of School increases my optimism for the future.

The following questions invite you to share additional insights into the evaluation process. (*Open-ended*)

34. What is particularly useful to you about the process of teacher evaluation?
35. What is particularly NOT useful about the process of teacher evaluation?
36. What should an effective teacher evaluation system accomplish?
37. Is there anything else you would like to add about teacher evaluation?

This completes your survey. The questions contained herein were adapted in part from evaluation utility instruments used in studies conducted by the following:
Greller, M. (1978)
Tuytens, M. & Devos, G. (2011)

# APPENDIX F

# INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

**Pre and Post Interview Protocol**

Interviewer: Thank you for taking the time to sit with me to have a conversation about teacher evaluation. The purpose of this interview is to provide me with information that guides my research and my study. Please be candid in your responses as I am not trying to convince you of anything. This interview is strictly confidential. Responses are not tied to your identity in any way. You will be give a copy of the transcript tso you may check it for accuracy, and with your permission, I will record the interview.

What are your conceptions of teacher evaluation?

What do you think is the purpose of teacher evaluation?

What are some directions you have taken professionally as a result of past evaluations, if any?

# APPENDIX G

# POTENTIAL THREATS TO VALIDITY

| Type of Threat | Description of Threat | Researcher Response |
|---|---|---|
| History | Because time passes during an experiment, events can occur that unduly influence the outcome beyond the experimental treatment. | Note events that occur during the change effort, such as new building initiatives, professional development events, etc., in discussion of findings. |
| Maturation | Participants in an experiment may mature or change during the experiment, thus influencing the results. | Note the potential threat in discussion of findings. |
| Mortality | Participants drop out during an experiment due to many possible reasons. The outcomes are thus unknown for these individuals. | Note any dropped participant and impact of the drop in the discussion of findings. Pre-test data will be lost. |
| Hawthorne Effect | Participants produce desired outcomes or respond in a favorable way because they know they are being studied. | Note the potential threat in discussion of findings. |
| Novelty Effect | Participants improve because of the novelty of the instrument or system, not because it truly has transforming qualities. | Ask: Is there anything else that influenced you? Note threat in discussion of findings. |
| Experimenter Effect | Participants are swayed to research favor due to behaviors of the experimenter. | Maintain a common approach with a standard set of procedures to follow. Encourage frank responses from participants. Have board members conduct focus groups. Note threat in discussion of findings. |