12-2018

Special Area Teachers’ Perceptions Of Performance Evaluation Feedback And Professional Development Provided

Christy Isaacs

University of New England

Follow this and additional works at: https://dune.une.edu/theses

Part of the Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons, and the Educational Leadership Commons

© 2018 Christy Isaacs

Preferred Citation
Isaacs, Christy, "Special Area Teachers’ Perceptions Of Performance Evaluation Feedback And Professional Development Provided" (2018). All Theses And Dissertations. 188. https://dune.une.edu/theses/188

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at DUNE: DigitalUNE. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses And Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DUNE: DigitalUNE. For more information, please contact bkenyon@une.edu.
SPECIAL AREA TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF PERFORMANCE EVALUATION FEEDBACK AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROVIDED

By

Christy Isaacs

BS (University of South Florida) 1998
M.Ed. (University of South Florida) 2004

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Affiliated Faculty
Of the College of Graduate and Professional Studies at the University of New England
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the degree of Doctor of Education

Portland & Biddeford, Maine

July 23, 2018
SPECIAL AREA TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF PERFORMANCE EVALUATION
FEEDBACK AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROVIDED

ABSTRACT

There is significant research showing that teachers are motivated to grow intrinsically through the feedback and professional development opportunities they receive from their principals following the evaluation cycle. The quality of this feedback greatly influences their willingness to continuously improve their practices. However, limited research exists on whether special area teachers receive meaningful feedback and professional development opportunities from their principals, who may lack specialized content knowledge, following their evaluations.

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to explore special area teachers’ perceptions of the feedback and professional development opportunities their principals provided following the evaluation cycle. Participants included teachers who were employed as elementary school music teachers, had previous experience with FS County’s teacher evaluation system, and taught in an A rated school. Analysis of the data revealed that the music teachers neither received musical feedback nor were offered musical professional development opportunities by their principals following the evaluation cycle. However, it was revealed that the participants felt overwhelming support from their principals when they asked and were permitted to attend specialized professional development focused on teaching music, which in turn, promoted individual growth.
University of New England

Doctor of Education
Educational Leadership

This dissertation was presented by

Christy Isaacs

It was presented on July 23, 2018 and approved by:

Michelle Collay, Ph.D.
University of New England

Brandie Shatto, Ed.D.
University of New England

Gabriel Isaacs, Ph.D.
Affiliate Committee Member
New Mexico State University
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This journey has proven to be one of the most transformative experiences of my professional career second only to working in the field I am most passionate about; Music education. First, I would like to thank my husband, Dr. Gabriel Isaacs. He offered steady guidance and read and edited anything I put in front of him with no holds barred. Without both his professional and emotional support this journey would not have been possible. Second, I would like to thank my Society for the Prevention of a Low Pass (SPLP) group., which we formed back in EDU 801. I could not imagine getting through this process without you. Lastly, I would like to thank the University of New England and the Educational Leadership professors and staff, especially my dissertation committee Dr. Michelle Collay and Dr. Brandie Shatto. It has been a pleasure learning from and working with you both.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER ONE

- Statement of the Problem ........................................................................................................... 1
- Purpose of the Study ..................................................................................................................... 4
- Research Questions .................................................................................................................... 5
- Conceptual Framework .................................................................................................................. 6
- Limitations of the Study ............................................................................................................... 8
- Significance of the Study ............................................................................................................. 9
- Research Design .......................................................................................................................... 9
- Definition of Terms .................................................................................................................... 10
- Chapter Summary ..................................................................................................................... 12

## CHAPTER TWO

- Historical Background ................................................................................................................... 14
- The Teacher Evaluation Process ................................................................................................ 15
  - The Danielson Framework ....................................................................................................... 16
    - Advantages and disadvantages of the Danielson Framework ............................................. 20
  - Professional Development Plan .............................................................................................. 21
    - Advantages and Disadvantages of Professional Development Plans ................................ 21
  - Value-Added Measures .......................................................................................................... 22
    - Advantages and disadvantages of Value-Added Measures .............................................. 23
- The Importance of Feedback and Professional Development Opportunities .......................... 25
- Teachers’ Perceptions of Teacher Evaluation Systems .............................................................. 28
- Conceptual Framework ............................................................................................................. 30
How Special Area Teachers Differ From General Classroom Teachers

Qualities of Special Area Teachers

Visual Arts Teacher

Music Teachers

Physical Education Teachers

Special Area Teachers and Evaluation Systems

Conclusion

CHAPTER THREE

Setting

The Evaluation Process in FS County

The Danielson Framework

Professional Development Plans in FS County

VAMS in FS County

How Final Ratings are Determined in FS County

How Final Effectiveness Ratings are used in FS County

Participants/Sample

Data Collection

Interview Questions

Analysis

Participant Rights

Potential Limitations

CHAPTER FOUR

Participants
APPENDICES

Appendix A: OUTREACH TO STAKEHOLDERS

Appendix B: CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

Appendix C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 – Charlotte Danielson’s Domain and Elements of the Framework for Teaching……19
Figure 2.2 – Evaluation Process in FS County and the Point at Which Motivation Occurs……31
Figure 2.3 – Self-Determination Theory…………………………………………………………33
Figure 2.4 – Motivation to Learn………………………………………………………………34
Figure 2.5 – The Conceptual Framework………………………………………………………..36
Figure 3.1 – Professional Development Plan Rubric in FS County…………………………51-52
LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 – Participant Demographics.................................................................60

Table 4.2 – Themes, Subthemes, and Subbranches.............................................63
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Effective teachers matter. They are the single most important influence on student achievement within in a school-based setting (Santiago & Benavides, 2009; Strunk, Weinstein, Makkonen & Furedi, 2012). Strunk, Weinstein, Makkonen, and Furedi (2012) indicated that having an effective teacher will positively affect a student’s current academic performance and his/her future success (p. 46). Still, how do schools adequately measure teacher effectiveness? One way that individual states evaluate teachers’ work is through district-level implementation of a teacher evaluation system (TES). A recent educational trend is the implementation of evaluation systems that not only measures teachers’ effectiveness, but also promotes individual teacher growth. According to recent empirical studies, a key lever for promoting teacher growth is for principals and/or evaluators to provide effective and meaningful feedback and professional development opportunities to all teachers during the evaluation process (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015; Danielson, 2016; Delvaux et al., 2013; Firestone, 2014; Hill & Grossman, 2013; Hunt, Gurvitch & Lund, 2016; Tuytens & Devos, 2011, 2014, 2017). This effective and meaningful feedback should specify areas for growth and target the individual needs of the teacher through the offering of professional development opportunities (Darling-Hammond, 2011). Empirical research has shown that teachers are motivated to grow intrinsically through the feedback and professional development opportunities they receive from their principal. The quality of this feedback greatly influences their willingness to continuously improve their practices (Angeline, 2014; Firestone, 2014; Tuytens & Devos, 2017).

District leaders can use a variety of systems to evaluate teacher effectiveness. However they decide to evaluate a teacher’s effectiveness, research has shown that the most accurate
measure is an inclusive approach that offers several viewpoints of a teacher’s performance (Clements-Cortez, 2011; Gilbert, 2016; Neilson, 2014; Overland, 2014; Shaw, 2016). For example, rather than only conducting observations of instruction to measure effectiveness, researchers recommend the use of both student and teacher portfolios or student surveys as well. Danielson and McGreal (2000) said that effective evaluation systems must contain three elements; 1) a definition of the domain of teaching; 2) techniques for assessing all aspects of teaching; 3) trained evaluators who can make consistent judgements about performance.

The school district selected for this research study, which is referenced using the pseudonym Florida School (FS), implemented its current evaluation system in the 2013-2014 school year (FS, 2017). This system consists of three components. First, is the observation component using the Danielson Framework for Teaching (2013). This is accomplished by the teacher submitting evidence and artifacts to prove their effectiveness in accordance with the Danielson Framework for Teaching (2013). The principal also observes the teacher using the Danielson Framework Evaluation Instrument (2013). Based on the evidence provided by the teacher and the principal's evaluation, the teacher receives an effectiveness rating based on the Danielson rubric.

Second, the teacher creates and implements a professional development plan (PDP). This is accomplished by the teacher self-reflecting on what he/she wants to improve, then creating both short- and long-term goals that are focused on relevant practices relating to that improvement. Based on the evidence provided by the teacher, the principal assigns an effectiveness rating based on the rubric set forth by FS County (FS County, 2018). Third, the teacher is rated according to value-added measures (VAM), which are student growth data from standardized test scores. The teacher’s final effectiveness ratings is reached by accumulating the above components into an overall effectiveness rating.
Researchers agree that one of the main goals of teacher evaluations is to promote teacher growth by providing meaningful feedback and professional development opportunities to teachers following the evaluation process (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015; Danielson, 2016; Delvaux et al., 2013; Firestone, 2014; Hill & Grossman, 2013; Hunt, Gurvitch & Lund, 2016; The Danielson Group, 2017; Tuytens & Devos, 2011, 2014, 2017). FS’s County leaders required principals to participate in a series of workshops to learn how to properly provide teachers with meaningful feedback and professional development opportunities (FS County, 2017).

Special area teachers must comply with same evaluation guidelines as general classroom teachers because they are also certified by the state. A special area teacher is a specialist in his/her field and is usually the only teacher in the school who teaches the subject (DuFour, 2007). A special area teacher could teach art, dance, drama, music, and physical education, among others. The processes to evaluate general classroom teachers have not always aligned well with special area teachers (Overland, 2014). Special area teachers may have a higher degree of specialized teaching skills than that of general classroom teachers. Therefore, a coherent definition of the domain of teaching for special area subjects must reflect the uniqueness of the learning that the teaching inspires; the assessment tools must be geared towards the subject being evaluated, and the evaluator must be qualified within the context of the special area (Clements-Cortes, 2011, p. 13-14). Yet, special area teachers are being evaluated by criteria designed for other modes and disciplines. Many times they are evaluated by an individual who may not have special subject knowledge in the subject (Overland, 2014). Based on this knowledge, the majority of special area teachers perceive that their ratings do not accurately reflect their expertise and that the evaluation is failing to achieve its objective of promoting growth (Guerra, 2014; Martin, 2014; Smith, 2017).
This researcher did not find any studies with a primary focus on the feedback or professional development opportunities that special area teachers received from principals. However, there are studies that indicate special area teachers perceive that their principal’s knowledge of their subject is key to providing meaningful feedback and professional opportunities in order to motivate them to grow professionally (Guerra, 2004; Martin, 2014, Norris, Van der Mars, Kulinna, Amrein-Beardsley, Kwon, & Hodges, 2017). Even still, these researchers only asked one or two questions of the participants regarding their perceptions of the subject of feedback and professional development they receive from their principals following the evaluation process. However, when the principal did not provide meaningful feedback and/or professional development opportunities, the teachers perceived the conversation with the principal as moot. For example, Guerra’s (2014) participants agreed that the evaluation system they participated in was not applicable to their teaching because the observers did not have specific knowledge and background in their specific field and could not adequately evaluate what they did in their classroom and provide meaningful feedback (p. 72). One can see the importance of promoting the growth of special area teachers through meaningful feedback and professional development opportunities. Stakeholders must be aware of how special area teachers perceive the feedback and professional development opportunities their principals provide following the evaluation cycle and determine if these conversations are indeed promoting growth.

**Statement of the Problem**

Recent research has shown that teachers, in general, have mixed perceptions of whether TES 1) improves their teaching; 2) provides meaningful feedback; 3) uses trained administrators to conduct proper observations; 4) shows evidence of student growth and achievement (Delvaux
et al., 2013; Moskal, Stein & Golding, 2016; Stecher, Garet, Holtzman & Hamilton, 2012; Norris et al., 2017; Sawchuck, 2009). For special area teachers, these perceptions exist for three reasons: First, within most school districts, every teacher is evaluated using the same TES, regardless of the subject they teach. The Danielson Framework (2013), used as the basis for evaluating all teachers, was designed to cover broader areas of the teaching process (Hunt, Gurvitch & Lund, 2017, p. 22). This means that the high degree of specialized teaching skills of special area teachers’ pedagogies is not evaluated. Second, principals may lack the knowledge of the specific set of teaching skills and pedagogies special area teachers use in the classroom in order to conduct proper evaluations (Clements-Cortes, 2011; Overland, 2014; Norris et al., 2017). Therefore, it may be difficult for principals to provide meaningful feedback and professional development opportunities in subject areas they are not familiar with (Overland, 2014). Third, using VAM scores to determine a special area teachers’ effectiveness rating is problematic because VAM scores that are calculated from standardized math and language arts tests are unreliable for a special area teacher (Clements-Cortes, 2011; Donaldson, 2012; Norris et al., 2017; Overland, 2014). This evidence suggests that special area teachers find that their evaluations are failing to achieve the objective of promoting professional growth. Principals are neither able to provide meaningful feedback nor able to provide targeted professional development opportunities.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore special area teachers’ perceptions of the feedback and professional development opportunities principals provide as a result of the evaluation process as well as their perceptions of how the evaluation system can be improved. The study sought insight into special area teachers’ perceptions of principals’ knowledge of
special area subjects and their ability to provide meaningful feedback and professional development opportunities that promote teacher growth.

**Research Questions**

Three research questions guided this study: (1) What are music teachers’ perceptions of the feedback they receive from their principals following the evaluation process? (2) What are music teachers’ perceptions of the professional development opportunities they receive from their principals following the evaluation process? (3) What are music teachers’ recommendations for improving evaluation of their instruction?

**Conceptual Framework**

The evaluation cycle in FS County consists of three components: The Danielson Framework for Teaching (2013), a PDP, and a VAM score. As the teacher completes the Danielson Framework and their PDP component of the evaluation process, his/her principal assigns an effectiveness rating for each. Once students receive their scores from standardized tests, a VAM effectiveness rating is assigned according to a statistical model (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012). Next, all three ratings are accumulated to reach an overall effectiveness rating. When these three components are complete, the principal and teacher meet to discuss the ratings. At this time, the principal should provide the teacher with meaningful feedback and professional development opportunities to promote professional growth. Teachers’ perceptions of this feedback and professional development opportunities have an impact on their extrinsic motivation regarding any applied rewards or punishment and on their internal motivation of professional growth (Firestone, 2014). As it is this study’s purpose is to explore special area teachers’ perceptions of the feedback and professional development opportunities the principal provides as a result of the evaluation process, as well as their perceptions of how the evaluation
system can be improved, presenting research supporting what motivates teachers to grow professionally is key to understanding teachers’ perceptions of their experiences with the evaluation process.

William Firestone’s (2014) framework served as the primary lens to study special area teachers’ perceptions of the feedback and professional development opportunities their principals provided following the evaluation cycle. Firestone (2014) suggested that teachers are motivated to grow professionally through feedback and this, in turn, supports their autonomy and raises their competence.

Competence enhances intrinsic motivation most when the individual gets feedback on performance. Ideally, this feedback is direct, clear information coming from the work itself…Feedback can help teachers clearly recognize their accomplishments or offers guidance so they can enhance their instructional competence as long as it does not constrain their autonomy. (Firestone, 2014, p. 103)

In other words, Firestone (2014) proposed that in order to promote teacher competence and autonomy, principals should provide targeted and meaningful feedback that relates to a teacher’s specific instruction.

Firestone (2014) further suggested that competence also promotes teacher motivation through knowledge building. One way knowledge building occurs is through professional development when that professional development promotes improved competence. Firestone (2014) recommended four ways that policy makers could provide professional development that promotes improved competence. Effective professional development:

- Challenges teachers intellectually, while giving them powerful images of teaching and learning and building their pedagogical content knowledge;
• Actively engages teachers in collaborative settings;
• Reinforces learning through congruent learning activities that permit practice and refinement; and
• Offers teachers opportunities to solve their own real instructional problems (p. 103).

Firestone’s (2014) conceptual framework provided a lens for researching how special area teachers experienced the evaluation process. If one accepts the premise that special area teachers are intrinsically motivated to grow professionally by 1) receiving meaningful feedback that supports their autonomy and promotes their competence; 2) receiving professional development that challenges and engages them, reinforces learning, and allows them to solve their own problems; it follows that different stakeholders could benefit from special area teachers’ perceptions of the feedback and professional development opportunities their principals provide following the evaluation cycle.

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of this study is that it was bound to one school district. More insight on the type of feedback and professional development opportunities may be achieved with a broader reach to multiple districts. Second, there are very few studies relating specifically to elementary music teachers’ perceptions of the feedback and professional development opportunities they receive from their principals. More existing empirical evidence of elementary music teachers’ perceptions would allow for the focus of this study to broaden to possibly include all special area teachers at all grade levels. Lastly, this study did not address options for alternative TES for special area teachers, as this will be an item for future research.
Significance of the Study

Findings from this study are important to various stakeholders, which include the following: special area teachers at all levels, other districts around the country, students, administrators, parents, and policy makers. The purpose of an evaluation system is two-fold. Its first purpose is to serve as a professional development process and its second is to function as a quality assurance mechanism (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). As such, stakeholders should be vested in the quality of assessment of special area teachers. If the evaluation process is not motivating special area teachers to grow professionally, than the evaluation system is not meeting its objective.

Research Design

This study explored the feedback and professional development opportunities that special area teachers received from their principals following the evaluation process to determine if these conversations were meaningful and promoted professional growth. Data was collected from participants who met the following criteria: they were 1) employed as an elementary school music teacher; 2) had previous experience with this teacher evaluation system; 3) taught in an A rated school. According to the Florida Department of Education (2018), a school that earns 62% or higher on the Florida State Assessment in English, math, science and social studies and if the lowest 25% of students show learning gains from the previous year, receive an A rating. In the attempt to help to explain, examine, understand, and describe the phenomenon of special area teachers’ evaluation experiences and how it relates to the feedback and professional development opportunities principals provide following the evaluation cycle, the design of this study was a qualitative, phenomenological research design. Creswell (2006) said:
A phenomenology study describes the meaning for several individuals of their *lived experiences* of a concept or a phenomenon… By describing, what participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon…The basic purpose of a phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence. (p. 57-58).

Data was gathered via one-on-one structured interviews and analyzed via Moustakas’ (1994) horizontalization, which is a way of coding to find common patterns. This type of analysis provided insight into how a participant experienced a phenomenon (Creswell, 2006).

**Definition of Terms**

The following definitions provide explanations for terms specific to the topic of teacher evaluation systems and education.

- **Race to the Top (RTT):** A 4.35 billion-dollar grant run by the United States Department of Education to spur and reward innovation and reforms in state and local district K-12 education. The goal of this initiative was to encourage the education sector to prioritize evaluation systems by setting goals, which would increase the number of states that incorporated a comprehensive teacher and principal evaluation systems (Scott & US Government Accountability, 2013).

- **General Classroom Teacher:** A teacher who is “expected to have a broad and comprehensive understanding of and knowledge and skills needed to teach mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies to the same group of students daily. They must comply with both the National and State Standards for every child they teach” (Thompson, 2018, p. 1).
• Special Area Teacher: A teacher who teaches art, drama, dance, music, or physical education, among others. Teachers must have a college degree and be certified in the area in which they wish to teach. They must comply with both the National and State Standards for every child they teach.

• Teacher Evaluation: The formal process to review a teacher’s performance and effectiveness in the classroom. Hypothetically, these findings are used to provide meaningful feedback to teachers in order to guide their professional development (Sawchuk, 2015).

• The Danielson Framework for Teaching: A research based set of components of instruction, aligned to the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) standards, and grounded in a constructivist view of learning and teaching. The complex activity of teaching is divided into twenty-two components and seventy-six smaller elements, clustered into four domains of teaching responsibility (The Danielson Group, 2017).

• Teacher Observations: State and local policies determine the number of times a teacher is to be observed, the length of the observations, the mix of formal and informal visits, if it is to be accompanied by pre- or post-observation conferences, and who conducts them. Generally, principals and administrators fulfill the observation requirements (Sawchuk, 2015).

• Informal Observation: When the evaluator makes unannounced short visits to the teacher’s classroom between 7-10 minutes. Ideally, the evaluator must provide reliable feedback to the teacher then records a copy of his or her findings as evidence of effectiveness (Danielson, 2013).
• Formal Observation: An observation that is announced, takes a full class period, and requires pre- and post-observation conference. Ideally, during the pre-conference, the evaluator discusses the lesson focus, activities, students, and expectations. During the post-conference, the evaluator and the teacher reflect upon the teacher’s performance during the observation and discuss how they could further guide future teaching practices (Danielson, 2013).

• Professional Development Plan (PDP): A teacher created goal that is designed to facilitate deliberate practices in the classroom. It allows for self-reflection, goal setting, focused relevant practice, and specific feedback for teachers (FS County, 2017).

• Value-Added Model (VAM): A statistical method of analyzing growth in student test scores. This estimates the frequency to which a teacher has contributed to student-achievement growth. This score factors in the gains the student was expected to make based on past performance (Sawchuk, 2015).

Chapter Summary

The intent of this study was to explore special area teachers’ evaluation experiences and their perceptions of the feedback and professional development opportunities their principal provided to them as a result of the evaluation process. By exploring these perceptions, school leaders will better understand special area teachers’ perceptions of this TES and determine if this system is achieving its objectives. A further explanation of empirical research linking meaningful feedback and professional development opportunities to teacher growth will be necessary to move the research forward. An in-depth analysis of the self-determination, extrinsic, and intrinsic motivation theories will serve as a theoretical framework for the study to aid in the understanding of how teachers are motivated to grow professionally through
meaningful conversations with their principals who provide meaningful, targeted feedback and professional development opportunities. Chapter Two presents research in the field of teacher evaluations and provides an in-depth analysis of The Danielson Framework (2013), professional development plans, value-added measures, and the differences between general classroom teachers and special area teachers. The focus will then shift to how evaluation systems affect special area teachers and outline the conceptual framework. Chapter Three will begin by discussing how FS County implements its evaluation system. Then, the focus will shift to the methodology used in the study and explain the methods associated with data collection and analysis. Chapter Four and Five report the findings and discuss the interpretations and implications.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to explore special area teachers’ perceptions of the feedback and professional development opportunities principals provide as a result of the evaluation process, as well as their perceptions of how the evaluation system can be improved. By studying teachers’ experiences, the researcher hoped to gain insight into special area teachers’ perceptions of principals’ knowledge of special area subjects and their ability to provide meaningful feedback and professional development opportunities that promote teacher growth.

The purpose of this literature review was to encapsulate current research to provide context for this study. The literature review captures major themes, studies, and topics related to teacher evaluation systems. It also elaborates on the conceptual framework, which framed the study through the lens of Firestone’s (2014) work on teacher motivation. The chapter provides a brief historical overview of teacher evaluation. It offers an analysis of common components of teacher evaluation systems including the Danielson Framework, professional development plans, and value-added measures. Additionally, the literature review examines the importance of feedback as well as general classroom teachers’ perceptions of teacher evaluation systems. Finally, literature will be presented on motivational theories and the importance of teachers’ perceptions of TES on their professional growth.

**Historical Background of Teacher Evaluations**

To provide context for the implementation of teacher evaluation systems, it is essential to offer a brief review of the historical background in which modern teacher evaluation systems emerged. After the passing of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the U.S.
Department of Education received access to an additional four billion federal dollars to support education across the country in the form of competitive state grants (Gates, Hansen & Tuttle, 2015). This initiative was called Race to the Top (2011) and it invited states to compete for funding by implementing policies related to the development of rigorous standards and assessments, adoption of better data systems, and support for teacher effectiveness (White House, 2014). The latter goal of this initiative was to encourage the education sector to prioritize evaluation systems by setting goals that would increase the number of states that incorporated a comprehensive teacher and principal evaluation system (Scott & US Government Accountability, 2013).

Since the Race to the Top initiative was implemented, teacher evaluation systems (TES) are commonly used for measuring teacher effectiveness in an attempt to satisfy the Race to the Top standards (Harris & Sass, 2014; Moran, 2017). These evaluation systems sought to improve teacher effectiveness in the classroom (Scott & US Government Accountability, 2013) and were designed to evaluate teachers through classroom observations, student growth, or a combination of the two (Lash et al., 2016; Marzano, 2012; Santiago & Benavides, 2009; Tuytens & Devos, 2017). Teacher evaluations serve many purposes. These include, but are not limited to, informing teachers of their effectiveness, informing stakeholders of teacher effectiveness, making informed personnel decisions, and encouraging professional growth in teachers (Delvaux et al., 2013; Firestone, 2014; Moran, 2017; Tuytens & Devos, 2017).

**The Teacher Evaluation Process**

Teacher evaluation systems often share common components. This review of the literature will focus on three components that are important to the teacher evaluation system
being explored in this research study. These components are the Danielson Framework for Teaching, the professional development plan (PDP), and value-added measures (VAM).

The Danielson Framework

Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching (2013) has emerged as one of the primary tools for supporting effective teaching practices. According to The Danielson Group (2017), over twenty states have adopted Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching. Charlotte Danielson described the Framework for Teaching “as a means to promote clear and meaningful conversations about effective teaching practice” (The Danielson Group, 2017). Danielson developed the framework through an in-depth analysis of empirical and theoretical research related to improving student learning and achievement (Bullis, 2014, p. 63). According to the Danielson Group (2017), the Danielson Framework is organized by four domains that describe the qualities of good teachers (Figure 2.1). From these four domains, descriptors are designed to help teachers clearly understand their effectiveness on a four-point scale. Teachers demonstrate their effectiveness through classroom observations for the “observable” domains (Domains 1 & 4) and artifacts for the “unobservable” domains (Domains 2 & 3).

Domain 1 is Planning and Preparation (Danielson, 2013). It includes seven subcategories in which teachers must provide evidence of effectiveness. They must demonstrate knowledge of content and pedagogy, students, setting instructional outcomes, resources, designing coherent instruction, and designing student assessments. Because these items cannot be observed, teachers gather evidence through artifacts to demonstrate their effectiveness. Evidence might include lesson plans, class newsletter, student generated work, completion of workshop certificates, or simply writing about these teaching practices (Danielson, 2008).
Domain 2 is Classroom Environment (Danielson, 2013). To demonstrate effectiveness in these domains, teachers must create an environment of respect and rapport, establish a culture for learning, manage classroom procedures, manage student behavior, and organize physical space. Because this domain is observable, the administrator looks for evidence of effectiveness while conducting both informal and formal classroom observations. Evidence of effectiveness could include whole class positive reinforcement charts, transition signals, behavior expectations, and consequence posters (Danielson, 2008).

Domain 3 is Instruction (Danielson, 2013). To demonstrate effectiveness in Domain 3, teachers must show evidence of effectiveness in six categories. These categories include communication with students, effective use of questioning and discussion techniques, engaging students in learning, using assessment in instruction, and demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness. This domain is also considered “observable.” An administrator can look for evidence of effectiveness while conducting both informal and formal classroom observations. Evidence of effectiveness might include whole class positive reinforcement charts, student work displayed, transition signals, behavior expectations, consequence posters, and safe classroom furniture layout (Danielson, 2008).

Domain 4 is Professional Responsibilities (Danielson 2013). Effectiveness in Domain 4 includes reflecting on teaching, showing maintenance of accurate records, communicating with families, participating in the professional community, professional development and growth, and evidence of professionalism (Danielson, 2013). These actions are often not possible to observe during a classroom lesson, so Domain 4 is considered unobservable. Rather, teachers gather evidence through artifacts to demonstrate their effectiveness. Evidence could include the
teacher’s website, timely and accurate student progress reports, evidence of parental opportunities for participation, or to write about these teaching practices (Danielson, 2008). Classroom observations and artifacts are rated according to rubrics for each of the domains. After teachers are observed using the rubrics from domains 1 and 3 and have submitted artifacts or shown evidence of effectiveness in domains 2 and 4, the principal reviews the observations and artifacts and determines the score and level of performance for each domain. The scores range from 1 to 4: 1: Ineffective, 2: Developing, 3: Effective 4: Highly Effective (The Danielson Group, 2017). As described by the Danielson Group, “The observations are averaged to arrive at a mean or median score for [each of] the components and a judgment is made linking the evidence to the statements in the levels of performance” (2017). The teachers are then assigned an overall effectiveness rating to describe their practice. Similar to the rubrics for each domain, the ratings are ineffective, developing, effective, and highly effective.

The key to successful implementation of the Danielson Framework is utilizing trained observers to rate teachers’ effectiveness. Danielson (2013) wrote:

The Danielson Framework for Teaching is a research-based set of components of instruction...grounded in a constructivist view of learning and teaching. The complex activity of teaching is divided into 22 components (and 76 smaller elements) clustered into four domains of teaching responsibility. (p. 1)

Danielson designed the Framework for Teaching (2013) to provide structure and feedback to encourage continuous teaching improvement. Continuous improvement is accomplished through articulating a teacher’s individual goals that target student achievement and professional growth, thus supporting overall school improvement (p. 2). The four domains were designed to support student achievement and professional best practices (Figure 2.1).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain 1: Planning and Preparation</th>
<th>Domain 2: Classroom Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a. Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy</td>
<td>2a. Creating an environment of respect and rapport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• knowledge of content and the structure of the discipline</td>
<td>• teacher interaction with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• knowledge of prerequisite relationships</td>
<td>• student interactions with one another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• knowledge of content-related pedagogy</td>
<td>2b. Establishing a culture for learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b. Demonstrating knowledge of students</td>
<td>• importance of the content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• knowledge of child and adolescent development</td>
<td>• expectations for learning and achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• knowledge of the learning process</td>
<td>• student pride in work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• knowledge of students’ skills, knowledge and language proficiency</td>
<td>2c. Managing classroom procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• knowledge of students’ interests and cultural heritage</td>
<td>• management of instructional groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• knowledge of students’ special needs</td>
<td>• management of transitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c. Setting instructional outcomes</td>
<td>• management of materials and supplies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• value, sequence and alignment</td>
<td>• performance of non-instructional duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• clarity</td>
<td>• supervision of volunteers and paraprofessionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• balance</td>
<td>2d. Managing student behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• suitability for diverse learners</td>
<td>• expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1d. Demonstrating knowledge of resources</td>
<td>• monitoring of student behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• resources for classroom use</td>
<td>• responses to student misbehavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• resources to extend content knowledge and pedagogy</td>
<td>2e. Organizing physical space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• resources for students</td>
<td>• safety and accessibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1e. Designing coherent instruction</td>
<td>• arrangement of furniture and use of physical resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• learning activities</td>
<td>2f. Using instructional technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• instructional materials and resources</td>
<td>• operation of instructional technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• instructional groups</td>
<td>• remote instruction technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• lesson and unit structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1f. Designing student assessments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• congruence with instructional outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• criteria and standards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• design of formative assessments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities</th>
<th>Domain 3: Instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4a. Reflection on Teaching</td>
<td>3a. Communicating with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• accuracy</td>
<td>• expectations for learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use in future teaching</td>
<td>• directions and procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4b. Maintaining accurate records</td>
<td>• explanations of content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• student completion of assignments</td>
<td>• use of oral and written language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• student progress in learning</td>
<td>3b. Using questioning and discussion techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• non-instructional records</td>
<td>• quality of questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4c. Communicating with families</td>
<td>• discussion techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• information about the instructional program</td>
<td>• student participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• information about individual students</td>
<td>3c. Engaging students in learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• engagement of families in the instructional program</td>
<td>• activities and assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4d. Participating in a professional community</td>
<td>• grouping of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• relationships with colleagues</td>
<td>• instructional materials and resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• involvement in a culture of professional inquiry</td>
<td>• structure and pacing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• service to school</td>
<td>3d. Using assessment in instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• participation in school and district projects</td>
<td>• assessment criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4e. Growing and developing professionally</td>
<td>• monitoring of student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• enhancement of content knowledge and pedagogical skill</td>
<td>• feedback to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• receptivity to feedback from colleagues</td>
<td>• student self-assessment and monitoring of progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• service to profession</td>
<td>3e. Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4f. Showing professionalism</td>
<td>• lesson adjustment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• integrity and ethical conduct</td>
<td>• response to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• service to students</td>
<td>• persistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• advocacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2.1* Charlotte Danielson’s (2013) Domains and Elements of the Framework for Teaching. Shows the four domains of teaching responsibility, the 22 complex activities of teaching, and the 76 smaller elements.
Advantages and disadvantages of the Danielson Framework.

The Danielson Framework offers several advantages as well as detractors. According to Wile (2017), there are two advantages of observations. First, teacher observations provide additional information that other means of evaluation cannot. Second, the evaluators can observe how the teacher and students interact, the rapport, and questioning techniques. Verner (2017) discussed five benefits of classroom observation. First, the evaluator may have a different set of knowledge and can look at the materials and teaching methods from a different viewpoint than the teacher being observed. Second, the evaluator does not share student bias or have favorites. The evaluator can give the teacher a different perspective on student behavior and performance. Third, an evaluator is able to observe and give feedback, whether positive or negative, to help the teacher grow. Fourth, the evaluator has a different set of standards than the teacher. The evaluator can help the teacher to set realistic standards for his/her students. Lastly, the evaluator has a different set of goals than the teacher. The evaluator can help the teacher to set realistic goals for him/herself.

Wile (2017) also discussed the disadvantages of observations. First, observations can be unreliable. This is because teachers, on average, teach 180 days per year. The method of observing assumes that the evaluator will get a clear sense of a teacher’s effectiveness in a few hours. Wile (2017) noted that teachers might experience anxiety when a supervisor is observing, a teacher’s performance may suffer, or student behavior may change against the norm. This can all lead to unreliable data. Second, unreliable data can occur due to bias by the evaluator. This can happen when the evaluator imposes preconceived notions or beliefs about teaching into the rating. Tuytens and Devos (2014) described four commonplace problems with TES observation ratings: First, ineffective teachers received good ratings because leaders had a discomfort with
confrontation. Second, principals did not provide meaningful feedback to teachers on improvement opportunities. Third, teachers were not provided professional development opportunities that corresponded with the needs identified through the evaluation. Fourth, lack of time prevented principals to invest proper time into teacher evaluations because they themselves felt time constraints. In summary, observations can provide a good measure teachers’ effectiveness if the evaluator comes to the observation without preconceived biases and also takes the time to provide targeted feedback and professional development opportunities to every teacher.

**Professional Development Plan**

The second component included in this TES is a professional development plan (PDP). A PDP is a teacher created plan that establishes short- and long-term goals for professional development and implementation of what was learned in the professional development (Killion, 2008). Dove (2010) said that this plan should include the necessary sources and materials to achieve the short- and long-term goals and should align with both state and national standards. Hilt (2011) explained that professional learning is successful when educators are active partners in determining what they feel they need to learn, how that learning will be learned, and how it will be evaluated for its effectiveness. While PDPs links high-quality teaching to student achievement, like classroom observations, there are advantages and disadvantages.

**Advantages and disadvantages of professional development plans.**

Fogarty and Pete (2006) wrote a book guiding teachers on how to engage in high quality professional development. They listed eight advantages of a teacher created professional development plan: 1) it allows the teacher to self-reflect and determine their professional growth needs; 2) it allows teacher to identify their individual goals based on their students’ performance;
3) it encourages teachers to attempt new strategies and share the results with others; 4) it engages teacher to identify an action plan to improve teaching and learning in the classroom; 5) it allows teacher to ties evaluation rating to professional growth needs; 6) it provides a process for teachers to seek and provide supportive time, people, learning opportunities, and resources for individual teacher needs; 7) it encourages collaboration between administrator and teacher to identify growth goals; 8) it gives teachers greater autonomy to reflect on their teaching practices.

The researcher did not locate any research that addressed disadvantages of teacher created professional development plans. However, there are disadvantages to professional development in a broader sense. Burns (2015) discussed four barriers teachers could face. Although Burns (2015) focused on less developed countries, the discussion could translate well to other situations. First, if a teacher is in difficult working conditions, such as overcrowded classrooms or experiences a lack of respect from school leaders, it can negatively affect their identity, efficacy, and professionalism. These are critical to shaping the effectiveness of a teacher. The second barrier relates to systematic challenges. This occurs when there may be a lack of qualified personnel to help a teacher master content or research to improve their instructional strategies. A third barrier Burns (2015) described is conflict. Conflict occurs when holding professional development is too dangerous because of the social climate surrounding the topic or because the topic is unpopular with the community. The last barrier is poorly designed professional development. Poor design can be the result of insufficient funding or policy makers’ misunderstandings about the professional development teachers need.

**Value-Added Measures**

The final component of TES discussed in this literature review is value-added measures (VAM). Value-added is a term used to describe the measure of student growth. “Student growth
means the change in student achievement for an individual student between two or more points in time” (Gates, Hansen & Tuttle, 2015, p. 163). VAM are used to rate a teacher based on student test scores usually on standardized tests in math and language arts (Harris & Sass, 2014). Darling-Hammond et al., (2012) described VAM as one family of methods to link teacher instruction to student achievement. They are statistical models designed to measure changes in student scores over time and to measure teacher influence and the value added or subtracted on student achievement over time. Using VAM for teacher evaluation “is based on the belief that measured achievement gains for a specific teacher’s student reflect that teacher’s “effectiveness” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012, p. 8). Stroupe (2015) explained that a teacher’s effectiveness is determined first, by comparing students’ actual performance on an assessment to their predicted performance. Predicted performance is calculated from previous students’ scores on the assessment. The second method for determining effectiveness with VAM is by analyzing, over time, the performance of students’ in classrooms where the teacher had similar VAM measurements. Many times VAM are used to target the types of professional development a teacher needs for growth and for district leaders to make high stakes decisions, such as tenure, salary increase, or dismissal.

**Advantages and disadvantages of value-added measures.**

Value-added measures have sparked support and criticism across the educational community. There is growing agreement that adding student-learning gains into the TES ratings calculations, in conjunction with classroom observations, provides reliable evidence of student achievement and teacher effectiveness (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012; Koedel, Mihaly & Rockoff, 2015; Sass, Hannaway, Xu, Figlio & Feng, 2012). VAMs are designed to make comparisons in terms of how much students improve from one testing period to another. This
can be accomplished in many ways, such as pre/post-tests scores, standardized test scores, testing diagnostic software programs, such as i-Ready and Fountas & Pinnell, among others. Research by Darling-Hammond et al., (2011) supported that the use of VAMs could help validate ratings from TES. Stroupe (2015) discussed arguments from VAM supporters that point to two positive elements of VAM. First, VAM led to professional development tools to help teachers grow in their weak areas. Second, VAM provided school and district leaders information they could use to make informed decisions for rewarding and recognition of effective teachers and denial of tenure and termination for low-performing teachers (p. 2).

On the other hand, multiple researchers found that using VAMs to measure teacher effectiveness led to inaccuracies and inconsistencies (Condie, Lefgren & Sims, 2014; Darling-Hammond et al., 2012; Koedel, Mihaly & Rockoff, 2015; Sass et al., 2012). Some of these inaccuracies and inconsistencies were based on the belief that student learning was measured well by any given test, that one individual teacher was the sole variable of a student’s learning, and a student’s learning was independent from the growth of their classmates (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012). Condie, Lefgren and Sims (2014) argued that none of these assumptions is well supported by current research. VAM do not take into account class sizes, home and community support or challenges, individual student needs or abilities, prior teachers and schooling, other teachers working with the child, validity of the tests being used, among others. Student achievement measures must be directly related to the individual teacher, in the subject area taught by that teacher. This is the only way to accurately reflect a teachers’ contribution to his/her students’ learning.

When focusing on the disadvantages of VAM and the improper uses of VAM, Darling-Hammond et al., (2012) indicated that forty to fifty-five percent of teachers received noticeably
different scores when different statistical models were applied. In addition, Hopkins (2016) argued, “A singular focus on a onetime assessment mitigates the other dimensions of a child’s acquisition and demonstration of learning” (p. 7). This statement assumed that a given test was well designed, measured what it was intended to measure, and that any individual teacher was the sole purpose for student achievement; when in fact, there are other factors that influence student learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2011; Hopkins, 2016).

In his article, Stroupe (2015) highlighted three critiques of VAM: First, that the models and their proposed uses were flawed because a teacher’s effectiveness changed drastically from class to class and year to year. Second, test scores were subject to many variables that teachers could not control. Third, making high-stake decisions could have led to inaccurate personnel decisions (p. 2). Koedel, Mihaly, and Rockoff (2015) examined the biases and stabilities of estimated teacher VAM and agreed that there are biases with VAM estimates. Value-added measures could overstate the importance of teacher quality in determining student outcomes, which could lead to errors in the supplementary analyses. If this were the case, individual teachers would be held accountable for factors that are outside of their control (p. 183).

Value-added measures have been a source of both consensus and disagreement in research. However, a broad view of widely accepted facts are emerging that VAMs must be implemented with care. Along with observations, VAMs could be a reliable evidence of teacher effectiveness if the VAM data is taken from the subject the teacher teaches, if it is taken from more than one valid test, and if it is taken from variables within the teachers control.

The Importance of Feedback and Professional Development Opportunities

To accurately measure a teacher’s strengths and weaknesses, two key levers of an evaluation system are improving teaching effectiveness by providing teachers with meaningful
feedback and professional development opportunities (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015; Danielson, 2016; Delvaux et al., 2013; Firestone, 2014; Hill & Grossman, 2013; Hunt, Gurvitch & Lund, 2016; Tuytens & Devos, 2011, 2014, 2017). Darling-Hammond (2014) said that evaluations should include meaningful feedback that is connected to professional development opportunities. Similarly, teachers could use this information to attend professional development trainings in the areas they feel are their weakest. Many researchers agreed that TES and procedures do contribute to professional development opportunities. However, many school leaders are missing this key link in the TES process by neither providing adequate feedback nor providing professional development opportunities (Callahan & Sadeghi 2015; Donaldson, 2012; Tuytens & Devos, 2017). Studies have concluded that most teachers perceive TES positively if these conversations with administrators provide meaningful feedback and professional development opportunities (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015; Danielson, 2016; Delvaux et al., 2013; Firestone, 2014; Hill & Grossman, 2013; Hunt, Gurvitch & Lund, 2016; Tuytens & Devos, 2011, 2014, 2017). Danielson (2011) said that when principal and teacher conversations are performed around a common understanding of good teaching, it offers a rich opportunity for teacher growth especially when the conversation is tied to the teacher’s goals.

The purpose of teacher evaluations is to help teachers improve their classroom practice (Tuytens & Devos, 2014). One way to accomplish this is by the principal providing meaning feedback. “Feedback can help teachers clearly recognize their accomplishments or offers guidance so they can enhance their instructional competence…” (Firestone, 2014, p. 103). Tuytens and Devos (2011) found that when principals “provide regular feedback to teachers based on classroom observations...[meaningful] feedback can have many positive effects on teachers, such as stimulating reflective behavior and encouraging the use of innovative teaching
Feedback is critical to the teacher evaluation processes because it is what triggers teacher learning and motivation (Tuytens & Devos, 2014, p. 511). When teachers are given meaningful feedback following the evaluation process, it means they are given immediate, clear, frequent, specific, and non-penalizing feedback that gives suggestions to improve their performance (Mo, Conners & McCormick, 1998).

Concerns with how principals determine ratings have also been documented. Kimball and Milanowski (2009) found that principals were sometimes rating teachers according to their interaction of will, skill, and context, which innately increased the possibility of unreliable ratings. The evaluator’s attitudes toward the evaluation system itself (will), can affect the evaluator’s motivation and in turn, the accuracy and validity of the ratings. The evaluator’s skill in observing and processing information regarding a teacher’s behavior may influence the performance rating. The more skilled the evaluator, the more accurate the rating. The evaluator’s knowledge of the subject being evaluated has an impact on the accuracy of the ratings. The more experience the evaluator has with the subject matter, the more accurate the rating (Kimball & Milanowski, 2009). Another problem reported was the lack of connection between teachers using their prior knowledge of teaching and connecting it to the feedback they received from their principal. Researchers have discovered that many administrators do not take the time to provide meaningful feedback and professional development opportunities because of the time constraints to complete the evaluation processes (Hill and Grossman, 2013; Hunt, Gurvitch & Lund, 2016; Tuytens & Devos, 2011; Tuytens & Devos, 2107). Gagne and Deci (2005) showed that through the theory of self-determination, positive feedback facilitates intrinsic motivation and promotes a sense of competence because teachers feel responsible for a successful performance (p. 332). The increased feelings of competence improve their teaching.
In addition, teacher evaluation systems also have an implicit influence on student development through the stimulation of the professional development of teachers (Danielson, 2016; Delvaux et al., 2013; Firestone, 2014; Hunt, Gurvitch & Lund, 2016; Tuytens & Devos, 2014, 2017). Literature has shown that that TES should be formative and stimulate teachers’ professional development while at the same time, hold teachers accountable for their performance (Delvaux et al., 2013). Marzano (2012) said, “If the emphasis [of a TES] is on teacher development, the model needs to be both comprehensive and specific and focus on the teacher’s growth in various instructional strategies” (p. 19). Empirical research shows that principals are essential in supporting professional growth by knowing the content and providing professional development opportunities to teachers (Kraft & Papay, 2014). “Teachers learn by doing, reading, and reflecting (just as students do); by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students and their work; and by sharing what they see” (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin 2011, p. 88). It is important that principals take advantage of the evaluation process and collaborate with the teachers, reflect with the teachers, learn with the teachers, and provide individualized professional development opportunities for teachers in order to facilitate growth.

**Teachers’ Perceptions of Teacher Evaluation Systems**

The literature shows that teachers understand and agree that they must be held accountable for student growth. However, they feel that their ratings should reflect an accurate snapshot of their skills and practices and provide meaningful feedback and professional development opportunities in order to promote individual growth (Callihan & Sadeghi, 2015; Donaldson, 2012; Hill & Grossman, 2013; Tuytens & Devos, 2014, 2017). Conley and Glasman (2008) and Sheppard (2013) explored teacher evaluations and fears that arise when being evaluated. They found that teachers became stressed during classroom observations.
because they were under close observation by their superiors. This stress was further elevated because both positive and negative consequences were attached to their evaluation ratings (Stecher et al., 2012). “Sixty-eight to 82% of the teachers…reported experiencing increased stress as a result of the evaluation system” (Stecher et al., p. 42). Stress leads to emotional exhaustion, which relates to lower productivity and less effectiveness, which leads to teacher burnout (Klusmann, Richter & Ludtke, 2016).

Teachers reported that evaluations have little impact on improving their teaching (Donaldson, 2012; Moskal, Smith, 2015; Stein & Golding; 2016). A study seeking to contextualize new teacher evaluation reforms found that only thirty-nine percent of teachers evaluated agreed that their ratings accurately showed their effectiveness. Thirty-two percent indicated that the system did not rate them accurately. Thirty percent were undecided (Ruffini, et al., 2014). This suggests that nearly sixty percent of the teachers surveyed were not satisfied with or simply did not understand the ratings. In another study, Callahan and Sadeghi (2015) found over fifty percent of teachers reported that the feedback they received had no impact on changes in their teaching, raising student test scores, or their knowledge of subject pedagogy.

Teachers have differing perceptions of the individual components in a TES. A qualitative study in Arizona found that teachers perceived the observation component of TES as the most credible component of the evaluation process (Ruffini, Makkonen, Tejwani, Diaz & WestEd, 2014). It was in this component that teachers felt they could grow the most, but only if the principal was an impartial evaluator, knew the subject and content, gave meaningful feedback, and provided opportunities for professional development (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015; Conley & Glasman, 2008; Donaldson, 2012; Hill & Grossman, 2013; Tuytens & Devos, 2014). Donaldson (2012) found that overall, teachers did not receive meaningful, targeted feedback to assist in the
improvement of their teaching practices. Donaldson (2012) explained that the majority of teachers did change how they planned their overall approach to teaching when principals provided meaningful and impactful feedback along with targeted professional development opportunities. However, if principals did accomplish this action, it was found it did not affect the pedagogical approach a teacher took. Unlike classroom observations, VAM were not perceived as positively. Laqireno-Paquet et al., (2016) found that teachers whose evaluation ratings included VAM scores were 2.5 times less likely to be satisfied with the process of evaluation than those whose ratings did not include student test scores. The processes to determine a teacher’s effectiveness through the use of VAM scores conjure negative perceptions and experiences in teachers towards its reliability and has a low impact on teacher growth.

Conceptual Framework

Both education and special area education scholars have increasingly found that the feedback and professional development opportunities special area teachers receive from principals are lacking (Clements-Cortes, 2011; Delvaux et al., 2013; Donaldson, 2012; Moskal, Stein & Golding Sheppard, 2013; Norris et. al., 2017; Overland, 2014; Stecher et al., 2012; Sawchuck, 2009; Tuytens & Devos, 2011, 2014, 2017). Efforts to explore the phenomenon of special area teachers’ perceptions of teacher evaluations can be viewed through several motivational theories (Firestone, 2014). Research indicates that there is a link between teachers’ perceptions of the feedback and professional development opportunities they receive and how it impacts their motivation to grow professionally (Figure 2.2).
Figure 2.2: The evaluation process in FS County. Shows the evaluation process and the point at which motivation to learning occurs. Created by Christy Isaacs.

determine the answers to questions such as, “Are teachers motivated by financial gain? Are they motivated through self-efficacy? Are they motivated by status?” To gain insight into how
teachers are motivated to grow, this study will explore Deci and Ryan’s (2008) self-
determination theory and more specifically, the economics-based theory of external motivation
and the psychology-based theory of internal motivation. “Intrinsic motivation represents the
most self-determined or autonomous behavior regulation by inherent interest, enjoyment, and
satisfaction” (Sportlyzer Academy, n.d., p. 1). Extrinsic motivation are activities that yield
rewards or avoid punishments.

The self-determination theory aims to explain individuals’ goal-directed behavior. Through people feeling motivated by activities which allow them to satisfy their innate
psychological needs (competence, autonomy, shared experiences), people are driven by intrinsic
rewards that are integrated into the individual’s sense of self and autonomy is perceived as low
(Deci and Ryan, 2008). Ryan and Deci (2008) said that as individuals move along this
continuum, their motivation becomes less controlled and more self-determined which leads to
amotivation (Figure 2.3).

For the topic of evaluations, the self-determination theory promotes an interest for
learning and confidence in capacities and attributes, which in turn, could enhance personal
growth (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier & Ryan, 1991). Research in the field of education has
confirmed that satisfying the personal needs of the teacher leads to personal satisfaction and
enjoyment in the activities being learned (Angeline, 2014).
Figure 2.3. Self-determination theory. Explains how the extrinsic and intrinsic motivation theories use an individuals’ goal directed behavior (Sportlyzer, n.d).

Furthermore, self-direction is thwarted when the learning is perceived as being controlled externally or is contingent on rewards or punishments (Angeline, 2014). Thus, it could be surmised that professional development can be designed to guide teachers towards pedagogical mastery of their craft.

The theory of self-determination can be broken down into two types of motivation: extrinsic and intrinsic. The extrinsic motivational theory is grounded in the theory of economics. Teacher evaluations rely heavily on extrinsic incentives to motivate educators through monetary incentives (Firestone, 2014). These incentives include monetary bonuses, salary increases, and tenure decisions, among others. The intrinsic motivation theory is grounded in the field of psychology and is intended to motivate through intrinsic incentives. Its ultimate goal is to internally motivate individuals towards autonomy and self-efficacy. According to Firestone (2014), individuals who are autonomously motivated find the learning activity of the evaluation process so interesting and rewarding that other rewards are not needed to motivate them to grow (p. 101). As it relates to teacher education, teachers who are autonomously motivated find the
feedback and professional learning opportunities they receive as a result of the evaluation process so rewarding, extrinsic benefits, such as monetary bonuses are not necessary. The theory of self-determination is an important lens through which to view this study because of the focus on special area teachers’ perceptions of the feedback and professional development opportunities their principals provide on their motivation to grow (Figure 2.4).

![Figure 2.4. Motivation to Learn (Helen, 2011). Shows how extrinsic and intrinsic motivation works to motivate.](image)

What does motivation have to do with the evaluation process? On what level should evaluations be used to motivate teachers to improve instruction? Both these answers lie in the extrinsic and intrinsic motivation theories. According to Firestone (2014), extrinsic motivation relies heavily on extrinsic incentives, such as punishments or rewards, to motivate teachers. For example, extrinsic motivators include removing bad teachers from employment or increasing a teacher’s salary or giving bonuses (p. 100). Extrinsic motivators can influence teachers in both positive and negative ways. Positive in that the teacher can be rewarded for achieving the agreed upon goals and negative in that the teacher is monitored closely to determine if the goals are being met. On the other hand, intrinsic motivation relies on individuals rewarding themselves through the acquisition of knowledge, autonomy, and professional development (Firestone, 2014, p. 100). Intrinsic motivators can influence teachers in both positive and negative ways. Positive
in that the teacher experiences autonomy and self-efficacy and negative in that it can be slow to affect behavior and can require special and lengthy preparations (Firestone, 2014). Corwin and Borman (1988) explained that historically, teachers have had great autonomy. In fact, teachers still report that they feel more intrinsically rewarded when they are given feedback from others.

Teachers’ perceptions of feedback are critical to a TES because good feedback and professional development increases competency, which leads to internal motivation to grow professionally (Angeline, 2014; Danielson, 2011; Deci & Ryan, 2008; Firestone, 2014; Gagne & Deci, 2005). This leads to the conceptual framework of this study as presented in Chapter 1, which looks at feedback and professional development as a motivation for special area teachers to grow professionally (see Figure 2.5). “Motivation is strongest when individuals feel competent to carry out their assigned tasks and expect that doing so will have the intended effect” (Firestone, 2014, p. 101). Competence also promotes intrinsic motivation and the act of providing professional development helps build teachers’ knowledge. Firestone (2014) discussed four ways that feedback and professional development promote improved competence:

- Challenges teachers intellectually, while giving them powerful images of teaching and learning and building their pedagogical content knowledge;
- Actively engages teachers in collaborative settings;
- Reinforces learning through congruent learning activities that permit practice and refinement; and
- Offers teachers opportunities to solve their own real instructional problems (p. 103).
In summation, a key objective of a TES is that teachers grow professionally through feedback and professional development opportunities. The self-determination theory and more specifically, the theories of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation demonstrated that teachers perceive that meaningful feedback and professional development from their principals is a key motivator of professional growth. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that principals achieve this objective by promoting growth in all teacher under their supervision.

**How Special Area Teachers Differ From General Classroom Teachers**

For the purposes of this study, it is important to know who must participate in the evaluation process in a school setting. Not only teachers whose students take standardized tests, but also teachers whose students do not take standardized test must participate in the evaluation process. This includes special area teachers. A special area teacher can vary from state to state, district to district, and even school to school. Special area subjects often include art, technology,
media, dance, physical education, theatre, S.T.E.M., and music, among others (Clements-Cortes, 2011; Gates, Hansen & Tuttle, 2015; Gilbert, 2016; Norris et al., 2017). The most common American special area classes in elementary schools are art, music, and physical education (Elementary School, 2018). To better understand if current evaluation systems can be reliable for special area teachers, a good starting point is to examine the literature on the qualities of special area teachers and what past researchers have found regarding current evaluation processes and how they affect special area teachers. Nielsen (2014) described special areas as providing a unique, creative, learning environment. In many cases, special area classrooms, such as music, could have the highest per capita teacher to student ratio in the school. Music and PE classroom could have up to 100 students at a time and see hundreds of students in a week (Nielsen, 2014). These classrooms are many times the noisiest, yet most structured class in the school. For instance, Nielsen (2014) found that a principal could consider this noise chaotic when conducting an observation when in fact; it is controlled chaos (p. 66). With each special area subject comes its own unique job descriptions, duties, teaching skills, and pedagogies. Knowledge of the differences between general classroom teachers and special area teachers could aid the reader in understanding why this study important.

**Qualities of Special Area Teachers**

The Framework for 21st Century Learning (2015) gathered education experts, teachers, and business leaders to define the skills and knowledge students needed to succeed in their lives, work, and citizenship and included the arts as a core subject (Gilbert, 2016). With this new push to see the arts as a core subject, it is critical to explore the qualities of special area teachers to understand how they fit into the current evaluation process. Existing literature has described
what special area teachers must do to become a teacher, what their job entails, and all of the nuances and special circumstances that are attached to the job.

**Visual art teacher.**

Elementary school art teachers must hold a bachelor’s degree to teach the visual arts and pass the state-issued art teacher certification (Akers, 2017). Ideally, this degree should be a visual arts education degree because an effective art teacher needs to be able to showcase his or her own work to the students (“How to Become an Art Teacher”, 2018). The art teacher must then be able to teach the students the basic techniques of art making and encourage them to take these techniques further by using the appropriate teaching skills, scaffolding, and teaching pedagogies (“How to Become an Art Teacher”, 2018). Lesson planning is a key part of an art teacher’s job. Visual art teachers must learn to not only design standards based lesson plans for grades K-5 that demonstrate core concepts to all their students, but be able to integrate this lesson into other curriculums such as stage designs for a musical, state fair projects, and design, among others. Many times these projects are attached to historical concepts that focus on social studies and language arts that the art teacher must be well versed in.

Akers (2017) also noted that visual arts teachers must discover which students are struggling with the art concept. Artwork is as individual as each student is. The visual arts teacher must be able to sift through the individuality of each student and determine which do not grasp the concept. Many times art teachers may have to teach children with different disorders that range from hearing loss to autism. This requires understanding effective strategies for integration of these special children into the art classroom.

An art teacher’s most difficult job is to budget funds to purchase art supplies (Pulbratek, 2013). Pulbratek (2013) said most visual art teachers receive around $2 a year per child. This
requires advance lesson planning for every day lessons and planning for community and school-based projects. This means the teacher must determine the lesson, the number of students fulfilling this lesson, what each student will need, and then decide the best place to purchase the supplies and the time constraints to wait for delivery. Many times the visual arts teacher and his/her students will participate in outside school activities to showcase student artwork. This extends the possibility that the art teacher may need to participate in extracurricular after work hours without extra pay (Akers, 2017).

Lastly, a visual arts teacher must be an expert in assessing students and in behavior management. To assess a student on art concepts can require several projects to be completed before assigning a grade to every student in the school. This could up to 1,000 students or more to grade for each project. With this, the art teacher must learn to manage a classroom that is highly engaged and structurally chaotic (Akers, 2017).

**Music teachers.**

Miller (2017) said that music teachers must hold a bachelor’s degree to teach music and pass the state-issued music certification. Ideally, this degree should be in the field of music education because a music teacher needs to be able to play at least one instrument at a high proficiency level and must learn to play the other instruments from band, orchestra, and choir (including piano), with some proficiency (Miller, 2017). A music teacher must also be able to teach students the basic techniques of music making, then encourage them to take the techniques further using the appropriate teaching skills, scaffolding, and teaching pedagogies (“How to Become an Music Teacher”, 2018). Most music teachers go into the music education profession because they are already accomplished musicians and want to expand their knowledge and share it with their students.
Miller (2017) also indicated that music teachers must learn to design standards based lesson plans for grades K-5 that demonstrate core concepts to all their students. They must be able to integrate these core lessons into other curriculums such as math, language arts, and social studies to satisfy the national and state standards. Many times these lessons, such as projects or songs, are attached to historical concepts that focus on social studies and language arts in that the music teacher must be well versed (Miller, 2017).

A music teacher’s responsibility is to teach the basic principles of music and music skills (Miller, 2017). These are to incorporate singing, movement, instrument playing, music theory, music notation, composition, and improvisation into every lesson. Music teachers may have to teach children with different disorders that range from hearing loss to autism (Miller, 2017). This requires understanding effective strategies for integration of these special children into the music classroom. A music teacher’s most difficult job is to budget funds to purchase music supplies such as instrument, uniforms, movement materials, and curriculum materials, among others (Pappas, 2017). One xylophone can cost upward to $2,000. This requires a close relationship with music vendors and the senior secretary.

Beyond this, a music teacher must also design school musicals for public performances, as well as collaborate with other teachers and parents to make the musical possible. This extends the possibility that the music teacher may need to participate in extracurricular after work hours without extra pay (Miller, 2017). A music teacher must learn to sift through the individualized students and encourage them to undertake further studies beyond the elementary classroom. This could be private lessons, joining a chorus, or even participating in the church orchestra (Miller, 2017).
Finally, a music teacher must be an expert in assessing students and in behavior management (Miller, 2017). To assess a student on music concepts can require several class periods to be completed before assigning a grade to every student in the school. This could be up to 1,000 students or more to grade for each project. With this, the music teacher must learn to manage a classroom that is highly engaged and structurally chaotic (Miller, 2017).

**Physical education teachers.**

Physical education (PE) teachers must hold a bachelor’s degree to teach PE and pass the state-issued PE certification (Firth, 2017). Ideally, this degree should be in the field of sports education because an effective PE teacher must be knowledgeable about the human body and a wide variety of sports and be able to model the appropriate way to play each of these sports (“How to Become a P.E. Teacher”, 2018). A PE teacher must also be able to teach the students the basics of sports then encourage his/her students to take these techniques further through a highly specialized degree of teaching skills, scaffolding, and teaching pedagogies. Most PE teachers were high-level athletes or coaches themselves before pursuing a career in teaching.

Lesson planning is a key part of their job. PE teachers must learn to not only design standards based lesson plans for grades K-5 that demonstrate core concepts to all their students, but also be able to integrate this lesson into other curriculums (Firth, 2017). This includes organizing physical skill development and developing or finding games that satisfy the PE standards. Physical education standards focus on participation, cooperation, character development, and skill acquisition to develop fine and gross motor skills. A PE teacher should be able to demonstrate leadership and communication skills. The PE teacher must also be able to sift through the individuality of each student and determine who does not grasp the concept (Firth, 2017). A PE teacher must model good health by being in good shape. Beyond these
responsibilities, many PE teachers may design and/or participate in before or after school extracurricular activities such as a runner’s club or a soccer club without extra pay for their time (Firth, 2017). A PE teacher’s most difficult job is to budget funds to purchase equipment. Many times enough equipment is needed for classes of sixty or more students at one time and for equipment that wears out quickly (Zeiger, 2018).

Many times PE teachers may have to teach children with different disorders that range from hearing loss to autism. This requires understanding effective strategies for integration of these special children into the PE classroom (Firth, 2017). Lastly, Firth (2017) explained that a PE teacher must be an expert in assessing students and in behavior management. To assess a student on PE concepts can require several class periods to be completed before assigning a grade to every student in the school. This could be up to 1,000 students or more to grade for each project. With this, the PE teacher must learn to manage a classroom that is highly engaged and structurally chaotic.

The highlighted differences, for the purposes of this study, between special area teachers and general classroom teacher is that first, the special areas subjects “is the synthesis of many highly developed motor cognitive and affective skills that culminate in a form of human art and capacity that is expressive and diverse” (Moreno, 2014, p. 32). Each special area subject is unique in its teaching skill, scaffolding, and pedagogies (Clements-Cortes, 2011; Overland, 2014). A prerequisite of teaching a special area subject is that a teacher should first “be” an artist to be an effective art teacher, or to first “be” a musician before becoming an effective music teacher, or to first “be” an athlete before becoming an effective PE teacher (Akers, 2017; Firth, 2017; Millers, 2017). Second, an art, music, and PE teacher each require its own separate college degree and state certification exam. To become a general classroom elementary teacher
in Florida, a person must have a college degree and pass the state K-6 certification to teach Kindergarten thru sixth grade, all subjects.

So how do these differences affect special area teacher’s evaluations? Generic evaluation systems, systems made to evaluate general classroom teachers, do not translate smoothly to special area teachers because special area teachers many times use different teaching skills and pedagogies than general classroom teachers (Norris et al., 2016; Overland, 2014; Robinson, 2015). Principals, many times, have little exposure to or experience with the special area subjects in a school setting, which may lead to unreliable teacher evaluation ratings and teacher growth opportunities provided by the principal (Wakamatsu, 2016, p. 203). This could also mitigate against the very claim that special areas make as being student centered and creative (Clements-Cortez, 2011, p. 14). Therefore, principals should be qualified and trained in the special area subjects in order to make reliable assessments, evaluate, and report within the context of the special area teaching domain. This, in turn, will allow principals to provide meaningful feedback and professional development opportunities that provide growth opportunities (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015; Danielson, 2016; Delvaux et al., 2013; Firestone, 2014; Hill & Grossman, 2013; Hunt, Gurvitch & Lund, 2016; Tuytens & Devos, 2011, 2014, 2017).

**Special Area Teachers and Evaluation Systems**

Special area teachers are held to the same standards and evaluations as every other teacher (Clements-Cortes, 2011; Donaldson, 2012; Overland, 2014). Hunt, Gurvitch, and Lund (2016) discussed potential concerns with generic TES and using one single rubric to assess every teacher. They said:
When writing a generalized rubric, broad statements are used so it can apply to all subject areas. However, in terms of the scope of the rubrics and corresponding descriptors, this type of broad statement becomes quite superficial when applied. The rubrics were written for the majority of teachers (in classrooms) and not for the relatively few [special area] educators. Another consideration is that these rubrics were probably written by individuals who were unfamiliar with the complex and ever-changing environment found in [special area] education, and thus are more applicable to cognitive classroom settings. This lack of attention to the specific context of the classroom, coupled with the generalized treatment of the descriptor, often results in a rubric that has little value in [special area] education with regard to providing useful information about areas of strength or how to improve areas needing attention. (p. 23)

Current TES do not allow for any type of revision or edits to the evaluation system to accommodate for the different teaching skills and pedagogies special area teachers must use on a daily basis. Thus, the current evaluation systems and generic rubrics are used to evaluate special area teachers’ effectiveness.

As stated above, most general classroom teachers agreed that their evaluation ratings were a fair indicator of their effectiveness, but also agreed that not all aspects of their teaching can be captured on any one TES. However, this scenario is different for special area teachers. Overland (2014) argued that nearly seventy-five percent of a special area teachers effectiveness is determined through observation by an administrator. Yet, the rubrics of most observations are purposefully generic and look the same regardless of the content being taught. While some behaviors and characteristics are similar across content areas, special area teachers often employ different pedagogies and teaching skills than general classroom teachers. In addition, many
times the principal was unfamiliar with the subject area. Clements-Cortez (2011) discussed the importance of evaluator training in the field of music education.

A coherent definition of ‘the domain of teacher’ for music must honor the unique aspects of the learning the teaching motivates. Assessment techniques must be the right tools for this type of learning, and perhaps more importantly, the evaluators must be qualified to make assessments, evaluate, and report within the context of the music teaching domain. (pp. 13-14)

McAllister’s (2009) research indicated that music teachers are the only person in the elementary school teaching their subject. Thus, they have no one with whom to discuss lesson planning, teaching pedagogies, subject matter, or other specialized instructional content. The principal will not be able to provide that specialized support either. Overland (2014) suggests that when an administrator goes to a special area classroom to perform a formal observation, typical teaching techniques may not be applicable to certain evaluated criteria. This could lead to the untrained evaluator to assign a low rating. However, the special area educator may have demonstrated a highly effective skill of music practice, brush strokes, teaching a dance routine, or rehearsal techniques, among others. Overland (2014) continued to give examples of a principal’s lack of understanding of music content when a music teacher used a typical “whole-group” technique. He described a scenario in which a music teacher insisted that the entire group “tune in on the same pitch.” In the Danielson Framework (2013) criterion rubric, a principal may rate the special area teacher as developing when asking an entire group to “tune in on the same pitch” because it does not differentiate instruction. Yet, the music teacher is using very important music terminology and teaching pedagogy of music education.
Most special area teachers’ TES ratings include the use of VAMs to determine their effectiveness. Morrison (2012) discussed that this inclusion is problematic. He asked how this could be done fairly when tests have not been designed to measure student growth in special areas (p. 14). The literature has shown that a special teacher’s effectiveness rating included showing student gains on tests scores. If tests have not been designed to measure student growth in the special area fields, it makes sense that special area teachers are getting VAM data from sources other than the subject they teach. Robinson (2015) continued with this thought by stating special area teachers were skeptical of VAMs being used to determine their effectiveness especially, through the use of standardized tests and assessment of student achievement from subject areas, other than the special areas, to determine effectiveness. Many researchers (Emert, Sheehan & Deitz, 2013; Morrison, 2012; Robinson, 2015) noted that a special area teacher’s VAMs are taken from student’s test scores in math and language arts. Standardized tests do not evaluate special area education. Therefore, they should have no place in the assessment of a special area teacher’s effectiveness (Clements-Cortez, 2011).

**Conclusion**

The literature reviewed indicated that Teacher Evaluation Systems (TES) might not achieve their intended objectives of accurately rating teacher effectiveness or promoting teacher growth. Exploring special area teachers’ evaluation experiences and their perceptions of the evaluation process will help to gain insight if TES are indeed meeting its objective of promoting professional growth. Furthermore, there is little to no literature exploring special area teachers’ perceptions of TESs as related to feedback and professional development opportunities they receive following the evaluation process. By understanding special area teachers’ perceptions, we can gain insight into a) whether principals are first able to provide meaningful feedback and
professional development opportunities and second, if they are giving meaningful feedback or professional development opportunities, which could change the way school districts conduct the evaluation process of special area teachers; b) on where the evaluation system is failing and guide school leaders and policy makers into either redesigning the current system or into designing a new system specifically for special area teachers that is able to accurately measure their effectiveness while at the same time, promote professional growth. The few studies found indicate that special area teachers do not have positive perceptions in regards to the current TES. However, the research does not indicate the specific areas in which special area teachers have these perceptions. This research intends to learn more about these specific areas.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology used in this study. The purpose of this qualitative study is to discover music teachers’ perceptions of the feedback and professional development opportunities principal provide following the evaluation process. Specifically, the research questions are: (1) What are music teachers’ perceptions of the feedback they receive from their principals following the evaluation process? (2) What are music teachers’ perceptions of the professional development opportunities they receive from their principals following the evaluation process? (3) What are music teachers’ recommendations for improving evaluation of their instruction?

To describe lived experiences of special area teachers, a phenomenological, qualitative research approach was used using Moustakas (1994) phenomenological research methods. Moustakas said that “research should focus on the wholeness of the experience and behavior as an integral and inseparable relationship of a phenomenon with the person experiencing the phenomenon” (Simon & Goes, 2011 p. 1). It is a methodology used to guide researchers into identifying phenomena by collecting data from participants who have experienced the phenomena, then develop a composite description of the essence of the experience for all of the individuals (Creswell, 1994, p 58).

This chapter will present an overview of the setting specifically the participants and how they will be chosen, data collection methods, instruments, analysis of the data, participants rights, and the potential limitations of the study.
Study Setting

The setting for this study was in FS County, which is in the state of Florida. It includes five surrounding cities. FS County serves over 49,500 students, employs 6,800 staff that includes 2,900 teachers. There are seven high schools, ten middle schools, and thirty-two elementary schools (FS County, 2018). FS County has 49 schools and approximately 261 special area teachers in total from its elementary, middle, and high schools (FS County, 2018).

The Evaluation Process in FS County, Florida

Many school districts across the country now include multiple methods of evaluating teachers in conjunction with observations in an attempt to make the ratings more reliable. FS County combines effectiveness ratings from the Danielson Framework, a teacher created professional development plan, and value-added measures to determine a teacher’s effectiveness rating. The next sections will analyze how FS County has implemented the above components and explain how final effectiveness ratings are determined and how effectiveness ratings are used.

The Danielson Framework in FS County

FS County implemented the Danielson Framework for Teaching (2013) in the 2013-2014 school year. In the 2016-2017 school year, district leaders implemented a validation process for all administrators, K-12th grade. This process was designed to ensure that teachers received reliable ratings regardless of the grade level or subject they taught (FS County, 2017). Observations in FS County follow the recommendations of Charlotte Danielson as describe in Chapter 2. Danielson’s recommendation is that in order for the observation component of her framework to be twice as reliable, three short and one full lesson observation should be conducted (The Danielson Group, 2017). In FS County, every tenured certified teacher receives
three unannounced, informal walk-through observations totaling between 7-10 minutes in length. During a walk through, administrators look for different teaching practices: student engagement, curricular objectives being taught, what has been taught previously, instructional practices, safety concerns, among others (Protheroe, 2009).

In addition to the informal walk-through observations, one planned formal observation is scheduled. A formal observation is conducted over a full class period. During the formal observation, principals collect information on how well the teacher provided clear learning objectives, implemented classroom management and safety procedures, established policy and procedure, differentiated instruction, and communicated ideas. Information is also collected about student engagement (Danielson, 2007; Kimball & Milanowski, 2009; Young et al., 2015). The data collected are sometimes referred to as a “wide lens” or a “big picture” of what is transpiring on a daily basis in a teacher’s classroom. This gives principals a snapshot to guide them when rating teacher effectiveness.

A pre- and post-conference with the principal is also required for every teacher (FS, 2017). During the preconference, the teacher discusses the lesson plan content of the formal observation with the principal. Time is set aside for both the principal and the teacher to ask questions or raise any concerns or questions regarding the lesson. This meeting is usually short, around ten minutes, depending on any questions or concerns that arise. A post conference is also required. During the post conference, the teacher meets with the principal and receives feedback and effectiveness ratings for each of the twenty-two components of the Danielson Framework using the same system for the walk throughs. This meeting is usually long, approximately one hour or longer, depending on the feedback given by the principal, questions asked, and defense of ratings on the part of the administrator or the teacher.
Professional Development Plans in FS County

FS County requires a teacher to develop and implement at least two SMART goals that align with the School Improvement Plan to even be considered for a highly effective rating (FS County, 2017). This acronym stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely. This plan must include an explanation of each of the SMART goal(s), research and data evidence supporting why the goals are necessary, strategies and behaviors the teacher will complete, professional learning activities needed to complete the plan, and who the collaborating personnel were (FS County, 2017). This plan could take multiple days to create and all year to complete. Once the teacher has written the plan, it is the principal’s duty to review the plan and assign an effectiveness rating according to the comprehensive rubrics below (Figure 3.1). The ratings are highly effective, effective, needs improvement/developing, and unsatisfactory (FS County, 2017).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highly Effective:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Professional Development Plan demonstrated a direct correlation to needs indicated by student assessment and/or data and the educator’s previous evaluation, credentials and/or self-assessment. Two or more SMART goals were set. Strategies were specific, fully-developed and focused on improving or changing professional practice for the purposes of improved student learning. The educator reviewed his/her plan during the school year, and readily adjusted the plan only when ongoing evidence indicated the need. The educator not only completed all activities identified in growth plan, but identified strategies and resulting evidence that ultimately improved or changed the educator’s practice in an effort to improve student learning. The educator’s reflection provided extensive and thorough evidence of why the educator implemented those strategies and how and why the chosen strategies improved or changed his/her practice. In the course of implementing the plan, the educator collaborated with other educators in a deliberate and meaningful way. Results of the plan were effectively shared and impacted the practice of others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Professional Development Plan demonstrated a direct correlation to needs indicated by student assessment and/or learning data and the educator’s previous evaluation, credentials and/or self-assessment. At least one SMART goal was set that aligns with the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices. Strategies were specific, well-developed and focused on improving or changing professional practice for the purposes of improved student learning. The educator reviewed his/her plan during the school year and, only if necessary, made adjustments to the plan. The educator completed all activities identified in growth plan and produced evidence that identified strategies were implemented in the classroom. The educator’s reflection made adequate connections between student data and the strategies the educator chose to implement. In the course of implementing the plan, the educator collaborated with other educators in a meaningful way. Results of the plan were shared with departments or grade levels and may have had an impact on some colleagues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Needs Improvement/Developing:**

The Professional Development Plan demonstrated some correlation to needs indicated by student assessment and/or learning data and the educator’s previous evaluation, credentials and/or self-assessment. A learning goal was set but was missing one or more components of a SMART goal. The goal may not have aligned with the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices. Strategies were loosely-focused on improving or changing professional practice for the purposes of improved student learning. The educator reviewed his/her plan during the school year, but made few or no adjustments to the plan unless suggested by the evaluator. The educator’s reflection demonstrated that he/she completed most or all activities identified in the growth plan, but provided limited evidence of implementation or how it improved or changed his/her practice. The educator’s attempts to collaborate with others were not deliberate and contributed little to the evidence. Results of the plan were minimally shared with others.

**Unsatisfactory:**

The Professional Development Plan did not directly correlate to needs indicated by student assessment and/or learning data and the educator’s previous evaluation, credentials and/or self-assessment. A learning goal was missing or a learning goal was set but lacked the clarity of a SMART goal. Strategies were not clear or did not specifically focus on improving or changing professional practice for the purposes of improved student learning. The educator reviewed his/her plan during the school year but did not recognize or accept the need to make adjustments to the plan. The educator’s reflection (if one exists) provided little evidence that the strategies were implemented or how those strategies improved or changed his/her practice. There was minimal or no evidence to support the plan. The educator did not collaborate with others in a meaningful way. Results of the plan were not shared with others.

*Figure 3.1. PDP Rubric. Shows the professional development plan rubric FS County uses to evaluate teachers (2017).*

**VAMS in FS County**

FS County also uses VAM to rate a teacher’s effectiveness. The Florida Department of Education says the following: “Our value-added models [measure the contribution of a teacher or school to student learning growth] by measuring the difference in each student’s actual performance on a statewide assessment from that student’s expected performance, which takes into account specific student and classroom factors that impact the learning process” (FLDOE, 2018). Teachers’ effectiveness ratings for VAM are broken down as follows in FS County: 1.0-1.49 Unsatisfactory, 1.5-2.49 Needs Improvement, 2.5-2.49 Effective, 3.5 to 4.0 Highly Effective (FS County, 2017).

The Florida Department of Education does not require that VAM be part of any teachers’ evaluation rating (FLDOE, 2018). However, FS County has chosen to use the Danielson Framework, the PDP, and VAM data to measure a teacher’s effectiveness rating.
How Final Ratings Are Determined in FS County

In FS County, a final cumulative score is given to the teacher after the following is complete: 1) the Danielson Framework for Teaching effectiveness rating is applied via post conference and electronically; 2) the PDP effectiveness rating is applied via post conference and electronically; 3) the standardized test scores (VAM formula) is calculated via electronically using the chosen statistical model. The FS County professional application titled My PGS then calculates the above effectiveness ratings into a cumulative score and is presented to the teachers electronically. In FS County, final effectiveness ratings are broken down and determined in the following way: 50.0% Instructional Practice (Danielson Framework/Observations), 16.7% Professional Development Plan (PDP), 33.3% Student Learning Growth (VAM) (FS County, 2017). Final evaluation scores are broken down in the following way: 1.0 to 1.49 Unsatisfactory, 1.5 to 2.49 Needs Improvement, 2.5 to 3.49 Effective, 3.5 to 4.0 Highly Effective.

How Final Effectiveness Ratings Are Used in FS County

In 2017, the Florida Legislature, revised statute 1012.731-The Florida Best and Brightest Teacher Scholarship Program. Although the Florida Department of Education calls this a scholarship program, it would be better described as a bonus program for teachers. For the purpose of this study, the word scholarship will be used to keep consistency. There are three scholarships available to qualified teachers: 1) any teacher who is rated highly effective and placed in the 80th percentile on their college entrance exams (ACT, SAT) earn $6000 scholarship; 2) any teacher who was rated highly effective the previous school year would receive a $1200 scholarship; 3) any teacher who was rated effective the previous school year would receive a $800 scholarship (Florida Department of Education, 2017). FS County participates in this program. One stipulation is that if the number of eligible teachers exceeds the
total allocation, the department shall prorate the per-teacher scholarship amount. In addition, an untenured teachers or a new teacher who rates highly effective make more than new teachers who are rated lower.

**Participants/Sample**

Participants were chosen based on their professional attribute. Criteria required to support the purpose of the research was carried out by generating research related themes or categories through purposeful homogeneous sampling. Creswell (2015) said this occurs when researchers intentionally select individuals and/or sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon because participants possess a similar trait or characteristic (p. 205-207). This was accomplished by limiting the sample of participants of special area teachers that met the following three criteria: 1) an elementary music teacher; 2) had previous experience with this teacher evaluation system; 3) from a school that received an A rating for the 2016-2017 school year. These criteria were selected to minimize contextual differences not addressed in this study that may influence individual responses or perceptions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Additionally, VAM scores are largely based on school ratings. Therefore, the sample was limited to teachers from A schools in an effort to minimize variances in VAM scores between respondents, given that VAM scores play a key role in TES (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

There were seven potential participants who fit the above description, not including the researcher. Potential participants were contacted first by phone to get an idea of the participant sample number. Then, participants were sent the Outreach to Stakeholders document through FS County’s Research department, which asked them to participate in this study regarding the evaluation process in FS County. Next, participants were made aware that (a) they would be participating in a research project, (b) the information provided would be strictly confidential, (c)
they had to be willing to do one audio recorded interview and a possible follow-up interaction, (d) the interview would last approximately 45 minutes. Lastly, anyone who was willing to participate in the study contacted me with his or her willingness to participate in the semi-structured interview. Those who agreed to participate were given the Participant Consent Form to read and sign that explained their rights.

**Data Collection**

Interviews were conducted to gather data about each participant’s experiences with feedback and professional development opportunities they received from their principals following the evaluation process. The interviews were one-on-one and semi-structured to allow individual participants the ability to share information that was unique to their own evaluation experience (Creswell, 2006). This personalized data collection method allowed the researcher the opportunity to work directly with the music teacher. In addition, it allowed the researcher to observe body language, facial expressions, and gestures, which can give the researcher a different perspective into how the music teacher felt towards the topic (Marshall, 2016). Semi-structured interviews are somewhat personalized in that they allow the researcher to ask follow-up questions and pursue a more in-depth exploration surrounding the participant’s experiences (Marshall, 2016).

**Interview Questions**

The following were the interview questions and to which research question they corresponded:

Research question 1: What are music teacher’s perceptions of the feedback they receive from their principals following the evaluation process?

1. Describe the feedback provided by your principal following your evaluation.
2. In what ways does the feedback provided by your principal influence your teaching practices?

Research question 2: What are music teacher’s perceptions of the professional development opportunities they receive from their principals following the evaluation process?

1. Describe the professional development opportunities provided by your principal following your evaluation.

2. In what ways does the professional development provided by your principal influence your teaching practices?

Research question 3: What are music teachers’ recommendations for improving evaluation of their instruction?

1. On what criteria would you like to be evaluated?

2. What types of professional development opportunities would be most effective for you?

3. What are your recommendations for improving the evaluation of your instruction?

Analysis

Moustaka’s (1994) approach for conducting phenomenological research has systematic steps for analysis in order to assemble textual and structural descriptions (Creswell, 2006, p. 60). First, the interviews were transcribed via voice to text application using two iPad minis. Then, the data was analyzed via horizontalization. Horizontalization is the process of going through the data and highlighting significant statements, relevant words, phrases, or sentences that arise from the different participants to find any common patterns. Horizontalization provides an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2006, p. 60). From here, clusters of meaning were developed from the significant statements and made into themes. Next, the data was coded. Coding the data involved systematically labeling the themes
and allowing for a better sorting of the information for the analysis and examination (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Next, coded labels were worded in a way that allowed them to be organized in an outline form (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The coded labels were then refined and grouped. They were checked in order to determine if they were representative of their definition. Finally, the passages were examined to determine if they were correctly coded.

After an initial analysis of the refined codes was completed, the codes and passages were grouped according to the themes in order to obtain a more detailed and rich idea of what the participants were describing and explaining. These themes represented an idea, issue, or area that summarized several differ codes (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The development of the themes was based on the analysis of coded data was similar to what Glaser and Strauss (1967) referred to as categories, which are in turn, made up of properties. These themes were then used to write both a textural description of what the participants experienced and a structural description of the context or setting that influenced how the participants experienced the phenomenon. Finally, a composite description or an essence of the phenomenon was presented (Moustaka, 1994).

**Participants’ Rights**

This study posed no harm to the participants. Participation was voluntary and participants had the right to opt-out of the study at any time for any reason without consequence. All participants signed the Participant Consent Form, which included an insurance of confidentiality. The data was collected on the researcher’s private computer with password protection. All data was collected and catalogued without any identifiers, which allowed for anonymity. Member checks were completed by each participant to ensure that the transcriptions and summaries were accurate.
Potential Limitations

The potential limitations of the study included the following: First, the study was focused on elementary music teachers only. This study did not interview special area teachers outside the field of music. Therefore, the findings of the study may not be able to be directly generalized to other special area teachers. Second, the study focused on elementary music teachers only. This too presents a potential limitation in that the findings may not be able to be directly generalized to middle and high school music teachers. A third limitation is that this study was bound to one school district. More insight on the feedback and professional development opportunities provided may be achieved with a broader reach to multiple districts. Fourth, participants were from A rated schools. Responses may vary from music teachers who teach in schools who do are not categorized with an A rating because their VAM scores will be lower than a music teacher who teaches in an A rated school. Fifth, research indicates that once special area teachers receive their ratings, they will perceive that their principals are not providing meaningful feedback and professional development opportunities that promote growth. Lastly, the researcher has been a music educator for eighteen years and holds both positive and negative biases regarding the current evaluation system in FS County. To ensure that these biases do not influence how participants’ perspectives were portrayed, “member checks” were implemented, which means the transcribed interviews were sent to the participant for review to ensure accuracy of the findings.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore elementary music teachers’ perceptions of the feedback and professional development opportunities provided by their principals as a result of the evaluation process as well as teachers’ perceptions of how the evaluation system can be improved. Face-to-face, individual, semi-structured interviews were used to obtain rich and in-depth data about the lived experiences of elementary music teachers as it related to the evaluation process in FS County. The open-ended the nature of semi-structured interviews gave the researcher the opportunity to follow the natural course of participants’ responses and ask probing questions to extend questions when appropriate.

Participants

The participants were chosen based on three criteria. Participants were required to: 1) teach elementary music; 2) have previous experience with the teacher evaluation system described in this study; 3) be employed in a school that received an A rating for the 2016-2017 school year. There were seven potential participants who met the criteria for participation in this study. Five participants agreed to participate, two declined to participate. The declined because he is in a unique situation at his school in which he teaches visual arts, music, and PE. However, his degree is in the visual arts. Therefore, he identified as a visual arts educator, not a music educator and chose not to participate. The second declined because he retired from the position five months prior to the interview process. The remaining five participants were interviewed in their classrooms either before or after school hours. Each shared their perceptions of the feedback and professional development opportunities their principals offered following their evaluation and discussed their recommendations for improvement.
All participants were lifelong musicians who each had over 25 years of experience teaching music in some capacity. Participants were assigned three-letter pseudonyms, GCT, PPM, IFL, DDK, and BBS to assure anonymity and protect their privacy. Table 4.1 provides a descriptive profile of the participants, including their pseudonyms, number of years teaching music, number of years teaching music in FS County, their highest degree held, and the last evaluation rating the participant received on his/her previous evaluation.

Table 4.1

Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Years Teaching Music</th>
<th>Years Teaching Music in FS County</th>
<th>Degree Earned</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Evaluation Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GCT</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Masters/Music Education</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Highly Effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPM</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Masters/Music Education</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Highly Effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFL</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Masters/Music Performance</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Highly Effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDK</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Ph.D./Music Performance</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Highly Effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBS</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Masters/Music Education</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Highly Effective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Method of Analysis

Data were collected through five individual face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. Interviews were recorded via two iPad minis using the Voice Recorder application and transcribed by the researcher. These interviews ranged from 26-38 minutes in length. The transcriptions were emailed to participants for member checking to ensure accuracy of the data.
Following the member checks, the researcher reviewed the transcripts multiple times with the goal of finding significant statements regarding the music teachers’ experiences of the feedback and professional development opportunities principals provide following the evaluation process as well as their recommendations of how the evaluation system can be improved.

**Coding**

The data collection and analysis phase of this study followed Moustaka’s (1994) approach for conducting phenomenological research as discussed in Chapter 3. The data was first analyzed via horizontalization, to find any common patterns. The researcher extracted statements from the transcripts that offered information about the experiences of the participants with the purpose of identifying the range of perspectives about the phenomenon. The statements were placed in a matrix organized appropriately under each participant’s name. Then, the researcher deleted any statements unrelated to the topic as well as repeated or overlapping statements. The researcher then hand-coded the data. This was accomplished by highlighting in a color-coded regiment on a computer laptop using the toolbox function, any significant statements that were found. Codes began to emerge. A Word document was created to list the codes along with the color in which it corresponded.

After reviewing the transcripts multiple times, 21 codes emerged from the analysis. These codes were clustered into themes regarding the teachers’ perceptions of the feedback and professional development opportunities they received and their recommendations for improving the evaluation system. During the first analysis, six themes emerged. However, after additional analysis and identification of redundancies, the original six themes were narrowed to four. Therefore, four major themes are presented and will be discussed in the presentation of results. These themes represented ideas, issues, or areas that summarized several different codes (Rubin
Participants’ quotations were organized by themes so that the data could be presented in a cohesive manner. After coding and organizing the data, it was interpreted using Firestone’s (2014) motivational conceptual framework and the three research questions guiding this study (Figure 2.5).

**Presentation of Results**

The themes are presented by the amount of times they were mentioned by participants (Table 4.2). The first theme to emerge was music teachers’ perceptions of their principals. The participants mentioned the coded terms associated with teachers’ perceptions of their principals a total of 306 times during the interview process. This theme included three subthemes and eight subbranches. The first subtheme was principal qualities. The subbranches included trust and positive experiences.

The second subtheme was principal feedback. The subbranches included the feedback from principals with music experience, the principals’ ability to give feedback specific to music instruction, the principals’ general feedback and how it drives music instruction, and how general feedback drives music instruction. The third subtheme was professional development opportunities. The subbranches included professional development opportunities (general and music specific) and how providing professional development (general and music specific) drives music instruction.

The second theme to emerge was motivation for professional growth. The participants mentioned the coded terms associated with this theme a total of 200 times during the interview process. Subthemes included principal support to attend professional development opportunities specific to teaching music and discussion of such professional development opportunities.
Table 4.2

Themes, Subthemes, and Subbranches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Theme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Subbranch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Music Teachers’ Perceptions of Their Principals (306)</td>
<td>• Principal Qualities</td>
<td>o Trust Between the Principals and the Music Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Principal Feedback</td>
<td>o The Principals’ Positive Experience with the Music Lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Professional Development</td>
<td>o Feedback from Principals with Music Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Principals’ Ability to Give Feedback Specific to Music Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o The Principals’ General Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o How General Feedback Drives Music Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation for Professional Growth (200)</td>
<td>• Principal Support to Attend</td>
<td>o Professional Development Opportunities (Music Specific)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Music Specific Professional</td>
<td>o How Providing Music Specific Professional Development Opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Drives Music Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>o Professional Development Opportunities (General)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunities (Music Specific)</td>
<td>o How Providing General Professional Development Opportunities Drives Music Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Teachers’ Perceptions of the Teaching</td>
<td>• Benefits and Problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Process in FS County (179)</td>
<td>Associated with FS County’s TES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher Experiences and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attitudes Towards the TES Process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The third theme to emerge was the teacher evaluation process in FS County. The participants mentioned the codes associated with this theme a total of 179 times during the interview process. Subthemes included benefits and problems associated with FS County’s TES and experiences and attitudes towards the TES process.

The fourth theme to emerge was music teachers’ recommendations for improving the TES in FS County. The participants mentioned the coded terms associated with this theme a total of 128 times during the interview process. This theme included three subthemes and four subbranches. The first subtheme was the evaluator. The subbranches included the benefits of a musical evaluator vs. a nonmusical evaluator. The second subtheme was the TES. The subbranches included recommendations for changes. The third subtheme was professional development. The subbranch included working with and learning from peers. The four themes closely align with the conceptual framework (Figure 2.5) of motivation and/or the three research questions.

The research questions were as follows:

1. What are music teachers’ perceptions of the feedback they receive from their principals following the evaluation process?

2. What are music teachers’ perceptions of the professional development opportunities they receive from their principals following the evaluation process?
3. What are music teachers’ recommendations for improving evaluation of their instruction?

Each theme will be presented according to the number of times corresponding codes were referenced by participants, beginning with the most frequent themes. Then the subtheme will be presented along with any extending subbranches.

**Theme #1 Music Teachers’ Perceptions of their Principals**

This theme correlated closely to research questions #1 and #2 in that it helped to describe in detail the music teachers’ perceptions of their principals. Although it wasn’t explicitly asked, at some point in the interview, all of the participants discussed their perceptions of their principals. This included their principals’ qualities, general positive feedback and praise their principals gave (general and specific to music), level of trust between the principal and the teacher, perceptions of the feedback and professional development opportunities the principal provided (general and specific to music), participants’ perceptions of the principals’ feedback, and recommendations for professional development.

**Principal Qualities.** Interview participants discussed their principals in some capacity 52 times during the interviews. Every participant had positive comments regarding their principals’ positive attitude towards music, the music program, and/or the music teacher. For example, when referring to his formal observation experience, GTC said that the principals enjoy observing him stating, “The first thing that they do….is they give you a little sticky note on the way out of the door that usually has some kind of positive comment, which is really nice.” When referring to her post observation experience with her principal, PPM said, “He generally starts by saying he doesn’t know how I do what I do….They treat me like a national treasure around here.” When referring to her overall situation IFL said that her principal is “hands off” and allows her to run conduct her classroom as she sees fit, yet the principal is supportive of her.
When referring to his principals’ overall character traits DDK said, “She is fantastic. She walks on water in my book. She’s the best admin I’ve probably ever had.” When referring to her post observation experience BBS said that it is always a positive experience when she meets with her principals. She enjoys having her principals come to her classroom because she feels appreciated in what she does.

**Trust between the Principals and the Music Teacher.** Three out of the five participants revealed a level trust that exists between them and their principal. The results showed that the participants’ principals revealed a level of trust in the music teacher to choose professional development opportunities that would enhance their own professional growth or a level of trust in the music teacher to morph the current evaluation system to meet his/her needs. For example, during the interview, PPM described what it was like being evaluated by an evaluator with no specialized knowledge of music instruction:

> There is often a communication gap. I am fortunate…there’s a lot of trust in the relationship that I have with our administration. In my particular case, I am listened to, I can explain what it is, you know and it’s…accepted.

Similarly, IFL discussed the level of trust her principal places on her when it comes to choosing professional development to attend for her specialization:

> The vibe I get from her is this is your thing. This is your area of expertise. I’m not gonna tell you how to teach music….I think she recognizes that I have the expertise and she trusts me to run with it…when I bring things up, she is supportive.

Likewise, DDK said his principals trusts him to find professional development that he needs.

**The Principals’ Positive Experience with the Music Lesson.** Four out of the five participants discussed their principals’ positive experience with the lesson for the formal
observation. GCT revealed that his principals play piano and were able to give general musical feedback:

She was very impressed on how [the lesson] was presented and the different activities that were involved. She knew all the intricacies of what the staff is used for and how to interpret it and...she was impressed by the way I was able to get the kids to understand it.

PPM said her principal is always in awe of how she can incorporate so many activities into one forty-five minute class. In one class period they participate in movement, singing, and instrument playing activities. IFL described her principal’s positive experience by discussing nonmusical feedback her principal provided:

She really liked my procedures and realia. She was very happy with that....She was really impressed that I was able to get the kids to play Hot Crossed Buns all together....the recorder that at have the stickers on them covering the holes showing the fingers.

BBS said that during the preobservation meeting, her principal said she was looking forward to hearing the students discuss the drumline video they were going to watch and seeing how the students were going to create their own drumline

**Principal Feedback.** During the interview process, participants were asked to describe the feedback provided by their principal following the evaluation process. Results were varied but one participant’s principals stood out in this study because they had musical experience.

**Feedback from Principals with Music Experience.** One participant, GCT, had principals who had musical experience. Even so, when asked to describe the feedback he received from his principals following an evaluation, GTC suggested that although his principals
play piano, they are intimidated to suggest that he teach a music concept differently because they do not have formal music education training.

*Principals’ Abilities to Give Feedback Specific to Music Instruction.* The other four participants revealed that their principals did not have any musical background. Therefore, they perceived that their principals were only able to provide general feedback on instruction not specific to music education. For example, PPM said:

> It has been pertinent to the lesson as far as the principal who is not a music teacher could…his vocabulary isn’t particularly, musically literate. But he’s able…to communicate to me what he needs…For example if he was observing a lesson in rhythm…like a half note, he may not exactly say, that was a half note…but he would talk about the length of the note.

When IFL and BBS were asked if their principals were able to provide them with feedback specific to music instruction following their formal observation, both said that they received absolutely no feedback related specifically to music. BBS was asked why she thought there was no feedback related specifically to music. Like other participants, she said that there is no feedback specific to music instruction because the principals do not have the musical knowledge to provide such feedback. BBS noted, “There isn’t anything that she can give me either in feedback and how I’m teaching musically.” Similarly, DDK said:

> She’s not a music educator. She doesn’t have a degree in music. So it puts me at a deficit and it puts her at a deficit…My administrator has said to me in the past when evaluating me…I’m looking at the aspects of your teaching, not your specific discipline…She frankly would have probably felt very foolish…because obviously, I’m the one who sort of holds that knowledge base that she doesn’t hold…I would imagine
that it must be very, very difficult to separate those two worlds. I mean, how can you evaluate for example, how someone is doing a reading lesson if you don’t have the knowledge of how to teach reading? And that’s essentially what she does for me.

**The Principals’ General Feedback and how it Drives Music Instruction.** As mentioned above, four out of the five participants had principals who are not musicians. Even still, the participant who was evaluated by principals with some musical knowledge, GCT, revealed his principals may feel intimidated to suggest ways for him improve teaching musically. Four out of the five participants discussed specific general feedback they received from their principals following their evaluations. GCT mentioned the general feedback more frequently during his interview, 11 times. For example, he said, “It’s more of…the questioning techniques that could easily be used in the science class or whatever class.” When the researcher asked GCT how the general feedback provided by his principals influenced his teaching practices, he gave an example of when the principals suggested he post a behavior expectations chart after an observation. He said that this suggestion was helpful when it came to managing his classroom behavior. PPM discussed her general feedback in a more general sense. Her principal provided feedback on the use of technology, higher level questioning techniques, and helped her translate the verbiage of the rubrics into musical terms, which was difficult for her. When PPM was asked how this general feedback drives her instruction, she replied:

> It does drive my instruction to the point, especially when they’re in the room. For example, I always refer back to the *Can I* question…when they’re in the room unexpectedly. I try to put in, and often times I’ll have students work together in groups…do Kagan structures. But…when they walk in, I will go ahead and try to institute something like that.
IFL shared her principal’s detailed general feedback:

She said my classroom management was fine. She was fine with my chairs and stands the way they’re set up…One thing she noticed was my procedures were in order. The kids come in the room and they know right where to sit. So, you know, she did touch on those things….She liked the plastic recorder models….because this is our first year of having a self-contained ESE unit and so were including those kids….She showed me that I’m on the right track for that aspect of teaching….She liked the beyond posters, beyond white board approach and get something that they can actually hold in their hands and look at and pass around.

IFL discussed how her principal’s general feedback drove her instruction. She said that she has already made plans to implement the feedback to include the ESE and ELL students. In addition, she said that she is researching ways to extend the recorder lesson feedback she received to keyboard instruction. BBS shared her principals’ nonmusical feedback:

They wrote a lot of information about how I interacted with the kids and how the students were all engaged in our music activities and in the learning….How I manage the classroom….how I work with differentiated learning with my kids that are mainstreamed in, how I work with ESOL kids, use sign language. But you know, not musically.

**Professional Development Opportunities.** During the interview process, participants were asked to describe the professional development opportunities provided by their principal following the evaluation process. The participants mentioned music specific opportunities 69 times during the interview. This included music specific professional development they would like to take, have taken, and how these professional development drive their music instruction.
Professional Development Opportunities (Music Specific) and how It Drives Music

Instruction. Towards the end of the interview, participants were asked what types of professional development opportunities would be most effective for them. Five out of five participants exclusively discussed musical related professional development. GCT said:

Specifically, in my classroom I’m already using iPads quite frequently. And I would like to have more time in training on um what more is out there. I’ve only explored…a couple of apps…I use GarageBand….I use Symphony Pro….I use a little game called Staff Wars. But that’s it. And I know that there’s are a lot more out there available.

When GCT was asked if he knew of any technology professional development he could attend, he could not recall any except a college level class. GCT did not discuss how attending this or other music specific professional development would influence his instruction. PPM became visibly excited to discuss music professional development:

Wow! If I could, lots of them. There’s so much out there that I haven’t learned yet.

Specifically…drumming…conducting class for my choral conducting. I’d love to be able to develop my own ability to sing better. The sky is the limit. Lots and lots of things….Working with exceptional students…that related to what particular adaptations I could use…how could I adapt an instrument….Even some ELL…for me dealing with learners of English that had to do with music….But that would totally relate to what I am teaching. It gets very difficult to always feel like you have to translate things into music.

When PPM was asked how the professional development provided by her principal influences her teaching practices she said, “Kodaly has helped me be a much better teacher.” IFL said, “World Drumming is something I’m looking at…I would like to get my level 1 Orff because I’m not Orff certified.” IFL discussed two recent music specific professional development
opportunities she was pleased that her principal allowed her to attend in lieu of a language arts professional development called PLW’s (when schools let out early to allow teachers a 2 ½ hour professional development opportunity). IFL was asked how the music specific professional development provided by her principal influences her teaching practices she said that she comes back to her classroom with immediate implementable ideas from her colleagues. DDK discussed his passion for music specific professional development and how it influences his teaching and professional growth:

Well, it, everything. My Orff levels, they’ve totally changed my professional life. I mean they’ve turned it upside down….I went to the conference this year [Florida Music Educators Association FMEA Conference]….It provides you with wonderful opportunities to connect, it allows me now to serve on the FMEA board…I ultimately have an opportunity to create change for future teachers, I mean, there’s a bit of pay it forward…PD is a very important thing…It’s a lot of work….It’s worth it.

BBS passionately explained the music specific professional development she attended and the impact it had on her teaching:

I went through the National Board process, which is a huge process to really improve your teaching….and graduate school was something that was huge. It really changed my teaching because I learned why I do the things that I do. Why it is important to do these things. Not just how to do it or what to do….Our state music conference…it provides me with lesson plans for the rest of the semester. It provides me with ideas for my chorus. It provides me with new ways of playing instruments….This is what makes me excited. To be with other music teachers. I love being with the music teachers from our county. But even going throughout the state and seeing hundreds and hundreds of people who do
exactly what I do and that I don’t get to see every day, obviously, and being with them and getting energized with new ideas or old ideas that need to get you know, need to get you know a little more excited about.

**Professional Development Opportunities (General) and how It Drives Music**

**Instruction.** During the interview process, participants discussed their perceptions towards the general professional development that are mandatory for all teachers to attend and how it drives their instruction. When referring to the Danielson model in general as professional development GCT said that it helped him to organize his thought process and then how he organized his lessons. On the other hand, the other four participants had negative perceptions towards the influence that general professional development had on their teaching. PPM said:

> My teaching practices not really very much. Not very much at all. And I try, I go to these…workshops…I always take notes and that way it focuses me, and I try to make some connection between what I do and what they’re telling me and then perhaps that happens about 10% of the time.

Similarly, IFL said:

> I’m almost always completely inattentive and I typically sit there and work on my music things or lesson plan or, or whatnot…I get nothing from them. I also put nothing into them to be fair. And every time I go to one, I sit and wish I was at a music specific meeting.

However, IFL spoke positively regarding a school-wide character building professional development that her principal established. She found ways to incorporate songs on character building that corresponded to the professional development. When discussing the how general professional development drives his instruction DDK said:
It doesn’t influence it at all if you must know the truth…Occasionally something will come up, I think we were talking about higher level questioning this year. That was nice to know….So, if there an hour and a half, I usually consider that 90 minutes of my life that I can’t get back.

When BBS was asked to describe the professional development opportunities provided by her principal, and how they influence her teaching, she responded:

Content for the teachers, that doesn’t have to do with me. And every time I sit in those…I try really hard to I think about how I can make it work in my classroom. And sometimes it’s stretching it really far…I try to…be positive about having to sit and listen to some things that really don’t have to do with me, as far as grading and testing and reading.

*Why the Principal Cannot Recommend Music Specific Professional Development.*

Four out of five participants were asked if their principal was able to suggest or had suggested professional development opportunities that were musical in nature. Four out of the four participants interviewed said that their principal was not able to provide professional development opportunities that were musical in nature and that they have to suggest professional development to attend for themselves.

The analysis of the data showed that music teachers’ perceptions of their principal qualities were key to how they experienced the feedback and professional development they received. When the principal showed an interest in the formal evaluation lesson or an appreciation of the subject of music, the music teacher held the principal in high regard. Although the participants’ principals could neither provide music specific feedback nor suggest musical specific professional development opportunities, the level of trust that the principal and
music teacher built with each other was integral towards both parties working together to find musical feedback and professional development opportunities that would promote professional growth.

**Theme #2 Motivation for Professional Growth**

The second theme, motivation for professional growth, theme closely aligns with the conceptual framework of this study. While analyzing the transcripts with the conceptual framework in mind, it was evident that all the participants vividly demonstrated strong motivational behaviors through, not only their determination to seek out professional development opportunities that would promote their professional growth, but also through their principals’ support to attend these professional development.

**Principal Support to Attend Musical Professional Development.** This subtheme includes the participants’ discussions of their principals’ qualities and how it relates to their openness in allowing the participants to attend musical professional development. Four out of the five participants revealed that they must approach their principals to attend a music related professional development. When the participants were asked why they felt they had to ask for music specific professional development, they all agreed it was because their principal was not a musician and did know what musical professional development were available to suggest. Even though the principals were not able to suggest musical professional development, all four of these participants discussed a time in which they asked permission to attend a musical professional development and how their principals went above and beyond to both support them and help them attend the professional development. For example, PPM said:

I went to a conference…that…the school paid for the hotel room, they paid for… half the airfare, they paid for registration…and I got an ATD (Assignment of Temporary Duty),
so, I got a substitute without taking personal leave…I was gone for 3 school days. And, this was granted me even though I am a music teacher. I’ve also gone to the…state conference and that is covered by school funds that I am part raised through fees that the students who are in extracurricular groups pay. But in part they are also covered by the school and approved by the principal because I have students who perform during the state conference and I am required to be there as their teacher.

DDK said:

My principal in general, she realizes that the….PD I need is different than say, you know, Mrs. Jones who’s teaching the 3rd grade…So she lets me sort of pick and choose and she’s very supportive of…allowing me to, to get some funding…in order to do that….She has never denied me.

Likewise, BBS said:

My principal is very open and I whenever I ask to go to conferences, she is willing to let me go, get the ATD, and provide substitutes. She even gets funding for me through PTA or whatever is available to attend our state music conference…She is always willing to allow me to bring other teachers…on…professional development days. Even if somebody else is hosting she wants me to be able to go out and work with my other music teachers. Always… She even said, you don’t have to ask just go….If I find it myself, she very willing to pay and let me do it.

**Professional Development Opportunities (Music Specific).** Five out of the five participants revealed that they must be and are motivated to seek out their own professional development opportunities. Many times, these opportunities are in-county or in-state, other times, it is out-of-state in which the music teacher had to attend during his/her summer break,
pay for airfare and/or hotel stays, and pay for the professional development. For example, PPM spoke about a Kodaly certification she earned in Oklahoma in 2018. To attend, the cost would be to pay for a flight from Florida to Oklahoma, pay for the course and pay for a list of books and supplies, go to classes for two weeks during her summer vacation, pay for a hotel room, and food, which would cost well over $1000. As mentioned In Theme #1, her principal paid for more than half of this cost. The remaining portion, PPM had to pay out of her own pocket. Despite the cost, she was excited that she was a certified Kodaly educator. IFL described her motivation to grow professionally by discussing a time in how instead of going to a language arts professional development her principal allowed her to attend a musical professional development. BBS recalled the same music PLW that IFL spoke about in the previous example. This is how she described it:

There was quite a few of us who attended. And many of us were so excited just to be together…And just being with each other and understanding…what I go through and I know what your go through and were in this together and everybody needs that. Everybody needs the community….It does take extra effort to do that, especially… when you’re not right next door. But it’s…what really helps you become better at your craft.

Later in the interview BBS circled back to professional development she took in the past:

I took Orff 1 and 2…and this was learning that I paid for myself and that I went to and paid for myself going to outside of the state or driving. And took the time to take these classes to become better at teaching. And it really changed my teaching and it was definitely worth doing. Now do we have teachers who would take a 2 week class and pay for it themselves? No. In my opinion. I don’t think, I think if the principal paid them to
go or paid for them to go, but we as music teachers…we paid for most of it ourselves or we get grants and that’s how dedicated we are.

The analysis of the data showed that principal support to attend musical professional development was what motivated the participants the most to grow professionally. The simple act of the principal allowing the music teacher to attend a musical professional development in lieu of a math or language arts built a rapport with the music teacher. In turn, the participants held their principals in high regard. In addition, those principals who supported the participants’ professional development financially were spoken of very highly by the participants because the principals were showing support of their craft and felt it was important.

Theme #3 The Teaching Evaluation Process in FS County

The participants had mixed perceptions of the evaluation process in FS County. The subthemes that emerged in this theme were benefits and problems associated with FS County’s TES and the participants experiences and attitudes towards the TES process in FS County.

Benefits and Problems Associated with FS County’s TES. Five out of the five participants briefly discussed the process and the system FS County utilizes, which can be read in-depth in Chapter 3 of this dissertation. Therefore, this section will not highlight the participants’ thoughts regarding the process. The participants were not asked to describe any benefits or problems they have experienced with the Danielson model or with FS County’s TES process during the interview process. However, each participant wanted to convey their perspectives towards the TES process or the Danielson model at some point during the interview. For example, GCT showed his frustration with the lack of training on how to write SMART goals for the PDP portion of the TES or how to make the goals measureable. Later in the interview when discussing ways to measure a music teacher’s effectiveness GTC said, “This is
problematic in the fact that we don’t get our own VAM scores. We have to depend of what the school’s getting and hope that it doesn’t hurt us too much.” PPM discussed how she sometimes changes her lesson structure around when the principal comes to do a walk through:

I know they’re only going to be in the room for a few minutes. So, I will rearrange my lesson. So, that instead of waiting 20 minutes into it after I’ve done something else, I will pull that in and have them see it…what I teach shows a lot of these things, if you stayed an, an entire class period. But, if you have a walk through that lasts 5, 6 minutes, that’s, they’re not necessarily going to see all the things that you’ve put into place for an entire class period…So I might move something around. And, my teaching tends to be rather fluid anyway…If something excites the children about something that we’ve done, I will go in that direction and then come back later to, ah, to institute what’s in the plan.

After this statement. PPM was asked if this was to get a particular rating. She said that since she is tenured she is not concerned about a highly effective rating. She does however, succumb to the idea that a music teacher, many times, must change his/her lesson order or content so the principal can observe what they need to observe in order satisfy the rubric of the TES or just to impress the principal. PPM also discussed her difficulties with the Danielson model and how it is difficult to translate the Danielson rubrics into musical terms she said, “I really don’t retain the verbiage. I can’t speak with that kind of Danielson talk.” PPM was probed further by being asked how she felt about that. PPM replied, “You’re the square peg trying to be fit into the round hole.” IFL is in a different situation from the other participants. She is not tenured. She was asked why it is important that her principal is able to help her with her classroom strategies. She simply stated that job security was why she thought her evaluation rating was so important.
DDK said that he and his principal feel that the Danielson model does not evaluate music content. DDK continued to say:

Essentially the evaluation is almost saying content doesn’t matter because the person doing the evaluation doesn’t have the knowledge base for the evaluation. I don’t think the evaluation system holds validity…The tool itself does not accurately, it’s not specific enough to music… She [the principal] said we have to…kind of skew or push the tool to work for a music teacher.

When discussing how FS County determines a VAM score for music teachers DDK said the following:

I don’t think VAM right now the way it’s set up for music educators is a fair deal. For example, my VAM score is based on the school score. So, the thing is, I happen to be lucky. I’m in an A school…That’s going to help my VAM score. But does that mean that the teacher who’s in a C or D school that they’re any less of a music teacher that I am? But the problem is, is this, and this has always been an issue with music is how do you evaluate music in a very traditional way?

During the interview, BBS was asked if her principals were able to give her specific music feedback. She replied no. She continued to discuss how she must prepare and teach the principals for the music content they will evaluate during the preobservation so they will understand what they will observe.

**Experiences and Attitudes towards the TES Process.** The participants mentioned the coded terms that make up this subtheme 53 times throughout the interview process. It was the second highest behind recommendations for improvement. Participants explained in detail the
experiences or attitudes they hold towards FS County’s TES process. GCT said that he has grown comfortable with the process. He continued to say:

Now true in music, it would be nice if people understood comments or concepts a little better…But again, I’m pretty lucky there because my principals do. I can see how that can be a problem for other people… but I think that the things I’m asked to do and show are very helpful to produce a good classroom.

PPM said that having to write down what she is going to do in the lesson makes the process difficult for someone who does not understand the verbiage of the rubric. She suggested the following:

Come and watch me teach. See the magic that’s created with the children. When I have to sit down and write in education speak what is that happens…it’s very difficult. I feel unnecessary to a large degree…And it’s frustrating.

IFL has also grown comfortable with the process. However, she continued to say, “I always feel that the evaluation turns out to be…little bit of a performance for me…It all just seems artificial.” She said that her observations have become scripted and not necessarily true to the way she normally teaches. She does not feel that it is possible to get the whole picture of a teacher in one prearranged 40-minute observation. When IFL was asked why she thinks teachers create a scripted lesson plan when the principal walks in, that one perfect lesson plan. She replied:

I think a fair amount rides on this. This is…our evaluation…for people like me who are not tenured….it has to do with whether we have a job the following year. It effects our pay and our VAM…the bonus that we receive….because finances…and your future career do ride on it. So, there is that pressure… this is the one time. This is my official
evaluation even though I’m may be doing a great job every day in the classroom. This is the day that counts…Am I highly effective? Am I effective? Or, even lower than that? All based on one prearranged [lesson].

IFL gave great insight into how she chooses the lesson she will present for her formal observation:

I could pick my date so I knew what would be happening that day and I knew it would be a big WOW to get them from learning their first three notes to playing a song all together. So, I was able to orchestrate it in such a way that she was there on the day of the big WOW. Which it worked out great. I got all highly effective markings.

DDK shared a story in his interview about a problem that occurred with his principal during his post observation. His story began by explaining why and how he created the lesson for his formal observation and why he chose to assess the students the way he did. He passionately discussed a prominent leader in the music field named John Feierabend and Feierabend’s new book he purchased and used in his lesson. The problem was that the principal did not understand that he was giving an informal assessment. DDK went into detail regarding the assessment portion of his formal observation lesson and the conversation he had with his principal. DDK said:

I was going around and listening to those children who were, and I’m going to put this in quotes, “matching pitch”….and I was just listening. And she didn’t even see the assessment. She didn’t understand the assessment. And I had to…go back and then explain to her, later on…the whole thing…So she nicked me, she put me as effective instead of highly effective…And I told her…in our post observation, these are the things
that I’m looking for… So, she is an open minded enough person that she actually changed it on the evaluation and put it as highly she said, Okay, I can see the argument. But, if you’re the teacher in question, and it effects not only your evaluation but frankly, ultimately, some financial compensation potentially. Because it’s tied to that…now things get a little sticky….Honestly, I’m frustrated by the system.

When describing how she perceives the TES process BBS has also grown comfortable with the system. She had an interesting perspective on how she feels her students must be prepared for her evaluation in order for her to do well on her formal observation:

I feel like it’s something that created throughout the year. Like you have to really engrain attitudes into your children about the love of learning and the love of music before they [principals] even can come in and see the enthusiasm that the kids have about learning. It’s not just a one time, come and observe me for one class and you’ll actually see all these things that they’re evaluating me on….I’ve been training them [students] to work with one another, to answer and ask deeper questions, and to be completely engaged and to hold each other accountable for doing a good job when it’s creating music.

Similar to IFL, when discussing how to choose a lesson for the formal observation BBS said that choosing a lesson that the principals will not only enjoy but will also see the student engagement and all the learning taking place at one time is tricky.

Analysis of the data suggests that FS County’s TES is not motivating music teachers to grow professionally. The participants’ disapprove of; 1) not having a musical evaluator; 2) the system not evaluating music content or pedagogy; 3) the process being created for general
classroom teachers. These three factors work against the music teacher growing professionally because they are not receiving musical feedback or professional development opportunities.

**Theme #4 Music Teachers’ Recommendations for Change in FS County**

This theme correlated closely to research question #3 in that it helped to describe not only the participants recommendations for improving the TES as it stands currently in FS County but also how to improve professional development opportunities that are offered to music teachers.

**The Evaluator.** When discussing their recommendations for improving the evaluation of their instruction, three out of five participants said the evaluator is the bigger issue for them as opposed to the system being used. For example, BBS said:

> I would like to be evaluated by somebody who really understands the amount of years and the amount of work that has gone into what I do on a daily basis and sees how I can pull great things form kids in, in a just a short amount of time…Who really knows what it takes to…be a musician. It’s not just singing a song. It’s more…its being a performer and that’s totally different skills in my opinion. And when I do performances with my kids, I don’t just teach music skills, I teach performing skills….it would be nice to be evaluated by even a peer who understands how hard it is to do what we do.

**The Benefits of an Evaluator with Musical Experience vs. One Without.** It was a natural progression for the participants to progress from discussing evaluators in general to, specifically, who they recommended could best evaluate them. Four out of the five participants recommended using a musical evaluator when they were asked their recommendations for improving the evaluation of their instruction. For example, GCT said that it would be beneficial if the evaluator understood the musical content happening during the lesson. PPM suggested bringing in someone from the district or administrative level that was just purely musical. DDK
said, “We have a colleague who could have been our teacher. She’s amazing…I would like for her to come in and evaluate me.” Continuing with this thought, DDK posed a scenario in which a nonmusical evaluator might evaluate a music teacher on musical content, yet does not understand musical content:

I can explain it to her all day long, but I can show the kids what the fingering for G is and they could be wrong. And I could be showing them a fingering for D. And how would she know the difference really, honestly. She wouldn’t. So, I could be making stuff up all over the place. So, I could be in error all over the place. She would never know…. She’s not saying that content doesn’t matter. She’s never said that to me. But essentially the evaluation is almost saying content doesn’t matter because the person who’s doing the evaluating, doesn’t have knowledge base for the evaluation. So right there I don’t think the evaluation system doesn’t hold validity.

DDK recommended the county’s arts supervisor or curriculum specialist and highly recommended a peer evaluator. BBS recommended the following:

I would like to be evaluated by somebody who really understands the amount of years and the amount of work that has gone into what I do on a daily basis and sees how I can pull great things from kids in, in a just a short amount of time…But it would be nice to be evaluated by even a peer who understands how hard it is to do what we do…I would recommend that somebody who’s gone through the process already…Who really understands the all the things they’re looking for and try fit it in to one lesson…Because that’s really tricky to be quite honest.

The Teacher Evaluation System. The next subtheme to emerge from the data was the participants’ recommendations on how to improve the TES in FS County. This included what
they would like to see change, their recommendations on how to improve it, and what they would not want to occur as a change.

**Recommended Changes.** Five out of the five participants recommended changes. GCT recommended that teachers who received a highly effective rating for X number of years in a row could abstain from the evaluation process for a year to give both the music teacher and the principal time off. When PPM was asked on what criteria would she would like to be evaluated, she replied that she is a music teacher and should be evaluated specifically on the content and standards that she teaches. When discussing her frustration with the paperwork involved with the TES process PPM said, “Come and watch me teach. See the magic that’s created with the children.” IFL agreed with PPM as she shared some of her insights as well. She suggested that the formal observations be eliminated and replaced with more informal walk throughs. “It just seems artificial to me….Just let them come in…Let them see me every day…See the steps because…I had a couple of steps before…and she missed those.” DDK had explicit recommendations for change:

I also think you also need to redesign the tool, okay. The tool is a mess. But…assuming the tool is redesigned…by arts educators by the way. And not just arts educators, but music educators. So, if you’re doing…visual art, that’s a whole another tool. That’s a whole other conversation for those folks. But, having said that. Because start with what I said…they’re K-12…certified…That gives you a perspective and a knowledge and to be able to impart that and pass that on and to reflect upon that your evaluating someone or your being evaluated is invaluable.

BBS spoke about her recommendations for improving the PDP portion of the TES she suggested that music teachers be allowed to create a professional development plan that they feel is
important to their personal professional growth and not get marked down on the evaluation rating because the plan doesn’t fit into the rubric to constitute a highly effective rating. Later in the interview BBS discussed on what criteria she would like to be evaluated:

This is how I teach. The kids are active the whole time. And were making music and I feel that is the most important thing that should be done. So, yes if they’re going to…evaluate me or evaluate the children on what they’re learning, I would want it to be on active music making, singing, playing instruments, doing a performance together. Something that obviously, they are used to and…are familiar with. I don’t spend a lot of time having them do a lot of writing and sitting…That’s what we need to be doing. For the little time I have with them…Not something that we have to just throw in just because the principals are there that day for one particular rubric.

**Scenarios to Avoid.** Two out of the five the participants gave scenarios they would not want to see occur to the evaluation process of music teachers. GCT spoke about a state-wide assessment that nearly occurred in Florida a few years ago:

There’s are so many variables for each school that it would be really hard to say…everybody should be able to perform up to a standard on this sheet…I would be really nervous of a state-wide thought process on…trying to do everyone the same as far as performance. That would make me really nervous. Man your kids are out of tune, man. And your evaluation is going down. Well, Johnny can’t sing, you know… you know as much as you work with a kid sometimes he’s just not gonna get it. They just don’t have rhythmic skills, they don’t hear pitch very well.

BBS echoed GCT’s thoughts and said that a state mandated music test would neither be valid nor fair because 1) music teachers see their students very few times in one school year and 2) many
teachers are required to perform programs, which could take nearly a semester to teach an entire grade level. This, many times, takes away valuable time from the music curriculum and teaching time.

**Professional Development.** Four out of the five participant discussed their recommendations for improving principals’ offers for professional development to music teachers in FS County. As mentioned previously in discussion of Theme #2, what motivated music teacher to grow professionally, this subtheme enticed great excitement and motivation from the participants to share their thoughts for professional development improvement.

**Working with and Learning from Peers.** PPM recommended professional development opportunities that encourage working with and learning from musical peers. She said:

> I’ve taught almost 40 years. And at this point in my life, I wish there would be, a way without me taking a personal day…to be able to go out into the field with them to be able to work with them…I wish that could be done with me too…be really somebody who could come in and work with me…I have a lot to tell people and a lot to show people and a lot to offer. And I do feel stymied in that the evaluation process…doesn’t include anything music wise that…would help one way or both ways.

Similarly, IFL felt that that working with and from her peers would be extremely helpful and recommended allowing music teachers to spend time in classrooms with teachers who have been rated highly effective, in addition to well respected music teachers in order to improve their musical skills and knowledge. DDK also recommended allowing music teachers to observe and work with their peers:

> I mean we have a colleague…who could have been our teacher…And I joke with her that I’d like to sit criss cross on her music rug and just watch her teach. She’s’ amazing….I
think someone like that coming into my room and it works two ways because I would like for her to come in and evaluate me. But…I would like to watch her teaching as well…. And that’s a that’s a whopper…That’s very beneficial. That is going to make a change.

BBS shared the other participants’ recommendations in that she suggested allowing time to watch and work with established music education mentors in order to improve teaching skills. She said that working with other musicians, working towards similar goals, and discovering best practices, among others, created a bond between the musicians that ultimately improved her craft the most. BBS continued with this thought later in the interview:

I get a little jealous sometimes because our teachers here…are on a team together, which I love my team but we all do something different…We support each other but we all teach very different contents…So it’s different than being on a team on a regular basis where your teaching the same content throughout the day, all day, all year. And you really can A. play together, B. talk about behaviors or things that are going on and try to figure out best practices for problems or students that might be having issues, and having somebody to bounce ideas off of…When we’re teaching together all in the same county, even though we weren’t at the same school, we could pick up the phone and call each other and say, I need to run this by you. This lesson didn’t work and you’ve done it. Please help me. You know, and it does take extra effort to do that, especially when you’re right, when you’re not right next door. But it’s, it’s what really helps you become better at your craft.

The notion of being able to work with their music peers and veteran music teachers gave each of the participants a simple and viable way to grow professionally as music educators.
Analysis of the data showed that using a musical evaluator would allow for musical feedback and suggestions for musical professional development for music teachers. This, in turn, would promote professional growth for music teachers. In addition, the data showed that because most principals lacked musical knowledge, these participants had to reach out to their musical peers and colleagues for musical feedback and/or professional development because they were not getting it through the evaluation process. This suggests that the evaluation system in FS County has failed to achieve its goal of promoting growth in all its teachers.

Summary of the Findings

The primary purpose of this study was to explore music teachers’ perceptions of the feedback and professional development opportunities principals provide as a result of the evaluation process as well as their perceptions of how the evaluation system can be improved. The study sought to answer the following research questions: What are music teachers’ perceptions of the feedback they receive from their principals following the evaluation process? What are music teachers’ perceptions of the professional development opportunities they receive from their principals following the evaluation process? And, what are music teachers’ recommendations for improving evaluation of their instruction?

FS County’s evaluation process and the participants’ experiences with the process informed the participants’ responses through its three evaluation rating components: 1) The Danielson teacher evaluation system. 2) The professional development plan. 3) Value-added measures. Theoretically, each of these components provide the principal with targeted data on where a teacher can improve his or her teaching. The participants responded to the interview questions according to their particular experiences with the feedback and professional development opportunities they received from their principals following the evaluation cycle.
Four themes emerged from the data analysis. The first theme was music teachers’ perceptions of their principals. As the data was analyzed, it was clear that the participants’ perceptions towards FS County’s TES and the feedback and professional development they received was dependent on their principals’ qualities and the rapport between them. The results from Theme #1 showed the participant’s received exclusively general feedback from their principals. This was due to their principals’ lack of music education pedagogy and content knowledge. The results also showed that the participants’ principals were highly supportive of the participants’ music programs. This support was showcased through positive praise and trust that the principals showed that the music teacher knew their craft and taught it correctly.

The second theme was motivation for professional growth. As the data was analyzed, it was clear that the music teachers were motivated to grow professionally the most by attending musical professional development. Participants whose principals supported attendance of these musical professional development were highly respected by the participants even though they were not able to suggest which professional development to attend. In addition, principals who took this support to the next level by providing the funding to attend musical professional development were held in high regard by the participants.

The third theme was music teachers’ perceptions of the teaching evaluation process in FS County. The data showed that the participants in FS County do not have learned to adapt to the current system even though it neither evaluated music content nor did it require a musical evaluator who could provide music specific feedback and musical professional development opportunities. A minority of the participants said that the TES used to evaluate them did help them to improve their teaching as it applied to classroom management, physical space, and higher level questioning techniques, among others. On the other hand, the majority of the
participants perceived the TES used to evaluate them had no impact on their professional growth as a musical educator.

The fourth theme to emerge was recommended changes. The majority of the participants recommended that an evaluator with music experience be present during evaluations to provide music specific feedback to the music teacher following the evaluation process. Other recommendations included allowing the music teachers to attend musical professional development in lieu math or language arts and principals allocating more time for music teachers to learn from and work with their peers.

Chapter Five will provide an explanation of the findings, their significance, and suggestions of how the results can be useful to stakeholders, and offer recommendations and opportunities for further research considerations.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions of the feedback and professional development opportunities principals provided as a result of the evaluation process of five elementary school music teachers as well as their recommendations for improvement. Researchers agree that the key for promoting teacher growth is for principals to provide effective and meaningful feedback and professional development opportunities to all teachers during and following the evaluation process (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015; Danielson, 2016; Delvaux et al., 2013; Firestone, 2014; Hill & Grossman, 2013; Hunt, Gurvitch & Lund, 2016; Tuytens & Devos, 2011, 2014, 2017). Feedback is only effective and meaningful when it targets the individual teacher’s needs through rich and meaningful professional development opportunities (Darling-Hammond, 2011).

The conceptual framework that guided this study taken from Firestone’s (2014) research on motivation, emphasized two factors that generate teachers’ intrinsic motivation for growth (see Figure 2.5). The first is feedback. Teachers’ perceptions of the feedback they receive influences whether the feedback increases their competence and supports their autonomy. The second is professional development. Teachers’ perceptions of the professional development they receive, and the professional development should: 1) challenges teachers intellectually; 2) encourages active engagement; 3) reinforces learning; and 4) encourages problem solving. These, in turn, raises competence and supports autonomy. This framework shows that teachers are motivated to grow intrinsically through the feedback and professional development opportunities they receive from their principal. The quality of this feedback and professional
development greatly influences their willingness to continuously improve their practices (Firestone, 2014).

Exploring how the participants perceived the feedback and the professional development opportunities their principals provided following the evaluation process through the lens of Firestone’s (2014) study on motivation, was useful in analyzing whether elementary music teachers perceived they had received meaningful feedback and individualized professional development opportunities from their principals and if it provided professional growth.

The Danielson Framework, used observation component of teacher evaluation in FS County, was designed to cover broader areas of the teaching process (Hunt, Gurvitch & Lund, 2017). Yet, the process to evaluate general classroom teachers have not always aligned well with music teachers because their high degree of specialized teaching skills and pedagogies are not evaluated (Clements-Cortes, 2011; Overland, 2014; Norris et al., 2017). In addition, many principals may lack the knowledge of the specific set of teaching skills and pedagogies music teachers use in the classroom to provide meaningful feedback or provide rich professional development opportunities to promote professional growth (Overland, 2014). Music teachers find that their evaluations are failing to achieve the objective of promoting professional growth process (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015; Delvaux et al., 2013; Firestone, 2014; Hill & Grossman, 2013; Hunt, Gurvitch & Lund, 2016; Tuytens & Devos, 2011, 2014, 2017). Principals are neither able to provide meaningful feedback nor able to provide targeted professional development opportunities.
Interpretation of Findings

Three research questions guided this study to develop a deeper understanding of music teachers’ perceptions of the feedback and professional development opportunities they receive following their evaluation and their recommendations for improvement.

1. What are music teachers’ perceptions of the feedback they receive from their principals following the evaluation process?

2. What are music teachers’ perceptions of the professional development opportunities they receive from their principals following the evaluation process?

3. What are music teachers’ recommendations for improving evaluation of their instruction?

In addition, Firestone’s (2014) motivation study served as the primary lens through which to study this phenomenon.

The first research question guiding this study was: What are music teachers’ perceptions of the feedback they received from their principals following the evaluation process? Two interview questions related to this research question: 1) Describe the feedback provided by your principal following your evaluation. 2) In what ways does the feedback provided by your principal influence your teaching practices? Based on the data collected, the participants felt that the feedback offered by their principals was related exclusively to adjustments that might be appropriate if they were teaching a core subject, rather than music. This finding indicated consistency between the literature reviewed in that the principals did not have the specialized content knowledge to provide music specific feedback (Clements-Cortez, 2011; Hunt, Gurvitch, & Lund, 2016; Overland, 2014). This, in turn, did not drive the participants’ music instruction nor did it promote professional growth. However, the principals were able to provide general feedback through the Danielson (2013) teacher evaluation model, such as classroom
management and higher level questioning techniques. This general feedback did not drive their musical instruction. While evaluations are set up to provide meaningful feedback to every teacher, it can be concluded that music teachers are not receiving meaningful feedback following their evaluations that promote professional growth (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015; Delvaux et al., 2013; Firestone, 2014; Hill & Grossman, 2013; Hunt, Gurvitch & Lund, 2016; Tuytens & Devos, 2011, 2014, 2017).

The second research question guiding this study was: What are music teachers’ perceptions of the professional development opportunities they receive from their principals following the evaluation process? Two interview questions fell under this research question: 1) Describe the professional development opportunities provided by your principal following your evaluation. 2) In what ways does the professional development provided by your principal influence your teaching practices? Every participant said that the professional development that was offered to them came from the district or administrative level and was exclusively nonmusical. This finding indicated consistency between the literature reviewed in that the principals do not have the specialized music content knowledge to either provide or offer musical professional development (Clements-Cortez, 2011; Hunt, Gurvitch, & Lund, 2016; Overland, 2014). This outcome, in turn, did not drive the participants’ music instruction nor did it promote their professional growth.

The participants also perceived that they had to seek out musical professional development and then ask their principals for permission to attend the musical professional development because their principals lacked the proper musical knowledge to suggest ones that would help them grow professionally. This finding highlighted perceptions of trust between the participants and their principals. The participants perceived that their principals trusted them to
teach the music content correctly and to find music specific feedback and professional development that would promote individual growth. In turn, the principals supported these endeavors by offering financial support to attend the professional development in which the participants felt overwhelmingly supported by their principals.

The third research question guiding this study was: What are music teachers’ recommendations for improving the evaluation of instruction. Three interview questions fell under this question: 1) On what criteria would you like to be evaluated? 2) What types of professional development opportunities would be most effective for you? 3) What are your recommendations for improving the evaluation of your instruction? The participants showed intense motivation to attend particular musical professional development and went into detail about musical professional development they already attended and how it positively impacted their musical instruction. This finding indicated consistency between Firestone’s (2014) motivational study and this study’s conceptual framework that stated that music teachers are motivated to grow through meaningful professional development opportunities that raise competence and supports autonomy.

The majority of the participants also recommended using a musical evaluator. These findings indicated a strong consistency with the research that using an evaluator with music specific content knowledge can provide music specific feedback and offer music specific professional development (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015; Delvaux et al., 2013; Firestone, 2014; Hill & Grossman, 2013; Hunt, Gurvitch & Lund, 2016; Tuytens & Devos, 2011, 2014, 2017). It can be concluded that teachers are motived to growth through meaningful feedback and professional development opportunities that they perceive as meaningful (Firestone, 2014). Providing an
evaluator with music specific knowledge would allow for such meaningful feedback and professional development opportunities, thus promoting professional growth.

In addition, the majority of the participants recommended working with and learning from their musical colleagues. The participants said that working with and learning from their musical colleagues is key to motivating them to attend musical professional development, which in turn, elevated their excitement about teaching. This recommendation returns to Firestone’s (2014) motivation research and this study’s conceptual framework that stated if the teacher perceives the professional development as meaningful, then the teacher is motivated to grow professionally.

**Implications**

This study found considerable strengths in FS County’s TES process at every level. At the teacher level, consistent with Firestone’s (2014) findings, this study found that FS County’s elementary school music teachers were intrinsically motivated to grow through meaningful feedback and professional development opportunities. Regardless of the evaluator’s knowledge or the system being used, music teachers demonstrated a strong desire to be lifelong learners. At the principal level, although they lacked musical knowledge and were not able to suggest ways to improve music pedagogies or suggest musical professional development, principals showed great leadership characteristics. This was accomplished by the principals building trusting relationships with the music teachers that exhibited understanding and trust in the music teacher to not only find professional development for themselves to attend, but by also providing financial support to attend the professional development if applicable. It is important to note that these music teachers did not feel it was the fault of the principal as an evaluator that he/she was not capable of providing neither meaningful feedback nor professional development.
opportunities. Although in general, an evaluator should be able to suggest specific and targeted feedback to everyone, these participants understood the dilemma the principals faced and actually experienced gratitude towards their principals when they not only allow them to attend a musical professional development but went above and beyond by assisting the music teacher with the costs of attending.

At the district level, principals with transformative leadership traits are being employed by the county who are able to motivate music teachers through individualized consideration. This supportive gesture from the principals was a significant motivator of growth for these participants as music educators.

On the other hand, some considerable weaknesses were found in FS County’s TES process at every level. At the teacher level, music teachers were not motivated through the traditional TES process to grow professionally. Although all five participants received highly effective ratings, they did not receive any musical feedback nor were they provided any musical professional development opportunities. Not every music teacher holds a Master’s Degree or Ph.D. in the field of music, has 25 years or more of experience teaching music, and is able to self-guide their own learning as these five participants do. The evaluation process should result in the same outcomes for music teachers as they do for the other teachers that is music teachers will grow from their evaluations through the feedback and professional development opportunities provided by the evaluator. The data shows that the current evaluation process does not promote growth for music teachers.

At the principal level, principals were neither able to provide suggestions on how to improve or teach music content nor suggest musical professional development opportunities. This is a direct correlation to the TES not fulfilling its key purpose of providing teacher growth.
While the key to evaluations are to provide feedback in order to improve professional growth (Darling-Hammond, 2011), it is not reasonable to expect; 1) that a principal be knowledgeable in every subject area. Therefore, it may not be reasonable to expect them to evaluate every subject area, especially if they feel they cannot give meaningful, targeted subject related feedback; 2) that every music teacher will have the credentials that these five participants have earned (see Table 1). Therefore, not every music teacher will cognizant of the music leaders in their county who are willing to assist them with musical feedback or professional development opportunities available to them.

This leads to the weakness of FS County’s implementation of the TES system. Implementation of a generalized system leads to a generalized evaluations. TES process created unnecessary stress on the music teachers by changing their musical teaching practices. For example, to satisfy the TES rubrics by teaching subjects or components they are not qualified to teach, and frankly, are forced to teach during an evaluation that they would not normally teach unless they were being evaluated. In addition, assigning one or two principals who hold their own specialized and individualized skills as an evaluator for every subject in the school, to fit into one generalized rubric, nullifies the validity of that evaluation (Clements-Cortes, 2011; Overland, 2014; Norris et al., 2017).

**Recommendations**

The following recommendations were align with Chapter 2 and were developed from the data collected as part of this qualitative research study. Recommendations are targeted at three populations:

1. School Districts,
2. Principals,
3. Music teachers

Recommendations for School Districts

National music organizations across the country are in support of assessing music teachers in some capacity. Each has their own suggestions on how to successfully evaluate music teachers. For example, The National Association for Music Education (NAfME) has an official position statement and suggests the following:

The systematic application of student scores to teacher evaluation must be done carefully if the resulting systems for evaluation are truly to benefit our students and our schools. It is important for music educators and others involved in our schools to be aware of the following issues, to avert potential damage to school programs, teachers, and most of all, to students (Teacher Evaluation, 2018).

NAfME does not suggest a particular system nor has it developed a method to evaluate music teachers at any level. However, the organization gives implicit suggestions, such as, including measures of music student achievement, avoiding assigning school-wide VAM scores to music teachers, and limiting evaluations to those individuals the adequate training in music as well as in evaluation.


Colorado developed the Colorado State Model Educator Evaluation System: Practical Ideas for Evaluating Teachers of The Arts (Colorado Department of Education, 2015). There is a separate evaluation guide for each of the following subjects: dance, drama, music, theatre, and
visual arts. The music evaluation document is 19 pages in length and comprehensive. This researcher does not necessarily agree with all aspects of the system, as it evaluates music teachers on how well they integrate math and language arts into the music curriculum. In addition, some content of the system would be more advantageous to secondary music teachers and other content more advantageous to primary music teachers. Yet, Colorado presents this document as a guide to evaluating music teachers. Not a hard fast system that must be implemented exactly as seen as a generalized system for every music educator. In addition, it was developed in conjunction with music leaders and educators so that everyone involved are “evaluated in a manner that is fair, rigorous, transparent and valid” (Colorado Department of Education, 2015, p. 3).

The first recommendation for school districts is to begin transitioning towards a better way to evaluating their music educators. This could be accomplished by first, researching the different recommendations of these national music organizations. The School District of FS County, along with its music educators, can then choose which of these recommendations would best suit the needs of the county and winnow the undesired components. The second recommendation is to bring in music experts, or at the very least, the more respected music teachers from the county and nearby universities and hold discussion forums on the best ways to implement particular components of the different musical evaluation systems available or even create and pilot a new evaluation system for music educators. The third recommendation is to review what Colorado and other states have implemented. School districts could begin working with music experts and music teachers by dissecting the evaluation models these states have created, determine the strength and weaknesses, and begin creating a new evaluation system that would promote professional growth in music teachers.
To accomplish the above, districts could simply begin by recruiting music teachers in the county who come highly recommended by their principals, arts supervisor, or musicians from local music chapters, and train them as evaluators on either the current evaluation system, a new piloted system, or just a few new components that are trickled in. At the very least, the music teachers would be provided with targeted musical feedback, the chance to ask questions on how to better teach music components, and be provided with professional development opportunities that are targeted to their individual needs.

**Recommendations for Principals**

Understanding that principals do not have the authority to make many of the necessary district-level changes, they could make school-level and across school-level decisions that could inherently impact music teachers in a huge way. To accurately measure a teacher’s strengths and weaknesses, two key levers of an evaluation system are improving teaching effectiveness by providing teachers with meaningful feedback and professional development opportunities (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015; Danielson, 2016; Delvaux et al., 2013; Firestone, 2014; Hill & Grossman, 2013; Hunt, Gurvitch & Lund, 2016; Tuytens & Devos, 2011, 2014, 2017).

Therefore, the first recommendation for principals is to establish a mentorship program. Principals could collaborate with other principals in the county to set up a mentoring program in which music teachers are able to travel to each other’s classroom to watch best practices during the school day. This could include sharing the cost of a substitute or asking another member of the special area team to take two classes at a time to free up the music teacher for half a day. The second recommendation is to open their school as a hosting site and encourage their music teacher to present music lessons for other music teachers. The third recommendation is to allow the music teacher to attend a music professional development instead of mandating them to
attend the classroom teachers’ professional development that focuses on math or language arts. The fourth recommendation is for principals to work with the district arts specialist or the leading music teachers in the county to determine what professional development opportunities are available to music educators. At the very least, the principals should have a contact person who could give recommendations for individualized professional development they could offer their music teachers. Then the principals could a) encourage music teachers to attend a particular professional development and b) provide financial support to attend the professional development. This could be accomplished via Title 1 or PTO funds. The fifth recommendation is to collaborate with the arts supervisor, curriculum specialist, and/or the leading music teachers in the county to devise a way to include a musical evaluator’s assistance during a walk through or formal evaluation. This recommendation aligns with the literature, which stated that teachers felt that they could grow the most if the evaluator knew the subject and content, gave meaningful feedback, and provided opportunities for professional development (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015; Conley & Glasman, 2008; Donaldson, 2012; Hill & Grossman, 2013; Tuytens & Devos, 2014). This recommendation would be strictly to provide musical feedback and professional development opportunities to the music teacher until a more permanent solution can be contrived to include a permanent musical evaluator. This could be accomplished whether the school district has changed the current TES system/process or not. The musical evaluator would exist to provide a service to the music teacher if he/she is a willing participant.

**Recommendations for Music Teachers**

According to NAfME (2018) Music teachers need to be proactive in their own professional growth. Join a local music chapter, seek out professional development that are appropriate to your individualized growth, and find a colleague/mentor in which to discuss music
education. Even the participant who has been teaching for 39 years discussed needing a peer in which to watch and learn. This study showed that building a relationship between the principal and the music teacher was key to the participants achieving their educational goals. Be proactive by asking the principal to attend workshops, conferences, and inservices that are most important to individualized professional growth goals. Be proactive by asking principals if funds are budgeted to support professional development. This study showed that every principal was willing to not only allow the participants to attend musical professional development, but also provide support to pay for them as well.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

Additional research is recommended to expand the scope of this study to include elementary music teachers from all types of schools, not just A schools. It would be useful to examine if perceptions of the TES would change due to the type of school in which a music teacher teaches. This study was conducted with five participants; future research could be replicated with an increased number of participants to compare findings. Although unintentional, the participants in the study were similar in age, the number of years they taught music, and the advance degrees they held. The study could be replicated with a wider range of years of experience, age, and degrees held. Lastly, research on the effect a musical evaluator could have on a music teacher’s growth.

**Summary and Conclusion**

Many existing studies demonstrated that the key for promoting teacher growth was for principals to provide effective and meaningful feedback and professional development opportunities to all teachers following their evaluation (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015; Danielson, 2016; Delvaux et al., 2013; Firestone, 2014; Hill & Grossman, 2013; Hunt, Gurvitch & Lund,
While there is an increasing body of literature that explored general teachers’ perceptions of feedback and professional development opportunities they receive, there is little literature exploring music teachers’ perceptions and more explicitly, elementary school music teachers.

Through this qualitative research, it has become clear that the elementary school music teachers who participated in this study are intrinsically motivated to grow professionally through the musical feedback and the musical professional development they attend. Although most principals did not possess the music skills necessary to provide meaningful musical feedback and professional development opportunities that music teachers need to grow professionally, findings from the data suggested: 1) The participants held their principals in high regard because their principals took an active role in providing both encouragement and financial support to attend professional development. 2) The music teachers were motivated to seek out feedback from their musical peers and musical professional development opportunities.

The data from this study also suggested that the current evaluation system process is failing to achieve its objective of promoting individual growth in music teachers because; 1) the system was developed to evaluate teachers in the general sense, which means that music content is not evaluated. 2) The principals; a) are not musical evaluators; b) cannot provide musical feedback; c) cannot suggest musical professional development. On the other hand, the data suggested that both principals and music teachers have learned to adapt to the TES system they have been given. Principals have built a level of trust with the music teachers and both have devised ways to improvise together to force the system to work for all parties until a better system can be created.
School districts, principals, teachers, parents, and most importantly, students stand to benefit from the data gathered from this study by developing a more comprehensive teacher evaluation system that meets the needs of all teachers. Increasing awareness of the evaluation inequity across subjects is a positive first step and shouldn’t be ignored. By all levels working together and taking an active role in developing a comprehensive evaluation system for music teachers will assure that all teachers have the opportunity to grow professionally.
References


Review, 83(2), 371-384, 401. Retrieved from


doi:http://dx.doi.org.une.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/0192636516670771


https://www.teacher.org/career/music-teacher/


https://www.teacher.org/career/music-teacher/


https://www.teacher.org/career/PE-teacher/


Lacireno-Paquet, N., Bocala, WestEd, Bailey, J., Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands (2016). Relationship between school professional climate and teachers’ satisfaction with the evaluation process. REL 2016-133. *Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands.*

Lash, A., Tran, L., Huang, M., Regional Educational Laboratory West (2016). Examining the Validity of Ratings from a Classroom Observation Instrument for Use in a District’s Teacher Evaluation System. *Regional Educational Laboratory West.*


Race to the Top Act of 2011


APPENDIX A

OUTREACH TO STAKEHOLDERS

Hello,

My name is Christy Isaacs. I am currently completing my doctorate in educational leadership through the University of New England. I have completed two years’ worth of courses and am now working on my dissertation. It is time to begin my data collection and I need your help. My study is entitled Special Area Teachers’ Perceptions of Performance Evaluation Feedback and Professional Development Provided. The purpose of this study is to discover music teachers’ perceptions towards their evaluation experience regarding the feedback and professional development opportunities they receive from their principal following the evaluation process. I am seeking elementary music teachers who taught in a school that received an A in the 2016-2017 school year and have had previous experience with this system. The study will consist of a one-on-one interview that should take approximately 30-45 minutes. If needed, a follow-up interview may be requested for any clarification or to ask any follow-up questions.

If you are willing to participate, please let me know and I will schedule a time at your convenience to review and complete the consent form. Once I have confirmed participants, I will contact you to schedule dates, times, and a meeting place to conduct the interview. Please note the interview will be audio recorded.

If you have any questions please reach out to me. Thank you for your consideration.

Christy Isaacs
APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

Project Title: Special Area Teachers’ Perceptions of Performance Evaluation Feedback and Professional Development Provided

Principal Investigator: Christy G. Isaacs, Graduate Student, University of New England, cisaacs@une.edu 941-447-4616

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Michelle Collay, University of New England, collaym@une.edu 207-602-2010

Introduction:

- Please read this form, you may also request that the form be read to you. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information about this research study, and if you choose to participate, document your decision.
- You are encouraged to ask any question that you may have about this study, now, during or after the project is complete. You can take as much time as you need to decide whether or not you want to participate. Your participation is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?

- There is significant research showing that the purpose of evaluations is to improve teaching effectiveness by providing teachers with meaningful feedback and professional development opportunities. The purpose of this study is to explore special area teachers’ perceptions of the feedback and professional development opportunities principals provide as a result of the evaluation process as well as their perceptions of how the evaluation system can be improved.

Who will be in this study?

- You are eligible for this study because you are an elementary music teacher that teaches in a school that received an A rating in the 2016-2017 school year and have previous experience with this evaluation system.
- The goal for this study is to have all seven possible participants participate.

What will I be asked to do?

- You will be asked to take part in an interview regarding your experiences with the feedback and professional development opportunities you receive from your principal following the evaluation cycle. The researcher of the study will conduct the interviews. Interviews would occur at a mutually acceptable time and place for the participant and researcher. This interview will last
approximately 30-45 minutes. A follow-up interview may be needed to clarify or ask any follow-up questions. All interviews will be audio recorded.

What are the possible risks of taking part in this study?

- There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.
- If you are not comfortable with the study process, you may opt out of the study at any time.

What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?

- There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study.

What will it cost me?

- There will be no cost involved for you to participate in this study.

How will my privacy be protected?

- The researcher will not disclose your identity or your status as a participant to any other entities.
- Your name and all other identifiers will not be used in the final written findings of the study.

How will my data be kept confidential?

- All voice recorded data collected during the study will be kept in a password protected, personal computer and iPad.
- All transcripts will be locked file cabinet and only viewed by the principal investigator. No data will be shared with identifiable information at any time.
- Individually identifiable data will be destroyed after the study is complete.
- Please note that regulatory agencies and the Institutional Review Board may review the research records.
- A copy of your signed consent form will be maintained by the principal investigator for at least three years after the project is complete before it is destroyed. The consent forms will be stored in a secure location that the members of the research team will have access to and will not be affiliated with any data obtained during the project.
- Audio recordings of interviews will only be accessible to the principal investigator and will be deleted upon completion of the study.

What are my rights as a research participants?

- Your participation is voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no impact on your current or future relations with the University of New England or with the Manatee County School District.
- You may skip or refuse to answer any question for any reason.
- If you choose not to participate, there is no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive. You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason. If you choose to withdraw from this research, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.
**What other options do I have?**

- You may choose not to participate.

**Whom may I contact with questions?**

- The researchers conducting this study are Christy Isaacs and Dr. Michelle Collay. For questions or for information concerning this research you may contact them at cisaacs@une.edu 941-447-4616 or Dr. Michelle Collay at mcollay@une.edu 207-602-2010
- If you choose to participate in the research study and believe you may have suffered a research related injury, please contact, Dr. Michelle Collay, University of New England, at mcollay@une.edu
- If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call Olgun Guvench, M.D. Ph.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board ay (207) 221-4171- or irb@une.edu.

**Will I receive a copy of this consent form?**

- You will be given a copy of this consent form
Participant’s Statement

I understand the above description of this research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I agree to take part in the research and do so voluntarily.

_______________________________________________  ______________________
Participant’s signature or 
Legally authorized representative  Date

______________________________
Printed Name

Researcher’s Statement

The participant named above had sufficient time to consider the information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.

Christy Isaacs  4-09-18

Researcher’s signature  Date

______________________________
Printed Name
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Research question 1: What are music teacher’s perceptions of the feedback they receive from their principals following the evaluation process?

1. Describe the feedback provided by your principal following your evaluation.
2. In what ways does the feedback provided by your principal influence your teaching practices?

Research question 2: What are music teacher’s perceptions of the professional development opportunities they receive from their principals following the evaluation process?

1. Describe the professional development opportunities provided by your principal following your evaluation.
2. In what ways does the professional development provided by your principal influence your teaching practices?

Research question 3: What are music teachers’ recommendations for improving evaluation of their instruction?

1. On what criteria would you like to be evaluated?
2. What types of professional development opportunities would be most effective for you?
3. What are your recommendations for improving the evaluation of your instruction?