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An Exploration of Teachers' Views of Evaluation in a

Choice-Based System

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

in Educational Leadership

by

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my family. They have always been my biggest fans and I'm truly grateful for their continuous love and encouragement. They have taught me that education is life long and giving back to others is key to a happy, healthy and humbled life. It is my hope to continue to make a positive contribution to the field of education and inspire others to reach their goals just as my family has inspired me to follow my passions. To my friends who have cheered me on from the sidelines, I thank them for keeping me laughing along the way. The consistent prompting to, "Get 'er done!" was what I needed to stay the course and not give up. The support from those I am blessed to call my family and friends is what carried me through this educational endeavor…For that, I am forever grateful!

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ABSTRACT

An Exploration of Teachers' Views of Evaluation in a

Choice-Based System

by

Laura Wellington

The educational landscape is changing and along with the changes is the reform and accountability system of teacher evaluation. As of late, teachers have come under scrutiny for their practice and professionalism in the classroom and many believe we need to hold teachers to higher standards. To that end, recent reforms have been put in place to allow for greater focus and accountability such as the development of new professional standards for teachers.

Professional teaching standards developed in California are designed to provide teachers with guiding principles for improved practice and provisions, as well as drive criteria for teacher evaluations. Along with a standards-based evaluation system, many local California districts are offering teachers on cycle and in good standing a choice-based method of evaluation. It is unclear what teachers' reactions to these systems have been, in particular, whether they feel the choice-based evaluation system allows for more meaningful feedback and insight into their strengths and areas of development as professional educators. With the permission of the superintendent and a district assistant superintendent, five teachers were interviewed in a medium-sized suburban unified school district in California in order to gain a greater perspective into their opinions of the choice-based system of evaluation. With regards to types of evaluation experienced, two teachers emphasized three evaluation choices (peer, portfolio, and administrator) in their interviews; three others generally emphasized evaluation by an administrator.

A district assistant superintendent was also interviewed, providing background about the choice-based teacher evaluation system in the district, as well as insight into the overarching practice and protocol of the choice-based system in this particular district. Findings highlighted similarities and differences across the cases. For example, teachers tended to agree that it was best to maintain a choice-based system versus the traditional administrative model. In addition, teachers understood and had a clear vision of the choice-based teacher evaluation process. At times, among teachers who did not select the peer or portfolio option themselves, they nonetheless stressed the advantages of those options. Teachers had varied ideas of what might be helpful in making teacher evaluations in general more effective.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As an educator, I have worked in various capacities K-12, both private and public and international as well as national for the last nineteen years and I have a plethora of perspectives and experiences dealing with teacher evaluations. As a teacher for the first ten years of my career, under varied leadership and campus settings, I have received a number of evaluations and have had the opportunity to be a part of a choice-based system of evaluation. Each of the various approaches and methods used to evaluate me as an educator were reflected in the results and meaningful feedback. In reflection, the evaluation I found to be most valuable and impactful was when a past principal approached the evaluation process with a multi-step process and appeared to be genuinely interested in supporting me as a team member and not simply fulfilling an administrative obligation. This principal sat with me on numerous occasions (pre- and post-observation), reviewed my lesson and unit plans, observed my class lesson from start to finish and wrote a narrative evaluation based on her observations. She cited areas of strength as well as areas that I could further develop in the future. I still have this evaluation on file.

After teaching for ten years, I served as an administrator for the last nine years and found myself the evaluator and not the evaluatee. Due to the size of the campus and the numbers of teachers on cycle to be evaluated, the evaluation process became a shared responsibility between all of the administrators. Each administrator would receive a caseload of teachers they were responsible to evaluate throughout that current year. It was the intention every year to respect and approach the evaluation process with

authenticity and support. No matter how scripted the evaluation process was for our

district and campus, each administrator added their own personality and expectations…As

did the teachers. As expected and what was evident throughout the evaluation process,

some administrators and some teachers took greater pride in their work and were more

thoughtful about the process. On the contrary, some administrators and teachers

procrastinated and/or saw the process as more routine and obligatory and approached it

as such.

Statement of the Problem

Like other professions, education is built around a conception of practice based on current and emerging research findings: pedagogical practices and recent standards-based processes of quality teacher evaluations (Kimball, 2002) have evolved due to these latest findings. However, numerous individuals (e.g., Danielson & McGreal, 2000) have suggested that the teacher evaluation systems in many public school districts continue to be fraught with deficiencies and questions.   A combination of factors - limited administrator expertise, little shared understanding of what constitutes good teaching, low levels of trust between teachers and administrators - leads to a culture of passivity and questions the control a teacher has over his/her instructional practice (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).   In a time that education is focused on accountability and teachers are trying to increase their autonomy as professionals, it is rare to find educators who believe that instructional accountability requires a strict line of command, a fixed hierarchy. Leithwood (2001) identified, among other approaches, the professionalization approach to educational accountability: "Professional approaches to accountability imply an increased need for school leaders to stay abreast of best professional practices and to assist staff in the identification of professional standards for their work" (p. 225).

Because we live in a rapidly changing and increasingly complex society, Fullan, (2005) noted that schools must be able to rapidly react, respond, and adapt.   It is not a coincidence that important new thinking, frameworks, and theories of leadership fit extremely well with state of the art, research-based, teacher assessment/evaluation practices (Davis, Ellett, & Annunziata, 2002).   As a fundamental component to the realm

of education, teacher evaluations should be a priority and a respected process in order to maximize and gain the greatest benefits for all involved.   It has been suggested that "school-based administrative and professional leadership play essential roles in determining the meaning and value of teacher evaluation in schools, and how teacher evaluation can extend beyond its ritualistic traditions to improve teaching and learning" (Davis et al., 2002, p. 288). Peer evaluation has also been identified as a promising practice to provide meaningful feedback and improvements in teaching and learning (Goldstein, 2010; Jancic, 2004).

Background to the Problem

Educational policy has been evaluated in many countries leading to a "multiplication of reforms" (Tuytens & Devos, 2009, p. 924). With reforms came accountability and the accountability movement led to the creation and sustainability of teacher evaluation systems. Tuytens and Devos noted that new teacher evaluation policy conforms to what Anderson (1997) described as *organizationally-focused initiatives* to improve teaching and learning processes. "As teachers receive feedback and guidance to improve their classroom practice through teacher evaluation, the system should influence the classroom practice of the teacher" (Tuytens & Devos, p. 924). However, teacher autonomy in the evaluation process is also key as it "[stimulates] a more active role for teachers [and] prevents teacher evaluation of becoming a yearly ritual with no lasting impact" (Tuytens & Devos, p. 924).

As Haefele (1993, as cited in Danielson & McGreal, 2000) pointed out, a clear sense of purpose should govern the design of a teacher evaluation system.   He identified the following purposes that must be served, arguing that a system should:

1. Screen out unqualified persons from certification and selection processes;

2. Provide constructive feedback to individual instructors;

3. Recognize and help reinforce outstanding service;

4. Provide direction for staff development practices;

5. Provide evidence that will withstand professional and judicial scrutiny;

6. Aid institutions in terminating incompetent or unproductive personnel; and

7.   Unify teachers and administrators in their collective efforts to educate students.

(Haefele, as cited in Danielson & McGreal, p. 8).

Background to the Study

In California, the development of new standards for teachers emerged in 1997 when the state developed the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 1997; they were recently updated in 2010). These standards were created to guide teacher practice, as well as direct teacher evaluations.   Since 1997, many local California districts have placed renewed emphasis on creating standards-based systems of teacher evaluation.

These developments were consistent with the framework for teaching created by Charlotte Danielson that has long been considered a model of effective teacher evaluation. According to Danielson (2007),

Clear descriptions of practice enable teachers to consider their own teaching in light

of the statements. It is virtually impossible for teachers to read clear statements of

what teachers do and how those actions appear when they are done well, and not

engage in a thought process of finding themselves in the descriptors. (p. 6)

Further, some California districts placed an emphasis in their evaluation systems

tied to CSTP on *peer* evaluation as part of the state's Peer Assistance and Review Program

(PAR). Further, a handful of California districts offered teachers a choice of an

administrator or a peer as an evaluator (Palazuelos & Conley, 2008). One of these districts

was the focus of the study.

Choice-based systems in California were adopted in some districts to allow

administrators and others who are evaluating teachers more time with teachers who may be

struggling (Conley, Smith, Collinson & Palazuelos, 2014; Palazuelos & Conley, 2008).   In

doing so, the choice-based system was designed to allow tenured teachers (when "on

cycle" every several years) to choose among three evaluation options: portfolio, peer

evaluation or administrative. If the teacher chose peer or portfolio, this, in turn, allowed

the administrator (evaluator) to extend his/her efforts with teachers who were new and had

no choice other than the administrative mandate evaluation, as well as the tenured teacher

who may be struggling. A goal of such systems was also to allow for enhanced personal

reflection and a greater dialogue with colleagues (district administrator, personal

communication). In this context, prior research suggests that the ideas of buy-in,

ownership, and control are beneficial for both parties (evaluators and evaluatees) (Glasman

& Paulin, 1982).

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The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' views of evaluation in a choice-based system in a medium-sized, suburban California school district. Many current studies of teacher evaluation focus on the school leader's role, and in doing so over shadows the teacher's perceptions of the process as well as the role of peer evaluators (Goldstein, 2010). Conley et al. (2014) investigated, in a quantitative study, the correlates and predictors that influenced teachers' willingness to be evaluated and job satisfaction. The study was carried out in a California district that offered teachers a choice of administrator or peer evaluators.

Findings indicated that willingness to be evaluated and job satisfaction were at times influenced by different predictors, depending on the type of evaluator selected. The authors suggested that qualitative studies might explore reasons that teachers choose an administrator or peer evaluator based on, for example, gender, experience, or skill.

Building on this research, the proposed study explores the perceptions of teachers qualitatively, relative to their identification of key issues regarding their choice of evaluator and the evaluation process.

Research Questions

The following questions (divided into descriptive, opinion, and comparative questions, see Riley, Conley & Glasman, 2002) addressed teachers' perceptions of choice-based evaluation as examined in this study:

1. What were teachers' descriptions of their choice, the choice-based evaluation process, and the evaluation process that followed? (Descriptive)

2. What did teachers perceive to be the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation process they experienced? (Opinion)

3. What differences did teachers perceive between their experiences in the current evaluation compared to previous experiences with teacher evaluation? (Comparative)

Overview of Method

This research was an exploratory study, involving interviews with five teachers and one administrator in a medium-sized school district located in southern California. These interviews were utilized to create multiple case descriptions of the five teachers, focusing on the teachers' perceptions of their experiences in a choice-based evaluation system. As Turnbull (2011) noted, "Case studies have been used in varied investigations, often aimed at revealing the details of a specified event from the viewpoint of the participants by using multiple sources of data" (p. 8, see Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995). Among the specific types of case studies identified by Yin (1993) were exploratory case studies, which sometimes are considered as a prelude to social research.

In this exploratory study, as noted, investigation occurred through the use of semi-structured interviews, with the purpose of describing the perceptions of five teachers in the district, relative to their choice of evaluator (peer or partner, portfolio, or administrative choice) and the evaluation process. Turnbull (2011), for example, used the interview method to provide clarity to the perspectives of superintendents in a multiple case study research project. His use of the multiple case studies and the interview method supports the methods used in this study.

Focusing on the perspectives of five teachers, the researcher collected interview data from each participant in a semi-structured format, guided by the research questions above. The first research question was designed to provide descriptive information about the teacher, the choice of evaluator, and the evaluation process. The second question elicited opinions about strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation process. The third research question provided comparative information from the teachers about his or her own experiences in teacher evaluation in the past compared with the present system.

Each of the five teachers in this study was interviewed once. The interview protocol was designed to gather background information, in addition to other information guiding further discussion on the reasoning for their choice of evaluator, their experiences with the evaluator, strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation they experienced, and improvements to evaluation that might be made.

Significance of the Study

Administrators who directly oversee the evaluation process—and teachers who are evaluated—might find it worthwhile and innovative for teachers to be able to choose administrator, portfolio, or peer evaluation. For these choices, if there is an element of trust involved, and the administrator/peer allows for a pre- and post conference where the teacher is encouraged to have an active voice in the process, teachers may find the evaluation process helpful and meaningful. This study permitted some exploration of these ideas through qualitative interviews.

As a teacher for ten years and as an administrator for the last nine years, I have experienced both sides of the evaluation process and a variety of evaluation methods. The

choice-based system of evaluation appeared to provide an opportunity for two different scenarios to occur as a result of choice.   In one scenario, the choice-based system might be a way for the more talented and self-assured teachers the chance to self-regulate (Glasman & Paulin, 1982). Thus, teachers could seek autonomy (through a peer option) and/or share a more creative outlet and gain insight and support. On the other hand, scenario number two in the choice-based system might allow the opportunity for weaker teachers to seek out a fellow teacher they trust to "go through the motions" and show little evidence of a meaningful evaluation other than a means to an end, formality, if you will. Although the present study did not distinguish between stronger and weaker teachers in this study, the qualitative investigation of teachers' views provided an opportunity to examine teachers' reasoning about some of the complexities underlying a choice-based model.

Limitations

The following limitations should be considered in interpreting the findings of this study.

1. A first limitation is that not all of the teachers interviewed in the study know of any other method of evaluation but the choice-based model. Therefore, comparisons with other models of evaluation were not possible for some study participants.

2. A second study limitation relates to the sample. The study was conducted with a small sample of teachers in a single medium sized (suburban) district in southern California. A district with other characteristics (urban, rural) or with a different method of teacher choice of evaluation might have yielded different results.

Definitions of Key Terms

California Standards for the Teaching Profession - six standards for professional teaching practice intended to "guide teachers as they define and develop their practice" and "provide a common language and a new vision of the scope and complexity of teaching" (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 1997, p. 1).

Job Satisfaction - a generalized affective response to the job and career as opposed to reactions to particular components of the job or career such as satisfaction with pay or resources (Conley, Muncey, & You, 2005).

Portfolio Evaluation - a component of the evaluation system that provided permanent teaching staff with the option of completing a portfolio of lessons, communication, and other items used in the course of their duties as they relate to the teaching continuum (Goldrick, 2009; Palazuelos, 2007).

Peer or Partner Evaluation - a component of the evaluation system that utilizes and provides for a peer teacher (sometimes a designated partner) to provide a formative and/or summative evaluation of the partner teacher (Palazuelos, 2007).

Standards Based Evaluation - a system that has at its core a vision of teaching elaborated with broad domains of practice, comprehensive standards, and detailed criteria through rubrics (Kimball, 2002).

Teaching Continuum - a description of performance or rubrics at five levels or developing continuum of teacher competency (beginning, emerging, applying, integrating, and innovating) (Goldrick, 2009).

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Teacher Control - the level of teacher control or autonomy a teacher perceives him or herself as having over a specific teaching activity and that teacher's feelings about being evaluated on that activity (Glasman & Paulin, 1982).

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF SELECT LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter addresses selected literature related to the elements and qualities of

evaluation systems that support teachers as they attempt to grow and develop in their

profession. I examine literature related to recent shifts and rethinking of teacher evaluation

and teacher professional development nationally and globally. I draw on the work of

scholars who have suggested that teacher evaluations should be more fully utilized, and not

a missed opportunity, for teachers and administrators to foster professional growth. In

addition, I discuss some options for teacher evaluation and the choice-based model of

teacher evaluation.

Rethinking Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development

Recently, Collinson , Kozina, Lin, Ling et al. (2009) drew on perspectives from

several countries to outline changes in how we think about teacher professional

development and why those views might be changing. Three trends, including rethinking

teacher evaluation was used to illustrate this shift. In providing background about changes

occurring over the last half of the twentieth century more generally these authors cited a

"communications revolution and a rethinking of how people learn" (p. 3), as well as the

development of a knowledge society that needs knowledge workers (in making this point,

they cited Drucker, 1959 and 1993). Collinson et al. argued:

The birth of the Information Era and the establishment of a knowledge society

(Drucker 1994) have transformed the world. Such a society requires people to have

'a good deal of formal education and the ability to acquire and to apply theoretical

and analytical knowledge ... Above all, they require a habit of continuous learning'
(62). Drucker (1993) outlined a new role for education in a knowledge society:
learning and schools would not simply exist for children, but would extend through
adults' lives, permeate society, and include knowledge creation and problem
solving. Learning, Drucker predicted, would be based on performance and results
rather than on rules and regulations. The new thinking envisions 'systems [that] are
self-regulating and capable of transformation in an environment of turbulence,
dissipation, and even chaos...The teacher's role [is] no longer viewed s casual, but
as transformative...And learning [is] an adventure in meaning making' (Soltis 1993,
x, xi, as cited in Collinson et al., 2009, p. 4).

Thus, education is in a constant state of evolution and refinement. More than ever,
all stakeholders are being held accountable for their contributions to the improvement
process. Some might argue that teachers are the most important single element of the
education system. At the same time, the question surfaces, what does it take to create high
quality teachers in today's world? With that said, teachers want to have an active voice in
various facets of education and this includes how they are evaluated (Conley & Glasman,
2008; Glasman & Paulin, 1982). Teachers have a natural desire to be successful and aspire
to make a positive impact on the students they teach. Therefore, it is important that they
have a meaningful evaluation with substantial feedback that can realistically be
implemented into a more progressive, proactive teaching regimen (Kimball, 2002). The
path to improvement and control over how a teacher conveys material to students is often
revealed through a professional accountability process or teacher evaluation.

Teacher evaluations have been completed by teachers as a reflective tool, by students of the teacher for feedback to the teacher as well as his/her administrators and most popular, by the administrators for purposes of direct feedback and accountability. A continuous concern that has inevitably surfaced with the administrative evaluation is that teachers lacked a voice in the process and did not receive high quality feedback, and therefore, the growth and development and overall communication to get better was limited. Kimball (2002), for example, focused on feedback as one central enabling condition in teacher evaluation.

> Feedback is a central aspect of evaluation that has been shown to relate to teacher perceptions of evaluation quality. Among a number of variables studied by Stiggens & Duke (1988), attributes of feedback were identified as having the highest correlation with teachers' perceptions of evaluation quality. These attributes included perceived evaluator credibility, quality of ideas, depth of information, persuasiveness of rationale for suggested changes, usefulness of suggestions, trustworthiness of the evaluator, perceived relationship with the evaluator, and perceptions of evaluator capacity to demonstrate needed changes (Stiggens & Duke, 1988). Similarly, McLaughlin & Pfeifer (1988) identified several important dimensions of feedback, including timeliness, specificity, credibility and intent. (Kimball, 2002, p. 245).

Teachers, by their nature, have a strong desire to seek overall success for themselves as well as their students (Lortie, 1975). Many teachers will operate as an independent contractor (of sorts) and not reach out for (and possibly even avoid) common

dialogue and/or feedback with an administrator or fellow colleagues. Many teachers will

converse with colleagues with the idea that open communication and a mutual exchange of

ideas are positive and healthy for professional development. Teachers, whether they are

forthright about it or not, want to progress and improve as well as hear a bit of validation

of what they are doing right. In conjunction with the positive support, teachers, if done

correctly and genuinely, look for meaningful ways to substantiate their lessons and place

value with a collective and collaborative conversation with their administrator.

Sosanya-Tellez (2010) provided an overview of teacher evaluation practices that is

consistent with some of these ideas. However, she cited a number of challenges with

current teacher evaluation practice on the policy landscape.

In legislation, student assessment, teacher licensure, and research based curricula

have taken center stage. Teacher evaluation is noticeably absent [from many

school improvement efforts] . . . Teacher evaluation is static and mired in politics;

it has not historically helped to improve schools (Peterson, 2000). (p. i).

Further, according to Sosanya-Tellez (2010), "As educators and legislators seek to

provide high quality education to increasingly diverse students in a climate of standardized

testing and accountability, resources are dwindling" (p. 9; see also Enomoto, 2011).

Teacher evaluations have not surfaced as a priority even though administrators and

educators engage in teacher evaluations regularly. It is a fundamental and expected

element in the professional career of both. There are many reasons teacher evaluations

have taken a back seat to other school reform tactics. Teacher evaluation has been

characterized, first, as

predictable, ritualized, but generally ineffective interaction (Acheson & Gall 1987).

Second, there are those that believe that teacher evaluation is too difficult to change

(Peterson, 2000). Finally, others purport that teacher evaluation is a non-event

(Palmer, 1997)" (Sosanya-Tellez, 2010, p. 9).

Sosanya-Tellez (2010) also suggested that

> Teachers often feel isolated and powerless in their evaluation experiences. Even if
>
> they disagree with the summative evaluation, teachers can only refuse to sign or
>
> submit their own statement of rebuttal (Glickman & Kanawati, 1998). When
>
> effective, teacher evaluation recognizes student achievement, acknowledges good
>
> practice, supports teacher goals, shapes performance, motivates to improve on
>
> weaknesses, and removes the rare ineffective teacher from the profession (Peterson
>
> & Peterson, 2006). (p. 9)

According to Sosanya-Tellez (2010), investigating teacher evaluation's potential as

an overlooked method to improve teaching in schools is therefore vitally important in this

context. As Stronge and Tucker (2003, as cited in Sosanya-Tellez, 2010) asserted,

"Without capable, highly qualified teachers in America's classrooms, no educational

reform process can possibly succeed" (p. i).

Interestingly, Sosanya-Tellez (2010) also explored teacher evaluation within her

problem-based learning study as she sought to raise the bar to not only view a choice-based

system but to create a self-evaluation handbook for high performing teachers. The study

examined Wood's (1998) call for a move from traditional to transformative evaluation.

The ten teachers in the study explored study options designed for them to critically reflect

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on their own teaching, connect with students, reflect, and set new goals. The study

addressed a "real world" problem across many school districts and schools and in the end

allowed for greater insight into what could be a more "democratic, caring and loving" (ii)

process. In this 21st century milieu, the study suggested that teacher evaluation may hold

"untapped promise" (p. 8) for teacher professional development and educational reform

efforts.

According to Sosanya-Tellez (2010), in framing her study of these high performing

teachers, "When teacher evaluation uses rubrics (Danielson, 2002), a transformative

approach (Wood, 1998) or a reflective clinical evaluation process (Pajak, 2000), it can

offer specific feedback to teachers. However, the teacher remains the receiver of

information in most experiences" (pp. 9-10). Further, she characterized literature on

teacher evaluation as "fraught with challenges [and as] least effective and meaningless for

long-term, proficient, or high performing teachers (Peterson, 2000)" (p. 10). She noted

Peterson and Peterson's (2006) proposal for teachers to "improve their own evaluations and

select the most pertinent data sources for themselves [and that] teachers behave more

responsibly when they share the authority involved in personnel evaluation" (p. 10; see

also Glasman & Paulin, 1982).

Within a choice-based model, teachers arguably have some of the elements

highlighted in this chapter in the evaluations conducted of them. For example, they have

the option to be central in their own evaluation by committing to growth and pinpointing

effective change where needed (Conley et al., 2014; Palazuelos & Conley, 2008). The

evaluation process that most closely aligns to this model might be the portfolio method of

evaluation. Under this option, teachers are asked to gather evidence (both teacher and student generated) that substantiates the standards and goal selected. A main objective in allowing for portfolio as well as peer evaluations is to encourage the high-performing teachers to have autonomy in monitoring their own view of teaching and practice through experience and self-discovery. On the other end of the spectrum, a choice-based teacher evaluation system was developed in many California districts to allow for site administrators to spend more quality time with struggling teachers (Palazuelos, 2007).

Tuytens and Devos (2009) provided an argument that teachers' perspectives should be included when formulating teacher evaluation policy and/or gauging the effects of such policy (Chapter 1). Citing Hall (1976), they noted that "the most intense concerns of teachers are the self-oriented concerns: teachers want to know more about the innovation and the effects of the innovation for them personally" (p. 926). In framing the importance of teachers' views, they argued that on a global scale, educational policy has been evaluated in many countries leading to a "multiplication of reforms" (Tuytens & Devos, p. 924). With reforms came accountability, they suggested, and the accountability movement led to the creation and sustainability of teacher evaluation systems. Further, they noted that new teacher evaluation policy conformed to what Anderson (1997) described as *organizationally-focused initiatives* to improve teaching and learning processes. "As teachers receive feedback and guidance to improve their classroom practice through teacher evaluation, the system should influence the classroom practice of the teacher" (Tuytens & Devos, p. 924). However, according to these authors, teacher autonomy in the evaluation process is key as it "[stimulates] a more active role for teachers [and] prevents

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teacher evaluation of becoming a yearly ritual with no lasting impact" (Tuytens & Devos, p. 924).

Thus, a variety of scholars have suggested that the teacher evaluation process allow for greater teacher and administrator interaction and involvement that will address and drive professional development and future practices. It has been suggested that "school-based administrative and professional leadership play essential roles in determining the meaning and value of teacher evaluation in schools, and how teacher evaluation can extend beyond its ritualistic traditions to improve teaching and learning" (Davis et al., 2002, p. 288). Feedback from peers or peer evaluation has also been identified as a promising practice to provide meaningful teacher evaluation (Goldstein 2010).

Administrative Evaluation and other Models of Evaluation

Teachers have traditionally exercised only one option in the past, represented by the standard administrative observation model, often using checklists. In the early 1960s through the 1980s, the principal has been characterized as busily checking off discrete items within a cookbook of school improvement. Teacher unions and administrations "focused upon the performance of these discrete measures" and trusted the checklists (Kersten & Israel, 2005, p. 49). The demands for improving the quality of teaching and learning in public schools strongly surfaced to the forefront upon the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). NCLB imposed mandated sanctions for schools that did not meet increased student achievement standards (primarily measured by student test scores). With these legislative changes, educators "watched teacher evaluation processes evolve from simple end of the year checklists or summative narratives to more sophisticated clinical

processes and reflective teacher evaluation models" (Kersten & Israel, 2005, p. 49). For example, they noted that the forms of evaluation processes that may be used in schools were "personal and instruction goal setting, clinical observation processes, portfolio assessment, and self evaluation" (p. 49).

According to the international study by various educational professionals across the globe (discussed earlier), professional development, including teacher evaluation practice, is surfacing as educational trends and a discussion item in response to recent global understandings of lifelong learning and innovation, organizational revitalization via the development and retention of members, and continuous improvement and transformation from within (Collinson et al., 2009). Teacher evaluations may be called by a variety of terms: *annual performance review*, *appraisal*, *assessment*, *inspection*, or *supervision* (Collinson et al., 2009). Patterned after industry, historically school administrators supervised subordinate teachers "who had clear-cut roles and responsibilities within a hierarchical bureaucracy" (p. 6).

According to Collinson et al. (2009), teachers prefer to learn with and obtain ideas or advice from teachers and that the traditional top-down model of teacher evaluation came to be known as a 'dog and pony show' and, rather than being perceived as constructive learning, [the traditional model] was viewed as "obtaining someone's subjective judgment of how good a teacher is, a judgment based on the assumption that the judge knows what good teaching is and can recognize it when he sees it" (Stronge & Ostander 1997, p. 131, as cited in Collinson et al., 2009, p. 6).

According to these authors, "By the end of the twentieth century, academia belatedly perceived 'a need to change the traditional evaluative process that treated teachers as supervised workers rather than collegial professionals'" (Kumrow & Dahlen, as cited in Collinson et al., p. 6). As they noted, and consistent with Kersten and Israel (2005); practitioners were already exploring such emerging alternatives as "peer coaching, self-evaluation, client surveys, teacher portfolios, action research, and study groups" (p. 7). Collinson and colleagues believed an emerging trend to change teacher evaluation was very different from national or state adoption of induction programs. They suggested that this trend has just begun, and is still in a quiet grass-roots experimentation phase, affecting experienced teachers more than novice teachers. To these authors, re-thinking teacher evaluation as professional learning and growth represented a major break with the past. Re-thinking teacher "evaluation today may be following a path similar to the re-thinking of student assessment" (p. 12); that is, the students show their understanding through various avenues of work (journals, projects, tests, reading records and other data collecting sources) as a means to formative assessments (Collinson et al., 2009).

Accordingly, in international developments in professional development, Collinson et al. (2009) also noted that "Education is slowly absorbing the new shift in thinking and is beginning to implement changes that encourage teachers and principals to engage in learning together for the purpose of improving teaching and, by extension, learning for the children in their care" (p. 5). In this context, these authors identified a choice-based model in teacher evaluation (Palazuelos, 2007) as one of several innovative alternatives to traditional teacher evaluation in the USA, stating:

One school system uses state standards and a developmental continuum of teacher competency (beginning, emerging, applying, integrating, innovating) to offer three choices for evaluation: traditional clinical supervision by the administrator, peer evaluation that includes a self-assessment component, or a portfolio to demonstrate teaching proficiency (Palazuelos 2007) (p. 13)

In this school system's state of California, state standards were designed to provide a more consistent definition of good teaching and define for the teacher and the evaluator about what good teaching sounds, feels, looks like. With the use of state standards in teacher evaluation, teachers arguably had a greater understanding of what they were going to be evaluated on, therefore encouraging greater risk, confidence and creativity in the classroom. As for the principal or administrator performing the evaluation - "A principal or a superintendent must be able to say to the school board and the public: "Everyone who teaches here is good - and here's how I know" (Danielson, 2010, p. 36). Danielson is also quoted as saying, "Credibility in an evaluation system is essential" (p. 36). When a teacher is given the opportunity (a choice) to select the avenue to which they are to be evaluated, a teacher may be more likely to seek genuine parameters and guidance to which they most feel will give them the biggest return.

The California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) were intended to provide common language and a vision of the scope and complexity of the profession (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 1997) (Appendix E and F). A formative assessment system has three essential components: standards, criteria and evidence of practice. Standards referred to the CSTP and are in alignment with the P-12

academic content standards. Criteria referred to indicators of teaching practice. Evidence

of practice included multiple sources such as lesson plans, observation data, and student

work analyses and is used to make valid self-assessments on the Continuum of Teaching

Practice. The Continuum of Teaching Practice (beginning, emerging applying, integrating,

innovating) in California was one component of a comprehensive formative assessment

system for teachers, based on the CSTP. The six standards were:

- Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning

- Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student learning

- Understanding and Organizing Subject matter for Student Learning

- Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students

- Assessing Students for Learning

- Developing as a Professional Educator

As suggested by Conley and Glasman (2008), some California districts are moving

to a choice-based model with the expectation that it will give teachers more ownership and

personal accountability for professional development (see also Palazuelos, 2007). For

example, Palazuelos' (2007) study was conducted in one district that employed a choice-

based evaluation system. A teacher interviewed for that study stated: "The new method

allows for personal growth and personal choice. [When I chose the partner option], I had

an opportunity for collegiality to work with a partner. [When I chose the portfolio option] I

had choice over what documentation and reflection to provide" (p. 33).

Teacher Evaluation Policy and Perspective

As noted earlier in this chapter, teachers, by their nature, have a strong desire to seek overall success for themselves as well as their students. Many teachers will operate as an independent contractor (of sorts) and not reach out for (and possibly even avoid) common dialogue and/or feedback with fellow colleagues. Many teachers will converse with colleagues with the idea that open communication and a mutual exchange of ideas is positive and healthy for professional development. Teachers, intuitively, want to evolve in their professional practice and receive validation and constructive feedback. Teachers seek a balanced conversation with their administrators when it comes to their professional performance. Teachers want a conversation that addresses the teacher's strengths and highlights their best practices as well as a meaningful and respectful conversation regarding areas for improvement.

Because we live in a rapidly changing and increasingly complex society, Fullan (1993, as cited in Davis et al., 2002) suggested that schools must be able to "rapidly react, respond, and adapt" (p. 288). It is not a coincidence that important new thinking, frameworks, and theories of leadership fit extremely well with state of the art, research-based, teacher assessment/evaluation practices (Davis et al., 2002). Teacher evaluation models and varying systems of professional feedback are at the heart of many educational reform collaborative discussions. It is suggested that "school-based administrative and professional leadership play essential roles in determining the meaning and value of teacher evaluation in schools, and how teacher evaluation can extend beyond its ritualistic traditions to improve teaching and learning" (Davis et al., 2002, p. 288).

As noted in Chapter 1, I have experienced both sides of the evaluation process and a variety of evaluation methods. As a teacher, I sought meaningful feedback from the administrator and at the same time, enjoyed the conversations that seemed more mutual in nature, as if we were learning together to improve our campus community and the learning for each student. As an administrator, I can remember perceiving the 'dog and pony show' concept, where a lesson seemed so polished and practiced that it may not have represented the realistic day-to-day operations. However, I reflected that the choice-based system seemed to allow a greater sense of creativity and autonomy (through a portfolio or peer option). On the other hand, I wondered whether the choice-based system may have allowed some teachers to feel they could 'side-step' the formal administrative visit. That is, could teachers experience the formality of the teacher evaluation process but with little or no feedback from the administrator when, in fact, they might benefit from some constructive feedback?

As an administrator directly overseeing the evaluation process, I found it refreshing for a teacher to choose the administrative choice versus portfolio or peer evaluation. If done correctly, the method of the administrative visit may be the most meaningful for both sides. This is, of course, if there is an element of trust involved and the administrator allows for a pre-conference and post conference where the teacher is allowed to have an active voice in the process.

Over the course of several decades, literature has suggested that teacher evaluations have changed regarding the emphasis placed on teacher performance and overall focus. Since the 1940s and the 1950s, for example, educators and researchers emphasized what

Danielson and McGreal (2000) referred to as teacher traits. The teacher traits included "voice, appearance, emotional stability, trustworthiness, warmth, enthusiasm" (Danielson and McGreal, p. 13).   It was believed that those teachers who possessed such traits were more likely to be successful in the classroom and perform effectively. However, with the 1960s and 1970s, came new research and subsequent shifts in teacher evaluation. These decades brought the focus to teacher "skill acquisition and improv[ing] science and math teaching" (p. 13). During this time period, observation techniques and supervision skills created the development of clinical supervision.

More recently, by developing a strategic plan that focuses on student learning, adult learning, professional growth and classroom structure -- as in a choice-based system -- change will become inevitable with positive outcomes. Glickman (2002) suggested that teacher supervision and evaluation is necessary to enhance "quality student learning that gives every child the knowledge, skills and understandings needed to become a valued and valuable member of a vital democratic society" (pp. 95-96). Further, "if we want teacher evaluation systems that teachers find meaningful and from which they can learn, we must use processes that not only are rigorous, valid and reliable, but also engage teachers in those activities that promote learning - namely self-assessment, reflection on practice, and professional conversation" (Danielson, 2011, p. 38). The figure in Appendix D visually displays the aforementioned shifts in teacher evaluation. Appendix E displays a historical outline of the documents that provided the rethinking in teacher evaluations. Lastly, Appendix F displays the California Standards for the Teaching Profession.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

Although some literature suggests that there are beneficial aspects to teacher

evaluation systems that provide the choice of an evaluator, little research has explored

teachers' views of the choice and the evaluation. As noted in Chapter 1, this exploratory

study was designed to gain insight into teachers' perceptions in a choice-based evaluation

process. This study was conducted through teacher interviews. For purposes of answering

the research questions, five teachers in the K-12 system within one medium-sized

California school district were selected for the study. Initially, I describe the research

setting for the study. Then, I describe the efforts to acquire permission to conduct the

study, as well as the selection of interviewees. Discussion then turns to the structure of the

interviews and the protocol used in this study. Finally, there is a description of the site of

the study, transcription, and analysis.

Research Setting: School District and Evaluation System

The sample of teachers that were interviewed came from two schools within one of

the 989 school districts in the state of California. The school district served approximately

7,000 students in a medium-sized suburban area situated in the foothills northwest of Los

Angeles. The community is a medley of multi-generation families of all socio-economic

backgrounds and has approximately 34,000 residents. Master (a pseudonym) Unified

School District (MUSD) includes six K-5 elementary schools, one K-8 school, two middle

schools, one comprehensive high school, and one continuation high school. In addition, the

district offers three pre-schools, an adult school, and an alternative high school program,

located at a local college. Demographics within the district is seen as diverse, with approximately 34 percent eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, 55 percent minority students, and 19 percent English language learners (ed.data.k12.ca.us, 2013-14).

MUSD adopted an evaluation system that was aligned with the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) in the 1990s. The system was implemented to serve a variety of purposes. According to a veteran teacher and assistant superintendent interviewed for the study, the newly-formed (at the time) evaluation and professional accountability system was designed to support the new standards for the teaching profession (CSTP); in addition, the evaluation system was to provide teachers options for evaluation in order to better serve teachers who truly needed the extra administrative support and attention.   Teachers now had the choice (based on tenure, and the professional accountability cycle) to select one of three evaluation options: partner, portfolio, or administrative choice (see Appendix C). (A research action team was a fourth evaluation option; however, this was a less common option and was not mentioned by the interviewees.) Those teachers who were not yet tenured were required to select administrative mandate and did not have an option to choose peer or portfolio. Evaluations were conducted annually for beginning teachers (non-tenured) and once every two years for permanent teachers. However, once a teacher has ten years of teaching and is tenured, they are evaluated every five years.

Teachers who selected "partner" would then have the opportunity for collegiality and peer-review by a fellow teacher within the school. On the contrary, those teachers who

selected "portfolio," self-selected specific pieces of teacher and student work that best reflected the teaching and learning in their classroom.

District/University Permission and Interviewee Selection

Permission was obtained from both the district under study and the university (University of California, Santa Barbara). For the district, the associate superintendent of personnel was approached for permission to conduct the study. It was emphasized that each of the five teachers would be asked to participate in this multiple case study based on the condition of anonymity. For the university, human subjects approval was requested and granted prior to the interview sessions. A consent form (Appendix A) for teachers' signatures was designed and made available prior to the interview sessions.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the five teachers in this study. To select the teachers, I spoke with the assistant superintendent of personnel for the district, requesting names of teachers who may be interested in participating in the study. The district official indicated that there were several teachers in two sites who were proactive on their campus, progressive in their teaching, and highly respected by their peers. Further, the teachers were located in two sites, one K-8 (Corral Campus) and one high school (Monument High School [MHS]) whose principals would likely be open to providing permission to conduct the study at their site. Both school names are pseudonyms. One of the sites, with two teachers, was the K-8 college preparatory school. This school is the only K-8 model in the district and offers parents and students a unique learning environment. The other site, with three teachers, was the high school.

Finally, for background information about the district evaluation program, district administrators were also asked to provide relevant documents (e.g., evaluation form, description of evaluation choices, rubric for administrative observation). When visiting the sites I also took the opportunity to speak informally with the site principal.

Interviews and the Interview Protocol

According to Hitchcock and Hughes (1989), the interview is a major tool of social research, and is "often achieved in qualitative research through conversational encounters" (p. 79). Interviews are further defined as to "'talk to some purpose'" (p. 79). A diversity of interviewing types may be conducted, including the structured interview, the survey interview, the life history interview, the informal/unstructured interview, and conversations (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989).

Semi-structured interviews occupy a middle-ground between unstructured and highly structured interview formats. In semi-structured interviews, the questions are more flexibly worded than in structured interviews, or the interview is a mix of more or less structured questions. Departing from a highly structured format, this interview format allows the researcher to "respond to the situation at hand, the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). In addition, it "allows depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewees' responses" (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989, p. 83).

In Fall 2013, two preliminary pilot interviews were conducted with teachers in another district to finalize probes for the interview protocol in Appendix B. All of the final interviews were recorded and then transcribed for coding and further analysis.

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Each of the five teachers were interviewed once for this study in Spring 2014. The interview (Appendix B) sought general background information from each subject, as well as seeking more specific information that would guide further discussion on the teacher evaluation process. The interviews were about 45-minutes in length, and were designed primarily to bring opinions about choice of evaluator and evaluation to the surface. One teacher interview, however, cut the interview short (to approximately 20 minutes) because the interview was conducted during the teachers' preparation period, and she had two students waiting for assistance.

The semi-structured interview format, in combination with clarifying questions and probing questions, allowed for a more in-depth discussion on the topics listed in Appendix B. Each of the questions in the semi-structured interview protocol was created using the research questions in Chapter 1. The interview was divided into three sections: descriptive, opinion, and comparative (Riley et al., 2002). The descriptive questions focused on teaching background, choice of evaluator and reasons for that choice, and overall experience in the evaluation process. The opinion questions asked about strengths and weaknesses of the choice of evaluator (and the alternate choice), contributions to the meaningfulness of the personnel evaluation process, strengths and weaknesses of having a choice of evaluator, and what in the school/district facilitated or became an obstacle to evaluation. The comparative question focused on comparing the recent evaluation experience with those earlier in the career.

Site of the Interview

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research takes place in the "natural setting" (p. 185), where the interviewer often goes to the site (home, office) of the participant to conduct the research. All of the interviews took place at the work site of the individual teacher.

Transcription

A recording device was presented at the beginning of the interview. The interview in its entirety was recorded and verbatim transcripts were produced. Following Creswell (2014), the researcher also took "interview notes" (p. 193) to record information from interviews and in the event that recording equipment failed.

Analysis

According to Creswell (2014), data analysis is an "ongoing process involving continual reflection about the data, asking analytic questions, and writing memos throughout the study" (p. 190). Thus, data analysis cannot be "sharply divided" (p. 190) from data collection. Grounded theory techniques as explained by Creswell (2014) and Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) were considered in the data analysis. These involved

> generating categories of information (open coding) ... [and] explicating a story from
> the interconnection of these categories. ... [Further,] case study and ethnographic
> research involve a detailed description of the setting or individuals, followed by
> analysis of the data for themes or issues" (Creswell, 2014, p. 196).

After study of the transcripts, there was an attempt to extract patterns and themes from the interviews and conversations (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989, p. 99). Mini-case

studies were constructed of each teacher, followed by a comparison of cases that further

explicated categories patterns and themes and the interconnection of these themes.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

The purpose of this study was to explore teacher views of evaluation in a choice-based system. Previous literature suggested that current studies of teacher evaluation focus on the school leader's role and in doing so may overshadow the teacher's perceptions of the process as well as the role of peer evaluators. The present interview-based study explored the perceptions of five teachers in one California district, relative to their choice of evaluator (peer or partner, portfolio, or administrative choice) and the evaluation process.

The data presented in this chapter are six narrative summaries, five for each individual teacher and one representing the district assistant superintendent. These summaries are based on the coded transcripts and are presented in a narrative format. The summaries describe each case, in this multi-case study, the various experiences each individual has regarding teacher evaluation. Each case describes the teacher's or administrator's views in the context of personal experiences: past, current, and future reflection of highlights and concerns with teacher evaluations in general and more specifically, with a choice-based system. Then the views of of the teachers interviewed are compared and contrasted.

Research Questions

The principal research questions for this study were:

1. What are teachers' descriptions of their choice, the choice-based evaluation process, and the evaluation process that followed? (Descriptive)

2. What do teachers perceive to be the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation process they experienced? (Opinion)

3. What differences do teachers perceive between their experiences in the current evaluation compared to previous experiences with teacher evaluation? (Comparative)

As explained in Chapter Three, each individual is represented by a pseudonym in order to maintain anonymity in the research process. Each case is labeled with the following pseudonym: Steve Piece, Briana Smith, Patti Jones, Susan Wells, and Kristy Loves.

Table 1 displays each participant's: years of teaching experience, current school level, primary subject area(s), other roles in the school, and types of evaluation experienced. Years of teaching experience ranged from 8 (Briana Smith) to 38 (Steve Piece). Three teachers worked in MUSD's high school, and two in the K-8 college preparatory school. Two teachers taught English and the others taught Social Studies, Physical Education/Science, and Multiple Subject. Other school roles played by the teacher participants included a teacher mentor and union representative (Steve Piece) and common core coordinator (Briana Smith and Patti Jones). With regards to types of evaluation experienced, two teachers emphasized three evaluation choices (peer, portfolio, and administrator) in their interviews; three others emphasized evaluation by an administrator. (See Table 1)

Table 1

Participant Characteristics

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4	Case 5
Name	Steve Piece	Briana Smith	Patti Jones	Susan Wells	Kristy Loves
Years of Teaching Experience	38	8 following 4 as substitute	13	14	16
Current School Level	High School	High School	High School	K-8 School	K-8 School
Primary Subject Area(s) Or Grade(s) Taught	Social Studies	English	English	Physical Education, Science	5th and 6th Grade Multiple Subject
Other Roles	Teacher Mentor, Union Rep.	Common Core Coordinator	Common Core Coordinator	Teacher Trainer, Teacher on Special Assignment	Response to Intervention (Rti) and Enrichment Coordinator
Types of Evaluations Experienced	Administrator Portfolio Peer	Administrator	Administrator	Administrator Portfolio	Administrator Portfolio Peer

The following several sections provide case descriptions for the three high school teachers initially (Steve Piece, Briana Smith, and Patti Jones), followed by the two K-8 teachers (Susan Wells and Kristy Loves). Lastly, a case description from the district administrator who was interviewed for this study (Brooke Grand) is included.

High School Teachers

Case One: Steve Piece

Description of Personal Experience

Steve Piece started his full time teaching career at a middle school prior to making

a transition to Monument High School (MHS) within MUSD in 1976. In reflection, he

remembered his first year well as he taught an opportunity class, a program developed for

students who benefited from a small classroom environment with greater academic and

social guidance. Steve received his California teaching credential from California State

University, Northridge in the areas of Math and English. He soon returned to the

university scene and received his Master's Degree from University of California, Santa

Barbara. Steve continued at MHS and started teaching in the social studies department.

His expertise and passion for teaching was renewed and energized when he taught United

States History and an elective called, History in the Movies.

As mentioned in previous chapters, teachers want a meaningful evaluation despite

the voluntary method utilized. Steve was no different in this train of thought. He too,

believed the principal can be a powerful tool in shaping the culture of expectation and

professionalism when it comes to teacher evaluations. Indeed, Steve stated that a teacher

evaluation, "should be the highest priority" of the administrative staff. He remembered

one principal in particular stating, "I want a teacher [who] can hit a home run."

As his years in teaching progressed, Steve found himself as a campus leader and

was being asked by the school administration to be a mentor to other teachers. He

remembered mentoring another teacher within the framework of the Peer Assistance

Review (PAR) and reflected that it could be a useful tool to have teachers mentor one

another. For the last four years of his career, Steve remained on the MHS campus as a

mentor to other teachers. At the time of the interview, May 2014, Steve was a month away

from retirement.

Opinions of Evaluation Process

Steve was passionate about students and the craft of teaching. With a long,

rewarding career in teaching, Steve reflected upon his varying experiences with teacher

evaluations throughout his career. He had distinct memories from the past based on the

administrator-only model (singular approach to evaluations) and could as easily conjure up

the many stories surrounding the choice-based system. In fact, as a union representative,

Steve was instrumental in making sure the contract language was agreed upon in this

transition from traditional teacher evaluations to a choice-based evaluation system. Steve

chose and completed the portfolio approach early on in the choice-based system but was

quick to add that he was very disappointed in the lack of follow-through from the

administrator. He painfully summarized that his hard-work did not get validated by an

administrator; there was little or no interest in reviewing his efforts. He stated: "[The

administrator] simply just signed off without reviewing or caring to ask about any portion

of my work." Steve's experience may not be unique when all too often portfolios become a

formality and not viewed as a significant evaluation piece to grow from (National Board

Resource Center, 2010). Indeed, past administrators might cringe to realize he/she was

guilty of doing just that -- not giving the teacher and the portfolio the time it deserves for a

comprehensive evaluation.

Another concern that Steve raised was that no matter the form of evaluation, many

of his past administrators never completed the pre- and post-conversation which included a

review of goals and objectives and created a comprehensive approach to the evaluation

process for that year. Surprisingly, with a frustrated tone, Steve also poignantly pointed

out a disturbing scenario for any teacher: "I had an evaluation by a principal who never

came in my class." To add to his frustration, he noted that many administrators waited

until the last minute to evaluate him and then attempted to post-date the evaluation forms.

As a talented educator and a strong advocate of the formal evaluation process,

Steve believed that

the most powerful thing in terms of evaluation is having somebody come into a

teacher's class unannounced, sometimes staying five minutes, sometimes staying

half an hour and looking at what's going on and getting a feel for what's going on.

For teachers it raises that level of anxiety -- that if I'm showing [the movie] *Dumb*

and Dumber and the principal walks in, I better have a really good explanation on

how that fits into the curriculum.

When asked if he thought unannounced visits by the administrators were welcomed by all

teachers, he replied, perhaps not surprisingly, "No, of course not."

Steve was passionate about a quality education not only for his own students, but

also for students in general. He believed a strong, "rock-solid" evaluation process should,

once again, be a top priority for any administrative staff. He stated:

Teachers who should not be in the classroom need to be counseled out of the

profession. They need to be taken out of the profession and to me that's one of the

highest priorities for principals. I think it gets moved to the bottom a lot of times

because of the everyday crises that administrators face: parents and board and

superintendents and all those other things. [Teacher evaluation] gets put down and

becomes an easy scapegoat for administrators and districts to say "This is way too

hard, this process is way too hard and it's too expensive and it's all this red tape."

And I think that it, yes, may take some effort but ... most teachers are trying to be

able to do a good job. If they're not, [then] somebody needs to come in and say,

"This is not the thing for you to do."

Steve often blamed sub-par teacher evaluations on administrators, teacher unions,

and sometimes teachers themselves. As a mentor for teachers, and having participated on

several interview committees seeking talented teachers, he said, "I'm looking for good,

competent, effective, perfectly effective teachers." All the more reason that Steve placed

much emphasis on teacher evaluation, because even he admitted that he has been fooled by

an excellent interview and then witnessed lack of follow through once the teacher was

hired: "I've gone for people who said everything right…I want that and I found I've made

mistakes."

Steve stated, "I've tried what they call the dog and pony show for the

administrative, the formal evaluation…" With this statement, Steve expressed a bit of

sarcasm in his voice in painting a scenario that was not natural and everyday but yet, could

give an administrator on overall glimpse: "I'm going to pick my best class and I'm going

to do all those other things but at least you get to see me do a lesson." His point was

simple. If an administrator could observe an effective and coherent lesson, then the

administrator should hold the teacher to that same standard daily.

Comparative Reflection about Evaluation

Following a long career in teaching, Steve ultimately that he preferred a combination of all three methods of evaluation (portfolio, administrator, and peer). He clarified that an administrator should be directly observing classrooms throughout the year, no matter what method of evaluation the teacher selected. A self-reflective tool like the portfolio was also a process that he believed allowed for professional growth. Having been a mentor to other teachers, Steve strongly believed that teachers should work together observing one another and giving feedback. He stated,

> It would be great for teachers to work with other teachers - that's taking a risk to let somebody else come in your classroom. I think we don't do that nearly enough. We don't go see what our colleagues are doing.

Teacher evaluations should be about mentoring, sharing and, according to Steve, peer assistance and review could become a permanent piece of an evaluation. However, he did not overlook that all teachers may not feel similarly. When asked why other educators may not be as receptive to this idea, Steve replied promptly, "Because you're going to judge me, you're going to talk about me, I can't control that." He continued

> I think it sounds nice to be able to give teachers a choice. People are going to do what's most comfortable for them and if they've got a buddy who they're going to say we're going to work together, do they really do that, do they really take the time to go in and do this on a professional basis.

The choice-based system did not come without its doubters though. As union president, Steve had worked with the district office, union and the administrators on the contract language of the new choice-based system. When I asked if the faculty at MHS

were happy to have a choice when the choice-based teacher evaluation system first surfaced, he stated, "…this is something new to try and I think some got disillusioned about how it sounded good in theory and the practice didn't turn out for it to be the way that they wanted." He added, "…people are going to find what's easiest for them."

Case Two: Briana Smith

Description of Personal Experience

Briana Smith was an English teacher at MHS, currently working on her doctoral degree in Educational Leadership from a southern California university. Teaching was a second career for Briana Smith. She had a very diverse professional background and multiple degrees. Briana was a financial advisor in the space industry for about ten years with a private company. She had also earned an MBA from a local university. After having children and volunteering in the classroom, she decided to return to school for her Multiple Subject Credential with supplements in business and fine arts. After working as an elementary substitute teacher for the last four years, Briana moved onto the secondary level. She was hired in 2007 as a permanent, full-time English teacher at MHS and has been there ever since.

Briana worked within the Business Academy on campus for two years. Here, she folded in business concepts into the English program at the senior level. Briana agreed that with such a diverse background, she could pull from various resources and references when it came to teaching her students. In fact, she expressed, "I'm proof that you can reinvent yourself as many times as you want." Interestingly, Briana was also a professional dancer for four years.

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Opinions of Evaluation Process

Briana explained that she was just recently evaluated and currently on-cycle to have her teacher evaluation completed. Despite the choice-based system, Briana stated, "I chose the administrative route because, in addition to teaching part-time, I am the Common Core Coordinator for the district at the secondary level." In this coordinative role, Briana focused on professional development and it was her job to get the teachers practicing and steadily incorporating common core standards into their lesson plans. "One of the Assistant Principals, "Mr. Smith," came in to evaluate me. And it was a Common Core lesson, just to see how that would work."

Interestingly, when asked if she had the option to choose a peer or portfolio – Briana was quick to state, "It's always – at MHS, it's consistently the administrator with the exception of [new teachers participating in Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment or BTSA]. ... Yes, I could have chosen portfolio or peer…Most – 99 percent of the time, people choose the administrator route." When asked if that was a campus culture, Briana replied,

> That's just the culture here and the fact that, quite honestly, it's always nice to get
> feedback. And with our portfolios, we all have group [sharing] on our school
> website, and we have shared drives. So we have access to those quite often, and so
> we just go with the feedback route.

Indeed Briana stated that she could not recall a single teacher in her high school who chose a different mode of evaluation despite the choice model.

In describing her personal experience with her evaluation with her Assistant

Principal (AP), she noted that the AP was required to meet with her prior to the evaluation

to review the goals for the year, accomplishing that before he/she formally came into her

classroom to observe. She continued

> After the observation, you set up a time for an evaluation. [The evaluation will]
>
> take you into [his/her] office and discuss [the observation] and if you have any
>
> questions of if you wanted to focus on anything else. Then you both sign off on [the
>
> evaluation], and it goes into your file.
>
> When pressed to answer the advantages and disadvantages of being evaluated by a

peer versus an administrator, Briana stated

> I think, within our department, it would be fine [to be evaluated by a peer]. I think
>
> having another teacher evaluate someone from a different department might be
>
> problematic, only because things are taught so differently. The focus, the emphasis
>
> is on different things. And... I don't think anyone would mind having another
>
> teacher come in to evaluate them, as long as what they were being evaluated on was
>
> clear.

Comparative Reflection about Evaluation

Briana stated that the choice-based teacher evaluation system might become even

more advantageous with the implementation of the Common Core standards. However,

her opinion hinged on the "ideal" of peers observing one another out of desire and not for

the sake of a formal evaluation. She elaborated

I don't necessarily mean [advantageous] as far as evaluative purposes with the

peers, but maybe just observational rounds and things like that, so you can see what

other people are doing. We're going to lots more project-based lessons than just

direct instruction with Common Core and formal and informal observations will

benefit this new approach to learning and teaching.

She believed that it would also be "extremely important to have both student and teacher

portfolios in order to evaluate the Common Core lessons" and that this "combination

[would] be a lot more strategically necessarily in the next couple of years."

Briana mentioned that "pure reflection" was what she found most meaningful in the

evaluation process. According to Briana, the evaluation process made

you really reflect on where you want to go and what you want to accomplish and

then discussion with someone else about what they saw, versus what you thought

you did. That's just invaluable, and we don't do that nearly enough, I don't think,

in the educational world.

It was also Briana's belief that some teachers might choose a portfolio or peer

option due to a sense of being more comfortable "showing results, rather than the process."

She noted

A single lesson in a whole unit is observed when the administrator comes in…A

simple glimpse…A very small part of the process. And yet, a teacher can showcase

an entire unit or an entire year in results through a portfolio or shared peer

observations throughout a particular unit or even throughout the school year.

The above comment is an interesting take on the preference of an educator. Indeed, Briana went on to say that

> It's good to give [teachers] a choice, but it's also good because, of course, being
> humans, we will choose the one that we feel most comfortable with. And I think a
> lot of that has to do with how long you've been teaching as well because, if you've
> been teaching for 30 years, you're set in your ways; you're set in your delivery.
> You're not as open to change sometimes. And you just want to say, "Look, my
> kids learned this. They have gotten the 5s on the AP test," or, "They have passed
> the CAHSEE," or whatever method you want, and that's going to change." So I
> think you should be given a choice, but perhaps you should mix it up throughout
> the evaluation time. Like, every few years, you have to do something else.

It was evident that Briana was open to her peers coming in to observe and she
believed her colleagues would be more open too sharing and mentoring if there were set
expectations. A simple observation cannot be judgmental. No matter if it is a colleague or
an administrator, according to Briana, there needs to be consistent, common language to
the expectations of the observation and follow-up.

Toward the end of the interview, it was clear that Briana stood firm that there were
pros and cons to both the standard teacher evaluation and the choice-based evaluation.
Briana proceeded to share:

> Well, in all honesty, the portfolio and the teacher evaluation; it's really just sort of
> skimmed over. I mean, at least with the English department, and I can only speak
> toward the English department and towards me, and I think with the science

department, I think quite a few of those teachers have chosen the portfolio route.

With us, it's just a little bit more difficult.

When asked whether choice-based evaluation has contributed to her job

satisfaction, Briana replied,

Yes, it has, and that's the one thing I can truly, truly say with the management here

because, while I love to teach, I also love curriculum development and Common

Core and teacher preparation and all that. And [administration] really works with

you, as far as what goals do you have? And, whether it be moving from teacher to

administration or teacher to curriculum development or lead teacher, they really

will work with you to help groom you. At least, that's my experience. And they

will give you every opportunity to pursue whatever goals you think you might

want.

Case Three: Patti Jones

Description of Personal Experience

After taking several law classes and realizing that law was not the career path for

her, Patti worked towards a career in teaching by starting for a President Clinton Initiative,

America Reads, America Counts. After receiving her Master's degree and credential, she

became a teacher at Monument High School (MHS) and has been there for the last thirteen

years. Patti is a part-time English teacher and, like Briana, serves as a part-time Common

Core Coordinator at MHS. She reported designing Common Core lessons and working

with a colleague to decide the direction of the Common Core Professional Development

for the MHS. According to Patti, the county office has actually using her lessons as prototypes for other districts and schools.

Opinions of the Evaluation Process

When asked if teachers had a choice in evaluation, Patti replied, "Yes, we have a choice, and we have not had choice the whole [past] thirteen years. …I think it was probably ten years ago that [teachers] were given a choice [of how we were evaluated]." When asked to describe her opinion or experiences or those of her colleagues regarding the choice-based system, Patti replied, "I've heard success stories, and I've heard not such successful stories." Positively speaking, she added

> My colleague across the hall, she's a science teacher, and she and another science teacher worked on this amazing portfolio. She and I have actually talked about possibly working together because it really would be awesome with the Common Core if we had two different disciplines doing a portfolio together.

On the flip side, Patti inserted a negative reflection. "I've had colleagues that they just are rushing to meet the minimum and not really getting the valid feedback." Personally, Patti had never tried any other method in the choice-based system other than the administration completing the formal observation. She sat up tall and proclaimed, "I like having administration in my room. I do, and I wish that they would come into my room more." With that statement I quickly let Patti know that I felt that is a sign of a strong and confident teacher and/or a teacher who is comfortable with feedback. Her reply was framed with an analogy, "Right. And it's like medicine. It's a practice. We're not perfect, and we need other eyes to give us that."

When the interview turned to the strengths and disadvantages of a choice-based system, Patti mentioned the concept of trust.

Some of my peers are very afraid of or not trusting of the administration. And so they are afraid that there's an ulterior motive when they come into the room. They're always afraid that they're looking specifically for something wrong, as opposed to something to improve on or something that's good. And so I know some of my colleagues, in that case, they really benefited from the idea that they have a choice, and it's lessened their stress as well.

Interestingly, Patti also saw the other side with trust and openness when it comes to administration interacting with teachers. For instance, Patti stated, "The more experienced you get, the more people don't want to ever say anything to you. They're just so – 'You're awesome,' but I always think, no matter how awesome I am, I can still improve." Patti stated that the most meaningful evaluations she has had by an administrator were done early in her career and not so much anymore.

Patti went on to explain a negative administration observation and it goes back to the idea that an administrator who only comes into a classroom two times a year for a formal observation may only get a glimpse of a lesson and not appreciate the whole unit or sequence of events pre- and post-observation. Patti explained that the administrator might get caught up in the content that Patti was teaching and not the teaching methods. Patti explained that once she was at the end of a unit and the class was reviewing the content. The administrator gave her a negative review but she asked to be evaluated a second time stating, "Maybe you should come in at the beginning of a unit or in the middle of a unit

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because maybe then you could see what it is that you're looking for, as opposed to this idea that the students are lost."

When asked about professional development or friendly reminders of the choice-based teacher evaluation system, Patti responded with a resounding

I think it would be an awesome thing to have as a reminder [a review of the choice-based evaluation process]. And I also think something else that would be awesome, like what we do in our classroom, is maybe even a modeling, just mini model, like, "This is a sample page of a portfolio. This is what some teachers chose to do," because I know that there's lots of options [for evaluation], that it's not just one method.

It seemed to be a trend that teachers have these evaluation options but they (and possibly the administrators themselves) do not really know what the expectations and objectives are in the execution phase.

As a follow up question, I asked Patti if she thought that some teachers would specifically choose a selective choice-based method based on the administrator in charge. "Yes, absolutely! At MHS, it's split –the principal would generally select to evaluate the newer teachers and the assistant principals would split the rest of the [veteran] teachers who were on cycle."

Ultimately, Patti believed that a choice-based evaluation system is good with the caveat,

I think administration needs to be in everybody's classroom regardless. They need to – and, I mean, I also feel, at a high school, your counselors really need to because, so often, our counselors are the contact for the parents. And if the

counselor has never been in the classroom, the counselor can't speak for that teacher.

With this comment, it became clear that counselors are not considered a part of the administrative staff and are not directly involved in the evaluation process. Nonetheless, it would be interesting to better understand if Patti's comment that counselors should be in the classrooms informally visiting to keep a finger on the pulse, if you will, because "counselors are the contact for the parents."

Comparative Reflections about Evaluation

It was apparent that Patti was open to a choice-based evaluation system and believes it has its merits. However, she also described another powerful tool that a team of teachers and other school personnel can apply as another evaluation application, that of structured team visits to classrooms.

They're based on medical rounds. And you have a group of people, a team, that go into classrooms, and it's very structured. It's for fifteen minutes only. There's a timekeeper there. You are only allowed to write down what you actually see. And you're like, "Teacher does blank." "Student does blank." "Question says, blank." You're just writing down observations.

Once the team has observed for the fifteen minutes, they come back and write their observations on Post-It notes and start charting trends – both positive and negative. Patti has applied this method on another campus and was quite impressed. She approached the administration at MHS to potentially carry out the same practice as she saw absolute worth in charting patterns for the school's overall campus culture and future staff development.

"Every teacher should have a team that they've done instructional rounds with because you start to see patterns in our school, patterns with our students, patterns with our teacher." Something of this nature is not necessarily for evaluative purposes but for a school to get an overarching idea of their culture and climate.

K-8 School Teachers

Case Four: Susan Wells

Description of Personal Experiences

Susan Wells has been with MUSD since 2000 and currently holds a position at Corral School as a part-time physical education teacher and part-time teacher on special assignment. As a teacher on special assignment, Susan carried out various administrative duties such as writing grants and assisting with the enrichment program. Prior to being a part-time teacher, Susan taught full-time physical education in combination with science. When asked if she was selected by the administrators to take on a specialist role, she replied that she had to apply through an application process.

Opinions of the Evaluation Process

Due to the role she was in (i.e., part-time teacher and part-time teacher on special assignment), Susan's options for a teacher evaluation were selected for her and narrowed down to a few set goals. She was evaluated on her set goals and projects tied to the grant(s) she was writing. Susan stated that she was evaluated by an administrator just the year prior, despite the fact that there was a choice in the process. When reflecting back to her previous evaluations, she replied, "Prior to that, it was always the administration that came down. I don't…I'm trying to think back to if it was really much of a choice or if it was

just…" Susan took a long pause as if to state the given…her evaluations have not been that impactful or memorable. However, she did have this to add: "I can't really recall. I know that I've never been evaluated by the same person twice." When I asked her if she thought that was a positive or negative factor in the evaluation process, her response was not a reflection of Susan as a teacher but of the system as a whole and lack of long-term meaningfulness. She replied,

> Who knows? I mean, it was one of those things that I wasn't a high-risk teacher.
> So I would get whichever new AP came in because the AP was like a revolving
> door….Or else a coordinator. I would get people like that who would come and
> observe me. And I knew it was because I did a good job, and it wasn't…I was a
> non-issue.

> Sadly, Susan's testament sheds light on the teacher's perspective of the flip side of
the evaluation process. Based on who is elected to evaluate a particular teacher is observed
as a evaluation tool before the process even begins…So it appears based on one teacher's
account.

Susan brings up a point that I, as the interviewer, hadn't really heard a teacher state out loud until now. But it was a concern that I had anticipated in the current study. Susan, without hesitation, voluntarily stated, "One of the things being a PE person that I didn't necessarily like was they knew nothing about what I was doing. So it really didn't matter what I did." She quickly followed that up with…

> Yeah. A thing that I also would notice with other teachers is the big dog and pony
> show for the one day they'd [administrators] be there. I would say that part of the

evaluation process would be if they're [teachers] on your list, they're

[administration] going to their classroom periodically, popping in throughout.

This appears to raise the point of frustration with colleagues knowing that they may

have a weaker colleague and yet, that teacher is able to pull off an acceptable evaluation

for one class period, especially if that teacher had some lead time to prepare.

Susan is not alone in her thought when she adds

I just feel like it would be more valuable if they got to see you throughout the year

as well as…because I know being a fellow teacher, sometimes you have one that's

not really strong but, man, they look good on that one day that they're being

evaluated.

Comparative Reflections about Evaluation

It was clear that Susan had an opinion of what works and what elements of the

evaluation process could be improved upon. She clearly had her frustrations. When I

switched gears and asked Susan about the advantages and disadvantages of the peer to peer

evaluation and/or the selection of a portfolio, her answer reflected the idea of trust and

whether or not you respected your colleagues enough for them to come in and evaluate

and/or critique. She was comfortable if it was a team of colleagues who were like-minded

but was quick to add that she would not feel comfortable with a fellow teacher she did not

know well or did not share the same subject or grade level.

She reflected upon a positive experience when an AP, who had PE experience,

evaluated her and gave her meaningful feedback. I added that it is nice when someone

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really knows your craft and can give genuine feedback. She agreed indeed with the caveat that administrators still need to 'pop' in on a regular, unannounced basis.

When pressed with the question, "Do you think teachers want someone popping in on a regular basis?" Susan's response was similar to the other reactions I received.

It depends upon the teacher. If they're comfortable and feel good, then I would say yeah, they'd have no problem with that. But I think a majority – and I never thought of myself as the typical teacher – would be the ones on guard.

It appears that teachers want, not only themselves to succeed, the students to succeed but overwhelming they want their colleagues to succeed. The idea that Susan continues to make (and again she is not alone in this thought) is that in order to succeed, there needs to be an accountability factor present and that comes with consistent, realistic and a very visible, high standards evaluation system in place. My comment was reinforcing her thoughts. "As a colleague, you probably want the teachers that you know are struggling to really get the nurturing they need, or the mentoring they need, or kind of the push they need."

Susan's comeback to my last comment was motivating and good-willed in nature. It became quickly evident that this is all too often a reality and a frustration of many colleagues. She stated, "If [teachers] only knew somebody was watching, they would probably step up their game because they could. But because they can get away with it [sub-par performance], and it's easy, why would you want to go the extra mile if you don't need to?"

Interesting to note, Susan was relishing in the idea of an administrator sitting with her to assist in the outlining of her goals. Clearly, Susan is appreciative of an administrator who can be fully active member of the evaluation process. "So I always liked the administrators that would sit down with you, and you could have that conversation on what exactly those goals should look like."

Despite the idea that Susan has chosen an administrator to observe her for most if not all of her evaluations, Susan does appreciate having a choice. However, like many who were interviewed prior to her and after her, she appreciates the administration observation regardless of the formal method that was chosen. "I think the choice-based system is good. But definitely, there should be that administrator piece…"

Trust and lack of time and support for the teachers and administrators were a few of the selected concerns that Susan mentioned with the evaluation process. As an administrator understanding that having the appropriate time to dedicate to evaluations is crucial. I was quick to add, "It's just people want the feedback. People want it to be reflective and good conversation and very collaborative in spirit. But in theory, it's just – it sounds good, but it's just not happening because of time." Susan agreed and added that when there were three administrators sharing the evaluation process, "…it was a little more meaningful."

Case Five: Kristy Loves

Description of Personal Experience

With varied teaching experiences early in her educational career, Kristy Loves has a positive grasp on targeting the needs of the learner and is able to fulfill various roles

asked of her. She has fifteen years of teaching experience – nine at MUSD and six at another district in the state. At the time of the interview, Kristy was teaching one period of sixth grade and working as an enrichment specialist for the remainder of the day. As an enrichment specialist, she assisted in the facilitation of various small group programs that aligned to the needs of the students. Kristy has a degree in Biology as well as a multiple subject teaching credential. She has had the opportunity to teach kindergarten through tenth grade. "I've taught elementary, middle and high school all in this district." Additionally, Kristy has already earned her Master's Degree and administrative credential. To that end, Kristy proudly proclaimed, "I feel like I'm the multi-use employee. I bounce wherever they need me."

When asked whether she would like to transition into a full-time administrative role, Kristy promptly replied, "I don't think so. I had a really, really rough one [year]. And it turned me off a lot." With that we moved on and rebounded back to her teaching experience. She explains,

> I prefer the middle school, elementary school 'bridge', that fifth and sixth grade. I like the getting ready for middle school mode and the independence. Those are my favorites. They still want that little bit of encouragement and the fifth graders, it's all about getting ready for the middle school and getting them ready to be independent. I really like that.

Through teaching at a K-8 school, Kristy was able to get creative with the various activities she presented to the different grade levels. Indeed, she was proud to mention a mentoring class that she oversaw with sixth through eighth-grade students who were

interested in possibly teaching someday. "The students are like little buddies and go down to the primary grades and build that connection with the kids."

Opinions of Evaluation Process

In review of a choice-based evaluation system, Kristy has been open to trying all three methods of evaluation and has learned a lot through the varied processes.

I've done all three. I've done the portfolio. I've done the peer method for the first time this year. I'd never done the peer method before. I did that this year, which was pretty enlightening. And I've done the regular traditional evaluations, as well.

When asked why she chose the methods she chose, Kristy explains the process,

I was forced to do the general observation ones [method] until my cycle got to a certain amount of time. So we did those for quite a long time, and that was fine. And I am fine doing those. I don't mind those at all. Most of our principals come in more often, so they see you on a regular basis. So I wanted to try something new.

In the past, Kristy was a gifted and talented education (GATE) facilitator and chose the portfolio method of evaluation to showcase many of the enrichment-based projects that she and the students were working on throughout the year. Her opinion of this method was minimal and neutral as she quickly shifted her focus to the peer evaluation method that she just recently completed with the teacher next door.

My colleague next door encouraged this. We have similar philosophies in teaching, but we have drastically different teaching styles. So it was really

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interesting to gain some perspective on how a teaching style – yet the same

philosophy –can change the dynamic of the classroom and the students.

To her surprise, Kristy learned a lot about her own teaching and about her approach

to evaluation when she chose the peer model of evaluation. "I gained a lot from it and I

did not expect to." Interesting to note, Kristy doesn't think her peer learned as much or

gained as much as she did in the process. Kristy mentioned that she was surprised when

she took on the role of administrator instead of a peer when observing her colleagues

lesson.

The biggest take away for Kristy was that each teacher can have a very different

style of teaching and yet be just as effective in delivering the content or material.

Additionally, since Kristy and her colleague share some of the same students, Kristy was

quick to pick up on the fact that many of the

students' various personality traits came out differently based on the teacher's

dynamics and the teacher's personality. I learned a lot about my style, and how the

things I do impact the kids, and what was positive and what I needed to clarify. It

was helpful.

Comparative Reflections about Evaluation

When I asked Kristy Loves if she found one method to be more meaningful than

another, she was quite reflective and diplomatic in her response.

I think they all have their merits. I think they all have something really beneficial.

There's something about the administrator coming in and evaluating you that steps

it up. I think it's good for teachers to be able to plan an actual scripted lesson plan that they actually get to implement.

However, it is poignant to point out that Kristy also mentioned that when she was participating in the peer evaluation with her colleague, it was her colleague that had to step up her game and take it seriously because Kristy expected the most meaningful and substantial evaluation regardless of who performed the evaluation. She wanted out of it what she was putting into to it and according to Kristy, her colleague quickly became much more serious about the process when Kristy shared her observations.

Kristy was not alone when she mentions that it is to everyone's benefit that the administrator come and observe regardless of the method of evaluation chosen by the various teachers on cycle. Even though Kristy and her colleague chose to work together in the peer evaluation method, Kristy mentions that her administrator continued to play an active role in guiding them through a more meaningful process. "And having an administrator check in with you, and making sure you're observing each other. "How is the progress in terms of growth versus evaluative?" so, "Are you seeing observations? Are you learning things? Are you implementing anything different?" She reiterates several times over that regardless of the method, an administrator needs to formally sit down and check in with each of the teachers. "Even if they don't have to document and submit paperwork, have a discussion of the growth or progress that they're working on."

As a side note, I asked Kristy about the portfolio method and whether she observed or had experienced any strengths or weaknesses of this type of evaluation. Without hesitation, she stated, "It's boring. It can be very boring. It can feel like being in college

again." She described the portfolio as a task that is very detached to the classroom. She was quick to add, "some administrators don't even read it. And some will sit down with you and talk and, "How did this go? This looks really good." She goes on to explain a specific portfolio project she completed and how genuinely interested the administrator appeared to be by giving her time to validate her project in person.

> And that principal – we actually sat and talked about them, and actually talked about it and discussed it, versus just submitting it on a piece of paper. And it was real. And if I could talk about it, then you actually know that I did it, versus me just writing it on paper, and you asking me a question, and me going, "Um…." – because I didn't really do it. Because you can get away with that with a portfolio; with not doing anything.

It is apparent that she, and perhaps others, have been frustrated by the fact that some teachers get through the evaluation process with little to no effort.

When asked if the choice-based system is positive overall, Kristy promptly responded, "Absolutely. It's a positive. But it's all about the teacher and how they take it seriously or not. And how they actually implement it. If it's purposeful." Due to the fact that Kristy has her administrative credential and has considered becoming an administrator someday, I asked if she would offer a choice-based system to her teachers. "I would. Because I think they need to have some sort of empowerment, some sort of decision-making. And it gives them a little bit more freedom and a little more choice, and I think that is important."

It is evident that Kristy appreciates and is willing to try new approaches to her teaching, and in turn, is open to receiving feedback in various methods of evaluation. In fact, she reflects on a positive experience when an administrator evaluated her and it all came down to the approach. When asked what made the evaluation process with this particular administrator so positive, Kristy remembered,

The feedback that she gave - it wasn't the traditional administrative feedback that we have: teacher does this; teacher does this. It wasn't very dry. It was very warm; and observations of interactions with students; observations of the things that really impact the classroom: organization; things that make a difference. Not just the lesson plan. It's, "How do you interact with your kids?" The human element.

When pressed for any negative experiences surrounding the evaluation process, Kristy was quick to share with me a year she had an administrator that came in for only a few minutes and gave her a glowing review. Her reflection of this meaningless and empty encounter was something many teachers might associate with. Simply stated, "Nothing I could go off of; nothing I could grow from; nothing I could reflect on; nothing I could be proud of. Nothing at all - It was just dry. But nothing was negative. Just dry."

We steered the conversation back to the positive and Kristy reemphasized that teachers really do want their administrators in their classrooms. "Supportive and not judgmental. We need that feedback now a days because we don't get feedback." Kristy explained that validation of a positive performance could go a long way for all teachers and the school too. But she also realistically acknowledged that time can be a big

constraint in terms of honoring the evaluation process as it was meant to be carried out. To that end, she also stated that a choice evaluation system could only be effective if the teachers and administrators take it seriously.

District Administrator

Case 6: Brooke Grand

Description of Personal Experience

Brooke Grand is the Associate Superintendent of Personnel in MUSD. However, it is a highlight to note that she started her career with MUSD at MHS as a Language Arts and Social Studies teacher in 1998. She had been with the district for sixteen years and the choice-based system of evaluation was in place when she started as a teacher.

As the Associate Superintendent of Personnel, Brooke had a larger perspective of the evaluation process, especially having been a teacher working within the choice-based system and now as a district administrator, overseeing the entire process. Indeed, she was quick to correct the title they [MUSD] used for the choice-based evaluation method - MUSD calls it The Alternative Evaluation Form.   Therefore, a teacher can have the traditional administrative observation or the Alternative Evaluation Form, meaning that the peer and portfolio models could be chosen as the alternative forms of evaluation.

In her present position, Brooke outlines the system of evaluation stating, "Teachers have to be tenured and in good standing – in other words, in our traditional system you either get an "S" or a "U", so you have to have all S's on the traditional from your past too." She proceeded:

You would have had at least two evaluations: two years of evaluations if you start at Probationary 1 – Prob1; Prob 2 and then your third year is tenure. That year you really aren't evaluated because once you hit tenure you have one year off, and then the following year you are evaluated. So we do [evaluation] every other year, but when you are a ten-year tenured teacher, then you can go on to an every five-year cycle. However, if at any time a principal would like to interrupt that cycle, and there is some cause for concern they can put them [a teacher] back on every other year cycle. And it's at the principal's discretion. That's in our contract. It could be any issue. Bit it's not defined. So in that respect our contract is very good.

When asked about the origin of the choice-based system within MUSD, Brooke gave a historical view into the transition process.

The choice-based system started in the 1990s. I don't know the exact date, but it originated through the Association for California School Administrators (ACSA). And they were encouraging alternative forms of evaluation that were more meaningful, possibly, than a dog and pony show – so to speak.

She further explained that principals and superintendents were very involved in ACSA and when they heard about the alternative options through this professional organization, administration shared the idea with the teachers' union and they and the district negotiated a new evaluation system to provide teachers with evaluation options. When asked about negotiations, Brooke states that the negotiations were smooth and uneventful as the alternative forms/choice-based evaluations were very well received. "It was written and proposed by management and it wasn't much of a collaborative effort, to

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be honest. But they [union] were very happy with it." When asked if it was well received by the teachers, Brooke replies, "Well, I think everybody welcomed it."

She mentioned that in the peer process, a teacher could select two other teachers to work with (up to three teachers working together) and a teacher could also select to present a new program as a portfolio option. She continued to add clarity to the alternative form of evaluation system by stating, "Typically where it is done the most is at the elementary or at grade level – like third grade." She gave the example that all of the teachers at a grade level will get together and select a project; for example, the implementation of instructional technology. All of the grade level teachers would get together to write up the proposal and the principal would have to approve the project proposal.

She proceeded to add that the school, as a whole, could benefit from teachers coming together to pilot a project, as was the case for a few of the schools in MUSD. She mentioned instructional technology and more specifically, two campuses were piloting a Response to Intervention (RtI) project. So teachers could exercise the initiative to choose a project allowing for flexibility, collegiality and innovation. To back up this claim, Brooke reiterated, "Results say that teachers do well when they have autonomy, and this gives them some autonomy to develop their own professional development."

When asked about the secondary level and why many of the teachers appeared to be driven by the more traditional model of evaluation – administrative observation, Brooke replied with,

Yes, at the secondary level it is rare to see the secondary teachers do the project. And I don't know if it's because there is a time commitment, or a culture of a little

more, "My classroom is my classroom type of thing.", as opposed to being more collaborative.

She stated that the vast majority of the teachers at the middle and high levels chose to be formally evaluated by the administrator. Besides the time factor, she further explained that perhaps the difference is in the culture of elementary schools being more team oriented and project based; therefore, the tendency naturally leans towards a more alternative form of evaluation system.

Teachers who were on cycle for evaluation all have deadlines to meet, as does the administrator.

They have deadlines for submitting a proposal – it has to be submitted by October 1st, and then the principal approves it by October 15th, and then they have a mandatory midpoint progress check, which they'll have no later than January 15th.

When asked if the administrators were still expected to observe teachers, both formally and informally, regardless of the alternative form of evaluation, Brooke promptly replied, " Oh yes, Walk-throughs, yes. That's part of the culture here." Having been a principal and now overseeing Personnel, she realizes the importance of walk-throughs and stated, "It's actually an expectation of our principals. They are to get into every teacher's classroom at least once a month. That's an expectation." She quickly backed that up by stating that they [MUSD] would like more frequent visits into classrooms but she also understands the reality of time.

Interestingly, Brooke Grand added that principals have to show documentation that they have visited and observed the teachers on their campus. "So basically they would see

each teacher nine times minimum. And it could be even a five or ten minute visit." She added that frequent visits allows for an administrator to learn so much about teachers and the overall campus climate.

When addressing the topic of strengths and weaknesses of the alternative form/choice-based evaluations, Brooke, once again, mentioned that a strong principal is going to have an agenda to have certain teachers perform various projects for the benefit of the whole school as the vehicle to get the evaluation completed. "Well the strength is that you can get some of your district priorities; goals; encourage teachers to move that way, and build strength in a particular program or something." However, she was careful to note that teachers like autonomy and want to take ownership of their classroom; which feeds into their creativity and some of their own interests. So finding that balance and the acceptance of a wide range of projects was key between teachers and administrators.

When she discussed weaknesses, she mentioned the clear divide between the elementary and secondary. She also mentioned that administrators need friendly reminders that they are still expected to observe all classrooms regardless of the method of evaluation that a teacher chose. She explained a potential pep talk to principals, "This is not you giving up your opportunity of going into the classroom at all, in fact if anything, this might help the teacher attend to an area that they need to approve." Some teachers want to get better at certain things and they may be encouraged to address that area of improvement for future evaluations. This being another example of a positive element of having choice, "It allows the teachers to choose areas where they may improve their practice." However,

once again, she recognized that this could be time consuming and stressful to the teacher who may already be overwhelmed.

When asked if the alternative form of evaluation has had a positive impact on teaching and learning, Brooke genuinely paused and replied, "Well, I think it gives them permission to try to take risks and to try new programs or new processes - To try something different. Absolutely! Because we want to encourage [risk-taking]."

She also added, "I predict with Common Core, that we might have more secondary teachers choose the alternative." Her rationale was that the Common Core Standards are asking teachers to approach their units and lesson plans differently, hence, it lends itself to a redefined approached already. To that end, teachers are asked to become more project based and redesign units to include multiple content areas.

Comparison Across Teacher Cases

Introduction

Previous literature suggested that a choice-based teacher evaluation system has allowed for an open dialogue and a more open-ended approach to teacher evaluations within some school districts across California. For the purpose of this study, five teachers within the Master Unified School District, along with one district administrator within the same district, were interviewed. Through a series of questions, all six individuals expressed varying perspectives as well as similarly aligned thoughts of the choice-based teacher evaluation system.

With regard to demographic/background characteristics, all of the teachers

interviewed had at least eight years in the field of K – 12 teaching. It was evident that the

teachers involved were well versed in education and are highly respected by their peers and

administrative teams. To that end, each were asked to assist in leadership roles on campus.

For example, Steve Piece was a mentor teacher, Patti Jones was a Co-Coordinator for

Common Core and Kristy Loves was an RtI Enrichment Specialist, to name a few.

All of the teachers, including the assistant superintendent of personnel, emphasized

the importance of a strong teacher evaluation process. Additionally, all five teachers

interviewed directly or indirectly expressed it was best to maintain a choice-based system

versus the traditional administrative model. Kristy Love stated that a choice-based

evaluation system, "allows for empowerment; some sort of decision-making. It gives them

[teachers] freedom and a little more choice, and I think that is important." Steve Piece

responded, "I think it sounds nice to be able to give teachers a choice and people are going

to do what's most comfortable for them." Throughout his interview, he suggested, teacher

evaluations need to be valued more and be observed as a greater, more meaningful tool

regardless of the choice. Briana Smith, who chose the administrator option, indicated that

some teachers might choose a portfolio or peer option due to a sense of being more

comfortable "showing results, rather than the process." She noted

A single lesson in a whole unit is observed when the administrator comes in…A

simple glimpse…A very small part of the process. And yet, a teacher can showcase

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an entire unit or an entire year in results through a portfolio or shared peer

observations throughout a particular unit or even throughout the school year.

And, Patti Jones who chose administrator evaluation stated:

My colleague across the hall, she's a science teacher, and she and another science

teacher worked on this amazing portfolio. She and I have actually talked about

possibly working together because it really would be awesome with the Common

Core if we had two different disciplines doing a portfolio together.

It was also very clear that elementary and secondary teachers had a delineated

thought process when it came to the choice-based teacher evaluations. It was stated by

several teachers that the secondary teachers embraced choice, however due to time

constraints and, at times, a lack of collaboration, most selected the administrative

observation. A secondary teacher, Briana Smith states, "Most – 99 percent of the time,

people choose the administrative route." She was speaking about her secondary

colleagues. She wasn't alone in this thought as the administrator interviewed for the study

(Brooke Grand) also made a point to say that, "Elementary and secondary are different

cultures. [Elementary] is more team oriented; project based…as opposed to secondary –

although with Common Core, it might get interesting."

It appeared to be an assumption that teachers understood and had a clear vision of

the choice-based teacher evaluation process. At times, among teachers who did not select

the peer or portfolio option themselves, they nonetheless stressed the advantages of those

options.

Further, it was apparent to some teachers that staff development and teacher training could be a helpful and possibly necessary component in order to better define and review the process. Further, not only did most teachers believe administration should be in the classrooms on a regular basis, the teachers interviewed conveyed that they would like the feedback to be constructive and motivating versus judgmental in nature.

Common Core was also a driving force to review the choice based evaluation system with greater applications. Briana Smith stated, " I think it will become more advantageous with the implementation of Common Core to have a combination of the three. So I think probably a combination will be a lot more strategically necessary in the next couple of years."

Differences

There were also some differences among the teachers who were interviewed. With regards to background, three teachers (Steve Piece, Briana Smith and Patti Jones) taught at the high school level and two (Susan Wells, Kristy Loves) at the elementary level (K-8). The five teachers also taught in a variety of subject areas including social studies (Steve Piece), English (Briana Smith and Patti Jones), physical education and science (Susan Wells) and 5th/6th grade multiple-subject (Kristy Loves). Moreover, differences existed in the evaluation options exercised by the teachers as suggested above. Specifically, three teachers, two at the high school level (Briana Smith, Patti Jones) and one at the K-8 level (Susan Wells) chose the administrator option. Two others, one at the high school level (Steve Piece) and one at the elementary level (Kristy Loves) spoke of all three options experienced in their career (administrator, portfolio, and peer).

There were two major differences in opinion about evaluation generally. The first had to do with the value of having others, typically administrators, observe their teaching. Four of the five teachers mentioned that they would appreciate the administrator(s) coming through their classroom regardless of their voluntary choice of evaluation. They saw formal and informal visits by the administration team a necessary tool to keep a positive morale and a nurturing partnership between the front office and the classroom culture.

Most advocated additional or unannounced observations, or simply the value of administrative observation. For example, Steve Piece said, "The most powerful thing in terms of evaluation is having somebody come into a teacher's class unannounced, sometimes staying five minutes, sometimes staying half an hour and looking at what's going on and getting a feel for what's going on." And, Patti Jones stated, "I like having administration in my room. I do, and I wish that they would come into my room more." Kristy Loves added, "There's something about the administration coming in and evaluating you that steps it up." But she added, evaluation must be meaningful, and provided an example of an administrative evaluation in which there was "nothing I could grow from" or "be proud of." Brooke Grand, the district administrator, had similar thoughts regarding regular visits by the administrative staff regardless of a choice-based system, as regards frequency of evaluation. She described a built-in district expectation that each teacher will be observed at least once a month by an administrator; equaling nine visits a year.

However, Susan Wells believed that although there should be "that administrative piece" in a choice-based system, many teachers would not be receptive to regular classroom visits by the administrator.

It depends upon the teacher. If they're comfortable and feel good, then I would say yeah, they'd have no problem with that. But I think a majority – and I never thought of myself as the typical teacher – would be the ones on guard.

Interesting to note, and a bit of a twist in opinion, Patti Jones noted that a choice-based system might be particularly beneficial for teachers who were cautious about having administration enter their classrooms. As she noted,

Some of my peers are very afraid of or not trusting of the administration. And so they are afraid that there's an ulterior motive when they come into the room. They're always afraid that they're looking specifically for something wrong, as opposed to something to improve on or something that's good. And so I know some of my colleagues, in that case, they really benefited from the idea that they have a choice, and it's lessened their stress as well.

In addition, and generally speaking, teachers had varied ideas of what might be helpful in making the teacher evaluation more effective. For example, Patti Jones suggested the value of observational rounds, likening teaching to medical practice. She also mentioned that in high schools, counselors might be included as classroom observers because "so often, our counselors are the contact for the parents." Kristy Loves and Susan Wells stressed the value of feedback in the evaluation process. Susan, for example, said "It's just people want the feedback. People want it to be reflective and good conversation and very collaborative in spirit. But ... it's just not happening because of time." Kristy Loves said that feedback needed to be "supportive and not judgmental," adding, "We need that feedback now a days because we don't get feedback." Steve Piece indicated that

having done a portfolio he had wanted more follow-through, validation and review by an administrator. Others stressed that teachers should be more aware of evaluation options and how they might be exercised.

In sum, teachers embraced the value of a choice-based system and could point to specific examples where the less than typical choices -- peers or portfolios -- might have been helpful to themselves or to other teachers. Further, teachers offered a variety of suggestions about methods of improving teacher evaluation including more frequent classroom observations and within a choice-based system making teachers aware of potential options.

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CHAPTER V

OVERVIEW, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

As of late, teachers in some California districts have been introduced to a choice-based system of teacher evaluation based on the negotiations between unions and the districts (Collinson et al., 2009; Conley & Glasman, 2008; Palazuelos & Conley, 2007). As such, it is important to understand the perspectives of teachers regarding teacher evaluation systems that are based on teacher choice of evaluator. The research questions for this study were:

1.   What are teachers' descriptions of their choice, the choice-based evaluation process, and the evaluation process that followed?

2.   What do teachers perceive to be the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation process they experienced?

3.   What differences do teachers perceive between their experiences in the current evaluation compared to previous experiences with teacher evaluation?

This chapter first presents an overview of the study. Some relationships between study findings and previous literature are then addressed, followed by implications for research and implications for practice.

Overview of the Study

Chapter I provided a background about some perceived deficiencies and questions about the teacher evaluation systems present in many public school districts. It then outlined some policy developments in California since 1997, when the state developed the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP). One development, in some

districts, was to place renewed emphasis on creating standards-based systems of teacher

evaluation, with some of those further placing an emphasis on choice-based teacher

evaluation systems. This chapter explained the purpose of this study, which was to explore

teachers' views of evaluation in a choice-based system in a medium-sized, suburban

California district.

Chapter II reviewed select literature related to teacher evaluation for this study. In

this chapter, teacher evaluation was discussed as a reflective tool; thus, enabling conditions

such as the provision of high quality feedback were identified. Among the studies and

conceptual overviews of teacher evaluation reviewed in this chapter were those of

Collinson et al. (2009), Sosanya-Tellez (2010), and Tuytens and Devos (2009). In addition,

the chapter reviewed some emerging trends aimed toward altering teacher evaluation

including the movement toward a choice-based evaluation model in some California

districts.

Chapter III discussed some parameters of the study and provided the framework by

which the study was conducted. The chapter reviewed the setting of the study and provided

the demographics of the school district and specific schools from which the teachers and

administrator were giving their point of reference. The school district served

approximately 7,000 students in a medium-sized suburban area situated northwest of Los

Angeles. Master Unified School District (MUSD) included six K-5 elementary schools,

one K-8 school, two middle schools, one comprehensive high school, and one continuation

high school. Demographics within the district were seen as diverse, with approximately 34

percent eligible for free or reduced priced lunches, 55 percent minority students, and 19 percent English language learners (ed.data.k12.ca.us, 2013-14).

The chapter proceeded to review the qualitative methods, including the permission and consent processes, the interview protocol, and the final transcription. Upon receiving permission from the district superintendent, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the consent of five teachers and one district administrator. As suggested by Creswell (2014), the interviews were conducted in a "natural setting," the teacher's classroom or the administrator's office. The interviews were recorded and verbatim transcripts produced. The transcripts were reviewed in order to extract patterns and themes from the interviews and conversations (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989).

Chapter IV presented the data in six narrative summaries, five for each individual teacher and one representing the district assistant superintendent. The summaries were based on the coded transcripts. Each summary described the teacher's or administrator's views in the context of personal experiences: past, current, and future reflection of highlights and concerns with teacher evaluations, and more specifically with the choice-based evaluation system. The views and opinions of the teachers and administrator were then compared and contrasted.

Chapter V was the concluding chapter that outlined the previous chapters and framed the study's purpose as well as summarized the findings. More specifically, the current chapter described the relationship of the current study to previous literature and various implications for future research and practice.

Relationship to Previous Literature

Teachers fundamentally want to develop and serve their students and campus community with pride and purpose. However, with education under social scrutiny, numerous scholars have reviewed the accountability practices of the teaching profession and have begun to question the best way to provide greater development and a more constructive framework for teacher evaluations. A collective effort was put forth in some California school districts to shift the practices of teacher evaluation systems to become more collaborative and allow for teacher selection of various evaluation options. In the district under study, a choice-based teacher evaluation system had been developed in the late 1990s. The five teachers interviewed were asked for their individual opinions regarding the strengths, weaknesses and overall comparisons of the various options (portfolio, peer, administrative) they were provided.

All of the teachers, including the assistant superintendent of personnel, emphasized the importance of a strong teacher evaluation process in general. Additionally, all five teachers interviewed directly or indirectly expressed that it was best to maintain a choice-based system versus the traditional administrative model. One interviewee linked the choice-based evaluation system to the provision of teacher empowerment, decision-making, and freedom. This view is consistent with Peterson and Peterson's (2006) suggestion that teachers "share the authority involved in personnel evaluation" (as cited in Sosanya-Tellez, 2010).

The potential advantages of a choice-based model in teacher evaluations have also been suggested in previous works by Palazuelos and Conley (2008), Palazuelos (2007),

Conley and Glasman (2008), and Collinson et al. (2009). For example, Conley and

Glasman suggested that choice in evaluation could be viewed as part of a larger shift in

teacher evaluation that would "alter the adversarial tone of evaluation" (p. 77). They noted

that this type of evaluation system could be part of a professional model that would

structure both the school organization and teacher evaluation. In this model, collaboration,

teacher risk taking, and two-way communication between evaluators and teachers would

be capitalized upon. In making this point, they cited Palazuelos (2007) survey study of 300

teachers from three high schools and interview of one teacher in a district using a choice-

based model in California. They noted:

> In the district studied, a veteran English teacher remarked that the "idea that
>
> teachers would have some choice as to how they were going to be evaluated" has
>
> been of continuous appeal to teachers (Palazuelos, 2007, p. 136). ...In addition,
>
> [this teacher] described her partner collaboration with an agriculture teacher, as a
>
> "great collaboration" that featured exchange of information about student writing
>
> and reading" (p. 79).

This emphasis on teacher collaboration is consistent with related literature. Indeed,

several teachers interviewed for this study mentioned that aspects of the evaluation system,

particularly the choice of a peer evaluator or a group portfolio project might further teacher

collaboration. Similarly, Leithwood (2001) recommended that approaches to

accountability should encourage school leaders to use the most progressive and

professional practices to assist staff in the identification of professional standards for their

work. Leithwood seemed to suggest that teacher evaluations should continue to be

observed as an opportunity to extend the collaboration component and highlight extensive hard work and positive strides being made campus wide. More specifically, and perhaps more importantly, is the increased teacher autonomy and responsibility.

One contribution of this study was to point to further potential advantages of choice in teacher evaluation beyond previous literature cited (e.g., Palazuelos, 2007). For example, in this study, one high school teacher contrasted administrator observation with what could be accomplished in a portfolio that highlighted "results" as opposed to process.

> A single lesson in a whole unit is observed when the administrator comes in…A simple glimpse…A very small part of the process. And yet, a teacher can showcase an entire unit or an entire year in results through a portfolio or shared peer observations throughout a particular unit or even throughout the school year.

And, another high school teacher who chose administrator evaluation pointed to the value of portfolios as an evaluation option:

> My colleague across the hall, she's a science teacher, and she and another science teacher worked on this amazing portfolio. She and I have actually talked about possibly working together because it really would be awesome with the Common Core if we had two different disciplines doing a portfolio together.

In addition, it was found in this study that teachers perceived that time constraints in secondary schools may have encouraged teachers to select administrative observation (as opposed to partner or portfolio options). The notion that time constraints are an issue in teacher evaluation has appeared in previous literature; for example, by Frase and Streshly (1994). They noted that lack of time was prevalent, but could also be a "popular

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excuse for not spending more time in classrooms and conducting evaluations" (p. 53).

They stated:

> We know that everyone has twenty-four hours in a day. The fact is that successful
>
> principals do spend a major portion (40-50%) of their day in classrooms while
>
> unsuccessful ones do not (Sagor,1992). This discrepancy is a simple matter of
>
> priorities at every level of school administration.

> This observation, as applied to this study, might suggest that could more time and

attention be provided to administrative observation, not only might the quality of

administrative observation improve, but also teachers and schools might make use of a

fuller array of evaluation options.

Another study finding was that not only did most teachers believe administration

should be in the classrooms on a regular basis -- but teachers conveyed that they would

like the feedback to be constructive and motivating versus judgmental in nature. Frase and

Streshley (1994) echoed this sentiment as well, noting:

> Evaluation or supervision can and should be a means of providing feedback and
>
> direction for improvement. The value of feedback is supported in many
>
> professions. To paraphrase Bennis and Nanus (1985), awareness of a need for
>
> improvement is the springboard of hope. Accurate and straightforward feedback
>
> regarding performance, whether it comes directly from an evaluator, mentor, or
>
> professional analysis of a videotape, is crucial to improvement. As Blanchard
>
> (1981) whimsically but earnestly said, "feedback is the breakfast of champions."
>
> This is particularly true for educators. Research report after research report tells us

that educators' motives for being in the profession are altruistic. They want to serve; they want to help others learn. Constructive feedback is fundamental to achieving this goal. (p. 51).

Interestingly, Common Core was also a driving force to review the choice based evaluation system with greater applications. As one teacher stated, " I think it will become more advantageous with the implementation of Common Core to have a combination of the three [evaluation options]. So I think probably a combination will be a lot more strategically necessary in the next couple of years." Thus, greater attention might be provided in the literature to the implications of the Common Core reform effort for teacher evaluation policy and practice.

An additional study finding was that most teachers mentioned that they would appreciate administrators' visits/observations in their classrooms, regardless of which evaluation option they exercised. They saw formal and informal visits by the administration team as a necessary tool to keep a positive morale and a nurturing partnership between the front office and the classroom culture. As one teacher stated, "The most powerful thing in terms of evaluation is having somebody come into a teacher's class unannounced, sometimes staying five minutes, sometimes staying half an hour and looking at what's going on and getting a feel for what's going on." And, another: "I like having administration in my room. I do, and I wish that they would come into my room more." These observations are consistent with the emphasis in the literature on administrative involvement and feedback (Kimball, 2002; Tuytens & Devos, 2009).

However, one teacher speculated that although there should be "that administrative piece" in a choice-based system, some teachers might not be receptive to frequent classroom visits by the administrator. This adds a cautionary note to literature advocating this administrative involvement.

It depends upon the teacher. If they're comfortable and feel good, then I would say yeah, they'd have no problem with that. But I think a majority – and I never thought of myself as the typical teacher – would be the ones on guard.

Implications for Future Research

This study contributed to existing literature on teacher evaluation by exploring the perspectives of teachers within one district that utilized a choice-based approach to evaluation. Although this type of evaluation had become increasingly utilized in districts in California, it has rarely been investigated. Among the limitations of this study of five teachers and one administrator were:

1. Not all of the teachers interviewed in the study know of any other method of evaluation but the choice-based model. Therefore, comparisons with other models of evaluation were not possible for some study participants.

2. The study was conducted with a small sample of teachers in a single medium sized (suburban) district in southern California. A district with other characteristics (urban, rural) or with a different method of teacher choice of evaluation might have yielded different results.

Given these limitations, a different study could examine an evaluation system that had been more recently implemented, whereby teachers might compare previous

evaluations with an administrator model with a choice-based model. In addition, a study could examine a choice-based model in a different kind of district, such as one that was urban or rural.

Several additional studies could be envisioned. First, a study could be conducted that would capture administrators' or union leaders' views of a choice-based system. These views might capture the administrative demands and requirements of the system. A previous study (Palazuelos, 2007) noted that according to one teacher interviewed the evaluation system would not be burdensome so "long as everyone understands what you're supposed to be," "make sure teachers understand what their responsibilities are," and "communicate with and monitor everybody." A study of administrative perspectives might expand on these considerations. Second, a future study might compare different approaches to choice-based evaluation. For example, some districts might elect to provide only two choices, or require that teachers not always choose the same method. Third, a study of the conduct of labor-management negotiations could be conducted, providing insight for other districts or union organizations contemplating such an approach.

Implications for Practice

This study also has several implications for practice, particularly for district administrators and/or union leaders who are considering developing or implementing a choice-based teacher evaluation system.

1.   Study findings suggest that staff development might be considered at the district level for site administrators and at the school sites for all teachers. A simple review at the beginning of each school year might benefit all of the stakeholders. As one participant in

this study stated, "I think it would be an awesome thing to have as a reminder [a review of the choice-based evaluation process]." Staff development could provide for the objectives, expectations from both the teachers and the administrators. It would allow for clear parameters and define an infrastructure that all parties can respect and uphold.

2.   Staff development could also reinforce the professional language to be used throughout the process of a choice based evaluation system. It would allow for transparency and a common language. For instance, the portfolio option was viewed as useful yet also at times ambiguous in terms of the end product.

3.   Districts and unions might consider giving examples of group portfolio projects that could be undertaken by teachers. One teacher in this study suggested "modeling," i.e., "This is a sample page of a portfolio. This is what some teachers chose to do." To take another example, Common Core standards were mentioned by several interviewees in relation to possible portfolio projects and/or a project-based peer models. Examples of these and other projects might encourage more district teachers to participate in this less utilized option in the choice based evaluation system in this study.

 4.   Districts could consider differences between elementary and secondary schools in their design of such a system. The district administrator interviewed for the study suggested that the culture of secondary schools was less inviting for such an approach. In addition, some secondary teachers said that the portfolio might work better in some departments than others. Taking some of these elements into consideration might strengthen the evaluation system's design and use of the evaluation options it proposes.

Further Conclusions and Reflections

The landscape of education has been rapidly changing and many individuals have challenged the effectiveness of teachers along the way (Conley & Glasman, 2008). In light of the professional accountability for teacher performance, many districts, unions, and teachers themselves, have joined forces to review, and in some cases, redefine the teacher evaluation system. To this point, in California, some districts have collectively negotiated a choice-based teacher evaluation system versus the traditional administrative model. The five veteran teachers in the current study have concluded that the choice-based teacher evaluation system, as it stands in their district of employment, gives them freedom to be creative and allows them to take risks. It was also noted by one teacher that the choice-based teacher evaluation system makes them feel more empowered by allowing them options and some autonomy. Regardless of having options, it was evident that the teachers want meaningful feedback from their administration that will allow for professional growth. Teachers want to improve and are not afraid to work hard and demonstrate their competencies and vulnerability if they know that their administration will be supportive and constructive in their feedback.

It was clear that teachers want the administration to be visible in their classrooms in order to review, reinforce, and/or redefine teaching across the campus. It was also a collective perception by most that on-going administrative classroom visits, despite the choice of evaluation, had the potential to create a more cohesive campus community and a more comprehensive plan for improvement. In this particular study, it was a district

expectation that the administrative staff would be in each teacher's classroom at least once a month.

When viewing the choice-based system, some of the teachers thought it might be wise if the evaluation system was a combination of all three options: portfolio (self-reflection), peer (collaborative in nature) and the traditional administrative visit (executive feedback). This opinion suggests that teachers are willing to put the time and effort into their professional responsibilities and become vulnerable to one another in order to reach their greatest potential as a teacher.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Consent Form

Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Explanation: You are being asked to participate in a research study investigating the perspectives of teachers with regards to teacher evaluations in a choice based system.

Rights to Participate: Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions.

Compensation: You understand that you will not be compensated for your time other than a small token of appreciation - $25.00 gift card.

Contact: If you have concerns or questions about this study, please contact Laura Wellington at (805) 276-3378 – cell. If you have questions about your role and rights as a participant, you may contact the Office of Research at University of California, Santa Barbara.

Documentation of Informed Consent: Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

_____   _____

Print Name   School

_____   _____

Signature   Date

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Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Part I

Descriptive research question: What are teachers' descriptions of their choice, the choice-based evaluation process, and the evaluation process that followed?

I. Opening

1. Welcome and thanks

2. Questions will be open ended with some questions becoming more specific. We will allow approximately one-half hour to 45 minutes for the interview. Reminder about digital recording and written permission will be provided.

3. Please briefly describe your teaching background.

4. When were you last formally evaluated?

5. Why did you choose a [administrator, peer] as your evaluator?

   • Probes include: fairness, experience of you/evaluator, trust, administrator/peer background, making evaluation a discussion, gender, joint project etc.

6. Please describe the process you and the [administrator, peer] followed in the evaluation process?

Part II

II. Opinion research question: What do teachers perceive to be the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation process they experienced?

1. What are your perceptions of the strengths, and then the weaknesses of choosing a [admin/peer] over a [admin/peer]?

      a. Strengths:

      b. Weaknesses

2. Had you chosen an [admin, peer—the other option] what would have been the strengths/weaknesses?

      a. Strengths:

      b. Weaknesses:

3. What did you find most meaningful about the personnel evaluation process you experienced?

4. What would have improved the experience for you?

5. In your view, what are the strengths if any of having choice of an evaluator?

6. What are the weaknesses of having a choice of an evaluator?

7. What in the school/district facilitates teacher evaluation?

8. What in the school/district is a barrier/obstacle to teacher evaluation?

9. Do you think the choice-based system has contributed to your satisfaction as a teacher?

Part III

III. Comparative question: What differences do teachers perceive between their experiences in the current evaluation compared to previous experiences with teacher evaluation?

1. Could you compare your most recent experience with teacher evaluation to those you had earlier on in your career?

Part IV

IV Wrap-up

1. Some might say that weaker teachers might choose peers as a way to avoid administrator evaluation. How would you respond to this criticism?

2. Thank you for participating in this study. Is there anything else that I didn't ask that you would like to add?

District Information about the Evaluation System

Master Unified School District
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

ALTERNATIVE EVALUATION PROPOSAL
2013 - 2014

In lieu of the standard evaluation process by administrator observation, tenured certificated employees who received all satisfactory performance ratings on their most recent performance evaluation may elect to implement an alternative evaluation option with the evaluator's approval of the Alternative Evaluation Proposal. Alternative Evaluation Proposals are due to the evaluator by the 30th day of instruction – October 3. The proposal must be approved by the evaluator by November 1 or the evaluation will automatically revert to the standard evaluation process. Teachers are expected to schedule a mid-year progress conference by the 90th day of instruction – February 5 with the evaluator and a final assessment conference with the evaluator at least 60 days before the end of the school year – April 11. An incomplete or poorly implemented alternative evaluation will result in an evaluation the subsequent year using the standard evaluation process.

Proposal due: October 3, 2013
Administrative approval by: November 1, 2013
Mid-year progress conference by: February 5, 2014
End of year conference by: April 11, 2014

NAME_____SCHOOL YEAR_____

PARTNER OR TEAM MEMBERS_____
(If applicable)

ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

❑ **Partner** – This is a peer-coaching model in which teachers collaborate, coach and apprise progress toward professional development goals. Requirements: at least two peer observations with pre/post conferences, a written self-reflection for each observation, and a final self-evaluation.

❑ **Portfolio** – Based on the Professional Growth goals and California Standards for the Profession selected, the teacher develops a portfolio with reflections to validate

professional development. Requirements: at least three portfolio selections with a written self-reflection for each selection, and a final self-evaluation.

❑ **Research Action Team** – This is a team investigation of a selected topic, project or problem through research and discussion. Requirements: at least six meetings of the team to discuss and research a designated topic/problem, a mid year self-reflection, a written and oral report of findings concerning the topic, and a final self-evaluation.

PROPOSAL: - Attach a one page narrative summary which will addresses the proposal components listed

below.

1. California Standards for the Teaching Profession – Focus Areas Selected Based on self-assessment on the California Standards for the Teaching Profession, what Standards have you targeted for professional development this year?

2. Description of Project or Activities Including Timeline
Describe the project or activities you will implement to achieve growth toward the Standards you selected.   Include a timeline showing when activities will be accomplished including the mid and end of year conferences with the evaluator.

3. Outcomes
How will the implementation of this proposal improve students' learning and assist you to achieve professional growth toward selected Standards for the Teaching Profession?

4. Evaluation
What type of evidence or criteria (reflections, student work/assessments, research etc.) will you use to evaluate your professional growth?

SIGNATURE OF TEACHER OR TEACHERS (Partners or Team Members)

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

The evaluator's signature indicates approval of the attached Alternative Evaluation Proposal and Timeline.

EVALUATOR'S
NAME_____TITLE_____

EVALUATOR'S
SIGNATURE_____DATE_____

Goals and Objectives for Certificated Evaluation
2013-14

For each certificated evaluation, please complete the MUSD Goal/Objective Setting Form with the following information:

Goals
- o Goal # 1: Common Core goal of your choice.

- o Goal #2: Personal goal.

Please use the MUSD Goal/Objective Setting Form to write out your goals (this e-mailed to you.) You should use two of these forms- one for each of your two goals. Please fill out the following sections on this form:

Statement of Objectives
- o Your objectives should relate to your goals and they should list the steps you will take to work towards completion of your goals
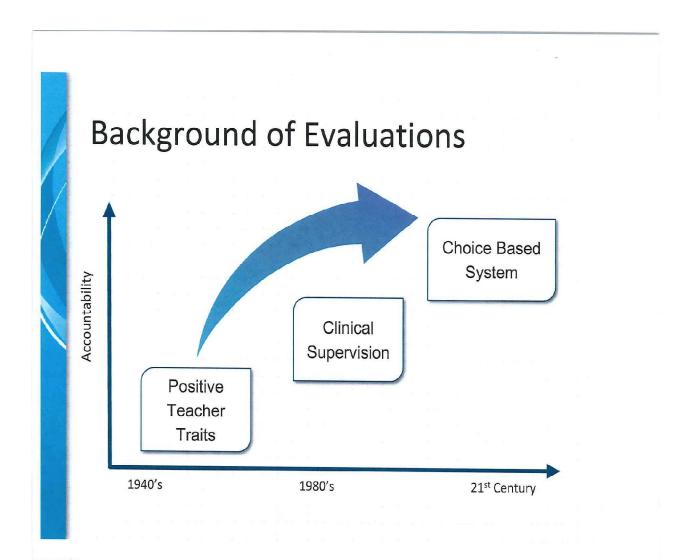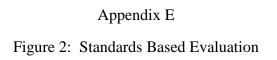
Activities/Observable Outcomes
- o List activities for each objective and what outcomes should be observable as a result of implanting your goals
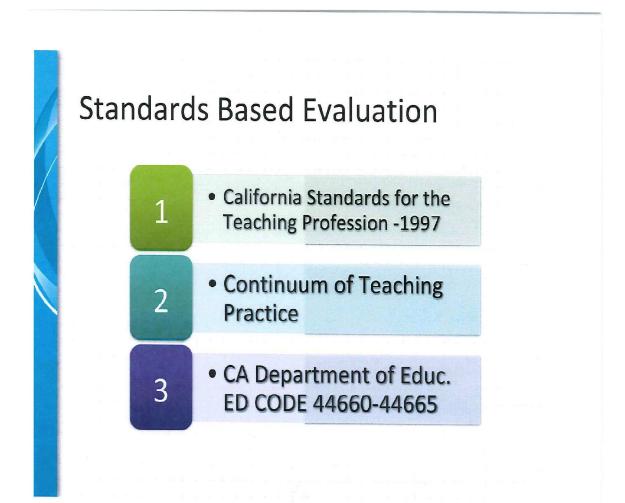
Please bring a copy of your completed Goal/Objective Setting Forms to the goal setting conference or e-mail them prior to your conference to the administrator who will be evaluating you this year.

Thanks very much and please let us know if you have any questions!

Appendix D

Figure 1: Shifts in Evaluation

Background of Evaluations

Appendix E

Figure 2: Standards Based Evaluation

Appendix F

California Standards for the Teaching Profession