# EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES WITH NEW APPROACHES TO TEACHER EVALUATION

By

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ABSTRACT

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Since the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, there have been enormous pressures placed on public schools to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Data from standardized state assessments are being used to examine student growth and to create stronger accountability measures for schools. Educators have had to redefine, restructure, and refocus their efforts on best instructional practices, and they have placed an increased emphasis on student improvement. The federal government, states, and school districts are placing increased demands on building principals, who have the challenge to serve as instructional leaders, rather than as overseers of their buildings. Principals not only have to concern themselves with the management of the school itself, but also with accountability processes as they relate to teaching and learning.

The Race to the Top program, part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, led many states to enact changes in their teacher evaluation policy. Race to the Top is built on a framework of comprehensive reform in four core education reform areas: adopting rigorous standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace; recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers and principals; building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices; and turning around the lowest-performing schools. Also, these changes include adapting more rigorous classroom observation instruments and supporting their use in high-stakes decisions such as teacher promotion, compensation, and dismissal.

Research conducted prior to the enactment of Race to the Top found that leadership, especially instructional leadership, was one of several characteristics of successful schools. Evidence has also shown that school leaders who are knowledgeable about their district's evaluation process are likely to be successful in helping teachers interpret and adapt to current policies (Burch & Spillane, 2003; Coburn, 2005; Youngs, 2007). Teachers depend on the leadership in their building to support their implementation of effective instructional practices that are mandated by new teacher evaluation systems. However, there has been little research on the characteristics of effective principal leadership in the context of new approaches to teacher evaluation. The purpose of this study was to examine educators' experiences with new approaches to teacher evaluation.

## DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to my family and friends who supported and encouraged me throughout this process. I would especially like to thank my parents Edmond and Maybell Hasty, my sisters, and brother who prayed for my continuous courage and strength to cross the finish line. To that special person who was there from the beginning of this journey; I will forever be grateful and thankful for your friendship.

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## Introduction

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The purpose of this study was to examine educators' experiences with new approaches to teacher evaluation. In this study, I used data from principal and teacher interviews to explore the following research questions:

1. What role does principal leadership play in teachers' responses to new approaches to teacher evaluation?
2. How do elementary teachers interpret and respond to new approaches to teacher evaluation?

In this chapter, I review relevant research on teacher evaluation, focusing in particular on the possible effects that new approaches to teacher evaluation have on teachers, the role of principal leadership in shaping teachers' responses to reforms, and how classroom observations measure and potentially lead to changes in instruction. In the second chapter, I describe my theoretical framework, which draws on principal-teacher relational trust theory (Bryk & Schneider, 2002); discuss the methodology used for this study, including the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis plans; and address the potential significance of this study and its possible contributions to the research and practitioner fields. The third and fourth chapters present the main findings from the study. Finally, I conclude by discussing my findings

in relation to other relevant research, considering some limitations of this study, and describing implications of my study for future research.

## Literature Review

In this section, I discuss research on (a) teacher evaluation approaches, including classroom observations and value-added measures; (b) the role of principal leadership and other factors in influencing teachers' responses to teacher evaluation reforms; (c) principal-teacher trust; and (d) how classroom observations measure and potentially lead to changes in instruction. I conclude this section by summarizing the gaps in the literature on teacher evaluation, and by describing the ways in which my study will address these gaps. I argue that studies to date have provided limited evidence on how school leaders can promote teacher learning and changes in instruction through the teacher evaluation process.

### Teacher Evaluation Approaches

**Traditional teacher evaluation approaches.** Traditional teacher supervision and evaluation approaches typically call for building principals to observe classroom lessons and record notes. Next, principals convert their notes to an evaluation instrument or rubric that helps them to rate the lesson against a previously determined scale. Lessons are often judged based on whether or the degree to which (a) the teacher clearly stated the learning objectives to students, (b) the teacher linked classroom activities to the learning objectives, (c) students appeared engaged by the lesson, (d) there was off-task behavior on the part of students, and, if applicable, (e) there was evidence of student learning during the lesson. After rating the teacher's lesson in each category, the principal then typically offers some affirmative and prescriptive feedback in addition to the ratings, and judges the lesson in its entirety with an overall rating, such as Outstanding, Proficient, Needs Improvement, or Unsatisfactory. If time permits, the two parties

may meet to discuss the lesson and the evaluation (Kane, Taylor, Tyler, & Wooten, 2010; Sartain, Stoelinga, & Brown, 2011). This practice and others like it occur in thousands of schools across of the country and have been the trend for the past 30 years.

According to Marshall (1996), this process is largely ineffective and typically has little impact on the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Traditional teacher evaluation procedures often place teachers in the role of passive participants who have little input into their evaluation, beyond one or two brief meetings with the principal. For example, Peterson (2000) concluded from his review of the literature that typical teacher evaluation practices neither improve teachers' practices nor accurately represent what happens in the classroom. Darling-Hammond, Wise, and Pease (1983) considered teacher evaluation methods to be generally of low reliability and validity. Others have criticized teacher evaluation as insignificant (Stiggins & Duke, 1988), or as based on simplistic criteria with minimal relevance to what teachers need to do to improve student learning (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Medley and Coker (1987) reviewed studies from the 1950s to the 1970s and established that the relationship between principal ratings of teacher performance and student achievement was mostly weak. Their own study found correlations between principal performance ratings and learning gains of only .10 to .23.

Research by Milanowski and Heneman (2001) described traditional evaluation procedures as part of an outdated system that is cumbersome and places little emphasis on improving instruction. Milanowski and Heneman (2001) stated, "The single annual observation traditionally used to assess most teachers is more of a check to ensure minimally acceptable performance than a formative process" (p. 198). Rubrics are seldom designed to provide teachers with criteria-referenced data as an assessment of teaching. As a result, ratings of

performance are often subjectively given out by principals and often reflect value judgments, as opposed to being based on teaching evidence (Darling-Hammond, Wise & Pease, 1983). Despite research that shows that adults respond primarily to positive reinforcement and desire to operate in a collegial environment, traditional teacher evaluation approaches often fail to communicate these understandings while treating teachers as passive participants in the process (Brandt, 1996).

## Non-Tenured vs. Tenured Teacher Status

In this section, I define teacher tenure and provide background on non-tenured status and tenured status. While my study will focus on tenured teachers, it is important to explain non-tenured teacher status in order fully to explicate tenured teacher status.

What is teacher tenure? The purpose of tenure is to provide a measure of job security for teachers, protection against subjective employment decisions, and protection to be able to teach students without constraints; all of these are expected to promote a classroom environment beneficial to learning (Michigan AFT, 2013).

**Non-tenured teacher status.** The Tenure Act in Michigan provides a statutory framework for the probationary period (non-tenured status). School districts are required to provide non-tenured teachers with an individualized development plan and evaluations at least yearly, based on a minimum of two classroom observations. At least 60 days before the end of the school year, the district must provide the probationary teacher with a written notice indicating whether or not his or her work has been satisfactory. Failure to provide the required individualized development plan, evaluations, or written notice is considered irrefutable evidence that the teacher's work is satisfactory. A satisfactory rating requires automatic employment for the following year (unless terminated for economic reasons). A teacher rated satisfactory in the final probationary year must be granted tenure (Michigan AFT, 2013).

**Tenured teacher status.** A new teacher in a Michigan school district must serve a probationary period of four years. After four years of satisfactory service in an appropriate position, a certificated teacher automatically attains tenure. If a teacher has already attained tenure in another Michigan school district, the probationary period is usually two years, but school districts have the option to waive some or the entire two-year requirement. Traditionally in Michigan, after teachers obtained tenure, they were not evaluated very often; in most districts, tenured teachers have traditionally been evaluated once every three to five years.

## Classroom Observations

In this section, I focus on two classroom observation instruments that are commonly used across the U.S.: the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS).

The district where I am conducting my research recently adopted the 2013 Danielson Framework for Teaching for their teacher evaluation instrument to assess the performance of their teachers. All teachers, regardless of whether they are tenured or non-tenured, must now be evaluated a minimum of twice a year to ensure their effectiveness as teachers. The Danielson Framework focuses on four domains that are associated with student learning: (a) Planning and Preparation, (b) Classroom Environment, (c) Instruction, and (d) Professional Responsibilities (Danielson, 2013).

The 2013 edition of the Danielson Framework has enhancements that include helping teachers respond to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The CCSS call for teachers to help students become active and deep conceptual thinkers who are able to take a position and support it with logic and evidence— skills and strategies needed for college and future careers. Therefore, curricula, instructional materials, and students' assessments are being revised to

support instruction associated with the CCSS. Teachers are now expected to teach for deep conceptual understanding, argumentation, and logical reading, which may represent major challenges for some teachers (Danielson, 2013).

In terms of elements within the four domains, there are six elements for Planning and Preparation, five elements for Classroom Environment, five elements for Instruction, and six elements for Professional Responsibilities. Based on their performance, teachers are rated at one of four levels for each domain: (a) Distinguished, (b) Proficient, (c) Basic, or (d) Unsatisfactory.

In contrast to the Danielson Framework, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) is a standardized observation measure of global classroom quality that assesses three domains of quality: (a) Emotional Supports, (b) Classroom Organization, and (c) Instructional Supports (Pianta & Hamre, 2009). CLASS can be used in pre-kindergarten classrooms through $12^{th}$ grade, and it also applies to teacher-student interactions in classroom contexts across grades and across content areas.

Within each of the three domains in CLASS, there is a set of behavioral indicators reflective of that domain, with a 1-7 scale focusing on specific behaviors and interaction patterns that can be reliably observed in a specified window of time. Using this detailed, multilevel tool of teacher-child interactions in classroom environments can help in assessing teacher performance at various levels (Hamre, Pianta, Mashburn & Downer, 2007).

**Value-added Models**

Value-added models (VAMs) are statistical models that attempt to explain the contribution of particular teachers (or schools or programs) to student achievement gains over time (Harris & McCaffrey, 2010). Value-added models require at least two years of student test scores and are designed to isolate a teacher's impact on his or her students' tested progress while

controlling for other measureable factors, such as student and school characteristics, that are outside that teacher's control (Di Carlo, 2012).

By using multiple measures to evaluate instruction and student learning growth, and then aligning the results with professional growth opportunities and support, teaching and learning can be improved (Baker et al., 2010). There are other sources of evidence in addition to VAMs that should be taken into consideration when one speaks about teacher evaluation: classroom observations, student feedback, and using student learning outcomes in non-tested subjects/grades. No one source of data is sufficient to designate a teacher as effective or ineffective, regardless of the source of data, because the data results are unlikely to provide enough evidence and could actually lower reliability. With more than one source of data, evaluations of teachers are potentially more likely to have the validity needed for districts to make concrete decisions concerning a teacher's qualifications (Steele et al., 2011; Toch & Rothman, 2008).

Fuller (2011) and Steele et al. (2011) are also in agreement that student achievement scores should *never* be used by themselves to evaluate teachers because VAM scores have been shown to fluctuate over time. They suggest that multiple sources of data on teacher performance should be used across multiple years before a teacher is labeled ineffective and faces possible termination. While many states and districts are implementing VAMs along with the Danielson Framework or CLASS, the district where I conducted my study only uses classroom observations to determine teachers' effectiveness. Therefore, I focused solely focus on educators' experiences with classroom observations

**Research on the Danielson Framework for Teaching**

In this section, I discuss findings from studies of districts that have used earlier versions of the Danielson Framework for Teaching (i.e., versions earlier than the current 2013 version).

Milanowski (2004) conducted a study in the Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS), where there were 48,000 students and 3,000 teachers in more than 70 schools and programs at the time of the study. Due to state-level efforts to improve student achievement, the district initiated a knowledge- and skills-based teacher pay evaluation system during the 1998-99 school year. The evaluation system, which was based on Danielson's 1996 Framework for Teaching, was implemented in Cincinnati from 2000-01 to 2002-03, and it was used in making decisions about teacher salaries, promotion, and retention. The evaluation system focused on the same four domains mentioned above (see Table 2A in the Appendix) during six classroom observations, in order to examine the relationship between teachers' evaluation scores with a rigorous, standards-based teacher evaluation system and value-added measures of their effects on student achievement. The results of the study indicated that the CPS teacher evaluation scores had a moderate degree of criterion-related validity, signifying that the evaluation system was able to identify teachers who had students with higher than expected gains in achievement. Also, the results suggested that the observation scores can be used to identify teaching practices that affect student learning.

In a similar study, Kimball and colleagues (2004) also examined the relationship between teachers' ratings on the Danielson Framework for Teaching (1996) and student assessment results in Washoe County, Nevada, where there were 58,000 students enrolled in 84 schools. Washoe County used the Danielson Framework in a different way than Cincinnati.

Both districts based their evaluation systems on the Framework's standards and numerous sources of related evidence (Danielson, 1996). However, unlike Cincinnati, Washoe County "did not design its evaluation system for use in high-stakes decisions such as salary determinations. Instead, the evaluation system was designed for low-stakes purposes" (Kimball et al., 2004, p. 56). The changes were proposed to provide an inclusive and research-based conception of teaching quality that would steer evaluation discussions, and promote formative feedback and teacher reflection on instruction. The results from the study suggested that the relationship of the teacher evaluation scores to student achievement was positive for each grade and subject and for the reading and math composite, but the coefficients were not statistically noteworthy in all cases.

Gallagher (2004) examined the validity of a performance-based, subject-specific teacher evaluation system (TES) by analyzing the relationship between teachers' evaluation scores and their effects on student achievement (i.e., classroom effects). The study took place at Vaughn Elementary charter school in the Los Angeles Unified School District, where 85% of its 1,200 students were classified as English language learners. Evaluators used teaching observations, lesson plans, student work, and other evidence to assess teachers. At the conclusion of each evaluation cycle, evaluators met with the teacher being evaluated to discuss the evaluation, provide feedback, and answer questions.

The Vaughn rubrics were designed to assess practices that are associated with improved student achievement, and they were subject-specific adaptations of the Danielson (1996) Framework for Teaching. In her analyses, Gallagher reported that "teachers' average evaluation scores in literacy were a highly statistically significant predictor of student performance" (2004, p. 97). Further, the composite teacher evaluation scores also had a significant effect on student

learning, but the evaluation scores in math and language arts were not significant predictors of student gains.

Sartain, Stoelinga, and Brown (2011) drew on two years of data on Chicago Public School's (CPS) 2008 newly-designed teacher evaluation system, *Excellence in Teaching Pilot*, which was aligned with the 1996 Danielson Framework for Teaching. The researchers examined the relationship between classroom observation ratings and their value-added measure (i.e., student achievement). During the first year of the pilot, 2008-09, 44 elementary teachers participated; in 2009-10 (the second year of the pilot), 101 elementary teachers participated. Principal observations of teaching practice were conducted twice a year, and principals held post-observation conferences with teachers to discuss their teaching practices and evaluation results.

CPS modified the 1996 Danielson Framework for use in mentoring new teachers and evaluating teacher performance in a pay-for-performance pilot program. The researchers found that across the majority of the framework's components, "teachers with the lowest observation ratings (had) the lowest value-added measures and the value-added measures increase (d) as the teacher's rating increase (d)" (Sartain et al., 2011, p.10-11). The study revealed that teachers who received an unsatisfactory reading observation score had a value-added measure of -0.397; those who had a basic observation score had a value-added measure of -0.087; those who had a proficient observation score had a value-added measure of 0.201; and those who had a distinguished observation score had a value-added measure of 0.429. Across the other components of the Framework, the study generated similar findings, indicating a connection between classroom observation scores and student growth (Sartain et al., 2011).

Taylor and Tyler (2011) studied mid-career Cincinnati public school teachers and the

effects that teacher evaluation had on their classroom performance. Teachers were observed using a scoring rubric based on the 1996 Danielson Framework for Teaching. The authors found that high-quality classroom observation-based evaluations improved mid-career teacher performance, both during the period of evaluation and in following years. Students who were assigned to these teachers after they participated in the teacher evaluation system scored approximately 10 percent of a standard deviation higher in math than similar students who were taught by the same teacher prior to the teacher evaluation system (Taylor & Tyler, 2011).

Evidence shows that teacher observations can be very accurate in identifying teacher effectiveness (Fuller, 2011). Well-trained observers must be able to identify key aspects of instructional practice and differentiate among different performance levels. In the study completed by the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) Project (2012), the researchers conducted four observations per teacher and used observation rubrics that were associated with student achievement gains related to math and English Language Arts (ELA). To check the validity and reliability of the value-added model (VAM) data in their study, they drew on their classroom observation data in conjunction with the teacher's VAM scores and student feedback on their teachers' instructional practices. Using multiple sources of data helped the researchers identify the characteristics of teachers who obtained larger student achievement gains in urban districts with high percentages of racial minority and lower socioeconomic status (SES) students (MET Project, 2012).

**Teachers' Interpretations of and Responses to Reforms**

As teachers begin to decipher a new teacher evaluation system, many discover that their colleagues can assist them in interpreting the new approaches. In Coburn's (2001) in-depth case study of one California elementary school, she examined the processes by which teachers

interpreted numerous policy messages concerning reading instruction in the context of their school-based professional communities. Depending on their interactions with their colleagues, teachers adapted, adopted, combined, and/or ignored messages from the environment. With teachers being inundated with multiple messages and pressures to improve student achievement, they were left to make meaning of the messages. When teachers worked with their peers, as opposed to working individually, they were often able to incorporate new ideas into their teaching and make meaning of the messages together. When teachers provided support for one another, this encouraged them to grasp and deal with numerous and conflicting messages. Access to resources and expertise was shared among those teachers who collaborated, and this helped them to sort out which messages they were going to pursue.

Also, the teachers in Coburn's study assisted one another with turning abstract concepts into concrete workable concepts in order to use them in their classrooms. The informal settings in the study allowed for the teachers to hold *face-to-face* communication about situations that were about their practice. Teachers had the chance to spend time with their colleagues to make sense of the reading curriculum, materials, and assessments; this gave them an understanding of what was beneficial to them and their students before they created their lessons. However, teacher collaboration involves not just coming together to support teacher learning, but also supporting those who share the same norms and values.

## Principal Leadership Related to Teacher Evaluation and/or Reform

**Principal leadership**. School leadership is a challenging role, because one must depend on his/her knowledge, prior professional experience, and professional relationships to work effectively with students, teachers, parents, and others. Coburn's (2005) study looked at two principals in two California urban elementary schools who had different leadership approaches

that influenced their teachers' learning about and enactment of reading policies. The two principals interpreted and adapted reading policies for their staff in ways that were influenced by their pre-existing understandings of social context, content knowledge, instructional practices, and teacher collaboration. For the teachers in one building, they felt that they were a part of a teaching culture in which the principal valued them and their knowledge, and in which they were able to assist in decision-making concerning their teaching and learning. In contrast, the teachers in the other school went along with what their leader wanted even though they did not agree with her/him (Coburn, 2005).

Coburn's study revealed that the two principals had opposite outlooks on how they shaped their teachers' understanding the current reading policies based on their own knowledge of reading instruction. Looking at novice teachers, principals should be very cognizant of their leadership role. Their understanding and implementation could help a novice teacher continue to build on his/her skills and become an excellent educator, or make one reconsider their desires and dreams to continue as an educator.

In Youngs' (2007) study, he examined how six elementary principals' beliefs and actions influenced new teachers' experiences. Principals in the study who were active supervisors were able to offer their expertise due to their content and pedagogical knowledge, their understanding of the teacher evaluation process, and their ability to help teachers directly improve their instruction. Those educators who were "experienced teachers in mentoring and staff development helped to create and sustain an integrated professional culture" (Youngs, 2007, p.114).

However, this was not the same scenario for other novice teachers in the study who worked in different schools. Their principals did not provide instructional guidance or time for

collaboration. One principal's background led him to focus on creating and sustaining a safe, orderly environment to work. He believed that strong classroom management, as opposed to teacher collaboration and peer support, was a characteristic of effective schools. The principals' different understandings of district and state policies and their prior professional experiences seemed to influence new teachers' experiences in different ways (Youngs, 2007).

Burch and Spillane (2003) examined how elementary school leaders address both mathematics and literacy reform in the same schools. In their study, they observed 15 elementary school administrators and 15 curriculum coordinators from eight urban schools. Twenty-four of the 30 leaders interviewed in the study identified both reading and mathematics as the primary focus of their instructional improvements. Since the district pressured leadership for improvement in test scores in reading and math, there was new urgency to reform these subjects. The authors showed how active leaders who interacted directly with teachers concerning classroom teaching and learning were able to understand clearly what their teachers needed or lacked in materials and instruction, and they were able to provide them with appropriate support (Burch & Spillane, 2003).

Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond conducted a four-year longitudinal study (2001) in 13 elementary schools within the Chicago metropolitan area. The leadership practices they studied had many commonalities with the leadership practices that were investigated in Burch and Spillane's (2003) study and Coburn's (2005) study. In one of the schools in the Spillane et al. study, the leaders included the principal, assistant principal, curriculum specialists, Title I teacher, and classroom teachers. These individuals used "standardized test scores and breakdown of student performance in certain skill areas to focus instructional improvement efforts on specific student learning needs" (Spillane, Halvorsen, & Diamond, 2001, p. 24).

In another school in the study, the principal and assistant principal provided regular observations to support teacher development, as well as content and pedagogical knowledge to assist and monitor instruction. Opportunities were created during the school day for teachers to collaborate and to participate in professional development. The school administrators were skilled at calling on other leaders in the building to share their expertise in curriculum and pedagogy. Principals can be particularly effective leaders when they share responsibilities with other leaders in the building to ensure that teachers are being supported in their learning (Spillane, Halvorsen, & Diamond, 2001).

**Principal-Teacher Relational Trust**

Bryk and Schneider (2002) conducted several studies in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) using relational trust as their framework. I also used relational trust as my framework to examine the relationships among educators at two elementary schools. This study relates to my study for the reason that both involve an educational reform, although the reform in my study is different from the reform in Bryk and Schneider's (2002) study. I am using the same framework to examine the role of principal leadership and how teachers interpret and respond to new approaches to teacher evaluation.

One of the schools in Bryk and Schneider's study, Ridgeway Elementary, had a student population of 875 in grades PreK-5. Chicago's decentralization reform began in 1989 after passage of the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act. The act aimed to bring about more direct involvement of local school professionals with parents and community members in the improvement of neighborhood schools through Local School Councils (LSCs). Trust relations were examined between the principal and teachers, school staff and parents, the principal and the LSC, and teachers and the LSC, and among teachers.

Each group in the school community had many viewpoints concerning the other groups in the school. Dr. Newman, the principal at Ridgeway, was committed to placing the students' interests above all others. He was aware that trust was a key factor within the school community that would support the advances of important changes that he wanted to implement; nonetheless, his inconsistencies and lack of personal regard for others were a concern to the parents, LSC, and teachers, and this made them question his leadership abilities. The principal found that the teachers did not display a high level of personal regard for the students or the competence level needed to be effective teachers. The teachers and the parents disclosed that the principal was compassionate towards the members of the school community, that he cared about the students, and that he was a visible leader. The teachers felt that some of their colleagues lacked personal regard for the children; they showed little or no compassion. Others believed that their colleagues were incompetent and lacked the commitment needed to work collaboratively together, while other teachers did not trust that their colleagues were effective teachers. The parents felt that some teachers did not display respect for them or their children. Parents also raised concerns about some teachers' competence levels and their low expectations for the children. Then again, the teachers believed that the parents lacked an interest in their child's education.

Each member in a given role relation had an understanding of the other member's responsibilities and held some expectations that each member would fulfill their responsibilities, respectively. Respect and integrity were lacking across the school community at Ridgeway, making it very difficult for relational trust to develop.

At Thomas Elementary, also in the Chicago Public Schools, Bryk and Schneider (2002) also examined the role relations between community members. The student population consisted

of Mexican immigrants who were English language learners. The principal, Dr. Gonzalez, aimed to bridge the gap between the home and school, and he looked to convert the monolingual and bilingual school to a completely bilingual school that featured the whole language approach. Trust relations were examined between the principal and teachers, school staff and parents, the principal and the LSC, and teachers and the LSC; and among teachers.

As Dr. Gonzalez interacted with the parents, he used Chicago's decentralization reform as a catalyst to enlarge parental participation and to assist them in understanding his vision for the school. He exhibited characteristics that led the parents to trust and support his vision. Dr. Gonzalez's commitment to education, his desire to bring forth the best structure and educational programs for his students and parents, and his relationship with the parents demonstrated that he exhibited respect, personal regard, competence, and integrity. However, the teachers had a different outlook. For the teachers, they believed that the principal did not provide clear and consistent messages about student discipline, his vision for the school, or his opinion regarding individual teachers who were not supportive of his vision. Still, the parents had a different perception; they believed he was a person who had a genuine personal regard for the well-being of their children. They were appreciative that he extended himself to listen to their concerns and ideals, and they considered him to be a very effective school leader.

Thomas Elementary was essentially two schools in one, monolingual and bilingual. Division between the two groups of teachers was evident due to the principal providing preferential treatment to individual teachers who supported his agenda. Those teachers received support from the principal, and this caused many other teachers to feel vulnerable. Since the principal did not acknowledge this discontentment, the division between the teachers grew larger. The lack of personal regard that was demonstrated towards some of the teachers caused

their trust in the principal to diminish. Although there were distrust and strife between the teachers, the parents had the utmost respect for the teachers at Thomas. Many parents described the teachers as caring and welcoming, and they appreciated how they were made to feel comfortable in the school setting. Although there was some tension between the parents and the teachers, there was generally mutual respect between the two groups.

The role of relational trust is very important to all the members in a school community. Relational trust is vital when a new reform is implemented, because members of the school community must be able to trust that all of the members will display the characteristics needed for there to be success. Bryk and Schneider's study indicates that leadership behaviors can impede or assist trust relations between teachers and principals.

**How Classroom Observations Measure and Potentially Lead to Changes in Instruction**

One main purpose of teacher evaluation is to improve instruction by developing teachers' instructional ability and effectiveness (Papay, 2012). Many districts are using teacher evaluation to drive teachers out of the profession when they could instead provide them with support to help raise their performance. Ebmeier's (2003) study tested a conceptual model to examine how active principal supervision and organizational agency are linked in influencing teacher efficacy and commitment to classroom improvement. The study provided evidence that when active supervision is present, through specific feedback, encouraging words, emotional support, and modeling positive experiences, more respect of and confidence in the principal are present.

Teachers were found to "take greater risks to improve their instruction, remain in the teaching profession, and show more interest in building activities and goals" when they were supported by both peers and the principal (Ebmeier, 2003, p.136). Productive collaboration enabled teachers to communicate with peers about their content and pedagogy. Peers were

determined to be very important to teachers and how they shaped their view of the school environment (Ebmeier, 2003). When principals allowed teachers to make decisions about their classroom activities, supported their initiatives, encouraged collaboration among teachers, provided feedback on classroom observations, and provided opportunities for teachers to observe their peers for support and learning, teacher efficacy and teacher practice improved. Also, several teachers in Burch and Spillane's (2003) study attributed their students' academic improvement to working closely with their administrator and teachers after their classroom observations.

Papay (2012) argued that an evaluation system should be a tool for continuous instructional improvement; that is, it is necessary not only to "examine its reliability, validity, and bias but also (to identify) the system's prospects for driving instructional change" (p. 133). Proponents of evaluation systems that include high-quality classroom observations point to their potential value for improving instruction. Taylor and Tyler (2011) suggested that a well-designed evaluation may provide useful knowledge for teachers in multiple ways. First, through formal scoring and feedback, teachers can receive information concerning each domain. Second, the evaluation can provide teachers with opportunities to become self-reflective. Third, during the evaluation(s), teachers and administrators are provided a platform for conversing about effective teacher practices. In Taylor and Tyler's (2011) research in Cincinnati, they focused on measuring the impact of practice-based performance evaluation on teacher effectiveness in midcareer teachers in 2000-01. The results suggest that the effectiveness of individual teachers improves during the school year when they are evaluated; on average, teachers performed 0.5 standard deviations higher on end-of-year math tests during the evaluation year than in previous

years. In sum, classroom observations that provide teachers with specific strengths and weaknesses, as well as a supportive plan of action, can lead teachers to improve their instruction.

**The Need for this Study**

This review of literature indicates that there is an abundance of research on teacher evaluation tools and how they affect educators in this new era of accountability. In particular, there are studies of classroom observation supporting teachers' efforts to change their practice. However, there have been few studies of the characteristics of effective principal leadership in the context of new approaches to teacher evaluation. This study examined how principal leadership promotes teacher learning and changes in instruction through the teacher evaluation process.

In my study, I identified the characteristics of effective leadership in the context of new approaches to teacher evaluation by conducting case studies of principals and teachers in two settings. By utilizing multiple data sources, I was able to analyze data on principals and teachers to provide a thorough description of educators' experiences with teacher evaluation, focusing in particular on the possible effects that new approaches to teacher evaluation have on teachers, the role of principal leadership in shaping teachers' responses to reform, and how classroom observations measure and potentially lead to changes in instruction.

**Implications and Conclusion from the Literature Review**

Building trusting relationships between the principals and teachers may help all participants gain content knowledge and social connections that assist in implementing and delivering reform in ways that can lead to significant gains for principals, teachers, and their students.

Principal leadership is a major factor that can help to improve teacher and student knowledge, especially with the districts that hold administrators accountable for the instructional practices in their building. Schools are constantly called upon to improve their teachers' practices, and this may be accomplished when there is a strong leader who has personal regard, respect, integrity, and competence. With these characteristics, clear expectations can be communicated, teachers may voluntarily become involved in improvement efforts, teachers can begin to build confidence in their abilities and their leader's abilities, positive relationships can form, and students can learn more. There have been numerous empirical studies on the characteristics of effective principal leadership; however, there has been little research on the characteristics of effective principal leadership in the context of new approaches to teacher evaluation.

As schools and districts dedicate significant resources toward the implementation of new teacher evaluation systems, research is needed that examines how principal-teacher relational trust can affect the role that principal leadership plays in teachers' responses to new approaches to teacher evaluation and how teachers interpret and respond to the new approaches to teacher evaluation.

# Chapter 2

## Theoretical Framework

Relational trust theory provided a theoretical framework and a set of tools for analyzing the many factors that are likely to influence the ways in which teachers make sense of and respond to new teacher evaluation systems. "Relational trust views the social exchanges of schooling as organized around a distinct set of role relationships: teachers with students, teachers with other teachers, teachers with parents and with their school principal" (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 20). Relational trust is understood through the interactions of a set of mutual members in a school setting. Relational trust provided a framework for analyzing each member within the community to determine if the members' behaviors led them to feel other community members were trustworthy.

This study primarily focused on how the following factors shaped teachers' responses to the new teacher evaluation system: (a) principal leadership, (b) principal leadership behaviors, and (c) principal-teacher trust. In addition, the study considered how teachers made sense of and responded to possible challenges associated with the new teacher evaluation system.

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) described the issue of interdependence in a trust relationship. They observed that where there is reliance on one another, two or more parties are vulnerable to each other. Where vulnerability does not exist, trust is not needed. They defined trust as "one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is (a) benevolent, (b) reliable, (c) competent, (d) honest, (e) open" (p.556). Although these features are independent of one another, they are interrelated and equally supporting.

Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2003) found a positive connection between high levels of trust in a school and a high level of teacher-perceived efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief of an individual regarding self-capacity to achieve the desired level of achievement (Bandura, 1997). "When teachers trust each other, it is more likely that they will develop greater confidence in their collective ability to be successful at meeting their goals" (Tschannen-Moran, 2004, p.127). Lack of trust in the school setting, however, causes discomfort, leaving people feeling ill at ease. Since learning is a cooperative process, lack of trust negatively affects cooperation and teachers' tendency toward collaboration (Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

Having established the function and importance of trust in schools, the literature also provides guidance regarding how school leaders and other members of a school community can develop and maintain trusting relationships. Bryk and Schneider (2002) described relational trust in terms of enabling conditions at an individual level and an organizational level. Individual conditions that are important to fostering relational trust among individuals include respect, personal regard, competence in core role responsibilities, and personal integrity. They believe that respect requires social discourse that takes place within the school community, and includes sincerely listening to and appreciating the opinions of others. When members of a school community extend themselves beyond their job requirements, they display personal regard for their colleagues and their profession. Teachers recognize that other community members play a significant core role in meeting their responsibilities in order for everyone to achieve desired goals. Lastly, personal integrity is the belief or awareness that a moral-ethical perspective guides one's work.

One of the main organizational factors that may help foster relational trust is principal leadership. Principal leadership is important for establishing both respect and personal regard

through acknowledgement of obstacles that teachers may face, as well as providing assistance needed by teachers to achieve their desired goals (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). My research study focused on relational trust and its influence in developing collaborative working relationships in a school organization. I examined the role of relational trust in two schools in one district as the principals determined the role that they played and the teachers interpreted and responded to new approaches to teacher evaluation. Relational trust provided a framework for analyzing the experiences of six teachers and two principals as well as the principals' leadership.

In this study, I used relational trust to examine how teachers and principals were able to build respect, display personal regard, and show their competence and integrity as they interpreted and responded to the new teacher evaluation system. Relational trust theory also drew my attention to each teacher and principal to examine how they were able to navigate through the new teacher evaluation system to support teachers' efforts to change their teaching practice.

Relational trust was used to analyze principals' and teachers' experiences with new approaches to teacher evaluation to gain a deeper understanding of their enactment of state and district mandates. This scope allowed me to understand the principals' and teachers' experiences (see Appendix A). Appendix A is based on my finding on how the principal and teachers were the center of the school community and how their experiences led them to interpret and respond to new approaches to teacher evaluation as well as the role that principals played in teachers' responses to these new approaches. I used a concentric circle to represent each component that helped build principal-teacher relational-trust. Principal-teacher relational trust is placed in the outer circle as the inner components: principal leadership behaviors, active supervision, teacher collaboration, and clear vision all work together to create and sustain the relationship between

the principal and the teachers. I used this model in the current study to explain how the various factors (i.e., principal leadership and principal-teacher trust) worked together to impact the new approaches to teacher evaluation.

Relational trust assisted my data analysis by allowing me to focus on how the principals and teachers collectively and individually interpreted and responded to new approaches to teacher evaluation and how principals' leadership skills shaped the teachers' responses to the new teacher evaluation system. I hypothesized that the principals played a significant role in shaping the teachers' interpretation and responses to the new teacher evaluation system.

## Principal Leadership

Principals who possess content knowledge can provide substantial feedback before and after evaluations to help influence teachers' instructional growth (Youngs, 2007). Teachers need and desire leaders who can support their learning and understand how they and their students' best learn. When principals are active participants in the learning and teaching of their staff, this can lead to improvement in teacher practice, thus improving student achievement and communication between the staff.

Commitment to reform, openness to innovation, and involvement in improvement efforts reinforce to teachers that they have a leader who believes that they are worth supporting, and that they are an important stakeholder in the educational setting (Burch & Spillane, 2003). Showing that they are committed to reform, principals need to make sure that their teachers have the resources, especially knowledge and supplies necessary to be successful. When principals are open to innovation, they are likely to value teachers' insights on the curriculum, providing them the opportunity to share their expertise during staff meetings and professional development sessions (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001).

Principal leadership also helps to foster social trust between themselves and staff members in order to provide a platform for collaboration (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Leaders know that when teachers engage in peer observation and feedback, opening up their knowledge and practice to be examined by their colleagues, they are able to learn about their colleagues' teaching practices about and their own practice.

## Principal Leadership Behaviors

Principal leadership behaviors that allow principals to create positive school cultures and learning environments have often been the subject of investigation. There are numerous behaviors that indicate that a principal possesses positive leadership skills. My theoretical framework focused on the following: (a) clear vision, (b) active supervision, and (c) collaborative leadership.

**Clear vision**. The school leader develops a vision of learning that encompasses the welfare of all involved. The vision should send a clear message of what the principal and the other community members envision the school to be in the future. If it is indeed a shared vision, then values, beliefs, tools for establishing goals, and how people are valued and consistently communicated by the school leader and all of the members involved.

Smith and Andrews (1989) explained that "communication of vision is perhaps the most important way for a principal to exert effective leadership—to leave no doubt about school priorities" (p. 16). Principals know what to expect for the school, and they believe that others will become a part of the vision that has been laid out before them. Perhaps principals can do nothing more important for the members of their school community than to create a process for building and revising their vision for the school. Traditionally, schools have not been places where adults can easily experience the collegial relationships that are essential to leadership and

teacher empowerment. An effective school principal "demonstrates a strong interest in promoting collegiality and shared leadership, an interest in shifting the norms of the school's culture from the traditional to more collaborative ways of working together" (Owens, 2004, p. 274).

**Active supervision.** When principals actively provide supervision to their teachers, this may lead many to improve their instruction. This process involves feedback, encouragement, emotional support, reinforcement, and modeling experiences for teachers (Ebmeier, 2003). As the principal observes the lessons and shares their findings in conferences with the teachers, asks questions of the teachers regarding their students' development, offers suggestions, and completes a follow-up observation to observe the suggestions in action, these activities can lead to the improvement of teachers' instruction (Coburn, 2005). When there is a visible leader who exhibits caring attributes regarding the needs of their teachers, one can predict that the teachers may respond to the reforms in a positive manner, which may help them develop respect for and confidence in the principal. "Leaders who interact directly with teachers about classroom teaching and learning understood what their teachers needed in material and instruction and (were) able to provide that support for them" (Burch & Spillane, 2003, p. 528-529). Coburn (2005) described many of the same positive principal-teacher relational outcomes, and she also believed that teachers were most likely to shift their thinking when the principal encouraged teacher learning and provided opportunities for them to talk and learn with their colleagues about instruction.

**Teacher collaboration.** With teachers facing multiple reforms designed to improve student achievement, principals have typically offered them opportunities to collaborate with their colleagues. Access to resources and expertise can be provided through colleagues as

teachers collaborate to determine how they will best accomplish their assigned tasks (Coburn, 2001). When teachers collaborate, they share experiences and knowledge that can lead to instructional improvement; therefore, one can speculate that student learning will be one of the benefits of collaboration (Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007). Teachers begin to explore their own thoughts and interactions with students, curriculum, and instruction during collaboration, and this can significantly contribute to the teachers' success (Stevenson, 2004).

Social relationships between the principal and teachers can influence how well teachers function, particularly in periods of reform and change (McLaughlin, 1993; Bryk & Schneider; 2002). Teachers can use their school community to problem-solve, support each other personally and professionally, coach peers, build team-teaching structures, and structure classroom observations for and with their peers (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996).

## Methodology

This study used a cross-case design (Yin, 2003). Focused teacher interviews (conversational) were the primary method of data collection (see Appendix B for protocol questions). Data was collected in the spring and summer of 2013. I focused on the experiences of principals and teachers in two suburban elementary schools in Michigan, examining educators' experiences with new approaches to teacher evaluation. Each case was treated separately, and I then aggregated my findings across the cases.

I examined how educators' experiences with teacher evaluation were affected by the district's contractual agreement and the district's observation evaluation instrument, Danielson's Framework for Teaching (2013). The results are reported in the form of case studies (Merriam, 1988).

**Description of the Study and Research Questions**

The principals and teachers in this study had to interpret and respond to the new teacher evaluation system in their district where the stakes were much higher than they had been in the past. Principals had to redefine their roles as leaders, and teachers had to respond with instructional practices that would result in improved student achievement.

This study was designed to examine how educators interpret and respond to new approaches to teacher evaluation, and the roles that principals play in how teachers respond to the new approaches. The study also examined the ways in which classroom observations can support teachers' efforts to change their teaching.

Principals and teachers need to have a deeper understanding of what is expected of them throughout the school year as they prepare to observe and be evaluated using the new Danielson Framework (2013) for evaluations, while at the same time being responsible for implementing the Common Core Standards. Meanwhile, principals and teachers should have open and honest conversations about instruction and student learning. Studying how these educators interpret and respond to new approaches to teacher evaluation can help educators in other districts (a) implement effective teacher evaluation practices and (b) provide teachers with the pedagogical and content knowledge needed to support student growth.

The focus research questions are the following:

1. What role does principal leadership play in teachers' responses to new approaches to teacher evaluation?
2. How do elementary teachers interpret and respond to new approaches to teacher evaluation?

**Site and Participant Description**

I focused on six elementary teachers, grades 3-5, and two principals in two schools (Addison and Stuvenberry) in the same Midwestern school district, (Stafford). The names of the individuals, schools, and district are all pseudonyms. These individuals were chosen through purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990 in Maxwell, 2005). I chose to study teachers within this particular school district because I taught in this district from 2001 to 2010, and I have professional relationships with many teachers within the district; thus, I had full access to the materials and personnel that my study required. I examined how these educators interpreted and responded to new approaches to teacher evaluation.

All of the teachers in the study were female; four were African American and two were Caucasian. There were also one male principal and one female principal who participated. The male principal was African American, and the female principal was Caucasian. The teachers had a minimum of 15 years as educators and the principals had a minimum of 20 years in education and a minimum of five years as an administrator. The teachers had prior knowledge and experiences with being evaluated in their previous and current school districts. They were aware of the expectations that parents, students, principals, and the district had of them as experts. All teacher participants had been formally evaluated using the new teacher evaluation system at least once, and had earned *effective* or *highly effective* ratings on their evaluation.

**Participants at Addison.** At Addison, there were three female teachers who participated in my study; two were African-American and one was Caucasian. All had been certified and teaching for a combined 75 years within different school districts. During the study, Pam taught a 3$^{rd}$-grade, self-contained class. (In a self-contained class, the teacher is responsible for teaching math, social studies, science, and language arts.) She had been teaching

in public education for 15 years in the same school district, where she had taught grades 3-5. During the study, Fran taught 5th-grade; she only taught English Language Arts (ELA) and social studies. She had been teaching in public education for 33 years in two school districts, where she had taught grades 1-5. She had taught 18 years in Stafford School District, where the study was conducted, and for the last 10 years she had taught 5th-grade. During the study, Debra taught 5th-grade; she only taught ELA and science. She had been teaching in public education for 27 years in two school districts, including 17 years in the Stafford School District, where she had taught grades K-5.

Todd, a male African-American, had been an educator for approximately 23 years. He was the principal at Addison Elementary in 2012-13 and had served in this role for two years. Prior to his arrival at Addison, he was employed at another school district for six years as a middle school administrator, and he had served as an elementary principal for four years. He started his career working as a 3rd-grade teacher in another school district for nine years. His responsibilities at Addison were to oversee 40 staff members, manage the school's budget and curriculum, and serve as an instructional leader. He also had to oversee day-to-day operations, and meet with parents, teachers, and the personnel at the central office.

**Participants at Stuvenberry.** At Stuvenberry, there were three female teachers who participated in my study; two were African-American and one was Caucasian. All had been certified and teaching for a combined 54 years within different school districts. During the study, Leslie taught a 3rd-grade, self-contained class. She had taught 3rd-grade for the first time in 2011-12. She had been teaching in public education for 24 years in three school districts, including 15 years in Stafford School District, where she had taught grades K-8. During the

study, Martha taught a 5th-grade, self-contained class; she taught science and social studies. She had been teaching in public education for 23 years in two school districts including 12 years in Stafford School District, where she had taught grades 5-8. During the study, Sandra taught a 4th-grade, self-contained class. She had been teaching in public education for 16 years in Stafford School District. She had taught grades 2-4 and had served as a literacy coach for four years.

Sherry, a female Caucasian, had been an educator for approximately 20 years. She was the principal at Stuvenberry Elementary and had served in this role for two years. Previously, she had served as an assistant principal at a K-8 school and an alternative high school in the district, as the district's English Second Language (ESL) director, and as the district's Special Education supervisor. She had taught grades 4-5 for 14 years. Her responsibilities at Stuvenberry were to oversee the maintenance of the building, serve as an instructional leader, provide support for the staff, address student discipline, and maintain positive parent relationships.

**Addison and Stuvenberry Elementary Schools.** Addison Elementary was a Title I, K-5 suburban neighborhood school with a student population of 363 in 2012-13. The students were 96.1% Black, non-Hispanic; less than 3% White, non-Hispanic; and less than 1% Asian/Pacific Islander. At the school, 68.5% of the students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, 191 students were male, and 172 students were female. Title I is a federally-funded program that provides services to schools based on student economic needs, including extra academic help to students who are identified as in need of additional support. Students who qualify due to their low test scores are pulled out of their regular classroom and are taught by a certified teacher approximately twice a week. Tutoring and summer school are also offered to the qualifying students at no charge.

The school offered art, music, library, and physical education. A literacy coach, whose sole job was to provide reading intervention with the five lowest achieving students in each class or within each grade level, assisted with Tier 2 of Response to Intervention (RTI, an entity of Differentiated Instruction). RTI is an approach used to help students meet academic achievement standards through early identification of those whose academic needs place them at risk. RTI ensures that resources and interventions are appropriately targeted to serve all struggling learners as soon as possible through high-quality instruction (Walker-Dalhouse, Risko, Esworthy, Grasley, Kaisler, McIlvain & Stephan, 2009).

The second school in the study, Stuvenberry Elementary, is located in the same district, approximately 2.5 miles from Addison. This school was also a Title I, K-5 suburban neighborhood school with a student population of 369 in 2012-13. The students were 96.75% Black, non-Hispanic; less than 2% White, non-Hispanic; less than 1% American Indian; and less than 1% Asian/Pacific Islander. At the school, 69.6% of the students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, 182 students were male, and 187-students were female. As with Addison, Stuvenberry also offered art, music, library, and physical education. There was also a literacy coach who worked at this school.

**Researcher's Background.** I am an African American female who has taught for 14 years in grades 1-5. From 1997-2001, I taught at an urban Midwestern school district and from 2001-2010, I taught at a suburban Midwestern school district. In 2010-2011, I took a literacy coach position for one year within the urban Midwestern school where I began my teaching career. Currently I am a professor at a Midwestern private college where I teach in the Education Department.

**Data Collection**

This study used qualitative research methods. The findings were reported in the form of a cross-case study (Yin, 2003) containing analyses of narrative examples of how educators interpreted and responded to new approaches to teacher evaluation in two schools located in one district. Teacher-focused interviews were the primary source of data collection. In addition, as part of the study, I analyzed the district's observation evaluation instrument (i.e., Danielson's Framework for Teaching (2013) and the district's teacher labor contract.

Data was collected in spring and summer of 2013. I was responsible for conducting the interviews and compiling the teacher data and all artifacts. The teachers and principals in this study were asked questions about their educational backgrounds, their teaching and/or leadership positions, their school's demographics (i.e., students socio-economic status (SES) and race/ethnicity), and the number of staff members. For the study, each teacher was interviewed once or twice, depending on the information gathered during the first session.

I conducted a pilot study in March 2013, during which I interviewed one teacher and one principal. The research interviews for my dissertation took place in the spring and summer of 2013, and they lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. The interviews included focused interview questions, such as "Do you meet with each teacher/principal before and/or after you observe them/have been observed?" and "Could you describe the strengths and weaknesses of the new approach to teacher evaluation in your school or district?" (Appendix B). Subsequent questions were designed to get the interviewee to discuss various topics in more depth. I asked questions for clarification or to probe their thinking about the new approaches to teacher evaluation. All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed using thematic analysis, which helped me identify themes and patterns using inductive reasoning (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

In the interviews, educators were asked a series of questions (see Appendix C for the Interview Protocol) to learn about how they interpreted and responded to the new teacher evaluation system, the role that the principal played in teachers' responses to new approaches to teacher evaluation, ways in which classroom observations supported teachers' efforts to change their teaching, and how they dealt with the conflicts (if any) between the new approaches to teacher evaluation and the existing curricula (Clark & Peterson, 1984). The interviews lasted from 45 to 60 minutes. Each interview was audio-recorded.

**Artifacts**

I analyzed the district's teacher labor contract and its classroom observation instrument.

**Data Analysis**

When I began this study, my intended purpose was to investigate what role, if any, principal leadership played in teachers' responses to new approaches to teacher evaluation, and how elementary teachers interpreted and responded to new approaches to teacher evaluation. I was also interested in principal-teacher relational trust and their experiences as they interacted in the workplace. I chose to collect my data through oral interviews. I transcribed the interviews with help from a colleague. As the interviews were transcribed, I began tracking the similarities and differences as to how the teachers at Addison and Stuvenberry interpreted and responded to new approaches to teacher evaluation. I also tracked the similarities and differences between the principals as to the role they played as they too interpreted and implemented the new teacher evaluation system.

As I began to analyze the data, I had to return to several participants to ask additional questions, which I added to my principal and teacher interview protocol questionnaire in May 2013, after my oral dissertation proposal defense. After reviewing the data again, nine codes

emerged that included experiences that had been mentioned in the interviews. There were also several codes that included sub-codes. The initial list of codes included: (a) principal leadership, (b) the Charlotte Danielson Framework, (c) walk-throughs, (d) data from the teacher evaluation system, (e) VAMs, (f) strengths and weaknesses of the new teacher evaluation system, (g) teachers' perspectives on the new teacher evaluation system, (h) changes in teaching practice due to the new teacher evaluation system, and (i) school context. My data was also reviewed by a scholar to confirm that there were not any codes or sub-codes that I may have overlooked. I reviewed the data again, so that I could begin to identify codes that could be removed, due to insufficient evidence, or any codes that I could combine that referred to the same data. After combining codes that seemed related, I began to write memos about my draft findings for each code and sub-code. The memos were also reviewed by another scholar to determine if additional analysis of the data was needed. As the memos were written, we then determined whether there was sufficient evidence to continue with any of the codes or sub-codes that would be included in my results chapters.

Initially in my dissertation proposal, my theoretical framework was supported by sensemaking theory. However, the memos that I wrote from my data eventually led me to consider relational trust theory (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). My data revealed many factors that shaped the role that principal leadership played in teachers' responses to new approaches to teacher evaluation, and how teachers interpreted and responded to new approaches to teacher evaluation.

**Establishing Validity**

I took three steps to establish validity in this study: I collected multiple sources of data, employed a multiple case design, and received feedback through peer review (Young, Jones, &

Low, 2011). The multiple sources of data supported the validity of the interview data. A cross-case study (Yin, 2003) containing analysis of interview data of two case studies was part of the study. One principal and one teacher were interviewed in March 2013 to ascertain if the initial questions for the interviews needed to be changed, and to ensure that multiple subjects were needed in different settings. Finally, peer review was provided by colleagues to determine if additional subjects and follow up surveys or questions were needed.

## Chapter 3

## The Role Principal Leadership Plays in Teachers' Responses to the New Teacher Evaluation (TE)

In this chapter, I address the first research question: "What role does principal leadership play in teachers' responses to new approaches to teacher evaluation?" In particular, I describe how the two principals in the study provided information to their teaching staffs about the new teacher evaluation instrument, the Charlotte Danielson Framework. In addition, I examine how the principals implemented this new instrument, and I consider how their implementation was associated with principal-teacher trust.

Trust is a small word that has major implications, especially if the trust has not been developed, or if there is mistrust already established. Everyone within a school community is given, or they inherit, a role that others expect them to fulfill. When the roles are neglected or dismissed, the school community may not function as properly as it would if everyone met or exceeded the requirements. Principals depend on teachers, and vice-versa, to make sure that schools run efficiently, and when one of the two parties cannot be depended on the other for various reasons, the structure of the school suffers.

Bryk and Schneider (2002) studied relational trust in schools. They examined four categories in their article under the subheading *Criteria for Discernment*, which were *Respect, Competence*, *Personal Regard for Others*, and *Integrity*. They believe that members in school settings analyze the behaviors of others using all four criteria, and if one criterion has deficiencies, then the trust for the entire relationship may be compromised. I used the above categories in my study to examine carefully the relationship between principals and teachers as they continued to implement the new teacher evaluation system. Despite the fact that the

principal is the leader of a school, I believe that teachers, because they typically know how a building functions and without them the building is just an empty shell, bear almost as much of the responsibility as principals to ensure that trust is present in the relationship with their principal.

When one speaks of or hears the word *trust*, they may immediately think of the following: (1) a confidant who is a close friend or family member; (2) a bond that is unbreakable between two people; or (3) a company that has been in business for many years, has a great reputation, and guarantees the quality of their product(s). Yet, I looked at trust using four lenses that deal with the beliefs and observable behaviors of principals and teachers. If the public were to be polled and asked how they perceive the relationship between a principal and teachers, many may presume that these individuals have mutual respect for one another's job, and that they are always willing to do and show the students and adults in the school what is right in every situation. They may also state that the adults in the school community work together to enhance the learning experiences of the students. However, these conditions may not always be present. In some schools, the relationship between the principal and the teachers is characterized by distrust.

**Principal Leadership**

School leadership is a challenging role in which one must depend on his/her knowledge, prior professional experience, and professional relationships to work effectively with students, teachers, parents, and others. With the many job requirements that principals have, there is a possibility that they interpret the same information differently, implement the same policies differently, and enact their leadership skills in different ways.

**How Principals Prepared Their Staff with Information on the New TE**

In August of each year, principals return to their assigned job site to face the various challenges that await them. In 2011-12 and 2012-13, changes in teacher evaluation were one of those challenges. Whether they are novice or veteran principals, they must devise a plan to assist the teachers' understanding of what is required of them by the state and the district; this must happen on the first day that the staff reports. The two principals in this study, Todd and Sherry, are in the same school district, where they received the same information regarding the new teacher evaluation system at summer meetings arranged by the district for school administrators. However, their approach to disseminating the information to their staff at times varied. So, exactly how were principals preparing their staff to undertake this massive task?

The school district summons all staff members for a half-day mandatory meeting at a designated location on the first day of the new school year. This is where the superintendent, the human resource director, and other personnel communicate important changes to everyone. Once the staff has reported back to their assigned locations, another meeting takes place between the staff and the principal. During this meeting, principals take time to introduce new staff members; review state, district, and building policies; disperse grade assignments and class rosters; and provide other pertinent information.

Todd and Sherry were provided the same training and materials by the district to assist them with becoming knowledgeable about the Charlotte Danielson Framework (CDF). As leaders in their buildings, their responsibility was to disseminate the materials and their knowledge to the teachers. There were several similarities and some differences in how they prepared their staff to understand the pre-and post-conferences, the five domains they were to be

evaluated in, the walk-throughs, and the other materials they were going to use to evaluate the effectiveness of their teachers.

Teachers from both schools indicated that their principal prepared them through a staff meeting that took place at the beginning of the school year. Both principals provided their staff members with information and the opportunity to ask questions about the teacher evaluation process. My data indicated that Todd, the principal at Addison Elementary, was not as thorough as Sherry, the principal at Stuvenberry Elementary, when he took his staff through the required materials. Pam, one of the teachers at Addison, reported "We have a meeting when we first return for that school year and the principal told us everything that he had learned about the new system at the beginning of the school year."

The teachers at Stuvenberry Elementary explained how their principal informed them about the new teacher evaluation process. Leslie stated,

> Everything the principal was given, we were given as well: what each domain looked like, what the administrators were going to be looking for. Even though everything is spelled out in the documents, the way it is written leaves a lot of room for subjectivity.

Even though Sherry and Todd both attended the same training sessions, she deemed it necessary not just to review the materials, but also to analyze with her staff each section of the document in order for them to understand what was inside. Martha added the following to support Leslie's testimony as to how Sherry prepared her staff not only to become knowledgeable, but also to gain in-depth understanding of what the district was expecting from the teachers:

> The approach; well we had to, as a staff we had some dialogue of the changes prior to all of this happening. The principal, as far as on a building level, as a staff, we went over the information that was sent from the state and we had to observe exactly what it was for each grade level and certification areas.

The teachers were asked to discuss what each criterion would look like at each grade level and in special subject classes: gym, art, music. Teachers can be moved after the fourth week count in a school year; this determines the approximate pupil population, which determines how many teachers and support staff are needed in the district. Because the teachers may be assigned another grade or special subject to teach, they need to be prepared for their first evaluation by reviewing not only the criteria for their current grade or special subject, but for all the grades and special subjects. This is to their advantage, especially if they have to relocate to another school where the principal may not provide their staff the opportunity to schedule their evaluations in advance.

Another topic that was discussed at the meetings was the scheduling of the observations. There was a time when the teachers' union had a voice in the teacher evaluation process. The union made sure that the principals provided teachers with prior notice when they were to be observed. As of the 2012-13 school year, that was no longer the case. The union does not have any authority as to how the district implements the new teacher evaluation system because it is now a state-mandated law. This leaves the school district in charge of following the state's guidelines, not the union's. Nevertheless, both principals still afforded their teachers the opportunity to schedule the day and time of their formal observations. Again, this is not an official union policy; the principals extended the courtesy to the teachers, to provide them a

chance to be fully prepared prior to the evaluation. This is an example of how the principals built trust with their teachers.

In the informational meetings, the principals exhibited some differences in how they dispersed the information to their staff. Sherry took her staff through the rankings that they could receive from the evaluations: highly effective, effective, minimally effective, and ineffective. Documentation was shared with Sherry's staff that helped them to see explicitly the criteria for each ranking mentioned above. Furthermore, she made them aware of the "district's expectations." My data does not indicate whether Todd provided his staff with extensive knowledge of the rankings. Todd did advise his staff of the district's expectations; however, the terminology he used was "what I will be looking for." One could ask whether he was following the district's agenda or his own personal agenda. Todd's personal regard for his staff was not as clear as Sherry's; she extended herself and her knowledge to ensure that her staff received as much information about the new teacher evaluation system as she could provide.

Another difference between the two principals was how they introduced the components of the walk-throughs. Sherry explained that at the beginning of the school year, she provides in-depth details about the walk-throughs that the district added. She stated,

> Also I showed them a model of the paper template for the walk-throughs and what is on my iPad and what I am looking for as I walk through the classrooms, so they can see what I am clicking on. I also show them the results of what I have seen.

The district used the software Teach Scape; the software tracks the data for each teacher's walk-throughs, and the principals are able to download reports, as well as the final reports that will calculate an overall score from all the walk-throughs. The principals are then to use the final walk-through score, along with the final observation score, to produce an overall final score for

each formal observation. This is in contrast to Todd, who offered no specifications as to what he reviewed with his staff other than the teacher evaluation materials. Also, Todd did not provide much insight about the walk-throughs. In addition, he did not mention that the district used iPads during the observations, and he did not discuss the Teach Scape software the district required the principals to use to track the data for the teachers' walk-throughs.

There was so much information that the principals had to absorb, not only for their own understanding, but to be able to convey that information successfully to their staff; this was especially important because the teachers' careers depended on knowing all of the components of the evaluation process. This task added to the list of principals' responsibilities. Again, if the principals are unsure of any part of the evaluation process, this could cause some uneasiness between themselves and the teachers, and possibly lead to distrust.

Sherry acknowledged to her staff that she lacked competence when the district first implemented the new teacher evaluation process. She stated,

> I am more knowledgeable about the teacher evaluation system than I was last year. We (the principals) did get extensive training at the end of the school year, in June last year-2012. But that was after a full year of using it. But we all felt that we could have used some more training before, but we kind of jumped in feet first. On a scale of 1-10, I am at a 7 or 8 now, but we are still learning; still working through it together. We are finding that no matter how great a rubric you have, it is very subjective and we are really trying to get consistency with all of that—all of the administrators with the issue of fairness.

Martha was aware of Sherry's lack of complete competence with the new teacher evaluation process during the first year of implementation. One could conclude that this may have been communicated to the staff by Sherry, which showed her integrity, respect, and personal regard

for her staff members. “This first year she wasn’t quite sure about everything, but she went and found out the correct information and she corrected the information and informed us on exactly what we were supposed to be doing,” stated Martha. Sherry displayed integrity and honesty in relation to her deficiencies. She was not concerned that her staff would judge her as she continued learning about the evaluation process in order to pass on the correct information which would ultimately deepen her knowledge of her teachers. The evidence presented above supports that Sherry extended great effort to build trust with the teachers. Also, this additional knowledge by the principal and the teachers would likely increase student achievement.

With regards to Todd, he did admit that “There is a lot to learn this year.” This may convey that he was still learning, and as he learned, hopefully he would pass that knowledge on to his staff. My data might lead to the conclusion that Todd provided minimal information to his staff concerning the new teacher evaluation system, even though both principals received the same training. It may not be due to his not wanting to help the teachers, but to a lack of competence on his part to realize the knowledge he needed in order to convey the information thoroughly. This is also evidence of Sherry’s efforts to build trust with her teachers.

The first step for the principals was to prepare their staff to understand the responsibilities of all parties involved in the new teacher evaluation process. Sherry and Todd both showed competence as they introduced the procedure of the CDF and their job duties, yet Sherry’s knowledge of the CDF was greater than Todd’s as she provided her staff in-depth information for a greater understanding of the CDF. Todd demonstrated less personal regard for his staff than Sherry. Sherry extended herself more than Todd did as she did everything that she could to prepare her staff for the new TE. Integrity was another area where Sherry overshadowed Todd. She was characterized as honest and trustworthy by her staff, yet Todd was characterized as

untrustworthy and dishonest by his staff. As Todd and Sherry finished introducing their teachers to the new reform, they also prepared them for the next step. The second step was the implementation process of the evaluation, which I describe in the next section.

**How Principals Implement the New TE**

There were similarities and differences in how the principals implemented the new teacher evaluation system. They discussed how they were going to schedule their observations, the amount of time they would reserve to observe each teacher, the CDF materials, and the pre- and post-conferences.

**Scheduling/time of the observations.** As mentioned in the earlier section, both principals extended the courtesy either to inform the teachers ahead of time when they would be observed, or to provide them the opportunity to select when they would like to be observed within a certain time frame. This showed the integrity of the principals, which helped promote trust among themselves and their teachers. Their actions indicate that they wanted to provide time to their teachers in order for them to plan an effective lesson that displayed their competence, which could help increase their effectiveness ranking. The principals continuing to allow the teachers to sign up for their observations is an example of how they displayed personal regard for the teachers as they extended themselves beyond their job requirements.

Even though the union was no longer involved in making decisions about the new teacher evaluation system, and therefore the principals no longer had to let teachers know when their formal observation was planned, the principals still afforded their teachers the opportunity to schedule their formal observations. Sherry explained, "The observations are scheduled I think per contract, but we don't have to do that anymore." As mentioned by Pam at Addison Elementary, "Compared to teacher friends I have in other districts, I appreciate the fact that you

know when it is coming. Some others have said their principal just showed up and it wasn't what they were looking to show." Leslie, who taught at Stuvenberry Elementary, also added that some principals would tell you the day and the time of their observations. My data indicates that Todd and Sherry scheduled the observations in a similar way. These are additional examples of how the principals promoted trust with their teachers.

The school district dictated how many formal observations the principals had to conduct each year of each teacher. My data revealed that due to the amount of walk-throughs the principals were required to carry out, the teachers believed that two formal observations were sufficient for their principal to determine the level of their teaching performance. The majority believed that being formally observed twice for a time period of 45-60 minutes was sufficient. However, this was not the sentiment of the teachers at Addison. Pam at Addison had a strong opinion concerning the way her principal handled the amount of time he reserved for her observations.

> I don't believe that two formal observations are sufficient. Maybe if he stayed from the beginning to the entire end of the lesson, I would feel differently. He misses a lot, either because he came in late or left early. Now someone can come in and observe for a short period of time and know that you know your subject, have classroom management, etc, but for documentation purposes and when my job is on the line, no.

That was not the case at Stuvenberry, where none of the teachers had negative remarks when it came to Sherry reserving the appropriate amount of time to observe their lessons. This was the only difference between the two principals on this topic that I found.

**Use of CDF materials.** The principals used the mandated materials as they were intended to be used; both completed two formal observations per teacher in their building. Both

acknowledged that they were still in the process of learning how to use effectively the evaluation tools. Todd spoke about how in district workshops they were learning not to be pre-judgmental towards teachers during the observations, and to look only at the instruction that the teachers were providing the students at that moment. Sherry acknowledged that the evaluation system was being tweaked. In addition,

> We are finding that no matter how great a rubric you have, it is very subjective and we are really trying to get consistency across the border with all of that; all of the administrators with the issue of fairness.

The teachers understood that the principals were learning as they received the new information. Another similarity was that none of the teachers criticized their principal for not using the evaluation tools correctly.

**Pre-observation conference.** My data indicated that the principals implemented the pre-observation conferences with their teachers in similar ways. The pre-observation conferences, which are part of the CDF policy, are mandatory for the principal and teacher to attend before each observation. During this conference, the teacher must submit the lesson they plan to teach during the observation. The principal and teacher discuss the lesson and questions can be raised about the lesson, the teacher's methods that he/she will use to develop instruction, the type of assessment(s) being used, and other pertinent information from either person.

The teachers during this meeting are afforded the opportunity to share with the principal any concerns they may have about students' behavior and achievement levels, special accommodations, and any other relevant information the principal should be aware of before the observation. The teachers in the study indicated that the principals provided support within the pre-conference meetings. The teachers at Addison all provided similar accounts about the

discussions during these meetings. They liked the idea that they were supported by the principal as they reviewed their lesson with him, and that he wanted to know how they were going to accomplish the goals of the lesson, if there were any students who had difficulties, and if they had any other concerns. This is the time he had designated to understand the lesson and ask questions before the formal observation. Again, these examples clearly show how Todd promoted trust with his teachers.

There was also similar evidence from the teachers at Stuvenberry that their principal used the pre-conference meetings to support the teachers and to listen sincerely to any concerns that they had about the students or the lesson prior to the formal observation. Leslie stated,

> You list everything that the evaluator will see and a sheet is given to us to fill out to inform the evaluator about the challenging students in our classroom and what they may see. I list everything that these students may do or say; not focused, not on grade level, even though I knew my administrator already knew, because she knows the students in her building, but I wanted to place it in writing.

Martha and Sandra, two of the other teachers in the study, confirmed the atmosphere in the meetings to be open and transparent for those in attendance. Based on this, one can speculate that the principals followed the CDF in the way that they were trained. Both principals appeared to have a genuine concern about the teachers, including any worries they had during the observations. It is apparent that the principals wanted to provide support for the teachers and to have a clearer understanding of the challenges they were facing. These factors that the teachers addressed may have aided the principals with their evaluations. Perhaps just being able to communicate concerns to their principal, and their principal providing suggestions or sincere

listening, were all that was required for the teachers to begin to become comfortable with the new teacher evaluation process.

**Post-observation conference.** There were not any differences with regard to how the principals implemented the pre-observations. However, that was not the case with the post-observation process where there were major differences. My data indicated that Todd may have lost the trust that he had developed with his teachers during these conferences. According to Martha, these meetings usually took place a few days to a week after the observation. Teachers were provided a formal assessment in oral and written formats of how the principal measured their effectiveness as a teacher. Teachers were able to voice their opinion about whether they agreed or disagreed with the rating they were awarded; that is, a dialogue occurred between both, so that both parties had a mutual understanding of what took place during the observation.

During these discussions, Todd discussed positive and negative aspects of the lesson and made suggestions on how the teachers could improve. Todd kept insisting that during the post-conference meetings there was dialogue that took place between himself and each teacher. I did not find any evidence to support his claim. Instead, none of the teachers at Addison indicated that the discussions were true dialogues. The principal seemed to have the dominant voice in the discussions and did not display respect; while he listened, nothing the teachers stated was taken into account to change his evaluations when evidence was brought forth to contradict what Todd had heard and or saw. When I asked Todd if the evaluation score was changed when the teachers had submitted evidence to support that their instruction aligned with a domain's characteristic(s), he stated,

> As an administrator you kind of make that call and then you dialogue about it in the post-observation we go through the things and make your final note on the final

> evaluation piece and be objective about it. I have had some conversations with teachers and I say, I didn't see that part. And they say we do exit cards at the end of the lesson and some may miss the exit cards to wrap up the lesson, so I would ask how did you wrap up the lesson…did the kids really learn what you taught.

I asked him whether he made changes on the evaluation form after having the dialogue with the teachers. In response, he stated, "Well again, we have a dialogue about it, but it usually doesn't change." All the teachers at his building echoed the same sentiments concerning his lack of respect and competence for their craft. Pam stated,

> I didn't feel like he was saying anything, for the most part, the first time I was observed, he missed things, you know the way he handles his observations he stayed in one area and he missed my differentiated instruction. He was open to the conversation, but he had already filed out his post-observation form, so it wasn't like it changed anything that was there. So that formal observation it was marked that I wasn't differentiating instruction when in fact the lesson had three different things that the kids were doing. They were playing a math multiplication game, at three different levels, so he missed that. He was opened to it, but…not really.

She mentioned that she asked him to sit in a different area for the second observation, and he accommodated her request. Fran was more upset concerning her experiences than Pam. Fran stated;

> He listens, but I don't see him writing anything down nor does that change the score. Again, some people are so stuck in their ways and have biases that they don't want to see what you actually did. These things (evaluations) are subjective.

The teachers had the option to check a box on the form that indicated whether they disagreed with the findings of the evaluation; however, none of them selected that option. Fran went on to say that she could have filled a grievance about the written evaluation, but that nothing would happen because of the politics that went on in the central administrative office in the district. These accusations from these teachers bring up the question, should anyone trust the scores from the evaluations?

The principals implemented their post-observation conferences in different ways. For example, Sherry explained how her staff used the post-observation form during the post-conference meetings. The form provided teachers a format to reflect on the lesson, how they themselves would rate their lesson, what last-minute changes they made throughout the lesson, and how they believed the lesson went. This form may have also been mandatory to complete and turn in for the teachers at Addison; however, this process was not explicitly communicated to the interviewer or by any of the teachers.

The teachers at Sherry's building all raved about her feedback, which they felt was useful. "When she gives you feedback she will tell you what were the strengths and weaknesses and provide strategies for you to help with your weaknesses," stated Leslie, a teacher at Stuvenberry. Sandra also commented on Sherry's feedback, stating, "She will also talk about anything else that she noticed in the classroom—what is good or needs to be improved."

Unlike the teachers at Stuvenberry, the teachers at Addison were not receptive to Todd's suggestions because they did not feel that they were valid or helpful to them. They used terms such as opinion, negative, and critiques in their descriptions of the post-observation conferences. These words have negative connotations. Teachers at Stuvenberry selected words such as

suggestions, advice, needs to be improved, and weaknesses. These words express genuine concern and helpfulness as opposed to Todd's words, which seemed opinionated and unpleasant.

Overall, there were many commonalities in terms of how the principals implemented the new teacher evaluation. First, they both displayed integrity in how they enacted the new system. Second, the principals showed personal regard for the teachers as they afforded them the opportunity to schedule their observation time and/or day, when that was no longer required of them via the teachers' union contract. Third, the principals displayed their knowledge of the CDF materials and their job duties by having routines in place for each entity. Fourth, they listened to their teachers during pre-conferences where support was provided to the teachers for their upcoming observations.

While there were commonalities, there were also differences between the principals with regard to implementation. Todd displayed less integrity because he was not present during the duration of the observations; therefore, he missed key information needed to accurately complete the evaluation rubric for the teachers. At the same time, none of the teachers at Stuvenberry had complaints that Sherry left early or that she neglected to document accurate data on the evaluation forms during the observations. Todd showed less respect for the teachers' viewpoint of what was actually implemented during their observations. He listened; however, he neglected to mention the new evidence that contradicted his initial evaluation data. He seemed to lack content and pedagogical knowledge; he did not understand or was not able to identify the key methods in the teachers' lessons. All of the teachers at Stuvenberry were receptive to Sherry's feedback/suggestions because she had not been out of the classroom for a long period of time before she became a principal; for that reason, they respected her input on how to make their lessons more effective. The terminology used during the post-conference meetings by Todd

could be considered to have negative connotations, whereas Sherry used words that could be considered to have positive connotations.

Todd and Sherry both showed personal regard with how they scheduled their teachers' observations. Both of the principals had enough competence of the CDF materials. Both of the principals provided all of the required paperwork to help their teachers prepare for the pre-observation conferences. However, during the post-observation conferences there was a major difference between Todd and Sherry. Sherry displayed more respect for her teachers during the post-observation conferences than Todd displayed towards his teachers. He ignored his teachers' evidence that refuted his findings, yet Sherry willingly accepted the evidence from her teachers to determine if a new rating was required.

The above examples illustrate some of the aspects of principal-teacher trust that the principals fostered as they prepared their staff with information on the new teacher evaluation instrument, and the methods they used to implement the new teacher evaluation system.

**Principal-Teacher Trust**

**Sincere listening and respect.** My data indicate that during the principal-teacher interactions, there was recognition of the important role each person played, a genuine sense of listening to what each person had to say, and valuing of each person's ideas. Also, teachers were able to voice their concerns and feelings with a sense that the principal would take them into consideration. However, I was also able to notice clearly distinct differences between the two principals from my data. The following examples address the respect that both principals showed towards their teachers. There were also times when Todd did not promote respect towards his teachers.

Sherry's staff was not only comfortable with her providing feedback and new information, but they solicited it as well. During the teachers' common planning time, Sherry went to each class to see if she could offer her assistance with multiple strategies and classroom management, and/or to see if any information the teachers had learned about the new evaluation process needed to be clarified.

As the teachers attended workshops and learned new strategies and other information, Sherry solicited those teachers to lead workshops within the building for their colleagues. She was absolutely comfortable with the teachers taking charge of their learning and helping their peers grow within their craft. She explained,

> I think that is (teachers teaching their colleagues) more effective than me being in the center of the stage. We do that more often than not. Like I will say to them that sounds awesome, I want you to share that with the staff. So yesterday I told the Literacy Coach that the Direct Reading Assessment (DRA) was not being conducted in the same way by everyone, so she is going to do some more training in August and she will train the staff.

This demonstrated to the teachers that they were valued and capable of providing support and knowledge to their colleagues. However, there was less evidence of this at Addison than at Stuvenberry; teachers at Addison were not afforded as many opportunities to learn from their peers.

Todd and Sherry sincerely listened to their teachers; however, it appeared that Todd did not fully value or respect his teachers' input on their lessons. He did not indicate on the written evaluation the additional evidence that the teachers brought forth to contradict his findings. All the teachers reported that he would listen attentively in the post-conference meetings regarding

the evidence they introduced to prove that a criterion had been addressed in their lesson. However, he did not add that information to their written evaluation, nor did he change their score. Here, Todd himself admitted to what the teachers expressed earlier, that they did not *really* have a voice in what went into their written evaluations. He explained,

> After we have a post-conference, I sit with the teacher and ask them how do you think the lesson was, is there any way you could have improved on the lesson and we just have a dialogue about it. But if there was something that I missed and you as a teacher explained I was doing this with the students and this is what I was doing, we can dialogue about it and I might miss something and again if I go in for an observation and I am there from the beginning to end of the lesson, I kind of get the gist of what transpired in the room. As an administrator you kind of make that call and then you dialogue about it in the post-observation we go through the things and make your final note on the final evaluation piece and be objective about it. I have had some conversations with teachers and I say, I didn't see that part.

The teachers would introduce evidence in order to address what he stated was not covered in the lesson. The lesson plan that the teacher submitted in the pre-conference meeting would be reviewed again to see if that method or those methods were identified as something the teacher would implement during the lesson. When I asked Todd again if the notes on the written evaluation reflected the evidence that the teacher produced, he stated, "Well again, we have a dialogue about it, but it usually doesn't change." From my data, one could conclude that Todd showed that he sincerely listened to the input from his teachers, but clearly there was a lack of respect in that he did not take into account the evidence from the teachers.

When there is genuine respect for one another, often times this is shown by recognizing that everyone has an important role to play within the community of learners. Genuine respect does not seem to be a characteristic that Todd displayed. His failure to be respectful towards the teachers may have been due to his trying to learn all of the components of the new teacher evaluation system, and that may have been his one and only focus. As for the teacher-led workshops, perhaps none of the teachers at Addison raised the issue of needing or wanting such workshops, or perhaps no one had shown themselves to be a true teacher-leader. Nevertheless, one of the characteristics of a true leader is being able to recognize the strengths of the members they lead and knowing when to volunteer someone who has the knowledge and leadership skills to perform the task.

**Personal regard for others.** My data indicated that during the principal-teacher interactions, there were times when the principals demonstrated how much they cared about their teachers' careers, and so they willingly extended themselves beyond their job requirements. Next, I describe instances when the principals demonstrated personal regard or lack of personal regard for their teachers.

Todd and Sherry both showed personal regard for their staff, Sherry at times more than Todd. Principals were no longer required by the teachers' union contract to inform teachers of their observation dates; nonetheless, Todd and Sherry still did this. At times, some teachers at Addison were unsure if Todd had personal regard for them. Fran explained how some teachers removed students from their classroom during their observation. I asked her if Todd had a roster of how many students were in the classroom, and did the teacher have to provide an explanation as to why those students were not in attendance. Her response was, "Yes, he has a roster for

each class. Well, if he, how shall I say it, if you are in his good graces that day then no." Fran's comment indicates that Todd may have been biased towards some of the teachers.

Personal regard for the teachers was more visible at Stuvenberry than Addison. Sherry extended herself as she shared with her staff the knowledge she obtained in order to learn about the new teacher evaluation system. She went over the materials and the rankings and had her staff look at sections of the document that affected not only the grade they were teaching, but other subject matters as well. For Todd's part, he reviewed the materials with his staff. However, no one was able to produce substantial evidence that it was more than just that, a review.

There are many stakeholders in education who believe that if educators are linked emotionally and/or physically to the school community where they teach, the effort they exert in educating the students may increase. Sherry had lived in the school's local community for numerous years before she married and moved away. She had worked within the district for 18 years compared to Todd's two years. This may explain why Sherry, compared to Todd, appeared to have a stronger personal regard for her teachers.

**Competence.** My data indicated that the principals had a solid understanding of their job duties, that they interacted with their staff members in respectful ways, and that routines were implemented for the new evaluation system that allowed everyone to learn about the new process. The principals displayed similarities and differences with regard to their competence in the area of teacher evaluation.

One similarity was their knowledge of the content within the CDF. They attended the same district workshops where they learned about the teacher evaluation instrument. Both had experience as classroom teachers and thus were knowledgeable about instruction and teachers'

daily duties. Todd had been a principal longer than Sherry; however, Sherry had served as an English Second Language Director and a Special Education Supervisor for the district. Therefore, she was more familiar with the district's rules and procedures than Todd. Todd had not been in the classroom for the past 10 years; he had been an administrator during that time. Sherry had not been in the classroom for the past two years, but she continued to work closely with teachers and students in her previous roles.

They both conducted the walk-throughs consistently, and they completed observations twice for each teacher as well as pre- and post-conferences. There were also routines for organizing and implementing the observations. The principals placed in the office sign-up sheets for each round of observations, and they contacted the teachers soon after the observations were completed to schedule post-observation conferences. One could conclude that the principals were competent with regard to understanding their job duties and ensuring routines were in place to support the new teacher evaluation system.

My data indicated that Sherry displayed more knowledge of the walk-through process than Todd. She was able to provide the name of the software that the district used for the walk-throughs, and to explain how it worked. She provided more information concerning what the principals were expected to do with the walk-through data. She articulated the teacher evaluation rankings and how data from the evaluations was used by the district. When it came to providing feedback to her staff, they considered her suggestions to be helpful. The teachers in Todd's building did not find his feedback to be as meaningful or useful. However, Pam did acknowledge that he made some valid points during one of her post-observation conferences.

**Integrity.** For true leaders to lead anyone, they must exhibit integrity through their words and actions. My data indicated that during the principal-teacher interactions, the principals displayed more differences than similarities.

The integrity Sherry displayed towards her staff was commendable. However, Todd's ratings from his teachers were much less favorable. Sherry displayed consistency between what she said and what she did; causing her teachers to believe that she was very trustworthy. This was not the case with Todd; teachers at Addison did not believe that Todd displayed integrity. There was evidence of a lack of integrity on his part that was indicated by the teachers' testimonies. They were not pleased that Todd left their observations early and did not write up the evaluations in a way that indicated when he departed. Also, according to Fran, he allowed some teachers to send students outside of the classroom during formal observations. Sherry was consistent with regard to how she treated all of the teachers during the observations. Leslie stated, "She does everything by the book. She doesn't bend the rules, but she works with you to help you learn." All of the teachers at Stuvenberry absolutely believed that Sherry was trustworthy and that she respected them, and they respected her completely.

The teachers at Stuvenberry trusted Sherry's leadership skills through the entire teacher evaluation process. These skills included understanding the new teacher evaluation document, respecting and valuing the various tasks that the teachers had to perform, demonstrating a willingness to extend themselves to their teachers, and being trustworthy. In comparison to their counterparts at Stuvenberry, the teachers at Addison seemed to exhibit less trust in Todd's leadership skills.

Sincere listening and respect was demonstrated by Sherry as she valued her teachers' knowledge, opinions, and craft. She allowed her teachers to facilitate professional development

sessions, and allowed them to produce evidence in response to her ratings off their teaching practice. Todd demonstrated listening, but it was not sincere listening, and he also demonstrated a lack of respect towards his teachers. He listened to the teachers' evidence to support their teaching practice; however, he did not use the presented evidence to change any of their ratings. He also did not offer any opportunities to the teachers to facilitate professional development. Personal regard was extended towards the teachers by Todd and Sherry as they continued to allow them to schedule their observations. However, Sherry displayed greater personal regard as she continued to find ways to bring information to the teachers about the new TE. As Todd interacted with his teachers, he exhibited a lack of personal regard toward certain teachers by providing them leeway to allow specific students to exit the classroom before their observation. Competence concerning the new TE was demonstrated by Todd and Sherry as they introduced the new document and they also had a solid command over their job duties. Sherry displayed more competence when it came to the walk-throughs; she explained the procedure in greater detail. The integrity that Sherry exhibited towards the teachers was consistent and unbiased. Todd, however, lacked integrity as he was not consistent with regard to arriving for and leaving the teachers' observations and his written evaluations reflected these inconsistencies.

**Pre-and Post-Conference Oral and Written Feedback**

This section focuses on the pre-and post-conference meetings that were connected to the principals' implementation of the CDF. When the district decided to adopt the CDF in 2010-11, they implemented all four domains of this framework and added assessment as their fifth domain. This domain is an extension of Domain 3, Section 3D, *Using Assessment in Instruction.* The pre-conference meetings were crucial to some teachers, especially if they were a novice teacher or if their teaching practices had previously been rated ineffective. At these meetings, the

principal's responsibility was to offer suggestions to assist the teacher in examining his or her methods of instruction and assessment. The post-conference meeting was also critical because the principal provided scores that determined the teacher's effectiveness as an instructional leader. The principals needed strong knowledge of content and pedagogy at each grade level to offer authentic suggestions regarding the strengths and weaknesses they observed during their observations, as well as suggestions to improve the teachers' teaching practice. Also, this conference offered teachers a platform for discussing their teaching practices and their concerns about the curriculum and/or their students. The following two sections help address Research Question #2, "What role does principal leadership play in teachers' responses to new approaches to teacher evaluation?"

**Pre-conference oral and written feedback.** The principal's role during this part of the CDF can be very vital in how a teacher envisions him/herself as an instructional leader. This is when the principal provides oral and written feedback on the teacher's lesson and the methods and the assessment(s) the teachers selected to meet the objective(s) of the lesson; mostly oral feedback is provided to the teacher in this meeting. The principal's suggestions and questions should help the teacher analyze each section of the lesson as well as the possible results. Sherry and Todd conducted the pre-conference meetings in similar ways.

Prior to the pre-conference observation meetings, the teachers had to complete a lesson plan template that the district implemented: Knowledge Understanding Do (KUD). The template had sections for the lesson's objective, the material the teacher would use, the content, and the assessment that would be given to the students.

During the pre-conference, teachers could raise concerns about the curriculum, students, parents, or other issues. For example, Leslie spoke about how her principal knew the challenges

she had with her students because she knew the students and that her class was selected for her by the principal. Thus, in the meetings the principal would ask specific questions about specific students.

Todd confirmed that he conducted these pre-conference meetings according to district policy; he did not indicate the length of the pre-conference meetings. Sherry stated that for her, the conferences usually lasted five minutes; she looked over the lesson plans briefly because her staff had to turn in weekly lesson plans, and she required the plans to be resubmitted if the teacher made changes to them. Some may feel that five minutes is not enough time for the teachers to adequately share their thoughts on their lesson or for the principal to advise them. But Leslie was adamant that Sherry knew her staff and that she was constantly visible in the classrooms. Also, the teachers in her school attested that she treated everyone fairly. So, one could conclude that if the staff or the principal had any major challenges, needs, or concerns, they would have reached out to her before the pre-conference meetings. My data indicated that Todd and Sherry implemented the pre-conferences in similar ways and provided their teachers with oral and written feedback. However, that was not the case with the post-conference oral and written feedback.

**Post-conference oral and written feedback.** The post-conference was the second mandatory meeting that was part of the CDF. This meeting was scheduled to take place after the evaluator had observed the teacher's lesson; it usually took place within a week of the observation. During this meeting, the principal informed the teacher of their ratings for the five domains, and the teachers were able to voice any concerns about the scores that were given. At this meeting, the principal was expected have an open and honest dialogue about the teacher's instructional practice and whether there was any need for improvement. During these meetings,

the teachers could voice their concern if they believed any errors were made with their scores; they were expected to provide evidence if they felt a rating should be changed. My data indicated that the principals handled the post-conferences in very different ways.

Both principals conducted two mandatory post-conference meetings with each teacher. Before this meeting, the teachers were asked to fill out a post-observation reflection form. Leslie explained the content of the form:

> You type that up (the post-form) and submit that post-conference reflection form along with any work that they (the students) have finished from the activity that she saw, she wants samples of that. You reflect on how you think the lesson went. The questions that are asked are, If you had the opportunity to change something what would it be and why? What are your strengths and weaknesses? How do your rate yourself? Do you feel that you are highly effective, or not, and why?

Several teachers in the study repeated similar questions when asked about the content of the form. One may conclude that these may be standard questions that are scripted for the principals to ask the teachers to begin the dialogue process.

As the meeting progressed, oral feedback was provided to the teachers regarding the five domains that were observed. As the principal provided oral feedback for each domain, the teachers were supplied with evidence of how those scores were calculated. There was more oral feedback than written feedback due to the amount of space the district provided on the forms. This could potentially become a problem; neither the teachers nor the principals had proof of what was communicated beyond the written statements.

Todd and Sherry did not differ in how they managed their time to meet with the teachers for the conferences, but Todd demonstrated less integrity as he evaluated the teachers. In

particular, his written feedback was questioned by all three teachers in the study. Pam mentioned that he gave her low ratings on certain domains because his knowledge of the subject/skill may not have allowed him to understand what was transpiring in the lesson. "I am not clear what his teaching pedagogy or understanding is, to be totally honest. I am just unclear. So whether he knows that or not, I could not tell you." When evidence was provided that contradicted his rating, Todd continued to listen; however, neither the score nor the written portion of the evaluation changed. There is a section on the form that the teachers can check if they disagree with the score and feedback; however, none of the teachers mentioned they did this. The other two teachers at Addison had similar experiences with the written feedback they were provided.

Sherry went over the teachers' goals that they created at the beginning of the year. If she was not able to stay to see the conclusion of the lesson, she asked the teachers to bring in samples of students' work during the post-conference meeting. Teachers at Stuvenberry stated that her oral feedback was useful because she did have the pedagogical knowledge required to implement procedures and provide suggestions to her staff. In contrast to Sherry's efforts to review her teachers' goals as part of evaluating them, Todd did not mention speaking to his teachers during the conferences about their goals.

In sum, the principals conducted the post-conference meetings in different ways. The first difference was that Todd did not sincerely listen or demonstrate respect during the time the teachers communicated their evidence to contradict their evaluation ratings, while Sherry listened and showed respect as she communicated the data that she compiled regarding the teachers' instructional practices. The second difference was that Todd demonstrated a lack of integrity during the oral and written feedback while Sherry demonstrated integrity while offering

her teachers feedback. Lastly, Sherry displayed a higher competence level with regard to the new teacher evaluation instruments as opposed to Todd. She reviewed the post-conference form and the smart goals during these conferences, but Todd did not mention these forms.

**Walk-throughs**

Walk-throughs were another part of the new teacher evaluation system based on the CDF. There were some similarities and differences in how the principals carried out this task as well as how they explained the purpose of the walk-throughs.

The walk-throughs were informal observations that the principals conducted bi-weekly. Both principals reported that they spent no more than 10 minutes per walk-through. Todd stated that he focused on how the students responded to the teachers' instructional practices and classroom management strategies. He did not offer any information as to what he did with the data he collected during these walk-throughs.

Sherry did not offer any specific details as to what she looked for during the walk-throughs she performed. She did explain that the walk-through data was supposed to be included in the teachers' final evaluation score. The teachers at both schools felt that feedback was not provided to them from the walk-throughs unless the principal had some concerns.

While Todd seemed unclear about the purpose of the walk-throughs, Sherry seemed to have a better understanding of how the data was used. Teachers at both schools, though, did not seem aware that the walk-through data was used to help determine their overall evaluation score. If the district was using the data to determine a percentage of the teachers' overall evaluation score, district officials should have made this clear to the teachers. In addition, the principals are held responsible for providing a rating of the effectiveness of teachers. In order to do this fairly, the evidence must be thorough. Principals must have a substantial amount of evidence from

formal and informal observations that is high quality. Therefore, the district may want to rethink the amount of time the principal needs to spend in the classroom, as well as the number of walk-throughs that they must complete. Lastly, the district could communicate specific reasons for these walk-throughs so that teachers understood their practice. These walk-throughs could help some teachers improve their instructional and classroom management skills.

In sum, if the teachers believed that a part of the new teacher evaluation system, such as the walk-throughs, was not useful, they may have developed some distrust of their principals and/or central district administrators.

**Summary**

The purpose of this chapter is to address the second research question: "What role does principal leadership play in teachers' responses to new approaches to teacher evaluation?" I examined three aspects of principal leadership: (1) how principals prepared their staff with information on the new teacher evaluation; (2) how principals implemented the new teacher evaluation; and (3) principal-teacher trust relations associated with the implementation of the new teacher evaluation.

As the principals provided the teachers information concerning the new system, it was apparent that principal-teacher trust was a primary indicator that affected whether the process was successful. It also became clear that teacher trust with regard to their principal's leadership skills needed to be established before the process started. As the principals carried out the new teacher evaluation system, they began to display characteristics that indicated their level of leadership. Table 2A outlines the main findings from my study.

**Table 1A. Main findings**

| Main Findings | Sherry | Todd |
|---|---|---|
| 1) Principals prepared their staff with information on the new teacher system evaluation | a)Discussed the TE document, provided examples of the elements in domains, guided the teachers through the walk-through process, teachers met in grade level meetings to discuss the TE document<br>b)Allowed the teachers to schedule their observations | a)Reviewed the TE document<br><br>b)Allowed the teachers to schedule their observations |
| 2)Principals implemented the new TE | a)Provided opportunities to the teachers to continue to schedule their observations<br>b)All CDF materials and paperwork required was reviewed<br>c)Post-conferences: When ratings were provided and teachers had evidence to refute the rating, principal took that information into consideration | a)Provided opportunities to the teachers to continue to schedule their observations<br>b) All CDF materials and paperwork required was reviewed<br>c) Post-conferences: When ratings were provided and teachers had evidence to refute the rating, the principal did not take that information into consideration |
| 3) Principal-teacher trust | a) Integrity was displayed with her staff through her consistent actions—followed the rules and did not display bias; teachers believed her to be trustworthy—she extended herself to make sure that the teachers understood the new system process | a) Integrity was not displayed due to principal leaving/arriving to observation late and the written evaluation did not reflect what he actually observed; some teachers were allowed to dismiss certain students during their observation |

In terms of similarities, both Todd and Sherry were competent evaluators. Second, they both exhibited personal regard for the teachers; they continued to allow the teachers to schedule the time and day of their observations.

At the same time, there were numerous differences between the two principals. First, Sherry provided her teachers with more in-depth information regarding the new system than Todd did. Second, there was a lack of sincere listening and respect exhibited by Todd as he conducted his post-conference meetings. He did not consider the evidence that was brought forth by the teachers who challenged their evaluation rating. Third, my data indicated that Sherry displayed a higher degree of integrity (i.e., consistency) than Todd, which allowed her staff members to trust her leadership abilities.

The teachers at Stuvenberry commended Sherry's leadership abilities; she allowed teachers to become facilitators of workshops; she provided them with advice; she listened to their concerns and challenges as educators; and she possessed the pedagogy to offer methods that would assist with educating multiple learners. On the other hand, Todd did not receive the same reaction from the teachers in his building. They seemed dissatisfied with his leadership skills; he lacked the necessary pedagogy to assist with their teaching practices; he did not offer accurate ratings for their observations; and they believed their rating was lowered because of his early arrival or departure from their observations.

The principals were still learning how to conduct the evaluations without biases in order to provide teachers with fair and accurate ratings, and if this could be accomplished, teachers would have a better outlook on the new teacher evaluation system. In chapter four I will address how teachers learned about the CDF; teachers' perceptions of their principals' levels of communication about and support for the new system; how the new observation instrument supported the teachers' instruction; and the teachers' concerns about the new teacher evaluation process.

# Chapter 4

## Elementary Teachers Interpret and Respond to the New TE

In this chapter, I address the second research question, "How do elementary teachers interpret and respond to new approaches to teacher evaluation?" In particular, I examine what teachers learned about the Charlotte Danielson Framework (CDF). I also describe the teachers' perceptions of their principals' levels of communication about and support for the new system. In addition, I examine how the new observation instrument supported teachers' instruction, and I describe the teachers' concerns about the new teacher evaluation system.

### Teachers' Experiences with the New Teacher Evaluation System

Novice and veteran teachers have always been held accountable for the quality of their instruction. A key part of this has been classroom observations as part of teacher evaluations. School districts have been required to provide non-tenured teachers with an individualized development plan and evaluations at least yearly, based on a minimum of two classroom observations (Michigan AFT, 2013). In contrast, traditionally in Michigan after teachers obtained tenure, they were not evaluated very often; in most districts, tenured teachers have traditionally been evaluated once every three to five years.

Under the new Michigan law, all school districts are required to submit, for approval by the state, a new teacher evaluation instrument that their district would utilize. The document that received approval had to be implemented in the manner which the district described in their initial proposal. The change to the new law is mainly for tenured teachers; now they must be evaluated yearly, the same as novice teachers.

The new teacher evaluation system may be viewed by some teachers as a chance to prove their teaching abilities, while others may view it as just another opportunity for the teaching

profession to be demoralized. Whichever view teachers take, there is no argument that the new teacher evaluation system is not just another educational intervention that will come and leave quickly. Nonetheless, teachers need to be aware of the requirements if they are going to obtain and maintain high ratings that demonstrate their effectiveness in the classroom.

Many veteran teachers had not been formally evaluated for at least five years before the 2011-2012 school year. At the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year, the district began implementing the state-mandated new teacher evaluation system. As the new system was implemented, teachers developed perspectives on whether their principal implemented the new system correctly, their principal's levels of communication about and support for the new system, the utility of the rating system, and possible problems with the new system. In the next section, I describe how the teachers learned about the CDF.

**How Teachers Learned about the CDF**

Each principal in the district was responsible for reviewing all of the new teacher evaluation materials with teachers and for answering their questions and concerns. No one could deny the tremendous responsibility that was placed on the principals: to understand the new teacher evaluation system, to help teachers understand it, to implement it, and constantly to make sure that teachers were updated on changes to the system.

As I examined my data, there were noticeable similarities and differences between the two groups of teachers in how they learned about the new system. In both schools, the teachers attended an initial staff meeting held by their principal. In this meeting, he/she introduced all of the documents that the district had provided. The principal reviewed the new system document and gave teachers the opportunity to ask questions, and they attempted to address them, as well as their concerns.

Even though the teachers at both schools received the information in a similar manner, Stuvenberry's teachers were provided more in-depth learning from their principal than Addison's teachers. Sherry dissected each part of the document with the teachers, not only reviewing what the document stated, but making sure that it was comprehensible. She provided visuals of what some of the domain elements would look like. The wording in the document could be ambiguous, and she wanted to make sure that the teachers knew exactly what she would be looking for when she evaluated their lessons. The teachers at Addison, however, did not receive this comprehensive explanation.

The teachers at Stuvenberry also spoke highly of their principal's enthusiasm as she passed on information that they needed to know about the new teacher evaluation process. Sherry made information available not only at the beginning of the school year; she also provided information at the staff meetings that were held throughout the school year and during grade level meetings. Todd only provided information to his staff at the beginning of the school year. If other information was given to him by the district, he made certain that he passed it on to the teachers. However, he did not provide any additional meetings that were set aside specifically to discuss the new system. This was in direct contrast with how Sherry kept her teachers informed.

The teachers at Addison reported other ways in which they learned about the CDF. One of the teachers recalled reading all of the materials on her own after the initial meeting, as well as locating information on the district's website and the Michigan Department of Education website. Another teacher admitted that she learned about the evaluation through a course she took. She acknowledged that had she not taken the course, she would not have been as knowledgeable about the CDF, the domains, the ratings, the evaluator's role in the process, or

how the evaluation system aids the teachers in assessing their strengths and weaknesses. Given the different ways that the teachers acquired information regarding the new system, one could conclude that the teachers may have had different levels of knowledge about the new system.

In the sections that follow, I discuss ways in which the teachers at Stuvenberry demonstrated more knowledge than the teachers at Addison the about pre- and post-conferences, the domains, and the ratings.

**Pre- and post-conferences.** The conferences are mandatory for both the principal and the teacher. The meetings act as a buffer between the principal and teacher so that both can speak freely about what had transpired during and after the observed lesson.

The teachers at Addison explained that a lesson plan for their evaluated lesson had to be submitted before the observations. Two teachers briefly mentioned the pre-conference form that they had to fill out prior to the meeting. Another teacher explained how the pre-conference form asked teachers to provide specific details about the students in their classroom and what they would teach and why, and if they had any circumstances that would prevent them from achieving the goals in their lesson. This was all of the information that the Addison teachers provided about the pre-conferences.

The teachers at Stuvenberry also mentioned having to fill out a pre-conference form along with completing a lesson plan before they would be observed. However, these teachers went into greater detail concerning the questions that were on the pre-conference form. Questions were on the form that helped them to think critically about the lesson, the resources, and the methods they would use, as well as the possible outcome(s). The district wanted the teachers to not only think of these questions when they were developing their evaluated lesson, but in relation to all of their lessons. The principal also asked for an overview of the students in

the classroom who had challenges; e.g., those who were not able to focus and those who were not working at grade level. The principal requested specifications of the lesson; i.e., if they anticipated any challenges during the implementation of the lesson, and everything that she might see during the observation. The teachers' smart goals, which were five goals that they wanted to accomplish before the end of the school year, were also reviewed to determine what evidence would indicate whether the goals had been met.

The teachers at Addison offered a few details about what transpired during the post-conferences. There were forms that they were required to complete before the conference. During the conference, the principal critiqued and presented his findings of the observed lesson. He also asked the teachers to reflect on their lesson; did they accomplish the goals of the lesson? And what were their next steps? There was not a lot of data provided to me by the teachers at Addison on this topic.

With the post-conference meetings, the teachers at Stuvenberry declared that they had also to submit a post-observation form. The form asked that they reflect on their observed lesson so that they may possibly critique themselves, just as the evaluator had done. The district hoped that the teachers would begin to critique their lessons to identify their strengths and weaknesses and to begin to improve their teaching practices. The teachers made it very clear that this form went into more detail than the pre-conference form. They also stated that this meeting was where the principal provided feedback from the lesson and offered advice to help improve their teaching practices. The principal asked the teachers to bring in students' work samples from the lesson that was evaluated in order to determine if the final product corresponded with the assessment of the lesson. Two teachers were able to discuss how the principal derived **a** rating for their lesson. They discussed how the principal used a checklist in which each domain was

rated and then all the ratings were calculated to determine a final rating. Again, the teachers at Stuvenberry were able to present significantly more information about post-conferences than the teachers at Addison.

**Domains and ratings.** The CDF has four domains. These domains are used in the formal and informal observations to evaluate the effectiveness of the teachers' teaching practices. The domains are: (1) planning and preparation; (2) the classroom environment; (3) instruction; and (4) professional responsibilities. However, the district added assessment as their fifth domain. There were four ratings that a teacher could receive; (1) highly effective, (2) effective, (3) minimally effective, and (4) ineffective.

The teachers at Addison had less knowledge on the subject of the domains and the ratings than the teachers at Stuvenberry. Stuvenberry teachers were able to provide substantial information regarding several of the domains. They knew the names of four of the domains, and one teacher informed me that the district added a fifth domain, but she was unable to provide the domain's name. Some details were provided concerning the elements in the domains. The teachers explained how the principal arrived at the teacher's final rating; each domain received a rating, and all of the ratings were then combined to determine their final observation rating. The domains were very important for a teacher to be able to understand and implement, seeing as their evaluation rating was based on how effectively they were able to address the domains in their evaluated lesson.

One teacher at Addison mentioned the ratings as she discussed the post-conferences. The principal gave them a form that had the criteria for each domain, and according to the criteria, he indicated next to each one if the teacher was highly effective, effective, minimally effective, or

ineffective; this was how the teachers' ratings were determined. The other two teachers did not offer any information about the rating factors.

The teachers at Stuvenberry were able to discuss the ratings and explain how they were connected to the domains, which was in contrast to the teachers at Addison. One of the teachers stated that each domain had several elements, and when the principal came in to evaluate, she placed a checkmark next to it and then she calculated the score. Then all of the domain ratings were combined to determine the teacher's final score. She went on to state that she had the calculation written down because the principal went through it with the staff, but she did not know it verbatim. As the principals implemented the new system, teachers were able to acquire feedback regarding their effectiveness.

**Plan of Action for Unsatisfactory Ratings**

Knowing the consequences of a satisfactory or unsatisfactory rating can assist teachers in their quest to maintain their employment. Teachers from both schools were aware of the consequences that were associated with all ratings, yet some teachers had a higher level of knowledge regarding these consequences than others. There were a lot of questions that the teachers at Addison had regarding the consequences that were associated with unsatisfactory ratings.

Stuvenberry's teachers were quite familiar with the district's plan to support teachers who received unsatisfactory ratings. As the teachers discussed their knowledge of the plan, it was apparent that their knowledge again was greater than that of the teachers at Addison. One teacher offered the following information:

> There is a plan put in place after a teacher gets two or more minimally effective or ineffective ratings. The teacher is placed on probation and they must agree with the

> principal to a plan; the teacher may have to go to professional development, meet with a designated coach in the district, or just work with the principal. If the teacher receives another minimally effective or ineffective rating while the teacher is on probation, my understanding is that the teacher is terminated.

It was also mentioned that the teacher had to have a meeting with the principal. This is when the principal offers recommendations for the types of professional development that the teacher must attend. Then the principal would have to conduct additional walk-throughs for that teacher to ensure that he/she was improving. After the teacher attended a certain number of professional development activities, he/she was reevaluated. After the plan had been executed, if the teacher had not made any improvements, the principal had the right to ask that the teacher be terminated. However, the school board and the district's human resource director were the ones with the authority to make a final decision regarding termination.

The teachers at Addison all had some knowledge of the district's plan of action for teachers who received unsatisfactory ratings. One teacher confided in me that there was a plan, but she was not completely clear on the details. Another teacher believed that there was some type of "corrective feedback" that was provided to the teacher to help him or her begin to make self-improvements. Other than the feedback, she was not clear about the plan. The last teacher indicated that her understanding of the district's plan for teachers who received unsatisfactory ratings was that a conference was held with them to put an intervention plan in place. The intervention was to help them improve their teaching practices. Also, they were given a time frame as to when they would be reevaluated; however, the teachers were unaware of the amount of time that was allotted to the teacher to improve their practice.

In sum, the teachers at Stuvenberry had greater knowledge of the new teacher evaluation system than the teachers at Addison.

**Are These Differences Related to Differences in Principal-Teacher Trust Across the Two Schools?**

Sherry provided teachers with a considerable amount of additional knowledge of pre-and post-conferences, domains, and ratings; as a result, the Stuvenberry teachers had more knowledge of the new teacher evaluation system than the Addison teachers. The teachers at Stuvenberry were more knowledgeable about the conferences, what forms and paperwork needed to be submitted before and during the meetings, as well as the discussions that took place during those meetings, the elements of the domains, and how the ratings were calculated. The ways in which the teachers learned about the CDF was related to differences in principal-teacher trust across the two schools. Personal regard, one of the criteria for principal-teacher trust, played a significant role in these differences.

Todd showed some personal regard for the teachers in his care when he gave them an opportunity to schedule their own observations. But my data clearly indicates that Sherry displayed characteristics of compassion and willingness, which may have led her to provide the teachers with knowledge of the new system, which extended beyond her role.

Sherry held additional meetings throughout the school year to ensure teachers had more in-depth knowledge of the new system. Teachers were provided examples of the elements to clarify all of the misunderstandings that they believed to be in the domains. Also, all components in the new system document were thoroughly reviewed by Sherry with her teachers. She believed that her teachers needed to know and have a full understanding of the content in the

document. This may have been one of the main reasons why the teachers acquired more knowledge than the teachers at Addison.

**Teachers' Perceptions of Their Principals' Levels of Communication about and Support for the New System**

Principals had the difficult task of implementing the new system with the teachers, and of course no two people can execute such a task in the same way. For that reason, the teachers' perceptions of their principals' levels of communication about and support for the new system differed at both schools.

The teachers at Stuvenberry all spoke highly of Sherry's enthusiasm that she displayed as she began to prepare them for the new system. Sherry made information available not only at the beginning of the school year, but also at the staff meetings that were held throughout the school year, when she thoroughly reviewed each component of the new teacher evaluation system. She also visited the teachers' grade-level meetings throughout the school year to ask the teachers if they needed any clarification on the new system and to offer any new information that she had learned or to provide them with paperwork she received that would keep them abreast of any changes.

Sherry was aware that the language in the new system could be ambiguous and subjective; therefore, she provided concrete examples of certain domain elements that the teachers were unclear about in order for them to understand what that particular teaching practice would look like. The teachers were very grateful to Sherry for listening to their concerns and helping them understand what the district expected from them during their evaluations. In addition, Sherry informed her staff that she was unclear about some areas of the new system. However, she was still in the process of learning because she needed to have a definite

understanding of the new system and her role. The teachers appreciated how she was honest with them from the beginning concerning her lack of knowledge of the new system. She made sure that she continued to learn and correct any misinformation that she had provided them. Due to her forthcoming nature, the teachers did not harbor any hostility towards her; instead, the trust in her grew stronger.

During the pre- and post-conferences, the teachers indicated that the level of communication and feedback that Sherry provided was useful and helpful. She gave them authentic suggestions to help them improve their teaching practice. If they wanted to implement any of the ideas she had offered, she came into their classroom during the lesson to offer additional feedback. As she communicated with her staff regarding the new system, she listened to their concerns and offered suggestions to help them improve and deal with those concerns in a positive manner. She did not want any of her teachers to feel overwhelmed by the new system. She feared that it could potentially cause them to lose focus on their teaching, so she continued to acknowledge their accomplishments. The teachers believed that Sherry ensured seamless and positive experiences for everyone. She did not want them just to go through the process because it was mandatory; instead, she wanted and encouraged them to learn about their teaching practice, so that they could continue to grow in their craft. Also, she communicated that as their principal, she was there to support them in any way that she could.

Walk-throughs were another component which the principals had to introduce to the teachers. When Todd presented the new system document to his teachers, he explained that he would be making informal observations, which were called walk-throughs; they would last approximately 2-10 minutes each; and that they would occur once a week or bi-weekly,

depending on his schedule. He also notified them that he would use a pre-set checklist during the informal observations.

Sherry described the process in more detail than Todd. She not only described the checklist which included a condensed version of the five domains that the principals used during the teachers' formal observations, but she also spoke about the frequency of the observations: at least once a week for a minimum of 5 minutes. In addition, she explained that the walk-through instrument she would use was derived from the CDF. After describing the documents for this component, she then demonstrated the walk-throughs by using her iPad and the Teach Scape software the district used for the informal observations. This software stored the data and generated the teachers' reports and scores, which could be sent to the teachers electronically.

As the new system began, the teachers at Addison quickly realized that Todd's communication about and support for the new system was minimal, even though they felt he implemented the new system correctly, in terms of formally observing each teacher twice, implementing the walk-throughs, and conducting the pre-and-post conferences. They concluded that Todd had briefly described the new system as he provided information to them; many found that they had to go to the district's website and the Michigan Department of Education website to read additional information to acquire a better understanding. Furthermore, he was rarely available to assist the teachers if they had any concerns or questions. There were not any professional development meetings in the building to assist the teachers to obtain comprehensive understanding. Also, the teachers had to depend on one another to learn about the various components of the new system, and they became aware that a principal mentor worked with Todd because he was a novice to the district. She would accompany him during the evaluations and provide feedback to the teachers as well when she was in the building. This was not

communicated to all of the teachers, thus providing additional anxiety to the teachers regarding the new system.

Feedback was another area where the teachers believed that Todd provided limited support for the new system. The teachers perceived their principal's communication and support to be limited or non-existent during the post-conferences. They felt that Todd was inclined to sincerely listen to their objections regarding the ratings. Yet, the teachers suggested that Todd did not support them professionally because he did not consider the evidence that was brought forth that could have led him to reconsider his findings.

**Are These Differences Related to Differences in Principal-Teacher Trust Across the Two Schools?**

My data indicated that sincere listening and respect were the basis of the differences in principal-teacher trust across the two schools. It was obvious that Todd tried at certain points in the implementation process genuinely to listen to what each of the teachers had to say as he allowed them to voice their concerns regarding their rating. Still, he showed little to no respect for the teachers' craft nor for the evidence they submitted to refute his findings. He dismissed the evidence and caused the teachers to develop limited to no trust in his leadership abilities.

Sherry displayed excellent leadership skills as she carefully and respectfully listened to the teachers' concerns. She acknowledged that they were a part of the process, and she ensured them that they would not be treated as bystanders to the new system. Thus, she took their concerns and tried her best to provide solutions to assist the teachers to be as successful as possible, as they moved through the new system. From Sherry extending her role as an administrator, to her respecting the teachers' instructional practices, her teachers believed her to

be a very trustworthy person who showed a deep concern for them through her sincere listening and respect.

**Ways in Which the New Teacher Evaluation System Supported Teachers' Instruction**

As with any new intervention, some teachers may have found that it supported their instruction and some the opposite. In this case, teachers indicated that the new system supported their instruction. There were numerous themes that were evident at both schools: guidelines, accountability, planning time, evidence of teacher's instructional skills, professional development, smart goals, pre- and post-conferences, and walk-throughs. All of the teachers at Stuvenberry believed that the new system offered support to keep them aligned with the district's teaching guidelines. They used the guidelines, which were the domains, to remain focused on the content they needed to teach; i.e., the district's benchmarks. This was very helpful to teachers who had a level change or who were teaching a new grade for the first time.

Planning time was another feature of the new system. As the teachers were observed once in the beginning of the school year, and again in the middle of the school year, the principals were obligated to ensure that they were keeping pace with the curriculum. The teachers were expected to focus on certain reading, social studies and science themes and to be in a certain chapter in math during certain times in the school year. Teachers used this system to pace their lessons in order to ensure they were meeting the district's guidelines.

Another way that the new system supported teachers' instruction was through the evaluator. All the teachers looked at the evaluator as the person who had the ability to provide evidence of their teaching abilities. This evidence, if teachers were willing to learn from the feedback, could help the teachers improve their teaching practices. Previously the evaluation system was much more subjective because the evaluator had to use his/her prior classroom

knowledge to determine if the teacher met the requirements. The new system provided the evaluator a rubric with specific key points to look for during the observation, which would help to eliminate some subjectivity. Also, it provided teachers accurate information in the five domains that could potentially help improve their teaching practice.

During my investigation, my data indicated that the teachers also believed that accountability was a very large part of the new system that helped to aid in their instruction. They thought that if they knew exactly what was expected of them to teach, they would be better prepared to plan their lessons and deliver effective instruction. The new system had a set rubric and guidelines for the teacher to abide by, and they saw these as consistent messages, whereas before, they did not receive such guidance. From my data, it was apparent that the teachers appreciated the structure that the new system afforded them.

Teacher participation in professional development also proved to help support their instruction. The district made participating in professional development a part of the new teacher evaluation system. Teachers were required to stay abreast of the latest researched methods, so that they would continually improve. This was very helpful for those teachers who changed grade levels; they were able to gain knowledge through hands-on practice as they learned how to implement the curriculum and select appropriate supplemental resources. Making professional development mandatory caused some teachers to think about it in new ways: they learned from their peers through *communities of learners.*

Opportunities at Stuvenberry were provided through *communities of learners*. This helped teachers share with their peers what they learned from the professional development they attended. The principals were given a monthly list of the teachers and the description of the professional development that they had attended. Sherry selected several of her teachers who

had acquired knowledge in areas she believed would benefit her staff to facilitate workshops and teacher meetings.

Smart goals were also a part of the teachers' new evaluation system. This component also provided support for the teachers' instruction. Teachers had to list five goals that they would accomplish before the end of the school year. Students' work had to be submitted as evidence that the goals were met. This component could enable teachers to experiment with different methods for different learning styles; doing this could possibly increase their instructional knowledge.

As the teachers went through the pre-and post-conferences, there were several opportunities where their instruction was supported through the completion of the pre-and post-conference forms and the dialogue that occurred. Teachers had to complete forms before and after their evaluations. The pre-conference forms helped the teachers to think critically regarding the instruction they would deliver, how they would deliver it, and how the instruction would be assessed. The post-forms also helped the teachers to think critically about the strengths and weaknesses that were observed in their lesson and how they could improve their instruction. When teachers reflect on their lessons, this could help them to think about the resources and methods they would need to use to obtain a more successful learning outcome for their students.

The last component of the new system that supported the teachers' instruction was the walk-throughs. Walk-throughs were short informal observations that occurred weekly or bi-weekly that assessed the teachers' effectiveness in the five domains. With these frequent assessments of the teachers' instructional practices, the feedback could possibly assist the teachers as they implemented changes. Even with all of the features that seem to support instruction, teachers still had several concerns about the new teacher evaluation system. In

general, the new teacher evaluation system was supporting teachers at both schools in similar ways.

## Teachers' Concerns

Interventions can bring forth many concerns and assurances. The assurances were addressed in the above section, and this section will address the teachers' concerns about the new system. Teachers had concerns about how their principals implemented the new system (at Addison), how the classroom observations ratings were being used, and about value-added models (VAMs).

### Addison Teachers were Concerned about the Principal's Implementation of the New System While Stuvenberry Teachers Did Not Share this Concern

Sherry and Todd's actual approach to the new teacher evaluation, compared to the teachers' understanding of how the principals were supposed to carry out their role, caused the teachers to believe that the principals met the requirements which the district set for them. The teachers at Addison all believed that Todd either carried out or tried to carry out the evaluation process correctly. Pam had one complaint**,** however; she stated,

> I believe he understands the process and from what I have heard from my colleagues in other buildings, if I were to compare him to them, I would give him a six. That six comes from scheduling issues; him coming in late and leaving early from the observations.

Fran also believed that Todd was doing everything that he was required to do from what she read; he conducted two formal observations, implemented the walk-throughs, and held the pre- and post-conferences. Debra, on the other hand, would not provide her viewpoint on this subject. She kept asking if the question pertained to *her principal* or principals in general. After the question was asked again to emphasize that the question only pertained to her principal, she

declined to provide an answer. However, she did state that he had fulfilled all of the required steps that he was instructed to complete.

The teachers at Stuvenberry all believed that Sherry's approach to implementing the evaluation was satisfactory. Leslie, who was the building's union representative in 2011-2012, confirmed that Sherry "did everything by the book," and from what she had heard from the other teachers in the district and from what she had read, she did not see any discrepancies. Martha explained that in staff meetings, Sherry would provide them with information as to how she planned to conduct the observations, so that everyone was on the "same playing field." Martha acknowledged that Sherry was "fair, honest, and to the point." Sandra confirmed that Sherry executed the process properly, and that she was fair and clear with her expectations as she followed the district's guidelines.

The teachers' perspectives on how their principal carried out the new teacher evaluation system compared to their understanding of how the process was to be implemented were fairly positive. A conclusion that could be drawn from my data was that the principals were trying to provide the teachers with evaluations that met the district's expectations. However, as the new system was implemented, the teachers experienced different levels of support from their principals.

Teachers had the right to agree or disagree with the principal's findings during the post-conference meeting. If there was a discrepancy, there was a place on the formal evaluation form where the teacher could indicate this, and they also had to submit a statement to refute the principal's findings. Some principals, if evidence was brought forth during the meeting to refute their findings, would change their written evaluation and rating, while others would not.

All of the teachers at Addison held some resentment toward Todd for not allowing evidence that they had to influence him to change their evaluation rating that he had given them. The criticism that two of the teachers brought up was that he did not stay for the entire observation, yet they were marked down in areas that he would have observed had he not left. One of the teachers said that he arrived to her observation late and left too early, and when evidence was submitted to him, he listened and they had a dialogue about the evidence, but neither her score nor the written evaluation statement changed.

Teachers also doubted whether his pedagogical knowledge was sufficient to fairly evaluate their lessons. Teachers had to present differentiated instruction in their lessons. One particular teacher used differentiated instruction during her math lesson. She introduced the concept to the entire class; once everyone had an idea of the concept, she placed the students in groups according to their readiness level; each group was playing a different game related to the same concept. Todd marked on her evaluation that she did not infuse differentiated instruction in her lesson. When evidence was presented to refute his findings, he did not change the evaluation rating. He listened attentively as he always did; however, the rating remained the same and there were no changes made to the teacher's written evaluation statement. Fran offered the following insight as to why she believed Todd's levels of communication about and support for the new system may have been low. "Some people are so stuck in their ways and have biases that they don't want to see what you actually did." Debra also spoke about her interactions with Todd during her post-conference meeting when she tried to bring up evidence to contradict his findings. "When you bring up the evidence that you have and tell him he would have seen it had he not left early, he looks at you as if he doesn't care to hear it, as if it is an excuse or something."

On the other hand, the teachers at Stuvenberry did not have any of the above grievances to report concerning their principal's levels of communication about or support during the post-conference meetings regarding their ratings. If a teacher had evidence to provide that might influence Sherry to change an evaluation rating, she accepted the evidence and had a dialogue with the teacher; the teacher walked Sherry through the evidence presented and if there were any questions the teacher addressed them. After this process, if Sherry was satisfied with the information presented, she would change the teacher's rating and the written statement to reflect the changes. However, this did not occur often because Sherry rarely left the observations early nor did she arrive late. Therefore, she was able to witness each teacher's entire lesson. The teachers at Stuvenberrry were pleased at Sherry's dedication to them and the new system. She understood that the teachers were still trying to navigate through the new system, and she preferred that they navigate through the process together, as a team, instead of individually.

**Teachers' Concerns about How the Classroom Observations Ratings Were Being Used**

Many of the teachers were aware that the district used unsatisfactory ratings in order to layoff or dismiss teachers; however, the teachers at Stuvenberry had more knowledge about the topic than the teachers at Addison. Pam stated, "Last year we heard that if you were effective or highly effective you were safe, and if you receive minimally or ineffective, you would be placed on the layoff list." Many teachers believed that this was a way for principals to get rid of the teachers they no longer wanted employed in the district. Fran felt that the district's plan of action for those teachers who were unsatisfactory was just a cover-up to rid themselves of teachers they wanted to terminate. She explained,

> So the district is going to provide feedback to these unsatisfactory teachers, but when are they going to get this feedback? It is not like they are going to provide it during the

> school year especially again, when the evaluation ratings are due towards the end of the school year, and teachers know that their job is on the line if they do not get a great score.

Other teachers agreed that the observation could be subjective and that some principals have been known to use the process to terminate teachers' employment. Some teachers have become anxious and scared to go through the evaluation process. As teachers received their evaluation rating, they noticed that there was some inconsistency with regard to how the principals were rating teachers; some teachers who had been known not to be effective received higher scores than some teachers who had always been known to be effective. One of the principals provided evidence of the inconsistency that the teachers believed took place during the observations. She explained,

> There needs to be more training so that there can be consistency for teachers and principals. I think some teachers are just getting to a point where they understand what highly effective and effective looks like. It is not consistent with administration in terms of who gets what. For example, a teacher here, if they went to another building may end up with a different rating. Also, the scoring is also a topic of conversation lately. The process of the checklist, those two worksheets from the teachers' formal observations and all of the Teach Scape data and compiling it into a final evaluation, that process has not been really explained. I am sure it is done differently at each building in terms of how you come up with that final evaluation score.

These inconsistent patterns were one of the main topics discussed in principal meetings. Hopefully, once the inconsistencies in the ratings have been corrected, teachers will have one less concern about the new teacher evaluation system.

## Teachers' Concerns about VAMs

There are many different approaches to teacher evaluation, and it is a very complex topic. With numerous teacher evaluation reforms being considered, the educational system must identify reasonable teacher evaluation practices and protocols that accurately reflect the multiple facets of teachers' practice, and this may be accomplished through VAMs. VAMs are a specific type of *growth model,* a diverse group of statistical techniques to isolate a teacher's impact on his or her students' testing progress while controlling for other measureable factors, such as student and school characteristics, that are outside that teacher's control. (Di Carlo, 2012). Although students' standardized test scores are one source of information for school officials to use in making judgments about teacher effectiveness, such scores alone may not be valid indicators of teacher effectiveness, and should only be used as part of an overall evaluation.

**Student performance on state tests.** With regard to teacher value-added models (VAMs), teachers were worried that the district would not be inclined to consider outside factors that may cause students to fall behind academically. If those factors were not addressed, teachers believed that they would be penalized for factors that were not within their control, which would be unfair to them and their profession. Many of the teachers had valid points on this subject. For example, Fran stated,

> Do people start arguing over which students they are getting in the classroom? For an example, my students who are resource students who I care about greatly, their scores went under my name. Their scores didn't go under the resource teacher; if they are providing reading or math services for them, the scores still went under my name. I really feel that whoever is teaching them that or those subjects, the scores should go under their name.

Teachers believed that if their evaluations were mainly based on their students' test scores, then teachers would only want to teach those students who were capable of passing the test. They also had a concern about the students who did not show growth. They understood that some students have more challenges than others, and that their academic growth may not be as great as a student who did not have as many challenges. Yet, they felt as teachers that they would have done all that they could and the student would have showed progress. But, if someone compared their academic growth to someone else who did not have as many challenges, it may not seem like a lot of progress, when in fact it was due to the student's circumstances or background.

Again, the teachers believed that the district wanted to hold them accountable for outside factors that were looked upon as part of the teacher's responsibilities, when in fact, some of these factors had to do with students' families. The educational system must locate ways to determine the impact that teachers have on students' learning. Until they are able to determine this impact, teachers may not be fairly evaluated on the knowledge they convey to their students. Many believed that some students may not be prepared when they enter school. Some students start off at pre-school and may be more advanced than the kindergartener who just entered school for the first time. Teachers have varied learning abilities that they have to address, and they believe that the goal should be for each child to be making progress.

Educators believe that there should be some accountability that is placed on them for their students' learning. However, one test is not an indicator of the learning that a student has acquired. The teachers were curious to know about those students who were not great test takers or who had many challenges that affected their ability to focus, or who were not at grade level. Martha explained,

> Some students start off at pre-school, which I think there is something to be said about pre-school, where some are more advanced than that kindergartener who is entering school for the first time in a classroom. So you have varied learning abilities.

Evaluations are helpful tools to identify the strengths and weaknesses of educators so that school districts can assist accordingly, to help teachers improve, and by doing this, students may become academically prepared for tests, college, and employment. With additional evaluation practices in place, I believe teachers may even welcome evaluations instead of being wary of them.

**Are These Differences Related to Differences in Principal-Teacher Trust Across the Two Schools?**

There were various teacher concerns regarding how their principal implemented the new system, how classroom observations ratings were used, and VAMs. From my data, the principals' integrity was related to the differences in teachers' concerns across the two schools, yet my data also indicated that there were some similarities in the topics of ratings and VAMs that the teachers at both schools exhibited.

The evidence showed that Todd and Sherry met their obligations to provide the teachers with information about the new system. In this task, Sherry showed greater trustworthiness than Todd. The teachers at Stuvenberry believed that Sherry showed integrity through her words and actions for their well-being in every aspect, not just for the new system. Her demeanor towards their learning and her willingness to provide feedback were consistent throughout the school year. She treated the teachers as part of her educational family and not as her subordinates. The feedback that was provided to the teachers was truthful and sincere, which led them to seek out her advice. They knew that she wanted them to succeed.

The above information is in contrast to how Todd's teachers felt about him. They believed that he showed little to no integrity. He had not shown himself to be trustworthy with the teachers, especially during the post-conferences. The teachers witnessed too much inconsistency in terms of his feedback to the teachers and did not believe that he was someone that was concerned about their growth as educators.

The principals were not responsible for the way the district used the observations ratings or the VAMs; however, they were responsible for the teachers' written evaluations and ratings and the structure of each classroom. Therefore, the teachers could conclude that the principals had a significant role in these decisions. This caused the teachers to rely on the integrity that their principal previously displayed throughout the various components of the new system to determine the outcome of those decisions for them.

**Summary**

The purpose of this chapter was to address the second research question: "How do elementary teachers interpret and respond to new approaches to teacher evaluation?" I examined what teachers learned about the CDF, the teachers' perceptions of their principals' levels of communication about and support for the new system, how the observation instrument supported teachers' instruction, and teachers' concerns about the new system.

As the teachers were learning the new system, it became apparent that principal-teacher trust was a primary indicator of the teachers' opportunities to learn about the new system. It also became obvious that the principal's leadership skills tremendously affected the teachers' experiences with the new system. The way that the principals provided the new system information to the teachers affected how the teachers viewed their principal's leadership skills.

In terms of how the teachers learned about the CDF, there were numerous similarities and differences between the two schools which were due to their principal's leadership skills. Stuvenberry teachers were able to acquire substantially more information regarding each component of the new system than the teachers at Addison. This may have been due to Sherry's personal regard for the teachers; she ensured their knowledge about the new system was in-depth by providing examples and demonstrations. Todd offered his teachers a rudimentary understanding of each component of the new system.

At the same time, there were numerous differences between the two principals' levels of communication about and support for the new system. This goes back to how the teachers learned about the CDF; i.e., through their principal sharing information effectively and thoroughly, or ineffectively and briefly. Sincere listening and respect from the principals towards the teachers helped teachers understand what was expected of them, and how they were supported in the new system. Todd's levels of communication about and support for the new system were much different than Sherry's. She genuinely listened to her teachers' needs and concerns and supported their efforts to learn, and she constantly informed them of changes. Todd listened to his teachers, although his listening was not as genuine as Sherry's.

As the teachers continued to navigate through the new system, there were many ways in which their instruction was supported. First, they were able to plan their lessons according to the district's guidelines. Second, the evaluator provided feedback that would help them improve their instruction. Third, accountability was another chance for the teachers to improve their teaching practices. Teachers had to ensure that their teaching aligned with the district's guidelines; teachers would use the rubric from the CDF to ensure their accountability. Fourth, the professional development requirements from the district offered numerous chances for them

to become familiar with different methods. Fifth, the new system also required teachers to identify five goals that they wanted to accomplish before the end of the school year. The smart goals were meant to help the teachers identify areas where they were ineffective or inexperienced, so that they would become knowledgeable. Next, feedback on the teachers' lessons before and after they implemented them was intended to support them. Last, during the walk-throughs, as in the post-conferences, the teachers were provided feedback to support their instruction.

The new system may have provided the teachers with numerous opportunities to improve their teaching practices; still, the teachers were left with many concerns. There were concerns about the principal's implementation of the new system (at Addison), how the classroom observations ratings were being used, and the VAMs. The teachers at Addison had multiple concerns about Todd's integrity, in terms of how he implemented the new system that left them with numerous gaps in their learning. The classroom observations ratings were used to compile a layoff and termination list. Then there were the VAMs that would evaluate a teacher's effectiveness based on their students' standardized test scores, which the teachers believed would be unfair due to the various factors that assist or hinder a student's success. The integrity of the principal was a major issue for the teachers at Addison; if the person who implemented the evaluations was not accurate with his or her ratings and/or was unwilling to ensure that everyone was provided extensive information that could provide them in-depth knowledge that could potentially cause a teacher to lose his or her job.

As with the other two sections, there were many criteria in the principal-teacher trust relationship that assisted or hindered teachers' learning of the CDF, shaped their perceptions of

their principals' levels of communication about and support for the new system, affected the support for their instruction, and led to concerns regarding the new system.

# Chapter 5

## Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study extend our understanding of principals' knowledge and enactment of the new teacher evaluation system, and the ways in which elementary teachers interpret and respond to new approaches to teacher evaluation. In Chapter 3 there are three main findings: (1) the differences in the ways principals introduced the new teacher evaluation system; (2) how principals implemented the new system; and (3) principal-teacher trust during the principals' introduction and implementation of the new system. Chapter 4 presents two main findings: (1) the opportunities that teachers had to learn about the new teacher evaluation system; and (2) teachers' experiences with the new teacher evaluation system. In this concluding chapter, I will discuss the main findings from Chapters 3 and 4, the limitations of the study, the implications for future research, the implications for practice, my interpretations of the main findings, and my personal reflections on the main findings.

### Principals' Implementation of the New Teacher Evaluation System

As principals began to create an environment to help teachers become knowledgeable about the new evaluation system, different goals were constructed for themselves and the teachers that reflected their contexts, policies, and other factors (McLaughlin, 1993).

**Introduction to the new system.** Although the principals received the same number of sessions and hours of training, their ways of introducing the Charlotte Danielson Framework (CDF) to their teachers were different. There were many components that the principals had to learn in order to transmit that knowledge in a manner from which the teachers were able not just to understand, but also to have in-depth knowledge of the document, in order for them to be secure with the new system. The principals, Todd and Sherry, were given the responsibility by

their school district of transmitting that knowledge to their teachers. The principals in my research parallel those in Coburn's 2005 study, where she looked at two principals in an elementary school who also had different leadership approaches that influenced their teachers' learning about and enactment of reading policies. Although both Sherry and Todd learned the same information during the same training sessions, their approaches were at times notably different as they began to introduce the components of the new system.

The teachers at Stuvenberry all reported that they were introduced to the CDF in a manner that gave them in-depth knowledge on each component. Sherry not only reviewed the documents, she also analyzed them with the teachers. She provided concrete examples of methods for some of the elements in certain domains that the teachers had concerns about. She provided the teachers with opportunities to meet in grade-level meetings to discuss the CDF, as she made herself available to meet with each grade level to provide clarity on any sections of the document; this showed active leadership. Because of Sherry's active leadership role, she was able to have a clearer understanding of what her teachers needed in order to provide them with the appropriate support, as the leaders were able to do in the Burch and Spillane study (2003). The leaders in Burch and Spillane's study (2003) exhibited effective behaviors and commitment to the reform which enabled them to get the teachers involved in creating a collaborative environment that provided academic support. Sherry wanted her teachers to understand how the software that the district required the principals to use, Teach Scape, worked, so she demonstrated on her iPad what the documents looked like, what she would be looking for during the informal evaluations, and how she would calculate their ratings. Sherry extended herself as she went beyond the requirements set by the district, in order for her teachers to become more effectively and efficiently inculcated in the new evaluation system. The manner in which Sherry

introduced the teachers to the new system led to improvements in their craft, as the teachers in the Stevenson's (2004) study showed as well, because the teachers' interactions with their students and the curriculum helped them to achieve success in their teaching practice.

The teachers at Addison were not completely satisfied with Todd's introduction of the CDF, causing many to be unsure about some of the components. Todd displayed different attributes of a school leader to those of the principals examined in Youngs' (2007) study. There was limited evidence that he was knowledgeable enough about the district's new teacher evaluation system policy to provide effective and efficient help to the teachers in interpreting and enacting it. Todd reviewed the document only well enough for the teachers to know what it contained, instead of what was involved in each component of the new system. As with the walk-throughs, Todd did not mention that the district required the principals to use specific software. Todd did not provide a clear understanding of what the walk-throughs would involve. There were no examples of different elements of the domains provided or any mention that the teachers were granted any opportunities to collaborate with their peers to further their understanding of the CDF. Todd only mentioned that he reviewed the document with his staff and answered or tried to answer any questions or concerns they brought forth. The limited information provided to the teachers left them frustrated and disappointed with his leadership skills.

The principals needed to have a significant knowledge base about their job responsibilities to transmit knowledge effectively to the teachers. Todd and Sherry displayed different levels of competence regarding the components of the new teacher evaluation system. From their consistency in completing the teachers' observations and walk-throughs, both

principals proved that they had some knowledge of the CDF. However, Todd did not display as much knowledge about the content of the CDF and the walk-through process as Sherry.

**Implementing the new teacher evaluation system.** During the post-conference meetings, the principal provided the teachers with a summary of their observed lesson. Each domain and the elements of the evaluation system were reviewed. Then the principal provided each teacher with evidence corresponding to the rating that was given. The teachers at Stuvenberry were very satisfied with the level of communication from Sherry during the post-conferences. They were not wary about receiving feedback from her, on account of her recent experience as an elementary teacher and the consistency she showed during the evaluated observations and walk-throughs. The more knowledge the principal has of the domains and elements, as shown in Youngs' 2007 study, the more they are able to provide significant feedback that may influence the teachers' instructional growth. Sherry was able to provide suggestions that were useful to her teachers on account of her greater depth of knowledge of the evaluation system as well as her pedagogical knowledge. The teachers in the study felt that her knowledge of the new system and curriculum was excellent.

Sherry always provided evidence of why she gave the teachers a particular rating. She was fair in her observations, and she did not worry that the teachers would feel differently. She provided an environment for her teachers where they could voice their concerns and opinions, and she was respectful of those concerns and opinions. If a teacher believed that a rating did not reflect their performance, Sherry would examine the evidence and make the necessary corrections to their score. However, this was rarely a concern because Sherry had the pedagogical knowledge required to perform and evaluate the observations effectively. The teachers welcomed her suggestions and made use of them. They were also provided with

opportunities to receive additional feedback if they chose to implement any of the provided suggestions or any other ideas that they felt would help their teaching practice.

The teachers at Addison were not satisfied with the level of communication that they received from Todd during the post-conferences. Todd allowed the teachers to be forthcoming as they communicated their apprehensions and viewpoints regarding their rating. However, he was unable to internalize the teachers' needs and desires during the post-conferences to support them as they navigated through the new system. Todd's lack of respect for his teachers was exhibited as he disregarded evidence that the teachers brought forth to contradict his findings on their teaching effectiveness.

**Principal-teacher trust.** Trust is a critical factor as we consider school community members. At all levels, trust can enable productivity, and without it, progress can be inhibited. In examining the interactions of these two principals and six teachers, this study reveals and builds on how relational trust plays a major part in transforming educators, their knowledge, and their relationships within their communities. Relational trust may also determine a principal's leadership role as it pertains to the teachers' responses to new approaches to teacher evaluation, and how teachers interpret and respond to such evaluation (Jarzabkowski, 2002). Personal regard and integrity played important roles in my study, in which the differences between the two principals were prevalent (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

**Personal regard.** Principal leadership was a key factor as the principals began to create an environment where they helped the teachers become knowledgeable and gain a significant understanding of the new teacher evaluation system. Sherry's leadership qualities embodied personal regard for her teachers' learning. She found it necessary to make sure that the teachers had an understanding of the attributes for each ranking that they could receive during their

observations. The principal in Ebmeier's (2003) study showed similarities to Sherry, as both gave encouragement in their feedback, provided emotional support, and modeled experiences, extending themselves to encourage improvement in teaching practice. Sherry also continued to allow the teachers to schedule their own observations beyond the point where she was obligated to do. Through Sherry's in-depth reviewing and the examples she provided concerning the information in the CDF, the teachers gained more knowledge than their counterparts at Addison. Her efforts provided various opportunities for the teachers to learn and grow emotionally, socially, and academically, as she interpreted and implemented the new system.

Todd also showed personal regard when he too extended himself to his teachers as he continued to permit them to schedule their observations. Yet no other information was provided that indicated whether Todd extended himself any further to the teachers. Todd did not provide them with a solid understanding of the CDF. The district required that the principals review the document, and the teachers believed that Todd did review the document; however, he did not provide an in-depth overview of the information it contained. Bryk and Schneider's 2002 study examined a principal at Thomas Elementary in the Chicago School District, where the principal showed a lack of personal regard towards a group of teachers, which caused them to distrust the principal. Because of Todd's lack of regard for the teachers at Addison, they too had reservations concerning his leadership skills.

Principal-teacher relational trust addresses the fact that other members in the community have an important role in meeting their responsibilities, so that other members can meet their goals. Integrity is an awareness that a moral-ethical viewpoint leads one's work, which is also a significant role in the principal-teacher relational trust theory.

**Integrity.** The principals' integrity was detected across both of the schools as they implemented the classroom observation ratings. The principals had the task of observing each teacher twice a year and to rate them in five domains, write up a summary of the overall observations, and calculate a final rating. During the observations, the teachers expected the principals to be unbiased and to award them the rating that they had earned. However, the principal at Stuvenberry showed more integrity in the new system process than the principal at Addison.

Sherry was consistent as she observed the teachers' lessons. She was on time and stayed for the duration of the observed lesson. Her feedback was encouraging and positive, which led the teachers to want to implement the suggestions she provided. They also trusted her expertise and respected her input. Her determination to be fair with the teachers was also something that she prided herself on. She depended on her teachers to be the best educators that they could be, as they trusted her to be the best leader that she could be. There was interdependence between Sherry and the teachers, similar to that described by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) in their study. Both relied on the other to ensure that everyone in the school community performed their task to the best of their ability, and that both could depend on the other for assistance. The integrity that Sherry exhibited brought relief to the teachers because they had heard stories regarding other principals in the district who were unfair and awarded teachers' poor ratings in the hope that they would be terminated. Sherry was a leader who honored and respected the teachers, their teaching practice, and their concerns and opinions.

There was little to no interdependence between the principal and the teachers at Addison. The integrity that Todd exhibited was not something that the teachers welcomed. Todd unfairly rated the teachers when he did not stay the duration of the observed lesson. When the teachers

questioned their rating, he listened, yet was unwilling to review the evidence that was provided to refute his findings. Teachers complained that Todd allowed some to release certain students from being present during the observation. Many teachers also believed that ineffective colleagues were given satisfactory ratings because they were liked, while some who were effective were given unsatisfactory ratings because they were disliked. The inconsistent manner in which Todd implemented the new system left many teachers resentful towards the process, the district, and Todd.

As the principals implemented the new system, which was associated with the principal-teacher trust relationship, the findings in Chapter 4 connect to those in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 addressed how the teachers interpreted and responded to the new approaches to evaluation, which was also found to be associated with principal-teacher trust relationships.

**Opportunities that Teachers had to Learn about the New Teacher Evaluation System**

As new reforms were introduced, teachers had a difficult task of interpreting and responding in ways that were beneficial to all members of their school community. To implement the new system effectively, they not only had to have knowledge of it, they also had to understand it. Teachers from both schools experienced various ways in which they learned about the new system.

The district required principals to hold a meeting at the beginning of the school year to introduce the teachers to the new system. Although both principals attended the same number of professional development sessions, and the same sessions, they introduced the CDF in very different ways. The teachers at Addison believed that their knowledge of the CDF was limited because Todd only provided an overview of the document. Therefore, they sought out other opportunities to learn about the new system. One teacher took a course that provided her with

in-depth knowledge of the components of the new system. Another reread the document and sought additional information from the Michigan Department of Education website to gain the knowledge she felt she had not received from her principal.

On the other hand, the teachers at Stuvenberry did not have to seek assistance outside their building to learn about the CDF. All of the teachers were provided with thorough information by their principal. Her presentation at the beginning and throughout the year provided the teachers with visuals, as well as explicit examples of the elements of certain domains that they found ambiguous and needed clarification. The teachers were provided with opportunities to learn from and collaborate with one another in their grade-level meetings, which were also important to the teachers in the Coburn (2001) study, where they made sense of the policies through discussions with their colleagues. The teachers in Coburn's (2001) study adapted, adopted, combined, and/or ignored messages from the environment through collaborative measures. Sherry kept the teachers abreast of any changes in the new system, and continuously supported them in their teaching practice, so that they could become highly effective teachers.

**Teachers' Experiences with the New Teacher Evaluation System**

With any new reform, teachers may have both positive and negative experiences. It was those experiences provided to the teachers at Stuvenberry and Addison by their principals that helped to shape their interpretation of and responses to the new evaluation system.

The Stuvenberry teachers' experiences proved to be more positive than those of their counterparts at Addison. This left the Stuvenberry teachers with fewer concerns than those at Addison. Some of the concerns were: (a) the perception that the teachers had regarding the level

of their principal's communication about and support for the new system; (b) the observation ratings; and (c) their principal's competence and personal regard.

The first concern dealt with the teachers' perceptions of their principals' levels of communication about and support for the new system. The principals had to gain knowledge of the new system before they were able to transfer that knowledge to their teachers; again, many similarities and differences were noticed. Sincere listening and respect were the foundation of the differences in principal-teacher trust across the two schools. The leadership skills that Sherry displayed could be described as very effective, in direct contrast to those of Todd. Both Sherry and the principal in Burch and Spillane's (2003) study valued their teachers' insight and were involved in and committed to the new reform. Sherry was able to create an environment where both teachers and principal could provide and receive suggestions and feedback. She was very respectful of her teachers' concerns about the new system, providing opportunities for them to gain additional feedback of their teaching practice and to collaborate with their peers.

Todd was the complete opposite of the principals in both Burch and Spillane's (2003) and Ebmeier's (2003) studies. While he at times evinced the ability to listen to the viewpoints of the teachers, he chose to ignore what they shared, leaving them disgruntled towards him and the new reform. Todd was unable to create an environment of trust between himself and the teachers; they perceived him as a person who valued only those teachers with whom he had a close relationship. The principals in Ebmeier's (2003) study were active leaders who created a work environment that fostered satisfaction, trust, morals, and a sense of community amongst the staff; Todd was unable to be that active leader for the teachers at Addison.

The second concern that the teachers expressed was how the classroom observation ratings were being used. Many believed that if they received an unsatisfactory rating they would

be provided with a plan of action to help them become a more effective teacher, while others feared that an unsatisfactory rating would result in their termination from the district. This lack of accurate information about consequences of their ratings caused many teachers to feel distress and unease about the new system.

The third concern expressed by the teachers was the competence level and personal regard demonstrated by the principals. Teachers at both schools believed that their principal provided all of the information that was required; still the teachers at Addison expressed more concerns than those at Stuvenberry**.**

Youngs' (2007) study pointed out that principals with significant subject and pedagogical knowledge may help new teachers to obtain and apply that knowledge. The teachers at Addison believed that Todd lacked the pedagogical knowledge needed to evaluate their lessons. He was unable to point out specific instructions that they provided in their lesson that correlated with some of the elements in the domains. The feedback provided to them after their evaluation was not useful to their teaching practice, and the teachers were unable to implement the majority of his suggestions. As far as personal regard, he failed to stay for the entire duration of the lesson, and this caused him to miss many of the characteristics that he needed to observe to rate the teacher's effectiveness accurately. Yet Todd did show some personal regard as he continued to allow the teachers to schedule their own observations when he was no longer obligated to provide this courtesy.

The teachers at Stuvenberry felt that Sherry had a high level of competence and personal regard for them. Prior research has shown that principals who have strong pedagogical knowledge, and who provide guidance and support, can help teachers improve their teaching practice (Ebmeier, 2003; Coburn, 2005; Youngs, 2007). The teachers felt that Sherry's

pedagogical knowledge was satisfactory, and they welcomed and asked for suggestions to help with their teaching practice. Sherry's thorough explanation of the CDF was very beneficial to the teachers' understanding and helped them to gain knowledge of their role in the new system. They believed that Sherry prepared them sufficiently; they did not have to seek additional support for the new system outside the building. The teachers were grateful that Sherry had enough experience in the classroom to help them become highly effective teachers.

I believe that the findings determine the role principal leadership plays in teachers' responses to new approaches and how elementary teachers interpret and respond to new approaches to teacher evaluation. Principals and teachers construct different goals for themselves that reflect their contexts, policies, and other factors (McLaughlin, 1993). In order for principals to be effective leaders who benefit all members of the school community in a way that produces principal-teacher trust and meets the needs of the teachers, a clear and specific plan must be generated with input from all the members. If this is done, I believe principal-teacher trust, a quality that demonstrates an effective leader, could assist teachers in how they interpret and respond to new reforms (Coburn, 2001). Further research is needed to examine the other factors that lead principals to take part in various roles as they and teachers respond to new reforms.

## Limitations/Implications for Future Research

As with any research, my study comes with a cautionary list of limitations. One of the strengths of my study is that the teachers and principals were people who worked with one another. I was able to look across three teachers in one school and document what they believed their experiences with the principal were, and what the principal believed their experiences with the teachers were. A limitation, however, was that neither the teachers' classroom observations,

nor the manner in which the principals implemented the new system, were observed me. Findings were based solely on the interview responses provided by the participants. While there is no way to determine whether the principals would have demonstrated the same knowledge or leadership under observation that they stated they displayed in their responses, or whether the teachers' interpretation of and responses to the new system were as they claimed, I have documented principals' and teachers' reports about leadership, and how the teachers interpreted and responded to the new system.

As a result, one implication for future research is that the reason for the small sample of two principals and six teachers, and two schools in one school district, allowed me to go in-depth, and it permitted me to develop some theories about the new teacher evaluation system. I did not interview or collect data from all the teachers at either school, or from all the schools in the district. It would be very difficult, therefore, to generalize the results to all principals and teachers facing evaluation reform.

Thus, another implication for future research would be the range of principals' knowledge regarding the Charlotte Danielson Framework; principals may have various perspectives and interpret the document in vastly different ways. If this is the case, the teachers' knowledge would also be vastly different, and this may lead them to interpret and respond to the new system in different ways.

Therefore, the last implication for future research is that my study also looked closely at the implementation of a classroom observation instrument; a different study might have looked at the implications of both the classroom observation instrument and teacher VAMs.

## Interpretations of Main Findings

As I interviewed participants, transcribed the interviews, and analyzed the data, I came to numerous interpretations of why there were differences between Sherry and Todd. Certain factors seemed to contribute to Todd's lack of personal regard, competence, integrity, and respect. I believe that one factor may have been gender. Todd was a male who may have thought he needed to be territorial and dominant in his position. In addition, Todd may not have had any desire to be a facilitator or he may not have had the background of being a facilitator… just a dictator. As for Sherry, a female, with the majority of her staff being female, her personality type may have been one of a facilitator who believed in sharing responsibilities, and she did not concern herself with how others perceived her. Sherry had developed a relationship with her teachers, and this made it easier for her to be a facilitator, and not a dictator.

Race may also have been a factor that could help explain some of the differences between the two principals. Todd was African American, and the majority of the teacher population at Addison were Caucasian females. From my background, African American male principals can be perceived as intimidating and difficult not only to females in general, but to Caucasian females in particular, especially if the principal does not appease everyone's concerns. If this was the perception many teachers had of Todd, this may have been the reason why they did not trust him.

Sherry, a Caucasian female with the majority of her teachers at Stuvenberry also Caucasian female, was perceived to be soft spoken, friendly, and welcoming; these are three characteristics that may lead someone to believe that a person is kind and trustworthy. The teachers did not believe that she was someone who would break the rules because she did not

seek conflict, just the opposite. They knew that she was fair and not biased; therefore, there was no reason for them to be confrontational with her.

Todd and Sherry's differing views of teacher learning can be attributed to their many differences. Sherry was perceived to be a principal who understood that teachers needed to be aware of the different factors that may hinder students' learning, that all students have different learning styles, and that their background was an important factor that would help the teachers understand who their students were emotionally, socially, and academically. Again, Sherry had taught in this district for many years, and the teachers were trained in differentiated learning. Understanding the differentiated instruction approach may have contributed to her providing her teachers with the opportunities to collaborate to learn about the new TE and to use multiple strategies to help the teachers understand the new TE. All Sherry's teaching strategies and approaches were aligned with the Danielson Framework. The data showed that Todd seemed to be an educator who had a direct instruction background, which is the opposite of the Danielson Framework. A few factors may have contributed to this: his training in his previous districts was in direct instruction and/or the fact that he had been taught direct instruction.

## Implications for Practice

The study has implications for school districts. Districts may find it valuable to review the changes to their teacher evaluation system with their teachers and principals as a whole, as well as to discuss the importance of the criteria of relational trust theory (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Educators must also have a clear understanding of how the curriculum is to be interpreted and implemented as it pertains to the new teacher evaluation system. Having a solid foundation in what makes an effective educator and how an effective educator implements instruction will assist them to meet the criteria of a highly effective teacher. The results of the study can be

shared with districts, teachers and principals who are interested in principal-teacher relational trust, to further understanding of how principals and teachers respond to reform.

This study shows that effective principal behaviors and teachers' commitment to reform can lead to improvement (Burch & Spillane, 2003). Also, principals' leadership abilities and their interpretation and enactment of policy can influence how teachers comprehend and enact that policy as well (Coburn, 2005). On-going collaboration can help teachers bring about change in their knowledge and practices. This topic needs to be explored amongst staff within each school building, especially the principal. Principals should be aware of the power they possess and use that power to initiate and aid teachers in uniting among themselves and their peers to ensure that all stakeholders prosper academically and socially.

The study has potential implications for efforts to promote principal-teacher relational trust and to support the characteristics of a strong and effective leader. Principals are the cornerstone of the community. When they are able to display positive leadership characteristics, their staff members may be more willing to follow their lead and take greater risks (Ebmeier, 2003). When there is proactive principal leadership, social discourse can take place to provide sincere listening, support, appreciation for the opinions of others, and content and pedagogical knowledge (Burch & Spillane, 2003; Ebmeier, 2003; Coburn, 2005).

In terms of the implications of my own research and teaching, it will contribute to the relationships between principals' and teachers' actions on reform, principal-teacher relational trust, peer collaboration, and the implementation and interpretation of the new teacher evaluation system. In addition, the practical and policy discussions about what it means for principals and teachers to possess effective characteristics that empower them both will empower students both, academically and socially.

## Reflection

Based on my professional background, ethnicity, and current position as a college professor, I have reflected on the main findings in Chapter 3. Three main findings concerned the role that principal leadership played in teachers' responses to new approaches to teacher evaluation. First, I identified differences in the ways Todd and Sherry introduced the new teacher evaluation system. Sherry was uniquely different in the manner that she selected to inform her teachers about the new system. I believe that since she was a former teacher within the district, she had a connection with them and developed a respect for them and their careers, and this prompted her to want to see them grow continuously as educators; in addition, the students would also grow academically. I believe Todd was still at the beginning stage of understanding the culture of the school district where he was a novice. He may have also believed that it would be safer to follow the guidelines until he had a better understanding of the district and of the teachers he was charged with.

Second, I looked at differences in how Todd and Sherry implemented the new system. Again, I believe that Sherry had a connection to the school community and she longed to see the teachers become successful educators; when teachers learn, the students learn. This is why she went into depth with helping the teachers understand the TE document, providing collaborative opportunities for the teachers to learn from one another, providing examples of the elements in some of the domains, making herself available to the teachers at all times, and building a trusting relationship with them. Sherry was vested in the community where she herself once lived and frequently saw the children that she taught.

I went to school from grades K–12 in the first school district that I taught in, and the conditions were more challenging than they were when I was a student. As a teacher, at times, I

could not understand the plight of my students' parents, but I still felt a personal connection to my students and I too extended myself to them and the parents. I believe that as a product of that school district, my duty was to give back to my students through the best education that I could provide to them. I really do not believe that Todd saw himself as part of the school community, but as an outsider who was trying to fit in. He was unable to build a trusting relationship with the teachers; he was not receptive to collaborative teacher efforts; he was uncompromising with the teacher's ratings; and he was very dominant in his position, where he believed he had the first and final decision in all manners. His not being able to become a part of this very close-knit district may have led to some of the mistrust the teachers felt towards him, and this may have caused Todd to be territorial.

When I first transferred from one school district to another school district, it was very difficult to become acclimated to their rules in the first few years. I too alienated many teachers because I was unable to understand and abide by their rules. However, after speaking with other teachers and personnel about the changes that I experienced going from one district to another, and them explaining reasons behind some of their rules that I did not understand, I began to become a part of the school culture. This made me feel more comfortable with expressing my concerns and opinions, and the school community began to accept me as part of their community. It may be that Todd has not gotten to a comfortable place with his staff and that they are still trying to understand one another.

Third, I looked at the levels of principal-teacher trust during Todd and Sherry's introduction and implementation of the new system. As an African American teacher who has taught in two urban school districts, I was frustrated that Todd was either unaware or lacked sincerity such that the teachers in his building had little to no trust in him or in his leadership and

instructional skills. They believed that he lacked the content and pedagogical knowledge to benefit their craft and they did not consider his instructional suggestions. The teachers found it difficult to disclose to him how they felt about his leadership and instructional skills, for they knew that their opinions/concerns would not be addressed. He was charged with ensuring that not only the students, but also the teachers were provided the best instructional leader to assist with learning. However, that the teachers were not receiving this to their satisfaction was very disheartening because the students, who looked like me, would experience academic disadvantage in the end.

Sherry was both an exceptional Caucasian instructional leader and overall leader, and the teachers believed she had the content and pedagogical knowledge to create a learning environment for both staff and students, who were majority African American. Her words and actions informed the entire school community that she cared about everyone's well being, and the teachers respected and appreciated her for extending herself to ensure that everyone had the opportunity to learn and to be successful.

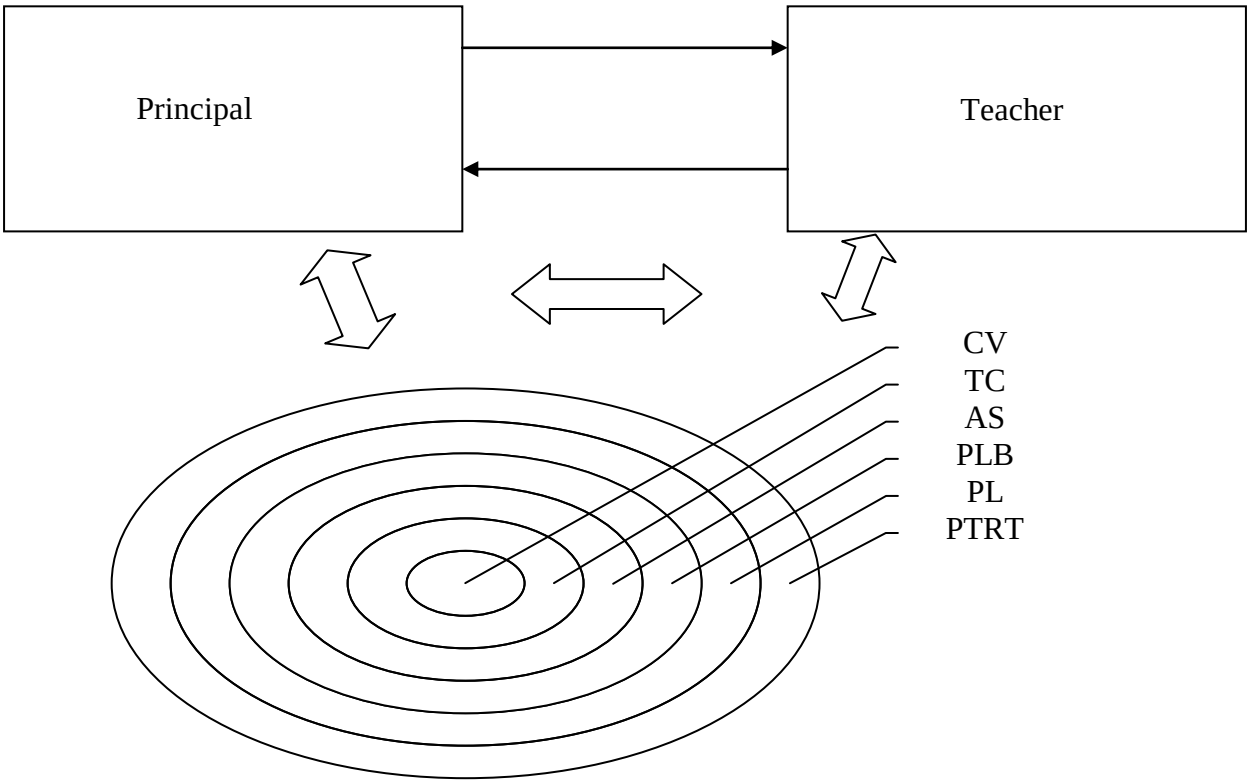
**Table 2A: Domains for Danielson's Framework for Teaching (2013)**

| **Domain 1: Planning and Preparation** | **Domain 2: The Classroom Environment** | **Domain 3: Instruction** | **Domain 3: Professional Responsibilities** |
|---|---|---|---|
| a) Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy | a) Creating an environment of respect and rapport | a)Communicating with students | a) Reflecting on teaching |
| b) Demonstrating knowledge of students | b) Establishing a culture for learning | b) Using questioning and discussion techniques | b) Maintaining accurate records |
| c) Setting instructional outcomes | c) Managing classroom procedures | c) Engaging students in learning | c)Communicating with families |
| d) Demonstrating knowledge of resources | d) Managing student behavior | d) Using assessment in instruction | d) Participating in the professional community |
| e) Designing coherent instruction | e) Organizing physical space | e) Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness | e) Growing and developing professionally |
| f) Designing student assessments | | | f) Showing professionalism |

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A

**Figure 1. Relational Trust Theory (Bryk & Schneider, 2002)**




Principals and teachers depend on one another to ensure that the school community functions properly. The principal and teachers must work together to create a clear vision for the school. Teachers must work collaboratively to ensure that they understand the new reforms. Principals must be active supervisors that model what is expected from the teachers. Principals must exhibit leadership behaviors to the teachers that help to facilitate social and academic growth. Principals must have exceptional leadership skills to ensure that reforms are comprehended and executed properly. As you can see, each component in the above diagram, beginning with the inner circle, builds on the next component to reach a principal-teacher relational trust relationship that will assist all groups learn and grow socially and academically.

CV—Clear Vision
TC—Teacher Collaboration
AS—Active Supervision
PLB—Principal Leader Behaviors
PL—Principal Leadership
PTRT—Principal-Teacher Relational Trust

## Appendix B: Principal Interview Protocol Questions
## Study of Educators' Experiences with New Approaches to Teacher Evaluation

1. Can you tell me about your current responsibilities as principal and how long you have served in this role? (Probe for how long they have worked as principal at their current school and in their current district, how long they taught K-12 and other schools/districts where they have worked)

2. Can you describe the current approach to teacher evaluation at your school? (Probe for the name of the classroom observation instrument used at their school, other sources of teacher evaluation data that are used, whether they feel knowledgeable about the approach to teacher evaluation at their school, whether the same approach is used throughout their district)

3. What type of formal training did you receive with regard to the new teacher evaluation system (Probe for who provided the training, the length of the training, the content of the training, and whether principals engaged in practice ratings during the training?)

4. How many times have you observed each teacher at your school this year? (Probe for whether the observations have been announced/scheduled, whether anyone else conducts the observations, whether teachers have to provide a lesson plan prior to the observation, how many more times each teacher will be observed by the end of this school year)

5. Do you feel that the number of formal classroom observations is sufficient for assessing your level of teaching performance?

6. Do you meet with each teacher before and/or after you observe them? (Probe for what is discussed in these meetings, the length of these meetings, whether each meeting is approximately the same length of time) Do these meetings vary by length of service or how many times a teacher has already been evaluated in a given year?

7. What kind of feedback do you provide to teachers after you observe them? (Probe for whether the feedback is oral or written, whether they feel skilled at providing feedback, how teachers would know if their ratings were satisfactory or unsatisfactory)

8. Has the approach to teacher evaluation in your school or district changed over time? (Probe for how and when it changed, what role is the state of Michigan and the federal government playing in these changes)

9. Could you describe the strengths and weaknesses of the new approach to teacher evaluation in your school or district? (Probe for who sees these as strengths and weaknesses: the principal, the teachers, the parents, others)

10. Could you describe the ranking system that is part of the new teacher evaluation system? (Probe for what rankings they expect teachers to get and what rankings will get teachers identified as in need of improvement)

11. If a teacher receives unsatisfactory ratings, what happens? (Probe for whether the teacher is assigned to an instructional coach, to external professional development, to mandated meetings with the principal; probe for how the districts uses results of observations/other teacher evaluation data)

12. How do you/would you feel if your district used the following in evaluating teachers? a) student performance on state tests, b) student attendance rates, c) teacher participation in professional development, d) teacher portfolios, e) classroom observations by trained outside evaluators (i.e., not the principal),, f) student surveys, g) self-assessments with specific evidence

**Appendix C: Teacher Interview Protocol Questions**
**Study of Educators' Experiences with New Approaches to Teacher Evaluation**

1. Can you tell me about your current teaching responsibilities and how long you have served in this role? (Probe for how long they have worked as a teacher at their current school and in their current district, how long they have taught K-12 and other schools/districts where they have worked)

2. Can you describe the current approach to teacher evaluation at your school? (Probe for the name of the classroom observation instrument used at their school, other sources of teacher evaluation data that are used, whether they feel knowledgeable about the approach to teacher evaluation at their school, whether the same approach is used throughout their district)

3. How many times have you been observed at your school this year as part of the formal teacher evaluation process? (Probe for whether the observations have been announced/ scheduled, who conducts the observations, whether they have to provide a lesson plan to their principal prior to the observation, how many more times they will be observed by the end of this school year)

4. Do you feel that the number of formal classroom observations is sufficient for assessing your level of teaching performance?

5. Do you meet with the principal before and/or after they observe you? (Probe for what is discussed in these meetings)

6. What kind of feedback does the principal provide to you before/after they observe you? (Probe for whether the feedback is oral or written, whether the principal is skilled at providing feedback, how the teacher would know if their ratings were satisfactory or unsatisfactory)

7. In what ways has the use of the Framework for Teaching instrument and the feedback provided caused you to change your teaching practices?

8. Has the approach to teacher evaluation in your school or district changed over time? (Probe for how and when it changed)

9. Could you describe the strengths and weaknesses of the new approach to teacher evaluation in your school or district? (Probe for who sees these as strengths and weaknesses: the principal, the teachers, the parents, others)

10. If a teacher receives unsatisfactory ratings, what happens? (Probe for whether the teacher is assigned to an instructional coach, to external professional development, to mandated meetings with the principal; probe for how the districts uses results of observations/other teacher evaluation data)

11. How do you/would you feel if your district used the following in evaluating teachers? a) student performance on state tests, b) student attendance rates, c) teacher participation in professional development, d) teacher portfolios, e) classroom observations by trained outside evaluators (i.e., not the principal), f) student surveys, g) self-assessments with specific evidence

## Appendix D: CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS/PRINCIPALS

You have been asked to participate in a research study to gain an understanding of educators' experiences with the new approaches to teacher evaluation. You were selected to be a participant because you are either a principal who administers the new teacher evaluation system or a teacher who has been evaluated using the new teacher evaluation system. The purpose of this study is to examine educators' experiences with the new approaches to teacher evaluation.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to respond to questions about teacher evaluation, your interpretation of the new approaches associated with teacher evaluation, the pre- and post-conferences, and the rating system.

There are very minor risks associated with this study to the teacher or principal. The information is de-identified (i.e., will not include the teacher's, school's, district's nor student's name). Neither a teacher nor a principal should feel that this research forms a part of his/her performance evaluation.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you will receive no monetary gifts.

This study is confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and Nina Hasty or faculty member Peter Youngs will have access to the records. In addition, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) would have access to the data in the event of an audit. If you decide to participate, you are free to refuse to answer any of the questions that may make you uncomfortable. You can withdraw at any time without you relations with the university, job, benefits, etc., being affected. You can contact Dr. Peter Youngs (517-353-4348 or pyoungs@msu.edu) with any questions about this study.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers to my satisfaction. I have been given a copy of this consent document for my records. By signing this document, I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

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