TEACHER EVALUATION MODELS: COMPLIANCE OR GROWTH ORIENTED?

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Abstract

This research study reviewed literature specific to the evolution of teacher evaluation models and explored the effectiveness of standards-based evaluation models’ potential to facilitate professional growth. The researcher employed descriptive phenomenology to conduct a study of teachers’ perceptions of a standard-based evaluation model’s effectiveness to promote professional growth. Teachers with five or more years of experience were asked to complete a close-ended questionnaire and 16 teachers were interviewed as a means of capturing their experiences with the district’s evaluation model. Findings supported the district’s standard–based evaluation model’s effectiveness in promoting teacher reflective practices as well as facilitating opportunities for professional growth. Time expectations specific to the evaluation process were flagged as a potential concern and if left unaddressed could negatively impact the effectiveness of the evaluation model. The importance of trust, respect, integrity and professionalism throughout the evaluation process were considered essential elements by participants in order for the evaluation process to positively impact teacher professional growth.

Keywords: Standards-based evaluation models, descriptive phenomenology, professional growth, reflective practice.
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Chapter One

Introduction

Various forms of teacher evaluation have been in existence since the beginning of the profession. As the teaching profession adapted to changing societal expectations various evaluation methods have evolved throughout time. For the most part, evaluations during the 20th and 21st centuries have been designed to measure teacher competency. Recent national and statewide evidence has clearly indicated that current teacher evaluation models have had a minimal impact on improving teacher performance (MA Task Force on the Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators, 2013).

As a result of the federal government’s inability to reauthorize the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), states have been faced with continuing to follow the current law or making application for a NCLB waiver. Most states have opted for the second option and as a result have created waivers that require certain conditions as a precursor to federal approval. One condition is the requirement to adopt a statewide evaluation system that is tailored to increase teacher effectiveness and enhance student achievement. Recently the NCLB Act has been replaced with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The adoption of ESSA has not changed the focus of states continuing the implementation of standardized educator evaluation protocols. In most cases, states are entering their fourth year of implementation. A strong system of teacher supervision inclusive of both formative and summative evaluation strategies is essential in order to enhance teacher performance and maximize student achievement. Summative evaluations provide feedback to the evaluator specific to management decisions such as confirming base-line teacher competencies and granting professional teaching status. Formative evaluation focuses on providing teacher feedback specific to teacher performance and places an emphasis on creating
an environment that encourages continual professional growth (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). A growing body of literature supports the belief that teacher supervision models, if implemented correctly, facilitate teacher growth (Machell, 1995). This research study seeks to explore the effectiveness of teacher supervision frameworks in facilitating teacher growth.

The following sections in chapter one begin with a statement of the problem followed with a significance statement that depicts the need to conduct further research specific to teacher evaluation and its effect on teacher performance. My positionality is then explored and potential biases are presented along with suggestions as to how to minimize bias throughout the research study. Research questions are presented as a means of guiding research in this area. The Chapter concludes with the exploration of the theoretical framework used in this study, Kegan’s (1992,1994) Constructive-Developmental Theory.

**Statement of the Problem**

In recent years educator evaluation has taken center stage due in part to the requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) waiver and the recently approved Every Student Succeeds Act. NCLB waivers contain a provision that requires the inclusion of standards-based teacher evaluation frameworks that are developed at the state level (Chubb, Clark, 2013). As a result of the mandated overhaul of educator evaluation throughout our nation, it has become a focus of intense dialogue and debate. Increased interest in educator evaluation is also a result of the awareness that the most important factor in enhancing student achievement is teacher effectiveness (Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Barber & Moursheed, 2007; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Leithwood, Lewis & Wahlstrom, 2004). Increased attention to educator evaluation has also been elevated as a result of research findings that have been critical of the effectiveness of educator evaluation throughout the country (The New
Teacher Project, 2009; Donaldson, 2009; The National Council on Teacher Quality, 2010). These studies have indicated that current teacher evaluation models “do not provide adequate feedback for improvement, lack connection to student learning and growth, and do not differentiate levels of teacher effectiveness” (Massachusetts Task Force on the Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators, 2013, p. 9).

Research studies of educator evaluation models throughout the nation have indicated that they are relatively ineffective in fostering opportunities for teacher improvement and growth. Recent changes in evaluation models at state levels have been designed to transform teacher evaluation practices focusing on strategies that are linked to enhanced teacher effectiveness. Teacher perspectives regarding the new evaluation models’ effectiveness in facilitating teacher growth will be paramount in assessing whether the new evaluation protocols are living up to their intended outcomes.

At the time of this writing, research on the effectiveness of new educator evaluation models implemented as a result of NCLB waivers and ESSA are just beginning to emerge. In most cases, states are entering their fourth year of implementation, which creates an optimal window of opportunity to conduct research in this area. Past research has revealed that teacher evaluation models throughout the nation have been ineffective in facilitating teacher growth often identifying minimum competencies of teacher effectiveness (Danielson, McGreal, 2000). Teacher supervision models that emphasize professional development as a major focus of the evaluation process have the potential to improve instructional quality and contribute to continuous school improvement. A growing body of literature supports the belief that teacher supervision models, if implemented correctly, can facilitate teacher growth and instructional improvements (Machell, 1995). The new educator evaluation protocols that have been recently
implemented across our nation as a result of the NCLB waiver process and ESSA focus on standards-based teacher supervision models that are designed to facilitate reflective practice and provide opportunities for ongoing teacher growth. Verification of the effectiveness of the new teacher evaluation models across the nation will be essential in determining their effectiveness in facilitating teacher growth.

The majority of research on educator evaluation over the last few decades has revealed the lack of impact that the teacher evaluation process has had on improving teacher effectiveness (Massachusetts Task Force, 2011). A smaller number of studies have focused on teacher evaluation models that are standards based and are tailored toward enhanced professional development and improvement of teaching practice. Many of these studies have been quantitative in nature or employed a mixed study approach to research. Qualitative research to date has been minimal and as a result data related to teacher perceptions of evaluation effectiveness is lacking.

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of teacher perceptions within a Suburban School District regarding the effectiveness of the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Model in facilitating teacher growth.

The research study was beneficial to multiple audiences, which included, state policymakers, state education officials, school based administrators and teachers. Information that was gleaned from this study helped determine which factors in the teacher evaluation process had a significant impact on facilitating teacher growth and enhanced teacher effectiveness. Specific to the benefit to the Massachusetts Suburban School District, this study created an opportunity to reflect on the effectiveness of the implementation of the new educator evaluation model and determined whether teacher perceptions support the primary focus of the
evaluation tool, enhanced teacher growth. This information was essential in ensuring that the suburban school district that is the focus of this study provided opportunities for teachers to reflect, access effective professional development and improve professional practice.

**Significance of the Problem**

National and statewide evidence has clearly indicated that current evaluation models have had minimal impact on improving teacher performance (Massachusetts Task Force on the Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators, 2011). Teacher performance is a key factor that is directly linked to student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Current teacher evaluation models have had minimal impact on increasing student learning and enhancing educator growth. A strong system of teacher supervision (Formative and Summative Evaluation) is an essential tool for improving teaching and learning. Summative evaluations provide information specific to management decisions such as confirming base-line competency or establishing professional teaching status. Formative evaluations focus on creating an environment that fosters professional growth (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Ineffective “evaluation practices are a missed opportunity for promoting better leading, better teaching, better learning, and better schools” (MA Task Force On the Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators, 2013, p. 9).

Recent changes in evaluation models at state levels have been designed to transform teacher evaluation practices by focusing on performance standards that are linked to enhanced teacher effectiveness. Teacher perspectives regarding the new evaluation models’ effectiveness in facilitating teacher growth will be paramount in assessing whether the new evaluation protocols are living up to their intended outcomes.

Research over the past three decades on teacher supervision has supported two significant findings. The first finding indicated that both teachers and administrators recognize the
importance and necessity of evaluation, but have expressed doubts about its effectiveness in relation to teacher growth. Secondly, evaluation systems designed to facilitate teacher growth emphasize formative strategies, produce higher levels of satisfaction, result in more thoughtful and reflective practice and maintain the necessary requirements to meet accountability demands (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). A growing body of literature supports the belief that teacher supervision models, if implemented correctly, facilitate teacher growth (DeMatthews, 2015).

Conducting research specific to teacher perceptions regarding the new teacher evaluation model’s effectiveness in improving teacher performance, will provide valuable information that can be utilized to guide future policy decisions in this area. Although a number of research studies have been completed in the area of standard-based teacher evaluation models, a small percentage of studies have focused on qualitative approaches that capture teacher perceptions specific to the effectiveness of the evaluation models’ ability to facilitate teacher growth (Davis, 1999).

At the national level, numerous research studies have continually verified the inadequacy of current teacher evaluation models’ effectiveness to increase teacher performance as a result of utilizing a summative approach to evaluation (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Similar research findings at the international level verify the ineffectiveness of traditional evaluation models (Kyriakides, Campbell and Christofidou, 2002). “The Widget Effect: Our National Failure to Acknowledge and Act on Differences in Teacher Effectiveness” (The New Teacher Project, 2009) determined that evaluation models that were used in twelve districts representing four states provided no feedback specific to “teacher performance and indicated that less than one percent of evaluated teachers received unsatisfactory performance ratings” (MA Task Force on the Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators, 2013, p. 3). The opportunity to explore the
effectiveness of a new teacher evaluation model specific to Massachusetts will be invaluable in helping states reflect on their own standards-based evaluation models. These findings will provide opportunities for further studies within various states to determine whether their new teacher evaluation models are living up to their intended outcomes.

Within Massachusetts, a number of research studies focusing on previous teacher evaluation practices indicated that these models are inconsistent and underdeveloped. They provide limited feedback specific to teacher performance and lacked strategies that promote teacher growth (MA Task Force on Evaluation in the Commonwealth, 2011). The National Center on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) report “Human Capital in Boston Public Schools: Rethinking How To Attract, Develop, and Retain Effective Teachers” (2010) determined that less than half of the educators within the district were evaluated during a two-year period. The NCTQ study also found that less that one percent of evaluated teachers received an unsatisfactory rating. Summative evaluation practices were prevalent within the district and school settings. A further review of teacher ratings in one low achieving urban district looked at a random sample of 58 district teachers with a total of 1,102 performance indicators and found that only one indicator for one teacher had an unsatisfactory rating (MA Task Force on Evaluation in the Commonwealth, 2011). The opportunity to conduct a research study within a Massachusetts school district specific to the new evaluation frameworks effectiveness in facilitating teacher growth would provide pertinent information to state, district and school leaders. This research will be helpful in confirming the effectiveness of the current model and will provide opportunities for further reflection in regard to process and practices that maximize opportunities for teacher growth. “Working together, educators of the Commonwealth have the opportunity to make Massachusetts a national leader in the reinvention of educator evaluation” (MA Task

The research study will be conducted within a suburban school district in eastern Massachusetts. Prior to the adoption of the new educator evaluation model in the 2013/2014 school year, the district utilized an evaluation methodology that was determined through union contract negotiations. For the most part, teacher evaluations were summative in nature and verified minimum competency levels. Conducting a study that focuses on teacher perceptions of the new evaluation model specific to fostering teacher growth will be invaluable in determining how successful that district has been in actualizing the intended outcomes. As a district leader this information will be pertinent in determining the effectiveness of the implementation process as well as ascertaining whether the district’s teachers are reflecting and accessing professional development opportunities that lead to increased effectiveness.

The research study’s findings will furnish significant contributions to the research community and will provide information specific to teachers’ perceived effectiveness of a statewide standards-based evaluation model. The research findings will be beneficial at the district, state, national and international levels. The research will also benefit, policymakers, school and district leaders as well as teachers and will create opportunities for further reflection and research on evaluation models that are implemented at district and state levels.

**Positionality Statement**

Research studies of educator evaluation models throughout the nation have indicated that they are relatively ineffective in fostering opportunities for teacher improvement and growth. Recent changes in evaluation models at state levels have been designed to transform teacher evaluation practices focusing on strategies that are linked to enhanced teacher effectiveness.
Future research regarding the new evaluation models’ effectiveness in facilitating teacher growth will be paramount in assessing whether the new evaluation frameworks are living up to their intended outcomes.

Teacher evaluation has been an interest of mine since I began my teaching career. With ten years of experience as a classroom teacher, I had the opportunity to be evaluated using a number of different evaluation models. Early in my teaching career, the district that I was part of adopted the Madeline Hunter model of teacher evaluation. This model was clinical in nature and focused on multiple dimensions of the teaching process. I found this model to be extremely effective in the analysis of one’s teaching performance and felt that the process provided salient educational dialogue that helped facilitate an environment that encouraged reflectivity, which in turn set the platform for continued professional growth. I believe that these experiences acted as a catalyst to ignite my passion to move into educational administration.

As I moved into school-based administration, I had the opportunity to create and implement a streamlined teacher evaluation tool that was used for both formative and summative evaluation. As a precursor to the formation of the teacher evaluation tool, I received training in the Madeline Hunter model of teacher evaluation. During my career as a school-based administrator, which spanned over twelve years, I had the opportunity to implement this model in two different schools. As I completed a Master’s degree that focused on Educational Leadership and Curriculum during this time period, I continued to be fascinated by the literature in the areas of effective teaching, transformative leadership, as well as performance based evaluation of professional staff.

As a Superintendent, I have been fortunate to gain international experience in school and district based educational leadership and had the opportunity to work with a variety of pre-
established educator evaluation models that provided an expanded experiential base in the area of educator evaluation. Briscoe’s (2005) conviction that “one’s identities, particularly those associated with an individual’s positioning in society, influences the way in which one perceives and understands the world”, certainly is applicable to my own experience and bias of the relationship between educator evaluation and enhanced teacher effectiveness (p. 24).

As a result of my experience with various educator evaluation models as a Teacher, Principal and Superintendent, I have developed a belief system, which supports a standards based approach to teacher evaluation having a positive effect on improving teacher effectiveness. The previous model that was used to evaluate teachers within my district was designed to identify base-line competency and had little to no effect on encouraging staff to reflect on their practice and create opportunities for professional growth and improved practice. The new state teacher evaluation model is well designed and with well thought out implementation strategies, has the potential to facilitate teacher growth. Briscoe (2005) discusses the importance of conducting research without preconceptions. Machi and McEvoy (2009) discuss the potential for researcher bias as a result of having a personal connection and belief about a problem of practice. It is imperative that researchers minimize any bias that may exist fully recognizing that biases can be controlled but may not be completely removed. As a result of completing an extensive review of literature for my research study, I am confident that the review of literature has created the necessary conditions to control bias related to preformed beliefs specific to standards-based evaluation frameworks. The review of literature presented research findings that both supported and refuted my current beliefs regarding standards-based evaluation frameworks. The implementation of an effective standards-based evaluation framework is multidimensional inclusive of effective organizational climates that are tailored toward fostering professional
growth. The verification that successful implementation strategies play a large role in determining the evaluation frameworks success will help minimize bias related to my own experiences with standards-based evaluation frameworks.

Conducting research within my current school district and being the Superintendent of Schools sets a platform of positional authority. My positional authority may have the potential to affect the quality of the research study. Although it is impossible to eradicate the positional authority that exists, one can minimize its effect through the development of an environment of trust. Working with representatives of the teachers’ association to negotiate contract language specific to the new evaluation model has created the opportunity to develop trust and create a climate that minimizes positional authority. Being actively involved within the district’s schools and serving on various committees focusing on curriculum, assessment and instruction has also helped cement positive relationships with staff.

Brisco (2005) introduces the concept of demographic and ideological positionality. Demographic positionality looks at factors, which include positional authority that alludes to the concept of ‘other’ which when applied to my current role creates a distinct separation from being considered as a member of the teaching community. The existence of ideological positionality has the potential to counterbalance positional authority if teachers have the perception that my role as a researcher is based on a genuine belief that we are engaged in a professional learning community that provides the necessary support for teachers to access resources that will improve professional practice. Briscoe (2005) also discusses the balance between group cohesiveness and individuality, which is determined by the belief system of the group. Individuality within the group dynamic often crosses boundaries with the other and shares some social identities (Bell, 1999, Bucholtz, 1999). The ability to accurately perceive the effect that my position may have
on conducting research within the school district will be essential to ensure that the research methodology that is employed is considered to be free from bias and is deemed reliable and valid by the research community.

Conducting a qualitative study of teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of the new state teacher evaluation model within my school district will provide pertinent information as to whether the time, resources, and commitment of staff and administrators has resulted in a teacher evaluation model that is effective in promoting increased teacher effectiveness. Prior to moving forward with the actual research study it will be imperative to feel confident that the bias’s that have been disclosed can be controlled in a manner that will uphold the integrity of the research findings. In order to minimize potential bias, I utilized a fellow researcher to interview staff as a means of ensuring that all potential biases as a result of my position within the district were controlled and minimized, to maximize the integrity of the research methodology and findings.

**Research Questions**

Kegan’s Constructive Developmental Theory influenced the development of my research questions through the awareness that teachers are at various stages of development. As a result of this reality, research questions need to be designed in a fashion that acknowledges that teachers are in fact creating perceptions of the new evaluation model based on their respective stages of development. Kegan’s ‘ways of knowing’ illustrate the various developmental levels of teachers in regard to how they perceive their respective worlds as well as how they process and make sense of social constructs. Research questions need to be designed in a fashion that recognizes that teachers are interpreting the evaluation process through diverse lenses. The research questions have also been designed within a phenomenological framework, which utilizes two broad open-ended research questions (Moustakas, 1994). The two questions focus on research
participants’ experience of a particular phenomenon and their “contexts or situations that have influenced or affected their experiences of the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p. 81). Using Constructive-Developmental Theory along with Moustakas’s (1994) design resulted in the formation of two research questions.

1. How does a teacher’s perception of the evaluation process affect his or her own professional growth?
2. In what ways can the teacher evaluation process affect a teacher’s professional growth?

**Theoretical Framework**

This study will be examined through a constructivist/interpretivist lens using a qualitative research methodology that incorporates phenomenology as a guiding methodological framework. After considering a variety of theoretical frameworks, adult learning theory was selected to guide the research study. When considering adult learning theories, the researcher was drawn to Kegan’s (1982, 1994) Constructive-Developmental Theory. This section of the paper explores Constructive-Developmental Theory as a viable theoretical framework.

**Using Constructive-Developmental Theory as a viable Theoretical Framework.**

Kegan’s (1982, 1994) Constructive-Developmental Theory looks at adult development by considering an individual’s attitudes, behaviors and expectations which are utilized to interpret how people learn, and in turn, support their respective learning experiences by acknowledging different ‘ways of knowing’ (Drago-Severson, 2009). Kegan (1982, 1994) identified four ‘ways of knowing’ that can be applied to adult learning: “instrumental (rule bound self), socializing (other-focused self), self-authoring (reflective self), and self-transforming (interconnecting self)” (p. 39). When applied directly to the field of education, educators undergo developmental learning that causes disruption in the way they view the world and how they interpret social
constructs. As educators undergo developmental growth they continue to develop within the identified ‘ways of knowing’, transition between the different stages and move along the continuum of identified stages.

The constructive developmental view of adult learning has evolved from the collection of 40 years of research (Basseches, 1984; Baxter-Magolda, 1992, 2009; Belenky et al. 1996; Gilligan, 1982; Kegan, 1982, 1994, 2000; King & Kitchener, 1994; Knefelkamp & David-Lang, 2000; Kohlberg, 1969, 1984; Perry, 1970; Piaget, 1955). Although this theory can be widely applied to the field of education (Cranton, 1996; Drago-Severson-2007; Hammerman, 1999; Kegan, 2000; Levine, 1989; Mezirow, 2000) it is continually gaining momentum as a theoretical framework within the educational community (Drago- Severson, 2009). This theory is tailored to help us understand developmental diversity as well as other forms of diversity that are evident within educational settings.

Constructive-Developmental Theory has its origin within Jean Piaget’s (1952, 1963, 1932/1965) theory of child cognitive development. Many of the principles outlined in this theory act as foundational elements within the Constructive-Developmental Theory, which is often referred to as a neo-Piagetian Theory (Drago-Severson, 2009). “Kegan’s (1982, 1994) theory applies many of Piaget’s ideas to the development of adults; however, his theory includes additional lines of development-emotional, interpersonal and intrapersonal” (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 36). Both Piaget and Kegan acknowledge definitive stages of development and focus on adult learning within a continuum of ‘ways of knowing’. Kegan’s theory also attends “to the interplay between a person’s ‘way of knowing’ and their psychosocial context to illuminate the robust interaction between the two” (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 36). Kegan “views adult development as a dynamic, continuous interactive process between the individual and the
environment” (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 37). The development process is continuous and is considered to be a critical part of adult learning development (Drago-Severson, 2009).

When considering research that presents a counterargument to using Constructive–Developmental Theory, Daniel Levinson (1978, 1990) and Gail Sheehy (1974/2006) conducted research specific to how age affects adult development. This approach is commonly referred to as an age-phasic (phasic) approach to adult development (Drago-Severson, 2009). Theories developed using age determined adult development guided the way people perceived their lives often viewing life changes within defined spans of time. The advantage of using approaches like this is the ability to predict behavior patterns based on identified events or milestones during one’s life. This approach, however, does not predict how an individual makes sense of these experiences. “While an age-phasic approach has many strengths, including helping us to anticipate our responses to life events, it does not help us to interpret how we make sense of these events or explain how we experience them” (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 34). A number of theorists (Cook-Grueter, 2004, Torbet, 2003, 2004) have explored adult developmental stages beyond the four stages contained in Kegan’s (1982, 1994) theory. They have expanded the stages of developmental learning as a result of the need for individuals to make sense of an ever-changing complex world as well as given greater consideration to the complexities involved in 21st century leadership. Having examined the two counterarguments, the researcher feels comfortable using Constructive-Developmental Theory as a viable theoretical framework. Phasic models of adult development do not interpret life experiences within age spans, theories that offer increased stages on adult development neglect to acknowledge that Kegan’s fourth stage is just beginning to be attained and is well suited within our paradigm specific to how we view the current complexities of our world.
Drago-Severson (2009) utilizes aspects of the Constructive-Development Theory to develop a leadership model that focuses on transformational learning within educational organizations. The leadership model focuses on developing growth-oriented climates for teachers with an emphasis on effective professional development, which is a desired outcome of state initiated teacher evaluation models. Covey (2005) when developing the eighth habit of effective leaders, “From Effectiveness to Greatness” continued to build on Kegan’s self-authoring way of knowing. Covey is a well-known author and scholar in the area of organizational leadership. Lahey (1988) conducted research specific to the transition zones outlined in Kegan’s (1982, 1994) adult learning model and focused on developmental learning theory within the specified transition zones. These three researchers have made significant contributions to research in the area of adult developmental learning and organizational leadership.

Ouellette-Schramm (2016) conducted research that focused on English as a Second Language learners. The study focused on 18 adult learners and utilized Kegan’s Constructive Developmental Theory as a means of tracking the learning experiences of the participants. The findings of the study suggested that, “developmental perspectives made a qualitative difference in how learners experienced academic language learning” (p. 219). “Instrumental learners, described what looks like a struggle, but from their developmental perspectives, represented a logical pathway toward success. Learners who were transitioning toward a self-authoring way of knowing brought unique learning agendas and capacities tailored toward self-monitoring processes” (p. 219).

Puchner and Markowitz (2017) applied Kegan’s Constructive Developmental Theory to a research study that focused on students in teacher education programs experiencing difficulties understanding racial tensions and dynamics within U. S. social constructs. The studies analysis,
presented compelling reasons for using Kegan’s theory as a means of providing developmental learning strategies tailored at fostering a better understanding of social justice related issues.

Helsing and Howell (2014) completed a study that assessed participants’ development when enrolled in a fellowship at a World Economic Forum. The program makes cognitive demands of its participants to be functioning at Kegan’s third developmental stage, the Self-Authoring, reflective self. The study found that participant “successes and struggles were related to their developmental stage, although the nature of these relationships was not always straightforward” (p. 186).

When applying Kegan’s Constructive-Developmental Theory to the research study, it is evident that leaders that venture into change processes that are transformational in nature need to be cognizant of the various stages of adult development and view the developmental process within a continuum. Being well versed in Kegan’s ‘ways of knowing’ will be instrumental in determining how staff perceives the current evaluation tool that is used within the district. The theoretical framework will also be instrumental in determining methodologies for collecting and interpreting data. Understanding that staffs within schools occupy differing stages of ‘ways of knowing’ also provides the opportunity for district and school leaders to better understand how to empower staff to maximize the benefit of utilizing the new evaluation model as a means of fostering professional growth.

One of the basic tenets of the Constructive-Developmental Theory is the focus on the development of transformational learning processes. Transformational learning changes one’s perspective and changes how a person knows (Drago-Severson, 2009). In order to support the process of transformational learning, one must understand an individual’s way of knowing,
“since it shapes how a person interprets all experiences” (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 35). “Kegan (2000) refers to this as a form of meaning-forming” (p. 52).

Kegan’s theory is based on three principles, constructivism, developmentalism and subject-object balance. Constructivism refers to the way that we construct and make meaning of our world. It includes “cognitive, emotional, intrapersonal and interpersonal pathways of development” (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 37). Developmentalism refers to “how we make meaning and construct our reality over time and is dependent on developmentally appropriate supports” (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 37). “Subject-object balance refers to the relationship between what we can take a perspective on (hold as object) and what we are embedded in and cannot see or be responsible for (are subject to)” (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 37). Kegan outlines four distinct developmental stages referred to as ‘ways of knowing’. The four stages: instrumental (rule bound self), socializing (other-focused self), self-authoring (reflective self), and self-transforming (interconnecting self) are indicative of well-defined stages of development which acknowledge the need for transition zones as individuals move from one stage to another. When pondering the essential tenets of Kegan’s theory, all tenets are applicable to the research study.

Conclusion

When looking at the research topic through various lenses throughout the doctoral program, I have considered conducting my research using quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Specific theories that have been considered include change leadership theories, transformational leadership theories and adult learning theories. Each group of theories has allowed me to envision my problem of practice through different lenses. Investigation of various theories has also had an influence on the types of research articles that have been examined and
vetted for the literature review. These theories have also had an influence on the content of the literature review. The decision to utilize Kegan’s Constructive-Developmental Theory has played a significant role in the design of the research questions as well as influencing the design of the study’s methodology and data collection processes. Kegan’s Constructive-Developmental Theory is well aligned with a qualitative study that utilizes a phenomenological framework.
Chapter Two

A Review of the Literature

Are teacher evaluation models designed to improve teaching practice? Research regarding teacher evaluation over the past 40 years has culminated into two major findings. The first finding supports the belief that administrators and teachers feel that evaluations are an essential component of the profession, however it also indicates that they have had limited impact on teacher growth and student performance. The second finding places an emphasis on the difference between summative and formative evaluations. Summative evaluations typically focus on compliance and accountability, while formative evaluations tend to focus on professional growth and improvement (Danielson and McGreal, 2000).

The failure of current evaluation models to enhance teacher effectiveness has a significant impact on schools’ and districts’ abilities to move student achievement forward and narrow the achievement gap that exists within our nation. Our key mission as teachers is to advance the learning of all students. It is essential to have the best teachers possible in our classrooms and schools. Poor teacher evaluation practices present missed opportunities for improved teaching, enhanced student learning and improved opportunities to meet the needs of all students (MA Task Force on the Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators, 2013, p. 9).

In recent years educator evaluation has taken center stage due in part to the No Child Left Behind Waiver (NCLB). Within the criteria of the NCLB waiver, states that have been granted a waiver were required to implement a standards-based evaluation model (Chubb, Clark, 2013). As a result of the mandated overhaul of educator evaluation throughout our nation it has become a focus of intense dialogue and debate. Increased interest in educator evaluation is also the result of the awareness that the most predominant factor in enhancing student achievement is teacher
effectiveness (Sanders And Rivers, 1996; Barber and Moursched, 2007; Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain, 2005; Darling, Hammond and Bransford, 2005, Leithwood, Lewis and Wahlstrom, 2004).

Research on the effectiveness of the new educator evaluation models implemented as a result of NCLB waivers is just beginning to emerge. In most cases, states are entering their fourth year of implementation and as a result little research has been conducted in this area. Previous research has indicated that teacher supervision models that emphasize professional development as a major focus of the evaluation process “have the potential to improve instructional quality and contribute to continuous school improvement” (DeMatthews, 2015, p. 82). A growing body of literature supports the belief that teacher supervision models if implemented correctly can facilitate teacher growth and instructional improvements (DeMatthews, 2015).

Research studies of educator evaluation models within our nation have indicated that they are relatively ineffective in fostering opportunities for teacher improvement and growth (Massachusetts Task Force on the Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators, 2013). Recent changes in evaluation models at state levels have been designed to transform teacher evaluation practices focusing on strategies that are linked to enhanced teacher effectiveness. Teacher perspectives regarding the new evaluation model’s effectiveness in facilitating teacher growth will be paramount in assessing whether the new evaluation protocols are living up to their intended outcomes.

The literature review has been divided into distinct sections, which include; teacher effectiveness, teacher supervision models, standards-based supervision models, critique of literature and summation.
Teacher Effectiveness

Research regarding teacher performance has been slow to develop as a result of the historical influences on defining and measuring teacher effectiveness (Brophy & Good, 1986). Tuckman (2013) discusses the need to determine what effective teaching entails. Although teacher effectiveness has been debated throughout time, “there is still no agreed upon definition about what effective teaching is” (p. 127). Even if agreement on the conceptualization of effective teaching were actualized, further controversy would emerge as a result of how to measure the various elements associated with teacher effectiveness. Medley (1979) identified five successive conceptions of effective teaching, which include possessing personal traits that are desirable, using effective teaching methodologies, developing positive classroom climates, demonstrating instructional competencies and effectively applying and orchestrating essential competencies.

Concerns in regard to the reliance on teacher personal traits to determine teacher effectiveness led to a number of studies that attempted to identify the psychological characteristics associated with effective teaching. Personality characteristics, teaching experience, aptitude and professional achievement were explored and analyzed in great detail. Although this approach identified certain characteristics that were deemed desirable within the teaching profession, no correlation existed between desirable teacher qualities and student achievement. (Borich, 1992, Rosenshine & Furst, 1973).

Subsequent research focused on studies that attempted to identify specific teacher characteristics that had a direct influence on student achievement (Kyriakides, Campbell, Chistofidou, 2010). The majority of studies produced inconclusive evidence as a result of the differences between teaching methodologies used by teachers. The teacher characteristics that
were examined lacked significant correlation with student achievement (Medley, 1979).
Furthermore, significant correlations that occurred lacked consistency and contradicted each
other (Borich, 1992).

The 1950’s and 60’s focused on creating optimal classroom climates as well as effective
teaching competencies that were conducive to enhancing student achievement (Kyriakides et al.,
2010). This movement resulted in an increased emphasis on the measurement of teacher behavior
through the design of structured observations. By the 1970’s a multitude of classroom
observation models emerged. During this time period, a number of research studies identified
specific teacher behaviors that directly correlated with improved student achievement.

As a result of research conducted over the last three decades “researchers have turned to
teacher behaviors as predictors of student achievement in order to build up a knowledge base on
effective teaching” (Kyriakides et al., 2010, p. 296). This research has led to a range of identified
behaviors, which demonstrate positive correlations with student achievement (Borich, 1992;
Brophy and Good, 1986; Galton, 1987; Muijis and Reynolds, 2000). A number of these studies
have been validated through qualitative studies, but have been weaker and shown less
consistency than correlational findings derived from quantitative studies (Griffin & Barnes,
1986).

“Brody and Good (1986) argue that the most consistent findings in American studies link
student achievement to quantity and pacing of instruction” (Kyriakides et al., 2010, p. 294). The
amount of student learning is directly correlated to opportunities for learning. Student
achievement is enhanced when teachers focus on instruction, create high expectations for student
learning and provide sufficient time for curriculum related activities (Brody and Everston, 1976).
“Opportunity to learn was also a significant factor associated with teacher and school
effectiveness” (Kyriakides et al., 2010, p. 294). Student achievement is also related to students demonstrating consistent success. To learn effectively students must be involved in classroom activities that align with their current ability levels (Bennett, Desforges, Cockburn, Wilkinson, 1981; Stallings, 1985). “Brody and Good (1986) argue that the pace of a class should depend on the students’ abilities, developmental levels, and the nature of the subject matter” (Kyriakides et al., 2010, p. 295). Presentation clarity also demonstrates a strong correlational relationship to student achievement (Borich, 1992).

During educational reform in the 1980’s and 1990’s, teachers were under increasing scrutiny to prepare students for changing job markets (Doherty, 2009). Students were required to develop deeper understandings of concepts through learning more complex skills, which included collaborative learning, problem solving and critical thinking. As a result of research tailored to the neurology of learning, there was also a heightened awareness of how children learn. Research on teaching methodology and content developed new insights into how content, teacher, learner, and context must be interconnected for effective teaching and learning to occur (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

Strong and Tucker (2005) identified several “key qualities of effective teachers;

1. Have formal teacher preparation training
2. Hold and maintain certification within their fields
3. Have taught for at least three years
4. Are caring, fair, and respectful
5. Hold high expectations for themselves and their students
6. Dedicate extra time to instructional preparation and reflection
7. Maximize instructional time via effective classroom management and organization
8. Enhance instruction by varying instructional strategies
9. Present content to students in a meaningful way that fosters understanding
10. Monitor student’s learning by utilizing pre and post assessments, providing timely and informative feedback, and re-teaching material to students when necessary
11. Demonstrate effectiveness with the full range of student abilities in their classrooms regardless of academic diversity of the students” (p. 2).

Numerous studies have been completed that link the attributes of effective teachers to student achievement. Marzano, Pickering and Pollick (2001) conducted research that linked specific instructional strategies to an increase in student achievement. Tucker and Stronge (2005) conducted research that linked student achievement to students who were exposed to effective teachers over a significant amount of time. This same study demonstrated that students who were exposed to less effective teachers demonstrated lower achievement levels on state standardized tests. A similar study conducted in Dallas, Texas revealed similar results (Tucker and Stronge, 2005).

The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (1997) published a report titled “What Matters Most, Teaching for America’s Future”, developed a series of recommendations that covered the entire spectrum of teacher development, including teacher evaluation standards (Darling-Hammonds, 1997). The first recommendation linked teacher standards to student standards. It made connections between what effective teachers should know and operationalize in order to help students succeed in learning the new standards that were necessary for a 21st century workforce (Darling-Hammonds, 1997). The standards were developed by three groups: The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) which sets standards of teaching practice, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher
Education (NCATE) which creates standards for colleges of education, and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) which develops standards for the licensing of teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1997). These three sets of standards are aligned with each other and the alignment is evident in the design of their respective teacher assessments. The assessments are designed to measure how teachers meet these standards by looking at teacher performance through a well-defined lens. The standards created by the three national organizations provide an opportunity to utilize formative assessment as a means to foster teacher growth resulting in increased educator performance.

The evolution of traits and behaviors directly related to effective teacher performance play a pronounced role in determining the makeup of effective evaluation protocols. The identification of teacher behaviors linked to student success created the opportunity to link teacher behaviors to student behaviors. This progression of research was pivotal in the development of standards-based evaluation models.

Utilizing indicators that are directly linked to teacher effectiveness plays a pivotal role in the design of standards-based evaluation models. Well-defined standards of practice when linked to teacher effectiveness create professional learning cultures that encourage teacher growth. School climates that encourage teacher growth are more prone to experience increased teacher performance.

**Teacher Supervision Models**

Teacher supervision models have a tremendous potential to enhance teacher performance. However, the dichotomy of teacher supervision is that it has the potential to have teachers grow professionally, yet the reality of current practice suggests that evaluations focus on teacher competence having little or no impact on teacher growth (Stiggins & Duke, 1988). Many states
have put policies and practices into effect to address concerns regarding evaluation, but in most cases results have been sketchy at best, with the majority of evaluations deemed summative in nature, having little to no impact on teacher performance. Traditional evaluation systems are outdated, have limited evaluation criteria, and do not focus on student learning (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Traditional evaluations, completed by school-based administrators tend to be of little value if administrators are untrained in evaluation methodology and as a result have minimal knowledge in the area of effective instruction. These evaluations and rating systems are often called ‘drive-bys’ due to the lack of emphasis on effective classroom instruction (Toth & Rothman, 2008). Lack of rigor in the evaluation process often leads to artificial inflation of evaluation ratings leading to the Lake Wobegan effect (Keillor, 1985) where all teachers are above average (Danielson and McGreal, 2000). The absence of merit in this approach to evaluation lends itself to a culture of compliance that does not promote risk taking, hence minimizes the opportunity for improved teacher performance. As supported by research, teachers place value in the evaluation process, however ineffective evaluation strategies provide little incentive for admitting challenges, knowing that in this environment it may be held against them.

Teacher supervision has two main components, summative and formative evaluation. Summative evaluations provide information specific to management decisions such as confirming base-line competency or establishing professional teaching status. Formative evaluations focus on creating an environment that fosters professional growth (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

When looking at the history of teacher supervision during the 1940’s and 1950’s educators and researchers utilized presage variables (Kyriakides et al. 2010). These variables looked at traits such as “personality characteristics, attitude, experience, aptitude and
achievement” (Kyriakides et al., 2010, p. 294). Educators during this time period felt that teachers who possessed these traits were effective at their craft. Research in this area has indicated that there was no evidence that linked presage traits to effective teaching (Kyriakides, 2010).

The 1960’s and 1970’s brought a rigorous pursuit of researching teaching behaviors and their respective links to teacher effectiveness and student learning. During this time frame significant advances were made in the area of classroom observation tools. Researchers were also creating clinical supervision protocols as a way of improving teacher performance, while other researchers were developing observation and rating instruments that allowed for effective ways to evaluate classroom teaching methodology and practice (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

“Seventy years of principal ratings of teachers have indicated that they do not work well” (Peterson, 2000, p. 19). Several studies have indicated that the focus of the evaluation process was summative in nature and had no effect on improving teacher performance (Peterson, 2000). Medley and Coker (1987) looked at the “ratings of 46 principals and 322 teachers in three areas: (a) facilitating student learning of key curricular concepts; (b) fostering development of student citizenship, intrinsic satisfaction and self understanding; (c) collegiality with fellow teachers” (p. 244). The authors reported minimal “statistical correlation between administrator ratings and teacher roles” (p.245). The most prevalent “finding of the study was the evaluators’ low accuracy of the judgments” of teaching effectiveness with teachers that were under their supervision (p. 245).

Stodolsky (1984) looked at the consistency of classroom observations and concluded that evaluations based on observations place heavy weightings on the activities that were observed during the time of the evaluation. Due to robust job expectations placed on administrators,
limited time is available for teacher evaluations and as a result limited classroom observations occur, often resulting in unreliable and/or inaccurate perceptions of teacher effectiveness.

Other research has revealed similar findings specific to evaluators relying solely on summative approaches to evaluation. Kauchak, Peterson and Discoll (1985) surveyed Florida and Utah teachers and from the findings, concluded that evaluations based on principal observations had minimal or no effect on improving teaching practice. Teachers often viewed evaluator observations negatively often citing that the visits were too short in duration and lacked rigor specific to subject content. Teachers also expressed concerns related to the principal not having adequate knowledge about teaching and not being well versed in their respective content area. Teachers that were surveyed in this study did not place any value in the evaluation process as being helpful in improving teaching performance.

Scriven (1981) provided an analysis specific to the concerns regarding the evaluation process that was used during this era. He identified four essential areas that should be incorporated as part of the evaluation process. These included; (a) administrative evaluation; (b) incorporating other expectations of teaching into the evaluative process; (c) clarity in regard to defining merit and worth within the evaluative process; and (d) provision of an independent support system for educators.

The primary purpose of summative evaluation is to focus on determining competency levels of teachers. Scriven (1981) determined that without the opportunity to pass judgment regarding the outcome of summative evaluations one would not be able to decide whether the evaluation was good or bad, as a result evaluators could not determine whether teacher improvement was needed.
This generation of evaluation protocols that were grounded within the paradigm of what effective teaching looked like during the 70’s utilized evaluation models that were similar to the instruments designed by Madeline Hunter. These instruments were clinical in nature and focused on performance indicators that were linked to effective teaching practices. More recent research focusing on how students learn, accompanied by research on the physiology of learning, clearly indicates that we need to rethink approaches to teaching and learning and redefine evaluation protocols. Unfortunately, a significant number of policy makers and school districts have misinterpreted the intent of the research and still fall back on evaluation practices that are often driven from lists of teacher behaviors taken from previous research or derived from Hunter’s clinical approach to supervision. Evaluation instruments that were developed during this time, relied on checklists and rating scales as a means of determining teacher effectiveness. These rating scales and checklists often encouraged the use of a single measure to determine teaching effectiveness. This has resulted in a single layered, summative approach toward teacher evaluation that has flourished into the 20th and 21st centuries. (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Unfortunately, in many cases, similar evaluation models continue to be used throughout our nation.

The findings from these studies indicate that if local evaluation systems are to be used beyond the limitations that are evident within the summative approach to evaluation, the focus should shift to making local evaluation systems more formative in nature. This would promote a growth-oriented approach to teacher supervision and would help establish a climate that promotes continual professional growth. If ongoing professional growth becomes the basic premise of teacher evaluation, teachers, administrators and district leaders would need to
embrace the philosophy of striving for continual teacher improvement, a climate in which
excellence is constantly pursued.

The literature on teacher supervision supports the belief that many school districts
throughout our nation still rely on summative processes for teacher evaluation. With the recent
national pressure placed on individual states to revamp teacher evaluation systems, largely due to
the Race To The Top (RTTT) initiatives and NCLB waivers, significant dollars are being
invested to develop standards-based evaluation models. Sufficient evidence has been presented
in this section of the literature review to support the belief that formative approaches to
evaluation that are standards-based are more likely to promote professional development
initiatives that are directly linked to improved teacher performance.

**Standards-Based Supervision Models**

Standards-based supervision models focus on the formative process of evaluation.
Danielson and McGreal (2000) strongly support the belief that the developments of effective,
evaluation protocols are linked to two essential questions: (a) how is good teaching identified?
and, (b) what processes and procedures need to be put in place to align with the vision of the
organization? These questions address the issues of ‘what’ and ‘how’ but equally important are
the issues related to the purpose of evaluation. This section of the literature review will focus on
standards-based evaluation approaches to teacher evaluation.

Teacher supervision models that emphasize professional development as a major focus of
the evaluation process have the ability to improve instructional quality and improve school
effectiveness through the actualization of school improvement initiatives (Headden and Silva,
2011). A growing body of literature supports the belief that standards-based teacher supervision
models, if implemented correctly, can enhance teacher performance (DeMathews, 2015). As a
result of continued research in this area, a number of specific indicators have been identified within effective evaluation models. School districts that have a clear, well-defined purpose of evaluation with a universal understanding of its purpose, as well as aligning procedures and processes to the key purpose, have been successful in creating environments that facilitate teacher growth. Systems that have allocated sufficient resources inclusive of time and money, and have provided sufficient training to district and school evaluators, have been effective in actualizing a model that truly facilitates professional growth (Shakman, Riordan, Sanchez, Cook, Fournier, and Brett, 2012). Additional attributes of these systems “include: (a) effective feedback provided to teachers, (b) multiple sources of data, (c) clear, relevant and meaningful performance criteria, (d) teachers actively involved in peer assistance and goal setting, (e) mutual level of trust between teacher and evaluator, (f) teacher evaluation and staff development which are systemically linked” (Machell, 1995, p. 33).

Standards-based supervision models that are implemented within a hostile environment will have a counterbalancing effect (Glatthorn, 1997). Teacher specific professional growth is dependent on multiple systemic variables and requires a supportive environment in order to be effective (Papay, 2012). Cooperative professional development, in order to be successful, requires a supportive school culture which promotes bottom up involvement as well as administrative support, timely access to training, provisions for flexible release time as well as incorporating some form of recognition for staff participants (DeMatthews, 2015).

Effective standards-based evaluation systems are perceived to be fair and unbiased, meet the professional needs of all staff, are transparent in nature, and have realistic and attainable expectations for teachers and evaluators (DeMatthews, 2015). Effective teacher evaluation systems have well-defined teaching standards and interconnect with the entire spectrum of
teacher roles and responsibilities. District evaluation models, which are deemed effective, are evaluated on an ongoing basis, collect empirical data specific to teacher and evaluator satisfaction and, adhere to teacher performance norms as well as overall systemic performance targets (Glatthorn, 1997).

School districts looking to improve current teacher supervision models targeted at enhanced professional growth, will need to employ a well thought out process in order to be successful at implementing change. Change of this nature is transformational and will require a cultural paradigm shift within an organization (Papay, 2012). Valentine (1992) discusses the importance of effective teacher evaluation processes focusing on staff development as opposed to staff evaluation. Current standards-based evaluation models place an emphasis on pre-conferences and post-conferences as part of the evaluation process. In order to maximize the effectiveness of teacher-evaluator conferences a culture of trust must be created and sustained. Before teachers can engage in performance-based reflection, a well-developed rubric outlining effective standards of teaching practice need to be incorporated into the evaluation process (DeMatthews, 2015). An environment of trust, understanding and awareness acts as a precursor to professional growth (Papay, 2012).

Research conducted by Valentine (1992) found that the relationship between evaluator conferencing skills and degree of teacher effectiveness are significantly correlated. An insignificant correlation occurred between the evaluator/evaluatee conference and teacher effectiveness absent of consideration of evaluator skill sets. The research did not find a deep commitment to change on the part of the teacher as a result of conferencing, and recommended that evaluators conduct follow-up meetings to discuss suggestions that were included during the post-conference discussion. Recommendations specific to ongoing training in effective
conferencing, administration of questionnaires to participants engaged in the process as well as the development of a broader understanding of conferencing skills specific to the teacher’s understanding were suggested. Effective conferencing is an essential requirement for the development of optimal learning environments that are conducive to fostering opportunities for professional growth.

A number of research studies have been conducted specific to the use of standards-based teacher supervision models. Kimball, White, Milanowski, and Borman (2004) reported on the following case studies: the Annoka-Hennepin Public Schools District in Minnesota, the Washoe County Public School District in Nevada, and the Newport News Public School District in Virginia. Each case study focused on the entire district. The school districts implemented a standards-based evaluation model titled, “Enhancing Professional Practice: A Teaching Framework” (Danielson 1996). All districts were dissatisfied with their previous evaluation models due to the lack of accountability and the absence of contributing to the formation of a climate that encourages professional growth. The three districts created committees of teachers and administrators to work together and designed an evaluation model that matched their respective cultures and needs of the district. Aligned with the Danielson framework, all districts included multiple measures of data within the evaluation model which included goal setting, classroom observations, portfolios, self-assessments, instructional unit plans, log of family contacts and professional development activities.

Each school district tailored the model’s design to their own unique needs. Washoe County field-tested the evaluation system for two years, Annoka-Hennepinn conducted a one-year pilot, and Newport News implemented the supervision model in its entirety during the first year. All school districts provided training to teachers and administrators specific to the new
evaluation model. In Annoka-Hennepin and Washoe County, the new evaluation model was aligned with systemic initiatives, however, Newport News had less alignment to system initiatives. All three districts reported that the new evaluation model had a positive impact on teacher professional growth as a result of clear standards, input from both teachers and evaluators specific to the evaluation process, a commitment to self-directed growth, and a culture committed to continual improvement.

Within the Cincinnati Public School District, Heneman and Milanowski (2003) used a mixed methodology approach to conduct a study that evaluated the first two years of implementation of a district wide standards-based teacher evaluation system that was aligned with Danielson’s evaluation model. The first year of implementation was met with mixed reviews with the subsequent year demonstrating a strong support of the evaluation model and its capacity to have a positive impact on teacher growth. One of the successes of the implementation process focused on the awareness of the teachers and administrators understanding of agreed upon teaching standards. Throughout the second year of implementation numerous teachers indicated support for the new evaluation system, citing its potential to improve their teaching performance.

According to Heneman and Milanowski (2003) a number of challenges were also reported during the first year of implementation. Evaluators faced an increased workload as a result of the new standards-based model, which resulted in many administrators unable to complete scheduled evaluations within the specified time frame. Concerns were expressed by teachers specific to the increased workload as a result of time spent on portfolio creation. Teachers also reported concerns about the lack of feedback from their assigned evaluator. Other issues included concerns about the level of expertise of the evaluators, consistency of evaluation
protocols across schools, as well as variance in the interpretation of rubrics across evaluators. Despite the concerns that were raised during the first year of implementation, survey results from the second year demonstrated a strong support for the newly implemented evaluation model.

The Institute of Education Sciences (2012) examined standards–based evaluation models in five states. The research study was conducted during the 2010/2011 school year and included states that adhered to predetermined criteria that focused on evaluation systems that were tailored toward increased teacher effectiveness. Delaware, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas met the selection criteria and as a result were included in the study. All five states included the following components in their evaluation protocols, “classroom observations, self-assessments and multiple rating categories” (Shakman et al., 2012, p. 1). The evaluation rubrics for each state closely mirrored the standards that were adopted by the International Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium. All standards-based evaluation models included multiple measures of teacher performance. Performance measures did not include “student ratings of teachers or student growth data” (Shakman, 2012, p. 7). Although the study looked at similarities and differences between different models, all models included practices and procedures that were tailored toward the facilitation of teacher growth as well as assessing the quality of teacher performance. All states included in this study were part of the Race To The Top Initiative, which required states to create performance-based evaluation systems as part of the application criteria. Further studies on the effectiveness of the new evaluation models have yet to be conducted. A follow-up study tailored toward the various models’ effectiveness would contribute significantly to the current research base.

Headden and Silva (2011) conducted research on the Washington, D. C.’s IMPACT evaluation model. The model’s development “started with the basics of defining good teaching”
(p. 41). Its design focused on factors related to ‘How to Teach’ rather than ‘What to Teach’. Although the evaluation model was designed using the criteria of a standards–based evaluation model, it was implemented as a rating and checklist approach to evaluation, and as a result was not tailored toward enhancing teacher performance. During the design of the IMPACT model, opportunities for teachers to be included in developing evaluation criteria and performance rubrics was absent, as a result teachers felt disconnected to the process. Teacher response to the evaluation model for the most part was negative citing that the process did not promote improved teacher performance. Despite the evidence collected from the field, the designers of the IMPACT model felt that it provided guidance for professional growth via the post-observation reports that were detailed and thorough. The IMPACT system “is often described by teachers, as one that was done to them instead of done with them” (p. 44).

Headden and Silva (2011) also researched Montgomery County Schools, MD’s evaluation model titled, “The Teacher Professional Growth System”. This model “integrates evaluation, support and development” with an emphasis on growth as a primary focus, and deems the summative evaluation process as a second priority. (p.43). The district does not use test scores as part of the evaluation process, but “uses them to inform discussions about instruction” (p. 43). The district involved teachers and administrators in the evaluation’s design and implementation process. The standard-based rubric is aligned with the criteria included in the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. The model focuses on “professional growth with continued reflection on goals and progress in meeting these goals, and formal evaluation with narrative assessments that provide qualitative feedback to teachers about their work” (p. 43). Teachers within the school district report high levels of satisfaction with the evaluation process and feel that the model’s design promotes professional growth.
SRI International (2014) conducted a study of the Massachusetts educator evaluation model during the 2013/2014 school year. The research study conducted interviews utilizing focus groups in twelve Massachusetts case study districts, administered a statewide survey to school staff and analyzed 110 evaluation files from three districts. The new evaluation model places an explicit emphasis on educator growth and development. The evaluation framework is standards-based and uses a five-step cycle of continuous improvement. During the study, RTTT districts would have entered their second year of implementation and non-RTTT districts would have begun implementation during the 2013/2014 school year. The research study used a mixed methodology approach for collecting data. Although districts were still in the infancy stages of implementing the new model, the research provided valuable insights that could inform future decision-making. Forty-six percent of the surveyed teachers indicated that the primary focus on evaluation was educator development. Sixty-nine percent of the staff surveyed felt that the model provided opportunities to reflect on current practice. Eighty-one percent of school staff surveyed indicated that the feedback after an observation was timely and seventy-two percent of surveyed staff found the feedback from their evaluator to be helpful. Forty-eight percent of surveyed staff reported that evaluator feedback resulted in the altering of classroom practices. Considering the research is somewhat premature, initial feedback is promising and provides future direction for districts implementing the new evaluation model. Data collection throughout the implementation of a new evaluation model is essential in order to reflect and reassess protocols and processes, which provides opportunities for increased focus on areas of concern.

Case studies presented in this section of the literature review clearly indicate that standards-based evaluation models are supported by and large by teachers and teachers felt confident that the evaluative process helped identify areas for professional growth. In all district
adoptions there was a significant shift in system culture that required a well thought out implementation plan. Training for both administrators and teachers plays a key role in the successful implementation of a standards-based approach to teacher evaluation (Papay, 2015).

The need for staff involvement from the onset of the implementation process was also a common theme throughout the case studies that were examined. Effective evaluation frameworks include well-planned conferencing inclusive of a shared purpose of intent, which helps to facilitate the development of a culture within a district that is both reflective and committed to self-improvement. Providing sufficient time for both evaluators and evaluatees to benefit from the evaluation process seems to be a common challenge as systems move toward a more collaborative and formative approach to teacher evaluation.

Critique of Literature

Research on standards-based evaluation protocols clearly supports their value in helping teachers grow professionally. Evaluation models that are designed to reflect good teaching that is shared across the district is a key component of a well-designed model (Danielson, 2011). Standards-based evaluation models that are created through a collaborative process utilizing staff and other educational stakeholders are more successful at creating professional cultures that encourage teacher growth. The utilization of a shared leadership style within districts, which encourages staff to actively engage in developing a learning community that promotes continual improvement sets the scene for the development of a culture that integrates standards-based evaluation with teacher effectiveness and student achievement (Taylor and Tyler, 2011).

The research on standards-based evaluation models is heavily reliant on quantitative studies with a few mixed method studies. There is a lack of qualitative research that would add considerable context to the current research literature. Many of the research studies were
conducted in larger school districts; as a result smaller school districts are not represented in the current literature. Qualitative studies focusing on both smaller and larger districts would add to the current research base and would provide contextually rich information regarding teacher perceptions specific to the effectiveness of standards-based evaluation frameworks.

The current literature regarding effective evaluation frameworks for the most part lacks the necessary connection with other variables that are linked to teacher effectiveness. Further research that focuses on an evaluation frameworks purpose and its alignment with the district and school’s mission and vision would be beneficial (Waldron, McLesley, and Redd, 2011). DeMathews (2015) discusses the importance of setting the course and developing a clear mission and vision for the district. All characteristics of a school inclusive of professional development, faculty meetings, instruction, evaluation and everything else that staff do to maximize student achievement should be linked to the school’s mission and vision. To get to a destination one has to know where they are going. Standards-based evaluation models should align with the district and school’s mission and vision. The literature on effective teacher evaluation models would benefit significantly by exploring connections between professional learning communities (PLC’s), school culture, professional development and their effect on standards-based evaluation models.

The research is limited specific to the study of standards-based evaluation models that were implemented as a result of RTTT and NCLB waivers. Although this is understandable given the limited time that evaluation models have been fully implemented, quantitative and qualitative research studies that focus on their effectiveness in increasing teacher performance would substantially add to the research base.
**Summation**

The literature review focused on teacher evaluation protocols through the examination of four areas; teacher effectiveness, teacher supervision models, standards-based supervision models and critique of current literature. The literature clearly indicated that multiple variables are in fact involved in the facilitation of improved teacher performance. As a result, it is difficult to isolate and study specific variables without considering all aspects of teachers’ professional learning environments. Examples of other variables include school and district climate, evaluator and evaluatee personality traits, training levels of evaluators, and evaluator interpersonal relationships with staff. As indicated by the literature, standards-based formative approaches to evaluation can have a pronounced effect on improving teacher performance as a result of fostering a climate that creates opportunities to interconnect with other variables that are directly related to teacher growth.

During educational reform in the 1980’s and 1990’s teachers were under increased pressure to prepare students for changing job markets. As a result of the changing job markets at national, state and local levels, students were expected to develop a deeper understanding of concepts through extended skill sets such as critical thinking, problem solving and the development of collaborative skills.

Teacher supervision models have evolved throughout time. Evaluation protocols have remained relatively unchanged, even though evaluation models have progressed with advances in research. More often than not, the majority of evaluations are conducted within the summative domain (Peterson, 2000). Summative evaluations serve as a method of identifying base line competency and do not promote opportunities for teacher growth.
Continuing research on teaching methodology and content developed new insights into how content, teacher, learner, and context must be interconnected for effective teaching and learning to occur (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Traits and behaviors directly related to effective teacher performance played a key role in the development of well-defined standards of teaching behavior. These standards served as building blocks for standards-based supervision models.

With the increased national pressure placed on individual states to revamp teacher evaluation systems largely due to Race To The Top Initiatives (RTTT) as well as NCLB waivers, significant dollars are being injected at the state level to develop standards-based evaluation models. Increased scrutiny of teacher evaluation models during the last five years accompanied by research indicating that most evaluation frameworks were ineffective in facilitating teacher growth played a significant role in the development of national policies that called for an overhaul of teacher evaluation frameworks (Massachusetts Task Force-Building a Breakthrough Framework for Educator Evaluation in the Commonwealth, 2011). National regulations outlining requirements for new evaluation frameworks place a focus on standards-based evaluation models. Sufficient evidence has been presented in the literature to support the belief that formative approaches to evaluation that are standards-based have the ability to promote reflective practice and foster professional development opportunities that lead to improved teacher performance.

Standards-based supervision models focus on the formative process of evaluation. Teacher supervision models that emphasize professional development as a major focus of the evaluation process have the ability to improve instructional effectiveness and complement school improvement initiatives (Machell, 2005). Districts that develop a well-defined and shared purpose of evaluation with aligned procedures and processes are more likely to create cultures
that facilitate teacher growth through the provision of effective professional development opportunities.

School districts looking to retool current teacher supervision models need to employ a well-coined process to implement successful change. Teachers and administrators need to be key stakeholders in both planning and implementation processes.

Case studies specific to standards-based evaluation have indicated a number of areas of caution as districts move forward with implementation plans. Teaching standards need to be clearly defined and relate directly to behaviors that are linked to performance. Performance standards should be presented within a rubric format and include performance ratings for each standard. Formalized teaching standards need to be agreed upon through the utilization of a collaborative process. Administrators and teachers should be well versed in effective teaching pedagogy. Specific performance levels that are articulated within the structure of the rubric should be used as a primary resource for facilitating discussions related to observed performance.

When implementing a standards-based approach to evaluation districts should be aware of a number of critical areas that require attention. Evaluation protocols should be established within definitive timelines. Feedback mechanisms should be formalized with clear expectations regarding conferences, portfolio creation, goal development, and documentation procedures. District resources should be evaluated to ensure adequate support levels are in existence for all aspects of the implementation process. Time requirements for various processes within the supervision model should be identified and reviewed when creating schedules and determining staffing levels at the school and district level. Opportunities to monitor and review various stages of the implementation process should be established for the purpose of providing reflection and dialogue specific to ensuring that the needs of all staff are being met. This will provide cogent
information for the leadership team responsible for the implementation process. Information collected during this process will either affirm that current strategies being used in the implementation process are effective or indicate a need for reassessment and/or redirection.

Standards-based evaluation systems serve as a means to establish a climate that promotes professional development and fosters a culture that supports the commitment to continual improvement. Other variables related to developing cultures that are teacher growth oriented are equally important in the establishment of an environment that promotes reflection and improvement through staff professional development. If systems embrace the concept of learning communities and move the process of collaboration to the next level, other variables that directly affect teacher development will align and professional communities will emerge. The transition from collaboration to professional learning community will maximize learning opportunities for staff and students.

This review provided the opportunity to research literature linked to a variety of evaluation models. Research specific to the effectiveness of standards-based evaluation models in facilitating teacher growth is limited. As a result opportunities exist for further research in this area. The State of Massachusetts is currently beginning its fourth year of implementation, of a statewide standards-based educator evaluation model. As you can well imagine, all school districts within the state have deployed significant resources toward the implementation of the new evaluation model. The move to standardized evaluation protocols within the state provides an excellent opportunity for research in this area. Teacher perspectives regarding the new evaluation model’s effectiveness in facilitating teacher growth will be paramount in assessing whether the new evaluation protocols are living up to their intended outcomes.
Chapter 3

Methodology

NCLB waivers contain a provision that requires the inclusion of standards-based teacher evaluation frameworks that are developed at the state level (Chubb, Clark, 2013). Research on the effectiveness of new educator evaluation models implemented as a result of NCLB waivers are just beginning to emerge. Recently, the NCLB act has been replaced with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The adoption of ESSA has not changed the focus of states in continuing the implementation of standardized educator evaluation protocols that are designed to enhance teacher growth and improve student learning. In most cases, states are finishing their fourth year of implementation, which creates an optimal window of opportunity to conduct research in this area. Teacher supervision models that emphasize professional development as a major focus of the evaluation process have the potential to improve instructional quality and contribute to continuous school improvement. A growing body of literature supports the belief that teacher supervision models, if implemented correctly, can facilitate teacher growth and foster instructional improvements (Massachusetts Task Force on the Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators, 2013). The purpose of this doctoral thesis was to explore teacher perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Model’s ability to foster teacher growth. Therefore, the overall research question guiding this inquiry is “ How do teacher evaluation models provide opportunities for teachers to grow professionally”?

I examined my research topic through a constructivist lens using a qualitative research approach. After considering a variety of methodologies, I used a phenomenological framework to guide my research study. In education, phenomenological studies are often employed to gain an understanding of lived experiences around teaching and learning (Tymieniecka, Husserlina,
Within an “educational context, phenomenological inquiry is “the direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced, without theories about their causal explanation and is free as possible from unexamined preconceptions and presuppositions” (Aoki, 2004, p. 90). Phenomenological studies can be widely applied to the field of education. In relation to my research focus, the majority of research studies utilize quantitative and mixed study methodologies. Crystal (2014) utilized a phenomenological approach to gather teacher perceptions in regard to the effectiveness of a new state evaluation system in Connecticut. Other qualitative studies focus on administrative leadership styles and their application in creating growth oriented school climates. The lack of qualitative research around my research topic has catalyzed my desire to pursue a phenomenological study that captures the lived experiences of teachers regarding the effectiveness of teacher evaluation processes and practices.

**Research Tradition**

Phenomenology has been traced back to World War 1 and is thought to have its beginnings at the end of the war (Groenewald, 2004). “As a result of an ideological crisis, philosophers at this time began exploring a new philosophical method, which would lend absolute certainty to a disintegrating civilization” (Eagleton, 1983, p. 54). Philosophers during this time period “rejected that objects in the external world exist independently and that information about objects is reliable” (Groenewald, 2004, p. 43). They believed that examining personal experiences attains certainty and concluded that the world is viewed through one’s personal consciousness (Groenewald, 2004). The theory is linked to the “writings of the German mathematician Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and other researchers who have expanded his views inclusive of Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty” (Creswell, 2013, p. 80). “Phenomenology is utilized in the social and health sciences inclusive of sociology (Borgatta &
Borgatta, 1992; Swingwood, 1991), psychology (Giorgi, 1985, Polkinghorne, 1989), nursing and health services (Nieswiadomy, 1993; Oiler, 1986), and education” (Tesch 1988, van Manen, 1990) (Creswell, 2013, p. 81). Moustakas (1994) and van Manen (1990) are two primary resources that are commonly used by researchers that employ a phenomenological framework to their research studies.

Creswell (2013) highlights two phenomenological methodologies, “hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 1990) and psychological, or empirical transcendental phenomenology” (Moustakas, 1994) (p. 79). Hermeneutic phenomenology is widely utilized within the health field (Morse & Field, 1995). Within the field of “hermeneutical phenomenology, van Manen (1990) describes research as oriented toward lived experience (phenomenology) and interpreting the ‘texts’ of life” (Creswell 2013, p. 79). Van Manen (1990) approaches phenomenology without a well-defined set of rules or methods and explores a phenomenon, a compelling concern. Within the research process essential themes are reflected upon with the intent of capturing the lived experiences of participants who have experienced the phenomenon. The researcher writes a description of the phenomenon being explored and retains a strong relation with the topic being researched and maintains a balance between the components of writing in relation to the whole (Creswell, 2013).

Moustakas’s (1994) transcendental or psychological phenomenology emphasizes the importance of blocking out researcher-based interpretations and focuses solely on the descriptive experiences of the participants. Moustakas adopts Husserl’s process of ‘epoche’ (bracketing) which places an emphasis on the researcher “setting aside their experiences as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination” (Creswell, 2013, p. 80). This approach is reinforced by Moustakas (1994) when defining “transcendental as a means in
which everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time” (p. 34). It is important to note that Moustakas readily admits that total ‘epoche’ is rarely attained (Creswell, 2013). A common approach used by researchers utilizing the bracketing process is to document their experiences with the phenomenon being studied prior to conducting the actual research study.

Husserl’s (1859-1938) beliefs in regard to employing phenomenological methodology in research align with Moustakas’s (1994) approach to conducting phenomenological research, which relies on rich descriptions of the participants and avoids interpretation or understanding of the phenomenon (Racher, 2003). Heidegger (1889-1976) developed the tenets of hermeneutic phenomenology and emphasized the importance of understanding and interpreting an identified phenomenon. This belief aligns with van Manen’s (1990) approach to phenomenology (Dowling, 2007). Merleau–Ponty continued to build on the work of Husserl and Heidegger (Dowling, 2007). In alignment with Husserl, Merleau-Ponty emphasized the importance of the reduction process as a means of establishing an original awareness of the phenomenon being studied (Racher & Robinson, 2003). This approach allows the researcher to view the experience in a new light, one that does not rely on our reflective and pre-reflective experiences (Dowling, 2007). Gademar extended the philosophical underpinnings held by Heidegger and developed a version of phenomenology that defines understanding as a process that is developed by involvement of the researcher in reciprocal processes that align with “one’s being in the world” (Dowling, 2007, p. 134). The research process becomes one of “dialogue rather than individual phenomenology and interpretation permeates every activity with the researcher considering social, cultural and gender implications” (Dowling, 2007, p. 133). When considering the absence or utilization of interpretation within phenomenological research, one must view the use of description and interpretation within a continuum (Finlay, 2009). When employing philosophies that fall within
the continuum, it is evident that it is rare that a researcher is able to bracket out their positionality in its entirety and refrain from using some degree of interpretation when investigating a particular phenomenon.

When looking at similarities between hermeneutic and transcendental phenomenology, both were derived from German philosophy, with their respective creators working with each other as well as influencing each other’s viewpoints (Laverty, 2003). Both approaches to phenomenology were committed to “uncover the life world or human experience as it is lived” (Laverty, 2003, p. 25). The two philosophies also “sought to reclaim what they felt was lost through the use of scientific inquiry as a means of explaining social paradigms” (Laverty, 2003, p. 26). The two distinct philosophies also disputed the scientific view of the world, which was “based on Cartesian dualism, one life world among many worlds” (Jones, 1975, p. 84). Despite the original connection, differences in philosophical beliefs arose between the two traditions, which were based on “differences emerging within ontological, epistemological, and methodological realms” (Laverty, 2003, p. 26).

Laverty (2007) discusses key differences between the two approaches. When considering differences between hermeneutic and transcendental phenomenology one can begin by looking at ontology and epistemology. Transcendental phenomenology utilizes an epistemological approach whereas hermeneutic phenomenology aligns within an existential-ontological approach. Transcendental phenomenology focuses on epistemological questions of knowing and hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on questions of experiencing and understanding. Within transcendental phenomenology, the “mind-body person lives in a world of objects, within hermeneutic phenomenology the person exists as being in and of the world” (p.32). In transcendental phenomenology, the “essence of the conscious mind is shared, whereas
hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on the sharing of culture, history, practice and language” (p.32). Transcendental phenomenology starts with the reflection of mental states; hermeneutic phenomenology views the person within the world in pre-reflective states. Within transcendental phenomenology “participants’ meanings can be reconstituted in interpretive work by insisting data speak for themselves, in hermeneutic phenomenology, interpreters participate in making data” (p. 32). Transcendental phenomenology utilizes “bracketing to defend validity or objectivity of the interpretation against self-interest, hermeneutic phenomenology establishes its own criteria for trustworthiness of research” (p. 32).

Transcendental phenomenology aligns well with Kegan’s Constructive Developmental Theory, which in turn, played a significant role in the development of the research questions. The research questions were designed within a descriptive phenomenological framework, which utilized two broad open-ended research questions (Moustakas, 1994). The two questions focused on research participants’ experience of a particular phenomenon and their “contexts or situations that have influenced or affected their experiences of the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p. 81).

Using Constructive-Developmental Theory along with Moustakas’s (1994) design resulted in the formation of two research questions.

1. How does a teacher’s perception of the evaluation process affect his/her own professional growth?
2. In what ways can the teacher evaluation process affect a teacher’s professional growth?

Transcendental phenomenology is well aligned within the scope of the research study. Considering the researcher’s positionality within the organization to be studied, transcendental
phenomenology provides a methodological approach that will minimize bias and maximize the study’s credibility.

Participants

The research study was conducted within a suburban school district located in Eastern Massachusetts. The school district consists of four schools, two elementary schools (k-2, 3-5) one middle school and one high school. The research study focused on teachers who had five or more years of experience within the school district. Teachers who had taught for five or more years within the district had experienced the district’s previous evaluation model and had completed at least one evaluation cycle using the new Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Model. The school district began implementing the new educator evaluation model at the beginning of the 2013/2014 school year. Professional status teachers were placed on one or two-year evaluation cycles using a random selection process.

All participants with five or more years of experience were asked to complete a questionnaire consisting of close-ended questions. The sample size for this group of participants was 93 teachers. Of the 93 teachers that were asked to complete the questionnaire, four teachers from each of the four schools were interviewed using a semi-structured interview process. Teachers who completed the survey were asked to volunteer to be interviewed. From the list of volunteers at each school, four teachers from each school for a total of 16 teachers were randomly selected to take part in the individual interview process.

Recruitment and Access

Once approval was granted from Northeastern University’s Institutional Review Board, letters were sent to all teachers within the district that had taught for five or more years. Contact was made through the utilization of an electronic list serve.
Participants were recruited through an introductory letter that highlighted the purpose and scope of the research study. The introductory letter invited participants that met the specified criteria to fill out a closed-ended questionnaire (Appendix A). Participants were asked to volunteer to take part in individual interviews and were provided with an email address that was used to notify the researcher of their interest in participating in the interview process. Participants who volunteered to participate in the interview process and were selected for individual interviews were provided with a letter requesting informed consent (Appendix C). The letter of informed consent was signed prior to the participant taking part in the interview process.

**Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework**

In June 2011, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted regulations specific to a new statewide educator evaluation framework. The framework was designed to promote growth and development of teachers, place an emphasis on student learning and recognize excellence in teaching. Massachusetts’s educators receive two ratings during the summative evaluation process, a summative performance rating and a student impact rating.

The new educator evaluation framework consists of a five-step evaluation cycle. The goal of the five-step evaluation cycle “is to provide educators with a continuous opportunity for professional growth and development through self-directed growth and analysis” (MA DESE-Quick Reference Guide: Educator Evaluation Framework, 2015, p. 1). Continuous feedback from the evaluator accompanied with an ongoing reflective process by the teacher drive the five-step cycle process. The five-step cycle includes: self-assessment, goal setting and plan development, implementation, formative assessment/evaluation and summative evaluation.
Figure 1: Five-Step Cycle (MA DESE-Quick Reference Guide: MA Educator Evaluation Framework, 2015, p. 2)

The new educator evaluation framework includes three categories of evidence: Product of Practice, Multiple Measures of Student Learning, Growth and Practice and other evidence related to standards of practice.

Products of practice include artifacts related to effective educator practice as well as observations of practice. Artifacts and observations of practice are linked to standards-based performance rubrics that consist of standards, indicators and elements. Each element consists of rating scales, which include: exemplary, proficient, needs improvement, and unsatisfactory. Each standard is also given a final rating.

Multiple Measures of Student Learning, Growth and Achievement focus on multiple measures of student learning which include standardized and locally developed assessments as well as the assessment of an educator student-learning goal. Measurements of student learning that are used to determine the student impact rating must be administered across grade or subject levels within a particular district.
Other evidence related to standards of practice must include evidence from student feedback regarding their perceptions of a teacher’s overall effectiveness related to instructional delivery and assessment. Teachers can utilize micro surveys throughout the year or utilize other forms of data collection that solicit student input related to the teaching process.

The Educator Evaluation model also consists of three educator plans, which include: one or two year self-directed growth plans, directed growth plan and an improvement plan. The teacher’s evaluator determines the type or duration of the educator plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Rating</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
<th>1 or 2 year Self-Directed Growth Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>Directed Growth Plan (up to 1 year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Needs Improvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>Improvement Plan (30 days to 1 year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Impact Rating</td>
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Figure 2: MA DESE-MA Educator Evaluation Plan (MA DESE-Quick Reference Guide: MA Educator Evaluation Framework, 2015, p. 2)

The research study focuses on a suburban school district in eastern Massachusetts that implemented the new Educator Evaluation Model during the 2013/2014 school year. The district is entering its fourth year of implementation, an opportune time to conduct research on the effectiveness of the new educator evaluation model’s perceived ability to foster professional growth.

Data Collection

Data for the research study was collected using a closed-ended questionnaire as well as conducting semi-structured individual interviews.
**Questionnaire.** A close-ended questionnaire consisting of 18 questions was administered to teachers who had taught in the school district for five or more years. The closed-ended questionnaire was developed as a means of collecting qualitative data from a larger sample size that provided pertinent information to the study. Collecting information regarding the effectiveness of the new educator evaluation model on facilitating professional growth from a larger sample provided greater validity to the research study and allowed general themes that were gleaned from the interview process to be vetted within a larger sample size.

DeVaus (2002) discussed the purpose of questionnaires and surveys and indicated when utilizing surveys or questionnaires, one collects “information about the same variables or characteristics from at least two cases and ends up with a data grid” (p. 3). “Survey or questionnaire research is widely regarded as being inherently quantitative, however, the nature of the data that is collected for the grid need not be quantitative at all, each cell in the grid, may be filled with much more qualitative information.” (p. 5-6). Specific information from the questionnaire regarding teacher perceptions of the new educator evaluation model in facilitating teacher growth provides a much richer base of perspectives and feedback compared to relying solely on the perceptions captured from individual interviews.

**Interviews.** Phenomenological procedures typically utilize individual interviews as a method of collecting data from participants that have experienced an identified phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Interviews can be unstructured, semi-structured or structured depending on the preference of the researcher, with their choice being influenced by the use of transcendental or hermeneutic phenomenology to guide their research study. Open-ended descriptive questions are preferred when using structured and semi-structured interviews within a phenomenological study. It is recommended that the researcher utilize the same methodology in both the data
collection process as well as data analysis (Englander, 2012). Therefore, if a researcher employs a Husserlian descriptive phenomenological philosophy, both data collection and analysis procedures should follow descriptive phenomenology as a means of establishing validity and reliability within the research study. Polkinghorne (1989) recommends the use of 5 to 25 participants within a phenomenological study. Purposeful sampling and random sampling are used within phenomenological studies. Other forms of “data collection can be used inclusive of observations, journals, poetry, music as well as other forms of art” (Creswell, 2013, p. 81). Van Manen (1990) also includes the use of taped conversations, written responses as well as “accounts of vicarious experiences inclusive of drama, films and novels” as additional forms of data collection (Creswell, 2013, p. 81).

Moustakas (1994) employs descriptive phenomenological methodology and utilizes open-ended questions, which include two questions that explore the experiences of the phenomenon and the contexts or situations that influence the experiences of a phenomenon. These questions are incorporated as part of the data collection process, which often uses individual semi-structured interviews. Other open-ended questions are generally asked with the intent of gathering textual and “structural descriptions of the participants’ experiences” as a means of understanding the common experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2013, p. 81).

Descriptive phenomenology was utilized within the research study using semi-structured individual interviews as the primary method of collecting data. The majority of the data for the research study was collected through the interview process. Four teachers from each of the four schools took part in the interview process. The interviews followed a semi-structured protocol (Appendix D) that was designed by the researcher using open-ended questions. All interviews were recorded and the audiotapes were transcribed using an outside agency. Interviews took
place in the interviewee’s school in a setting chosen by each participant. Due to the researcher’s position in the school district that is used in this study, a fellow colleague who is an experienced researcher conducted the individual interviews. This strategy helped to ensure that the researcher’s positionality was minimized, which in turn, helped to maximize the validity of the research study.

Using the indicated format for the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews aligns with Kegan’s Constructive Developmental Theory through the design of questions that acknowledge different developmental levels of teachers and focus on capturing authentic experiences of teachers regarding the effectiveness of the current evaluation process. The use of individual interviews would also align with using a theoretical framework that recognizes that teachers are at different developmental stages.

**Data Storage and Management**

In order to ensure confidentiality, the questionnaire was designed for electronic submission with no identifying data; hence, participant data remained anonymous. Participants that took part in the individual interview component of the study were assigned pseudonyms to mask their identity. The pseudonym was used during the interview process and was included in the transcribed interview documents. Participants had the opportunity to verify the content of the transcripts after the transcription process had been completed. Audio recordings were transcribed by an outside agency.

Transcripts were housed in a password-protected computer. Paper copies of transcripts were housed at the researcher’s home and stored in a secure file cabinet. Any identifying data obtained from the participants was destroyed after the research study had been approved for publication.
Data Analysis

**Questionnaire.** Data from the questionnaire was analyzed using percent responses to questions that pertained to the effectiveness of the new educator evaluation model, and questions that compared the effectiveness of the previous evaluation model to the new model specific to the new evaluation model’s ability to encourage professional growth. Results from the survey served as a means of further triangulating the results from the interview data. Utilization of a larger sample population of participants (93) provided a much richer base of perspectives and feedback, compared to relying solely on the perceptions captured from individual interviews involving 16 participants.

**Interviews.** Data analysis procedures for psychological phenomenologists are generally similar and typically utilize methods proposed by Moustakas (1994) and Polkinghorne (1989) (Creswell, 2013). “Data analysis procedures of Van Kaam (1966) and Colaizzi (1978)” can also be utilized in the data analysis process (Creswell, 2013, p. 80). Building from the data obtained from interviews and transcriptions of the interviews, “significant statements and quotes that provide an understanding of the participants’ experiences” are documented (Creswell, 2013, p. 82). This process is in alignment with Saldana’s (2013) first and second cycle coding process. Moustakas (1990) refers to this process as a form of horizontalization. The researcher then develops “clusters of meaning from the statements” and quotes to develop themes (Creswell, 2013, p. 82). This process mirrors Saldana’s (2013) second cycle coding process. The actual methodology of the coding process used in phenomenological studies, seem to favor Saldana’s (2013) Initial, In Vivo and Descriptive coding processes. This seemed to be a prevalent approach used in the coding process when looking at a number of phenomenological research studies. The “themes are then used to write textual descriptions of the experiences of the participants”
(Creswell, 2013, p. 82). They are also used to write descriptions of the context in which participants experienced the phenomenon, referred to as imaginative description or structural variation.

As a researcher, I chose to employ Miles, Huberman and Saldana’s (2014) approach to data analysis when analyzing the transcribed interviews. The utilization of coding procedures allows the researcher to identify themes within transcribed interviews. Codes are essentially “labels that assign symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (Miles, Huberman, Saldana, 2014, p. 71). Saldana’s (2013) coding protocols were employed to analyze the data using first and second cycle coding. First cycle coding is initially used to identify codes and can include up to 25 different approaches, each having a unique function or purpose. Secondary coding results in the development of broader categories or themes. Repetitive coding throughout the secondary coding process creates broader categories of codes, which allows the researcher to develop broad-based sub-codes, which can be used to present the findings of a qualitative data analysis.

Coding of the transcribed interviews was performed using In Vivo and Descriptive coding. The researcher manually analyzed participant transcripts as a means of identifying common themes. The first coding cycle utilized words and phrases from the participants’ transcribed interviews. The researcher listened to the audio recording of interviews to confirm the accuracy of the transcribed data and the first cycle coding process. Listening to the audiotapes was extremely helpful as a result of being able to attach voice inflections to identified codes.

The researcher transferred the primary codes to a spreadsheet as a means of organizing the second coding cycle. Using Pattern coding, sub-codes were created by reorganizing the
spreadsheet resulting in the moving of primary codes to align with sub-codes. Reduction coding was applied during the second coding process (Saldana, 2013). The researcher listened to the audiotape a second time as a means of verifying the sub-codes that were developed from second cycle coding. The researcher employed a second reduction process and utilized In Vivo and Descriptive coding which resulted in a reduction in broad-based themes that were created from the first round of the second coding cycle (Creswell, 2013). Colored markers were utilized to track sub-codes within the third reduction process. The researcher listened to the audiotapes a third time as a secondary means of confirming major subthemes that were created from the second coding cycle. The researcher utilized MAXQDA, a computer assisted coding data analysis program as a means of verifying the major themes that were identified using the manual coding process.

Copies of transcribed interviews were sent to participants to verify the transcribed interviews. Additional triangulation involved utilizing the colleague that conducted the interviews to read over the transcribed interviews inclusive of discussing the results of the coding process. Major themes identified during the second coding process, were also verified by the colleague as being representative of the transcribed interviews. As stated earlier, it is important to note that confidentiality of the participants was maintained throughout the process by the assignment of pseudonyms to prevent identification of the participants.

There are many different approaches to report the results of a phenomenological research study. A number of phenomenological studies that the researcher retrieved from the literature tend to present their results using a thematic approach capturing rich descriptive quotes from participants ensuring that lived experiences of the participants are captured and communicated to the reader (Creswell, 2013). The data presented in Chapter four utilized a thematic approach to
present the results, utilizing descriptive quotes to capture the lived experiences of the participants.

**Trustworthiness**

Due to the subjective nature of qualitative studies, research is often scrutinized as a result of not using validation and verification procedures that are found in quantitative studies. The perceived validity of a qualitative study is determined by the extent that the researcher, participants and readers give credence to the research study (Creswell, 2013). Creswell provides eight primary validity strategies that a researcher can utilize to maximize the trustworthiness of their respective study. Of the eight validity strategies that Creswell (2013) recommends the researcher chose four strategies which included: triangulation of data, member checking, the use of rich, thick descriptions of the participants experience of the phenomenon and clarification of researcher biases.

The research study relied on two methods of data collection, the administration of a questionnaire and the sampling of 16 participants of their perceptions of the phenomenon being studied using semi-structured individual interviews. The questionnaire was utilized as a means of capturing the views of a larger sample of teachers through the use of a closed-ended survey that was electronically administered to 93 participants, who had five or more years of teaching experience within the district. The use of the questionnaire provided a form of triangulation by providing a much richer base of perspectives and feedback from a larger sample size compared to relying solely on the perceptions captured from individual interviews involving 16 participants. Triangulation was also utilized by using member checking, specific to transcribed interviews to ensure that participants could verify the accuracy of their respective perceptions of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013).
Descriptive phenomenology relies on the descriptive experiences of the participants and emphasizes the importance of blocking out researcher-based interpretations (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas, adopted Husserl’s process of ‘epoche’ (bracketing) which places an emphasis on the researchers “setting aside their experiences as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination” (Creswell, 2013, p. 80). The researcher employed descriptive phenomenology throughout the study and utilized rich, authentic descriptions gleaned from interviews of the participants to present the results and findings of the study. The methodological approach that was utilized maximized the bracketing out of potential researcher biases with the intent of maximizing the trustworthiness of the study.

In order to maximize the trustworthiness of any qualitative study, it is necessary to clarify potential researcher biases. As the Superintendent of the school district being studied, it was imperative that I continually reflect on potential biases that may compromise the validity of the study. In order to minimize bias associated with my position within the district, a fellow colleague who is an experienced researcher conducted individual interviews with the participants. This would eliminate any bias that could be perceived as a result of my positional authority. Other checks and balances were put into place to maximize the confidentiality of the participants that were part of the research study.

As an experienced school-based Administrator and Superintendent I have been involved in teacher supervision and evaluation for a number of years. The researcher also has experience in the design and implementation of teacher evaluation instruments in a number of school districts. As a result of the researcher’s experiential base of the teacher evaluation process, and professional perceptions of the effectiveness of various models of teacher supervision, it was imperative that a research methodology be employed that minimized the opportunity for
researcher bias to affect the trustworthiness of the study. For this reason, I employed a descriptive phenomenological approach to the study that placed an emphasis on bracketing which is designed to minimize researcher bias and maximize the credibility and validity of the research study.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

Participants were not contacted until the researcher had approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the researcher’s advisor. All participants received an introductory letter via email inviting them to take part in the study. The letter also included a brief description of the purpose of the study as well as the benefits of conducting the study within the school district (Appendix A). All participants that were interviewed signed a consent form prior to the interviews taking place. The informed consent form included a brief description and purpose of the study, disclosure of any potential risks and benefits, contact information should the participants have any questions or concerns about the study, as well as an opt out statement for participants (Appendix C). All participants took part in the study on a voluntary basis and were permitted to drop out of the study at any time.

There were no identified risks in the research study. Participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire, and volunteered to be interviewed for the study. Identities of participants were kept confidential. Participants that were interviewed were assigned pseudonyms that were utilized within all documents that were used in the study with the exception of the informed consent document.

Data compiled and used during the research study was securely stored. All electronic files were stored in a password-protected computer. Throughout the study, the researcher adhered to
ethical guidelines to ensure that all participants were treated with the utmost respect and ensured all components of the research study maintained confidentiality of the participants.
Chapter 4

Results

In recent years educator evaluation has taken center stage due in part to the requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) waiver and the recently approved Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). NCLB waivers contain a provision that requires the inclusion of standards-based teacher evaluation frameworks that are developed at the state level (Chubb, Clark, 2013). As a result of the mandated overhaul of educator evaluation throughout our nation, it has become a focus of intense dialogue and debate. Increased interest in educator evaluation is also a result of the awareness that the most important factor in enhancing student achievement is teacher effectiveness (Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Barber & Moursesh, 2007; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Leithwood, Lewis & Wahlstrom, 2004). Increased attention to educator evaluation has also been elevated as a result of research findings that have been critical of the effectiveness of educator evaluation throughout the country (The New Teacher Project, 2009; Donaldson, 2009; The National Council on Teacher Quality, 2010). These studies have indicated that current teacher evaluation models “do not provide adequate feedback for improvement, lack connection to student learning and growth, and do not differentiate levels of teacher effectiveness” (Massachusetts Task Force on the Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators, 2013, p. 9).

Research studies of educator evaluation models throughout the nation have indicated that they are relatively ineffective in fostering opportunities for teacher improvement and growth. Recent changes in evaluation models at state levels have been designed to transform teacher evaluation practices focusing on strategies that are linked to enhanced teacher effectiveness. Teacher perspectives regarding the new evaluation models’ effectiveness in facilitating teacher
growth will be paramount in assessing whether the new evaluation protocols are living up to their intended outcomes.

Research questions were structured in a way that acknowledged that teachers are in fact creating perceptions of the new evaluation model based on their respective stages of development. Research questions were designed in a fashion that recognized that teachers were interpreting the evaluation process through diverse lenses. The research questions were designed within a phenomenological framework, which utilized two broad open-ended research questions (Moustakas, 1994). The two questions focused on research participants’ experience of a particular phenomenon and their “contexts or situations that influenced or affected their experiences of the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p. 81). Using Constructive-Developmental Theory along with Moustakas’s (1994) design resulted in the formation of two research questions.

1. How does a teacher’s perception of the evaluation process affect his or her own professional growth?

2. In what ways can the teacher evaluation process affect a teacher’s professional growth?

**Presentation of Results**

For this research study, data was collected using a closed-ended questionnaire as well as conducting 16 semi-structured individual interviews with teachers within the district.

**Questionnaire.** A close-ended questionnaire consisting of 18 questions was administered to teachers who had taught in the school district for five or more years. The closed-ended questionnaire was developed as a means of collecting qualitative data from a larger sample size that provided pertinent information to the study. Collecting information regarding the effectiveness of the new educator evaluation model in facilitating professional growth from a
larger sample provided greater validity to the research study and allowed general themes that were gleaned from the interview process to be vetted within a larger sample size.

The questionnaire was electronically sent to 93 participants with 44 responses resulting in a participation rate of 47%. Participants were given a two-week window to complete the questionnaire. The findings of the questionnaire were presented through the reporting of percent responses to the categories contained within each question.

**Question 1.** Participants were asked to indicate the school that they currently worked in.

![Pie chart showing participant demographics by school](image)

**Figure 3: Participant demographics by school**

Figure 3 illustrates the percentage of teachers from each school that participated in the survey. High School teachers represented 31.9% of the participants, 29.9% of the participants worked at the Middle School. Pre k through 2 teachers represented 20.5% of the population; grade 3 to 5 teachers represented 11.4% of the population. Teachers that worked in multiple schools represented 6.8% of the participants.

**Question 2.** Participants were asked to identify the number of years of teaching experience within the district.
Figure 4: Years of teaching experience within the district

Figure 4 represents the number of years participants have taught within the district.

Participants with 10-15 years of teaching experience represented 40.9% of the research sample.

Participants with 5-10 years of teaching experience within the district represented 29.5% of the research sample, while 22.7% of the participants had taught 15-20 years. Participants with more than 20 years of experience within the district represented 6.8% of the surveyed population.

Question 3. Participants were asked to indicate which areas of the educator evaluation process resulted in making changes to current teaching practices.

Figure 5: Components of evaluation process that impacted teaching practice

Figure 5 displays the results of participants indicating what aspects of the evaluation process led to changes in their respective teaching practices. SMART goal setting was chosen by 81.8% of the participants followed by 40.9% of the participants indicating that evidence collection resulted in changes to current teaching practices. Participants also indicated that
implementation of the educator plan (29.5%), professional development linked to evaluation process (22.7%), and the utilization of the standards-based rubric (20.5%) had some influence on changing current teaching practices. Components of the evaluation process that seemed to have less influence included formative evaluations (18.2%) and performance ratings on evaluations (18.2%). Participants who indicated that no components of the evaluation process influenced changes in teaching practice represented 9.1% of the sample population.

**Question 4.** Participants were asked to indicate whether feedback received during the evaluation process included suggestions specific to ways of improving teaching practice.

![Image](figure6.png)

Figure 6: Evaluation feedback resulting in improved teaching practice

Participant feedback on question 4 indicated that 72.4% of surveyed teachers indicated that feedback provided during the evaluation process had a positive influence on improvement of teaching practice. Although the majority of participants indicated that evaluator feedback was influential in improving teaching practice, 27.2% of respondents disagreed that feedback had a positive influence on their teaching practices.

**Question 5.** Participants were asked whether the educator evaluation process provided opportunities to reflect on their teaching practice.
The majority of participants (79.5%) indicated that the educator evaluation process provided opportunities for reflective practice. Of the remaining participants, 20.9% indicated that the evaluation process did not offer opportunities to reflect on their practice.

**Question 6.** Participants were asked to indicate whether the educator evaluation process created opportunities for improvement of practice.

Participant responses indicated that 68.2% of surveyed teachers indicated that the evaluation process created opportunities for improved practice. The remaining participants (31.8%) indicated that the evaluation process did not provide opportunities for improved practice.
**Question 7.** Participants were asked whether the five-step cycle contributed to teacher professional growth and development.

![Pie chart showing the distribution of responses to the question about the five-step cycle's contribution to professional growth and development.](Image)

The majority of survey participants (68.2%) indicated that the five-step cycle within the evaluative process did not contribute to their professional growth and development. Of the remaining participants, 31.8% indicated that the five-step cycle provided opportunities for professional growth and development.

**Question 8.** Participants were asked whether feedback provided by their evaluator was meaningful to their teaching practices.

![Pie chart showing the distribution of responses to the question about the evaluator feedback's meaningfulness.](Image)

**Figure 9: Effect of five-step cycle on professional growth and development**

**Figure 10: Evaluator feedback effect on teaching practices**
A little more than half of the Participants (56.8%) indicated that evaluator feedback was meaningful to their teaching practices. The remainder of participants (43.2%) felt that feedback provided during the evaluative process had no meaningful effect on their teaching practices.

**Question 9.** Participants were asked to compare the previous evaluation model’s effectiveness in helping teachers grow professionally with the current educator evaluation model.

![Figure 11: Comparison of Old vs. New evaluation model on professional growth.](image)

Of the participants surveyed, 56.9% indicated that the new evaluation model wasn’t more effective in helping teachers grow professionally when compared to the district’s previous evaluation model. The remaining participants (43.1%) indicated that the new educator evaluation model provided more opportunities for professional growth.

**Question 10.** Participants were asked whether the main purpose of the new evaluation process was to encourage and enhance opportunities for professional growth.
The majority of participants (65.9%) indicated that the new educator evaluation process within the district was focused on encouraging professional growth of teachers. The remaining participants (34.1%) disagreed with the district evaluation model’s focus on helping educators grow professionally.

**Question 11.** Participants were asked whether the new educator evaluation process has had a positive effect on student learning.

When asked this question, 56.8% of participants indicated that the educator evaluation process has not had a positive effect on student learning. Of the remaining participants, 43.2% indicated that the district’s evaluation model has had a positive impact on student learning.
**Question 12.** Participants were asked whether the evaluator had recommended professional development to support their professional growth.

![Evaluator recommendations for professional growth](image)

The majority of participants (61.3%) indicated that they had not received specific recommendations from their evaluator specific to professional development tailored toward professional growth. The remaining participants (38.7%) indicated that their evaluator had provided professional development recommendations specific to supporting their professional growth.

**Question 13.** Participants were asked whether their evaluator’s assessment of their teaching practice was fair and accurate.

![Evaluator’s fairness and accuracy regarding assessment of teaching practice](image)
A significant number of participants (88.7%) indicated that the evaluator’s assessment of their teaching practice was fair and accurate, 27.3% of participants disagreed with the accuracy of their evaluator’s assessment of their teaching practice.

**Question 14.** Participants were asked if communication with their evaluator focused on the teacher rubric as a means of enhancing practice.

![Figure 16: Evaluator use of teacher rubric focused on improved teacher practice.](image)

Participants were equally split on this question with 50% of surveyed teachers indicating that their evaluator used the teacher rubric to focus on assisting teachers to improve practice.

**Question 15.** Participants were asked whether evaluator feedback from classroom observations and post conferences was helpful specific to teacher reflection of their respective teaching practice.

![Figure 17: Evaluator feedback from classroom observations and post conferences linked to reflective practice.](image)
A significant number of participants (63.6%) indicated that evaluator feedback from classroom observations and post conferences was beneficial to teacher reflective practices. Remaining participants (36.4%) indicated that evaluator feedback from observations and post conferences was not supportive in the area of teacher reflective practice.

Question 16. Participants were asked whether evaluator feedback from classroom observations and post conferences supported teacher professional growth.

![Figure 18: Evaluator feedback from classroom observations and post conferences linked to professional growth.](image)

When asked this question, 59.1% of participants indicated that feedback from classroom observations and post conferences was beneficial to teacher professional growth. The remaining participants (40.9%) did not support the benefit of observations and post conferences as a means of fostering professional growth.

Question 17. Participants were asked whether their relationship with their evaluator was built on trust and respect.
The majority of participants (84.1%) indicated their relationship with their evaluator was built on trust and respect, 15.9% of the participants indicated that this was not the case.

**Question 18.** Participants were asked whether their evaluator created opportunities for collaborative discussions that were linked to teaching practice and student learning.

A significant number of participants (65.9%) indicated that their evaluator provided opportunities to discuss teaching practice and student learning as part of the evaluative process, 34.1% of participants did not experience evaluator feedback specific to teaching practice and opportunities for student learning.
The results of the close-ended questionnaire supported the new evaluation model’s ability to promote professional reflection and foster professional growth. The majority of participants also agreed that the new evaluation process resulted in improvements to teaching practice. Participants also felt that their evaluator’s assessment of their teaching practice was fair and accurate. Participants also indicated that their relationship with their evaluator was built on trust and respect. The results of the close-ended questionnaire supported the findings of the interview process and provided further triangulation through the use of a larger sample size, which added credibility to the findings of the individual interview process.

**Semi-Structured Interviews.** This research study analyzed the results of 16 semi-structured individual interviews with teachers that had five or more years of teaching experience within the school district. Participants that completed the close-ended questionnaire were asked to volunteer to take part in the individual interview process. Four teachers from each of the four schools within the district were interviewed for the study. Six teachers from the middle school and six teachers from the high school volunteered to be interviewed. The researcher conducted a random draw to select four teachers from each of these schools. Within the two elementary schools, four teachers from each school volunteered to take part in the interview process. The interviews were conducted throughout a three-week time frame.

The researcher utilized Miles, Huberman and Saldana’s (2014) approach to data analysis. The utilization of coding procedures allowed the researcher to identify themes within transcribed interviews. Codes are essentially “labels that assign symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (Miles, Huberman, Saldana,
Saldana’s (2013) coding protocols were employed to analyze the data using first and second cycle coding.

Coding of the transcribed interviews was performed using In Vivo and Descriptive coding. The researcher chose to utilize both manual coding and MAXQDA to analyze the data from the 16 interviews. Primary and secondary coding resulted in the identification of five major themes.

The researcher distributed a copy of the transcribed interview to each of the 16 participants and had them verify the accuracy and content of their respective interview. Further triangulation involved utilizing the researcher appointed interviewer to read over the transcribed interviews as well as including the researcher in both discussion and collaboration as part of the verification process. Additional triangulation involved the researcher appointed interviewer confirming the five major themes that resulted from the coding process. It is important to note that confidentiality of the participants was maintained throughout the process by the assignment of pseudonyms to prevent any means of identification during the research process.

There are many different approaches to report the results of a descriptive phenomenological research study. A number of phenomenological studies that the researcher retrieved from the literature presented their results using a thematic approach capturing rich descriptive quotes from participants ensuring that lived experiences of the participants were captured and communicated to the reader (Creswell, 2013). The data presented in this section utilized a thematic approach to present the findings, utilizing descriptive quotes to capture the lived experiences of the participants.

Saldana (2013) defines themes as products of coding, categorization and analytic reflections. Five major themes resulted from the coding process: Trust, Respect, Integrity and
Biographical Descriptions of Participants.

Participant 1: Is currently a middle school humanities teacher with 19 years of teaching experience within the district.

Participant 2: Is a middle school science teacher with 12 years of experience within the district.

Participant 3: Is a middle school humanities teacher with 7 years of teaching experience in the district.

Participant 4: Is currently a teacher in the district’s grade 3-5 school with 17 years of teaching experience within the district.

Participant 5: Is a teacher in the district’s grade 3-5 school with 9 years of teaching experience.

Participant 6: Is a teacher in the district’s grade 3-5 school with 9 years of teaching experience within the district.

Participant 7: Is currently a teacher in the district’s prek-2 school with 11 years of teaching experience within the district.

Participant 8: Is a teacher within the district’s prek-2 school with 5 years of experience within the district.

Participant 9: Is a teacher within the district’s prek-2 school with 16 years of teaching experience within the district.
Participant 10: Is a teacher within the district’s prek-2 school with 16 years of teaching experience within the district.

Participant 11: Is a middle school world language teacher with 17 years of teaching experience within the district.

Participant 12: Is a high school science teacher with 9 years of teaching experience within the district.

Participant 13: Is a teacher at the district’s grade 3-5 school with 20 years of experience within the district.

Participant 14: Is a high school world language teacher with 8 years of teaching experience within the district.

Participant 15: Is a high school special education teacher with 6 years of teaching experience within the school district.

Participant 16: Is a high school humanities teacher with 8 years of teaching experience within the district.

**Trust, Respect, Integrity and Professionalism.** Trust, Respect, Integrity and Professionalism by all participants was considered an essential component of effective evaluation models that are designed to foster professional growth. All participants viewed the four components as inseparable and felt that they were essential in creating an environment throughout the evaluation process that focused on dialogue and actions that were designed to encourage professional growth. The following excerpts from participants verify the importance of the four components in the evaluative process:

Participant 1: So I think if there is a positive relationship in those categories, it makes the evaluation process legitimate and the teacher might take the feedback from the evaluations more seriously or feel that its-justified, but if trust is lacking -- I’ve never felt not respected in the evaluation process.
Participant 10: I think you need to have the trust and respect of the evaluator, because if you don’t, you’re going to feel uncomfortable throughout the whole process. If you know you’re doing your best and you’ve already had a bunch of conflicts with them throughout the year, you’re just going to go into it thinking, it’s not going to be a good thing, but you want to know that your principal or evaluator is somebody that is going to work with you and help you -- you know, show you -- pick an area okay, this is where we are going to improve, this is where it’s great, because there is always that balance there, but if you don’t have that trust with somebody, you’re not going to get that.

Participant 6: I think they are pretty important. You know if you’re being evaluated by someone that you think doesn’t respect you or you don’t respect them, I think that it’s really hard to get feedback and value it. So I feel very fortunate, because I feel like I do trust, you know, the people who have evaluated me, and I feel as though I can take risks and make a mistake and learn from it and move on.

Five participants specifically highlighted the importance of mutual trust and respect between the evaluator and evaluatee and felt that these two components were necessary for the evaluative process to be effective in encouraging teachers to become better at their craft.

Participant 5 stated:

I think that it’s really important for the teacher and the evaluator to have mutual respect and trust. You know I think that it is important for a teacher to be able to be open and honest about struggles or difficulties or challenges with the evaluator and not feel as though you’re going to be penalized you know for, so I think that’s a huge part of it. I think it’s super important if you feel like you’re going to be penalized or sort of you know spoken down to or just for voicing an area that you may find you’re weaker in or you know that maybe you didn’t meet the goal or something then I think the whole process falls apart. I think that there is really no point in doing it if you can’t be open and honest and I think that’s part of the dialogue.

Participant 15 stated:

I think that in any evaluation system, there needs to be a great deal of respect and trust. And, the relationship between the teacher and the evaluator needs to have those components in order for us to feel comfortable to really respectfully reflect. Because if I’m not feeling that I can trust my evaluator, or that my evaluator does not trust me, then I’m not going to authentically reflect on my practices. And so, I will reflect in a way that tries to portray me in a better light. Which doesn’t do any good for my students. So, I think that those components are incredibly important for there to be impactful evaluation and reflection happening within the process.

Participant 8 stated:
Well I like the process. The whole idea seems like it should work. I feel like both people have to be invested and care about the evaluation or the goals or whatever they are. If one doesn’t care too much about it or the evaluator doesn’t care too much about it, the teacher might not or lose caring as well.

Participant 8 also responded to the importance of receiving feedback from someone you trust.

It’s very important, and when I do receive the positive feedback, it means a lot to me. I take it to heart. It makes me feel better. Coming from someone that has a lot of experience and observing teachers throughout the whole building and to receive positive feedback, it’s reassuring to me that I’m doing my job the way that I’m supposed to be doing it.

When asked about the importance of Trust, Respect, Integrity and Professionalism, three participants specifically addressed the importance of Integrity and Professionalism within the evaluative process. Sample excerpts specific to Integrity included:

Participant 6: I think it would be really, really hard to get feedback from someone that you don’t think knows what they are doing. So I think it’s pretty essential. You would need to have someone who has, you know at least demonstrated some knowledge of what you do in your classroom every day. I mean, I think there are some bigger districts where you might have someone evaluating you, who isn’t even in your building or isn’t even in your age group. I think that would be really challenging. You’d be suspicious of that information.

Participant 14: So integrity goes back to knowing what needs to be done and being able to do it. And so, I think that each individual needs to have the integrity to be able to take on the work and do the work in a way that they can best complete it.

Participant 15: That’s huge too. You need to trust that your supervisors have integrity, for one thing. You need to trust that your teachers have integrity in what they’re doing on a day-to-day basis. I don’t know. It’s interesting because I don’t know you can always know that in people.

Participant comments related to Professionalism included:

Participant 6: And for me, professionalism is that, you know, it’s not -- it doesn’t cross the boundary. You know, someone wouldn’t, you know bring up or, you know, talk about how your personal life or, like, you know, make personal comments about you. It would be really based on truly what you are doing in the classroom.

Participant 14: I think professionalism is a real important characteristic that both need to portray in order to have a respectful relationship. And professionalism with regards to,
again, how and what they are doing, what they’re doing and portraying that professionalism not only for themselves, for each other, but then also remodeling it for other people within the building and how they are seen. I think it is very important.

Participant 15: Well I do because there are some people who maybe don’t have respect, and I don’t mean here, I just mean in general. Some people who wouldn’t have respect for their supervisor. Are they going to act in a professional manner? Probably not. A supervisor, maybe, who is not modeling integrity for their staff, are they going to show professionalism? Probably not. So I feel like if you don’t have those three things, then you are really unable to be professional in this kind of environment, and we are not just a bunch of adults working together. We’re modeling these things for our kids, too. So it’s super important. In any job it’s obvious when those three things aren’t there. You can tell, because people behave in a way that’s not professional.

The importance that Trust, Respect, Integrity and Professionalism plays in the evaluation process was evident throughout the interviews. It’s important to note that 84.1% of the teachers who took part in the close-ended survey indicated that their relationship with their respective evaluator was based on trust and respect.

**Time Restraints.** A second common theme shared by participants was the amount of time that the various components of the evaluation model required throughout the evaluation process. Evidence collection and time to reflect on teaching practice as well as time required implementing SMART goals were underlying themes throughout the interview process.

Statements from participants specific to the evaluation components that were deemed time intensive include:

Participant 2: I just got the teach-point shared with me from my formative assessment for this year and so I’ll look back at that again and reflect on how I met my goals probably for the end of May. I think that the main issue is time, so I think that you have to carve out time for working on this and that’s out of time that we don’t have. So it means that it affects teaching practices at some point when you have to do this because you have to give up one thing to do something else, it becomes stressful. So I think that the evaluation model could be more helpful and less stressful if there was dedicated time. Yes we do have prep time, but honestly I don’t stop working until I go to bed.

Participant 3: Maybe even given time in your district to like satisfying the requirements of the evaluation process so that it’s fair. Because so much of it, we do on our own time at home, you know. And then I feel like maybe finally that the outcome would feel like
you were able to reflect on things that were going well and also things that you can improve on moving forward and that those things were presented to you in a trusting, comfortable, fair and respectable way.

Participant 5: I don’t really believe that the rest of it is very effective, you know there are these standards you have to meet and you just have to upload all this evidence to prove that you’re doing it and it feels like busy work. It feels like it’s taking away from time in teaching you know. I wish that we could kind of just scrap that and just stick with like what our two goals were. I mean to me that’s what is impactful.

Participant 12: In terms of the teacher evaluation system, I think-I’m not trying to be arrogant about this; I’m trying to think of any instance where I’ve actually gained something from it that I wasn’t already doing. I mean, what I find is that I know I have to take what I was already doing and put it into a format and put it into a computer program, and for me that’s taking time. I mean, I’m typically here until 4:00 o’clock every day, sometimes later, and I’m -- all the time what I’m doing is improving what I -- the way I try to interact with my students.

Participant 6: I think a lot of the new evaluation system is extraneous. It’s like I think it is unnecessary. Say for instance that we’re tasked with collecting all of this evidence to, you know, to show proficiency in all of these standards. Why would I ever upload something, which reflected poorly on me? And from the evaluator’s point of view, why would I look at this portfolio and think, okay, well clearly this person is doing his or her job. That’s silly. However, putting evidence is time consuming. And having to review it on the evaluator’s end is also time consuming.

Three of the participants viewed the structure of the evaluation process and its time restrictions specific to set timelines in a positive light. Participant 9 commented on evidence collection:

Yes which is kind of a lot of work, too, to be honest and it is a lot of work, but I think it’s important and worthwhile. I put it in my mind that some teachers do portfolios with their students. I’m like this is my portfolio.

Participant 1 commented on SMART Goal design and actualization:

It’s just not something that I’ve done a lot of in recent years and so it takes a lot of planning and I -- so I’ve kind of avoided it because I’m gonna -- it’s hard to get real long chunks of time to sit down and really think it through. I mean I have worked on it in pieces and I’ve been reading and it’s not like it’s been totally not addressed -- it’s just I have to see it through. I have to execute. And I’m running out of time. So it’s good because and like now I’m forced to do it, but I do think it will be valuable for them and myself.
Participant 4 discussed the implementation process of a professional SMART goal and how definitive time-lines were advantageous to the implementation process:

-- because it takes a lot of work and effort and, you know, the profession, itself, is so time consuming, you know? So like, the example of the outdoor classroom, if it wasn’t -- I don’t necessarily know if I would have pushed forward as quickly if I didn’t have the teacher evaluation model sort of saying, you need to set a goal. Okay what do I want to do? Well, I’d really like to do an outdoor classroom. Okay great. Then along with that comes, you know, 30, 40, 50, hours of work, you know so, if you didn’t have the teacher evaluation model, you probably wouldn’t be as motivated or force -- motivated into achieving some of these things that you feel are valuable.

Participants also cited overall workload as a significant challenge in finding the necessary time to complete the various stages of the evaluation process. Participant statements specific to overall workload include:

Participant 3: I think that you know, often times when there might be like in policy setting, making policies that teachers are supposed to follow, they’re very much removed from the day to day obligations and responsibilities that a teacher has. And it’s easy to say hey, like here’s this five-step cycle that it’s just you’re gonna do this and its going to help you so much. And so that’s why I say in theory because you can see how on paper like, yeah, like there’s nothing inherently wrong with it when you look, there’s nothing that seems unfair or odd you know, like nothing that someone can’t handle. But then with the students and the meetings and the conferences and the parents and the -- the outside obligations and the things that you have to come to at night and the grading and I could go on and on. And then what it feels like, I think, for me and from what I’ve heard from other colleagues, it’s like one more thing to be like here, now you have to do this. And it feels less of something that is meant to be helpful and more of something that’s meant -- like feels burdensome.

Participant 14: There are so many parts to everyone’s job and it’s a matter of carving out time and prioritizing. You know what, I think that what’s important is that, if we’re putting such a strong emphasis on this new evaluation system, then, priority needs to be made for us to actually use it as it is intended.

In reference to professional reflection participant 15 stated:

I do think that if you spend a lot of time reviewing teach point, then it does have the potential for that, but I think for me and how busy I am in the course of the day, I’m not only supporting classes but, I’m teaching a curriculum skills course. I’m case managing fifteen students, doing monthly clinics with parents, and also teaching two classes. It’s very difficult for me to do that.
Comparison of the Effectiveness of the New Evaluation Model Compared to the Previous District Model. Findings from the interviews indicated that 14 out of the 16 teachers interviewed felt that the new educator evaluation model provided more opportunities to reflect and grow professionally then the previous model that was used in the district. Interviewee comments focused on three common themes, professional reflection, professional growth and improvement of practice.

Professional reflection. The majority of participants indicated that the new evaluation model provided more extensive opportunities to reflect than the previous district model. Excerpts from participants specific to professional reflection included:

Participant 5: Well, I think it’s just we reflect more formally, like we have actual data to use to reflect as opposed to just subjective sort of how do you think that went?

Participant 6: I just think the fact that the new evaluation model is just more specific in what we’re targeting. I think that it allows you to reflect on it. I think there’s value in general reflection, but it’s kind of hard to know if you are doing it right if there is not something that’s sort of guiding you to show you what you need to reflect on.

Participant 9: For reflective teaching practice? I feel like with the previous model, you might not as a teacher be as engaged in reflective practice, because you might have a formal lesson plan or formal evaluation where you work up your lesson plan, you’re very thorough, you teach it, and then your evaluator comes in and evaluates you, but sometimes the evaluator would follow up with you, sometimes not. And then in some ways I think some schools had implemented that previous model would be like a one shot thing. Now you know, you have many more little pieces to reflect on. Like uploading evidence to show that I’m communicating with parents using technology, so I’m reflecting on that and like last year, I was like Oh, I could do better, so then this year I added in twitter as a different way to communicate with parents. So I feel like now, it’s sort of like built in to have many more opportunities to reflect on your teaching practice.

Participant 13: So you know, I think it does a much better job in that when you’re reflecting on the whole year and so I look at the rubric and I say and I appreciate the focus on 12 elements rather then all 33. It helps me categorize my efforts in all these different areas so that I’m not just focused on building that interdisciplinary unit, which is important but I’m also focused on how I am communicating with parents and developing a relationship with my parents because we need to work together as a team. And how am I working together with my colleagues in developing that relationship and sharing ideas
and getting that environment of professional practice, collaborative professional practice which is equally as important. So I appreciate the time that I’m able to step back and look at each of those bullets and say, okay what have I done? Or what do I need to do?

*Professional growth.* Participants’ overwhelmingly supported the new evaluation model’s potential for helping teachers grow professionally. Examples of participant excerpts from the interviews included:

Participant 2: So I think that it makes me think about my choices for professional development and how they align with my goals. So I think that it’s good to have structure instead of oh, that sounds interesting. Like a few years ago, one of my goals was to improve writing in science and so I made a point of attending workshops on writing. So I have been going to the Massachusetts Association of Science Teacher’s Conference every year.

Participant 3: It’s definitely more standardized and clear, so I did my professional goal around using Google forms and other ways to assess kids through technology. So I would say that I have made some growth in implementing those things in my classroom more than I did before. But I suppose the fact that I had to write a goal and chose to do that I would use next year and the following years because it works and it’s engaging.

Participant 9: Okay. So like when I’m looking at you know, those different areas in the new educator evaluation model, and I’m reflecting on myself and where my strengths are or where they are not, it’s much easier for me, I think to pick out different areas that I need to grow as a professional where as I felt like in the previous model maybe the way it was implemented was things were so general, it was you know, your principal might suggest to work on something, but teaching can be so overwhelming there’s so many components to it these days, that I feel like having the benchmarks and the standards of the new model are super helpful in focusing me for what I need to work on professionally.

Participant 14: And so I find it sometimes tedious to have to prove that I’m doing these nitpicky parts of my job that I’m doing. So I hate it for the tedious aspect of it but I like it when I come across something that I remember. Oh yeah, I remember doing this project. I loved this project, but I want to change it. And so, I love that aspect that it, kind of, reminds me of a variety of things that I’ve done and how I can improve them. So I love that part of having to do with the evidence collection through the new evaluation system. So that’s why I think there are a lot of good things. I’m learning something and then also forming new goals for the next year.
Improved Practice. The majority of participants indicated that the new educator evaluation model provided increased opportunities for improved practice when compared to the previous district model. Excerpts from participants included:

Participant 8: I think it helps you become more realistic with your goals. They are supposed to be achievable. Instead of doing the same thing over and over, it forces you to change and make improvements, realistic improvements to your practice. The rubric also would help you to find the areas were you need to improve, and it’s more specific than the old model.

Participant 9: So one of the ways that the new evaluation model has helped me grow professionally is one of my goals was to improve my math teaching like, my math repertoire for teaching math so over the last couple of years, I went to a few different math trainings and math workshops for teachers, and kind of did like my own unofficial research like looking to see what other people were doing in math. There’s a couple of different ways that I have improved my teaching practice through using some of the strategies that I learned from some of the workshops like, I’ve incorporated more games into math. I think the trick is that a lot of kids will practice their math facts better if they think it’s a game. So that’s been helpful, but also like I have incorporated math centers or math rotations, which is where you put kids into different groups and have different math activities that could be differentiated. I think its been interesting for me professionally as I’ve never been able to successfully implement math centers on a regular basis before. The kids are super engaged and they have been doing better math as the year goes on, according to the data, but I feel like professionally maybe I wouldn’t have taken the step into really incorporating math centers, math rotations into math class yet if it didn’t happen to be also on my educator plan, as one of my goals.

Participant 10: -- because there are so many more standards to comment on, that during that sit down conversation at the end, you can pinpoint areas where you may potentially be a little bit weaker in and use your strengths to improve things in that area, and its more reflective for us, now, too. It’s not just the evaluator. You can look at things and say, hmm, I really liked how Part A and Part B went, but Part C, I needed to do a little bit differently, or it didn’t work this year.

Participant 12: I think you just improve upon any area that you feel like you need to -- that maybe there was an area that I do need to improve upon and I didn’t notice, but maybe my evaluator noticed so I think any improvement -- I think that’s a good thing.

Participant 14: I think that the new evaluation system does allow for more teacher growth than the previous system because we are -- I mean, I hate to use the word ‘forced’ but we are forced to create two goals. So we are forced to face something and try and tackle it and I think that that really allows us to enhance our teaching practices because we’re forced to look at a student-learning goal and a professional practice goal. And inevitably,
they’re going to tie back to what we are doing, what we are teaching, how we are teaching. And I think that the new system does that well.

Two participants indicated that they preferred the previous evaluation model over the new model. Participant excerpts included:

Participant 12: I prefer the previous model. I felt that I got better feedback from my boss through that because he could focus on one, maximum two things he thought I could do to improve myself in the coming year. I felt that my principal was able to give me very specific feedback, just by the fact of the matter that we would have a conversation. We’d have a very relaxed conversation without there being so much in the way of -- maybe there is too much structure; maybe that’s what I’m trying to say.

Participant 16: Well I’d say that -- kind of harkening back to what I said earlier, there’s certainly more -- I guess, opportunities written into the system, but as to how that actually plays out in reality, I don’t think it’s – there’s much of a net gain. I think that the best part of the old system was talking with your evaluator and saying okay, like what can I do better.

Reflective Practice. The majority of participants indicated that the new teacher evaluation model provides opportunities to reflect on teaching practice. Participants indicated that the evaluation process provided opportunities for self-assessment. Excerpts from participants included:

Participant 1: Like you’re required to think about your strengths and weaknesses and then there’s narrative so you have to, you know, you have to formulate like pretty solid ideas and explain. And then like after my last summative -- well, actually, after the last summative and formative, so I read what the comments where and then that made me think about did I agree with them? Did I not? What was my -- how was I going to take that information and use it in the future?

Participant 8: Yes, I think it does, especially when starting the evaluation. It allows you to do a self-assessment and you have to think about where you are and where you want to be. Also when you’re collecting evidence throughout the year, it’s forcing you to reflect.

Participant 13: I do. I personally even though it can be time consuming I do appreciate the cycle that it creates where you have to look at the current needs of our class, the strengths of our prior classes and then build goals off of that. I mean it takes time to go through that information and to really think about and target what you want your goals to be but because it forces us to do that it’s only going to help us to improve. I mean even right now my goal this year was in math and I’m already thinking about what goals I
want to set for myself, what areas I feel I’m least or less confident in my teaching currently and thinking ahead already to what goals I want for my next cycle.

Two participants distinguished between formal reflection and on going self-reflective activities.

Examples from participants included:

Participant 2: So yes, I definitely think it creates opportunities for teachers to reflect on teaching practice, but only when -- you know, it’s probably twice a year. I do reflect all the time. There is always reflection but it’s not formal. So every good teacher, I think it’s -- it’s making it a formal process where you have to record and write down your thoughts and -- and things like that. So informally, I reflect on how things are going each day and I can make corrections for the next day. Each week I do all my lesson plans for the whole week and I reflect on what I need to do and where I’d like to be and then I you know, at the end of the week, did I get there or do I need to do something different? But the evaluation model is a formal opportunity, so in the fall, I did my goals for the cycle. And I actually this time enjoyed it more than I did the first few times because I was more familiar with the process. And I also understood the parameters so that it wasn’t as stressful as, you know, not understanding exactly how it was going to affect my -- my life.

Participant 3: Yeah, I -- think it potentially does, I think -- I’m hesitating because I think -- it feels a bit forced. Like I think there are other opportunities throughout the normal day and year that we reflect with our colleagues or like in the middle of school, we do teaming. So I mean, like literally like last night was doing this, going through the process of uploading my evidence and for me it’s -- it’s more of a hassle to do that than like, there were moments when I was like oh, like that was a cool lesson we did, but like it didn’t necessarily offer me reflection that I wouldn’t already be doing as a teacher. So I -- I maybe it’s intended to do that.

Participants also indicated that they incorporated reflective practice in the goal-setting process. Excerpts from participants included:

Participant 4: I think it does allow you to create goals that involve action steps and also a timeline to help you to achieve it. You begin by deciding what your goals are, so, for example, one of my goals this year was to create an outdoor classroom space. So you create the goal and then you have to decide by year one, what do you want to accomplish: by year two. So, you’re -- you know, its not just like a goal in the sky, it’s a goal of like, how are you going to do it and what are the steps you’re going to take and then what’s the time frame. So it gives you structure so you can accomplish it.

Participant 6: All right, so one way, is at the beginning of the process when you are setting your goals. I think because we have to create a student-centered goal and a professional practice goal. And I think both of these goal-setting processes have caused me, personally, to need to reflect on what I’ve done in the past and what my students
have been capable in the past in order to generate a goal. You know, you can’t just make a goal for no reason. It should be based on something that you would like to target for improvement.

Participant 7: Yes, in the beginning when you are first writing your goals you are asked to think about what goes well in your class and what -- or in your practice -- and what you want to work on. To do it officially, you’re supposed to write down kind of pros and cons list and then choose from that. And that’s kind of your evidence -- supply evidence -- for why you want to make something your goal.

Participant 13: I do believe that it allows teachers to reflect on teaching practice. And the way in which I think it allows us to reflect is by looking at the evidence that we have to gather. And so, I think looking at that evidence allows us to reflect upon -- you know, if I’m looking at the rubric for example that I’m putting in as a piece of evidence, I’m reflecting on how that project went. Innately for me, it’s not a matter of just, oh, this piece, putting it in, it’s remembering. Oh, this project worked really well this year because of this, or it didn’t work as well as I wanted it to this year because of this but now that I have it in front of me, I’m going to change how I’m doing it.

Five participants indicated that the new evaluation model was not necessarily beneficial to the professional reflection process. Participant excerpts included:

Participant 11: I think if someone wants to, then they are able to, but I don’t think necessarily the teacher evaluation system requires you to do that. I think it’s -- all I do is look at what’s required of me on the outline. Oh I need a piece of evidence for this. I need a piece of evidence this and this and that’s what I upload. I mean if I wanted to think about it -- which I do because that’s important to me -- but other than that, I don’t think the evaluation system necessarily makes me sit -- requires someone to do that.

Participant 12: Personally I just find it a burden because I naturally reflect on my work and I do it in a way that best gives results for me. I mean, I find the current system to be a -- basically a way to -- it’s basically busy work, right. To collect stuff together and put it in a -- computer program and I don’t see that I’m getting any benefit out of it.

Participant 16: I think that the opportunities for -- for reflection of what we do in the classroom are there in theory, but not necessarily in practice. And this isn’t to in any way indict like -- any of the evaluators that I’ve had, but I think this is more about a -- a flaw within the system that we have right now. I think that the new evaluation system is quite large, quite bulky; there’s a lot of moving parts. And given its place within a school system both locally and statewide that has a great deal of unfunded mandates, a great deal, I think of demands that exceed the capacity of the school. I think the system offers up what should be times for reflection, but tend to become just the appearance of reflection. So to give you an example of this, I feel like when setting my goals for both my student learning goals and my professional goals, I sit down and think okay, what can I do better, and then I, you know, I create them. I have a good discussion, and then they
really kind of fall away until, you know, there’s like a few kind of checkpoints over the course of the year. But they are kind of like after thoughts, in a sense. I definitely want to make sure my students are doing well, no question. But is that something where I’m you know, like constantly reflecting in a way, which I think, is really useful? Not so much, just because there’s a lot to do and very little time to do it, and very few resources afforded to it.

Participant 3: I think I do better reflecting through other means. This is not the thing that makes -- the evaluation tool is not the thing that like gets me to any ah-ha moments or reflection.

When participants completed the questionnaire and were asked whether the evaluation process provided opportunities for reflection, 79.5 % affirmed the new evaluation model’s design provides opportunities for professional reflection. This result mirrored the findings of the interview process.

Professional Growth. When participants were asked about the effectiveness of the new evaluation model’s ability to foster professional growth, 87.5 % (14 participants) of the interviewees indicated that the district’s evaluation model helped them grow professionally. Excerpts from participants included:

Participant 4: I think that it does foster professional growth, and I think that it does improve practice because you’re working towards achieving goals that you feel are valuable. So, it’s helped me, in that it gives me sort of the structure to achieve some of the things that I want to achieve, that if I didn’t have it, I wouldn’t necessarily be pushing myself to do. I think it gives me parameters to achieve certain things. You know, like, you have to do this by a certain time frame, and then you have to do that. I think it also helps you grow professionally, because when the time comes to upload your Teach Point information, you’re sort of, like, doing like a summary of everything you’ve done over two years.

Participant 5: Yeah, I mean I think, I know instead of being completely subjective about many things, I find a way to have some objective data you know and I also think just that it’s driven me towards professional development. A couple of years ago I did a goal where I wanted to foster more social and emotional learning in the classroom and it caused me to take courses outside of the district, you know in the summer or whatever to kind of further that, so I think that it kind of drives what my professional development is, based on what it is I’m working on in these two years, a two-year cycle.
Participant 6: Yeah. So, one of my core beliefs is that, you know, if every teacher focused on something that we’re collectively trying to improve on, then we can’t lose. That the -- it’s like that’s what we should be doing and I think that this educator model sort of funnels us to be thinking about moving forward together as opposed to everyone saying, well, I’m interested in dinosaurs, so I think I’m going to develop a curriculum around dinosaurs, but if that has -- if no other teacher is doing that, then only a small cohort of kids are going to have that experience and then as they move through, its just going to dissipate. It’s not going to make a difference in what our district is able to accomplish. In some ways the evaluation model is an accountability system, right? So like you have to -- you know, you kind of have to continue to grow and -- interestingly, going through this second cycle -- so we’ve gone through one full cycle and now I’m on my second cycle -- I really worked hard at finding new things to upload, even though I’m doing some of the same things I did in the first cycle.

Participant 13: Well as I said, it just helps me to define some goals and the SMART goal process is important. It’s a pain in the neck, but it helps me define specific areas that I want to focus on and what I am going to do about it. It’s not just setting the goal but what are those action steps and following through on that and seeing where it falls. Just the fact that we have to outline them and take a look at it at the end, did we meet the goal and reflect on it? That to me is the most important piece of this.

Participant 14: So this new model forces us to pick two SMART goals, right? Professional practice goal and a student-learning goal. And I think this really forces us to sit down and consider what we are doing as a teacher and how we can improve our own skills as a teacher but then also how our students can improve as well. And that’s a big difference from our previous evaluation system. Sharing my goals with my evaluator makes me more accountable to reach those goals and that I think is a major difference. So I have more accountability on myself as to accomplishing these goals. And the way in which I can show that I’ve reached those goals is by gathering the pieces of evidence in a variety of different strands that we have to complete.

Two participants indicated the benefit of the new evaluation model helping them grow professionally as a result of encouraging them to take risks.

Participant 8: It helps me take risks. I think because if I were too comfortable, I may not take that risk. I think that when you’re writing your self-reflection, you really have to think about improvements and how can I, and that involves taking risks. I might not do that if it weren’t there. Who knows?

Participant 10: I like it, because I feel it gives you the opportunity to showcase what you can do, but also take a risk -- and grow in areas that you’re not as confident with. You know for me, technology is one of these areas, and I feel like I’ve been -- I’m able to start learning more with technology through the teacher evaluation process.
During the interview process participants were asked to share their respective professional development endeavors during the past three years. Participants had difficulty separating self-initiated professional development activities to specific influences, but placed great value on the need to continually access professional development. Professional development activities included course work, conferences and seminars related to interests and certification requirements, independent self-initiated professional development, district and school driven professional development, and activities that were linked to the actualization of group and individual goals tied to the district’s evaluation model. Examples of excerpts from participants included:

Participant 2: I’ve taken part in the district professional development and I also have -- a background in special education. So I’ve taken a couple of workshops on executive functioning and helping kids within the classroom. I also went to a workshop through the DESE on project-based learning. I have also done independent professional development. Last summer I spent a lot of the summer going through an MIT course that’s one of their free courses, online, going through a biology textbook to update my understanding of biology. I’ve been working on updating the curriculum -- for middle school science because we have new standards in this state and so I’ve been -- that’s taken a lot of my professional development time.

Participant 3: I would say they’re a mixture of -- so I teach social studies. They’re a mixture of like social studies related things. For example, I just took one on teaching current events in the classroom; teaching about politics in the Middle East, and then various ones on special education and teaching difficult students and I just did one on the rationale behind like what grades mean to kids and how they can best affect student learning. A couple of them have been on my own and most of them are provided by the district that we go to on our early release days.

Participant 6: So, I’m currently enrolled at Framingham State University in a program for -- to earn a certificate in Technology Integration. But, I’ve also attended conferences, like MassCue. I’ve done summer workshops and conferences that are less formal than the Framingham State program. I’ve attended Google workshops and seminars and Google palooza and things like that.

Participant 7: I just completed a Master’s program in curriculum and instruction. This year in the fall I completed the SEI endorsement program. I’ve attended a technology camp in the summer and participate on Thursday mornings in a technology program here. I’ve done quite a few webcasts at home on the environment in the classroom and it’s part
of my goals on mindfulness in the classroom and responsive classroom giving a choice in the classroom on differentiation.

Participant 8: One of my goals that I have in my evaluation is social and emotional learning, so I have been doing some professional development with that in the program that I use. The actual program that we use is called Second Step, so I’ve done some professional development on that specific program.

Participant 9: Sure, major ones that I’ve been pursuing, I’ve done a lot of training with the language academy. I also have my reading specialist certification, and so it kind of goes along with that, so I’ve been getting trained in some of their programs and their methodology and then I was also pursuing a lot of math professional development this year, last year, and even the year before. The math professional development has a connection to my evaluation goals and the reading training is just part of my recertification and just continuing to learn and grow as an educator.

Participant 10: So within the district, things are offered here, but we can come up with some of the topics that we want to do, so as a grade level, we generally try and find something related to our teacher evaluations to help continue growth in that area. For example, we all started using Seesaw as an online portfolio for first graders within the building. So we all used it in different ways -- like a drawing app – label a picture – take a picture of a U.S. symbol and then read something they already wrote about why it’s their favorite U. S. symbol. So we’re just showing each other different ways you can use it to try to incorporate in your own classroom to keep your professional development going and trying new things.

During the interview process, participants were asked if the new evaluation model provided opportunities for teachers to improve their practice. The majority of participants indicated that the evaluation process provided opportunities to improve teaching practice.

Participant excerpts included:

Participant 1: Well, I think like, I was just saying. Take feedback and then you kind of put it in the back of your head for the next year or years, that’s how I -- what I did. I think also when you write the goal, that’s SMART goals, you think about what could I work on or what am I interested in that could be made into a SMART goal. So, for example I like to make videos and I always want to work on reviewing tests and quizzes with my students. So I connected those two things into one of my SMART goals to like make review videos for different units.

Participant 2: I think it does. I think that it is a helpful model because it makes me formalize my goals. I might always have goals and I always, I keep a list, especially now towards the end of the year. I keep paper because I’m old fashioned. I keep a paper with a list of ideas for next year, goals for next year, things that I want to change. But having to
choose two different goals you know, one professional and one for the student goal, like I said formal, and I’m held to that more. Having to choose two goals makes it realistic and doable.

Participant 5: Yeah, I mean I think that if you were to meet with your evaluator and find an area in which you were weaker, you know you would definitely be sort of driven to focus on that area and to improve upon it. So, I think it would be, and also just sort of throughout the years you’re uploading evidence and if you’re looking at one area and like wow, I don’t have so much there to upload. It would sort of cause you to think about okay, what kind of things should I be doing.

Participant 6: Well, I guess, starting at goal setting. You know, we do have to come up with some sort of way to quantify that we have made some improvements with students - you know, reflecting on student data. And one thing that I have found over the years, even before this educator evaluation model, you know as a teaching staff, whenever we kind of target something that we want to get better at, we almost always see student improvement in it. It’s amazing how that happens. You know, you focus -- we have so many things pulling our attention and pulling our priorities, is that when we have an opportunity to focus on something? I find that there are usually gains that happen.

Participant 14: I do believe that it allows teachers to reflect on teaching practice. And the way in which I think it allows us to reflect is by looking at the evidence that we have gathered. And so I think looking at that evidence allows us to reflect upon -- you know -- if I’m looking at the rubric for example I’m putting in a piece of evidence, I’m reflecting on how that project went. Innately for me, it’s not a matter of just, oh this piece, putting it in, it’s remembering, oh this project worked really well this year, because of this but know that I have it in front of me, I’m going to change how I’m doing it.

Five participants indicated that the new evaluation model did not directly provide opportunities for improved practice. Excerpts from participants included:

Participant 3: Like those smart goals are supposed to be the things that you identify that you want to work on either with your students or professionally. So yeah, like I -- mine that I did for this year was about using certain technology things like Google forms or stuff more in my classroom and different kinds of assessment. Again, I don’t know if we needed this. I think I would have done it anyways because there are things you learn in workshops or professional development that you’re like oh, that’s really neat, I want to try that. So I think I would have done that anyways but I guess I would think that it was intended to do that, but it’s more just like documenting something you would already be doing.

Participant 11: No. I just don’t think I’ve used the evaluation model to improve my -- I mean I’m keeping track of it to make sure yes I’ve touched upon differentiating my
assessments and parent communication and things like that, but don’t think I’ve done anything because of it. I just keep track of it.

Participant 12: Personally, I just find it a burden because I naturally reflect on my work and I do it in a way that gives best results for me. I mean, I find the current system to be -- basically a way to -- it’s basically busy work right. To collect stuff together and put it in -- a computer program and I don’t see that I’m getting any benefit out of it.

Participant 15: I don’t know. For me, when I’m looking at doing something different or trying to improve something, I’m usually doing that on my own. I spend a lot of time doing that because I’m creating courses. If I’m not reflective and I’m not trying to always improve on what I’m doing, then I’m not going to be successful in building a program, but I do that on my own.

It’s important to note that the majority of participants completing the closed ended survey also felt that the new evaluation model provided opportunities for teachers to improve their practice.

Conclusion

The interview process created an opportunity for participants to discuss individual perceptions of the district’s current and previous evaluation models. Teachers were comfortable sharing their perspectives of the evaluation process with the interviewer. The use of a close-ended survey allowed the researcher to tap into a larger research base and provided an opportunity to triangulate data that was gleaned from the individual interview process.

The analysis of data using In Vivo and descriptive coding resulted in the formation of five themes that provided an effective framework to present the findings of the research. Rich, authentic descriptions from the participants were captured throughout the interview process and the utilization of a descriptive phenomenological approach to the research study provided bias free perceptions in regard to the effectiveness of the district’s new evaluation model in facilitating teacher growth. Triangulation of interview data with data obtained from the close-ended survey provided a larger sample to compare and verify the findings of the individual
interviews. Using individual interviews with a close-ended survey to compare data, added credibility and validity to the research study.

Findings from the research process provided data that could be directly applied to the research questions used in this study. Specific to the new evaluation model providing opportunities for professional growth, the majority of participants indicated that the new district evaluation model encouraged opportunities to grow professionally through the model’s structure and design. Both the interview process and the closed-ended survey indicated that the majority of participants utilized SMART goals, evidence collection and implementation of the educator plan to reflect, and implement changes to their respective teaching practices. In regard to the second research question pertaining to how the evaluation process affects opportunities for professional growth, the findings indicated that participants engaged in a variety of professional development activities that were tailored toward professional growth with a focus on changing teaching practices within their respective classrooms. Chapter 5 will explore the findings and their application to the research questions as well as current literature in greater detail.
Chapter 5

Findings and Discussion

During the past four years, educator evaluation has taken center stage due in part to the requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) waiver and the recently approved Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). NCLB waivers contain a provision that requires the inclusion of standards-based teacher evaluation frameworks that are developed at the state level (Chubb, Clark, 2013). As a result of the mandated overhaul of educator evaluation throughout our nation, it has become a focus of intense dialogue and debate. Increased interest in educator evaluation is also a result of the awareness that the most important factor in enhancing student achievement is teacher effectiveness (Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Barber & Moursheed, 2007; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Leithwood, Lewis & Wahlstrom, 2004). Increased attention to educator evaluation has also been elevated as a result of research findings that have been critical of the effectiveness of educator evaluation throughout the country (The New Teacher Project, 2009; Donaldson, 2009; The National Council on Teacher Quality, 2010). These studies have indicated that current teacher evaluation models “do not provide adequate feedback for improvement, lack connection to student learning and growth, and do not differentiate levels of teacher effectiveness” (Massachusetts Task Force on the Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators, 2013, p. 9).

Research studies of educator evaluation models throughout the nation have indicated that they are relatively ineffective in fostering opportunities for teacher improvement and growth. Recent changes in evaluation models at state levels have been designed to transform teacher evaluation practices focusing on strategies that are linked to enhanced teacher effectiveness. Teacher perspectives regarding the new evaluation models’ effectiveness in facilitating teacher
growth will be paramount in assessing whether the new evaluation protocols are living up to their intended outcomes.

The research study utilized a qualitative research methodology that incorporated phenomenology as a guiding methodological framework. After considering a variety of theoretical frameworks, adult learning theory was selected to guide the research study. When considering adult learning theories, the researcher was drawn to Kegan’s (1982, 1994) Constructive-Developmental Theory.

Kegan’s (1982, 1994) Constructive-Developmental Theory looks at adult development by considering an individual’s attitudes, behaviors and expectations which are utilized to interpret how people learn, and in turn, support their respective learning experiences by acknowledging different ‘ways of knowing’ (Drago-Severson, 2009). Kegan (1982, 1994) identified four ‘ways of knowing’ that can be applied to adult learning: “instrumental (rule bound self), socializing (other-focused self), self-authoring (reflective self), and self-transforming (interconnecting self)” (p. 39). When applied directly to the field of education, educators undergo developmental learning that causes disruption in the way they view the world and how they interpret social constructs. As educators undergo developmental growth they continue to develop within the identified ‘ways of knowing’, transition between the different stages and move along the continuum of identified stages.

A number of salient themes emerged from the literature specific to the use of standards-based evaluation systems as a means of fostering teacher professional growth. Standards-based supervision models employ a design that focuses on the formative process of evaluation. Danielson and McGreal (2000) strongly supported the belief that the development of effective, evaluation protocols is linked to two essential questions: (a) how is good teaching identified?
and, (b) what processes and procedures need to be put in place to align with the vision of the organization?

Standards-based teacher evaluation models that emphasize professional development as a major focus of the evaluation process have the ability to improve instructional quality and improve school effectiveness through the actualization of school improvement initiatives (Headden and Silva, 2011). The literature supports the belief that standards-based teacher supervision models, if implemented correctly, can enhance teacher performance (DeMatthews, 2015). Additional research in this area resulted in the identification of a number of specific indicators found within effective standards-based evaluation models. School districts that have a clear, well-defined purpose of evaluation with a universal understanding of its purpose, as well as aligning procedures and processes to the key purpose, have been successful in creating environments that facilitate teacher growth (DeMatthews, 2015).

School systems that have allocated sufficient resources inclusive of time and money, and have provided sufficient training to district and school evaluators, have been effective in actualizing a standards-based evaluation model that truly facilitates professional growth (Shakman, Riordan, Sanchez, Cook, Fournier, and Brett, 2012). Additional attributes of these systems “included: (a) effective feedback provided to teachers, (b) multiple sources of data, (c) clear, relevant and meaningful performance criteria, (d) teachers actively involved in peer assistance and goal setting, (e) mutual level of trust between teacher and evaluator, (f) teacher evaluation and staff development which are systemically linked” (Machell, 1995, p. 33).

Effective standards-based evaluation systems are perceived to be fair and unbiased, meet the professional needs of all staff, are transparent in nature, and have realistic and attainable expectations for teachers and evaluators (DeMatthews, 2015). Effective teacher evaluation
systems have well-defined teaching standards and interconnect with the entire spectrum of teacher roles and responsibilities. District evaluation models, which are deemed effective, are evaluated on an ongoing basis, collect empirical data specific to teacher and evaluator satisfaction and adhere to teacher performance norms as well as overall systemic performance targets (Glatthorn, 1997).

School districts utilizing standards-based evaluation models targeted at enhanced educator professional growth employ a well thought out process in order to be successful at implementing change. Change of this nature is transformational and requires a cultural paradigm shift within an organization (Papay, 2012). Valentine (1992) discussed the importance of effective teacher evaluation processes focusing on staff development as opposed to staff evaluation. Current standards-based evaluation models place an emphasis on pre-conferences and post-conferences as part of the evaluation process. In order to maximize the effectiveness of teacher-evaluator conferences a culture of trust must be created and sustained. Before teachers can engage in performance-based reflection, a well-developed rubric outlining effective standards of teaching practice need to be incorporated into the evaluation process (DeMatthews, 2015). An environment of trust, understanding and awareness acts as a precursor to professional growth (Papay, 2012).

The analysis of case studies within the literature review clearly indicated that standards-based evaluation models were supported by and large by teachers, and teachers felt confident that the evaluative process helped identify areas for professional growth. In all district adoptions there was a significant shift in system culture that required a well thought out implementation plan. Training for both administrators and teachers played a key role in the successful implementation of a standards-based approach to teacher evaluation (Papay, 2015).
The need for staff involvement from the onset of the implementation process was evident throughout the case studies that were examined within the literature review. Effective evaluation frameworks included well-planned conferencing inclusive of a shared purpose of intent, which helped to facilitate the development of a culture within a district that is both reflective and committed to self-improvement (Kimball and Melanoski, 2009). Providing sufficient time for both evaluators and evaluatees to benefit from the evaluation process was identified as a common challenge as systems moved toward a more collaborative and formative approach to teacher evaluation (Peterson and Peterson, 2006).

The purpose of the research study was to gain an understanding of teacher perceptions within a Suburban School District regarding the effectiveness of the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Model in facilitating teacher growth. The research questions were designed within a phenomenological framework, which utilized two broad open-ended research questions (Moustakas, 1994). The two questions focused on the research participants’ experience of a particular “phenomenon and their contexts or situations that influenced or affected their experiences of the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p. 81). The common themes gleaned from the literature review along with Kegan’s Constructive-Developmental Theory and Moustakas’s (1994) design resulted in the formation of two research questions.

1. How does a teacher’s perception of the evaluation process affect his or her own professional growth?
2. In what ways can the teacher evaluation process affect a teacher’s professional growth?

The researcher utilized a descriptive phenomenological methodology in the design of the research study. Teachers within the identified suburban district with five or more years of
teaching experience were invited to take part in the research study. The research study employed a closed-ended questionnaire, which was administered to all teachers within the district that had five or more years of teaching experience. The closed-ended questionnaire was developed as a means of collecting qualitative data from a larger sample size that provided pertinent information to the study. Teachers who completed the questionnaire were asked to volunteer to take part in individual semi-structured interviews. Four participants from each school were interviewed resulting in 16 individual interviews that were transcribed and analyzed.

Semi-structured interviews were analyzed through the utilization of Miles, Huberman and Saldana’s (2014) approach to coding data. Coding of the transcribed interviews was performed using In Vivo and Descriptive coding. The researcher chose to utilize both manual coding and MAXQDA to analyze the data from the 16 interviews.

Five major themes resulted from the coding process: Trust, Respect, Integrity and Professionalism; Time Restraints; Comparison of the Effectiveness of the New Evaluation Model Compared to the Previous District Model; Reflective Practice, and Professional Growth. The first theme, Trust, Respect, Integrity and Professionalism was viewed as an essential component of evaluation processes that are designed to foster teacher professional growth. All participants deemed the four components as inseparable and felt that they were essential in creating an environment throughout the evaluation process that focused on dialogue and actions that were designed to encourage professional growth.

The second theme; Time Restraints was viewed by participants as a major challenge in the implementation of the new evaluation model. Evidence collection and time to reflect on teaching practice as well as time required implementing SMART goals were underlying themes
throughout the interview process. Participants also cited overall workload as a significant challenge in finding the necessary time to complete the various stages of the evaluation process.

The third theme; Comparison of the New Evaluation Model compared to the Previous District Model indicated that the majority of the participants preferred the new evaluation model and found that the evaluation model provided more opportunities to reflect and grow professionally than the previous model that was used in the district. Interviewee comments focused on three common themes - professional reflection, professional growth and improvement of practice. The majority of participants indicated that the new evaluation model provided more extensive opportunities to reflect than the previous district model. Participants also supported the new evaluation model’s potential for helping teachers grow professionally. The majority of participants indicated that the new educator evaluation model provided increased opportunities for improved practice when compared to the previous district model.

The fourth theme; Reflective Practice was considered an essential component of an effective evaluation model. The majority of participants indicated that the new teacher evaluation model provided opportunities to reflect on all aspects of their teaching practices.

The fifth theme; Professional Growth was directly aligned to the research questions. The majority of the participants indicated that the district’s evaluation model helped them grow professionally. Participants had difficulty separating self-initiated professional development activities to specific influences, but placed great value on the need to continually access professional development. The majority of participants also indicated that the new evaluation process provided opportunities to improve teaching practice.

The five themes that were derived as a result of the coding process are supported by the major themes that were gleaned from the research literature. The next section utilized the major
themes that were developed from the coding process of the transcribed interviews as an organizational tool for the presentation of findings.

**Presentation of Findings**

The results from the research study supported the themes that were evident in the existing literature. Standards-based supervision models that place an emphasis on professional development as a major focus of the evaluation process have the ability to improve instructional quality and improve school effectiveness through the actualization of school and teacher based improvement initiatives (Headden and Silva, 2011). Existing literature supports the belief that standards-based teacher evaluation models, if implemented correctly, can enhance teacher performance (DeMatthews, 2015). Case studies presented within the literature review clearly indicated that standards-based evaluation models are supported by and large by teachers, and teachers felt confident that the evaluative process helped identify areas for professional growth. In district adoptions that were successful, there was a significant shift in system culture that required a well thought out implementation plan. Training for both administrators and teachers played a key role in the successful implementation of a standards-based approach to teacher evaluation (Papay, 2015). The findings section of the research study connected existing literature to the analysis of the results of the study. This section was organized by utilizing the major themes that were developed from the coding process of the transcribed interviews.

**Trust, Respect, Integrity and Professionalism.** Trust, Respect, Integrity and Professionalism by all participants was considered an essential component of effective evaluation models that are designed to foster professional growth. All participants viewed the four components as inseparable and felt that they were essential in creating an environment throughout the evaluation process that focused on dialogue and actions that were designed to
encourage professional growth. Participants specifically highlighted the importance of mutual trust and respect between the evaluator and evaluatee and felt that these two components were necessary for the evaluative process to be effective in encouraging teachers to become better at their respective crafts. Participants also emphasized the importance of receiving feedback from someone they trust. A number of participants also addressed the importance of Integrity and Professionalism within the evaluative process. The results of the interview process were supported by the findings of the close-ended questionnaire with 84.1% of the participants indicating that their relationship with their evaluator was built on trust and respect.

The results from the study were supported by existing literature specific to standards-based evaluation models. Machell (1995) emphasized the importance of developing a mutual level of trust between evaluator and teacher as an essential component of an effective standards-based evaluation model. Valentine (1992) discussed the importance of developing a culture of trust in order to maximize the effectiveness of teacher evaluation conferences.

DeMatthews (2015) discussed the importance of standards-based evaluation systems being perceived as fair and unbiased, meeting the needs of all staff, and developing realistic expectations for teachers and evaluators. DeMatthews also discussed the importance of developing a culture of trust in order to maximize the effect of teacher-evaluator conferences. Glatthorn (1997) discussed the negative impact of standards-based evaluation models that are implemented within a hostile environment having a counterbalancing effect on their effectiveness in fostering professional growth. Teacher specific professional growth is dependent on multiple systemic variables and requires a supportive environment in order to be effective (Papay, 2012). Cooperative professional development, in order to be successful, requires a supportive school culture, which promotes bottom up involvement as well as administrative
support incorporating some form of recognition for staff participants (DeMatthews, 2015). An environment of trust, understanding and awareness acts as a precursor to professional growth (Papay, 2012).

The importance that Trust, Respect, Integrity and Professionalism plays in the evaluation process was evident throughout the interviews. Participants were very clear in indicating that deterioration in any of these areas would derail the effectiveness of the evaluation process.

**Time Restraints.** A second common theme shared by participants was the amount of time that the various components of the evaluation model required throughout the evaluation process. Evidence collection, time to reflect on teaching practice as well as time required implementing SMART goals were underlying themes throughout the interview process. Participants also cited overall workload as a significant challenge in finding the necessary time to complete the various stages of the evaluation process. Participants indicated that they were supportive of the new evaluation process, but struggled finding the necessary time to complete the various stages of the evaluation process. Participants felt that the time commitment required for the new evaluation model was somewhat intrusive and many participants echoed the difficulty of balancing the every day expectations of their respective workloads citing that most of the work associated with the evaluation model was completed after the normal work day. Participants also felt that time limitations experienced by their evaluators was also a cause for concern and felt that time restrictions could impact the overall effectiveness of the evaluation process.

Existing literature supported the findings of the interview process specific to time restraints. Shakman, Riordan, Sanchez, Cook, Fornier and Brett (2012) discussed the importance of allocating sufficient resources inclusive of time and money as a necessary component in the
successful implementation of effective standards-based evaluation models. DeMatthews (2015) discussed the need to set realistic expectations for teachers and evaluators in all aspects of the evaluation process.

Heneman and Milanowski’s (2003) research study of the implementation of a standards-based evaluation model in the Cincinnati Public School District identified a number of challenges during the first two years of implementation. Concerns were expressed by teachers specific to increased workload as a result of time spent on portfolio creation. Evaluators faced an increased workload as a result of the new standards-based model, which resulted in many administrators unable to complete scheduled evaluations within the specified time frame. Teachers also expressed concerns about the lack of feedback from their assigned evaluator.

SRI International (2014) conducted a study of the Massachusetts educator evaluation model during the 2013-2014 school year. The research study conducted interviews using focus groups in twelve Massachusetts case study school districts, administered a statewide survey to school staff and analyzed 110 evaluation files from three districts. The majority of educators who took part in this study indicated that the new educator evaluation model placed a significant increase in workload and time for both teachers and evaluators.

Providing sufficient time for both teachers and evaluators to benefit from the evaluation process appears to be a common challenge as school districts implement a more collaborative and formative approach to teacher evaluation.

**Comparison of the Effectiveness of the New Evaluation Model Compared to the Previous District Model.** Findings from the interviews indicated that the majority of participants felt that the new educator evaluation model provided more opportunities to reflect and grow professionally than the previous model that was used in the district. The previous
model was less structured and focused primarily on observations and evaluator perceptions of a teacher’s overall performance. The previous evaluation model placed an emphasis on a summative approach to evaluation and was structured to identify base-line competencies without any consideration given to a formative evaluation process. Interviewee comments focused on three common themes, professional reflection, professional growth and improvement of practice.

The majority of participants indicated that the new evaluation model provided more extensive opportunities to reflect than the previous district model. Participants felt that the new model was more targeted and structured which provided greater opportunities for formalized reflection. Participants generally liked the increased structure over the previous evaluation model, citing that the new evaluation model provided greater opportunities to reflect on all aspects of the teaching process. Participants varied in their preferences as to what stages of the evaluation model provided greater opportunity for professional reflection. The majority of participants favored the SMART goal setting process and reflection on the targeted elements within the rubric as the major catalysts for reflective practice.

Participants’ overwhelmingly supported the new evaluation model’s potential for helping teachers grow professionally Participants acknowledged that the increased structure of the new evaluation model provided greater opportunities to identify areas of potential growth. The structure of the new evaluation model also provided a more in depth analysis of their respective teaching practices which resulted in the development of goals and initiatives that were more targeted at improved opportunities for student learning.

The majority of participants indicated that the new educator evaluation model provided increased opportunities for improved practice when compared to the previous district model. Participants acknowledged the structure of the new evaluation model as the primary impetus for
creating opportunities for improved practice. The majority of the participants favored the SMART goal process as a means of developing strategies that were tailored toward enhanced instructional practices. Participants also spoke favorably of the new evaluation model’s focus on four broad based standards, which incorporate the entire spectrum of teacher proficiencies and responsibilities.

Research specific to comparing standard-based evaluation models to previous models that focused on summative evaluation practices is somewhat limited. The majority of evaluation models prior to the requirement of NCLB waivers did not place an emphasis on formative approaches to teacher evaluation and did not emphasize professional development as a major focus of the evaluation process (Headden and Silva, 2011). Standards-based evaluation models that “include: (a) effective feedback provided to teachers, (b) multiple sources of data, (c) clear, relevant and meaningful performance criteria, (d) teachers actively involved in peer assistance and goal setting, (e) mutual level of trust between teacher and evaluator, (f) teacher evaluation and staff development which are systemically linked” (Machell, 1995, p. 3) and focus on formative approaches to evaluation are more successful at promoting teacher professional growth. Effective teacher evaluation models have well-defined teaching standards and interconnect the entire spectrum of teacher roles and responsibilities (DeMatthews, 2015). The structure and processes of the evaluation models described above mirror the new evaluation model that was implemented within the school district being researched.

Additional literature that supports the effectiveness of standards-based evaluation models that emphasize professional growth of teachers include a case study by Kimball, White, Milanowski, and Borman (2004) which focused on case studies that included; the Annoka-Hennepin Public School District in Minnesota, the Washoe County Public School District in
Nevada, and the Newport News Public School District in Virginia. All three districts reported that the new standards-based evaluation model had a positive impact on professional growth as a result of clear standards, input from both teachers and evaluators specific to the evaluation process, a commitment to self-directed growth, and a culture committed to continual improvement.

SRI International (2014) conducted a study of the Massachusetts educator evaluation model during the 2013-2014 school year. The majority of educators that took part in the survey indicated that the new evaluation model had significant advantages over the previous models that were used in their respective districts. Educators reported that, “the new evaluation system has more potential value as a tool to improve teaching than previous evaluation systems” (p. 2). These results mirror the findings of the research study.

The results of the research study specific to the comparison of the previous district model to the new district model are clearly supported by the literature, which indicated that standards-based evaluation models if implemented correctly, have a greater impact on facilitating teacher professional growth than previous evaluation models that often lacked clarity and purpose, and focused on summative approaches to teacher evaluation.

**Reflective Practice.** The majority of participants indicated that the new teacher evaluation model provided opportunities to reflect on teaching practice. When participants completed the closed ended questionnaire and were asked whether the evaluation process provided opportunities for reflection, 79.5 % affirmed the new evaluation model’s design provided opportunities for professional reflection. This result mirrored the findings of the interview process.
Participants indicated that the evaluation process by its design provided opportunities for teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses in all aspects of their teaching practices. As part of the structure of the evaluation process, teachers are required to identify areas that they would like to further explore and develop professional development plans that identify a process for actualizing areas that were identified. The evaluation process also requires teachers to develop both student learning and professional practice goals, which are collaboratively shared with their evaluator. A number of participants also distinguished between formal reflection and ongoing self-reflective activities, which they considered to be essential components of effective teacher growth practices.

It is important to note that a few participants indicated that the district’s new evaluation process had minimal impact on their reflective practices as a result of what was referred to as an inherent desire to employ reflective practices as part of how they approach their respective teaching processes. The majority of participants, however, favored the structure and timelines provided by the evaluation process, indicating that these two factors significantly contributed to the attainment and actualization of their goals.

Current literature specific to reflective practice is somewhat limited and assumed to be a component of the professional growth process. SRI International’s (2014) survey on the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Model indicated that 77% of the teachers surveyed felt that the new teacher evaluation system provided opportunities to reflect on teaching practice. Hill’s (2017) study on school culture, teacher voices, and meaningful feedback examined three schools in three different districts in New Hampshire. The three districts that were part of the research study utilized an evaluation process that placed an emphasis on continuous improvement. Teachers were supported in the development and actualization of goals based on the evaluation
process. Teacher reflection was embedded in the evaluation model in all three schools. The evaluation process was viewed positively in two of the schools and within these schools teachers generally felt that the evaluation process was effective and meaningful.

Tuyten and Devos’s (2014) research study focused on a standards-based evaluation model’s ability to contribute to teachers’ professional development. One of the conclusions of the study indicated that professional reflection linked to professional learning activities is influenced by how teachers perceive feedback provided by their evaluator. A strong collegial and collaborative school environment lends itself to teachers using evaluation feedback to reflect, develop and seek professional development activities that are linked to improved teaching practices.

Machell (1995) discussed the importance of reflection and goal setting within the evaluation process. Valentine (1992) discussed the importance of utilizing effective evaluation processes that focus on staff development rather than staff evaluation. Staff development involves teacher’s employing reflective practice as they identify areas for potential growth.

The literature clearly supports the importance of professional reflection as a necessary precursor to professional growth. Although current literature on standards-based evaluation models is limited in regard to teacher perceptions of the implementation process, examples cited within the research literature have clearly indicated that standards-based evaluation models if implemented correctly provide opportunities for teachers to employ reflective practices within the evaluation process.

**Professional Growth.** The majority of participants that were interviewed (87.5%) indicated that the new district evaluation model helped them grow professionally. Results from the closed-ended questionnaire specific to participants’ perceptions as to whether the new
evaluation model was tailored to encourage and enhance opportunities for professional growth resulted in the majority of participants indicating that this was in fact the primary purpose of the new evaluation model. Participants indicated that the structure provided within the new evaluation model was helpful in creating opportunities for reflective practice and in turn identifying areas for professional growth. Participants utilized various components of the evaluation process to identify areas of growth. Specific processes within the evaluation model that played a significant role in improving teaching practice included, SMART goal development and actualization, evidence review and collection, professional development linked to the evaluation process, and the utilization of the standards-based rubric to determine areas of potential growth. These processes were verified as having a significant influence on improving teaching practice in the findings of the close-ended survey as well as the individual interviews.

A number of participants also indicated that the new evaluation model helped them grow professionally as a result of encouraging them to take risks. Participants felt that the design of the new evaluation model required self-reflection tailored at improving teaching practice, which resulted in greater risk taking. Participants also indicated that the evaluation process requires teachers to identify specific areas that they are not as confident in, which results in greater risk taking that may not have occurred without being embedded within the evaluation process.

During the interview process participants were asked to share their respective professional development endeavors during the past three years. Participants had difficulty separating self-initiated professional development activities to specific influences, but placed great value on the need to continually access professional development. Professional development activities included course work, conferences and seminars related to interests and certification requirements, independent self initiated professional development, district and
school driven professional development, and activities that were linked to the actualization of group and individual goals tied to the district’s evaluation model.

As part of the interview process, participants were asked if the new evaluation model provided opportunities for teachers to improve their practice. The majority of participants indicated that the evaluation process provided opportunities to improve teaching practice. Participants emphasized the development and actualization of SMART goals and the structure of the evaluation process that is tailored toward continual improvement as major drivers that result in changes to their respective teaching practices. The results of the close-ended questionnaire mirrored the results of the interview process with the majority of participants indicating that the new evaluation model created opportunities for improvement of practice.

It is important to note that five participants during the interview process indicated that the new educator evaluation model did not directly provide opportunities for improved practice. These participants cited that the process of reflection and self improvement related to improved teaching practice was something that was embedded in their respective teaching practices and indicated that they would have continued to identify areas related to improving practice without the use of the new teacher evaluation model.

During the interview process participants discussed feedback provided by their respective evaluators specific to discussions linked to areas of professional growth and improved teaching practice. The majority of teachers indicated that discussions with their evaluator regarding SMART goal development, informal and formal classroom observations and post-conferences for the most part resulted in collaborative discussions that were focused on potential professional growth opportunities tailored toward improved practice. Responses from the close-ended questionnaire specific to evaluator feedback from classroom observations and post conferences
supporting teacher professional growth indicated that the majority of participants engaged in conversations with their evaluator were helpful in identifying potential areas for professional growth. The majority of participants that were surveyed also indicated that their evaluator created opportunities for collaborative discussions that were linked to teaching practice and student learning. It’s important to note that the closed-ended questionnaire asked participants whether the evaluator had recommended professional development to support their professional growth. The majority of participants indicated that they had not received specific recommendations from their evaluator specific to professional development tailored toward professional growth.

The literature supports the findings of the research specific to the potential of standards-based evaluation models providing teachers with opportunities for professional growth. Standards-based teacher supervision models that emphasize professional development as a major focus of the evaluation process have the ability to improve instructional quality as well as overall school effectiveness. (Headden and Silva, 2011). The literature supports the belief that standards-based teacher supervision models, if implemented correctly, can enhance teacher performance (DeMatthews, 2015). School districts that have a clear, well-defined purpose of evaluation with a universal understanding of its purpose, as well as aligning procedures and processes to the key purpose, have been successful in creating environments that facilitate teacher growth (Shakman, Riordan, Sanchez, Cook, Fournier, and Brett, 2012). Effective teacher evaluation systems have well-defined teaching standards and interconnect with the entire spectrum of teacher roles and responsibilities.

Valentine (1992) discussed the importance of effective teacher evaluation processes focusing on staff development as opposed to staff evaluation. Effective standards-based
evaluation models place an emphasis on pre-conferences and post-conferences as part of the evaluation process. In order to maximize the effectiveness of the teacher-evaluator relationship a culture of trust must be created and sustained. Before teachers can engage in performance-based reflection and identify specific areas of potential growth, a well-developed rubric outlining effective standards of teaching practice needs to be incorporated into the evaluation process (DeMatthews, 2015).

A number of research studies have been conducted specific to the use of standards-based evaluation models that focus on teacher professional growth. Kimball, White, Milanowski, and Borman (2004) conducted a research study that reported on a number of case studies of school districts that adopted Danielson’s (1996) standards-based evaluation model titled, “Enhancing Professional Practice: A Teaching Framework.” All districts reported that the new evaluation model had a positive impact on teacher professional growth as a result of clear standards, input from both teachers and evaluators specific to the evaluation process, a commitment to self-directed growth, and a culture committed to continual improvement.

Heneman and Milanowski (2003) used a mixed methodology approach to conduct a study that evaluated the first two years of implementation of a district wide standards-based teacher evaluation system within the Cincinnati Public School District that was aligned with Danielson’s evaluation model. One of the successes of the implementation process focused on the awareness of teachers and administrators understanding the purpose of the evaluation process and adopting agreed upon teaching standards. Throughout the second year of implementation numerous teachers indicated support for the new evaluation system, citing its potential to improve their teaching performance.
Headden and Silva (2011) researched Montgomery County Schools, MD’s evaluation model titled, “The Teacher Professional Growth System”. This model placed an “emphasis on growth as a primary focus, and deemed the summative evaluation process as a second priority” (p. 43). The district involved teachers and administrators in the evaluation’s design and implementation process. The model focused on “professional growth with continued reflection on goals and progress in meeting these goals, and formal evaluation with narrative assessments that provided qualitative feedback to teachers about their work” (p. 43). Teachers within the school district reported high levels of satisfaction with the evaluation process and indicated that the model’s design promoted ongoing professional growth.

Hills (2017) conducted a study on school culture, teacher voices, and meaningful feedback. The case study examined three schools in three different districts in New Hampshire. A conclusion gleaned from the research specific to teacher perceptions regarding the purpose of evaluation indicated that teachers believed that the “primary purpose of evaluation should be to provide feedback for improvement” (p. 108). The evaluation models were designed to provide opportunities for teachers to identify areas of growth and set goals to actualize the specific areas that were identified. Two out of the three districts felt that the evaluation model provided opportunities for professional growth.

SRI International (2014) conducted a study of the Massachusetts educator evaluation model during the 2013-2014 school year. The survey was administered to 606 teachers across various districts within the state. Results from the survey support the findings of the research study. The majority of participants surveyed indicated that the new educator evaluation model provided opportunities for teachers to improve their practice. The majority of participants also
indicated that their evaluator provided meaningful feedback specific to their respective teaching practices.

The literature regarding standards-based evaluation models was aligned with the results of this study. Standards-based evaluation models, if implemented correctly are designed to foster reflective practices that are tailored toward teacher professional growth and improved teaching practice. Effective standards-based evaluation models focus on staff development rather than staff evaluation and foster a climate of continual improvement. Key ingredients of effective standards-based evaluation models include environments that foster trust, respect, professionalism and integrity between teachers and evaluators and are committed to providing the necessary time that is required to effectively implement and actualize all components of the evaluation process.

**Research Questions: Revisited**

This study was designed to gain an understanding of teacher perceptions within a Suburban School District regarding the effectiveness of the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Model in facilitating teacher growth. Rich authentic descriptions of participant perceptions of the new evaluation model were captured throughout the interview process and a close-ended questionnaire was administered as a means of providing triangulation and capturing perceptions from a larger research sample. The larger research sample was utilized as a means of enhancing the credibility of the study through the verification of perceptions that were gleaned from the individual interview process. A summary of participant perceptions specific to the research questions are provided below:

**How does a teacher’s perception of the evaluation process affect his or her own professional growth?** The majority of participants indicated that the new educator evaluation
model provided opportunities for professional growth. Participants also indicated that the evaluation process provided opportunities for teachers to improve their practice. Participants also voiced strong feelings specific to the purpose of evaluation and indicated that evaluation models that place an emphasis on staff development are more likely to foster climates that emphasize continuous improvement and as a result encourage and promote professional growth. Participants also spoke about the need to feel included as partners in the evaluation process rather than viewing the evaluation process as something that is done to them rather than with them. Teachers also emphasized the importance of building a strong collaborative partnership throughout the evaluation process.

Participants strongly echoed the importance of Trust, Respect, Integrity and Professionalism as essential components of effective evaluation models that are designed to foster professional growth. All participants viewed the four components as inseparable and felt that they were essential in creating an environment throughout the evaluation process that focused on dialogue and actions that were designed to encourage professional growth. Participants specifically highlighted the importance of mutual trust and respect between the evaluator and evaluatee and felt that these two components were necessary for the evaluative process to be effective in encouraging teachers to become better at their respective crafts. Participants also emphasized the importance of receiving feedback from someone they trust. A number of participants addressed the importance of integrity and professionalism within the evaluative process. Participants were very clear in indicating that the absence of any one of the four areas mentioned above, would have the potential to derail the effectiveness of the evaluation process.
Participants also expressed concerns about the amount of time that the various components of the evaluation model required throughout the evaluation process. Evidence collection, time to reflect on teaching practice as well as time required implementing SMART goals were underlying themes captured from the interview process. Participants also cited overall workload as a significant challenge in finding the necessary time to complete the various stages of the evaluation process. Participants indicated that they were supportive of the new evaluation model, but struggled finding the necessary time to complete the various stages of the evaluation process. Participants felt that the time commitment required for the new evaluation model was somewhat intrusive and many participants echoed the difficulty of balancing the every day expectations of their respective workloads citing that most of the work associated with the evaluation model was completed after the normal work day. Participants also felt that time limitations experienced by their evaluators was also a cause for concern and felt that time restrictions could have an impact on the overall effectiveness of the evaluation process.

Other areas that were deemed important by participants that maximized the benefit of evaluation processes designed for continued teacher growth included sufficient training for both teachers and evaluators, positive collaborative environments, well developed and clear standards specific to effective teaching, evaluator and evaluatee expectations that are fair, reasonable and attainable, and sufficient allocation of time and resources required for completion of the evaluation process. Teachers emphasized the importance of acknowledging the time requirements of all aspects of the teaching process and indicated the importance of ensuring that expectations related to the workload of teachers is both reasonable and attainable. Evaluation models meeting these criteria would support the development of growth-oriented school cultures,
which in turn would lend itself to teachers’ feeling empowered to support a culture of continuous improvement.

In what ways can the teacher evaluation process affect a teacher’s professional growth? As part of the interview process, teachers were asked to share their respective professional development endeavors during the past three years. Participants had difficulty separating self-initiated professional development activities to specific influences, however placed great value on the need to continually access professional development. Professional development activities included course work, conferences and seminars related to interests and certification requirements, independent self-initiated professional development, district and school driven professional development, and activities that were linked to the actualization of group and individual goals tied to the district’s evaluation model.

The majority of participants indicated that the district’s evaluation process is tailored to encourage continual professional reflection as well as the development of goals that are designed to improve teaching practice. Participants indicated that the structure of the evaluation process required teachers to identify areas of strengths and challenges. A number of teachers specifically commented on the district evaluation’s design, encouraging teachers to take risks that they otherwise would not have taken. Taking risks when developing goals and pursuing professional development opportunities linked to goal attainment results in professional growth that has a direct impact on improved teaching practice.

Through the design and structure offered in the district’s evaluation model, teachers are able to utilize reflective practices that target specific areas of improvement. Once specific areas are identified teachers pursue individual or group SMART goal development and access the necessary professional development required to actualize their respective goals. Teachers also
indicated that reflective practices are utilized to review strategies employed in all aspects of the teaching process and may result in changes to current practices without the need to access further professional development.

**Connections to Theory**

The research study examined teacher perceptions of the new Massachusetts teacher evaluation model in its ability to foster teacher growth and utilized Kegan’s (1982,1994) constructive developmental theory. Kegan’s Theory looks at adult development by considering an individual’s attitudes, behaviors and expectations which are utilized to interpret how people learn, and in turn, support their respective learning experiences by acknowledging different ‘ways of knowing’ (Drago-Severson, 2009). Kegan (1982, 1994) identified four ‘ways of knowing’ that can be applied to adult learning: “instrumental (rule bound self), socializing (other-focused self), self-authoring (reflective self), and self-transforming (interconnecting self)” (p.39). When applied directly to the field of education, educators undergo developmental learning that causes disruption in the way they view the world and how they interpret social constructs. As educators undergo developmental growth they continue to develop within the identified ‘ways of knowing’, transition between the different stages and move along the continuum of identified stages.

Kegan’s theory “illuminates the ways in which we make sense of our experiences” (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 32). The methodology that was employed in the research study was designed to capture rich, authentic descriptions of participants’ using descriptive phenomenology. Teachers with five or more years of experience were asked to take part in a semi-structured interview process. Questions that were used during the interviews were designed to solicit participant descriptions of their experiences with the new evaluation model.
Interviewing 16 participants allowed the researcher to capture the experience of a cross-section of teachers with various experiences as well as having a different number of years of teaching experience in different subjects and grades. The diversity within the participant sample allowed the researcher to analyze participant experiences through the various ‘ways of knowing’ which reinforced the theory’s premise that individuals view their respective worlds and social constructs through different lenses. Throughout the interviews it was evident that most participants were describing their experiences through socializing and self-authoring lenses. It is important to note that a number of participants described their experiences through a self-transforming lens which aligned with Kegan’s viewpoint that self-transforming approaches to interpreting life experiences is the highest level and not easily achieved. The researcher is in no way indicating an expertise in this area, but various characteristics described within each ‘way of knowing’ were evident throughout the interview process.

Examples that illustrate participant experiences that were aligned with different ‘ways of knowing’ included a number of participants expressing concerns that it was important that evaluators respected them as educators and felt that they were using best and next practices as part of their teaching repertoire. This need for acceptance is a characteristic of socializing knowers. Other participants spoke about the need for constant reflection and that goal setting should be linked to a school’s improvement plan as well as the district strategic plan. These participants also discussed the importance of engaging in improvement initiatives that had a positive effect on many students rather than a single class of students. They also promoted the development of shared improvement initiatives with other staff members as a means of having a positive influence on a greater number of students learning experiences. These behaviors were more aligned with self-transforming knowers.
Questions within the close-ended questionnaire were also designed to capture teacher experiences of the new evaluation process and provided a much larger sample size. The use of a larger sample size allowed the researcher to triangulate the experiences captured during the interview process which in the researcher’s opinion, added greater credibility to the study.

The diversity of experiences that were captured during the interviews could be directly attributed to the way participants viewed their experiences with the evaluation process. The way participants perceive or view their respective worlds and social constructs have a direct effect on how they view the evaluation process. The differing level of commitment to the effectiveness of the evaluation model’s ability to foster professional growth can be explained using Kegan’s constructive-developmental theory. Kegan’s descriptions of activities tailored to help move individuals to different levels of ‘ways of knowing’ can be beneficial in improving the evaluation model’s effectiveness in fostering teacher professional growth.

Kegan’s theory can be widely applied to the field of education. Viewing adult learning through a lens that supports the belief that adult learning is a continuous process and an individual’s viewpoint of how they experience the world can be altered, is well aligned within the field of education. Utilizing a theory that aligns with the development of growth minded school cultures can be instrumental to a school or district’s change process. It is the researcher’s hope that the use of Kegan’s theory as a theoretical framework within this study will spark the interest of other researchers to incorporate this theory into future research studies specific to k through 12 education.

**Implications for Practice**

The research study offers several implications for practice. In order for evaluation models to be successful the purpose of the evaluation must be clear to all stakeholders. If the primary
purpose is to foster teacher professional growth, then the evaluative process must focus on a formative approach to evaluation. Standards-based evaluation models that place an emphasis on staff development are more likely to foster climates that emphasize continuous improvement and as a result encourage and promote professional growth. The structure of the evaluation model by itself does not guarantee its success; implementation processes that focus on strategies that emphasize ongoing collaboration through the entire process are more likely to foster teacher professional growth. Successful evaluation models that promote professional growth include teachers in the evaluation’s development and implementation process and create an environment where teachers feel like they are part of the process rather than viewing evaluation as something that is done to them rather than with them. Participants within the research study continually indicated the importance of a strong partnership as a key staple in order for an evaluation model to truly impact a teacher’s professional growth.

Participants consistently communicated the importance of trust, respect, professionalism and integrity as part of the process. These qualities are important for both the evaluator and evaluatee. Evaluators must be invested in the process and teachers need to embrace the philosophy of continual improvement. Participants were very clear in indicating that the absence of any one of the four areas mentioned above, would have the potential to derail the effectiveness of the evaluation process.

Participants also expressed concerns about the amount of time that the various components of the evaluation model required throughout the evaluation process. Participants cited overall workload as a significant challenge in finding the necessary time to complete the various stages of the evaluation process. Teachers indicated that they were supportive of the new evaluation model, but struggled finding the necessary time to complete the various stages of the
evaluation process. Participants felt that the time commitment required for the new evaluation model was extensive and many participants echoed the difficulty of balancing the every day expectations of their respective workloads citing that most of the work associated with the evaluation model was completed after the normal work day. Participants also felt that time limitations experienced by their evaluators was also a cause for concern and felt that time restrictions could have an impact on the overall effectiveness of the evaluation process. In order for standards-based evaluation models to actualize their intended outcomes, district and school leaders must provide adequate time and resources to ensure that teachers and evaluators can devote the necessary time to the process. Anything short of this would have the potential to compromise the evaluations effectiveness to promote ongoing teacher professional growth.

The effectiveness of the evaluator plays a key role in the success of an evaluation model that focuses on ongoing staff development. Evaluators need to exercise leadership styles that promote collaboration and instill growth-oriented cultures within their respective schools. Effective evaluators are strong instructional coaches and are able to collaborate with staff on areas of potential growth. Effective evaluators employ strategies the empower, inspire and support risk taking that focuses on improved learning opportunities for students. This is a tall but necessary order that was echoed by participants within the study.

The new educator evaluation model prides itself in its structure and as a result is somewhat inflexible, and employs a one-size fits all approach to evaluation. As the district moves forward, it is imperative that district and school leaders explore ways of personalizing the evaluation process without compromising the integrity of the evaluation model. The utilization of a process that brings teachers and evaluators together to look at ways to enhance the
evaluation model’s effectiveness would be beneficial to ensure that the evaluation process is maximizing its potential.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

Additional research in areas that were explored in the implications for practice section of this paper would add to existing literature. Further studies involving larger sample sizes and schools and districts in urban, suburban and rural areas within the state would also significantly contribute to the literature base. Studies in other states and countries that focus on teacher perceptions of the evaluation process specific to promoting teacher growth would add to a literature base that lacks research specific to teacher voice in evaluation processes.

Research on the effectiveness of the Massachusetts new teacher evaluation model with non-professional status teaching staff that have not be granted professional status would significantly add to the current literature base. The research study focused on professional teaching status (PTS) staff with five or more years of teaching experience within the district. Capturing the experiences of beginning teachers in regard to their perceived effectiveness of the new educator evaluation system in Massachusetts would be instrumental in determining the model’s effectiveness in helping new teachers increase proficiencies as they acclimate into the profession. The researcher intends to employ a similar methodology that was used in the research study within the district to assess the effectiveness of the new educator evaluation model’s ability to help teachers professionally grow as they integrate into the teaching profession.

Additional research studies that focus on leadership styles and capacity of evaluators within Massachusetts, other states and other countries specific to evaluative proficiency and effectiveness would also significantly add to the current literature base. Effective skill sets of
evaluators are paramount in effective evaluation processes and are necessary in order for any evaluation model to have a positive influence and impact on teacher growth.

As the Superintendent of the school district in which the study was conducted, the researcher intends to create a grouping of representative teachers and evaluators to review and reflect on all aspects of the current evaluation model and implementation process. Three other areas of focus have been identified and will include; discussions of how the district can move forward with greater individualization of the evaluation process, further exploration of the benefit of the evaluator employing coaching strategies as part of the process, and exploration of the value of peer observation as a component of the evaluation process.

**Conclusion**

Standards–based evaluation models, if implemented correctly, have the ability to promote teacher professional reflection and foster ongoing teacher professional growth. Evaluation models that are growth oriented place an emphasis on formative evaluation and focus on ongoing staff development. The results of this study support the potential of standards–based evaluation models with a well-coined implementation plan, having a positive impact on teacher professional growth.

Effective teacher evaluation models that focus on staff development provide a clear understanding of the purpose of the evaluation process and embrace teacher voice in the evaluation’s design and implementation process. District leaders also provide ongoing opportunities to reflect and assess the effectiveness of the implementation process and its ability to actualize its intended outcomes.

Sufficient time and resources need to be allocated in order to maximize the effectiveness of the evaluative process. District and school leaders also need to be cognizant of the everyday
workload of teachers and develop realistic expectations the support and nurture growth-oriented cultures.

Trust, respect, integrity and professionalism are essential components of successful evaluation models that promote ongoing staff development. Participants in the research study viewed the four components as inseparable and felt that they were essential in creating an environment throughout the evaluation process that focused on dialogue and actions that were designed to encourage professional growth. The absence of any one of the four areas would have a detrimental effect on the effectiveness of the evaluation process.

The effectiveness of the evaluator plays a key role in the successful implementation of evaluation models that focus on ongoing staff development. Evaluators need to exercise leadership styles that promote collaboration and instill growth-oriented cultures within their respective schools. Effective evaluators are strong instructional coaches and are able to collaborate with staff on areas of potential growth. Effective evaluators employ strategies that empower, inspire and support risk taking that focuses on improved learning opportunities for students.

Evaluation models by themselves do not create school cultures that are growth oriented, but rather contribute to the formation and perpetuation of school cultures that embrace the importance of continuous professional growth. Within growth-oriented cultures, teachers understand and embrace the connection between student learning and ongoing staff development.

Research that focuses on the implementation of evaluation models that are designed to foster professional growth and employ teacher voice continues to be lacking in the current literature base. Recent studies that have begun to examine the effectiveness of evaluation systems across the nation appear to focus on teacher proficiency levels as well as the
evaluation’s ability to enhance student learning. Minimal attention has been given to the importance of the role that teacher perceptions play in actualizing their intended outcome; increased teacher effectiveness. It is the researcher’s hope that this research study will increase awareness of the importance of teacher voice within the evaluative process and encourage future research specific to teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of current evaluation models at the state, national and international level.

*Effective evaluation practices “provide opportunities for better leading, better teaching, better learning, and better schools” (MA Task Force On the Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators, 2013, p. 9).*
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Appendix A

Dear Colleagues,

As many of you know, I am currently enrolled in a Doctor of Education program at Northeastern University. My dissertation focuses on gathering perceptions of teachers regarding their perceived effectiveness of the new Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Model’s ability to foster teacher growth. Through this study, I hope to gain more insight into the effectiveness of the new educator evaluation model within our district. As a district, this could allow us to identify ways in which we can reflect and reevaluate our current processes and practices to ensure that we utilize the evaluation model as a primary means of fostering professional growth. During the past three years we have worked collaboratively together to implement a teacher evaluation model that focuses on providing opportunities for teachers to grow professionally. All teachers within our district have completed their first evaluation cycle and are at various stages of the second evaluation cycle. This is an opportune time to review our current practices and together reflect on the effectiveness of the new evaluation model’s ability to foster professional growth.

The research study will focus on capturing teacher perceptions within our school district, specific to the new teacher evaluation model’s ability to foster professional growth. This letter is being sent to all teachers within our school district who have taught here for five or more years. I have chosen this particular group of teachers as a result of their experience with the district’s previous evaluation model as well as their experience with the district’s new model.

I have attached a brief close-ended survey at the end of the unsigned consent form that is attached at the end of this letter consisting of 18 questions that I would encourage you to complete. The survey is electronically administered and will be submitted electronically upon completion. Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary but will be greatly appreciated and could provide salient information regarding the overall effectiveness of the new evaluation model. All surveys will be submitted anonymously. I greatly appreciate your participation in the survey and would like to have all surveys submitted by April 28, 2017.

As part of the research study I will also be asking teachers to volunteer to take part in individual interviews that will take approximately 50 minutes to complete. Individual interviews will focus on conversations regarding the new evaluation model’s effectiveness in fostering teacher growth. As a result of my position within the district and the desire to maximize credibility of the research study, I will be using a colleague to conduct the individual interviews. I would encourage you to send an email to only my student email address at clenchy.k@husky.neu.edu indicating your interest in taking part in the individual interview process. Please use this email address rather than my work email address as per Northeastern University’s IRB. Any emails to any other email address must be deleted without any response. Four teachers from each school will be randomly selected to take part in the interview process.

Please indicate your interest in taking part in the interviews by April 28, 2017. If you choose to participate, your confidentiality will be maintained at all times and each participant will be assigned a pseudonym, which will be referenced on all documents. If you are selected to
participate in the interview component of the study you will be provided with an informed consent form, which we will ask you to sign prior to the interview process.

Please note that you do not have to participate unless you volunteer. There will be no negative consequences if you do not fill out the survey and/or volunteer to be interviewed.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research study, please contact me at clency.k@husky.neu.edu.

Please access the survey by clicking on the attachment below. The survey link is located at the bottom of the unsigned consent form. Press the send button when completed.

Kelly R. Clenchy
Appendix B
 Unsigned Consent Form

Northeastern University, Department of: College of Professional Studies
Name of Investigator(s): Principal Investigator: Dr. Kristal Clemons, PhD
Student Researcher: Kelly Clenchy

Title of Project: Teacher Evaluation Models: Compliance or Growth Oriented?

Request to Participate in Research

We are inviting you to take part in the research study. This form will provide you with information about
the research study. This survey should take about 20 minutes to complete. You are being asked to share
your experiences with the new educator evaluation model. The research study focuses on gathering the
perceptions of teachers regarding their perceived effectiveness of the new educator evaluation model’s
ability to foster teacher growth. Through this study, we hope to gain more insight into the effectiveness of
the new educator evaluation model.

The decision to participate in this research project is voluntary. You do not have to
participate and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the web-
based online survey, you can stop at any time.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study.

There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this study. However, your responses may
help us learn more about the perceptions of teachers regarding the new Massachusetts Teacher
Evaluation Model’s effectiveness in facilitating teacher growth.

Your part in this study is anonymous to the researcher. However, because of the nature of web-
based surveys, it is possible that respondents could be identified by the IP address or other
electronic record associated with the response. Neither the researcher nor anyone involved with
this survey will be capturing those data. Any reports or publications based on this research will
use only group data and will not identify you or any individual as being affiliated with this project.

If you have any questions regarding electronic privacy, please feel free to contact Mark Nardone,
NU’s Director of Information Security via phone at 617-373-7901, or via email at privacy@neu.edu.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Kelly Clenchy, 2000 Matrix
Way, Apt 2211, Hudson, MA, 01749. Tel: 978-408-1081, Email: clenchy.k@husky.neu.edu the person
mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact Dr. Kristal Clemons, Ph.D., Doctor of Education
Program, College of Professional Studies, 360 Huntington, 42 BV, Boston, MA, 02115 Tel: 830-629-9132,
Email: k.clemons@northeastern.edu the Principal Investigator.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Nan C.
Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University,
Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

By clicking on the survey link below you are indicating that you consent to participate in this
study. Please print out a copy of this consent form for your records.

https://goo.gl/forms/ippxzUWFQACXLZ433

Thank you for your time.
Kelly R. Clenchy
Appendix C

Signed Informed Consent Form

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies.

Investigator Name: Principal Investigator- Dr. Kristal Clemons, PhD
Student Researcher- Kelly Clenchy
Interviewer- Richard C. Gleason, Ed.D

Title of Project: Teacher Evaluation Models: Compliance or Growth Oriented?

Informed Consent to Participate in a research study

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the interviewer will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

You are being asked to share your experiences with the new educator evaluation model. The research study focuses on gathering the perceptions of teachers regarding their perceived effectiveness of the new educator evaluation model’s ability to foster teacher growth. Through this study, we hope to gain more insight into the effectiveness of the new educator evaluation model. Hopefully this will allow us to identify ways in which we can reflect and reevaluate our current processes and practices to ensure that we utilize the evaluation model as a primary means of fostering professional growth.

Why is the research study being done?

The purpose of the study is to describe the perceptions of teachers regarding the new Massachusetts teacher evaluation model’s effectiveness in facilitating teacher growth. The study will use a phenomenological methodology to capture the perceptions of teachers specific to the new evaluations model’s effectiveness in promoting teacher growth; a primary goal of the new evaluation model.

What will I be asked to do?

If you decide to take part in the study, we will ask you to:

1. Read the teacher evaluation framework materials along with the semi-structured interview questions that will be provided to you prior to your interview date.
2. Take part in the interview process.
3. Read over the transcribed interview to ensure that it is representative of what you shared during the interview process.
Your participation is voluntary and you can opt out at any time.
Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?

Individual interviews will take place at a mutually agreed upon location. Interviews will be scheduled for 50 minutes. Participants will also be asked to read over their transcribed interview to verify its accuracy. This will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?

There are no identified risks to the participant during the study. You do not have to participate and can quit at any time with no repercussions.

Will I benefit by being in this research?

No direct benefits will be provided to the participants. However, potential benefits include:
1. The opportunity to contribute to the assessment of the new teacher evaluation model.
2. Providing information that will help determine how the district moves forward with the continued implementation of the teacher evaluation process.

Who will see the information about me?

Pseudonyms will be used for all participants that are being interviewed for the study. Only the researcher and the researcher’s colleague conducting the interview will be aware of the participant’s identity. Reports or publications will not use information that can identify you in any way. The interviewer, student researcher and Principal Investigator will be the only ones who know any information.

Data collected during the interview will be kept by the researcher inclusive of audiotapes and will be stored in a secure location. Pseudonyms will be used throughout the study. Data from interviews will be stored in a password-protected computer only used by the researcher. Files will be backed up using cloud-based services. Paper copies of transcripts will be stored at the researcher’s house in a locked file cabinet.

Audiotapes, paper and electronic transcripts will be destroyed after the researcher has successfully completed the dissertation process and the research study has been published. Consent forms will be maintained for three years, the identified period of retention and will be stored in a locked file cabinet at the researcher’s home. The consent forms will be destroyed at the end of the three-year retention period.

In rare instances, authorized people may request to see research information about you and other people in this study. This is done only to be sure that the research is done properly. The researcher would only permit people who are authorized by organizations such as Northeastern University to view the study data. No identifying information will ever be shared with people at the Public Schools or other institutions.

If I do not want to take part in the study, what choices do I have?
You are not required to take part in the study. The participant may withdraw from the study at any time with no risk of harm.

What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?

There are no identified risks in this study.

Can I stop my participation in this study?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. After beginning the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would otherwise have.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact:

Kristal Moore Clemons, Ph.D.                                      Kelly Clenchy
College of Professional Studies                                  Hudson, MA 01749
Phone: 850-629-9132                                             Phone: 978-408-1081
360 Huntington, 42 BV                                             clenchy.k@husky.neu.edu
Boston, MA 02115                                                 2000 Matrix Way, Apt. 2211
k.clemons@neu.edu

Nan C. Regina, Director
Northeastern Univ., Human Subject Research Protection
360 Huntington Ave., Mailstop: 490 Renaissance Park
Boston, MA 02115-5000
Phone: 617.373.4588; Fax: 617.373.4595
n.regina@neu.edu

______________________________
Research Participant (Printed Name)

______________________________
Research Participant (Signature)

______________________________
Date
Appendix D

Interview Protocol Form

Institution: _____________________________________________________

Interviewee (Pseudonym): ______________________________

Interviewer: ______________________________

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

Question 1: How does a teacher's perception of the evaluation process affect his/her own professional growth?

Question 2: In what ways can the teacher evaluation process affect a teacher’s professional growth?

Part I:

Introductory Session Objectives (5-7 minutes): Build rapport, describe the study, answer any questions (have the participant sign the informed consent form).

Introductory Protocol

Thank you for volunteering to be interviewed and share your experiences with the new educator evaluation model. My research project focuses on gathering the perceptions of teachers regarding their perceived effectiveness of the new educator evaluation model’s ability to foster teacher growth. Through this study, we hope to gain more insight into the effectiveness of the new educator evaluation model. Hopefully this will allow us to identify ways in which we can reflect and reevaluate our current processes and practices to ensure that we utilize the evaluation model as a primary means of fostering professional growth.

Because your responses are important and I want to make sure to capture everything you say, I would like to audio tape our conversation today. Do I have your permission to record this interview? [If yes, thank the participant; let them know you may ask the question again as you start recording, and then turn on the recording equipment]. I will also be taking written notes. I can assure you that all responses will be confidential and only a pseudonym will be used throughout the research process. The Superintendent and I will be the only ones privy to the tapes, which will be destroyed after the dissertation process has been completed. To meet our human subjects requirements at the university, you must sign the form I have with me. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Do you have any questions about the interview process or how your data will be used?
This interview should last about 50 minutes. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning. Do you have any questions at this time?

Part II: Interviewee Background (5-10 minutes)

Objective: To establish rapport and obtain the story of the participants general knowledge with the research topic. This section should be brief as it is not the focus of the study.

A. Interviewee Background

1. Can you tell me about your educational background and how you became a teacher within the Littleton School District?

2. How many years have you been teaching? How many years within the Littleton School District?

3. Can you tell me about the professional development activities that you have pursued during the last 2 years?

4. How many times have you received summative and formative evaluations using the new evaluation model?

5. Do you feel that you have a good understanding of the various components of the new evaluation model?

Part 2:

One of the things we are interested in learning about is how teachers perceive the effectiveness of the new educator evaluation model in its ability to foster professional growth. I would like to hear about your perspective/experience regarding the effectiveness of the new educator evaluation model. To do this, I am going to ask you some questions about the key experiences you encountered. If you mention other people, please do not mention names. Today's interview will be transcribed using a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality of your identity.

1. Does the new teacher evaluation model create opportunities for teachers to reflect on teaching practice? If so, how?

2. Does the new teacher evaluation model provide opportunities for teachers to improve their practice? If so, how?

3. How does the new evaluation model compare to the previous district model in helping you grow professionally?
4. How does the new evaluation model compare to the previous district model in supporting reflective teaching practice?

5. How does the new evaluation model compare to the previous district model in providing opportunities for improving practice?

6. What are your thoughts regarding the teacher evaluation model’s effectiveness in fostering teacher growth?

7. In what ways, if any, is the new evaluation model helping you grow professionally?

8. How do relationships defined by trust, respect, integrity and professionalism between evaluator and teacher affect the evaluation process? (Possible sub-question: How do relationships between evaluator and teacher affect the evaluation process?).

9. What teacher successes are indicative of an effective evaluation model?

10. Does the new evaluation model provide opportunities for teachers to demonstrate/show successful teaching practice?

11. Does the new five-step design of the new evaluation model provide opportunities to discuss teaching practice and also promote professional growth?

12. Is there anything else that you would like to add that might have been missed during the interview? Are there any questions that you feel would have been helpful to ask during the interview?

Ask participant if they have any questions and thank them for their participation.