TEACHERS’ LEARNING EXPERIENCES THROUGH THE MASSACHUSETTS EVALUATION SYSTEM: AN INTERPRETIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

A thesis presented

by

Lisa Karantonakis

to

The School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

Dr. Chris Unger

Advisor

College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts

December 2018
Abstract

The educator evaluation system has changed in the United States. Mandated by education reform, states are now required to look at their evaluation systems more closely to monitor the effectiveness of teachers and to see how students are learning in schools. The purpose of this Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) study is to understand how teachers perceive the Massachusetts educator evaluation process. Specifically, this study examines how teachers learn from the evaluation process in the school environment to enhance their professional practice using the lens of Bandura’s (2001) self-efficacy theory. This study was guided by one research question: How do teachers describe their learning experiences with the Massachusetts teacher evaluation system’s process?

The findings from this study indicate that the participants experienced varying levels of learning throughout their professional teaching careers and that they had mixed views regarding the Massachusetts evaluation process. The findings from this study may guide policy makers, state reformers, and individual school districts with data to improve evaluation processes for teachers in the workplace. By developing a better understanding of teachers’ thoughts and ideas with teacher evaluation, school districts may be able to use the information from this study to partner with staff to create a more comprehensive, effective learning opportunity for them. The implications for practice and future research are discussed.
Acknowledgements

Time is something that people struggle to acquire daily in life; it never seems like there is enough of it. When I started a family years ago I felt like I had all the time in the world to go back to school, but as my kids grew, it felt like the time slipped away even more quickly than before. My dreams of returning to college never seemed possible until one day I researched what I needed to do to make it happen, and with my husband Tony’s support, the rest is history. I finished three programs in three years and then enrolled in the Northeastern Doctoral Program. I met a lovely group of people from my previous administrative group with whom I am still friendly today. This kind and supportive group made me feel accepted, especially Janet, who has been my inner conscience. Janet made me work when I fell behind, she complimented me when I felt despair, and she pushed me to catch up when I thought I had given up, and I am thankful for that.

It has been a long and grueling journey. I have had family hardships, health concerns, changed jobs, and still in my mind I held on. My children Alex, Vasiliki, Zaharias, and Anthony never gave up on me; they waited patiently by the sidelines anticipating the day I would finish. Many nights when I had to meet deadlines, schoolwork came first and my family never complained. My husband Tony kept telling me he believed in me and that I had nothing standing in my way. But life goes on and it took me a lot longer than I expected (over eight years). So, for this I am thankful: I got to complete my coursework, spend family time, and navigate back to my studies when my daughter Vicky went off to college. A new chapter in my life that lay dormant was now awakened. My family has always been important to me and without their love and support I couldn’t have done it! But most importantly, these setbacks allowed me to spend time with them and I wouldn’t have had it any other way. As I stated before, time is precious. It has a
wonderful way of showing us what really matters; in my case, I got to reap the benefits of both
time with family and pursuing my studies.

I would like to thank my Northeastern University advisor, Dr. Sandy Nickel, for helping me to craft my study and to refine my topic over the years. I would also like to especially thank my second advisor, Dr. Chris Unger, for guiding me at the end of my study, by getting me back on track, and believing in me to finish. His positive demeanor challenged me, he was flexible to meet my needs, and most of all, he helped me to channel my thoughts when it was needed the most. Finally, I would like to thank my second and third readers, Dr. Margaret Gorman and Dr. Marie- Juanita-Digioia for being there at the end of this journey helping me to finish. A special shout out to Dr. DiGioia who has been a tremendous inspiration to me both personally and professionally, I admire her strength and I am so lucky to have met and to have worked with her.

Life does not come easy for everyone, it takes a village for some and others it may not. Some people take the road less traveled, and in my case I did not always stay on the path, but I eventually made it to the right destination. I have endured great loss during this trip and the lesson learned here is to enjoy life to the fullest because life as I stated before, is precious. And finally, without my husband and kids believing in me, I don’t think I would have finished. My mother has been asking me for years, “Lee, have you finished yet?” and now I can say, “Yes, I finally finished!”
Dedication

In memory of my daughter Alexandria (Alex) Anderson who passed away unexpectedly on June, 28th, 2018, I dedicate this study to her. She reminded me every day to “Take one day at a time.”

I will always remember her by this quote~

“The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or touched, but just felt in the heart.”

Helen Keller
Table of Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................. 2
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................... 3
Dedication ................................................................................................................ 5

Chapter I: Introduction .......................................................................................... 8
  Statement of the Problem .................................................................................... 8
  Significance of Research Problem ..................................................................... 10
  Positionality Statement ...................................................................................... 19
  Purpose and Research Question ........................................................................ 21
  Theoretical Framework ....................................................................................... 21
  Summary ............................................................................................................. 27
  Key Terms .......................................................................................................... 27

Chapter II: Literature Review .............................................................................. 29
  Educator Evaluation Historically ....................................................................... 29
  Effective vs Ineffective Teaching ...................................................................... 33
  Educator Evaluation and Professional Development ....................................... 36
  Student Achievement ......................................................................................... 39
  The Purpose of Feedback .................................................................................... 42
  Teachers’ Perceptions of Educator Evaluation .................................................. 44
  New Trends in the Massachusetts Evaluation Framework .............................. 47
  Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 49

Chapter III: Research Design .............................................................................. 50
  Research Question ............................................................................................... 50
  Qualitative Research Design ............................................................................. 50
  Research Tradition ............................................................................................... 51
  Research Design .................................................................................................. 53
  Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis ......................................................... 53
  Site and Participants ............................................................................................ 55
  Recruitment and Access ...................................................................................... 56
  Protection of Human Subjects ........................................................................... 56
  Data Collection/Data Storage ........................................................................... 57
  Data Analysis ....................................................................................................... 59
  Trustworthiness ................................................................................................... 62
  Summary ............................................................................................................. 62

Chapter IV: Research Findings and Analysis ..................................................... 64
  Participants Profiles ............................................................................................. 64
  Thematic Analysis ............................................................................................... 67
  Conclusion ............................................................................................................ 87

Chapter V: Analysis, Implications, and Recommendations ............................... 90
  Revisit the Problem of Practice ......................................................................... 91
  Discussion of the Key Findings .......................................................................... 91
Chapter I: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Teachers have been evaluated since the 1700s, and although research suggests that the evaluation system has improved substantially, many believe the current system is still deficient. Most current inquiries indicate the biggest problem with educator evaluation is that it lacks evidence to distinguish between effective and ineffective teachers (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2011). For many years, teachers have been provided little to no feedback on their teaching (Boyd, 1989). The evaluation of the past did little to promote teaching and learning and became a mundane yearly exercise for many administrators (Darling-Hammond, 2013). Educators, too, believed the yearly evaluation system did little to support them and left them with little guidance for improvement. In a speech (2010), Duncan stated, “Our system of teacher evaluation… frustrates teachers who feel that their good work goes unrecognized and ignores other teachers who would benefit from additional support” (p. 1). Though used for decades, traditional observational practice has proven to be ineffective when evaluating teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2013).

Across the country, educator evaluation has been revived. States are creating more comprehensive systems to meet the demands to provide students with more competent teachers (McGuinn, 2012). This change was brought about by poor standardized test scores, mediocre teaching, gaps in student learning, and inconsistent teaching practices (Darling-Hammond, 2010). “Public schools generally do a poor job of systematically developing and evaluating teachers” (Baker, Barton, Darling-Hammond, Haertel, Ladd, Linn, Ravitch, Rothstein, Shavelson, & Shepard, 2010, p. 5). To meet the demand of declining student achievement,
states began to look closer at teacher effectiveness and teacher evaluation. To date, each state has been using their own version of an evaluation system and varied evaluation tools, complicating the evaluation process even more (McGuinn, 2012). This inconsistent system has led to differences from state to state, district to district, and teacher to teacher. “In most states, school districts are allowed to develop their own systems for evaluating teacher performance. The result is an uneven patchwork of measures, which seems to create a form of grade inflation for teachers” (Williams, McKinney, Garland, & Goodwin, 2010, p. 1).

In 2001, prompted by The No Child Left Behind Act and President Obama’s American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (2009), education reform was developed to employ highly effective teachers and to improve student achievement in K-12 public education. This act provided $4.35 billion dollars for states to redesign their educational systems, including teacher evaluation. Part of this improvement that was envisioned by President Obama included developing great teachers and leaders. Almost two thirds of the states in the nation took the Race to The Top challenge in 2011 and developed a new educator evaluation system that focused on improving teacher quality and student achievement. In order to establish great teachers and leaders, each state considered its own evaluation practices and developed a plan to submit. Many studies have shown that the quality of instruction is one of the most important factors when looking at student achievement (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigor, 2007; Rice, 2003, Hanushnek & Kane, 2005).

Driven by Race to the Top competitive challenges and a desire to receive federal grant money, districts began employing new ways to evaluate staff. This newly developed system, with significant variations from state to state, provided stakeholders the freedom to develop a more consistent system at their own discretion based on Common Core Standards, state
standards, and research-based evaluation tools. The new initiative was a step in the right direction. By looking more closely at how they were evaluating staff, state and school leaders could now plan how teachers would be evaluated using these new criteria for effective reform. In some states, this became a daunting task, but others met it as an enthusiastic challenge. The purpose of this study is to investigate how educators in Massachusetts describe their learning experiences with educator evaluation. There has been little research on the learning experiences of teachers to enhance their professional practice. What do teachers really want? What kind of feedback opportunities are beneficial to them? How can teachers improve in their practice?

**Significance of the Research Problem**

Evaluation is a component of every educator’s life throughout the United States. Educator evaluation has deeply affected the lives of many teachers, leaders, and students positively and negatively. Through educator reform, the evaluation system has changed, and through these changes teachers have had to change as well. Classroom observations of the past have taken on a new meaning, which now may include surveys, data collection, walkthroughs, artifacts, rubrics, and much more (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011). In a national survey by Public Agenda, 77% of teachers out of 1300 reported that “few” or “quite a large number” fail to do a good job and are simply going through the motions (Farkas, Johnson, & Duffett, 2003, p. 44).

How teachers have been evaluated has significantly changed, and many agree changed for the better. New reform efforts have focused on “improving methods for evaluating teacher performance and using the resulting information to change teaching practice” (Steinberg & Sartain, 2015, p. 71). However, there is still a body of evidence that substantiates the need for more improvements in teacher evaluation (Hammond-Darling, 2015; Marzano, Rothman, &
Toch, 2012). The new evaluation system was primarily prompted by education reform and the desire to persuade states to adopt a new system for better evaluation standards and the collection of data. Most evaluations of the past provided teachers with little to no feedback and were rarely linked to student achievement. In fact, “Most teachers want more from an evaluation system.” They crave useful feedback and the challenge and the counsel to help them to improve” (Darling-Hammond, 2013, p. 6). Beliefs from “school administrators, parents, and students themselves widely support the notion that teacher quality is vital to student achievement, despite inconsistent evidence linking achievement to observable teacher characteristics” (Hanushek, 1986, p. 247).

Teacher performance was formerly completed through traditional, brief, sit-down observations, usually by a school administrator. The observation was completed and written up in a narrative report that often included subjective information (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). New evaluative practices consist of many more parts, including: data collection and assessment, lesson plans review, classroom observations, surveys, and other artifacts (Hull, 2013).

In many districts and states, however, evaluation systems are now being designed to assess not only what teachers do, but also the outcomes of what teachers do. In other words, evaluation systems are being developed to help teachers master content, refine their teaching skills, critically analyze their own performance as well as their students’ performance, and make changes to improve teaching and learning in their classrooms. (National Educator Association, 2011, p. 4).

The aim of these new evaluative practices is to develop multiple measures to evaluate a teacher through varied opportunities to observe teaching and learning in the classroom (Youngs & Grissom, 2016).
Research in educator evaluation is important and relevant at the local, district, state, and global levels (Stronge, 1993). The aim of the new evaluation system is to provide teachers with more feedback, to guide them to improve their practice, and to foster a community of high achieving students regardless of race or background. The global implication of teacher evaluation is to develop well-designed teacher evaluation programs to “have a direct and lasting effect on individual teacher performance” (Tyler & Taylor, 2012, p. 79).

The U.S. Department of Education’s Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) allows states flexibility in choosing how they will address the educator evaluation reform. According to Kennedy and Papay (2012), the purpose of teacher evaluation is to help teachers to improve their practice and also to inform decisions in schools and districts. Initially, 45 states signed up for a Race to the Top waiver to compete for federal funding for school improvement. These states have committed to changing their systems to:

- Develop, adopt, pilot, and implement, with the involvement of teachers and principals, teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that: will be used for continual improvement of instruction; … [and] provide clear, timely, and useful feedback, including feedback that identifies needs and guides professional development (U.S. Department of Education, 2012, pp. 18–19).

So, what is the controversy? Since President Obama’s initiative to improve schools, teacher quality, and student achievement, there have been demonstrations of disapproval throughout the United States. The newly adopted reform created an unexpected reaction from state to state. Some states reported that they did not have the staff or resources to implement the reforms, while others accepted the challenge and scrambled for a plan. Many teacher unions across the nation resisted educator evaluation; some even publicly protested, citing that it was
unconstitutional. In 2013, Florida’s teacher union filed a lawsuit stating that the teacher evaluation system in their state was unconstitutional, claiming union collective bargaining violations and unfair salary practices. The U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that the teacher evaluation system was constitutional. Florida is one state that ties student assessment scores to individual teachers, including merit pay.

In 2009, other districts such as the District of Columbia began to give bonuses to effective teachers based on a high rating scale and dismissed ineffective teachers. In 2010, Los Angeles decided to make teacher effectiveness data visible to the public. They began publishing teachers’ names in the paper with their individual ratings and scores; consequently, some teachers were devastated. New York followed in this practice in 2011 by posting teacher salaries and ratings of “effective” or “not effective.” There were strikes in 2012 in Chicago when individual educator evaluations were linked to student scores. Teachers protested that student scores should not be linked to their evaluations.

Although teacher evaluation reform was initially opposed by many, views are changing now and it has been accepted by most states as a change for the better. Depending on the state, the educator evaluation system is individualized to the state’s standards and has varied measures of competency. The main purpose of the evaluation system is to evaluate staff on their effectiveness, to promote teacher growth and learning, and to promote student achievement, although research has found that student achievement can be difficult to measure when identifying teacher effectiveness. Many researchers agree, though, that “without capable, high quality teachers in America’s classrooms, no educational reform effort can possibly succeed” (Stronge & Tucker, 2003, p. 3). Some states use the evaluation system to evaluate teachers based on student achievement on high-stakes tests. This achievement is measured by value-added
model criteria and teachers are compensated for the achievement of their students. Thus, many states now view teacher evaluation to have two main purposes: accountability and professional growth (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Peterson, 2000).

States such as Massachusetts have taken a different approach. The Massachusetts Educator Evaluation System was enacted in 2011, allowing each district a two-year timeframe to implement it. This research-based system, recommended by the U.S. Department of Education in 2011, addressed the former system’s deficits by implementing five standards and focusing on toward student achievement. Participating states should “conduct annual evaluations of teachers and principals that include timely and constructive feedback [and] as part of such evaluation to provide teachers and principals with data on student growth for their students, classes, and schools” (p. 3). Non-professional teacher-status staff members are evaluated yearly for three years, while professional-status staff members are evaluated each year, but in a two-year cycle. Each educator must start off with goal setting and the development of an Educator Plan (603 CMR 35.00). The U.S. Department of Education recommends that states develop systems that incorporate:

- Understanding what and how students are learning and… how to address students’ learning needs, including reviewing student work and achievement data and collaboratively planning, testing, adjusting instructional strategies, formative assessments, and materials based on such data (U.S. Department of Education, 2011, p. 30).

Massachusetts has taken the Department of Education recommendations seriously and has implemented statewide reforms to align with other states’ implementation, as well as to develop its own approach. Lannan (2016) reported that in 2012, more than 366 districts
participated in the new evaluation of educators, which included more than 80,000 teachers. The newly implemented teacher evaluation showed that 85.9% of teachers were rated as proficient, 4.1% as needing improvement, and 0.4% as unsatisfactory. This rating is based on the new evaluation rubric and data obtained from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in 2011.

A poll of teachers in Massachusetts found that teachers felt like the evaluation system was all about how they were progressing professionally and that they were the main focus, not the students (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2012). The newly developed Massachusetts Task Force wanted teachers and administrators to be part of the development of the evaluation system. This collaborative development signified how important their teachers were to student achievement. The new system allowed teachers to set challenging goals, reflect on practice, self-assess, and design the steps that they would employ to achieve their goals based on the Massachusetts state evaluation standards rubric. The rubric includes four standards: Curriculum, Planning and Assessment, Teaching All Students, Family and Community Engagement, and Professional. It was developed to help educators understand their own strengths, and through self-assessment and reflection, it also allows for areas of improvement (The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2012).

Currently, Massachusetts teachers meet with their evaluators yearly to discuss their professional goal and student learning goal. During this time, educators are encouraged to challenge themselves and to reflect on professional practice. With the help of their supervisor, the teacher narrows down what they want to accomplish in a years’ time, and they develop a plan. Ultimately, the evaluator would provide feedback to the teacher continuously throughout the year. This feedback would be intended to improve the learning experiences of the teacher and
to guide the teacher in the direction of professional development as needed to meet their personal goals as a teacher, and also the school’s goals for the district.

In addition to increasing an educator’s own personal growth, an educator’s goals are linked to their students’ achievement. Educators may develop goals individually or work on goals in teams. The team approach builds collaboration and efficacy in the team members’ approach to teaching (Beauchamp, Klassen, Parsons, Durksen, & Taylor, 2014). Educators may compile a binder portfolio paper system or digital version to show evidence in the standards. The evaluation system in Massachusetts has grown since its introduction in 2011. The rubric, now readily used and understood by most staff and school leaders, provides a starting point of conversation when observing in a classroom. This open dialogue allows for clearer expectations for staff. The new model moves away from the traditional model that focused more on what the teacher was doing, and instead looks more closely at how teaching impacts student learning.

In other states, such as New York, a great debate in the educator evaluation system was recently settled with the implementation of a huge change in April 2015. The system was negotiated since its 2010 plan by school stakeholders. This new plan would now tie teacher evaluation to state scores, state and local test scores, and observations from people who do not work in the school, but outside of the district. Nationally, the Education Transformation Act of 2015 used tactics from which some current systems are moving away, such as teacher bonuses and tenure being tied to test scores. This new system has ratings which include “ineffective,” “developing,” “effective,” and “highly effective” categories for teachers. Educators’ opinions are split about this newly adopted reform, and New York has embedded a lot of funding for this change (Cuomo, 2015). Teachers are not pleased, since it will tie their performance to how well their students perform on statewide assessments.
Other states like California have the Stull Act of 1971, which has also created a lot of controversy. The act linked teachers to state-developed assessments of student achievement data. Although this act is still part of educator state policy in California, most districts in the state do not follow it. The system has become more qualitative, and data on student growth and achievement are rarely used (Sandoval, 2015).

Teachers have mixed feelings about educator evaluation (Donaldson, 2012). Initially, there was resistance and fear; some teachers felt that they were being examined and that their jobs were on the line. This fear deepened as districts struggled to implement reform without fully developing negotiated language and ideas with teachers, causing buy-in with teachers to be virtually non-existent. Many teachers feared educator evaluation because in some states, it was linked to student achievement on high-stakes tests; teachers found this to be an unfair practice. In a teachers’ survey by Howell and Henderson (2010), 42.5% of respondents completely opposed tying a teacher’s salary to their students’ academic progress on state tests; 0.0% completely favored it (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Teacher survey by Howell and Henderson (2010) regarding tying a teacher’s salary to their students’ academic progress on state tests.
In the same 2009 survey, 38% of teachers responded that tying teacher rewards to student achievement was not effective at all, 29% not too effective, 24% somewhat effective, and 8% very effective (see figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Teacher survey by Howell and Henderson (2010) regarding tying a teacher’s salary to student achievement

**Who are the Stakeholders?**

Teachers and administrators are the two most important stakeholders in creating educator evaluation. Other important stakeholders are parents, other school leaders, and school committee members. Some states choose policy experts to develop the educator evaluation system for them. “These stakeholders often have conflicting expectations regarding what is good practice and effective reform and, yet, the input and support of these groups is an important aspect of gaining political support for a new evaluation system” (Stronge & Tucker, 1999, p. 339). Out of 50 states, 47 have decided to let experts develop the plans for them.
On December 10, 2015 President Obama signed into law The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which is an extension of The U.S. Department of Education’s Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965). The main focus areas of this act include:

1. College- and Career-Ready Students
2. Great Teachers and Leaders in Every School
3. Equity and Opportunity for All Students
4. Raise the Bar and Reward Excellence
5. Promote Innovation and Continuous Improvement

To develop great teachers and leaders in every school under President Obama’s plan, stakeholders were very interested in developing new evaluation systems that would be able to tie in the other areas of the Department of Education’s Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) and the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015). Teacher evaluation is a new focus of the act and districts are attempting to implement better evaluation practices. Duncan (2010) states:

We have reached this stage of education reform after decades of trying, failing, succeeding and learning. We're building on what we know works – and doesn’t work – and while there are still some honest policy disagreements among key stakeholders, there is far more consensus than people think (p. 1).

Positionality Statement

In this section, I (the researcher) will present my own background in terms of evaluation as a teacher/staff member. As a former classroom teacher in Massachusetts for 10 years, I felt that the educator evaluation system was not a good measure of my teaching abilities, nor was it linked to how well my students performed each year on statewide assessments. I started out as a
teacher in 2001 and have seen little change since the 2009 reform was initiated. I believe my yearly evaluations did not collect an adequate measure to report on my effectiveness as an educator. Many times, the entire observation experience felt scripted and planned, and it provided little, if any, feedback to improve my practice. My evaluators were different every year, and the report I received changed in language and style depending upon who evaluated me. It appeared to me that, ironically, most evaluators had little or no experience teaching, familiarity with the standards, or the evaluation criteria. I also felt that the process was easily affected by subjectivity and bias; at times, it could be driven by reasons unknown to the educator, such as justification for termination before tenure was achieved. I believed that the observation time periods were too infrequent and too brief.

As a coordinator now, I see the other side of the educator evaluation system. I want to provide teachers with relevant information based on the standards to help them improve in their practice. The system now incorporates walkthroughs, conversations, observations of practice, and professional development opportunities that were not part of the system when I was a teacher. I believe the newly implemented Massachusetts system is an improvement from the past, but I still feel that there are flaws in the system. Those flaws include inconsistent evaluator training, which results in a lack of knowledge of the standards, and the many additional job responsibilities for each administrator, which make it difficult to complete observational reports efficiently within a school building, let alone across a district or statewide. The flexibility that the federal government has granted to states has also created an unbalanced system, in my opinion. Lastly, the lack of useful feedback before, during, and after the yearly evaluation.
Purpose and Research Question

This study will focus on teachers’ learning experiences and how these experiences are relevant to the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation process. This researcher will interview 4-6 highly qualified educators to gather information on their perspectives about the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation System and their own personal experiences with the evaluation process. The research question for this study is: How do teachers describe their learning experiences with the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation System’s process?

Theoretical Framework

Albert Bandura, a social psychologist, developed Self Efficacy Theory in 1977. Bandura defined efficacy as, “personal judgment of one’s capabilities to organize and execute courses of action to attain designated goals,” and he assessed its level, generality, and strength in various contexts (p. 191). Bandura’s theory (1977) posits that people with a strong sense of self-efficacy believe that they can influence others and events in their lives, which will lead to positive outcomes. These influences are deeply rooted in a person’s own belief systems and their motivation to succeed. Having a belief of positive self-efficacy will enable a person to achieve personal goals or to work through difficult situations. A person’s self-efficacy may help them to achieve a difficult task rather than to avoid it, since they may see the task as an achievable personal challenge rather than as an unattainable feat. The stronger a person’s self-efficacy is, the more they believe that they can succeed. In contrast, weaker self-efficacy contributes to lower motivation and possible failure.

Bandura (1977) stated that in order to judge a person’s self-efficacy there are four sources: performance outcomes, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological feedback; performance outcomes are the most important source of efficacy theory (figure 3).
When someone has success completing a task or an experience, they are built up to do well the next time and therefore they are more likely to have positive results in that area. In contrast, when a person has been unsuccessful in an area they tend to have more failure rate when repeating the same task or experience.

According to Bandura (1977), there are four means to develop the belief of self-efficacy. First, a person can develop self-efficacy by facing difficult challenges that are filled with obstacles. These experiences make a person more resilient and determined to be successful. In contrast, if a challenge is too easy, then a person may gain a sense of false efficacy. Second, self-efficacy can be developed by watching others reach their goals through efficacious efforts. These social models can help people by providing them with positive experiences while displaying examples of success. Another way people can achieve self-efficacy is by being socially persuaded to believe that they are able to accomplish their goals by others. Through verbal attempts, individuals or a group may persuade others to join them in undertaking a tough obstacle. This group effort transpires into a mission with common goals surrounded by team supports. Lastly, another source to help people believe in self-efficacy is a person’s emotional status at the time of the encounter. A person who feels well physically and emotionally may be able to tackle situations with more self-efficacy than others and have more success in these circumstances. Teachers who set goals for themselves with a strong sense of self-efficacy may attempt to take on new school-wide initiatives, such as educator evaluation.

Bandura (1994) stated:

Perceived self-efficacy is defined as peoples’ beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and
behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes (p. 2).

**Self-efficacy sources of Information**

![Diagram of self-efficacy sources]

**Figure 3. Self-Efficacy Sources**

Some researchers wonder why some people are more successful than others in their lives. According to Bandura, people are successful in different variations. For instance, “in academic settings, self-efficacy researchers have sought to determine the predictive value of self-efficacy beliefs on other motivation constructs or on varied performances” (Pajares, 1997). Finnegan (2013) describes how teachers with self-efficacy may perform in an educational setting: “A major attribute of effective teaching is a teacher’s sense of teacher self-efficacy, which influences teacher behavior, motivation, and impact on student outcomes” (p. 18). If teachers are concerned with student performance outcomes, then they want to be efficacious in their performance, as well, to help students achieve their goals in school. Students strive to get good grades and in turn, teachers strive to help those students attain good grades through instructional
practices. Teachers are also graded on their performance within the classroom at the school level, district level, and eventually at the state level. With education reform, teachers are being closely examined on their classroom practices and their students’ levels of academic achievement.

Bandura’s theory relates to this study by providing a background of how educators take on and respond to new school initiatives, such as teacher evaluation within a school. As teachers work independently or collectively on their professional or student learning goals, they may have a stronger sense of self-efficacy. Teachers with stronger self-efficacy “are more open to new ideas and are more willing to experiment with new methods to better meet the needs of their students” (Protheroe, 2008, p. 43). Bandura (1994) proposed, “Self-Efficacy is the belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (p. 2). When a teacher feels that they have the capability to complete a task then they are more confident to try it. When a teacher experiences success routinely with a task they become more confident to try different assignments in the future. Bandura (1994) concluded:

If efficacy beliefs always reflected only what people can do routinely they would rarely fail but they would not set aspirations beyond immediate reach nor mount the extra effort needed to surpass their ordinary performances, or execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations (p. 4).

By developing a new tool to evaluate teachers, educators are challenged to learn this new evaluation system, as well as to develop competency to prove their understanding of it. Teachers may experience the evaluation differently, and as a result have a sense of more or less efficacy towards it. Research indicates that teachers’ self-efficacy can be a predictor of classroom achievement and practices (Guo, Justice, Kaderavek, & Piasta, 2010). Bandura (1997) stated:
Mastery experiences are the most influential source of efficacy information because they provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed. Success builds a robust belief in one's personal efficacy. Failures undermine it, especially if failures occur before a sense of efficacy is firmly established (p. 80).

When relating this theory to teacher evaluation, one would look at self-efficacy as it relates to feedback and self-reflection in the evaluation process. Redman (2010) suggests that encouragement and discouragement facilitate the self-efficacy process when associated with performance. Part of educator evaluation in some states is goal setting. Massachusetts, for instance, incorporates teachers’ opinions in the evaluation process. Educators first begin their school year by reflecting on their past practice as a teacher to formulate new goals to submit for the upcoming year. The purpose of goal setting is to have the educator develop a plan on what it is that he or she would like to address in the new school year, which includes a student learning goal and a professional practice goal. For some teachers, this really channels what they want to accomplish for the year and for others it may be difficult for them to narrow down the two goals. Goal setting in relation to Bandura’s theory helps educators develop and attain goals that they feel will help them improve and that they can easily achieve.

According to Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory (1989, 1991), self-efficacy helps to increase a person’s awareness cognitively and affectively through challenging people to attain their set out goals for personal accomplishment. A strong sense of efficacy enhances human accomplishment and personal well-being in many ways. People with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided (Bandura, 1994, p. 202). Bandura’s Processes of Goal Realization include: self-observation, self-evaluation, self-reflection, and self-efficacy as displayed below (figure 4).
Figure 4. Processes of Goal Realization

Through teacher evaluation, teachers are able to express their goals and professional challenges as they relate to students’ achievement. Some teachers may feel that the new educator evaluation system is threatening in some way and may be difficult for them to meet the expectation of their school administration. Educational reform is change, and change is difficult for some. This shift in educational practices may result in teacher fear, and for some a change in profession. Bandura’s theory suggests that teachers who have stronger self-efficacy are better able to make the educational shift as it relates to the challenges that they face. Zimmerman (2000) stated, “Self-efficacy measures focus on performance capabilities rather than on personal qualities, such as one’s physical or psychological characteristics” (p. 83). This is significant when using Bandura’s theory as a lens to identify all of the individual differences teachers have within a school. Collectively or individually, teachers aim to do their best and want to provide their students with effective teaching strategies and, ultimately, academic achievement.
Self-Efficacy Theory (1977) can help us understand the research associated with teacher evaluation and how teachers feel about their learning experiences as it relates to modeling, feedback, and vicarious experiences. Educator evaluation in Massachusetts incorporates goal setting and self-reflection as part of the evaluation process, which allows teachers to incorporate their own beliefs.

**Summary**

Albert Bandura’s Efficacy Model of Social Cognitive Theory (1994) establishes a connection to understand how educators are feeling when they have developed a sense of self and group efficacy within an organization. Teachers working independently rather than in a group can become isolated. Bandura looks at schools that are based on collective group processes and school cultures that may have positive outcomes based on the social system collectively. By early goal setting, educators can feel empowered in the evaluation process and can visualize how they will manage their own goals and expectations in relation to the school-wide and district objectives. As schools may empower teachers to work in collective groups for the good of the school and to enhance student learning, they are also challenging teachers as professionals. Bandura’s theory is important to help recognize how teachers may respond to new school initiatives such as teacher evaluation reform, and to approach the research question of this project: “How do teachers describe their learning experiences with the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation System’s process?”

**Key Terms:**

**No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB 2001).** The No Child Left Behind Act was passed by Congress in 2001 and signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2002. The premise of the law, which replaced and updated the former Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965,
was to make the American education system internationally competitive and to focus on underperforming groups in American schools, such as poor students, special education, and English Language Learners.

**American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (2009).** The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, also called the Stimulus Act, was created by President Barack Obama to jumpstart the American economy, to help the American people get jobs, and to invest in education.

**Educator Evaluation.** A system in place to evaluate teachers and staff across the United States. The expectations and criteria of the evaluation system may vary by state.

**Race to the Top Initiative.** After the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act was created in 2009 by President Obama, a fund was created to support projected changes in education for the Race to the Top Initiative. This initiative was established to meet the needs of American schools so that equal educational opportunities would exist for all students. School districts had to apply for RRTT funds and the initiative became highly competitive.

**Efficacy.** The ability to produce a desired effect or outcome.
Chapter II: Literature Review

This literature review will examine past policies and mandates of the educator evaluation system as well as current trends, including trends in Massachusetts. The focus will be on educators’ perceptions about their own practices, the evaluation system, and how it ties into student achievement. The literature review is divided into the following sections: Educator Evaluation Historically, Effective Teaching versus Ineffective Teaching, Educator Evaluation and Professional Development, Student Achievement, The Purpose of Educator Evaluation Feedback, and Teachers’ Perceptions of Educator Evaluation.

Educator Evaluation Historically

After World War II, the approach of teacher evaluation shifted from scientific to individualistic. This new focus on the teacher as an individual was the first step towards the teacher evaluation system we have today. Coleman (1945) stated that “the first fundamental in understanding the teacher is… that the teacher is a person, different from every other person, living in an environment which affects and in turn is affected by that person” (p. 165). This important view was a shift in how teachers were evaluated in the past. Although evaluation at this time was specific in nature, for the first-time teachers were being looked at in a much different way. Teachers mainly spent the majority of their time with their students in their classrooms with little peer or administration interaction. Guidelines for teacher evaluation were not developed yet and teachers were not given supportive or collaborative experiences. Teachers were mainly teaching in isolation. Research identified how teachers were isolated naturally in their classrooms by building structures and building plans which prohibit them from working with others due to building constraints (Lortie, 1975, Blood, Cohen, & Blood, 2007). Teacher isolation is described by Lortie (1975) in three ways. One, teachers are isolated by their physical
space as he called “egg-crate” isolation where teachers work solely in their classroom and are separated by their spaces. Two, teachers are separated through lack of peer engagement and finally, adaptive isolation where teachers internally struggle from having to juggle the demands of teaching causing them to feel isolated in the workplace.

From the 1950s on, the practice of classroom observations developed. Whitehead (1952) set the groundwork for the idea that “the role of the administrator is in the facilitation process through feedback and conferencing post classroom observation” (p. 106). Thus, the role of the administrator was becoming more complex. Whitehead (1952) surveyed teachers about the importance of specific areas of supervision; they reported that to improve the classroom observation, principals needed to spend more time in the observation, and it was important to have a post-observation conference (p. 102). Whitehead’s views on evaluation changed how supervisors thought of evaluation. He stated, “Administrators should pay more attention to the chief aim of education – effective teaching” (p. 106).

In the 1970s and 1980s, the focus was on teacher observation in a clinical sense of supervision. Goldhammer (1969) first emphasized the need for more dialogue between the teacher and supervisor, identifying five phases of observation: Phase 1, Pre-Observation Conference; Phase 2, Classroom Observation; Phase 3, Analysis; Phase 4, A Supervision Conference; and Phase 5, Analysis of the Analysis. This idea revolutionized the evaluation process at the time and was intended to provide teachers with supervisory guidance and dialogue to help them become more effective. Despite Goldhammer’s intentions, his phases later became merely an exercise between supervisor and staff and lacked the guidance that teachers yearned for in their observations (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). Several evaluation models followed Goldhammer, such as that of Cogan (1973) and The Hunter Model (1980, 1984).

It wasn’t until the 2000s that student achievement became the main focus of educator evaluation. Even though teacher evaluation had changed tremendously over the years, researchers such as Tucker and Stronge (2005) and Toch and Rothman (2008) argued that the current evaluative practices could still be improved. These researchers focused on student achievement and its link to a teacher’s effectiveness, as well as the evaluation process. The evaluation criteria of the past indicated that the way a teacher was evaluated did not vary from teacher to teacher. In their study of 12 districts and 15,000 teachers in the United States, Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, and Keeling (2009) reported that teachers were evaluated based on their similarities but not on what made them unique. Their report, The Widget Effect (2009), demonstrated that administrators and other school personnel found the evaluation system to have many shortcomings.

In this study, teachers (73%) showed that there was a lack of guidance to help them develop as teachers; some teachers (45%) indicated that they actually were guided and supported in development areas. The study also pointed to the lack of training by administrators who performed the evaluations, as well as the infrequency of the observations. These emerging views on teacher evaluation were bringing about reforms in many educational areas, not just evaluation of staff, across the country. Some of those reforms were the foundation for President Obama’s American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (2009).

In 2009 President Obama created a “Race to the Top” challenge for America’s public schools as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). This act focused on many educational areas of improvement for students and teachers, such as rigorous high
standards and assessments for all students, attracting great teachers, the improvement of data systems, taking a closer look at low performing schools, and sustaining education reform. The act identified the need for great teachers and concentrated on teacher preparation, revising the educator evaluation system, and rewarding effective teachers.

This reform prompted many states to change their policies and to develop more comprehensive educational practices to foster excellence in teaching and learning for all students across the United States (The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, 2009). President Obama wanted to provide federal funding to states that were willing to compete for funds to improve their schools and meet the challenges of the new reforms. The competitive Race to the Top Fund was developed at this time to get states underway with the new development.

In 2009, the first phase of the Race to the Top grant challenge began with 46 states jumping on board to compete for grant money. Out of the 46 states, 11 states were awarded varying amounts of money to improve their educational systems. The educator evaluation system has been a challenging undertaking for many states and is still evolving today. Many of these challenges revolve around teacher training, the new expectation on teacher evaluation, and equipping school leaders to be instructional leaders, as well. These leaders are asked to move teachers ahead professionally and to provide meaningful feedback to staff. The expectation for administration is to provide clear communication, transparent expectations for teaching and learning, and new approaches to facilitate learning for teachers. Administrators are also expected to provide professional development opportunities for growth and career advancement for all staff. Finnegan (2013) notes:

School administrators impact the direction of a school and subsequently influence self-efficacy beliefs of both their students and staff. The level of support an administrator
provides to a teacher is one key determinant in their perceptions of teacher self-efficacy (p. 22).

Teachers like to feel validated in their work, especially when the workplace is always changing (Morgan & Lynch, 2006). In response to these changes, teachers are expected to learn how to develop as effective teachers within their practice. The goal of the evaluation process is to improve student outcomes and to evaluate effective teaching (Finnegan, 2013). Stronge and Tucker (2003) emphasized the importance of communication and collaboration in the development of any teacher evaluation model. According to Lee et al. (1991), there is a correlation of self-efficacy when administrators support teachers on skill development and are responsive to their needs. The teacher evaluation model of today has clearer expectations, rubrics, feedback, and open communication that may not have been apparent in the more traditional models of the past.

**Effective Teaching vs. Ineffective Teaching**

What is effective teaching and how is it measured? Some research suggests that there is a link between how well a student does in school and how effective a teacher is in the classroom (Jacob & Lefgren, 2008; Mead, 2012; NCLB, 2002). But how can one know if a teacher is effective or not? Research reports that 99% of teachers receive ratings of *satisfactory* on their evaluations (Thomas & Winger, 2010). What constitutes an effective teacher and is this expectation clear in all evaluations systems? Kane (2013) presented a definition for an effective teacher: “After a probationary period, a teacher is ‘effective’ if and only if, based on the available evidence (such as from classroom observations, students’ surveys and student achievement gains), their predicted impact on students exceeds that of the average novice teacher” (p. 1). Developing a consistency in teacher evaluations across the United States is
difficult since there is not one clear definition of what an effective teacher is and how an
effective teacher is measured to his or her peers. Stronge, Ward, and Grant (2011) concluded that
“the common denominator in school improvement and student success is the teacher” (p. 351).
If the teacher is the common link to student achievement, then how do we measure this? Race to
the Top legislature has provided us with two big takeaways about teacher evaluation. First, it
uses the measurement of student growth to predict a teacher’s effectiveness; and second, it
allows evaluators to look deeper at the rigor and pedagogical approach of the teacher (Marzano
& Toth, 2012).

Regular yearly observations, performed mainly by principals in the past, did little to
support teachers who were evaluated as effective versus ineffective in their teacher rating.
Research suggests that observation practices were not frequent enough to collect sufficient
ratings on teachers and that time was a huge factor when thinking about all of the job
responsibilities principals had to complete in a years’ time. Not to mention clearly the biases that
could be embedded in an observation. As Darling-Hammond et al. (2012) claimed, “Popular
modes of evaluating teachers are fraught with inaccuracies and inconsistencies, but the field has
identified better approaches” (p. 1).

Some principals and school leaders have received training in educator evaluation while
others have not, making it difficult to provide consistency overall for staff. But many states are
providing administrators with professional development opportunities to identify better
evaluation techniques in alignment with district evaluation measures. These opportunities help
administrators identify effective teaching practices by using consistent language and the use of
rubrics in observations. A commonly used training course for administrators in Massachusetts
for teacher evaluation is the Research for Better Teaching Model. This model helps leaders to
adopt a common language and practice when evaluating staff within their building and district. Research suggests both that more frequent observations by principals are beneficial to staff, and that feedback provided to the teacher after the observation is crucial. Taylor and Tyler (2012) concluded that observations completed by trained evaluators with high quality tools that provide feedback and goals are most favorable to improve instruction and achievement with students. Clear communication is essential when developing criteria for effective teaching practices. Finnegan (2013) states, “An evaluation model that clearly articulates the tasks for teachers can influence self-efficacious behaviors” (p. 23).

Marzano’s model (2013) to improve teacher quality includes five domains: A data-driven focus on student achievement; continuous improvement of instruction; a guaranteed and viable curriculum; cooperation and collaboration; and school climate. The Danielson Model (2011), another model that is widely used in education and evaluator models, has eight criteria: Centering instruction on high expectations for student achievement; demonstrating effective teaching practices; recognizing individual student learning needs and developing strategies to address those needs; providing clear and intentional focus on subject matter content and curriculum; fostering and managing a safe, positive learning environment; using multiple student data elements to modify instruction and improve student learning; communicating and collaborating with parents and the school community; and exhibiting collaborative and collegial practices focused on improving instructional practice and student learning. These two models are currently being implemented by districts across the country or adapted in some form to develop teacher evaluation systems.

According to Weisberg et al. (2009), high-quality teacher evaluations are based on: Clear performance standards; multiple, distinct rating options; regular monitoring; frequent and regular
feedback; training for evaluators; professional development linked to the performance standards; and intensive support for teachers who fall below the performance standards. Although these recommendations are noteworthy and have been proven to help teachers, they are not standard practice for all evaluation models. Research by Mathers et al. (2008) demonstrates that many models do not include regular feedback nor guide professional development opportunities with staff; therefore, they lack effective parts of the evaluation model recommendations.

Although evaluation practices to determine teacher effectiveness has improved, research by Kane (2009) indicates that many school districts still do not provide enough evidence to support effective teacher ratings versus ineffective teacher ratings. Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, and Keeling, (2009) concluded, “Teacher evaluation does not recognize good teaching, leaves poor teaching unaddressed, and does not inform decision-making in any meaningful way” (p. 1).

**Educator Evaluation and Professional Development**

Guided by the Obama administration, educational reform focuses on “developing teachers and principals, including by providing relevant coaching, induction, and/or professional development” (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, Sec. D [2] iv [a]). This reform was designed to assist all teachers across the United States, but does not vary state to state; thus, it is difficult to interpret and apply across the board for all educators. According to Darling-Hammond, in order for teachers to improve in their quality of teaching and gain teaching skills (2013):

- It is important to link both formal professional development and job-embedded learning opportunities to the evaluation system. Evaluation alone will not improve practice.
- Productive feedback must be accompanied by opportunities to learn. Evaluations should trigger continuous goal-setting for areas teachers want to work on, specific professional
development supports and coaching, and opportunities to share expertise, as part of recognizing teachers’ strengths and needs (p. 99).

Teachers want to improve their practice but may not have the ability to move forward without support. Research suggests that to improve teacher practice, continuous constructive feedback and a plan for improvement are essential. The Center for Great Teachers and Leaders of the American Institute of Research (2014) concluded, “Providing job-embedded, ongoing, individualized, and collaborative professional learning and support is necessary for teacher evaluation to have positive impacts on teacher practice” (p. 43). Professional development opportunities would clearly support educators in many ways, but deciding on which professional development topics to focus poses a challenge. Symlie (2014) stated:

If states are to improve the effectiveness of their teacher evaluation systems, they should make the provision of high quality professional development to all teachers a key element of these systems. Without more attention to professional development as a key complement to evaluation, recently developed teacher evaluation systems will likely fail to improve teachers’ practices in the ways theorized by their proponents (p. 107).

To address teacher evaluation, states have rooted professional development in their scheduled yearly meetings with staff. These planned events to target instructional practices may or may not help teachers become more effective in their practices. Depending upon whether the experience is relevant to the educator, the professional development may be applied to future practices. When professional development is prearranged without input from staff, it often has little to no impact on overall teaching practices. Therefore, for some, it can feel like a waste of time. Teachers reported that professional development in schools is a “patchwork of opportunities –formal and informal, mandatory and voluntary, serendipitous and planned”
(Druray & Baer, 2011, p. 273). Teachers most often attend one-day workshops covering various subjects throughout the day, usually spending about an hour on each subject. Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) concluded, “Short workshops of the sort found to trigger little change in practice are the most common learning opportunity for U.S. teachers” (p. 102). One can surmise that without meaningful opportunities, professional development may be important in the development of teachers’ own professional growth, but insignificant in terms of its impact on instructional practices, unless directly targeting areas of need. Through organized, relevant professional development opportunities, staff may have a better understanding of the expectations of teacher evaluation and be able to routinely practice these experiences in their classrooms. With modeled support and feedback, teachers can become more effective.

States must have a plan to model and provide support when training teachers how to interpret the teacher evaluation model. This has been a challenge for many states across the nation, in part due to a lack of staff and resources available at the district level to implement the plan. Another challenging factor is that many district leaders have little training as curriculum experts or with the evaluation tools. The U.S. Department of Education report (2015) stated:

Supporting educators as they build their practice requires strong preparation of aspiring teachers and ongoing professional development opportunities for all teachers and leaders; regular feedback on teaching and leadership practices, informed, in part by student progress; and strong instructional leaders in every school (p. 24). Support and applicable professional development is essential to teacher practice, especially for new teachers. An estimated 17% of new teachers leave the profession within their first five years of teaching (The U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Educational Statistics, 2015). As cited by teachers, the support and leadership ability of a principal is a
primary reason why teachers remain in the profession (Futernick, 2007). In a supportive
environment with opportunities to grow, new teachers are more likely to stay in the profession
(American Federation of Teachers, p. 22). The Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (2016)
stated, “High-quality professional learning and growth opportunities can help educators continue
to advance their practice and careers, making them more likely to persist in education” (p. 16). In
addition to participating in professional development experiences, including data and feedback in
their instruction would help teachers improve their practices (Jerald, 2009).

**Student Achievement**

Teacher evaluation reform requires that teacher practices improve student achievement. In 31 states across America, teacher evaluation is tied to how well their students do on statewide tests. Some researchers believe effective teaching accounts for higher yields with students’ consistency in achievement. “The effectiveness of the classroom teacher is viewed as the single greatest factor in improving student achievement” (Range, Hewitt, & Young, 2014, p. 1). Having an effective classroom teacher greatly benefits students in the progress they make each year. But variations of student groups, as well as differences in districts’ needs and resources, make it difficult to measure a teacher’s effectiveness from year to year (Range, Hewitt, & Young, 2014, p. 1). Although it is difficult to measure teacher effectiveness, states are seeking to improve ways to tie student achievement to the teacher evaluation system.

While student success may be a result of having an effective teacher, some states and individual districts are opposed to tying high-stakes standardized test scores to teacher evaluation. Student achievement scores drive many teacher evaluation policies, but the use of student achievement varies in evaluation (Zinth, 2010, p. 1). Since 2009 when President Obama challenged the states to improve their schools, teachers, and leaders, several states have adopted
value-added models in their teacher evaluation protocols. These models measure how a teacher has contributed to students’ scores in a given year compared to past years with different students. A value-added model can identify not only accountability in teaching, but also where a teacher may improve and reflect on practice (Kane, 2012). Value-added models, as used by some states, are a change from the student growth model, which measured progress increments over the long term with particular students. In contrast from the growth model, the value-added model shows how the teacher and leader can use data to determine whether a student has improved or is projected to improve in future years. Since many are skeptical of the effectiveness of traditional evaluation methods, the value-added model approach provides policymakers with a more consistent, unbiased approach (David, 2010).

The value-added model focuses on the student in a much different way, while also deeming the teacher to be effective or not. When used as the primary way to evaluate teachers, this model has stirred up controversy from state to state. Researchers assert that it is difficult to measure the predictability or validity of a student’s growth rate scores in a given year. Currently, all but five states – California, Nebraska, Iowa, Montana, and Vermont – use an evaluation system that takes into account growth of student achievement. Most evaluation models link student scores or growth of student achievement to teacher ratings and, in some states, merit pay each year.

Critics of the value-added model argue that it is difficult to measure a teacher’s effectiveness, since a teacher may not teach the same students from year to year and accountability tests may change, too. Polikoff and Porter (2014) questioned how value-added models can determine a teacher’s effectiveness in teaching; they stated, “Our results suggest that it’s going to be difficult to use these systems to improve teacher performance… Given the
growing extent to which states are using these measures for a wide array of decisions, our findings are troubling” (Walker, 2014). Baker, Barton, Darling-Hammond, and Ravitch (2012) concluded that the value-added model should not be the primary method to evaluate teachers, since it is imprecise and has many flaws.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2012) stated, “Value-added models of teacher effectiveness are inconsistent, researchers have found that teacher effectiveness ratings differ substantially from class to class and from year to year, as well as from one statistical model to the next” (p. 1). Especially for students who are far below grade level or at a higher-grade level, many factors other than their teacher may affect their growth in a given year. The RAND Corporation researchers (2003) concluded that value-added modeling “holds out the promise of separating the effects of teachers and schools from the powerful effects of such non-educational factors as family background” (p. xi). This creates a lack of trust of the value-added model (Koretz, 2008).

Although the value-added model has been criticized, some claim it is a fairer approach in the evaluation of teachers. The model collects data and compares teachers according to how well their students perform in a given year with the same predictors, such as standards, assessments, and objectives. The aims of the value-added model are to prevent differences in educating students and to hold teachers accountable. The model may be used to predict which teachers need professional development to become more effective.

As ideas are changing in educational reform, new movements suggest that the new presidential administration may impact school districts to change policies again. States may shift away from value-added models since there is little evidence to support the link between student achievement and teacher effectiveness. A 2014 PDK Gallup poll indicated that only 38% of the
public supports tying standardized scores to teachers’ evaluations; this suggests that views are shifting (Walker, 2014).

The Purpose of Feedback

Stronge (2012) claimed, “Teacher evaluation is, first, about documenting the quality of teacher performance; then, its focus shifts to helping teachers improve their performance as well as holding them accountable for their work” (p. 1). Teachers have indicated that feedback is an important part of their evaluations to improve their practice. McEwan (2003) confirmed that when administrators use feedback to guide teachers in professional growth and through accountability, they show instructional leadership.

Educator evaluation is an opportunity for evaluators to provide meaningful feedback to staff, in order to create communication and dialogue for ways to improve and reflect on practices. The Department of Education instructs states to “conduct annual evaluations of teachers and principals that include timely and constructive feedback [and] as part of such evaluation provide teachers and principals with data on student growth for their students, classes, and schools” (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, Sec. D [2] iii). Numerous states have developed evaluation procedures that incorporate effective feedback to staff during their formative and summative evaluations yearly. Some even use feedback as a constant ongoing practice in walkthroughs and professional development sessions.

Although feedback is important in evaluative practice, some report that it is still an area to focus on for improvement. Ideally, teacher evaluation would be an avenue for the implementation of constant feedback before and after the observation takes place, as well as ongoing discussions throughout the year. In many instances, an evaluator and teacher communicate in a pre-conference, where the goals and expectations of the lesson are discussed.
before the observation. The evaluator gives feedback to the educator through suggestions and recommendations before the classroom visit. After the observation, the educator meets with the observer again for a post-conference session.

According to Taylor and Tyler (2012), specified feedback to help an educator improve their teaching skills is vital to the profession. Although research suggests that feedback helps teachers continue to grow, it may not be helpful to move students ahead when examining student achievement. Massachusetts is one state that uses the evaluation system as an opportunity to meet with staff before a formal observation to discuss goals, artifacts, data, and how the lesson relates to student learning. This pre-conference allows the teacher to be part of the evaluation process by conveying their ideas, student learning goals, and professional goals to the evaluator. This opportunity gives the evaluator a clearer picture of what they will see and what the educator hopes to show during the observation. Once the observation is completed, the educator then meets again with the evaluator to reflect on the lesson and whether or not the lesson met the objectives. This is an excellent time to discuss growth and gain insight on planning, instruction, and assessment practices to improve teaching and learning.

In a Chicago study where a new teacher evaluation system was piloted, both teachers and administrators found that the evaluation system opened up communication between the parties, especially because conversations concentrated on evidence and standards. A downfall that the participants in the study noted, though, was the unequal participation of the parties. It seemed that the administrators guided the discussions, which limited the opportunity for self-reflection and growth (Sartain et al., 2011). Feedback is essential to teacher evaluations to help teacher learning and growth and to build professional culture. According to Marzano, Toth, and Schooling (2011), “the ideal evaluation model is a professional development model: it will rely
on frequent observations across different lessons and sections of students; it will provide ample opportunities for focused feedback; and it will build teacher expertise over time” (p. 6).

**Teachers’ Perceptions of Educator Evaluation**

Researchers have identified positive aspects of the teacher evaluation system and have made recommendations as part of their research. But as identified by McGuinn (2012), little research has been done in teacher evaluation to identify “how states are managing and supporting the implementation of these reforms” (p. 1). Since there has been little data collection on educator evaluation, it is difficult to project what the needs are from teachers. Arne Duncan of the US Department of Education stated, “Because teacher evaluation systems are still a work in progress, it is vital that school leaders and administrators continue to solicit feedback, learn from their mistakes, and make improvements” (McGuinn, 2012, p. 1).

There are mixed views on educator evaluation among teachers and administrators. Some teachers feel that educator evaluation is an opportunity to help them reflect on their practice as well as gather information to be better teachers. On the other hand, many educators feel that they do not receive enough feedback or descriptive documentation, thereby limiting their ability to improve in their professional practice. Some teachers also recognize that they need opportunities to guide them in new instructional approaches or in current information, such as professional development experiences. As stated by the U.S. Department of Education Report (2015), “New evaluation practices involved a shift in culture and expectations that, understandably, created anxiety amongst teachers, school leaders, and key stakeholders” (p. 26). It is relevant to note that teachers’ feelings towards the teacher evaluation process can help or hinder the evaluation outcomes. Teachers feel more positive about teacher evaluations when they partake in the
process, such as helping in the planning, designing, and facilitation of the evaluation model (Clark, 1996; Koster, Brekelmans, Korthagen, & Wobbles, 2005).

Sheppard (2013) surveyed 277 teachers and 12 administrators in Georgia and found that teachers and administrators were, overall, pleased with the evaluation process. Teachers felt that direct feedback related to the standards was especially helpful in professional practice. Administrators, on the other hand, focused more on how evaluations gave them a better picture of teachers and how their evaluations tied to student achievement.

Xu and Sinclair (2012) surveyed teachers and administrators about educator evaluation and found that both groups had similar views on the purpose of evaluations. Principals and teachers felt that evaluations were used for accountability, helping teachers grow as educators, and improving teaching and learning. Xu (2012) found that teacher evaluations were most valuable when there was a pre-conference and post-conference and when other teachers were used as peers to coach. Research suggests that teachers feel that the lack of feedback and brevity of the observation are the least effective measures of the process. Namaghi (2010) asserted that teacher evaluations are used for two purposes: to distinguish the quality of a teacher, as well as to offer opportunities from which a teacher may benefit through professional development experiences.

There are limited studies directly related to how teachers perceive evaluation in its entirety. The government provided states with the leeway to create their own procedures and guidelines, so this limitation could be a result of the variation among states’ adopted practices. The range in which states could change their evaluation systems has made it difficult to collectively judge how teachers feel about educator evaluation. Bravmann (2004) classified the summative aspects of educator evaluation as an “endpoint measurement only [which] omits the
very aspects of assessment that enable us to attain positive outcomes” (p. 56). The limited research available shows teachers to have mixed opinions about the evaluation of staff. A national study of about 1000 teachers’ data found that only one fourth of the participants considered their evaluations to be not valuable or applicable to their teaching (Duffet, Farkas, Rotherham, & Silva, 2008).

Donaldson (2012) found that there is little information on teachers’ perceptions of the new evaluation system (p. 1). Donaldson (2012) reported that “a large majority of teachers said the teacher-evaluation program did not generally affect their pedagogy but that many said it did affect their planning and overall approach to teaching” (p. 3). The study also found that teachers were mostly happy with the goal setting component of teacher evaluation and the fact that student performance data would be used in the goals (p. 3). Donaldson (2012) also looked at the importance of feedback in his study and found “in general teachers noted that they did not receive targeted feedback, more observations, or suggestions on how to teach differently through the program” (p. 3). In addition, teacher evaluation was more “positively” viewed than “negatively” viewed, and it was considered necessary by teachers (Donaldson, 2012, p. 2).

Since the Race to the Top grant began in 2009, the U.S. Department of Education (2015) reported that the first 12 participating states have made a difference. According to the report, “the state’s role in improving teaching and learning has changed fundamentally” (p. xi). The changes to teacher evaluation models as specified in this 2015 report are: the improvement and development of new evaluation systems for teachers and principals; better communication and feedback provided to staff; the ability to retain and reward effective teachers and leaders; clearer expectations on performance for all; new career opportunities/pathways for teachers and principals; and professional development opportunities to improve teaching and learning (p.
xv). In the years that follow the implementation of teacher evaluation models throughout the United States, new research will be highly relevant and important to study as it becomes available.

**New Trends in the Massachusetts Evaluation Framework**

After recognizing the limitations of their state’s evaluation system and a desire to comply to new federal reforms, Massachusetts developed a new educator evaluation model in 2012. Many limitations in the old Massachusetts model prompted this change, including: the small number of observations completed in a year; the lack of levels of effective teaching categories; minimal identification of excellence in teaching; too many differences between districts within the state; and the absence of self-reflection or growth for staff (Brown, Partelow, & Konoške-Graf, 2016). To address these weak areas, Massachusetts developed a 40-member task force, which later went on to create a framework for Massachusetts teachers and administrators that encompassed a 5-step evaluation cycle: self-assessment; goal setting and plan development; implementation of the plan; formative assessment evaluation; and summative evaluation (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2012). The Massachusetts Taskforce (2016) indicated:

> More than anything, evaluation systems should be recognizing, developing, and promoting the most talented and successful educators. We need an approach to evaluation that is all about celebrating excellence, and ensuring that those who excel also thrive in their workplaces, and stay in education (DESE, 2016).

Ideally, the plan was to include 50% participation of school districts in the state to begin the model in 2012-13 and 100% by the 2014-15 school year. School districts had the choice whether to adopt or adapt the new model, or revise their current model under the new regulations (DESE,
Since the inception of the Educator Evaluation Framework in 2012, all districts have adopted or adapted the new model, or built on their existing model to establish better evaluation practices and to meet the regulations by the state. 2016 was the first year in which all districts in Massachusetts have reformed their evaluation systems and are now collecting data. Since the model is fairly new, there have been very few studies into how teachers are feeling about the changes.

In their study, Brown, Partelow, and Konoske-Graf (2016) aimed to appraise the Massachusetts Teacher Evaluation model as compared to other states. The study concluded that Massachusetts presents an evaluation framework that is a great alternative to other evaluation systems across the nation. Brown, Partelow, and Konoske-Graf (2016) stated that it is a great alternative because it focuses on educator growth and development as the main priority. The study found that Massachusetts has developed an evaluation framework that empowers teachers, keeps control at the local level, promotes reflective practice and professional development, and helps facilitate feedback between teachers and administrators (Brown, Partelow, & Konoske-Graf, 2016). Results of the study also found that teachers were positive about the new system and that they found it to be necessary for them to grow as educators. Testimonials from teachers indicated that the system is a guide for choosing relevant professional development, opens up communication in a collaborative way with other staff, and allows more reflective practice than before (Brown, Partelow, & Konoske-Graf, 2016).

Thomson (2013) found that 56% of the teachers he surveyed in Massachusetts felt that their teaching practices had improved as a result of the new teacher evaluation model in the state. Thomson (2013) indicated that “overall participants reported that they agree with key goals of the evaluation system to improve instructional practice and student achievement” (p. 60). In
contrast, Huckstadt (2011) found that teachers reported little to no improvement in instructional practice, but did find that their professional practice had improved.

Just recently in 2016, Massachusetts has been faced with the question of whether to tie student test scores to teacher evaluations. Massachusetts’ current evaluation model does not do so, but rather helps teachers focus on what they need to learn to improve their instructional practices and to assist students. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) created by President Obama in 2015 has just relieved states of having to link student scores to teachers’ evaluations. Some states have already dropped this practice in their evaluation procedures and rubrics, but Massachusetts – despite being at the forefront of many educational practices and having the highest standardized test scores in the nation – is considering incorporating it (Ravitch, 2016).

Conclusion

Teachers in K-12 education are being evaluated throughout the United States yearly. These teachers have had to shift their instructional practices to meet the high demands of teacher evaluation, which is an important part of education reform. From state to state, teacher evaluation has changed. In Massachusetts alone, 79,000 educators in 366 districts were evaluated in 2015 under the new evaluation system (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2016). During the 2014-15 school year, about 87% of teachers with professional status rated as proficient and one in ten rated as exemplary. These teacher ratings were up from the 2013-14 school year, when 85% were rated as proficient and 7% as exemplary (DESE, 2016). Although teacher evaluation is here to stay, the range in evaluation practices across the United States results in a range of teachers’ perceptions of these evaluations, as well.
Chapter III: Research Design

The purpose of this study is to describe and understand the learning experiences of teachers with the educator evaluation system in Massachusetts. By interviewing teachers in Massachusetts, this researcher will explore teachers’ learning experiences on evaluation practices to better understand their view to help guide future practices within the state and build the current literature on teacher evaluation.

Research Question

This qualitative research study is guided by one research question: How do teachers describe their learning experiences with the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation process?

Qualitative Research Design

Information regarding the teacher evaluation system is unique from state to state. The majority of the information is researched based evidence and some anecdotal accounts of teachers’ perceptions and experiences with educator evaluation. This research study will focus on teachers’ experiences in Massachusetts as described by them and will use a qualitative research design to better understand their real-life situations.

Using a qualitative research design in this study allows the researcher to interview participants in their natural setting to acquire knowledge from their experiences with educator evaluation and to better understand their perspectives on teacher evaluation in Massachusetts. A qualitative research study allows the researcher to understand how the participants are feeling through their described lived experiences. Qualitative research is exploratory. Creswell (2014) stated, “In qualitative research, inquirers use the literature in a manner consistent with the assumptions of learning from the participant, not prescribing the questions that need to be answered by the researcher’s standpoint” (p. 29).
Creswell (2009) identified five methodological approaches in qualitative research studies: case study, phenomenology, grounded theory, narrative, and ethnography. According to Creswell (2009) in a qualitative study, there are nine characteristics to include: data collection which encompass multiple forms of data collection, participant’s perspectives obtained in a natural setting, researcher as key instrument, inductive data analysis, participants' meanings, emergent design, theoretical lens, interpretive analysis and holistic account.

In qualitative study patterns, categories and themes are examined to organize the data (Creswell, 2009). Creswell noted regarding qualitative research, “The intent is not to generalize to a population, but to develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon” (2009, p.203). Using a qualitative research design, and to further explain how teachers describe their experiences, the researcher will use phenomenology, specifically, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), for the purpose of this study. Using IPA for this study will allow the researcher to be immersed in the world of individual teachers and to make meaning of their experiences as they understand the evaluation system in Massachusetts.

Research Tradition

The phenomenological movement was initiated by Husserl (1859-1838). Edmund Gustav Husserl, a German philosopher and mathematician, developed the school of phenomenology in his early years of work. According to Husserl, “Phenomenology involves the careful examination of human experience” (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009, p.13). Husserl believed in order to understand the essence of an experience one would need to “disengage from the activity” and to “attend to the taken for granted experience” of it (Smith et al., 2009, p. 13). Through this careful examination “of a given phenomenon,” one might be able “to identify the essential qualities of that experience” (Smith et al., 2009, p.12). Unlike other forms of qualitative research,
Edmund Husserl developed Transcendental phenomenology. “The basic premise of this school of phenomenology is its adherence to the notion that experience is to be transcended to discover reality” (Kafle, 2011). Transcendental Phenomenology involves deferring one’s own beliefs through a state of consciousness that allows the researcher to discover the true essence of a phenomenon. Followers of Husserl include: Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty, each of them going on to develop their own unique perspectives on phenomenology.

As a student of Husserl, Heidegger (1889-1976) developed Hermeneutic phenomenology which rejected the idea of deferring one’s personal beliefs in the research process. Hermeneutic phenomenology is focused on methods and purposes of interpretation (Smith et al., 2009). Hermeneutics is a “research methodology aimed at producing rich textual descriptions of the experiencing of selected phenomena in the lifeworld of individuals that are able to connect with the experience of all of us collectively” (Smith, 1997, p. 80).

Both phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology focus on the lived experience. Husserl’s phenomenology is best known as descriptive phenomenology since it aims to describe the experience. On the other hand, Heidegger was best known for interpretative phenomenology which was an extension of Husserl’s beliefs and focused on the “understanding of beings or phenomena” (Laverty, 2003, p.24). Heidegger’s focus was more on “the mode of being human” or as he called it “Dasein” (Laverty, 2003, p.24).

Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), a French philosopher and follower of Husserl and Heidegger, best known for his work The Phenomenology of Perception (1945), took his own stand on phenomenology by describing how people view themselves in the world as individuals
and in this individual perspective, he or she can never experience what another individual experience. All three scholars were instrumental in developing the principles in phenomenological inquiry. Phenomenology is a philosophical and psychological approach to study the experience of others. From a psychologist point of view, phenomenology helps us to examine and understand

**Research Design**

A qualitative study/IPA qualitative research study allows the researcher to understand how the participants are feeling through their described lived experiences. Qualitative research is exploratory. A phenomenological research study, is a study that attempts to understand people's perceptions, perspectives and understandings of a particular situation (or phenomenon) (Van Manen, 1990). A phenomenological study also includes bracketing, intuiting, analyzing and describing (Creswell, 2013). Bracketing is the process of identifying any pre-conceived beliefs related to the phenomenon while researching. The purpose of bracketing is for the researcher to acknowledge his/her own preconceptions and biases and thereby “identify personal experiences with the phenomenon and to partly set them aside” (Creswell, 2013, p.78). Intuiting is when the researcher becomes completely immersed in the study in order to understand what the participants are experiencing. Analysis of the data through open, axial, or selection coding helps the researcher to make sense of the data and to provide meaning. Lastly, describing includes understanding the phenomenon in order to define it.

**Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is an approach of qualitative research that has become increasingly popular in the past twenty-five years. Rooted in psychology, IPA, is grounded in the theory of interpretation, or hermeneutics (Smith,
IPA is “the complex understanding of experience, an unfurling of perspectives and meanings, which are unique to a person’s embodied and situated relationship to the world” (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 21). Using IPA, as a methodology in this study, will allow the researcher to discover how teachers describe their unique experiences with teacher evaluation as it relates to that person. IPA, which focuses on a shared phenomenon of a small group of people, sometimes even one participant, looks at how someone makes sense of his/her major life experiences (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009).

IPA is based on phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2013). Phenomenology is how individuals experience a phenomenon and describe their experiences (Creswell, 2013). This purpose of this proposed phenomenological study is to better understand teachers’ learning experiences with evaluation. Hermeneutics is a theory behind spoken words or writing (Smith, 2013). Hermeneutics involves the interpretation of the researcher with his/her subjects. In an IPA study, the researcher brackets his/her own thoughts about teacher evaluation so that he/she may better comprehend the experience of the subjects interviewed. The goal is to be reflective while interviewing through active listening, and to interpret the experience of the subjects being interviewed individually.

Lastly, idiography relates to a certain group of people in a particular situation and examining each individual one at a time. This study will use Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to discover the meaning behind teachers’ descriptions of the evaluation process and their thoughts about evaluation that holds meaning to them. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) state, “When people engage with an experience of something major in their lives, they begin to reflect on the significance of what is happening and IPA research aims to engage with these reflections” (p.3). The Massachusetts Teacher Evaluation System has been newly developed and
implemented in some school districts beginning in 2011. Since this is a new development for most teachers in the state, the researcher aims to discover the reflections of teachers on this evaluation system. This proposed study focuses on 4-6 teachers’ perceptions and their involvement in the evaluation process each year.

Site and Participants

The site of the study is in a suburban town in Massachusetts with approximately 2,800 students and 225 teachers. The district consists of one preschool, two elementary, two middle and one high school. Teachers will be asked to participate from all grade levels within the district and teachers will be from diverse backgrounds such as years teaching, gender, and experience. By using the maximal variation approach, the researcher will be able to provide “a purposeful sampling strategy in which the researcher samples cases or individuals that differ on some characteristic or trait” (Creswell 2005, p. 204). Among the participants, the teachers within the district will be from all academic areas grades pre-k-12 in general education and special education areas.

The sample size for this study is relatively small, Polkinghorne (1989) suggested that an interview sampling of 5-25 participants is sufficient in phenomenology. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) agreed that “IPA studies usually have a small number of participants and the aim is to reveal something of the experience of each of those individuals” (p.3). The small sample size will allow the researcher to easily develop rapport with the participants as it will be discussed beforehand that their experiences will be anonymous and information will not be shared (Crewswell,2007).

The IRB process will be completed and approval will be granted before the study begins.
particular perspective on the phenomena under study” (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009, p. 49). Participants will be selected through purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling occurs when a researcher selects the participants based on recommendations from others or based on their projected contributions to the study which will help the researcher to answer the research questions. Maxwell (2005) stated, “Purposeful sampling…is a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 88). Participants in a phenomenological study must have experienced a particular phenomenon and also be prepared to elaborate on their experience with the phenomenon (Thomas & Pollio, 2002).

**Recruitment and Access**

Through the superintendent’s office, the researcher will obtain verbal and written consent to complete the study, recruit and have access to participants within the district (Appendix A). A recruitment letter will be distributed to staff via email (Appendix B). The researcher will access staff after school hours, and on voluntary time in different schools in the district, the local library, or an agreed site. Participants will be advised that their participation in the study is voluntary and a consent form to participate will be signed by those interviewed for the study. Participants of the study will be selected by the researcher or suggested by other district leaders. The consent form for this study will be consistent with the researcher’s name, the title of the study, why the study is being conducted, who is conducting the study, time constraints, any risks or benefits, and the method and storage of data used in the study. In addition, confidentiality and anonymity will be reviewed with participants (Appendix C).

**Protection of Human Subjects**
To protect participants’ rights, informed written consent was used (Appendix C). Participation in this study was voluntary and participants were notified that they could withdraw from the study at any time. A comprehensive outline was provided to participants to explain the purpose and methods of the study, as well as timelines (Appendix D). There is required training to work with human subjects, the researcher participated in such training and forwarded to the Office of Human Subject Research Protection through email. Permission was granted from the Office of Human Subject Research Protection. The study was deemed to be of minimal risk for its participants and minimal harm to participants was anticipated. Participation in this study was voluntary, teachers could answer as many questions as they felt comfortable with when being interviewed.

**Data Collection/Data Storage**

The data collection in this study will include individual interviews of teachers from a Massachusetts Public School. The data that will be acquired from these interviews will provide information based from the personal views of teachers regarding their described learning experiences and reflections with teacher evaluation. In an IPA study, it “recognizes that access to experience is always dependent on what participants tell us about that experience, and the researcher then needs to interpret that account from the participant in order to understand their experience” (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009, p.3).

Interviews will include information collected through observations and conversations with participants. This researcher will audio record all interview sessions with participants. The recordings will be sent to a transcription company called Rev Voice Recorder. After initially reading through the transcriptions, they will be analyzed for common themes and clusters.
according to participant responses. The researcher will analyze the data to identify common clusters of information on teachers’ experiences with teacher evaluation.

The interviews will be 45-60 minutes in length. During the interviews, all teachers will be asked a series of open ended questions about evaluation as it relates to them and will have time to describe their experiences with it. There will be approximately 5-7 questions asked in the interviews (Appendix D). “Interviewing allows the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in the light of participants’ responses” (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009, p.57). To help participants feel at ease and to check for accuracy, Maxwell (2005) suggested a second meeting/phone conversation scheduled in addition to the interview to validate the responses after participants are interviewed. Once the interviews are completed, the information obtained will be transcribed. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) stated, “Qualitative analysis itself is very time consuming, and sufficient time must be built into a project to allow the analysis to be carried out systematically and comprehensively-but also to allow space for reflection, consultation with others, and further development” (p. 54). Upon completion of the transcribed interviews, spaces in the margins should be left so that bracketing may be completed (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009). Analysis of the information obtained will be completed later and will be coded for common themes related to their lived experiences with teacher evaluation.

Interview audio recordings, notes, and forms associated with this study will be kept in a locked file cabinet. Information obtained from the participants during the study will be destroyed two years after the study is completed to protect the identity of participants.
Data Analysis

Data analysis in an IPA study uses an approach that starts at the bottom to the top. A researcher will generate codes from the data that is obtained rather than use codes that are already existing. IPA studies set out to find new information to add to existing research that has already been done to help to understand the phenomenon in a new way. Once the data is transcribed, the researcher annotates the text to gain the essence of the experience from the data. This data is then put into categories. Through the coding process, the researcher begins to analyze the information by looking for patterns in the codes. The researcher is looking for information from the participants that may be recurring throughout the process so that the information can be interpreted. As patterns in the data emerge, these themes may help the researcher to identify common thoughts or experiences that the participants have in common or are relevant to the study.

Data analysis in an IPA study has suggested steps and can be flexible in analysis, but Smith et al. (2009) recommended novice IPA researchers may find it easier to conduct their study to include these six proposed steps to help with structure to the study.

Step 1: Reading and rereading. Each interview conducted by the researcher must be looked at individually to focus on each independently. It is recommended that the researcher read and reread the data several times and listen to the audio recording several times to focus on the participant (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009). Completing the first step repetitively, might help the researcher to bracket their thoughts in the margins of the transcript or in a notebook to remain focused on the data (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009).

Step 2: Initial noting. Detailed note taking of each interview is the second step. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) suggest that the researcher spend a lot of time with step one and two
to get familiar with the participants’ responses in the transcript and also to get a feel for how the participant responds to the issue. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), also suggest using different focused processes when completing note taking with the transcripts: Descriptive comments, Linguistic comments and Conceptual comments.

As a participant, has responded throughout the interview, specific words or key phrases may be easy to identify in the printed-out transcript. These key areas will help the researcher to gain a better understand of the meaning behind the words from the participant and will help to develop descriptive comments about the text (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009). Linguistic comments are made by the researcher when she/he can identify the use of language by the participant for example, a pause or repetitive word (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009). Lastly, conceptual comments are another form of annotation that allows the researcher to dig deeper into the analysis to search for the real meaning/understanding of the interview responses from the participant. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) state that this is “more interpretative” in the analysis and that “conceptual coding may often take an interrogative form” (p.88). In this part of the analysis, the researcher may develop a better understanding of the participant’s thoughts on teacher evaluation as it relates to his/her own preconceived understanding.

**Step 3: Developing emergent themes.** After step two is completed in the analysis process, the researcher will have additional notes to the original transcript. These notes taken by the researcher begin to take on new life of the meaning behind the transcripts according to Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, (2009). This new meaning is where the researcher begins to identify the emerging themes from the data. The analysis of the data becomes an intertwined relationship of the participant’s words with the reflections of the researcher. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009)
stated, “Whilst initial notes feel very loose, open and contingent, emergent themes should feel like they have captured and reflect an understanding” (p.92).

**Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes.** In step four, emergent themes have been developed as they have appeared from the transcript and the researcher’s reflections. The themes must be mapped or charted to see how they fit together. It is important for the researcher to develop a sense of what to use and what to discard at this step to look for patterns in the data. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) propose many examples to use in this step such as abstraction, subsumption, polarization, contextualization, numeration, function. This list is a guide for researchers, but one or all may be used depending on the research question and study. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) suggest that the researcher create a chart to organize the emergent themes to view in a graphic analysis. Shaw (2010) described this step as “taking large amounts of raw data and then going through various stages of activity in order to reduce them into meaningful chunks” (p. 196).

**Step 5: Moving to the next case.** To keep in line with the IPA steps, the researcher must continue the same process with each case to look individual at each participant’s interview. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) do explain though that since each case is looked at individually, there may be different emerging themes with each one (p. 100).

**Step 6: Looking for patterns across cases.** Once the data is identified from step 4 and put into tables or charts, and steps1-4 is repeated for each case, step 6 is the last step in IPA and it looks to identify patterns across all of the cases collectively. To compile the most relevant themes across the cases, Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) propose creating a table to display the themes. Once this step is completed the researcher would then do a complete write up of the analysis. To show the reader what it is that the researcher found in the study. This final step in
analysis is the most detailed and interpretative part of an IPA study (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009).

**Trustworthiness**

This researcher served as the Coordinator of Special Education during the 2016-2017 school year in the district and was in the teacher’s contract during that time. Since the researcher was familiar with the Massachusetts Evaluation Framework, biases and preconceptions were bracketed during interviews (Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing allows the researcher to add notes during the interview process while collecting data from participants which helps the researcher to jot down ideas and connections at the time of the interview (Creswell, 2013).

Moustakas refers to these notes as field notes and identifies how these notes are important in the interviewing process. Field notes may capture what cannot be heard in a recorded and transcribed interview. Field notes would indicate how a person is reacting to a question, their mood, or ease to answer which cannot always be heard in a recording. According to Patton (2002), the use of field notes after an interview that is conducted by the researcher may increase the validity of the research. Research validity may also be increased by triangulation.

“Triangulation is a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (Creswell, Miller, 2009, p.126). In addition, to increase the validity and reliability of this study, the same questions were used for each participant in the interviews but not all questions that were asked in interviews had follow up or probing questions.

**Summary**

Teacher evaluation has shifted in past years, and this shift has shown differences in evaluation criteria across the United States. To guide this study, the researcher will use
Bandura’s Efficacy Model of Social Cognitive Theory, and guided by the research question, “How do teachers describe their learning experiences with the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation process?” In an attempt to study the phenomena, this researcher is using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as a research method to understand the lived learning experiences of teachers and the evaluation process. The goal of the researcher is to better identify teachers’ needs and to add to the existing literature on teachers’ learning experiences with evaluation.
Chapter IV: Research Findings and Analysis

The purpose of this research was to explore teachers views on their learning experiences with the Massachusetts Evaluation process. Six public school teachers were chosen using purposeful sampling to gain insight on their learning experiences with educator evaluation. Bandura’s Efficacy Model of Social Cognitive Theory was utilized as the theoretical framework of this study. All interviews were conducted at a mutually agreed upon place and time with participants. All interviews were audio recorder using Rev.com and then transcribed within 24 hours of the interview. The research question guiding this study was: “How do teachers describe their learning experiences with the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation process?”

This chapter is organized into four sections: introduction, participants profiles, data analysis from the findings, and conclusion. Participants “essence of their experience” will be presented with a liberal use of quotes throughout to inform the reader of their experiences with new Massachusetts teacher evaluation system in a specific school district in the Commonwealth.

Participants Profiles

The six participants for this study teaching in a suburban public-school district located in Southeastern Massachusetts. Teachers volunteered to participate and signed consent for this study. Teachers varied from the schools within the pre-K through 12th grade district. The teachers were given pseudonyms to protect their identity and the findings of this study. Interviews were conducted over a two-week span at a location of the teacher’s choice. Each teacher selected had various credentials and licenses. Grade level and experience also varied among participants.

The school district population had approximately 2500 at the time of this study. The district consists of one preschool with over 100 students. Two elementary K-5 schools which
vary in size from one containing 400 students and the other with 600. Two 6-8 middle schools varying in size as well, with one enrolling 400 students and the other 600. The high school within the district has over 900 students at the time of this study. The participants consisted of six teachers with varied experience from five years to 21 years. Table 1 includes further information about each of the teacher participants. Information included in the table are teacher pseudonyms, total years teaching, current position, familiarity with teacher evaluation, whether they have a group or individual goal and their current cycle in the Massachusetts Educator Evaluator System.

Table 1

Participants Background information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Total years teaching</th>
<th>Current Position</th>
<th>Familiarity with teacher evaluation</th>
<th>Group goal or individual goal</th>
<th>Year Evaluation cycle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexis</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Professional self-directed growth plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Non-professional status years 1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Professional self-directed growth plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valerie</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Non-professional status years 1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pam</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>Newly</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Professional self-directed growth plan year 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Newly</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Professional self-directed growth plan year 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alexis. Alexis has been working as a special education teacher for 11 years total within the district. Before her current position, she worked in a private school teaching different grade levels. She is “pretty familiar” with teacher evaluation and is on a self-directed growth plan on
the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation System. Alexis considers herself a singleton in special education, therefore she often develops her own goals instead of working as a cohort with others. Alexis has had other jobs in the educational field and has worked with children in various jobs most of her career. Alexis feels that although special education teachers are required to adhere to the same evaluation process as other teachers, that she really isn’t so sure that it is applicable due to the differences in many special education programs with students with disabilities.

**Will.** Will has been a special education teacher for 17 years at the high school level in three different districts. He is very familiar with teacher evaluation since he has been “going through it” since its induction. Will reports that all three districts have given him different experiences with teacher evaluation. Will works currently in co-taught classrooms and has a caseload of special education students. He is in his first three years of teaching within this district, therefore Will does not have professional teacher status yet. Will has an individual professional and student learning goal and prefers to work independently rather than with a group on his goals.

**Kate.** Kate has been a teacher for 21 years and has worked in a variety of careers her whole life. She is very familiar with teacher evaluation and has even worked on a committee to develop information about teacher evaluation within the district. Kate works with high school students at all grade levels and abilities. Kate currently teaches science. Kate is on a self-directed growth plan and works on her goals individually. In addition to being a teacher, Kate has had various job experiences working in other fields like a researcher, taxidermist, and scientist. She has completed many professional trainings and has been on many educational committees too.

**Valerie.** Valerie has been a teacher for five years total working in two different districts. She is new to this district; therefore, she does not have professional teaching status. She currently
teaches special education students in a small class setting and has a caseload of about 15 students. Previous to her teaching career, Valerie was employed in the business world. Valerie would like to work on her goals with others yearly, but has not had the opportunity and works individually on her professional learning goal and student learning goal.

**Pam.** Pam is in her 13th year of teaching and is currently working with preschool children. Prior to preschool, Pam worked in subset programs. Pam has a group goal and works with other preschool teachers in collaboration. The preschool group of teachers decided on a yearly group goal to fill in the curriculum gaps for the students in 2016-2017. Pam is in her 2nd year of a self-directed growth plan on the Massachusetts Evaluation Model. Although Pam has been teaching for 11 years within this district, this is the first time in four years that she has been evaluated with the new teacher evaluation model and she is interested in learning more. Pam is excited to learn from the evaluation system and enjoys working with her colleagues.

**Hannah.** Hannah is going in her sixth year of teaching at the high school level and is currently teaching math. Hannah has always worked with kids in the role as a camp counselor and or teacher. And states that she has “Always loved working with students and kids.” Hannah has professional status and is in her first year of a self-directed growth plan on the evaluation cycle. Hannah currently works in the math department and stated that she is working on an individual goal not a group goal for teacher evaluation. Hannah would love to learn as much as she can while teaching to help improve her instructional practices to help students. She gets her best information to improve on her learning through discussions with colleagues in the math department. She states that the information provided by teachers is far more useful than information provided by evaluators.

**Thematic Analysis**
An analysis of the transcripts generated five major themes in which participants described their experiences with the teacher evaluation process. These themes were carefully developed by the researcher’s interpretation of the data that emerged through the analysis of the transcripts and observational data in the interviews with participants (table 2).

This chapter includes emerged themes from the transcripts. Included in the themes are quotes from the participants, observations from this researcher, embedded reflections, and descriptions from the participants’ experiences.

Table 2

Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Alexis</th>
<th>Will</th>
<th>Kate</th>
<th>Valerie</th>
<th>Pam</th>
<th>Hannah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers felt isolated in the workplace through content areas and peers.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teachers’ learning experiences from the evaluation process is mostly dependent on the experience of the evaluator each year.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers report that the evaluation process is a mixed bag with both positive and negative parts.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The evaluation process has helped teachers to become more reflective in their professional practice.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback, modeling and collaboration from others is important to teachers.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers felt isolated in the workplace through their content areas and lack of peer interaction. The first theme that emerged in this study from all participants except for Hannah,
was a feeling of isolation. Throughout the interviews, educators commented on their feelings of isolation. Although teachers felt comfortable in their own classrooms, most felt isolated in their specific teaching area and also by being away from their peers. Isolation was broken down into two areas of discussion: Isolation from teaching different content areas and isolation from lack of interaction with colleagues.

By working alone in a particular content area, teachers felt that they had limited opportunities to work with like peers in the same content area and that this limitation prevented them from opportunities to discuss their related field. Teachers noted that they met to collaborate on their own with other staff but had limited scheduled times to discuss subject content in general. Teachers expressed how these limited experiences with peers and administration made them feel like they were teaching in isolation. Through more collaborative experiences with peers and administrators, teachers felt that they could improve the lines of communication, and ultimately improve in their own learning.

Alexis, Kate, Valerie and Pam believed that their content area was specialized, therefore this specialization made it difficult for others to understand what they did in their classrooms, especially the administrators evaluating them. Special education teachers particularly felt isolated by their content area since they believed that they were different than the larger group. For example, Alexis said, that the evaluation process was a process that was meant more for regular education classroom teachers. She stated, “Because that is how the system is geared towards, it really isn’t appropriate for a special education educator.” Alexis said:

She wished that they had a more specific evaluation process for specifically what I do. I feel like I’m just lumped in with people that are in my profession, we’re wedged into a one size fits all evaluation tool, which is not probably the most appropriate.
Alexis’ content area is not similar to other teachers, her classroom is unique, as well as her students, which makes it difficult for her to collaborate with others about teaching and learning. Alexis felt isolated by her content area, isolated by her peers and misunderstood by her evaluators, making the evaluation process challenging for her each year.

Teachers also attributed their isolation to scheduling difficulties and the lack of common planning time. Teachers often do not meet unless they do so on their lunch break, before school or after school. Pam stated, “There’s no common planning time” and “there is no concentrated time,” “it is purely like on an individual basis if you were talking to one of your peers.” Also, high school content specific meetings within this district are limited to monthly curriculum meetings with curriculum staff. Teachers expressed their desire to meet more to discuss content/curriculum. Kate stated, “Up here peers do not go into other people’s classrooms, which I don’t agree with.” She continued to say, “I feel the best way you can learn is through communication with each other.” In contrast, Hannah regularly met with other staff in her math content area, so she did not feel isolated by her content area or peers. But would like to learn more from the evaluation process to be better at her craft.

All of the teachers interviewed had some form of peer isolation when asked, except for teacher Hannah. Teachers Alexis, Will, Kate, Valerie, and Pam believed that they did not have enough collaborative opportunities to meet with peers to co plan, discuss classroom practices or compare ideas. Alexis felt that her lack of collaboration and interaction with peers in her field made her feel like she was different than her peers. Through these differences, Alexis felt that the teacher evaluation process should not pertain to her specialty area. To add to this, Kate felt isolated when asked about working with other teachers, she stated, “You feel like a man on an island at this point.” Kate very rarely interacted in other peer classrooms, but often helped peers
in their content knowledge when she ran workshops, curriculum, or trainings. Professionally, she has worked numerous times in peer cohorts which she felt were very helpful to her professional practice. In her current position though, she said that she did not have much opportunity to visit peer classrooms and it was not as welcomed in her school. She stated, “I think the best sharing model you can have is for peers to come in.” Kate continued, “I used to work in groups and we’d share information and I need that.” She would like to see more peer collaboration in and out of schools as she participates in online professional learning communities outside of work. Kate stated how she learned through collaboration with peers and how important it was, but in her current position, she has not had many collaborative opportunities, nor does she feel that she has learned much from others.

Valerie felt that her learning experiences were mainly from the day to day conversations that she has had with staff and students. She believed that her peers have been very helpful in her learning and most discussions were “Impromptu, primarily when I have a chance.” Valerie was interested to “Get a handle on the mysterious thing that some teachers have that other teachers don’t.” Pam stated that there was little to no time to communicate with peers since there was the lack of common planning time and that all peer communication was on your own time on a one to one basis and inconsistent. Pam described her experience as “isolated from her peers.” She stated, “There’s no common planning time, our first planning time is in the morning from 8-8:45 a.m. and then once 8:45 hits we have kids all day long and there is no collaboration time.”

Lastly, Hannah had a slightly different view than the others. She did not feel isolated in the workplace and stated that “She gets her best information to improve on her learning through discussions with colleagues in the math department.” She has had a few opportunities where she
has visited other peer classrooms though and has tried to “harness” what she found valuable from their teaching.

Five of the teachers that were interviewed, all from different grade levels and content areas, felt isolated in the evaluation process in some way. After reviewing the data, it appeared that all teachers, except for teacher Hannah, felt like they were working alone most of the time in isolation. Teachers wanted more time to meet with peers individually, or in content specific groups, to collaborate on teaching strategies to help them to improve professionally.

**Teachers’ learning experiences from the evaluation process is mainly dependent on the evaluator that they have from year to year.** The second theme that emerged from the data was how the Massachusetts evaluation process can be helpful to teachers, but is mainly dependent on the experience and knowledge of the evaluator each year. All of the teachers interviewed believed that their learning experiences with teacher evaluation depended on the particular evaluator that they were assigned to and that it changed from year to year.

Participants indicated that there were differences in evaluators’ knowledge and these differences influenced how teachers felt about their own learning experiences in the evaluation process. Pam has worked in the preschool for a few years and indicated that she had not been evaluated consistently since she had moved schools. Pam referred to her past experiences with evaluation and described a past evaluator. She believed that she was unique in what she did as a preschool teacher and that, “As a sub separate classroom teacher, the principal we had at the time did not have any special education experience so that was not very positive for me.” She continued by saying,

If you have a great evaluator who knows their stuff, so to speak, then you can certainly learn from them as well. If an administrator doesn’t understand what you are doing, I
think it’s more difficult for them to be able to support you because there’s no knowledge base, shared knowledge base.

Kate reflected on her past experiences with evaluators too and said, “When I first was evaluated it was the principal who would come in, write up three times a year, you would have a progress plan and we would sign off on it, and there was some give and take, writing it up.” Kate reported that “It was a positive experience because it showed me what kind of things, not being an educator, the principal or person in charge was looking for and it helped me become a better teacher.” Kate also referred to how some evaluators are different than others and some of her experiences have been “positive and some have been negative.” She discussed in one instance that her evaluator “Put himself in a power position” and that she felt “knocked down” by her evaluator and disagreed with her evaluation rating. She asserted that the evaluation system was supposed to “Help teachers reflect and to help them improve in their practices.” She stated, “Evaluation is a two-way street” where both the evaluator and teacher are learning through the process. In this instance Pam did not feel like she learned from her evaluator that year and indicated that for many evaluation cycles, that she actually had more experience in years and content knowledge than the administrators that had evaluated her.

To add to this thought, Valerie too reported that she had positive and negative experiences with her evaluators from past to present. She remembered in a past school where an “Administrator said to us, I can’t give you a proficient rating because I am not proficient.” Indicating that the evaluator did not have proficient experience to evaluate Valerie or was not familiar with the content area. Valerie said, “Time was a factor, in our specific situation, we rarely saw administrators come through our classroom whereas some other teachers saw them all the time.” Compared to other schools from other years where she stated, “I’ve been in schools in
the past where administrators were constantly a visual presence in the school.” Valerie said, “I’ve never had an experience where I felt I wasn’t getting along with an evaluator” and “because I am a special education teacher, we do have a number of visitors in our classroom.”

Will wanted an evaluator that had a similar background as he did. He referred to how important the evaluator’s experience was when he stated, “Evaluators or supervisors may not have been in the classroom for a while, things may have changed.” Will valued “The time I get to sit and discuss education with another person who’s been in the field for as long as I have or longer. Someone who has had relevant experiences, someone who’s dealt with the same student population as I have.” Will was very hopeful throughout his interview, he emphasized how he wanted evaluators that would help him to grow as a teacher and valued experienced evaluators.

Overall teachers believed that their evaluations had varied due to the experience and the changes in their evaluators each year. While some teachers reported that their evaluators had been more experienced/trained than others, teachers claimed that they have had both positive and negative experiences with evaluators.

In addition to an evaluator’s background experience, teachers felt strongly about their evaluator having familiarity with their content area and the student population that they taught. Five out of the six educators interviewed (one math, three special education, one preschool, and one science) felt that the evaluator’s understanding of their content was an important part to their learning. Teachers wanted an evaluator that was familiar with their particular subject area so that they would be able to effectively evaluate them, provide them with relevant feedback, and to help them to grow as teachers. Five of the teachers felt that administrators generally lacked content knowledge, therefore they believed they had limited meaningful learning experiences from their evaluations as a result of this. For example, when administrators came into the
classroom, Kate stated, “They come in, they write things, they don’t know the content at all, so they don’t even know whether you are teaching the right material or not. So that’s where I feel the evaluation is flawed.”

Hannah said, she wanted “Someone who was able to criticize the content” to understand what she was teaching so that she “could grow as a teacher.” She reported that she had not learned from her evaluators but wished to have more content knowledgeable individuals to evaluate her, so they could critique how she taught the material. Hannah reported how knowing specific content would allow the evaluator to assess whether a teacher was teaching the material correctly so that they would be able to provide relevant feedback on the teaching lesson instead of just critiquing the pedagogy. She stated, “I think the evaluation process is too generalized because I don’t think the evaluators always have a greater understanding of the topic.”

Although Hannah most recently reported that she hadn’t learned from the evaluation process by her evaluators, she also reported that one year she was “Lucky to have an evaluator who was math based so he was able to tell me what I could have improved on, even though I didn’t necessarily get that.” Also, another year that she was “Fortunate enough to have an amazing evaluator, who had the math background originally, who was able to give me a little criticism.”

Special education teachers felt isolated by their content differences and also by administrators’ lack of knowledge in their area. Teachers felt that this lack of knowledge regarding special education in general created a negative experience for them (Teachers Alexis, Will, Valerie, and Pam). For example, Alexis stated that most evaluators are “Not familiar with her students” or what she did as a special education teacher and, “again it has to do with the expertise” of the individual. Although Alexis has had some negative experiences with her
evaluators, she also has had some positive experiences too. She stated that she “Is often successful because I guess from their lack of knowledge” in her teaching area. Alexis indicated that she did well on her evaluations yearly as a result of evaluators lack of knowledge of the content. Alexis said that her most recent evaluation experience had been positive. She stated, “My former evaluator over the last cycle was extremely knowledgeable when it came to special education, so I found that extremely valuable and I felt like I had a lot to learn from that person.”

Teachers report that the evaluation process is a mixed bag with both positive and negative experiences that evoked many different emotions. Generally speaking, teachers reported that they had both positive and negative learning experiences with the evaluation process. A major part of the evaluation process in Massachusetts is having an evaluator visit your classroom while you are working with students through short classroom visits and longer scheduled visits. Although teachers stated that they were both excited and nervous during these classroom visits, all of the teachers said that they “welcomed visitors” because they took this an opportunity to show what they could do in the classroom. Will has been in the classroom for 17 years and he stated, “Anybody is welcomed in my classroom.” Kate has an open-door policy in her classroom with administrators but said she would like more peer interaction with her colleagues. Although peer visits are not part of the evaluation process in Massachusetts, Kate felt that visiting other teacher classrooms could be a helpful practice to learning. She believed that her school frowned upon colleague classroom visits and said that it was not a “welcomed practice,” but believed that there should be more of it. She was confident in what she did and believed that “It is nice to show people what you’re doing with kids in the classroom” when they come in to evaluate her. Kate felt that “The evaluation system was flawed and that there was a
lot of room for improvement, but she was hopeful that it will continue to improve and that the lines of communication are opened up more.”

Valerie said that she had always had a lot of visitors come to her room and that she was confident with the evaluation process. She stated, “I feel like it’s my time to show off. When evaluators come in to see me it is my chance to shine.” Valerie added, “We have to be evaluated” and that “overall the idea of teacher evaluation is a good thing.” But at other times in other school settings, she did not feel so confident. She stated at times her evaluations have “been contrived” and her evaluators have not understood what she was trying to accomplish in her lessons, which made her more anxious in the process. Pam said she has “An open-door policy” in her classroom and said that she didn’t “Feel like she needed to put a show so to speak when someone came in to do a walk through.” Pam was excited to have someone to come in since she felt “Undervalued, underappreciated, and misunderstood maybe.”

Overall, teachers welcomed visitors in the classroom and proposed that visits should be more frequent to see the daily ins and outs of classroom teachings. Teachers said that they wanted both peers and administrators to visit them for more collaboration and feedback from the observation and that they were generally excited to have people see what they did each day.

Although all of the teachers expressed that they valued visitors in their classes, some teachers (Alexis, Will, and Valerie) also felt that the process was somewhat forced when they described the longer announced formal classroom observation compared to the shorter informal walkthrough. Teachers felt that the announced observation did not allow for an authentic experience since it was pre-coordinated between the teacher and administrator; They feared that it could create a scripted visit. Valerie believed walkthroughs were more important than formal observations. She stated,
I really think walkthroughs because a formal observation you know they are coming and you have whatever you need prepared. But walkthroughs, they are picking up on a moment in time. So, the students do not know they are coming. I don’t know they are coming. Those are very helpful.

Alexis didn’t find the evaluation process challenging at all, “Because I just think it is part of every day, that’s just what we do it’s the norm.” Alexis found the formal observation the least meaningful in the evaluation process “Because of the formality of it” rather than the walkthroughs, where she felt were “more natural.” Will considered the formal observation to be the least meaningful in the evaluation process too. He thought that the formal observation would “Get teachers who are trying to put a show on for evaluators and teachers who plan elaborate lessons when it is really not needed and may disrupt some of the process.” Pam believed that all parts of the evaluation process were equally important but stated, “She always has an open-door policy in my classroom so I don’t feel like I need to put on a show so to speak when someone is coming in to do a walkthrough.”

Hannah liked walkthroughs over the formal evaluation, she stated “Just because the walkthroughs are where they see the general education action of what you are doing.” But indicated out of the whole evaluation process she enjoyed self-reflection the most. Kate however indicated that the formal observations “Were helpful because they opened up lines of communication.” Kate said that she mostly liked the self-reflection piece and the formal walkthrough the most in the evaluation process because “It allows me to have the discussion with the evaluator on what they saw was going on in the classroom, for me to sit back and really evaluate the methodology I use within the classroom. Did I reach all kids?”
Most of the teachers were excited to have visitors in their classrooms and welcomed them, some felt that the unannounced walkthrough was more natural than the formal announced observation. The formal observations felt “scripted” to some and teachers believed that these visits forced them to put a show on for their evaluators. Teachers were not conclusive about what they had learned from the walkthroughs or formal observations and participants expressed different emotions when asked about the evaluation process.

The evaluation process has helped teachers to become more reflective in their professional practice. Reflective practice is the fourth theme to emerge from the data. All participants in this study expressed how they used self-reflective practices to help them to understand what their strengths and weaknesses were in relation to the evaluation process and how to best help the students that they taught.

The first step of the Massachusetts evaluation process is self-reflection. This step was created to help staff to identify their personal strengths and weaknesses as teachers. Through conversations with other teachers and their evaluator, teachers are able to narrow down their goals for the upcoming evaluation year through a self-reflective entry. A common theme that emerged from the interview data was how using self-reflection practices helped teachers to improve. All of the teachers interviewed discussed the importance of learning as a teacher, and how their learning has helped them to become better teachers, so that they may ultimately help their students. As part of this process, teachers described how they self-reflected through journaling and by jotting notes down during or after a lesson to review at a later time.

All of the teachers in this study believed that self-reflective practices had helped them to improve their own professional teaching practices by narrowing down what they needed to do in the classroom. Alexis believed when she received feedback from her evaluator, either positive or
negative, that it helped her to become more reflective in her teaching practices. She stated, “Just some feedback that gives me ideas on how I can improve my practices and better ways to meet the needs of all my learners,” is what she valued the most from her evaluations. Alexis self-reflected after her post-conferences, so she could “change her practices” and see what she needed to do differently for her students. Alexis stated:

I self-reflect after just about all of my lessons, in the middle of my lessons, as I am planning my lessons. I reflect on what has occurred during the lesson, what is a flop during the lesson, how I can change it, how I can change in on the spot or how I can change it in the future. I do self-reflection all the time.

Will was excited about the evaluation process and stated, “It gives me a chance to reflect on my teaching strategies and I want to do better.” He said that he can “Be authentic and be myself, take risks, and reflect on my practices to do new things.” Will self-reflected by “Looking at student outcomes on a daily or weekly basis and I try to use assessment data to decide whether or not my methods or instruction or my special education practices are working.” Although Will regularly self-reflected, he also felt that teachers often did not have enough time to sit back and reflect deeply because of the fast-paced environment. Will liked to write self-reflection thoughts in a journal and believed that all teachers should self-reflect and did not think it was done enough.

Kate worked outside of her classroom to help other teachers at the elementary and middle school levels. She felt that these modeling opportunities gave her “The chance to reflect, and to bring better practices into her classroom.” Kate felt that the purpose behind the evaluation system is that “it is supposed to help teachers reflect and help them improve their practices.” Kate stated:
Self-reflection I think is even more important because it helps you form your instruction for the next day. It helps you get in tune in with your students- do you reach them or don’t reach them. If you do reach them what did you do to tap into their interest. If you don’t reach them, what do you need to do different? You have to constantly self-reflect. And it doesn’t have to be paper and pencil, even if you take a few minutes at the end of the day, what really worked well, what didn’t work well, and then help that to inform your instruction.

Similar to teachers Alexis, Will, and Kate, Valerie noted that she regularly self-reflected too. She liked to write her thoughts down by journaling in a notebook when lessons went well and particularly, when they did not go so well. Valerie liked to review her old notebooks from year to year to reflect, so she could “grow in her confidence” to see how far she has come as a teacher.

Pam liked to hear the perspective of her evaluator after classroom visits and noted that she always reflected. She stated, “It is nice to hear someone else’s viewpoint” and said self-reflection is done by her “on a daily basis.” Pam thought, “Self-reflection in the evaluation process, being able to do that with another professional, if you will, to be able to share ideas, being your evaluator… I think is very helpful.” Pam concluded that self-reflection helped her to learn and grow as a professional because “Ultimately you want to be a better teacher cause nobody’s perfect and it’s unobtainable, but you want to be the best that you can be.”

Lastly, Hannah agreed that self-reflection was the most important part in the evaluation process because she felt that it was the “most beneficial” to her since she goes home and “pesters over every single second of her day.” She tried to “figure out” what she could have “done better” on in the classroom. She consistently reflected to figure out what could have been done differently, for instance, she wanted to know “Was it me? Was it the students? Was it the time of
day? Did I have energy? Was it the way I taught the lesson?” Hannah tried “to reflect on the practices” that she needed “the most improvement on.” She also liked to keep a journal to look at “things that went well, lessons that went well.” She stated, “As far as reflection goes, I think it has made me become a better teacher because I have allowed myself to grow within the situation.”

Reflective practice was a common theme that was heard throughout the teacher interviews. All six teachers used some form of ongoing self-reflection through journaling to improve what they were doing in the classroom. Teachers felt that self-reflection was necessary and most helpful in their learning experiences and without it, they could not grow as teachers and help the students that they teach to the fullest. Teachers wanted to help their students learn and through the evaluation process, teachers were able to reflect on their teaching practices that helped them to be better teachers. By doing so, teachers could target how they could improve their practices so that students will be better informed and learn from them. It was evident from the interviews that staff really were interested on improving their teaching strategies for their students and that self-reflection was an important part of the teacher evaluation process.

**Feedback, modeling and collaboration from others is important to teachers in the evaluation process.** The final theme that emerged from the data was how teachers learned from the evaluation process. Teachers reported that they learned mostly from others through collaboration, feedback, and modeling. Participants in this study often felt that there wasn’t enough collaboration, feedback, or modeling opportunities from administration or peers and wanted more of it. This theme is divided into two parts: how collaboration and feedback from others is important in the evaluation process to help to improve teaching practices and how modeling is essential in the evaluation process.
Teachers reported that feedback was important to them in the evaluation process. Teachers from this study wanted to use the feedback that they received from administrators to improve/adjust their teaching practices, so they may add to their repertoire of skills and learning experiences. From the data, teachers Alexis, Will, Kate, Valerie, Pam and Hannah felt that feedback helped them to improve as teachers. Alexis valued feedback the most from the evaluation process. She stated, “Feedback gives me ideas on how I can improve my practices and better ways to meet the needs of my learners.” Alexis felt through collaboration and feedback that she was better able to problem solve, “Bouncing ideas off of different people who may have ideas.” When asked about feedback Will stated, “I think it is very important. It is important to me because even after 17 years, there are still areas I can improve on. I welcome the coaching, I welcome the feedback. I welcome the criticism.” He continued by saying, “I feel like as the years have gone on that the evaluation system has evolved. My feedback has gotten more specific, more helpful, more relevant.” Although Will welcomed feedback he also stated, “There’s not enough feedback and I don’t think there is enough time.”

Kate believed that feedback was important to the learning process for teachers, but also reported that she has had both negative and positive feedback experiences. She pointed out that the evaluation process should be to help teachers to improve in their practices, but at times, it had become negative on a personal level and she didn’t appreciate that. Kate would rather receive feedback from administrators, than from teachers, because they are the ones evaluating her and they should have comparable knowledge. To open up communication between staff and administrators, Kate believed feedback was necessary and more of it would help to improve the evaluation system. She believed providing teachers with simple statements such as, “You’re
Valerie revealed that feedback and coaching were important to her and that she also has had both positive and negative feedback experiences, but mostly positive from administrators. She stated:

It is very important to me because I know there are things that I’m good at, and I also recognize that there are things I am less proficient at or just less inclined to focus on. It helps me to see how I can improve on my weaknesses, and hopefully also on my strengths.

Valerie felt that the feedback depends on the evaluator and that it can change from year to year. She explained that one year she had an evaluator that spent a lot of time with her and was invested in helping her. Another year she said that her evaluator had less time and the feedback was less valuable to her. But overall, Valerie considered the discussion/feedback between the teacher and evaluator the most valuable to her learning in the evaluation process. Pam believed feedback was based on the particular evaluator and stated, the evaluation process is as strong as the feedback that you get from your evaluator. She felt:

Feedback was always important because it helped you to perfect your craft and to gain new insight. It exposes you to different methodologies you might not be privy to. It’s broadening your knowledge base and as a result will make you ultimately a better teacher.

Hannah agreed that feedback and coaching was important to her. She stated, “I think you have to tell people their negatives. You can’t just sugar coat everything, because sugar coating isn’t going to make them better.” Hannah looked for “constructive criticism” in her evaluations from
administrators because she thought she could consistently improve and she “felt like a lot of times when she went into those meetings, it’s just like, Hey, you did a really god job today.” Hannah wanted to improve as a teacher and she believed that the evaluation system was “too generalized” because she didn’t think the “evaluators always had a greater understanding of the topic.”

Although teachers had positive feedback experiences with evaluators over the years, they also described how these feedback experiences with administrators were limited in amount and they wanted to have more experiences. Some teachers reported other than their yearly evaluation, there were no new opportunities to receive feedback, while other teachers were more optimistic (Will, Kate, and Pam). They had indicated that feedback to them over the years was getting better and the process itself had improved. Tying it all together, feedback to improve teacher performance was still inadequate by most teachers’ standards. Teachers felt that the evaluation process had not been given the time that it needed between administrators and educators to really provide enough relevant feedback. Kate reported although she agreed that the evaluation process was still growing and had improved, it is “Not quite where it should be yet.”

Although the Massachusetts Evaluation process does not include peer coaching or peer feedback, both ideas surfaced from the data when teachers were interviewed. Teachers felt that peer feedback was lacking in the process and was relevant to the learning process for them. They indicated that this type of feedback was actually non-intrusive to them compared to evaluator feedback since they believed peers had similar teaching experiences and knowledge as they did. Most of the teachers interviewed indicated that peer feedback was the preferred feedback for their professional learning. Although Will valued the feedback that he received from his evaluators, he also discussed how important feedback from his peers was to him. He stated, “As
an educator I value feedback from everybody, but more specifically I value feedback from my peers because they deal with the same students I do, their goals are often similar to mine, we’re all looking for the same outcomes, so peer feedback is more important to me.” Hannah valued feedback from administration too and agreed with Will about feedback from peers. She stated, “I think my best feedback that I get in general is from my colleagues. Like I said they are in the classroom and it is more specific.”

Pam also felt that feedback from other teachers was significant, but said that there wasn’t enough time or feedback opportunities with staff. She felt that feedback from colleagues was more relevant than from administration because “We may have different strengths, different teaching methods, different philosophies. In sharing philosophies with her she understands my perspective and vice versa.” Will learned through the evaluation process by setting goals for himself and through timely feedback. In his experience, the feedback that he has received was “Neither timely or very helpful” to his learning. Alexis also believed that feedback from peers was vital, but said that she often was the one providing “Feedback and coaching to other people” and she “Would like to have more of it” from them. Hannah stated the most beneficial feedback comes from colleagues in her opinion because “They are in the classroom and it is more specific.”

It is evident by the data that teachers wanted to improve as educators, and to improve, they indicated that they wanted to learn from others through modeling or observational opportunities. Alexis reported that she “Thinks that there are positives and negatives with modeling because some people have a specific preference” and depending on the need of the staff modeling can be helpful. Kate said, “modeling is huge” but she often felt that she does the modeling for administration and staff because of her expertise level and that she would “like to
see modeling by supervisors.” Pam stated that modeling was “how you learn” and that she “welcomed such opportunities.”

Although teachers reported that modeling opportunities were embraced when they had them, they reported that they rarely existed in the evaluation process with their evaluators. Alexis, Will, Kate, Valerie, Pam, and Hannah all said that they had not had any relevant learning experiences from evaluators through modeling in the classroom. Valerie reported that she had “Not had any modeling going on through my evaluation experience.” She said in her experience with teacher evaluation, that “The evaluator just comes in and takes notes and does not necessarily engage with the students or her.” Hannah also said she hadn’t “Seen any one of my evaluators modeling anything for me, per say.” Modeling experiences with evaluators through the evaluation process was reported as limited or not present from year to year, and participants identified that modeling by administrators would be beneficial to them in the evaluation process.

Some teachers suggested that modeling by peers would be helpful to them in the evaluation process although it was not part of the current process. Will “Felt that modeling was helpful” and he suggested that modeling by both evaluators and peers “would be beneficial” but his experiences with modeling have been limited. Hannah stated, “I believe that your peers bring more and have a better influence” when it comes to modeling in the classroom.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter identified five themes from the data as it related to teachers’ experiences with the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation process. Things that stood out in the data from participants:

Isolation

1. Teachers felt alone most of the time.
2. Limited interaction with colleagues and evaluator
3. No common planning time

**Evaluator experience**

1. Evaluators were not consistent
2. Evaluators had different experiences/knowledge
3. Support was inconsistent

**Mixed emotions**

1. Teachers were excited and anxious about the evaluation process
2. Teachers wanted more frequent visits
3. Walkthroughs were liked better than formal observations

**Reflective practices**

1. Teachers often used reflective practices
2. Reflection is used to improve teaching
3. Reflective practices improves student outcomes

**Collaboration, Feedback, and modeling**

1. Feedback is used to adjust/improve practices
2. Used for problem solving
3. There isn’t enough time
4. Specific relevant feedback lacking
5. Feedback, modeling, collaboration from peers is needed
6. Learning from others

In summary, teachers from this study revealed that they had both positive and negative experiences with the evaluation process. Mainly what became clear from the analysis of the data
was the feeling that teachers wanted more from the process. Teachers felt isolated and they wanted more communication and collaboration with administrator and peers. Teachers wanted evaluators that could evaluate them effectively, by being skilled in evaluation, and also by being familiar with their subject area. Teachers also wanted their evaluators to visit them more frequently and to provide them with more feedback about their teaching. Lastly, teachers wanted modeling in and out of the classroom from administrators and colleagues. It appeared that teachers were not fully satisfied with the process as it currently exists and are hopeful that the process will continue to improve in the future.
Chapter V: Analysis, Implications, and Recommendations

The purpose of the study was to understand how teachers learned from the Massachusetts evaluation process. This researcher explored teachers’ views on the evaluation process and ways in which teachers believed that they had learned through the process. Teachers’ personal learning experiences as public-school employees were analyzed through the lens of Bandura’s efficacy theory.

The individual question used to guide this study was: How do teachers describe their learning experiences with the Massachusetts evaluation process? This researcher selected Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the research methodology. An IPA study was specifically chosen because this methodology could be used to capture individual teachers’ thoughts on the teacher evaluation process to show how it impacted their learning and teaching in the classroom. The analysis performed by this researcher, supported teachers’ beliefs as it relates to self-efficacy for individuals working alone, and within a group setting. Why is this important? This research is important to help better understand how teachers make meaning of their environments and to indicate how their personal thoughts contribute to other teacher views in a school environment regarding evaluation processes.

The literature review of this study demonstrates the limited data available regarding teachers’ learning experiences with educator evaluation. The findings of this study are intended to provide a better understanding of teachers’ perceptions so that evaluation processes and practices may be explored in greater depth. Six public school teachers were chosen as participants in this study with teaching experience ranging from five years to twenty-one years. The teachers representing this study differed in age, gender, education, and socio-economic backgrounds.
Revisit the Problem of Practice

Public schools are learning environments for students that aim to provide them with the best opportunities so they may gain the skills needed to pursue career and post-secondary goals. Teachers are responsible for the students that they teach under their care in public schools. This responsibility is fulfilled through the knowledge and skills that educators possess. Educators in turn are evaluated by administrators within their roles in educational settings such as schools. Evaluation processes are inconsistent from state to state and across Massachusetts. There has been limited studies/data to explore teachers’ voices with their learning experiences in the evaluation process.

To understand the evaluation process better, to shed light on the learning that takes place through the evaluation process with teachers, the research question underlying this study was How do teachers describe their learning experiences with the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation System’s process?

Discussion of the Key Findings

Embedded in the interviews, conducted in this study, were five major findings related to the research question.

The five themes that developed from the analysis of the transcripts in response to the research question include:

- Teachers felt isolated in the workplace.
- The teachers’ learning experiences from the evaluation process is mainly dependent on the evaluator that they have from year to year.
- Teachers report that the evaluation process is a mixed bag with both positive and negative experiences that evoked many different emotions.
The evaluation process has helped teachers to become more reflective in their professional practice.

Feedback, modeling and collaboration from others is important to teachers in the evaluation process.

The following sections represent the research findings significant to the participants learning experiences in the key findings from this study, the key findings in relation to the theoretical framework, and the major themes in relation to the literature. The last section will discuss the limitations, recommendations for future research, and lastly a personal reflection.

**Teachers felt isolated in the workplace.** The participants shared their experiences as it related to being evaluated in their classrooms. Teachers expressed how they felt alone and isolated from other teachers in the workplace. Teachers felt isolated by working alone in their classrooms and also through limited collaborative experiences with other staff. Teachers Alexis and Valerie, special education teachers, felt even more isolated since their population of students and curriculum differed from other staff. Teachers who were singletons, like Alexis and Valerie, not in a co taught environment or on a team, felt little or no direction from administration. Four out of the six participants believed that they were alone most of the time and they described their experiences as “alone on an island” teaching by themselves. Participants wanted more interactions while they taught to collaborate with peers, and more collaboration with administrators. Participants suggested more evaluation time with their evaluators through frequent check ins and observations. Pam said that she hardly ever had interactions with administrators or other staff and that she wanted more of it.

**The teachers’ learning experiences from the evaluation process is mainly dependent on the evaluator that they have from year to year.** Evaluators from year to year are assigned
different teachers to evaluate. Teachers felt that this unpredictable practice provided them with inconsistent learning experiences with the teacher evaluation process. Participants wanted evaluators who were trained, consistent, and had similar experiences in teaching as they did. Will wanted someone who was able to understand his content and who had comparable experiences as he did. He wanted consistency in the evaluation process with trained evaluators. Teachers wanted their evaluators to know or understand the content areas that they were teaching. Participants felt that their evaluation ratings had changed each year and were dependent on the evaluator. Participants suggested that some evaluators may have developed a better connection with them, which could have affected their experience towards the process. A few participants even noted that some evaluators were negative towards them and evaluated them poorly, while others had evaluated them more favorably from year to year.

**Teachers report that the evaluation process is a mixed bag with both positive and negative experiences that evoked many different emotions.** Teachers had mixed emotions when discussing the teacher evaluation process. All of the teachers reported positive and negative experiences when evaluated from past to present. Participants noted a mixed bag of emotions with the evaluation process too which included feelings of excitement to anxiousness. Most of the participants were excited to have their evaluators observe them when teaching, while others said that it made them nervous. Some participants said they felt like their observations were scripted because they were planned beforehand and that they enjoyed the unplanned walk-throughs much better. All of the teachers expressed how they wanted to learn from the evaluation process, but had not always learned from their evaluation experiences, especially from the feedback that they had received.
The evaluation process has helped teachers to become more reflective in their professional practice. Teachers indicated how important self-reflection was to them. Teachers were interested in developing their reflective practice skills and found that self-reflection especially helped them to be better educators. All of the participants indicated reflective practices as part of their teaching routine to improve their personal teaching practices. Participants also described how self-reflective practices helped them to grow professionally. Some participants practiced using self-reflection daily while others reflected as much as they could weekly. Valerie even indicated that she had saved her reflective journals from year to year to revisit positive learning experiences to support her teaching. Participants reported how self-reflection had helped them to be better equipped for their students. Self-reflection made participants focus on practices and lessons that worked and also focused on lessons that did not work. This helped teachers to redirect their plans so that they could improve and learn from errors. Hannah wanted to learn from her self-reflective practices. She wanted her evaluators to provide her with relevant feedback so that she could reflect and change practices/lessons as needed to grow as a teacher.

Feedback, modeling and collaboration from others is important to teachers in the evaluation process. Teachers valued feedback, modeling, and collaboration from the evaluation process the most. Teachers felt feedback was essential to the evaluation process because it helped them to grow as professionals and to reflect on ways to improve their practice. Although teachers reported that they received feedback yearly, they felt that the feedback was lacking in relevancy and quality. All of the participants had indicated that the feedback that they had received was different each year depending on the person evaluating them and that some evaluators provided more feedback than others. Participants also stated that they did not receive enough feedback and that they wanted more of it. Pam had indicated that she had past evaluators
that did not understand her subject area and that feedback was not relevant. She felt under-valued and unappreciated in the workplace as a result of some of her past experiences with her evaluators.

Another area that teachers valued from the evaluation process was modeling. Modeling with the teacher evaluation process was almost non-existent according to the participants. Teachers reported that they would like to have more modeling from administrators and also from their peers. Administrators’ schedules are extremely busy and their workloads have increased throughout the years, which has impacted the time they spend in classrooms. Teachers felt that time was definitely a factor when reflecting on their modeling experiences. Will, Valerie, and Pam felt like administrators were rushed when completing observations. Teachers indicated they would like more professional development opportunities with staff that are able to model new strategies and also to come into the classroom to demonstrate for them. Modeling and professional development opportunities were limited in this school.

Lastly, teachers appreciated opportunities to collaborate with staff through common planning times, professional development opportunities, and discussions with other colleagues. All except one of the participants indicated that they had limited chances to meet with other staff through planned times because of varying schedules. Common planning time was not embedded in the daily routines of staff, therefore most staff planned their lessons individually on their own, or met with staff by chance. Although planned collaborative opportunities with administration were infrequent and inconsistent, participants did note that they had yearly professional development opportunities with the whole staff on various topics. Teachers reported that they did not meet on a regular basis with administrators or other staff to plan, these interactions were
limited according to interviewees. Participants wanted to meet more with their colleagues to
discuss teaching and learning and to have more peer interaction.

Discussion of the Key Findings in Relation to the Theoretical Framework

**Self-efficacy theory.** The data was analyzed from the transcripts in this study guided by
the lens of Bandura’s efficacy theory. Bandura (1977) determined that a person with a strong
sense of self-efficacy was able to take on more difficult tasks and initiatives. Teacher evaluation
has been an initiative that teachers have had to take on since educational reform had changed
in 2011. This reform has been met with mixed reviews by teachers across the country. Bandura’s
efficacy theory encompasses four main parts: performance outcomes, vicarious experiences,
verbal persuasions, and physiological feedback when determining someone’s self-efficacy.

**Performance outcomes.** Bandura described performance outcomes as positive
experiences that have shaped a person’s ability to be successful at a task. Teachers who are faced
with new challenges, such as teacher evaluation, are more apt to face the challenge in a positive
way if they have experienced prior success. When someone has mastered success with a task,
they increase their self-efficacy according to Bandura. Overall, most of the participants in this
study had received positive evaluation ratings from administrators each year. Teachers who
performed well on teacher evaluation by receiving positive ratings from evaluators appeared to
have a stronger sense of self-efficacy within their environments. For example, participants from
this study reported that they enjoyed hearing from their evaluators and wanted more time to
speak and meet with them to discuss their teaching, students, and observations. The participants
that had positive past learning experiences with educator evaluation appeared to be more
confidence with the process and were more open to change within their school settings. They
wanted to embrace the evaluation process and welcomed evaluators in their classrooms and also welcomed feedback from their experience.

Participants reported that they enjoyed working with other staff and administration through collaborative experiences. These positive experiences, according to participants, helped them to perform better in their subject areas by gaining skills and knowledge from others. Participants strove to do as well as their peers, thus creating an efficacious environment to learn. By helping one another, teachers may be able to improve their instructional practices, which in turn could lead to better evaluations by their evaluators. Staff wanted to achieve and attain proficiency ratings in their observations and wanted to meet the evaluation process with a positive outlook; but not all participants were confident with the process. Out of the six teachers interviewed, three seasoned teachers appeared more confident in the evaluation process than the others who had less experience. It appeared that all of the participants had questions about their teaching performance, but had gained at least some positive feedback from year to year which attributed to their sense of self-efficacy.

Vicarious experiences. Vicarious experiences, according to Bandura’s efficacy theory (1977), are positive experiences modeled by others. Bandura believed people learned from modeling by others. Participants reported that they wanted modeling by their evaluators and modeling by peers because it was helpful to them. Participants noted that modeling experiences within their classrooms were not part of regular practice during their evaluations. Participants wanted their administrators to be able to model concepts or lessons when asked to do so for professional learning. Participants also determined that peer modeling was an area of interest to them. Teachers shared that they wanted to visit other classrooms so that they could learn from staff or to have staff model in their classrooms. Participants were supportive of the idea of peer
modeling to increase learning opportunities, but currently this is not part of the evaluation model in Massachusetts. Without the support of modeling from others in this environment, it appeared that teachers were working alone most of the time and unsure on their performance from lack of feedback. Self-efficacy through vicarious experiences appeared to be diminished with participants as a result. Participants were looking for guidance and direction in the workplace through collaborative times with administrators and other staff. This guidance would allow for teacher reassurance and a feeling of being part of a group or team.

**Verbal persuasions.** When people are verbally persuaded by others, according to Bandura (1977), they are more apt to be part of the plan. Teachers work in environments where school wide plans are adopted. The evaluation process is a whole group initiative for teachers and administrators. Teachers take on new challenges in the workplace, such as evaluation because they must do so to be employed there. Continued employment is contingent upon satisfactory evaluations on yearly effective teacher ratings. Some teachers work individually, while others work in teams to develop yearly teaching goals. By working in teams, and through verbal persuasion, teachers may develop a better sense of self-efficacy and find more success with the evaluation process, while others may not. In this study, findings from the data indicated that participants did not have many opportunities to work in teams and that they worked alone most of the time planning and working with students. Teachers felt isolated in the workplace.

**Physiological feedback.** Bandura’s efficacy theory (1977) premised that a person’s self-efficacy was stronger when a person was in a positive state of mind while taking on a new task or initiative. In this study, participants reported mixed emotions towards the educator evaluation process. The evaluation process evoked various feelings with the participants. Some reported that they were elated to see evaluators since they felt that this was an opportunity to show how they
worked with students in the classroom. While other participants reported uneasiness with the process and sought clarity. Bandura discussed how a person’s mental state at the time of an encounter may affect their overall performance. If a teacher is uneasy in any way with teacher evaluation, then most likely they will not do as well as some of their peers that are more confident in the process. Teachers with a stronger sense of self-efficacy, or more confidence, will perform better when evaluated. All of the participants expressed concerns about the teacher evaluation process at their school. Although all of teachers interviewed welcomed guests, they were not fully sure of what was expected of them and described different home/life experiences that may have affected their daily physiological state in the classroom.

Through the lens of Bandura’s efficacy theory (1977), the data from experiences of the participants revealed less than positive efficacious evidence towards learning from the evaluation process. Five of the participants felt that teaching in isolation made them feel isolated from the larger group and that the lack of interaction and collaboration made them believe that their personal learning experiences were limited as a result of this. Participants indicated that they not only were separated in their classrooms, but also by restricted exchanges with others in the same field. These limitations were due to lack of common planning time with like peers, and limitations of the evaluation process structure. Overall, teachers expressed positive and negative emotions with the teacher evaluation process which could be heard through their responses to questions in this study and their attitudes towards evaluation.

In 2011, the Massachusetts evaluation process under educational reform had changed and this researcher wanted to learn more about teachers’ experiences with the evaluation process. Have teachers become more familiar and proficient in the process? Are teachers learning from the process? Do the parts of the evaluation process help teachers to become more efficacious in
the workplace with other teachers? The goal of this inquiry was to better understand the
experiences of the participants and how participants responded to new processes in their school
environment through the lens of efficacy theory.

**Discussion of the Findings in Relationship to the Literature Review**

The findings from this study align with literature presented in chapter two. The literature
review focused on one guiding question: How do teachers describe their learning experiences
with the Massachusetts evaluation process? The following ideas from the literature in chapter
two that will be discussed in this section are: Teacher evaluation historically, teachers’
perceptions of educator evaluation, and educator evaluation with feedback.

**Teacher evaluation historically.** The body of literature related to the teacher evaluation
process shows historically that the evaluation process has changed throughout the years with
various practices and models. Overall, teachers have been evaluated through different
approaches from the 1950’s to the current year 2018, with some practices/models more
successful than others. The focus on evaluation shifted from the scientific era to the
individualistic era, focusing mainly on the individual. By the 1970’s-1980’s evaluation was used
as a clinical sense of supervision. This time period had changed how teachers were viewed and
was intended to provide teachers with supervisory guidance and more feedback (Goldhammer,
1969). Although evaluation procedures were headed in the right direction, they became more like
checklists and lacked the communication from evaluators as they were intended to do so.
Tucker and Stronge (2005) and Toch and Rothman (2008) argued that current evaluation
practices were still deficient and could improve.

It wasn’t until educational reform in 2009, guided by the Obama administration, that
states aimed at creating more consistent evaluation processes/models to implement with teachers
to address variations of the past. The Student Recovery Act (2009) intended to increase student achievement, teachers’ skills and training. Although much needed, the reform couldn’t have come fast enough. In a short time-span, researchers were finding loopholes in the plan and had discovered ways in which teachers immediately needed classroom support.

In a 2009 study, the Widget Effect, researchers reported that there were many shortcomings to teacher evaluation such as: a lack of guidance to help teachers in schools, lack of trained administrators, and infrequent observations. McGuinn (2012) referred to teacher evaluation as “a work in progress” and documented that there was little data to no data to show how states were managing the newly implemented reform. Darling- Hammond et al (2012) noted inconsistent practices with how teachers were being evaluated. This phenomenon was evident from the findings from the teachers’ experiences from the evaluation process as well. Teachers reported inconsistent processes and the need for clarity in the evaluation model. Some of the veteran teachers, with more experience, had noted that they had been through several changes in the evaluation system from district to district and were unsure of the expectations. One specific topic that was evident in the data from the participants and aligned in the literature review was the fact that teachers wanted more collaborative experiences and felt that they were isolated in their classrooms due to a lack of support.

In the past, teachers had been isolated in their classrooms with little interaction from administrators or other staff. Classroom practices had been designed in a way where most teachers were teaching alone and teachers were rated on their individual performance compared to other teachers in the school by a sole evaluator. Research identified how teachers are isolated naturally in their classrooms by building structures and building plans which prohibit them from working with others due to building constraints (Lortie, 1975, Blood, Cohen, & Blood, 2007).
Data from this study, in relation to the literature, provides similar examples of staff feeling isolated and alone in the workplace, thus contributing to a non-collaborative learning environment. As one teacher put it, administrators do not welcome colleagues in classrooms. Although education reform had improved evaluation practices from the past, teachers still felt isolated from lack of administrative and peer interaction and lack of common times to discuss content areas. These constraints frequently prevented teachers from interacting with other staff in similar content areas or by having interactions with colleagues (Flinders, 1988).

Teachers’ feelings of isolation may be attributed to their sense of loneliness in the classroom due to the lack of peer conversation and collaboration which Flinders (1988) noted as a psychological state more than environmental. According to Hedberg (1981), perception of teacher interaction with other colleagues plays a role in teacher isolation. Teacher isolation is described by Lortie (1975) in three ways. One, teachers are isolated by their physical space as he called “egg-crate” isolation where teachers work solely in their classroom and are separated by their spaces. Two, teachers are separated through lack of peer engagement and finally, adaptive isolation where teachers internally struggle from having to juggle the demands of teaching causing them to feel isolated in the workplace.

Participants in this study experienced isolation two-fold. One, teachers felt isolated in their classroom space by their content area and two, they felt isolated by the lack of peer interaction. The data revealed feelings of isolation from all participants but one, Hannah. Teachers described their experiences of the evaluation process and reflected on their feelings of the process by indicating that they wanted more interactive times with administrators and peers. Five of the six participants wanted more collaboration about their content, and special education
teachers especially felt isolated since their content and students were not the norm from the larger group. To make sense of one’s environment, Flinder’s (1988) noted that a teacher’s perception on their view of isolation may differ from that of their peers in the same situation. He stated for example:

The physical architecture of the school teachers may view self-contained classrooms as both a barrier to collegial interaction and as a way of protecting classroom activities against interruptions and distractive influences Thus, the four walls of the classroom can be interpreted in terms of both isolation and insulation (p.21).

Lieberman & Miller (1992) considered scheduling as a cause of professional isolation. Peer group collaboration, discussions, and shared teaching was not part of the process, therefore teachers believed this deficiency made them feel alone in their teaching. Participants indicated that they would like to learn from others but did not have opportunities to do so and that it was not encouraged by the school or by their evaluators. Research by Strong and Tucker (2003) noted that collaboration and communication was the key to the evaluation process. The Danielson Model (2011) as noted in the literature review, also supported collegial practices to support teachers’ growth and learning as professionals.

Research suggests, teaching in isolation can have negative effects on teachers in general (Ostovar-Nameghi & Sheikhahmadi, 2016). They stated, “Professional isolation leads to a state of burnout and a feeling of extreme helplessness, a collaborative atmosphere is conducive to professional growth and job satisfaction” (p.199). Participants asserted that they welcomed all guests, but had little to no opportunity to see other peer classrooms or to have other staff visit their classrooms. Participants wanted more learning experiences with other staff to support their
own personal growth. Teachers reported that they wanted administrators to visit more frequently and to have more staff collaboration. A study by Rosenhaltz (1989) “Found teachers’ professional collaboration to be profoundly effective in improving teachers’ efficacy and enhancing teachers’ effectiveness” (Ostovar-Nameghi & Sheikhahmadi, 2016, p.202).

Overall, teachers were not enthusiastic about the teacher evaluation process and wanted more interactive experiences. The research aligned with teachers’ described feelings to work collaboratively with one another and for administration to build on positive experiences for teachers in the workplace so they do not feel isolated, but supported.

**Teachers’ perceptions of the evaluation process.** Participants believed their learning experiences from the evaluation process were mainly dependent on the evaluator that they had from year to year and the feedback that they had received from them. Participants had mixed reviews of teacher evaluation. The body of literature relating to the important role the evaluator plays in teacher evaluation is noted in the experiences of the participants as well as the importance of feedback in the evaluation process. Although limited, the research also speaks to teachers’ feelings of mixed reviews with teacher evaluation. The literature in chapter two shows inadequate information as it relates to teachers’ perceptions about evaluation. Few studies have been conducted to adequately depict how teachers describe their experiences (Donaldson, 2012).

Taylor and Tyler (2012) reported that having a trained evaluator is important to the evaluation process. Weisberg et al (2009) described the importance of trained evaluators, regular feedback and professional development as essential parts when evaluating teachers. Interviewed participants expressed the need for trained, experienced evaluators when being evaluated. Participants indicated that they wanted someone who had experience and was familiar with their content area in order to provide relevant feedback to them about their teaching. Mathers et al
(2008) noted that teacher evaluations had no regular feedback opportunities or sufficient professional development for staff. Sheppard (2013) reported the significance of feedback for teachers when evaluating them.

The research from this study indicated that school systems needed to provide ongoing training and support to principals and other leaders to meet the evolving demands of their roles as instructional leaders (Alvoid, Black, Jr., 2014). Familiarity with the content and experience as an evaluator was valuable to participants. Danielson (2010) stated, “Evaluators need to be able to assess accurately, provide meaningful feedback, and engage teachers in productive conversations about practice” (p.35). Participants acknowledged that there was a lack of consistency with evaluators, and each year they were assigned a different person with different knowledge and experiences. This lack of consistency impacted how teachers felt about their own learning experiences. Teachers reported that they had varied positive and negative learning experiences with evaluation due to the changes in evaluators. Consistency with evaluative practices is significant in teacher evaluation. Not only did the participants want trained evaluators, but also evaluators that could relate to their content area. According to Danielson (2011), “Those making evaluative judgments must be adequately trained so their judgments are accurate, consistent, and based on evidence” (p.6). Evaluators are assigned to different staff each year in different content areas, but research suggests that knowing each content area is not relevant in the evaluation process. Administrators cannot possible be proficient in each subject area, therefore the consistency of the evaluation tool and training practices is crucial to the practice rather than subject knowledge (Danielson, 2011).

Principals are not just managers of schools anymore, Kraft & Gilmour (2016) stated, “New teacher evaluation system reforms have greatly expanded principals’ instructional
leadership responsibilities by requiring principals to work one-on-one with teachers to evaluate and improve their classroom practices” (p.712). Providing consistency in evaluators from year to year may promote efficacy with in a school system. Teachers may find comfort with their evaluators and develop a professional relationship with them, which in turn could make their learning experiences more meaningful. On the contrary, if the evaluator is not consistent, then the teacher may continuously feel that the evaluator is changing the expectations and clarity of the evaluation process. Teachers may suspect mistrust and unpredictability when being evaluated. Leahy (2012) suggested it is “Not unreasonable for teachers to question the qualifications of their observers to observe, evaluate and pass judgment on their teaching and professionalism.” Teachers continued to state that they wanted an evaluator that understood them and the content which they taught.

Participants in this study reported that they had both positive and negative learning experiences with the teacher evaluation process. Teachers conveyed that they wanted to learn from the process and welcomed evaluators in their classrooms yearly, but expressed mixed emotions with the Massachusetts evaluation system. Participants described having emotions such as excitement, anxiety, and nervousness when recalling feelings associated with the evaluation process. According to Hargreaves (2000):

> Emotions are an integral part of education and of organizations more generally. Teachers, learners and leaders all, at various times, worry, hope, enthuse, become bored, doubt, envy, brood, love, feel proud, get anxious, are despondent, become frustrated, and so on (p. 812).

In this study, teachers appeared frustrated in many areas of evaluation, but were hesitant to complain to their administrators possibly out of fear of being evaluated poorly. Recently, with
the high demands of teaching and evaluation, negative emotions are becoming more commonplace in education, with high levels of stress and burnout as a leading cause of teachers leaving the profession (Reyes, and Salovey, 2010, Savage, 2004, Sutton, Mudrey-Camino, and Knight, 2009, Zembylas, 2003).

It was evident from the interviews that all participants had some form of negative feelings towards the current evaluation process and provided their own recommendations to improve the process. Some even reported that they hadn’t learned from the process at all and that they had poor experiences with their evaluators. On the other hand, some of the participants were hopeful that new changes to the evaluation process were for the better and looked forward to a new year of learning. According to Donaldson & Peske (2010), “Poorly conducted evaluation has left teachers skeptical that thoughtful evaluation is probable or even possible” (p.5). Overall this researcher got the sense that participants wanted more consistent practices from the evaluation process. Participants varied in their descriptions of the evaluation process. Some participants had negative opinions about their evaluators and provided areas for improvement, while other participants highlighted their positive encounters with the evaluation process. Research from Darling-Hammond et al (2012) noted that there are inconsistent practices among evaluators that lead to unreliable evaluation processes with teachers.

Participants shared their mixed descriptions of the evaluation process and overall participants were not conclusive on how they had learned from their evaluations or their evaluators. The positive evaluation experiences were discussed less frequently than the negative evaluation experiences, making this researcher believe that participants were not totally satisfied with the process. Participants indicated many recommendations for improvement for teacher evaluation.
According to Owens (2010), in a study on Massachusetts schools, Teachers’ views in the Commonwealth revealed that working condition interventions hold significant promise. More than half of the teachers in the Mass TeLLS survey strongly agreeded that their career choices are “Influenced by school conditions, such as staff collegiality, leadership support, and teacher empowerment” (p.41). In a study to determine the effectiveness of the evaluation process, the Widget Effect (2009), indicated that there was an overall lack of guidance to help teachers and a lack of training of the evaluators evaluating them. Which correlated with teachers’ feelings of wanting trained administrators to accurately evaluate them and provide them with relevant feedback for professional growth and development. McGuinn (2012) referred to the limited data available regarding teacher evaluation reform and indicated that it was a work in progress. Donaldson (2012) also noted there have been limited studies/research to explore teachers’ perceptions of teacher evaluation as part of education reform.

**Feedback from administrators in the evaluation process.** The body of literature relating to the importance of feedback to teachers in the evaluation process was investigated in this study. The Massachusetts evaluation process encompasses various parts. When participants were asked to describe what was important to them in the process, all participants agreed on relevant feedback from their evaluators. Feedback was an essential part of the evaluation process according to the educators in this study. A report by OECD (2009) indicated “Both school evaluation and teacher appraisal and feedback should aim to influence the development and improvement of schools and teachers” (p.141). Teachers felt that feedback helped them to improve their practices and that feedback guided their teaching in a positive way. Teachers indicated that they learned the most from relevant feedback and that they wanted more of it. According to an article from Education First titled, “Giving Teachers the Feedback Support
they Deserve” (2015) it stated, “If teachers consistently receive feedback that helps improve their instruction, many more will value and support evaluation systems and feel ownership of their results” (p.2).

Feedback that is meaningful is huge in teaching. It validates the hard work that teachers do each day and helps them to stay positive in the workplace, thus creating a confident staff. Research from the literature to support the importance of feedback for teachers includes research by Taylor and Tyler (2012). This research indicated the importance of trained evaluators and feedback for teachers, which helps to improve instruction and student achievement. In addition, Weisberg et al (2009) also concluded how having evaluators that are trained who provide regular feedback to staff is essential in the evaluation process.

Staff that are confident and happy in the workplace may exhibit more efficacy with their job in the school environment. Individual efficacious behavior could lead to groups of staff that are more willing to implement new procedures and initiatives, such as educator evaluation. Kraft & Gilmour (2016) indicated “No amount of feedback will result in professional growth if a teacher is unwilling or unable to co-construct and enact changes” (p.719). Participants felt that there was a lack of relevant feedback from their evaluations and they wanted more time to discuss the elements of their lessons after an observation. Participants described feeling rushed when they met with their evaluators. They wanted to have conversations about the content in their lessons, not just discussions about their teaching practices. Participants described their feedback as non-specific at times and wanted more detailed feedback on areas that they could improve upon. In the article Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments (2009), it found “Appraisal and feedback have a strong positive influence on teachers and their work. Teachers report that it increases their job satisfaction and, to some degree, their job security, and
it significantly increases their development as teachers” (p.138). Research by Mathers (2008), indicated that there was a lack of feedback and professional development with educators, which resulted in inconsistent feelings of the evaluation process. Jerald (2009) and Symlie (2014), also concluded that productive feedback was needed in teacher evaluation and there was a lack of it.

**Limitations of the Findings**

This study presented findings to add to the literature on teachers’ learning experiences with the educator evaluation process in Massachusetts. Through the lens of the teacher, educators provided their positive and negative views on the evaluation process and also their recommendations for improvements to consider. These views offered relevant information to supplement the existing literature on the topic. Nevertheless, this study has limitations which are recognized below in addition to future implications to the problem of practice.

There are factors that must be considered as limitations of this study. This study is limited based on the participant pool, gender of the participants, and location. All participants were female except for one male in this study. More male participants may have offered different views on learning experiences with the teacher evaluation process. This study included data, findings, and participants from Massachusetts which limits the geographical area.

Furthermore, on a broader scale, this study is limited based on the small sample of participants, findings, and data from one school and from one state in Massachusetts. This study was completed in a small rural town and information obtained in a larger district, suburban or urban district may have resulted in different teacher experiences with evaluation. If this study were to be replicated, it is assumed that the study would yield similar experiences for future research, but it is unknown if teachers from a different district across multiple schools would report similar experiences.
Another limitation of this study, to be examined, would be the participants individual experiences and years of teaching. Each participant reported their own unique experience working in and out of education. Some of the participants had more experience than others ranging from six years to 21 years. Some participants were more familiar with educator evaluation than others, which could have impacted their unique perceptions of the topic. Further research is needed to discover the relationship between the teacher and the administrator during the evaluation experience, since evaluators frequently changed from year to year. Limitations of the study may also include the experience and training of the evaluators since there were variations in training courses and with observers.

Another limitation to consider in this study is the fact that education reform just began an overhaul of the teacher evaluation system in Massachusetts in 2011. Each state adopted their own version of educator evaluation which could have influenced teacher’s familiarity with the evaluation process in this district, compared to other districts or states they may have worked in. This researcher would suggest that a future study may entail more than one district, with a broader pool of participants, across Massachusetts or multiple states. This researcher chose participants from a rural district, and in a future study may find that using multiple districts from urban, rural, and suburban may yield broader results.

**Implications for Practice**

Based on the research findings, there are several recommendations for practice that may add to the current literature and future studies of the topic. Qualitative studies may be used to study problems of practice within school environments. The qualitative approach of this study, allowed this researcher to investigate the lived experiences of public school teachers and their personal descriptions of their learning experiences. Through detailed transcribed notes of the
interviews, this researcher was able to capture the essence of the participants’ experiences with educator evaluation. Through the development of themes from the data, teachers’ descriptions gave insight to positives and negatives of teacher evaluation, as well as suggestions from the participants to improve the process.

Triangulation of the data was completed from all sources and recommendations were developed based on this information. Recommendations to improve the learning experiences of teachers are as follows: 1. More relevant and frequent feedback is needed, 2. More collaboration with staff, 3. More administrator and peer modeling, 4. More reflective practice.

**More relevant and frequent feedback.** Teachers want to learn and to improve their professional practice. Relevant and frequent feedback helps teachers learn in school environments. Wiggins noted (2012), “Whether feedback is just there to be grasped or is provided by another person, helpful feedback is goal-referenced; tangible and transparent; actionable; user-friendly (specific and personalized); timely; ongoing; and consistent” (p.10). The current teacher evaluation process in Massachusetts is a comprehensive system which includes feedback to staff. Although this process is worthy, this process is inconsistent when providing feedback that is relevant and frequent according to the participants and research (Department of Education, 2010, Mathers et al, 2008, Taylor &Tyler, 2012).

Data from this study, revealed teachers wanted more feedback from administration and also from other colleagues. Teachers wanted more open dialogue in the workplace to help them to learn. Research indicates when teachers are happier in the workplace they perform better. Frederickson (2001) stated:

There is a large and growing body of research which indicates that people experiencing positive emotions perceive more options when trying to solve problems, solve more non-
linear problems that require insight, [and they] collaborate better and generally perform better overall (p.3).

Although teacher evaluation was stressful to some according to the participants, teachers must find a balance in their professional careers by asking for more feedback in their evaluations and throughout the school year to make the most out of them. Teachers need to be more proactive in their needs and voice out their concerns for more specific and relevant feedback. Having a voice in teacher evaluation is an important part of the process. Teachers ultimately want to grow as professionals so that they may help their students perform at the highest levels of achievement. Through specific, and relevant feedback, teachers may improve their instructional practices in the classrooms, which in turn, may help students to achieve more.

In the 1970’s and 1980’s, the teacher evaluation process shifted to focus more on the needs of the teacher. It was determined then, through frequent guidance and dialogue, that teachers could become more effective in the classroom which would lead to higher student achievement. Although the teacher evaluation process has greatly improved from that era, teachers continue to seek relevant feedback experiences in their teaching. Two factors contributing to the lack of relevant and frequent feedback could be the lack of training of evaluators, and also having the time to do so. With the abundance of job responsibilities among administrators, time definitely is a factor. Research by Marzano and Toch (2011) indicated how frequent feedback opportunities and professional development build teachers’ expertise in the classroom. McEwan (2003) also pointed out that the use of feedback guides helps teachers to become better teachers. The Department of Education (2010) agrees that feedback must be timely and constructive as part of teacher evaluation. To improve the evaluation process for future studies, school leaders and researchers should continue to develop ways in which feedback
can be widely utilized to help support teachers in their practice. The level of support provided to teachers according to Finnegan (2013), is the key to self-efficacy.

**Collaboration with staff through professional development.** A recommendation for future studies are to incorporate the use of frequent professional development with staff in public school settings. Currently, teachers do not feel that they have enough collaborative professional development opportunities and would like more of them to support their teaching. Professional development according to Darling-Hammond (2013) will help to improve teaching and learning skills in the classroom and to support teachers. Professional development to most teachers is irrelevant and infrequent. Teachers want to learn new strategies and new curriculum to add to their skills and knowledge. But professional development in many districts in Massachusetts is inadequate. Professional development only occurs once or twice a year in some districts, which is not enough. Professional development designed by staff could be included as part of the regular plan to develop teachers/staff. This would allow teachers to highlight their own skills and develop the skills of peers in the workplace in a non-intrusive way and also by providing more collaborative opportunities for staff to meet and plan together.

**Administration and peer modeling.** The teacher evaluation process as is, does not incorporate many chances for administrators to model in the classroom for teachers. These experiences may be infrequent due to lack of evaluator training or times to do so. The job of an administrator is quite busy and there just may not be enough time in the day to provide modeling for all staff in an equitable manner. As part of the data from the interviews, participants noted that they wanted peers to model for them or to have opportunities to visit peer classrooms to get ideas. Currently, this is not a practice in Massachusetts, but other states use this form of modeling in the evaluation process. For future studies and recommendations, it would
be suggested for states to adopt this practice in their evaluation models. Teachers really felt that they could learn from their peers better than administrators in a non-threatening way.

**Reflection with teacher evaluation.** The evaluation process has helped teachers to become more reflective in their professional practice. According to Murray (2015):

Reflection is more than merely thinking about one’s instruction. It is a purposeful act that begins with a problem, context or episode, defines/redefines the problem, seeks possible solutions, experiments with solutions, and finally evaluates the results (p.23).

Participants described self-reflection as the best part of the evaluation process. Teachers regularly self-reflect during the school year mostly through journaling. Participants felt that self-reflection was a great opportunity for staff to reflect on positive teaching experiences to help students to improve as well as reflection on lessons that did not go as planned. Many teachers used reflection to improve student learning which is called pedagogical reflection (Larrivee, 2008). Some teachers reflected daily on each lesson, while others reflected weekly.

Self-reflection is an important part of the Massachusetts evaluation process according to teachers. Teachers begin each school year by looking at ways that they can improve. Then they identify a professional learning goal and student learning goal based on these thoughts. Administrators observe teachers in the classroom and then meet with teachers to discuss the observation. This is a time for the evaluator and teacher to review the lesson and for the teacher to reflect on the discussion. Through reflection, the goal is for teachers to improve practice.

Reflection is embedded in the evaluation process, and participants found this to be a positive part. Participants were excited about their reflective experiences as educators. Teachers wanted to increase their reflective times and wished that they had more time with administration and colleagues to reflect more frequently. Reflection with peers and administrators would
enhance professional practice greatly through professional conversations (Murray, 2015, Larrivee, 2008, Smith, 2001). Reflection with peers was not reported in this research study by participants. Participants indicated that they wanted more reflective experience with colleagues and administrators and recommended more reflective practices for future implications.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study represents a limited examination of teachers’ learning experiences from the teacher evaluation process in Massachusetts. Overall, future research would be used to improve practices of the evaluation process for teachers in this study and other teachers in Massachusetts. Future research would also be used to expand upon this study to explore other areas of evaluation not discussed in this study. Although present in the literature review, one area with limited data from the interviews was how the classroom teachers’ learning experiences was associated with student achievement. Teachers in this study indicated how they wanted to improve to be the best that they could be for their students, but did not go into great depth about how their learning experiences impacted student achievement or experience with professional development. This researcher failed to find sufficient data to support the classroom teachers’ learning experiences as it pertains to student achievement and this area could be further explored in future studies. The data from this study also identified aspects of teacher evaluation that were not discussed in great detail in the literature review that may warrant areas for a future study such as the lack of information across the state on the monitoring of evaluation systems and how the landscape of evaluation is constantly changing. The literature indicated that there were limited studies to show how states were monitoring education reform and this could be another area for a future study. This study could be expanded across districts in Massachusetts and also across multiple states.
To increase the scope of this study, the number of the participants could be expanded across multiple districts in Massachusetts instead of one district. As part of a future study, teachers from various grades and subject areas to include preschool, elementary, middle and high school across the state from rural, suburban, and urban districts could be included. Additionally, primarily in many Massachusetts schools, teachers only have one evaluator which most likely is the school principal. In some districts though, teachers may have a primary and secondary evaluator which could vary teachers’ responses in regards to their learning experiences with the evaluation process. Teachers may have different views with more than one evaluator each year. A future study may also explore the feelings and experiences of administrators with the teacher evaluation process to compare the learning experiences to teachers. Evaluation procedures and policies across various states/regions in the United States could also be explored compared to Massachusetts for future studies.

**Personal Thoughts and Reflection**

As I started out my doctoral studies at Northeastern, my initial attempt to discover a topic that was meaningful to me began in an urban district that had undergone many changes district wide. This district had had many challenges and was faced with some safety concerns within its schools. In 2008, I wanted to explore teachers’ perceptions of school safety before school safety became such a huge concern is it is in the present day. A great topic and meaningful to me, but vast for exploration and I had a hard time narrowing down what I wanted to explore. After 12 years in the district, I changed school districts and the significance of the study was not as significant to me or relevant to the district I was working in. I decided to explore different subjects of interest and determined that I enjoyed learning about the teacher evaluation process. After quite some time and thought, and many years already invested in my previous topic, I
finally choose to change to the learning experiences of teachers with the Massachusetts
evaluation process. I found almost instantly that teachers wanted to talk about evaluation and that
it was actually a hot topic in school districts. I was interested in teacher evaluation because for
one, I had to go through it each year as a teacher and two, I believed that teachers were looking
at ways to improve how they were being evaluated. It appeared that teachers’ voices in the
process since its inception in 2012 were not being recognized currently and this interested me.

I left college as an education major in 1991, but ended up going into the restaurant
business for 10 years after school. So, I guess you could say I was a career changer to education.
When I returned to the field in 2001, things from what I had known had transformed. There were
many ideas in education that had changed. Massachusetts as well as many other states were
adopting new policies and processes. From what I remembered though, evaluation had stayed the
same. It was still just only a few visits a year in the classroom by a sole administrator, with an
informal and a formal observation. The formal observation was planned out by the classroom
teacher with all the bells and whistles, referred by many as the “dog and pony show.” The
teacher handed the lesson plan to the administrator beforehand to discuss what would be seen in
the lesson. The administrator would come in at an agreed time and date, they would sit, take
notes and leave. Within a week they would hand you your observation report and give you the
option to discuss it with you or you could just sign it. It was almost like a cookie cutter approach,
some administrators had a template and they copied and pasted many parts of the observation to
say the same thing. One year, I actually received my report with another person’s name
throughout the form, another year an administrator said he was too busy to write my observation
and said jokingly that I could do the write up myself.
I remember the entire process was a bit stressful because I really wanted to do my best but had little to no expectation on what the criteria was for evaluation. It was a hit or miss for many teachers since they did not know what that particular observer was looking for and observers varied on their expectations. My goal was to impress the observer with a great lesson and I wanted to achieve an exemplary rating on teacher evaluation, so I started to take notice on the language that was being used with administrators. I wanted to know how I could give them exactly what they wanted when they came in to my room. And it worked. I was receiving exemplary comments and exemplary ratings. The preparation that went into a formal, planned observation was exhausting to me. As the years progressed though, I incorporated these ideas into my regular daily teaching practices and no longer was I trying to impress, it became second nature to me and to my students. At any time, you could visit my classroom and students were learning with high academic rigor, data driven, differentiated lessons, choices, skills based, and students could tell you what they were learning and why.

This was a time for change in education, and some classrooms were using new practices such as student driven data, while others were not. Some teachers were on board with the changes and some were still reluctant to move ahead. To put it lightly, teachers were not thrilled about education reform that we kept hearing about. In the past, they had the ability to teach what they wanted in the classroom, they had more freedom. I remember meeting with ELA teachers in grade six, and everyone was arguing about what book they wanted to read with their students and nobody could agree on a novel. In contrast, the math teachers were meeting in teams and they were developing common lesson plans and units as a grade and teaching the same lessons on the same day of the week. Teachers felt like their power in the classroom was being taken over by scripted lessons and curriculum. Teachers were not happy about the changes with teacher
evaluation. There were too many unknowns, they were unfamiliar with data collection and
dividual/collective student progress. This was a stressful time in teaching. Many changes were
happening all at once and teachers needed professional development to help them with the
reform.

Around 2008, in order to adjust to the changes, curriculum groups developed school wide
and district wide, more time was spent with teachers on the evaluation process, and expectations
were emerging. Teachers were starting to accept what it was that was expected of them in the
classroom and what teacher evaluation was evolving to. Administrators were asking specific
questions, looking for specific teaching strategies, and asking questions to students about their
own learning in the classroom. This shift, was hard for some teachers and easier for others.

Over the years as a teacher, not only did I experience a shift with my own practices, but I
also saw a shift with other teachers’ experiences overall. The dog and pony show of the past was
not relevant anymore. The shift was geared to looking more at student progress and achievement.
How can an effective teacher teach a lesson to help students to reach maximum benefit and grow
as a student? Teachers started to change how they developed their lessons, they were more data
driven. There was more accountability in the classroom, data was becoming more common
place. Evaluation was changing as I experienced it. There was more focus on standardized tests
such as MCAS, and teachers were looking more at their student data to move kids along. The
conversations in the teachers’ room were changing too. Teacher evaluation conversations were
more commonplace and less intense. It had now become the classroom/school expectation.
Teachers began to see what administrators were looking for when they came into a classroom.
More dialogue had developed as a result of this, not only with the evaluator and teacher, but also
teachers were talking to each other.
Although the shift in evaluation reform across the United States began before 2012, Massachusetts officially developed its new evaluation process in 2012. The new process included: pre-conferencing, goal setting, self-reflection, post conferencing, informal walk-throughs, and formal observations. The process was designed to develop more effective teachers. It included more classroom visits, more conversation with teachers and also more relevant feedback from the observation. Administrators were being sent to evaluation training programs such as Research for Better Teaching. Programs such as these were developed to help administrators to evaluate teachers based on the standards in Massachusetts. This was not only a change for teachers, but also for administrators because now they were expected to be instructional leaders which was a new role for them too.

In 2012, I moved out of the classroom in a pseudo administrative role in which I had a different lens with evaluation. Now I got to visit classrooms and view what was happening with students and staff as an observer. My perception of what teacher evaluation was from the past had changed. I developed a higher level of expectation in my new role. I expected every moment in the classroom to be a meaningful experience for students with a purpose behind it. During observations, I anticipated great teaching and learning, data driven instruction and engaged students. I actually was looking for what I believed I had been as a teacher in the classroom. I started to see some aspects of great teaching, but also some deficits and inconsistencies in teaching. Some classrooms were using student driven data while others were not.

In 2018, it has been six years since the new implementation of the Massachusetts process. I believe that a lot has changed and changed for the better, for instance, specific rubrics are used to evaluate teachers, both teachers and administration are looking at student data more efficiently, more dialogue is happening, and teachers are teaching in more efficacious ways as a
whole group for clearer expectations for students. Accountability has increased in schools and classrooms looked quite different now. Many classes have flexible seating arrangements, teachers are not teaching concepts in isolation, there is more individual teaching of students, data is visible in the classroom and referred to. I believe teachers are more confident in their teaching. Principals and assistant principals are seen as instructional leaders within the school role.

My recommendations based on my experience as a teacher and as an administrator for teacher evaluations are:

- To continue to improve dialogue opportunities between the teacher and the administrator in planned and unplanned opportunities for feedback.
- To increase unplanned classroom visits to get a sense on what is happening on a daily basis.
- To develop a system where you have more than one evaluator to contribute to your evaluation.
- More peer collaborative opportunities in the classroom, such as reciprocal teaching, peer visits, peer feedback. Get teachers out of their classrooms more frequently!
- Seasoned teachers should have the same amount of classroom visits as new teachers. Currently, teachers with professional status in Massachusetts have less yearly visits because of their formal years in teaching, while newer teachers have more visits.
- Stricter protocols for teachers who are not meeting the standards, professional status or not. Unfortunately, many school district protect poor teachings through union procedures. Only a small percentage of teachers receive a needs improvement in teacher ratings.
To develop evaluation teams to include teachers, instructional leaders, and administrators.

In conjunction with the already established Massachusetts Evaluation system, individual school districts could voluntarily adopt new evaluation procedures/processes. Districts across Massachusetts could improve their systems by integrating teachers’ thoughts and voices for maximum benefit of educator learning. Ultimately, it would be ideal to take information gained from this study, provided by the positives from teachers, to develop an evaluation process that could incorporate what teachers really want in the evaluation process. By listening to the educators in this study and in future studies, individual school districts may be able to create a more comprehensive evaluation process that incorporates peer feedback, modeling, and collaborative opportunities that could help educators to improve in their professional learning.
References


Data in Education Research. Retrieved from:


permission of Phi Delta Kappa International. Retrieved from:
www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/03/01/kappan_hammond.html


http://edvoice.org/sites/default/files/STUDENT%20PROGRESS%20IGNORED.pdf


http://search.proquest.com/openview/af3cf428206b13a32ca522de0edd2e02/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=1766362


administration quarterly: *EAQ*, 52(5), 711-753.


https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-111hr1enr/pdf/BILLS-111hr1enr.pdf


http://doczz.net/doc/4643292/teacher-evaluation-2.0


http://educationpolicy.air.org/sites/default/files/publications/RushToJudgment_ES_Jan08.pdf


Appendix A

3/13/17

Northeastern University
Internal Review Board
360 Huntington Avenue
Boston, MA 02115

To Whom it May Concern:

I grant permission to Lisa Karantonakis, Coordinator of Special Education to assess, recruit, and interview K-12 teachers within the Dighton Rehoboth Regional School District during after school or summer hours to meet the requirements of her doctoral studies at Northeastern University.

Sincerely,

Anthony Azar, Ed.D
Superintendent of Schools
Dighton Rehoboth
Letter of Recruitment- Interviews

Appendix B

Dear ____________________

My name is Lisa Karantonakis and I am a doctoral candidate in the College of Professional Studies at Northeastern University and the Dighton Rehoboth Regional High School Special Education Coordinator in North Dighton, MA. As part of my dissertation research, I am conducting a study titled “Teacher Learning Experiences Through the Massachusetts Evaluation System: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis”.

In order to gather data about this research, I am inviting you to participate in my study. Your input regarding your learning experiences with the evaluation process will be helpful in obtaining information for this research. I am asking that you participate in a 45-60 minute in person interview about your learning experiences as it pertains to teacher evaluation. There will be no risks involved and you may discontinue participation in the study at any time you choose to. The questions for this interview will be sent to you one week in advance and the interviews will be scheduled in the month of June 2017.

Any participation in the study will be completely confidential; names and other personal information will not be used. Please respond via e-mail to karantonakis.l@husky.neu.edu if you are interested or have any questions.

Thank you in advance for your time,

Lisa Karantonakis
Student Researcher and Doctoral Candidate, Northeastern University
508-567-9446
Appendix C

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

To the participant: As a staff member who participated in educator evaluation over the course of the 2016-2017 school year, you are invited to take part in a research study being conducted as part of the completion of a doctoral program in Education at Northeastern University’s College of Professional Studies. This form reiterates what the researcher has explained to you. You may ask any questions you have about the study. Once you have made a decision about your participation, share that decision with the researcher. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to sign this statement. The researcher will provide you with a copy for your own records.

Why is this research being conducted? The goal of this research is to explore perceptions that teachers hold toward teacher evaluation. One research question anchors this study: How do teachers describe their learning experiences with the Massachusetts Educator process?

What will participants be asked to do? Each participant will take part in an audiotaped semi-structured interview of approximately forty-five to sixty minutes in length. It is possible that participants may be asked to take part in a shorter follow-up, once they have read the transcript of their interview, but they are not required to do so.

Where will this research take place? Interviews will be conducted with participants’ after school or during the summer at a designated site such as the library or another site of their choice.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to participants? There is no foreseeable risk or discomfort to participants. Participants may decline to respond to questions or end the interview if, at any time, they feel uncomfortable.

Will participants benefit from this research? Although there is no direct benefit to participants, the information learned from this study may help policy makers and stakeholders become more fully cognizant of the potential of teacher evaluation.

Who will see the information provided by participants? Participation in this study is confidential. Only the researcher and her academic advisor will see the information provided during interviews. No reports or publications will use the information in such a way that participants can be identified. Participants will be given pseudonyms; they will not be identified by their correct names. Audiotapes and transcripts of interviews will be stored in a secure location, a locked cabinet, in the researcher’s private residential office.

What happens if any harm is suffered from this research? No special arrangements have been made for compensation or for payment for treatment solely because of participation in this research.

Who can participants contact if questions or problems arise? Participants can contact the researcher’s advisor, Dr. Sandy Nickel. Her e-mail address is: S.Nickel@neu.edu.

Who can be contacted about participants’ rights? Participants can contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, at Northeastern University. She can be reached at n.regina@neu.edu.

Will participants be compensated? No financial compensation will be offered.
**Is there other information participants need to know?** 4-6 participants will take part in this study, approx. 3 general education classroom teachers, 3 special education teachers.

**I agree to participate in this research.**

__________________________________  ______________________________
Signature of Participant    Date

________________________________________________________
Printed Name of Person Above
Appendix D

Interview Protocol

Interviewee (Title and Name): ___________________________________

Interviewer: Lisa Karantonakis

Date: 5/1/17

Location of Interview: ____________________________________________

INTRODUCTION

Part I: Introductory Question Objectives (5-7 minutes): Build rapport, describe the study, answer any questions, review and sign IRB protocol and form for tape recording.

Introductory Protocol

You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about your learning experiences with the teacher evaluation system. This research project focuses on teachers’ learning experience and how these experiences may give insight on the evaluation process in Massachusetts. Through this study, I hope to help to identify what is important to teachers and how teachers learn through the Massachusetts evaluation system. 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. I will also be taking written notes during the interview. I can assure you that all responses will be confidential and only a pseudonym will be used when quoting from the transcripts. The tapes will be transcribed by a transcriptionist, but the pseudonym will be used to label the tapes. I will be the only one privy to transcripts and information and the tapes will be destroyed after they are transcribed. To meet our human subjects’ requirements at the university, you must sign the form I have with me (provide the form). 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 (allow time to review form). Do you have any questions about the interview process or this form? I would also like to audio tape this interview and have a consent form related to this as well (provide form).

We have planned this interview to last no longer than 45-60 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?

Introduction

A. Interviewee Background – My name is Lisa Karantonakis and I am a doctoral student at Northeastern University. I am presently working on my dissertation. I am also the coordinator for special education at Dighton-Rehoboth High School. I have been the coordinator for the last year and in education for 16 years.
Background Information

1. Thanks for meeting with me today. Please tell a little bit about yourself. When did you start in this district? Are you very familiar with teacher evaluation or newly familiar with it?
2. How many total years have you been teaching? Have you always been a teacher? If not what else have you done?
3. What year are you in the Massachusetts Evaluation Model Cycle? Non-Professional status year 1-3, Professional status Self-Directed Growth Plan, Professional status Directed Growth Plan, or Improvement Plan?
4. As a teacher, do you have an individual goal or a group goal? Which do you prefer and why?

Interview Questions:

The Purpose of this study is to explore how teachers describe their learning experiences with teacher evaluation in Massachusetts and to find out what teachers find helpful in their professional practice.

1. Tell me about ways in which you learn through the evaluation process? Are there ways through groups or peers that you have learned? Can you tell me more about that? Please clarify.

2. How would you describe your learning experiences with modeling in the evaluation process, are there positive and negative experiences? Do you feel that modeling opportunities are helpful to your professional practice? If so, tell me about ways that modeling has enhanced your learning experiences? Which do you feel is more helpful to your professional practice, modeling by peers or modeling by supervisors? Can you clarify.

3. As you consider the positives and negatives of your learning experiences with teacher evaluation, what has been due to feedback or coaching in the evaluation process? Is feedback/coaching important to you? If so how? Do other staff members provide feedback/coaching to you? Which do you value the most, feedback/coaching from colleagues or feedback/coaching by administration and why?

4. How would you describe your learning experiences with administrators observing you in the classroom from past experiences to current experiences? Have there been successes/failures. Please explain. Have there been differences with evaluators? Can you describe what you value the most from your evaluations as it pertains to your evaluation experiences?

5. Teacher evaluation encompasses many steps such as goal setting, self-reflection, pre-conference, post-conference, walk-throughs, formal observation etc… Can you explain what are the most important steps in the evaluation process in your opinion?
How about the least meaningful steps in evaluation? Can you tell me more about that?

6. As you describe your learning experiences with the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation process, how does this process make you feel? Do you feel confident when evaluated? Anxious? Excited? Challenged? Please explain.

7. Tell me how important goal setting is to your development as a teacher? Tell me what you did to set goals for yourself. Tell me about what you have learned through goal setting.
   The evaluation process includes self-reflection, can you tell me about ways you self-reflect? Can you explain how these self-reflection experiences have helped you in your learning as a teacher? Please explain. How has goal setting and self-reflection helped you to have a better understanding of the evaluation process?