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Administrative response to teacher incompetence: The role of teacher evaluation systems

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**ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSE TO TEACHER
INCOMPETENCE:
THE ROLE OF TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEMS**

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Pamela DuPriest Tucker

January 1997

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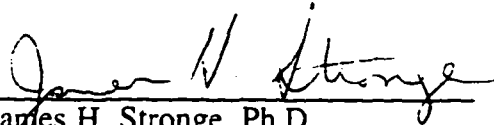
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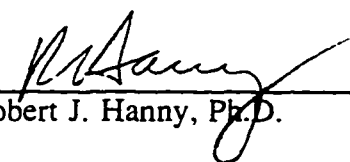
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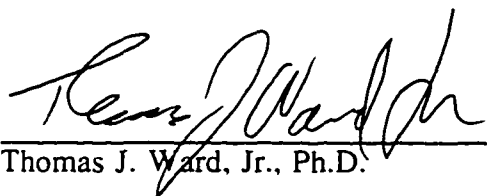
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to those special people in my life who have made sacrifices so that I could realize my personal goals: my parents, who gave me the courage to face challenges head-on; my husband, Larry, who never wavered in his belief that I could contribute something of meaning to education and provided all the support which that required; and my children, Michael, Jeffrey, and Alissa, who gave up valued time with Mom because they understood how important the dissertation was to me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	vi
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	ix
Abstract.....	x
Half-Title Page	xii
Chapter 1: The Problem	1
Introduction.....	1
Theoretical Rationale.....	10
Statement of the Problem.....	14
Significance of the Study.....	15
Operational Definitions	17
Limitations of the Study.....	20
Major Assumptions	20
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature	22
Current Educational Context for Teacher Evaluation	22
Role of Teacher Evaluation in Improving Teacher Quality.....	26
Teacher Incompetence	32
Administrative Responses to Incompetent Teachers.....	39
Constraints on Administrative Response to Incompetence.....	42
Facilitators of Administrative Response to Incompetence.....	47
Components of Effective Evaluation Systems.....	49
Summary of the Literature Review.....	64
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	67
Research Questions	67
Null Hypotheses	68
Independent Variables	68

Dependent Variables	68
Sample.....	70
Generalizability.....	70
Instrumentation.....	70
Procedures	75
Data Analysis	76
Ethical Safeguards	80
Chapter 4: Analysis of Results.....	81
Return Rate	81
Demographic Information: Responding Principals.....	82
Findings for Research Questions.....	89
Findings for Null Hypotheses.....	106
Chapter 5: Summary, Discussion, and Recommendations.....	111
Summary of Findings	111
Discussion of Findings.....	114
Conclusions.....	127
Recommendations for Future Research	131
Postscript.....	131
Appendix A: Correspondence to Principals in the Sample	133
Appendix B: Questionnaire.....	138
Appendix C: Verbatim Text of Comments	145
References	154
Vita.....	167

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LIST OF TABLES

1.	Survey Items which Address each System Component	75
2.	Means and Standard Deviations for Years of Experience, Number of Full-time Equivalent Teachers, and Number of Teachers Formally Evaluated Each Year	83
3.	Frequency Counts and Percentages for the Type of School in which Respondents Worked	84
4.	Comparison of School Level in Original Sample and Responding Sample	85
5.	Frequency Counts and Percentages for the Person(s) Responsible for Teacher Evaluation	86
6.	Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges for Identification and Administrative Response to Incompetent Tenured Teachers	91
7.	Adjusted Rates for Identification and Administrative Response to Incompetent Tenured Teachers	92
8.	Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges for Administrative Response to Incompetent Probationary Teachers.....	93
9.	Adjusted Rate for Nonrenewal of Incompetent Probationary Teachers	94
10.	Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Ranges for the Perceived Presence of Evaluation System Components	96
11.	Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Ranges for the Perceived Importance of Evaluation System Components.....	97
12.	Frequency Count and Percentages of Comments on Most Helpful Aspects of Current Evaluation Systems	98
13.	Specific Examples of Comments on the Most Helpful Aspects of Current Evaluation Systems.....	99

14. Frequency Count and Percentages of Comments on Aspects of Current Evaluation Systems which Principals Would Change.....	101
15. Specific Examples of Comments on Aspects of Current Evaluation Systems which Principals Would Change.....	102
16. Means for Variables which Distinguish Principals with and without Incompetent Teachers on Their Staffs	105
17. Stepwise Multiple Regression of the System Components on the Effectiveness Rating	107
18. Stepwise Multiple Regression of the System Components on Administrative Response Rate to Incompetence	109
19. Stepwise Multiple Regression of the System Components on Reassignment Rate	110
20. Percentages for the Frequency of “Formal Evaluation” or “Official Observation” for Untenured Teachers	117
21. Percentages for the Frequency of “Formal Evaluation” or “Official Observation” for Tenured Teachers	118

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Percent of schools which conduct formal evaluation of probationary teachers at indicated frequency levels87
2. Percentage of schools which conduct formal evaluation of tenured teachers at indicated frequency levels88
3. Percent of incompetent teachers per school as reported by principals.....90

ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSE TO TEACHER INCOMPETENCE:
THE ROLE OF TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEMS

ABSTRACT

The major purpose of this study was to assess the presence of evaluation system components which assist principals in responding to teachers with less than satisfactory performance. Research data were used to determine the relationship between specific teacher evaluation system components and two measures of evaluation system effectiveness: (a) the principal's overall effectiveness rating of the evaluation system and (b) the incidence of administrative response to teacher incompetence. Administrative response included remediation, reassignment, inducement to retire or resign, and recommendation for dismissal of teachers. A questionnaire was employed to collect data from a randomly selected sample of principals in Virginia's public schools.

According to Virginia principals, 5% of the teachers in their schools were incompetent; however, only 2.65% were documented formally as being incompetent. The typical principal with a staff of 100 teachers, identified 1.53 incompetent tenured teachers per year and remediated .68 teacher, encouraged .37 teacher to resign/retire, reassigned .29 teacher, and recommended dismissal for .10 teacher.

Principals verified the importance and presence of the evaluation system components identified in the study. The mean effectiveness rating for the evaluation systems used by the principals, however, indicated only moderate support for the ability of the system to respond to incompetent teachers. The four evaluation system components of remedial procedures, evaluation criteria, evaluator training, and organizational commitment were found to predict 69% of the variance in the effectiveness rating, but none of the

evaluation system components were found to predict administrative response to incompetence.

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**ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSE TO TEACHER
INCOMPETENCE:
THE ROLE OF TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEMS**

Chapter 1: The Problem

Introduction

Calls for educational reform have a long history which parallels much of public education's history (Bracey, 1995). However, no report has captured the attention of the public and influenced the academic community like the 1983 report, A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform, which "pushed education reform and renewal to center stage" (Timar & Kirp, 1988, p. xi). Amid the clamoring for restructuring and reform in education which has resulted, there has been little focus on the role of individuals (Ehrgott, Henderson-Sparks, & Sparks, 1993). Although "everyone agrees that the work of teachers is the critical element in effective schooling" (Clark & Astuto, 1994, p. 517), most reform efforts have focused on the teaching profession as a whole and effective schools (Clark & Astuto, 1994; Darling-Hammond, 1990; Fullan, 1996; National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 1996; Timar & Kirp, 1988). Only minimal attention has been given to the subset of teachers whose performance is marginal or incompetent (McGrath, 1995a), those who undermine the very concept of "educational excellence."

Teachers are the school's primary point of contact with students and, in large part, determine the educational goals and learning activities for students (Holmes Group, 1986; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993). "How teaching is conducted has a large impact on students' abilities to educate themselves" (Joyce & Weil, 1992, p. 1) and therefore, teacher quality directly affects student learning (Corcoran & Goertz, 1995; Crone & Teddlie, 1995; Reagan, 1983; Rosenshine, 1971; Schrag, 1995; Shapiro, 1995). The majority of teachers take this responsibility seriously and demonstrate a high level of commitment to their professional duties (Lavelly, Berger, & Folman, 1992). Most of the reform efforts that focus on capacity-building through professional development, goal-setting, and

collaboration (Corcoran & Goertz, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 1993) are targeted for these professionals.

Unfortunately, a small minority of teachers do not or are unable to perform their professional duties at an acceptable level due to a variety of reasons, including a lack of motivation, burnout, and personal crises (Henderson-Sparks, 1995). Based on both expert opinion and empirical research (Bridges, 1992; Ehrgott, Henderson-Sparks, & Sparks, 1993; Fuhr, 1993; Groves, 1985/1986; Lavelly, Berger, & Follman, 1992; McGrath, 1995a), it is estimated that 5 to 15% of the 2.4 million teachers in public school classrooms (U.S. Department of Education, 1993a, p. 5) are marginal or incompetent. These teachers have a detrimental effect on student learning and achievement, school effectiveness, and public perceptions of schools (Fuhr, 1993; McGrath, 1995a; Peterson, 1995). The negative impact of incompetent teachers has been recognized by numerous national studies (National Commission on Excellence, 1983; National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 1996) on the teaching profession. Major reports by groups such as the National Commission on Excellence (1983) and the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (1996) have recommended the removal of incompetent teachers as part of broad-based recommendations to improve the quality of education in America's schools.

Role of Teacher Evaluation

School boards are empowered to address incompetence by statutory authority to hire and fire personnel. Historically, the courts have given school boards "wide discretion in deciding whether or not to continue employment of their personnel" (Gwathmey v. Atkinson, 1976, p. 1117). School systems fulfill this duty through the personnel function which includes a broad range of processes, such as recruitment, selection, supervision, and evaluation (Casterter, 1992). According to Casterter, "the goals of the personnel function in any educational system are to attract, develop, retain, and motivate personnel" (p. 5). Performance appraisal plays an important role in providing feedback on these personnel goals. In recent years, virtually all school systems, specifically 99.7%, have developed

formal procedures for the evaluation of probationary and tenured teachers (Educational Research Service, 1988, p. 39). Furthermore, in over 90% of the schools, building principals have primary responsibility for this task (ERS, 1988, p. 53).

For administrators, teacher supervision and evaluation are major areas of responsibility (Laing, 1986; Youngblood, 1994) and can be the primary means of ensuring a quality educational program for students (Huddle, 1985). Personnel evaluation is typically viewed as serving the dual purposes of professional development and improvement and accountability or the basis for personnel decisions (Bacharach, Conley, & Shedd, 1990; Dagley & Orso, 1991; Stronge, 1995). Other authors (Millman, 1981; Scriven, 1967) have referred to these uses respectively as formative and summative. Formative evaluation is considered the ongoing process of providing feedback incrementally on relatively smaller units of performance with the intent of improvement and growth, whereas summative evaluation “sums up” or provides a summary of performance over a longer period of time for the purposes of decision-making (Scriven, 1967).

The improvement purposes of evaluation apply to both individuals and the organization. For the individual, improvement means professional growth and development and for the school, it means better school effectiveness and enhancement of student learning (Dagley & Orso, 1991; Darling-Hammond, 1983; Iwanicki, 1990; Stronge & Helm, 1991). The information demanded for improvement purposes is more responsive and specific to the unique contextual features of the individual or organization, often addressing strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement (Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin, & Bernstein, 1984).

The accountability function of evaluation also applies to both individuals and organizations. Accountability at the individual level means satisfactory qualifications for initial hiring, minimal competence to be retained in a position, and eligibility for promotion. At the organizational level, accountability determines community support, accreditation

decision, and eligibility for awards of recognition (Castetter, 1992). Accountability has been defined as:

the responsibility for setting appropriate goals; implementing a process, program, policy, or procedure; monitoring and evaluating; producing the specified results or desired outcomes; presenting and interpreting the information and results to others; and justifying decisions made. (Wheeler & Haertel, 1993, p. 14)

In serving these functions, accountability serves as a basis for both personnel (i.e., tenure) and school status (i.e., accreditation) decisions (Darling-Hammond, 1990). Given the high stakes nature of accountability as a purpose for teacher evaluation, the “processes must be capable of yielding fairly objective, standardized, and externally defensible information about teacher performance” (Wise et al., 1984, p. v).

Role of Administrators in Teacher Evaluation

It is taken for granted by most educators that “the supervision of classroom teachers is one of the most important management responsibilities of the school administrator” (Youngblood, 1994, p. 51). The duty of “ongoing observation of teaching both for formative purposes of development and for summative purposes of accountability is considered a pillar of instructional excellence” (Huddle, 1985, p. 58) for effective schools and, yet, it is fraught with problems. Administrative evaluations of teachers have been found to correlate minimally with other measures of teacher effectiveness, student achievement, and impact on professional development (McLaughlin, 1990; Medley & Coker, 1987; Poston & Manatt, 1993). Despite the evidence for consideration of alternative practices, principals continue to play a central and primary role in current teacher evaluation practice (ERS, 1988).

To address these recognized shortcomings in supervisory assessments, researchers in the field of teacher evaluation have recommended strategies to both improve the validity and reliability of the administrative evaluation and to modify the current approach with its reliance on the principal as the sole evaluator (Epstein, 1985; Medley, Coker, & Soar,

1984; Scriven, 1994). Better training and guidance for evaluators in an organizational context of valued support for evaluation is advocated by numerous authors (Bridges, 1992; Conley, 1991; Groves, 1985/1986; McLaughlin, 1990; Poston & Manatt, 1993). Manatt & Daniels (1990) found that when extensive training and properly developed instrumentation and methodology are employed, principal ratings do correlate positively with student achievement. Other researchers (Wise et al., 1984) have documented the importance of context and implementation factors such as “top-level leadership and institutional resources for the evaluation process” in contributing to highly successful evaluation systems.

In addition to the improvement of evaluation conducted by principals, researchers have suggested the use of additional or alternative approaches to evaluation which include self-assessment (Airasian & Gullickson, 1994; Barber, 1990) and peer supervision/coaching (Joyce & Showers, 1988; Sapone & Sheeran, 1991). These approaches emphasize the formative aspects of supervision and evaluation over the summative purposes. Another approach is the use of multiple sources of information on teacher performance (Bridges, 1992; Manatt & Price, 1994; Peterson, 1995; Stronge & Helm, 1991) which might involve the use of peer ratings, student achievement data, personal growth plans, student feedback, teacher portfolios, parent surveys, and review of job artifacts. Although these ideas in various combinations are supported in much of the professional literature, few schools have embraced any of these practices (ERS, 1988; Peterson, 1995); and most continue to rely exclusively on administrative evaluations of performance.

Incompetence

Teacher incompetence is “a concept without precise technical meaning” (Bridges, 1986, p. 4) in part because the complex phenomena of teacher competence has yet to be fully defined (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 1995). Incompetence is typically viewed as the “failure to perform at a minimally acceptable level” for whatever reasons (Wheeler & Haertel, 1993, p. 70). Specifically defining what constitutes an “acceptable level” of

performance for teachers has been elusive due to its subjective and contextual qualities. However, there is consensus, based on case law, which recognizes that incompetency can be applied to duties both inside and outside the classroom (Beckham, 1985). Practitioners have interpreted incompetence as a failure to do one or more of the following: (a) maintain discipline, (b) treat students properly, (c) impart subject matter effectively, (d) accept teaching advice from superiors, (e) demonstrate mastery of the subject matter being taught, and (f) produce the intended or desired results in the classroom (Bridges, p. 5). In addition, incompetence implies a pervasive level of unacceptable performance versus isolated examples of misjudgment or mismanagement. Thus, before a label of incompetence can be used, a pattern of behavior typically must be documented along with at least some minimal efforts to assist the teacher in improving the identified weaknesses (Adams, 1988/89; McGrath, 1995a; Tigges, 1965).

Aside from its general meaning, "incompetency" is a specific legal term referring to one of the prescribed grounds for dismissal in the state of Virginia (Virginia School Laws, 1992) and in 30 other states across the country (Adams, 1988/89; McGrath, 1995a; Tigges, 1965). Although the term has not been defined explicitly or consistently in the legal context, the General Assembly of Virginia has provided some guidance on its interpretation of incompetency in a 1996 amendment of the Virginia School Laws (§ 22.1-307). Virginia statute now defines incompetency as "performance that is documented through evaluation to be consistently less than satisfactory or to fall below the standards set for the position" (Virginia School Laws, 1996, § 22.1-307). What constitutes "satisfactory" now becomes the question. One advantage of "unsatisfactory" as the standard for dismissal is its use in most existing evaluation rating systems. Although changes in terminology may not change the legal process for dismissal (McGrath, 1996), a shift from "incompetence" to "unsatisfactory" will align the statutory law with personnel evaluation language.

Administrative Response to Incompetence

No matter what role principals assume in the evaluation process, the “principal must remember that he or she, more than any other individual, is responsible for the quality of education in the school” (Youngblood, 1994, p. 56). Principals have a responsibility to ensure minimal standards of teacher competency. In this capacity, it is the marginal and incompetent teachers who are tenured that present the greatest challenge to principals (Fuhr, 1993; Laing, 1986; Luck, 1985/86). “Principals don’t like to talk about the marginal or incompetent teacher. No one likes to admit these [teachers] exist in a school.” (Fuhr, 1993, p. 26). As in any other profession, however, incompetent personnel do exist in education and “a school district must protect its students from the few teachers whose performance is habitually unacceptable” (ERS, 1988, p. 10). Once the problem is acknowledged, the responses of building level administrators to teacher incompetence include attempts to assist the teacher, requests to reassign the teacher, efforts to induce resignation/retirement, and recommendations to dismiss (Bridges, 1992; Groves, 1985/1986; Staples, 1990).

Dismissal is the harshest sanction which can be imposed by a school system and is rarely used (Bridges, 1992; Groves, 1985/1986). Although a large number of school systems experience a resignation or termination due to poor performance during a given year (ERS, 1988), the percentage of teachers affected is minuscule, especially with regards to tenured teachers. In a national study of 909 school systems, ERS (1988) found a .5% termination rate (including both induced resignations and dismissals) for tenured teachers over a two year period. Bridges (1992) found a similar low rate in his study of California schools which had an annual dismissal rate of .6% of the employed teachers. However, he found that tenured teachers accounted for only 5.2% of all dismissals, with temporary teachers comprising 70% of the total and probationary teachers constituting the remaining 25%.

The low rate of administrative action in cases of poor performance has been attributed to a number of factors, one of which is that taking a proactive stance with a

teacher who is not performing satisfactorily requires “courage, honesty, knowledge, and hard work” (Staples, 1990, p. 142) on the part of the principal. In addition to the personal demands, there are many issues associated with the identification process and possible dismissal which can deter even the most committed administrator. Common concerns are the potential litigation, excessive expenses associated with a court case, ambiguity about the teacher evaluation criteria and process, and discomfort with conflict (Bridges, 1992; Groves, 1985/1986; McGrath, 1995a). Other ramifications of a decision to confront a weak teacher include a negative effect on school climate (Fuhr, 1993), polarization of a faculty (McGrath, 1995a), additional hours required for supervision (Youngblood, 1994), role conflict for the principal who typically has had a collegial relationship with teachers (Laing, 1986), and a sense of isolation during the stressful process of remediation (Conley, 1991). There is a distinct need for support structures within personnel evaluation systems to offset some of these deterrents to effective confrontation of the teacher with unsatisfactory performance (Bridges, 1992; McLaughlin, 1990).

Evaluation System Components which Support Effective Evaluation

What are the important evaluation system components which support effective evaluation? Effective, in this case, refers to when “a specific desired end is attained” (Barnard, 1938, p. 19). For the purposes of this study, effective evaluation was considered to be the successful implementation of formal procedures by a principal to resolve the problem of incompetent teacher performance. The procedures considered were formal identification of unsatisfactory performance, followed by remediation of identified problem areas, reassignment to another role or school, or some form of termination. Termination could be the result of a resignation, retirement, or recommendation for dismissal. Responses by principals to incompetent teachers of this type have been found to depend on a sense of support in confronting many of the factors which can deter decisive action. A variety of issues related to personal skills and training in evaluation (Fuhr, 1993; Luck, 1985/86; McGrath, 1995a; Youngblood, 1994), evaluation system components such as

technical rationality in the performance criteria (Bridges, 1992; Poston & Manatt, 1993; Stronge, 1995), and implementation factors such as the level of administrator-teacher collaboration in the evaluation process (Dagley & Orso, 1991; Huddle, 1985; Poston & Manatt, 1993; Wise et al., 1984) have been found to contribute to a more meaningful and productive evaluation process for both principals and teachers.

Although the factors influencing the evaluation process are complex and interwoven, seven aspects have been identified and explored by researchers as critical in the overall effectiveness of evaluation systems: (a) performance criteria for evaluation, (b) general evaluation procedures, (c) remedial procedures, (d) organizational commitment to evaluation, (e) level of administrator-teacher collaboration, (f) evaluator training, and (g) integration of evaluation in the other functions of the organization. Objective, job-related criteria, legally sound procedures which reflect due process, and well-defined remedial processes for identified teachers are integral components of most evaluation systems and they contribute to an evaluation which provides sufficient guidance in the evaluation process for supervisors and is fair to teachers (Bridges, 1992; Conley, 1991; Dagley & Orso, 1991; Groves, 1985/1986; Stronge & Helm, 1991). The remaining four elements have been termed "implementation factors" (Wise et al., 1984, p. vii) due to their indirect but pivotal influence on the context in which evaluation takes place. Organizational commitment, administrator-teacher collaboration, evaluator training, and system integration determine the situational circumstances and level of support for the actual implementation of evaluation, no matter what specific instruments or methodologies which may be used in the evaluation system (Wise et al.). This study focused on the seven aspects of a comprehensive evaluation system and how the aspects contributed to the perceived effectiveness of the system and the actual incidence of administrative action (i.e., remediation).

Theoretical Rationale

The theoretical rationale for this study is founded primarily on social systems theory. Schools and school districts are social systems where the primary function is learning. This investigation seeks to explore one aspect of how schools fulfill this function by ensuring minimal standards of competence for teachers. Therefore, the theoretical rationale takes into account the role of teachers in the learning process and the necessity of monitoring the level of teaching to achieve individual and institutional goals. The following sequence of conclusions was made based on social systems theory:

1. Proximal variables such as the quality of instruction have the greatest impact on learning.
2. Schools are social systems with the responsibility to ensure the quality of learning as an institutional goal.
3. Performance evaluation provides a feedback mechanism to monitor and adjust the balance between individual and institutional goals.
4. Teaching and learning are reciprocal processes.
5. Competence of teachers directly affects the quality of learning.

The basic assumption of teacher influence on the learning process was questioned by a number of studies in the mid-sixties and early seventies by Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McParland, Mood, Weinfield, & York (1966); Mosteller and Moynihan (1972); Rosenshine (1970); and Popham (1971) (cited in Brophy and Good, 1986). By 1986, however, Brophy and Good were able to assert that “the myth that teachers do not make a difference in student learning has been refuted” (p. 370). Furthermore, in a recent study which compiled comprehensive data on the factors affecting school learning, it was found that “instructional variables exert significant influence on school learning” (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993, p. 277). Teachers do make a difference and this was substantiated in the research effort by Wang et al. which included a review of 91 meta-analyzes and an analysis of over 11,000 research relationships.

Wang, et al. (1993) found that there was “general agreement among experts and empirically based findings about what variables impact school learning and their relative strength” (p. 275). Their major conclusions were the following:

1. Distal variables, like state, district, and school level policy and demographics, have little influence on school learning.
2. Distal variables are at least one step removed from the daily learning experiences of most students. Simply instituting new policies, whether state, district, or school level, will not necessarily enhance student learning.
3. Proximal variables like psychological, instructional, and home environment variables have more impact on learning than most of the variables studied and should be part of an effective strategy to promote student learning. (p. 276)

In summary, Wang, Haertel, and Walberg stated that “the actions of students, teachers, and parents matter most to student learning” (p. 279).

Social Systems Theory

One of the more useful theoretical constructs for understanding the interactions within a school is systems theory (Barnard, 1938; Castetter, 1992; Getzels & Guba, 1957) and its evolutionary descendent, social systems theory. Systems theory was developed in the biological sciences to explain the interrelatedness of the cellular subunits and their contribution to the overall organism. In a similar fashion, “school systems may be viewed as organizations composed of interdependent and interrelated parts or subsystems” (Castetter, p. 6), one of which is the personnel function. Since evaluation takes place within the social context of a school and, hence, it is important to understand what purpose and role it serves in light of the organization and its overarching goals.

Based on the scientific origins of systems theory, Banghart (1969) emphasized the interdependence of the parts of a system to accomplish a predetermined goal. Systems, however, tend to degenerate into disorder, or entropy, if they grow without monitoring. Control is necessary to retain the integrity of the system and minimize the degenerative

tendency. The area of cybernetics has contributed the concepts of feedback, internal communication, and control to systems theory. Control is viewed as critical to the ongoing health of the system and has been described as the process of continuous monitoring, self-adjustment, and self-design. Human organizations carry out these same processes of “monitoring, evaluating, and adjusting” (Castetter, 1992, p. 55).

Getzels and Guba (1957) applied systems theory to the area of administration with the reasoning that administration involved social behavior in a hierarchical setting, be it a school system, school, or classroom. Each of these social systems had two distinct and yet interactive components, the “institutions” and “individuals.” By “institutions”, Getzels and Guba meant the structural elements of a social system which defined the roles and expectations of the “individuals” who served these institutions and were defined by personalities. The administrative process involved balancing and integrating the institutional and personal components to achieve organizational goals. Operationally, balance or congruence would result in organizational productivity (e.g., an award-winning school) and personal fulfillment (e.g., sense of efficacy), and ultimately in goal attainment (e.g., student learning).

Hoy and Miskel (1991) expanded on the work of Getzels and Guba and emphasized the impact of feedback mechanisms for schools as social systems. Deming also stressed the importance of feedback and communication (cited in Carter, 1994). He challenged “American management to open the doors of communication, to identify the key processes that work teams have responsibility for, to talk with employees, and to provide them with feedback on a continual basis” (cited in Carter, p. 145). Feedback is viewed typically as “motivating” to individuals, but can include disciplinary action and firing as the most harsh form of feedback.

In the majority of schools, principals continue to have primary responsibility for evaluation, an important component of which is feedback. Frase (1992) asserted that “observing and being observed, giving and getting honest but straightforward feedback on

areas of weakness and suggestions for improvement, are the most powerful tools for instructional improvement and professional recognition known” (p. 36-37). In cases where there is a question of teacher incompetence, honest and direct feedback is even more important so that the teacher has a realistic understanding of their weaknesses and the potential consequences of a lack of improvement. Thus, feedback is a key element in the evaluation process, both for accountability and personal growth purposes. Feedback is the primary means of “balancing individual needs with institutional expectations [which] is essential for fostering productive work environments” (Stronge, 1995, p. 132).

Theory of Teaching

If learning is the institutional goal of schools, what is the role of teachers and teaching? Teaching can be viewed from two perspectives, as a *process* or as an *achievement* of an intention. Dewey (1910) regarded teaching and learning as reciprocal concepts. “To teach, in this sense, is known by its effects. Those effects are learning” (Eisner, 1994, p. 158). A second view of teaching is focused primarily on the process and involves “a variety of acts performed by individuals called teachers as they work in classrooms with the intention of promoting learning” (Eisner, p. 158). For example, Gagné (1965) argued that teaching, as a process, only increased the probability of learning. Eisner suggested that both constructs could be appropriate depending on the context in which they are used.

Vygotsky bridged this dichotomy with his view of education as a collaborative process determined in large part by the student’s personal activity versus the teacher’s activity (cited in Davydov, 1995). He viewed teaching and learning as reciprocal processes similar to Dewey, but he also emphasized the creative and complex nature of the teacher’s work. He stated that “the personal activity of the student must be placed at the base of the educative process, and all the teacher’s art must come down to directing and regulating this activity” (cited in Davydov, p. 17). Thus, the process of teaching was stressed but it was assumed to lead to learning. Regardless of whether teaching is a process or an

achievement, the work of the teacher is viewed as having a fundamental impact on student learning.

Given the current context for education, there is a much greater emphasis on the outcomes of education and hence, teaching as an achievement rather than teaching as a process (U.S. Department of Education, 1993a). Historically students have been seen as responsible for whether learning occurred or not; however, a shift has occurred in the last few decades in which educators are held more accountable for learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 1993). These sentiments are summed up well by one superintendent: “the reality is that we have not taught until students have learned. And if students are not learning, the performance of teachers and administrators is not satisfactory” (Brown, 1996).

Indeed, Darling-Hammond (1993) has noted that “all the solutions to the problems cited by education’s critics are constrained by the availability of talented teachers, by the knowledge and capacities of those teachers possess, and by the school conditions that define how that knowledge can be used” (p. 754). High quality teachers are integral to school improvement and furthermore, “teaching well means helping students learn well” (Joyce & Weil, 1992, p. v). Teaching ability directly affects student learning. When evaluation takes on the meaningful role of providing credible feedback to teachers about their practice, evaluation can serve as an important vehicle for improving the quality of instruction. Improving the quality of instruction gives students an opportunity to learn, teachers a sense of fulfillment, and the school a chance to achieve its institutional goals.

Statement of the Problem

Purposes of the Study

The major purposes of this study were to: (a) assess the presence of evaluation system components which assist principals in responding to incompetent teachers, (b) explore the relationship of evaluation system components and the principal’s overall effectiveness rating of the evaluation system, and (c) explore the relationship of the

evaluation system components and the incidence of administrative response to teacher incompetence. Administrative response was conceptualized broadly to include remediation of the teacher, reassignment of the teacher, inducement to retire or resign, and recommendation for dismissal. This study synthesized data collected from principals in the Commonwealth of Virginia to address the following questions.

Research Questions for Phase I - Prevalence of Teacher Incompetence and Presence of Evaluation System Components which Support an Effective Administrative Response

- I.1. How prevalent is incompetent teacher performance in Virginia?
- I.2. How many tenured teachers are (a) identified, (b) remediated, (c) reassigned, (d) encouraged to resign/retire, or (e) dismissed each year as a result of incompetence?
- I.3. What evaluation system components are present to assist the principal in responding to incompetent tenured teachers?
- I.4. How effective is the overall evaluation support structure in responding to incompetent tenured teachers?

Null Hypotheses for Phase II - Relationship between the Presence of Evaluation System Components and Measures of Effectiveness

- II.1 There is no significant relationship ($p < .05$) between the evaluation system components and an effectiveness measure of the overall evaluation support structure as perceived by principals.
- II.2 There are no significant relationships ($p < .05$) among the evaluation system components and the incidence of administrative responses to teacher incompetence.

Significance of the Study

School “districts do not seem to be dealing forthrightly with incompetent teachers” (Groves, 1985/1986, p. 102). Despite incompetence estimates of 5% and higher for the teaching profession, the dismissal rate is less than 1% (Bridges & Gumpert, 1983; Ehgott, Henderson-Sparks, & Sparks, 1993; ERS, 1988; Fuhr, 1993; Groves, 1985/1986; Lavelly,

Berger, & Follman, 1992). It would appear that factors inhibiting administrative action or response to incompetence far outweigh the factors which facilitate responsiveness on the part of the principal who is primarily responsible for teacher evaluation (ERS, 1988). If school systems are to respond to calls for accountability and excellence, they must develop a strategy to shift the balance of considerations in addressing teacher incompetence so that students and the general public are best served. One means of doing so is through the use of better constructed evaluation systems and organizational support structures which offset the naturally occurring deterrents to an assertive stance toward teacher incompetence.

At present, the "research into the process of teacher evaluation and dismissal is rather limited" (Staples, 1990, p. 5) with the bulk of the professional literature focusing on the legal aspects of dismissals and the pattern of judicial rulings which support and do not support schools in dismissal hearings (Groves, 1985/1986; Staples, 1990). "There is little understanding of [specifically] how and why administrators deal with incompetent teachers" (Groves, p. 101). Research by Bridges (1992) has shed light on the factors which tend to inhibit administrators from taking an assertive stance toward teacher incompetence. Other researchers have suggested factors which are related to successful evaluation systems (Wise et al., 1984) and the ability to dismiss incompetent teachers (Bridges & Groves, 1986; Groves, 1985/1986; Staples, 1990). Because principals have primary responsibility for initially identifying and responding to teacher incompetence, it is important to understand their perspective on what contributes to an effective administrative response. This study examined the features inherent in evaluation systems and the associated implementation factors which principals viewed as helpful in the demanding task of confronting and working with incompetent teachers.

It was hoped that a better understanding of how to support principals will allow school districts to balance the "institutional" goal of a quality education for its students and the "individual" goal of ensuring the due process rights of its teachers. The courts have provided a legal forum for teachers to seek protection of their due process rights but no

similar mechanism exists to protect students from inadequate teaching. Given that students attend school under compulsory attendance laws and that their future quality of life is determined in part by the instruction they receive (U.S. Department of Education, 1993b), it is crucial to better understand the dynamics of the complex process of teacher evaluation to empower principals, school systems, and school boards to fulfill their responsibility of providing a quality education for students.

Operational Definitions

Accountability. Accountability refers to the responsibility for setting, achieving, monitoring, and evaluating the attainment of educational goals (Wheeler & Haertel, 1993).

Administrative responses. Administrative responses to teacher incompetence were limited to (a) reassignment, (b) remediation, (c) inducement to resign or retire, and (d) recommendation to dismiss.

Administrator-teacher collaboration. Administrator-teacher collaboration refers to the level of trust, communication, and cooperation between teachers and administrators in the development and implementation phases of an evaluation system.

Dismissal. For the purposes of this study, dismissal is used in a strict legal sense and refers to the involuntary termination of “any teacher during the term of such teacher’s contract and the nonrenewal of a teacher on continuing contract” (Virginia School Laws, 1992, §22.1-306). The term, “dismissal” does not apply to the termination of probationary or temporary teachers at the end of an annual contract. Probationary and temporary teachers do not have a continuing contract, by definition, and have no expectation of continuing employment according to the law.

Effectiveness rating. The effectiveness rating is a composite score of ratings on six questionnaire items which reflected the principals’ opinions of their school system’s evaluation system.

Evaluation criteria. Evaluation criteria provide the foundation for an evaluation system by specifying what teachers are expected to do in a professional capacity both in the classroom and outside.

Evaluation procedures. Evaluation procedures provide direction to the evaluation process by defining who will be evaluated, by whom, how often, in what manner, and how documentation will occur.

Evaluator training. Evaluator training is a means of developing the evaluator's competence in the key areas necessary for the evaluation of teachers which include conducting observations, analyzing performance data, providing feedback, documenting performance, and assisting in the improvement process.

Identification. Teacher is identified as performing below acceptable levels as defined in performance standards set by the local school system in one or more areas.

Incompetence. Incompetency is a legal term which has been defined by recent Virginia statute to be "performance that is documented through evaluation to be consistently less than satisfactory or to fall below the standards set for the position" (Virginia School Laws, 1996, §22.1-306). For general legal purposes, it refers to a lack of both the required knowledge to teach a given subject and the instructional skills to impart that knowledge. Incompetency may also be used in reference to other areas of responsibility such as classroom management, student assessment, and duties outside the classroom. Incompetence provides legal grounds for dismissal in most states (Tigges, 1965).

Induced resignation. Teacher is counseled, encouraged, or pressured to voluntarily leave a school district based upon evidence of incompetent performance, lack of remediation, and imminent dismissal. Sometimes, monetary enticements are used to exert additional pressure (Groves, 1985/1986).

Organizational commitment. Organizational commitment refers to the fundamental importance given to teacher evaluation by the school system, most notably by the

superintendent and the strategies that he/she employs to demonstrate that meaningful evaluation is a priority.

Organizational integration. Organizational integration is the extent to which evaluation is integral to the overall organizational goals of individual schools and other functions (e.g., staff development) of the school system as a whole.

Performance. Performance refers to what a teacher does on a regular, predictable basis. Although it is dependent on abilities and competence, it is judged by the actions of the teacher (Wheeler & Haertel, 1993).

Reassignment. Reassignment refers to the request for the transfer of a teacher to another school. The underlying reason may be due to concerns about performance but this is seldom given as the explicit reason for the request.

Remedial procedures. Remedial procedures provide the direction for principals in working with teachers whose performance is less than satisfactory by defining the process for identifying weaknesses, developing improvement assistance plans, and providing instructional assistance.

Remediation. Remediation refers to “those techniques or strategies designed to improve an individual’s performance in identified deficiencies or specific areas of weakness” (Wheeler & Haertel, 1993, p. 122).

System components. For the purposes of this study, system components refers to the following seven components of an evaluation system: (a) evaluation criteria, (b) evaluation procedures, (c) remedial procedures, (d) organizational commitment, (e) evaluator training, (f) administrator-teacher collaboration, and (g) organizational integration.

Teacher competence. Teacher competence refers to the repertoire of knowledge, skills, abilities, personal qualities, experiences, and other characteristics that are applicable in performing the teaching task that an individual teacher possesses (Alkin, 1992; Wheeler & Haertel, 1993).

Teacher effectiveness. Teacher effectiveness is the “ability of a teacher to help a designated learner achieve desired educational outcomes” (Alkin, 1992, p. 1345).

Limitations of the Study

The following limitations apply to the interpretation of the results of this study.

1. The description of administrative responses to incompetent teachers is limited to the public school systems in Virginia during the time period of 1993-1995.
2. The description of administrative responses to incompetence are based on self-report by principals and may not reflect actual events.
3. The assessment of the school division’s evaluation system is based on the principal’s judgments.
4. The identified evaluation system components (i.e., organizational commitment) affecting administrative response to teacher incompetence are not discrete entities and may overlap in their influence on the administrative response to incompetent teachers.
5. There may be factors which substantially affect administrative response to teacher incompetence that were not identified in this study.
6. There is not a widely agreed upon definition for teacher incompetence, thus, making it difficult to study administrative response to an illusive construct.

Major Assumptions

Listed below are the major assumptions underlying this study.

1. Teachers are central to quality instruction.
2. Principals have primary administrative responsibility for responding to teacher incompetence.
3. Teacher evaluation procedures represent a primary vehicle for administrative response to teacher incompetence.
4. The responses by principals to the questionnaire accurately reflect events which have taken place in their schools.

5. **Principals have sufficient familiarity with their school division's evaluation system to respond accurately to specific questions about its components and implementation.**
6. **Principals possess the skills, knowledge base, and competence to judge teacher incompetence.**
7. **Principals possess the skills and competence to respond to incompetence.**

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Current Educational Context for Teacher Evaluation

Educational reform has a long tradition which can be traced back as far as there has been formalized education with teachers and students (Bracey, 1995). For the most part, the reform efforts were academic debates about issues such as educational goals and funding sources, with minimal public involvement (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1993). After World War II, however, educational reform became a concern of the general public and the “criticisms rose to a crescendo” (Bracey, 1996, p. 10). Public involvement in the educational debate waxed and waned for the next few decades. The “most significant educational document to confront educators and the general public” during the 1980’s” (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 1995, p. 23) was the 1983 report, A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform. It called for “excellence in education” and recommended “standards for academic performance” (National Commission of Excellence in Education, p. 4, 8).

One of the specific recommendations made by the National Commission of Excellence in Education called for “effective evaluation systems . . . so that superior teachers can be rewarded, average ones encouraged, and poor ones either improved or terminated” (p. 10). In summarizing the key recommendations of the report , one of which was effective evaluation systems, the report stated that “excellence costs. But in the long run mediocrity costs far more” (National Commission of Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 11). This statement applies to all aspects of educational reform but seems particularly poignant in the context of teacher competence. Reform took on greater urgency and excellence, standards, and accountability became central themes in much of the educational literature (Elliott, 1996; Lewis, 1995; Ornstein & Hunkins, 1993; Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 1995; U.S. Department of Education, 1993b) and continue today. They

underpin such efforts as the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (1990) and the professional standards set forth by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

Reform efforts initiated in the 1980s, partially in response to A Nation at Risk, focused on five broad areas according to Timar and Kirp (1988): (a) the teacher profession; (b) school organization and environment; (c) curriculum and academic standards; (d) administration and leadership, and (e) funding (p. 13). While all these issues were important ones, “teacher professionalism and school restructuring [were] the major watchwords used to describe efforts to reform teaching and schooling so that they [would] focus more directly on learners' needs” (Darling-Hammond, 1990, p. 17). The tangible products of these reform efforts in the area of teacher professionalism were new state initiatives addressing certification requirements for teachers, teacher evaluation systems, career ladders, and pay scales (Sclan, 1994; Timar & Kirp, 1988). The emphasis was typically on “intervention” and “control” (Clark & Astuto, 1994, p. 520).

Based on the perception of marginal success with the reform efforts, contemporary authors (Airasian, 1993; Darling-Hammond, 1993) have concluded that effective educational change cannot be mandated at the federal, state, or local level; and instead “reform [would have to] begin in the classroom” (Fuhr, 1993, p. 29). Wang, Haertel, & Walberg (1993) in a sweeping meta-analysis of available research on what variables impact school learning found that there was “general agreement among experts” (p. 275). One of their major conclusions was that distal variables, like state, district, and even school level policy have little influence on school learning; it is variables like psychological factors, instructional characteristics, and home environment that have more impact on learning. Schools obviously have the greatest control over instructional characteristics.

To this end of improving instructional characteristics, there have been countless reform efforts but teacher evaluation has rarely been a central issue. “In the past, teacher evaluation has generally not been a high-stakes activity, in part because improving the

quality of teachers has not been seen as critical for improving the quality of education. Instead, school improvement efforts over the past several decades have focused on improving the curriculum, altering school management methods, and developing new programs” (Darling-Hammond, 1990, p. 17). More recently “the public has come to believe that the key to educational improvement lies as much in upgrading the quality of teachers as in revamping school programs and curricula” (Darling-Hammond, 1990, p. 18). This shift in what constitutes educational accountability requires greater emphasis on evaluation as a means of promoting and ensuring the quality of classroom teachers (Laing, 1986; Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 1995). As stated by Murphy and Pimentel (1996), “redefining learning in this nation requires redefining accountability and assessment—for both students and staff” (p.74).

The historical shift in focus from programs and curricula to individual teachers reflects a shift in the perceived role of teachers from presenters of packaged curricula or vessels for an array of competencies to one of “professional decision makers who have not only mastered needed competencies but have learned when to apply them and how to orchestrate them” (Brophy & Good, 1986, p. 329). The conceptualization of teaching as decision-making implies that it is both a process requiring specific skills and an outcome necessitating an appropriate match of instructional strategies and student needs as suggested by Eisner (1994). Teacher evaluation only recently has begun to reflect the belief that teachers should be supported in these efforts to refine their decision-making and evaluated based on not only their teaching skills but their ability to teach “responsively and effectively” to their specific students (Darling-Hammond, 1993).

Recognizing that teachers are “central to the educational experience” (Timar & Kirp, 1988, p.14), suggestions for improving the quality of teachers have focused on proficiency tests to receive initial certification, financial incentives to enter the teaching field, incentive programs for current teachers which are tied to increased student performance, and professional development programs to reduce the isolation of teaching and promote more

innovative teaching practices (Timar & Kirp, 1988; U.S. Department of Education, 1993). “Teacher learning must be the heart of any effort to improve education in our society. While other reforms may be needed, better learning for more children ultimately relies on teachers. What lends urgency to professional development is its connection to reform and to the ambitious new goals for education that are to be extended to all students” (Sykes, 1996, p. 465). The recently released report by the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (1996) reinforced the claim that “the reform of elementary and secondary education depends first and foremost on restructuring its foundation—the teaching profession” (p. 5). Like the National Commission of Excellence in Education (1983), this commission also made the recommendation to remove incompetent teachers. While the need appears clear, little attention has been given to the issue of how to work with the marginal or incompetent teacher who has achieved tenure status.

The current educational context for teacher evaluation is one in which the public’s demand for greater accountability and the teaching profession’s interest in improving its professional standing (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 1995) dual for center stage. One paradigm calls for standards of performance and achievement of tangible outcome measures while the other emphasizes the need for support of the fundamental decision-making quality of teaching which is context-specific and sometimes defies specific standards. With its emphasis on standards and professionalism, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) has attempted to reconcile these two competing goals. It has recognized that, “teaching is at the heart of education, and the single most important action the nation can take to improve schools is to strengthen teaching” (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1990, p. 5). Thus, teacher evaluation has taken on an important role in this reform movement to increase educational quality at the national level, through the NBPTS, and at the local level through teacher evaluation systems (Cohen, 1995; Elliott, 1996; Lewis, 1995).

Role of Teacher Evaluation in Improving Teacher Quality

Purposes

Given the importance of teacher quality, it needs to be sought after, developed, recognized, and rewarded (Castetter, 1992). These goals are typically achieved through the personnel function of most school systems and are explicit purposes of the teacher evaluation process. The primary purposes of teacher evaluation are considered to be accountability - to ensure a competent teaching staff, and professional development - to further cultivate the skills and conceptual awareness of teachers (Castetter, 1992; Darling-Hammond, 1990; Duke, 1990; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993; Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 1995). Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) compared the different standards required by these two purposes of evaluation with accountability requiring a more formal, documented approach that is uniform, legally defensible, and based on minimum requirements of acceptability. In contrast, the characteristics of professional improvement are more informal, individualized, and collegial in nature with the emphasis on growth and development.

Another way of conceptualizing these two functions is as formative and summative processes (Cronbach, 1963; Millman, 1981; Scriven, 1967). Formative evaluation is the process of providing feedback *during* the evaluation process for the purposes of improving classroom teaching and promoting professional development. In contrast, summative evaluation is the process of synthesizing information *after* the evaluation process has taken place for the purposes of making a recommendation or decision for selection, retention, or promotion (Scriven, 1991). Summative evaluation is intended to ensure accountability for minimal standards of teaching performance.

Despite the usefulness of the accountability/professional development and formative/summative dichotomies in understanding the strands and textures of evaluation, the discrete functions do not and probably should not exist in practice. A heavy emphasis on professional growth as suggested by some authors (Iwanicki, 1990; Sapone & Sheeran,

1991) does not ensure minimum standards of teacher competence and instructional quality for students and a heavy emphasis on accountability shortchanges the vast majority of teachers for whom professional development is "clearly the more beneficial purpose of evaluation" (Searfoss & Enz, 1996, p.38). Rather a balance and integration of the two purposes appears to be an ideal, if elusive, goal.

History

The tradition of teacher evaluation in this country dates back to the colonial period when citizen groups periodically toured the schools to hear recitations and ensure that all was in order (Tracy & MacNaughton, 1993). In the late 1800's, administrative positions became more common and evaluation was assumed by master teachers or full-time administrators within the schools but typically was informal in nature with no written procedures (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980). By 1925, "various kinds of teacher efficiency ratings" (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 1995, p. 13) were being used by a majority of larger city school systems and almost all public school systems had written evaluation procedures by the 1970s (Stemnock, 1969).

The focus of teacher evaluation, prior to the 1970s, was primarily summative. The principal made his/her judgment about the teacher's performance and recommended retention or dismissal with little or no feedback to the teacher for improving his/her practice. "Clearly, this approach was one of the chief reasons for teacher discontent" (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 1995, p. 22). During the 1970s, authors (see, for example, Bolton, 1972; House, 1973) advocated a more formative approach to evaluation which would provide teachers with guidance on how to change and would bring them into the evaluation process as participants versus subjects. It was thought that greater involvement would positively affect teachers' perceptions of evaluation and reduce the inherent threat of evaluation, both of which would promote greater commitment to the development and improvement of instructional skills (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam). Teachers certainly endorsed this viewpoint. Two surveys by the NEA (1972) and Stemnock (1969) found that

94% and 93%, respectively, of the teachers favored the use of evaluation for the purpose of improving teaching performance. In both studies, teachers also supported the use of evaluations to dismiss incompetent teachers but to a lesser extent, 54% in the survey by Stemnock and 82% by the NEA.

Since then, "many school districts have endeavored to incorporate elements of formative evaluation into their total process, which means, in effect, that an attempt was being made to meet the needs of both the organization and the individual through evaluation" (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 1995, p. 22). Based on a survey of 1,000 teachers by Noland, Rowand, and Farris (1994), most school systems have been able to shift to a more formative process. Teachers reported (p. 37) that teacher performance evaluations were used to a moderate or great extent in their schools for the following formative purposes: (a) to guide improvement of teaching skills (91%), (b) to recognize and reinforce teaching excellence (81%), (c) to help teachers focus on student outcomes (79%), and (d) to plan inservice education activities (67%). In contrast, summative uses of performance evaluations were noted by less than half the teachers and the purpose of discharging incompetent teachers reported by only 45% of the teachers. Strikingly, 78% of the teachers indicated that the dismissal should be one purpose of evaluation in their school system (Noland, Rowand, and Farris).

Balance of Purpose

Historically, the principal has had sole responsibility for conducting evaluations and has been charged with achieving both goals of accountability and professional development (ERS, 1988; Laing, 1986; Nolin, Rowand, & Farris, 1994). The principal has been charged to "protect students and the public from incompetent teaching" and "guarantee quality teaching and schooling for students and the public" (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993, p. 222). In addition to the blending of purposes at the individual level, "agendas for individual evaluation and organizational renewal are increasingly intertwined" (Darling-Hammond, 1990, p. 17) as schools are asked to define their own school improvement

strategies. It appears that the goals of accountability and development cannot be separated and addressed individually. If schools are to improve and achieve educational excellence, schools need to foster professional development of their faculty and individual development efforts need to contribute to the school as a whole and the entire educational enterprise. As noted by Webster (1995), "competent teachers can make almost anything work, while incompetent ones can ruin even the most brilliant instructional design. Teacher evaluation systems must be . . . coordinated with ongoing program and school evaluation" (p. 228).

The theme of balancing individual needs and organizational expectations is not only a practical necessity because of the principal's role but the balance also has been discussed as desirable from a theoretical perspective. Getzels and Guba (1957) described the importance of balancing the personal and normative dimensions of organizations from the perspective of social systems theory. The idiographic or personal dimension of an organization focuses on the dispositions and needs of individual members while the nomothetic or normative dimension addresses the goals and role requirements of the organization. Together, the two dimensions define all aspects of the social system. Since all elements within a social system are complementary, they affect one another directly. For example, observed behavior by members of a social system is hypothesized to result from the interaction of the nomethetic and idiographic dimensions. The resulting behavior can thus vary substantially based on the interaction of an individual's personality and his/her assigned role in the organization.

The administrative process involves balancing and integrating the institutional and personal components to achieve organizational goals (Getzels & Guba, 1957). It was hypothesized by Hoy and Miskel (1991), in their extension of the work by Getzels and Guba, that the more congruent individual needs were with organizational role expectations and vice versa, the greater the individual satisfaction and organizational effectiveness. In the realm of schools and teacher evaluation, this would suggest that a balance between the school's requirements for accountability and the individual's need for professional

development is necessary for "fostering productive work environments" (Stronge 1995, p. 132). Operationally, balance or congruence would result in organizational productivity (an award-winning school) and personal fulfillment (high morale), and ultimately in goal attainment (student learning).

At what point the balance should be struck between the purposes of accountability and professional development is debatable and probably situation-specific depending on community expectations, school system norms, educational philosophies, and the general level of competency among the teaching staff. An imbalance toward accountability compromises the system's ability to "provide teachers with feedback on performance and stimulate reflective thought" (Searfoss & Enz, 1996, p. 34) and an imbalance toward professional growth compromises the safeguards which protect students from incompetent teaching. One rule of thumb is the 80/20 quality rule which states that "when more than 20 percent of supervisory time and money is expended in evaluation for quality control or less than 80 percent of supervisory time and money is spent in professional improvement, quality schooling suffers" (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993, p. 221).

In support of the 80/20 rule, one national study of approximately 1,000 elementary school teachers in 1993 found that "most teachers perceived that evaluations at their school were used to promote the development of improved teacher skills rather than to assist administrators and other teachers to make judgments affecting personnel decisions for teachers" (Nolin, Rowand, & Farris, 1994, p. 10). Eighty-nine percent of the teachers reported that their last evaluation had provided an accurate assessment of teaching performance and 74% of teachers thought their last evaluation had been useful for improving their teaching skills. Eighty-one percent of the teachers thought that evaluation should be a means to improve teaching skills to a "great extent" and 18% to a "moderate extent" (p. 37). Teachers reported, however, that the improvement of teaching skills was an objective in their school to a "great extent" only 61% of the time indicating a less than

optimal match between the schools' use of evaluation for improvement and teachers' support of the practice.

As stated earlier, the role of principal as instructional leader necessitates that he/she engages in both formative and summative evaluation (Dagley & Orso, 1991; Laing, 1986). Principals have primary responsibility for evaluation in the majority of schools and are perceived by teachers as competent to do so (ERS, 1988; Nolin, Rowand, & Farris, 1994). In a study by Nolin, Rowand, and Farris (1994), public elementary school teachers reported that principals were involved 90% of the time in their last evaluation and had the most important role in the evaluation process 89% of the time. Not only were principals involved in most evaluations, but 90% of the teachers viewed the competence of administrators as moderate to great in evaluating major aspects of their teaching, such as subject matter knowledge, classroom management, instructional techniques, and helping students achieve. Furthermore, Natriello (1984) found that the more frequent the evaluation activity with a teacher by the principal, the more effective the teachers perceived themselves to be in various teaching tasks.

Typically, summative evaluation comes after sincere efforts to assist teachers in the improvement process. "Schools, as educational institutions, are about the business of personal growth and improvement. It is imperative that schools model the precepts they espouse" (Laing, 1986, p. 92). The principal must exemplify the values of concern, support, and willingness to help that are desired in his/her teachers. Based on reports by teachers (Nolin, Rowand, & Farris, 1994), schools are emphasizing the formative purposes of evaluation to a greater extent than the summative but both uses could and should be stressed to a greater extent. For most evaluation purposes listed in the survey, teachers indicated that the purpose cited should be emphasized more than it was by 15 to 20% of the survey respondents. Indicative of this pattern was the use of evaluation to "guide improvement of teaching skills" (p. 37) to a "great extent" in 61% of the cases, but 81% of the teachers said it should be used to a great extent. Likewise, the use of evaluation

“to discharge incompetent teachers” was stressed to a great extent in 18% of the cases, but teachers said it should be used to a great extent in 45% of the cases. These findings would suggest that while teachers find evaluation useful, they believe greater utility of the evaluation process for both improvement and accountability purposes is possible.

Teacher Incompetence

Definitional Issues

One of the difficulties in developing and implementing teacher evaluation systems is agreeing upon what constitutes competence and incompetence in the field of teaching. Teaching is a complex act, much like leadership, and defies precise prescription of behaviors. “No one knows precisely what ideal role a teacher should perform to affect excellent student learning, even when the context of a classroom is specified” (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 1995, p. 9). If the definition of teacher competence has remained so elusive and difficult to pinpoint (Biddle & Ellena, 1964; Rosenshine, 1971), incompetence has been even more difficult to define because it is the absence of those same unspecified characteristics.

Despite decades of research on teacher effectiveness, Biddle and Ellena (1964) observed, “findings about the competence of teachers are inconclusive and piecemeal; and little is presently known for certain about teacher excellence” (p. v). In a review of the literature on teacher competence in 1980, Medley and Cook recommended that teacher evaluation should be determined by successful teaching rather than any specific set of competencies. In that tradition, Shinkfield & Stufflebeam (1995) defined teacher competence as “any action taken by a teacher that contributes to the cognitive, affective, or motor-skill development of the student” (p. 19). This definition reflects a shift in the criterion for competence from the processes of teaching, or what the teacher does in the classroom, to the outcomes of teaching, or what the student learns as a result of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 1993). This shift was a reflection of and paralleled the focus of most reform efforts during the 1970s and 1980s which began to evaluate success based on

outcomes (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 1995; U.S. Department of Education, 1993). In a similar fashion, administrator evaluation (e.g., Charlotte-Mecklenberg, N.C. Schools) has begun to reflect the quality of results versus a list of competencies using evaluation criteria such as the achievement of academic benchmark goals (Murphy & Pimentel, 1996).

At the functional level, outcome-based indicators of unsatisfactory performance may include “disproportionate disciplinary referrals, excessive student failure, and numerous complaints from students, parents, and even colleagues in the building” (Lawrence, Vachon, Leake, & Leake, 1993, p. 5). A more graphic description of incompetence was provided by a teacher:

[The incompetent teachers in her building] should never be teaching anywhere in a classroom in the United States of America. One is mentally ill; the second is mentally unstable and beats the children. The third one comes in late and thinks he is doing an excellent job but is totally incapable of controlling the chaos in the classroom. (Johnson, 1984, p. 115)

In a study comparing the characteristics of superior and incompetent secondary teachers, Arnold (1986) found that the two sets of teachers differed most in their affective skills and the variety of teaching strategies used. Superior teachers were most often described by principals as “having good planning and organizational skills, a command of their subject matter and good affective skills” (p. 45). Incompetent teachers were described as “having poor communication skills and a lack of classroom management ability . . . and a dearth of teaching strategies” (p. 46). Lawrence, et al., (1993) noted that a “marginal teacher is an individual who is consciously or unconsciously losing faith in the belief that every child can learn. The marginal teacher actually contributes to a dysfunctional situation by engaging in boring, uninspiring, and ineffective instruction” (p. 5).

Incompetency is also a legal term referring to one of the prescribed grounds for dismissal in 31 states across the country (Adams, 1988/89; Bridges & Groves, 1990; McGrath, 1995a; Tigges, 1965). It is a statutory cause for termination or demotion of

tenured or nontenured teachers and the term is typically used to refer to the "lack of some requisite ability" (Tigges, 1965, p. 1094). "Generally, it is used in a broad sense, and is not restricted in meaning . . . [it is] a collective term for a number of behaviors from which incompetency or inefficiency is inferred" (Adams, 1988/89, p. 8). It is assumed to entail a lack of the required knowledge to teach a given subject, the instructional skills to impart that knowledge, classroom management, student assessment, and other duties outside the classroom (Beckham, 1985). Additionally, the courts support the criterion of disrespect by parents and students as one indicator of incompetency (Adams, 1988/89). Specific guidance on the legal meaning of incompetence is sometimes available in statutory law, case law, and policies of state boards of education (Bridges & Groves, 1990).

Typically teachers are dismissed for patterns of behavior versus single mistakes, often exhibiting multiple problems that persist over time (McGrath, 1993). Incompetency, or inefficiency, "ordinarily manifests itself in a pattern of behavior, rather than in a single incident" (Tigges, 1965, p. 1095) and failure to remedy deficiencies once identified does constitute permissible grounds for dismissal (Community Unit School District v. Maclin, 1982). Bridges and Gumpert (1984) categorized the types of problems demonstrated by teachers who were dismissed for incompetency as the following: (a) technical failure, such as deficiencies in discipline, teaching methods, knowledge of subject matter, and other area; (b) bureaucratic failure, such as not complying with school/district rules and regulations or directives of superiors; (c) ethical failure, not conforming to standards of conduct presumably applicable to members of the teaching profession; (d) productive failure, not achieving certain desirable results in the classroom; and (e) personal failure, such as the lack of certain cognitive or affective attributes deemed instrumental in teaching. The authors found that technical failures were the most frequently cited type of problem in dismissal cases (80%), which usually was manifested in the area discipline. Other types of failures were often associated with technical failure but were noted as causes for dismissal in fewer cases.

In Virginia, teachers are “entitled to continuing contracts during good behavior and *competent service*” (emphasis added) (Virginia School Laws, 1992, § 22.1-304). Grounds for dismissal are “incompetency, immorality, noncompliance with school laws and regulations, disability as shown by competent medical evidence, conviction of a felony or a crime of moral turpitude or other good and just cause” (Virginia School Laws, 1992, § 22.1-307). Effective January 1996, §22.1-307 was amended and reenacted to state that incompetency would be “construed to include performance that is documented through evaluation to be consistently less than satisfactory or to fall below the standards set for the position.” At the same time, California amended the Education Code to replace “incompetency” with “unsatisfactory performance” as a basis for dismissal (McGrath, 1996). While McGrath concluded that this change in terminology probably would not change the dismissal process in any meaningful way, the use of “unsatisfactory” does better reflect the language used in existing evaluation systems in most states.

In reality, very few teachers are dismissed for incompetence. While school boards have “wide discretion in deciding whether or not to continue employment of their personnel” (Gwathmey v. Atkinson, 1976, p. 1117), this action is rarely taken. In a national study of 909 school systems, ERS (1988) found a .5% termination rate (including both induced resignations and dismissals) for tenured teachers over a two year period. Groves (1985/1986) reported that .1% of teachers in his study were recommended for dismissal and .14 % were induced to resign. Bridges (1992) found similar results in his study of California schools which had an annual dismissal rate of .6% of the employed teachers with tenured teachers accounting for only 5.2% of all the dismissals (p. 33).

Estimates of Incompetence

The actual estimates of teacher incompetence range from 5 to 15 % (Arnold, 1986; Bridges, 1986; Fuhr, 1993; Groves, 1985/1986; Gudridge, 1980; Lavelly, Berger, & Follman, 1992; McGrath, 1995a). There is limited empirical evidence on the actual incidence of incompetence but a number of studies have reported estimates made by

principals and superintendents of the percentage of incompetent teachers. In a review of available studies, Lavelly, Berger, and Follman (1996) concluded that the “best estimate of the incidence of incompetent public school teachers is approximately 10%” (p. 13).

Similarly, Groves (1985/1986) found in a statewide survey of California principals that 11% of their teachers were unsatisfactory in the classroom.

Because the incompetency rate is so much higher than the rate of dismissal, Bridges (1992) has argued that the “standard of performance for revoking tenure should be raised. Incompetence (blatant failure in the classroom) is much too low. It should be replaced with a standard that balances the interests of students in a quality education with the interests of a teacher in continued employment” (p. 182). The Holmes Group (1986) concluded that “the entire formal and informal curriculum of the school is filtered through the minds and hearts of classroom teachers, making the quality of school learning dependent on the quality of teachers” (p. 23).

Consequences of Incompetence

Incompetent teachers compromise student learning, negatively impact faculty morale and efficacy, contaminate public perceptions of schools, and can consume inordinate amounts of administrative time and effort (Arnold, 1986; Crone & Tedlie, 1995; Fuhr, 1993; Johnson, 1984; McGrath, 1993). Despite the importance of all these consequences of teacher incompetence, Arnold (1986) found in a study of principals that the foremost concern was its impact on student learning. Teacher quality has been found to have a direct and substantial impact on student learning (Frase & Hetzel, 1990; Rosenshine, 1971; Schrag, 1995; Shapiro, 1995). In a dramatic example of this, Wise et al. (1984) reported that in the Lake Washington School District (Kirkland, Washington) where an intensive program to “train winners” was instituted, 40 teachers (about five percent of the teaching force) were encouraged to leave over a four year period and student test scores rose 20% during the same time period. Frase and Hetzel reported similar improvements in test scores due to an aggressive response to incompetent teachers.

The negative repercussions of teacher incompetence for students are heightened due to two factors, the compulsory nature of schooling and the long term effects of education on one's future quality of life. Children and youth are required to attend school in Virginia (Virginia Code, §22.1-254) until eighteen years of age with little or no choice in the teachers assigned to them. If five to 15 percent of the 2.4 million teachers in public school classrooms (U.S. Department of Education, 1993a, p. 100, 148) are marginal or incompetent as suggested by most authors (Arnold, 1986; Bridges, 1986; Ehrgott, Henderson-Sparks, & Sparks, 1993; Fuhr, 1993; Groves, 1985/1986; Gudridge, 1980; Lavelly, Berger, & Follman, 1992; McGrath, 1995a), a serious detriment to student learning exists. Even a modest estimate of a five percent incompetence rate equals 120,000 teachers with a daily impact on over 2,000,000 children (U.S. Department of Education, p. 148) nation-wide. The result is that "for too many students, schools are not exciting, lively places that engender enthusiasm for and engagement in learning and academic pursuits" (Clark & Astuto, 1994, p. 517).

Unlike the business world, education does not offer the same free market options whereby customers can avoid an incompetent individual and "take their business" elsewhere. Students are obliged to spend a prescribed amount of time with a teacher regardless of that teacher's competence. "All too often, teachers represent the primary -- sometimes the sole -- opportunity for young children to have a positive adult role model . . . an ineffective teacher can adversely affect hundreds of lives" (Cook & Buehler, 1996, p. 51-52). The resulting diminished learning or desire to learn translates rather directly into future quality of life indicators, such as high school graduation, level of educational attainment, and average income level (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). As summarized by Darling-Hammond (1996):

Children are compelled to attend school. Every state guarantees them equal protection under the law, and most promise them a sound education. In the face of

these obligations, students have a right to competent, caring teachers who work in schools organized for success. (p. 194)

A byproduct of poor student achievement due to incompetence is dissatisfaction among parents and ultimately the whole community about the quality of education in the schools. Fuhr (1993) suggested that there are ongoing ripple effects from classroom teachers who are marginal or unsatisfactory which negatively impact the public's perceptions of the schools and ultimately undermine their support of the schools. Poor achievement and inaction on the administration's part to work with marginal teachers is seen by the public as tolerance of unsatisfactory performance (Johnson, 1984). The poor performance of a few teachers not only creates a public perception of poor quality schools but reflects negatively on the majority of hardworking educators. As noted by Bridges and Groves (1990):

Most teachers in our nation's schools are competent, conscientious, hardworking individuals. All too often their efforts are overshadowed by the poor performance of a relatively small number of incompetent classroom teachers. These incompetents must be identified and assisted, and if they fail to improve, dismissed. (p. 8)

When schools do not take action to address incompetence, parents and communities express their frustration and anger by voting down local tax initiatives which fund the schools (Arnold, 1986; Cook & Buehler, 1996).

Arnold (1986) found other consequences of incompetence to be significant both in terms of their impact on the schools and principals. Principals reported frustration with the time required for frequent supervision of incompetent teachers and the morale problems caused by their presence on the staff. This use of time was perceived as a detriment to the school and to the principal who experienced increased personal stress as a result of the supervisory process. Incompetent teachers were described by principals as "poor at self-evaluation . . . they either don't see the problem, won't acknowledge the problem or are at a loss as to how to improve" (p. 53). Not only were the teachers typically difficult to work

with but were often unresponsive to the extensive assistance making remediation both frustrating and unproductive.

The presence of incompetent teachers also impacts other teachers in the building. In a study by Johnson (1984), teachers reported that the lack of discipline in one class tended to carry over in other classes and poor teaching put additional burdens on the teachers who worked with the poorly taught students the following year. By failing to meet the basic expectations of the job, incompetent teachers lowered staff morale. Other teachers began to question why they should continue to work so hard when there were no administrative consequences for doing far less. Teachers in this study argued that “principals should persist in evaluating staff and setting high standards for teacher performance” (p. 131). While teachers felt unable to confront their peers due to norms of equity, they were supportive of principals taking administrative action when appropriate.

Administrative Responses to Incompetent Teachers

There is a range of ways in which a principal can respond to a teacher who he/she determines to be incompetent from ignoring the problem to recommending dismissal. Possible responses include: (a) ignoring and minimizing the problem, (b) working with the teacher to remediate problems, (c) reassigning the teacher to a new role or new school, (d) encouraging the teacher to resign or retire, and (e) recommending dismissal. Some states, such as California, have other mechanisms such as 90 day notices and salary freezes to sanction unsatisfactory performance. Groves (1985/86) argued that such “sanctions can improve performance because they (a) alert the employee that their performance is low in specified areas; (b) signal other teachers as to what are the expected levels of performance; and (c) remove sources of feeling of inequity” (p. 3).

The most common response to incompetence is to tolerate and protect it (Bridges, 1986). Bridges found that this was true not only in teaching, but in the legal and medical professions and in Fortune 500 companies. Strategies used to protect incompetence in education include giving gratuitous, meaningless feedback on evaluation write-ups,

cloaking negative feedback in a generally positive evaluation, giving inflated ratings, and reassigning the teacher (Bridges, 1986; Poston & Manatt, 1993). Poston and Manatt found in a six year study of principals that “summative evaluation scores dropped twenty percent if the principals didn’t have to show teachers the report in an end-of-the-year conference” (p. 46). Typically it was easier to reassign a person than confront him/her due to issues such as job security, insufficient documentation, and the principal’s personal desire to avoid conflict (Bridges, 1986).

Reassignment involves the transfer of a marginal teacher from building to building or position to position in response to parental and/or faculty complaints. Teachers may be transferred to age levels where their deficits are less evident or to positions in which the teacher has less of an impact on a large number of children, such as home-based instruction or long-term substitute’s position. Bridges (1986) referred to this as the “turkey trot” or the “dance of the lemons” (p. 31). This practice reflects a “deep cynicism about the district’s ability to improve teacher performance and a lack of respect for the teacher as a person” (Conley, 1991, p. 35). It also makes it difficult to document problems sufficiently for a remediation plan or a dismissal if necessary. Since a “grace period” typically accompanies any new assignment, months or a year could pass before problems are identified (Conley, 1991; Johnson, 1984).

Larger school systems sometimes have a career counseling program which can work with teachers whose difficulties are caused by problems outside the classroom (Conley, 1991). Counselors are able to work with teachers in a non-threatening manner to determine the causes and possible solutions to performance weaknesses and in some cases, help teachers find more satisfying work outside of education. In this case, teachers are counseled out of education. This is an optimal resolution in that the teacher is happier and the school system avoids an expensive and undesirable dismissal hearing (Conley).

In other cases, it is necessary to apply more pressure to encourage a teacher to resign. This can be done with the offer of various inducements such as early retirement

bonuses, cash settlements, health insurance payments, disability payments, or some combination of these (Frase, 1992; Groves, 1985/1986). A second level of pressure involves the principal “leaning on” a teacher sufficiently with frequent observations and clear messages that the teacher should carefully consider whether he/she should continue teaching (Johnson, 1984). Sometimes it is necessary to apply even greater pressure by informing the teacher of charges against him or her and an intent to recommend dismissal before a teacher will voluntarily resign or retire. In each situation, the teacher is able to represent his/her departure as voluntary, there is little harm to his/her professional reputation, and the school system has succeeded in getting rid of an incompetent teacher without a full dismissal process (Groves, 1985/1986).

Informal maneuvers such as these are often used and are considered the “only ones that work given the complexity of due process, the aggressiveness of the union, and district administrators’ lack of follow-through” (Johnson, 1984, p. 129) in pursuing dismissal. Cain (1987) found that superintendents viewed “nonformal teacher discipline” as “justified by the consideration of time, effort, and money to be invested disposing of the matter and/or a desire to give the teacher an opportunity to move on and not ruin the teacher’s career” (p. 118). While these informal strategies may remove a poor teacher from the classroom and protect the quality of education received by students in a given school district, it is not “effective in eliminating those teachers with serious offenses from the teaching profession” (Cain, p. 122) and it may undermine sound procedural safeguards for teachers that exist in most evaluation systems. The effectiveness of such strategies is also tenuous and dependent on the persuasiveness of the principal, the compliance of the teacher, and whether the union or educational association chooses to file harassment charges (Johnson).

The final step a principal can take to respond to an incompetent teacher is a recommendation for dismissal. The process for dismissing a probationary or permanent teacher for incompetency is outlined in the Virginia School Laws (1992, §22.1-307). As

noted earlier, this step is seldom taken, particularly with tenured teachers. Bridges (1986) found a dismissal rate in California of “less than six-tenths of 1 per cent” (p. 33) and tenured teachers accounted for only 5.2% of these dismissals. Temporary teachers constituted 69.8% of the dismissals and probationary teachers were involved in 25% of the cases.

Constraints on Administrative Response to Incompetence

Responding to teacher incompetence is difficult for a myriad of psychological, sociological, legal, definitional, and financial concerns (Bridges & Groves, 1990; Frase, 1990; Staples, 1990). A study by Arnold (1986) documented the increased time demands incompetent teachers put on administrators in terms of supervision and the solution of various problems caused the teachers, such as additional disciplinary referrals or parent complaints. Time is a precious commodity for school administrators and this demand alone presents a detriment to assertive action (Johnson, 1984). In a study of teacher evaluation in unionized settings, some principals observed that the evaluation process was so demanding, they avoided it. Others argued that while “time consuming and exacting, [it] could be mastered” (Johnson, p. 121). For busy administrators, an atmosphere of expediency often prevails (McGrath, 1995a) which limits the depth and quality of the evaluation process.

The ambiguity which is inherent in teacher evaluation as a process itself is a deterrent to identifying a teacher as incompetent in some cases (Bridges, 1986). “The identification and resolution of the unsatisfactory teacher is a complex decision making process for principals” (Luck, 1985/86, p. 209). In her study of this decision making process, Luck found that incompetency presented more challenges than any of the other categories of unsatisfactory performance. This is understandable. What is incompetence? What is the cut-off for acceptable versus unacceptable performance? Does the school system’s evaluation system clearly state expectations for acceptable performance? What is adequate documentation to substantiate a determination of unacceptable performance?

These questions create ambiguity for principals and there is little guidance in the literature or case law to answer the questions fully. As a result, few problems are actually identified (Frase, 1992). Webster (1995) reported that this leads to a situation where 93 percent of teachers are rated as “exceeds expectations” or “outstanding” and the remaining 7 percent are primarily “satisfactory.”

In the current context of site-based management, the task of supervision and evaluation also presents a basic role conflict for many principals (Laing, 1986). Current leadership trends which focus on consensus-building and collaborative decision-making emphasize collegiality while evaluation, particularly in cases of less than satisfactory performance, “requires the principal to assume a superior-subordinate posture with the faculty” (Laing, 1986, p. 92). At best, the “politics of rewards and sanctions are difficult” (Corcoran & Goertz, 1995, p. 29) for principals who are working to build communities within their schools.

While evaluation and supervision are difficult even under routine circumstances, a recommendation for dismissal of a specific teacher can completely polarize a staff (McGrath, 1995b). In some cases, “teachers will close ranks around their colleague, who they feel is being treated unfairly, even if they recognize that he or she is not doing well in the classroom” (McGrath, 1995a, p. 37). In other cases, as documented by Johnson (1984), teachers may not confront poor performing colleagues but expect the principal to enforce minimal standards of teaching and professional conduct. Teachers resent staff members who are “dead wood” and describe them as “totally ineffective” (Johnson, p. 114).

Tenure and its accompanying due process protections are often seen as the underlying impediments to aggressive action by principals with incompetent teachers. In fact, Geisert & Lieberman (1994) argued that “statutory procedure makes it all but impossible to terminate tenured teachers” (p. 96). In most states, continuing employment status or tenure is granted after three years of successive employment in the same school

district (Bridges, 1986). This entitles the teacher to the expectation of continued employment unless there is cause for dismissal. This expectation of continued employment is considered a property right under the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution (Nowak & Rotunda, 1995). What constitutes cause for dismissal varies by state and is defined in the statutes, but the burden of proof for substantiating the charges for dismissal rests with the school district.

In addition to the legal responsibility of proving the charges for dismissal, school districts also are responsible for providing due process protections, some of which are required before a recommendation for dismissal and some afterwards. The due process provisions are often defined in state statutes and can be further elaborated in local school policy or negotiated agreements (Geisert & Lieberman, 1994). These protections include notice of deficiencies, assistance to the teacher in remediating deficiencies, provision of hearing process rights, and a hearing before an impartial audience (Frase, 1992).

Dismissal cases can take a great deal of administrative time and money. The hearing process is time and resource intensive but if the case is taken to court, it can become an even greater burden. In some cases, the appeals process can continue for 10 years or more (McGrath, 1995b) and the legal fees can climb to \$200,000 (Alter, 1996). These numbers are daunting even for those committed to quality education (Bridges, 1986). Given these potential consequences of a recommendation for dismissal, many principals pursue alternative means of removing the teacher from the classroom such as reassignments or buy-outs (Frase, 1992).

Role of Unions and Educational Associations

The general public often perceives unions and educational associations as responsible for preventing the dismissal of incompetent teachers because of the “procedural protections in teacher contracts and the successful defense unions provide to those teachers whose competence is challenged” (Johnson, 1984, p. 111). Johnson found that while many teachers, unionized and not, agreed with this perception, others argued that “such

singular blame of unionism was more convenient than accurate” (p. 112). In fact, ERS (1988) found that “the presence of collective bargaining agreements is not associated with a significant difference in the percentage of school districts that terminated tenured teachers because of poor performance” (p. 66). While 47.7% of the school districts without collective bargaining agreements had terminated teachers in the previous two years, a comparable 44.4% of the school districts with an agreement also had terminated tenured teachers.

Teachers in the Johnson study (1984) suggested that other factors such as complex evaluation systems and a desire to avoid confrontation were reasons why some principals did not choose to use available means for terminating teachers. While it is unclear what role, if any, unions and educational associations have played in precluding the dismissal of incompetent teachers, clearly they have “further politicized the nature of teacher evaluations” (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 1995, p. 10).

A primary concern of teacher organizations has been the due process safeguards for teachers including notice of unsatisfactory performance, an opportunity to improve, and assistance (McGrath, 1995a). In dismissal hearings, the burden of proof rests with the administration. The administration must substantiate the provision of due process and the charges (e.g., incompetence) with sufficient documentation. Due to the serious consequences of dismissal, most teachers and principals in Johnson’s study (1984) agreed that any action which might lead to dismissal warranted such a burden. However, the practical ramifications of this burden seemed to create an imbalance of responsibility that few principals were able or willing to assume. As noted by Johnson,

Overall, the school administrators were untrained and unpracticed in documenting teachers’ failures, and most did not regard that work as rewarding. By contrast, union leaders saw the task of defending teachers in adversarial proceedings as central to their jobs. They were, for the most part, well prepared and determined, if not eager. (p. 123)

This would suggest the need for principal training, district level support to offset the resources of the union, and some mechanism to increase the motivation of principals to undertake such a challenge.

In cases of recognized teacher incompetence, many teachers are just as frustrated with the union's defense of these teachers as the general public (Johnson, 1984). Many times they were unaware that the unions had a "legal obligation to defend all members of the bargaining unit" (p. 124) no matter how incompetent or otherwise inappropriate the targeted teacher's behavior was. In cases where the union is the exclusive bargaining agent, it has a statutory duty to provide full representation of all its members and can be sued for punitive damages by union members for anything less than a full and vigorous defense (Bridges, 1986). In spite of this duty, there were reported cases of union representatives supporting administrative actions to discipline weak teachers (Johnson). Because "teachers' associations generally do not want to defend incompetent teachers" (Conley, 1991, p. 28), the associations often will lend support to the development of fair and impartial performance standards which provide due process protections but ultimately allow the dismissal of true incompetence.

The efforts of unions and teacher associations, in part, are responsible for the specification of due process rights in the legislation of most states and local board policies (Johnson, 1984). Additionally at the state or local level, collective bargaining agreements often address evaluation policies, procedures, documentation, and remediation; and sometimes include evaluative criteria and instrumentation (Johnson, 1984; Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 1995). In some school systems, unions or teacher associations are active participants in the development and implementation phases of the evaluation process. Collaboration at this level can improve the credibility and ultimate acceptance by teachers of a new evaluation system (McLaughlin, 1990).

If [teachers' associations] see there is a commitment to develop fair, impartial standards that are consistently and uniformly enforced, they are more likely to be

willing to participate in their development and lend support to (or at least not oppose) their implementation. (Conley, 1991, p. 28)

Principals can and do address teacher incompetence even in unionized school districts; however, it requires a combination of critical system evaluation components which support the principal and offset the inherent deterrents in the dismissal process. As concluded by Johnson (1984) in her study of six unionized school districts:

Principals who are intent on improving staff performance are not powerless. If such principals have district office support, they may initiate actions to terminate teachers. If that support is not forthcoming, they can follow procedures to transfer poor teachers and upgrade the quality of staff within their own schools. If even transfers are unlikely, they can observe regularly and insist on high performance, thus prodding unsatisfactory teachers and encouraging others. (p. 133)

Facilitators of Administrative Response to Incompetence

As noted above, there are considerable deterrents to an assertive approach to teacher evaluation. Given the press of everyday responsibilities, it is easy to avoid the demanding task of honest and forthright feedback to teachers about their performance. However, many authors believe that “teacher evaluation can make a difference in the improvement of teaching and the enhancement of productivity in student learning” (Poston & Manatt, 1993, p. 46) if it is done properly. To counteract the natural resistance to the evaluation process (Bridges & Groves, 1990), virtually all schools have instituted evaluation systems, but they vary in their level of sophistication, procedures, and purposes (Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin, and Bernstein, 1984). Numerous authors (Bridges & Groves, 1990; Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Pease, 1983; Dwyer, 1994; Haefele, 1993; Lawrence, Vachon, Leake, & Leake, 1993; Scriven, 1987; Sweeney, 1994; Wise et al., 1984) have suggested ways to enhance the teacher evaluation process and, by extension, enable principals and other administrators to respond confidently to teacher incompetence. Of particular interest is the conceptual framework developed by Bridges and Groves (1990)

and the reflection on successful practice by Wise et al. (1984). Taken together their recommendations for successful evaluation embrace the basic components for an effective evaluation system.

Based on the teacher evaluation research, Bridges and Groves (1990) suggested an “integrated, comprehensive” (p. 8) organizational approach of eight elements that would encourage principals to confront teachers who are performing unsatisfactorily, would enhance student achievement, and would increase the chances that a dismissal decision would be upheld in court. The eight elements were:

1. Establish “excellence in teaching” as a high priority for the district.
 2. Adopt and publish reasonable criteria for evaluating teachers.
 3. Adopt sound procedures for determining whether teachers satisfy these criteria and apply these procedures uniformly to teachers in the district.
 4. Provide unsatisfactory teachers with remediation (assistance) and a reasonable period of time to improve.
 5. Establish and implement procedures for ensuring that appraisers have the requisite competencies.
 6. Provide appraisers with the resources needed to carry out their responsibilities.
 7. Hold appraisers accountable for evaluating and dealing with incompetent teachers.
 8. Provide incompetent teachers with a fair hearing prior to making the dismissal decision.
- (p. 8)

Through an analysis of best practices in school systems, Wise et al. (1984) concluded that organizational commitment to evaluation, evaluator training, administrator-teacher collaboration, and system integration of evaluation in other organizational activities were the four key aspects of the effective evaluation systems they studied. The four school districts selected for in-depth case study had highly developed teacher evaluation systems that not only strived for the goal of using the process to improve personnel decisions and staff development but actually achieved that goal. The authors concluded that “relatively

few school districts have highly developed teacher evaluation systems, and even fewer put the results [of their evaluations] into action” (p. 3). They noted that despite “differences in form, the four districts [studied] followed certain common practices in implementing their teacher evaluation systems . . . which set the systems apart” (p. vii). The presence of these four “implementation factors” contributed to successful evaluation which produced “reliable, valid measures of teaching performance” (p. viii).

While the focus of the work by Bridges and Groves (1990) was primarily accountability (i.e., responding to an incompetent teacher) and the work by Wise et al. (1984) took a more balanced view of accountability and professional improvement, there is a striking overlap in some of the recommendations for what contributes to evaluation efficacy. The broader framework proposed by Bridges and Groves reflected both the content aspects of evaluation (i.e., criteria, procedures) and the process aspects (i.e., ensuring the competence of evaluators). In contrast, the observations made by Wise et al. focused mainly on the process aspects of implementation, the context-specific practices which enhanced the utility of the evaluation system. In addition, they examined the evaluation process from multiple perspectives, reflecting the views of teachers, administrators, parents, educational association representatives, and school board members.

Components of Effective Evaluation Systems

Based on the work of Bridges and Groves (1990), Wise et al. (1984), and others, a list of seven interrelated but distinct components of a comprehensive evaluation system was developed. A comprehensive evaluation system was defined as one that effectively served and balanced the purposes of accountability and professional development. In fulfilling the goal of accountability, the proposed components of a comprehensive evaluation system would facilitate the principal’s work with incompetent teachers. The proposed seven components of a comprehensive evaluation system are: (a) evaluation criteria, (b) general evaluation procedures, (c) remedial procedures, (d) organizational commitment, (e)

evaluator training, (f) administrator-teacher collaboration, and (g) organizational integration.

Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation criteria are fundamentally a statement of expectations and what “teachers can legitimately be held responsible for knowing and doing” (Scriven, 1994, p. 156).

“When we neglect to spell out those expectations, we run the risk of misunderstanding and disappointment” (Cook & Buehler, 1996, p. 50). Performance criteria are the foundation for an evaluation system and must be valid if the evaluation system is to be valid (Huddle, 1985; Poston & Manatt, 1993). Conley (1991) described criteria for evaluation of performance as the following:

Performance criteria are the specific statements of the district’s expectations for the behavior of the teacher, both in the classroom and outside it. These must be clearly written, easily understood, and have an obvious relationship to teaching duties.

They should be developed with teacher input and should have a clear rationale.

They must be observable in some form, and should have a strong, demonstrable link to the quality of work the teacher does. (p. 27)

During the 1980s, many school systems attempted to achieve the goal of linking criteria and quality teaching by adopting effective teaching research findings wholesale. While effective teaching practices derived from the research are potential guides to good practice, it is inappropriate to use them as a checklist of expectations because they are neither exhaustive nor effective in all situations with all students (Conley, 1991; Scriven, 1987).

A recommended approach is the development of evaluation criteria with teacher involvement so that the criteria reflect the values and priorities of the school district (McLaughlin, 1990). While related research provides some guidance in the definition of teaching responsibilities for the purposes of assessment (Scriven, 1994), it is important to involve teachers so that criteria remain “faithful to teaching as it is experienced by knowledgeable practitioners” (Dwyer, 1994, p. 135). Scriven (1984) likened the process to

one of “developing a code of professional ethics, or a system of normative ethics” (p. 156). Not only does teacher involvement increase understanding and support for the rationale of the evaluation criteria, but Conley (1987) found that teachers who have been involved in the process of developing criteria tend to ask more of themselves than administrators would. Unfortunately, ERS (1988) found that teachers had “no involvement” in determining the evaluation criteria 49.5% of the time and “minor involvement” 22.7% of the time. Even in cases of collective bargaining, teachers had “no involvement” in determining the evaluation criteria 53.6% of the time and “minor involvement” 11.4% of the time.

Performance standards provide a necessary and useful complement to performance criteria. While performance criteria articulates *what* is expected of teachers, performance standards address *how well* the criteria must be performed (Conley, 1991). For example, a criterion of performance might be “student assessment” and the performance standard would be that “student assessment results are interpreted accurately and shared with students promptly to improve their performance in the subject area.” Performance standards should address the minimum level of acceptable performance for the school district which would be considered “satisfactory” with anything less than that being considered “unsatisfactory.” In addition, performance standards can define multiple levels of performance which exceed the minimum expectation and those which fall below it (Stronge, Helm, & Tucker, 1995). Once there is agreement on the minimum level of performance, there are fewer misunderstandings about expectations and less anxiety on the parts of both administrators and teachers (Conley, 1991).

Frels, Cooper, & Reagan (1984) argued that from a legal perspective, the most critical issue in the assessment process was the development of the criteria against which a teacher's performance would be measured. There should be "sufficient specificity in the elaboration of assessment standards so as to inform a reasonably prudent person of the applicable criteria" (Beckham, 1985a, p. 9). Case law and most state statutes require that

performance criteria be objective and job-related (Beckham, 1985a). The courts, however, have acknowledged and accepted that there is a subjective quality to evaluation which is unavoidable. The subjectiveness of the judgments is permissible, so long as they are based on criteria which are job-related, observable, and uniformly applied to all teachers (Beckham, 1985). The research also supports the importance of clear performance criteria and standards. Duke and Stiggins (1990) found that they were correlated with evaluation systems in which teachers perceived they had grown professionally. Therefore, technically sound criteria meet the legal standard for accountability and provide the necessary specificity for professional development.

General Evaluation Procedures

Medley and Coker (1987) observed that "it is far more difficult to judge teacher performance than is generally realized" (p. 245). Because of this problem and the fact that there is not a single set of skills that perfectly define effective teaching, "measures of many aspects of teaching by multiple judges are likely to yield the fairest and most comprehensive evaluation of teachers" (Epstein, 1985, p. 8). The evaluation procedures should identify who will be evaluated, by whom, and how often. But most importantly, if evaluation is to improve teaching and educational quality, evaluation procedures should provide credible and useful information to the teacher on his/her practice (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Duke, 1990; Poston & Manatt, 1993). In addition, evaluation procedures must be legally sound so that in the case of a recommendation for dismissal, there has been sufficient documentation and due process to withstand legal scrutiny (Frels, Cooper, & Reagan, 1984; McGrath, 1993).

According to the 1988 Educational Research Service (ERS) survey, 99.6% of the 909 reporting school districts had formal evaluation procedures for probationary teachers and 98.7% for tenured teachers. The frequency of evaluations, however, does vary based on the district and on the longevity of service. Probationary teachers were evaluated at least once a year in over 98% of the school districts but tenured teachers were evaluated less than

once a year in the majority of the school districts. Most states stipulate the frequency of evaluations in the state statutes. The states of Texas, California, and Ohio, for example, require annual evaluations of both probationary and tenured teachers. Distinctions based on employment status (probationary or tenured) need to be addressed in the procedures. In addition, individual teachers also should be notified that they will be evaluated in a given year for the sake of clarity.

The principal is the supervisor who typically conducts the evaluation of the staff within his or her building (over 93% of the schools) with observations by assistant principals and department heads in some cases (ERS, 1988). Unless a state statute stipulates otherwise, however, anyone in the school system with the skills and training to assess could fulfill that role. As noted earlier, most teachers viewed their principals as competent in evaluating the basic aspects of their teaching (Nolin, Rowand, & Farris, 1994). Clearly, supervisory skill is essential if school reform is to be successful but this is not always the case (Poston & Manatt, 1993) and it points to the importance of training for administrators which will be discussed in some detail at a later point.

In addition to identifying the participants in the evaluation process, evaluation procedures should provide an approximate timeline for the evaluation process, forms to be used, the steps to be taken (minimum number of observations), and how they will be accomplished (Petrie & Black, 1983; Frels, Cooper, & Reagan, 1984). Although the courts have not required school systems to adhere to every aspect of their written evaluation procedures in cases of dismissal, teachers do reasonably expect that they will guide the process for the most part. Therefore, it is important that the evaluation procedures be realistic and somewhat flexible in nature. For example, a range of dates versus a rigid timeline provides adequate notice for teachers and yet allows for unexpected events and conflicts.

The majority of schools rely on observation to gather data for teacher evaluation although alternative methods are being tried in some school systems. As noted by Frels,

Cooper, & Reagan (1984), it would be difficult to "justify and defend an evaluation of a teacher's performance that did not include some classroom observation" (p. 10). But the use of additional data sources increases both the validity and legal credibility of a teacher evaluation (Poston & Manatt, 1993), and are especially important in the case of an unsatisfactory evaluation. The court in Rosso v. Board of School Directors (1977), commended the school system's "model" evaluation procedures in a dismissal case wherein the principal, the superintendent, and three other administrators observed and rated the teacher's performance with similar results. The court found that multiple perspectives lessened the influence of personal bias and prejudice. They also noted that the superintendent's method of recording what was going on in the classroom at five minute intervals gave them the "best picture of the learning atmosphere in a classroom that [they] have seen to date in the anecdotal record" (p. 1330).

The role of documentation is critical in cases of unsatisfactory performance because the "dismissal of a tenured teacher in almost every state requires a full evidentiary hearing" (McGrath, 1993, p. 31). The evidence must substantiate the dismissal in terms of the teacher's unsatisfactory performance and the process by which that conclusion was drawn. "Ongoing documentation of teacher supervision and evaluation by the administrator will reflect not only a thorough, systematic process, but also compassion and helpfulness in documented attempts to improve the employee's performance" (McGrath, 1993, p. 30). Unfortunately "districts seem to have difficulty linking personnel policies and professional development to standards. Schools find it easier to create structures for collaboration than they do developing effective focusing mechanisms [performance standards]" (Corcoran & Goertz, 1995, p. 28).

Remedial Procedures

Effective evaluation systems need specific procedures for providing assistance to a teacher whose performance is less than satisfactory. This is not only a fair practice but also, it is legally recommended as part of the due process accorded teachers when their future

employment is in question (Conley, 1991). When such procedures do not exist, principals are less likely to undertake the task and in cases where principals do proceed with an unstructured approach, it can be ineffective for both the teacher and the school system (Conley, 1991). When a school system pursues a dismissal based on an informal process, procedural errors are more likely and have the potential to undermine the case in court.

Once unsatisfactory performance has been documented, procedural due process involves the identification of weaknesses, development of a growth plan with specific directives for improvement, and assistance in meeting the directives provided (Frels, Cooper, & Reagan, 1984; Frels & Horton, 1994). This is usually done with both oral and written communications to ensure that the teacher understands precisely what behaviors need to be improved, what behaviors are expected, and what the consequences are if the teacher does not improve in the specified time period. These steps should provide teachers with a reasonable opportunity to improve and substantiate fair treatment by the principal. Any deficiencies which have not been remedied from previous years should be included in the recommendations or it can be assumed that the deficiencies are no longer a concern.

State statutes typically require that a reasonable time period be allowed for the remedy of a deficiency. "Reasonableness" will depend upon the specific facts of the case such as the nature of the deficiency and its impact on children. The Federal Circuit Court upheld a termination of a tenured teacher of eight years which provided only two months for remediation in Rogers v. DODDS (1987), but the Supreme Court of Minnesota in Ganyo v. Independent School District (1981), disallowed eight weeks as a reasonable time for a teacher of 17 years to remedy teaching practices which were labeled deficient for the first time. In Rogers, there had been ongoing difficulties and explicit identification of the expected performance criteria, whereas in Ganyo, there was no history of problems. These two cases illustrate how different circumstances can render highly discrepant court rulings. In general, however, the courts have viewed anything less than six months as inadequate (Findley & Estabrook, 1990).

“Very little research on the effectiveness of remediation programs for teachers has been reported to date” (Adams, 1988/89, p. 24). Frase (1992), one of the few authors to address this issue, reported that “only 10% of the teachers found to be incompetent ever achieve competency” (p. 70). Despite this dismal projection, it is important for schools to provide genuine assistance in the remediation process. As noted earlier, this can be demanding for a principal. Because many poor performers have problems in more than one area, Conley (1991) identified the need to write a series of plans addressing one area of performance at a time versus developing a single “unwieldy, overwhelming” plan addressing multiple areas at once. As long as a teacher is demonstrating improved performance, this approach offers the most reasonable circumstances for change to occur. In most states, the provision of assistance is considered by the courts as a prerequisite for dismissal proceedings (Conley, 1991).

“Teacher remediation, done properly, consumes substantial resources in terms of time, energy, and money, since it is a process based primarily on human interactions” (Conley, 1991, p. 34). Redfern (1983), and later Frase (1992), recommended similar four phase processes which provide the unsatisfactory teacher with ample opportunity to seek assistance and improve. The thorough and fair process described by both authors consists of the following steps: early diagnosis of problems, development of a performance improvement plan, notification of corrective action needed, and implementation of termination (if necessary). The recommended process takes 28 to 34 weeks of focused attention and documentation. Although more prolonged than what is probably required by the courts, it ensures full due process safeguards for teachers and demonstrates a school system’s commitment to fairness.

Many school systems now have remedial procedures which reflect the process described above. These secondary procedures are used specifically with poor performing teachers and are more prescriptive regarding information collection, timelines, strategies to improve, and expected classroom behaviors to demonstrate remediation (Duke, 1990).

Different forms usually accompany the process with some type of action plan or plan of assistance. In many schools, assistance teams are available to work with identified teachers on areas specified in the action plan. The assistance team members bring a fresh perspective to the problems the teacher is experiencing and relieves the principal of being both coach and judge simultaneously. With this approach, teachers who are willing and able to improve have a realistic chance of isolating and correcting specific problem areas. In addition, it demonstrates the school system's concern and willingness to address poor performance by unsatisfactory teachers (Conley, 1991; Frase, 1992).

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is "fundamental to implementing and sustaining a meaningful teacher evaluation program - [it requires] establishing a culture for teacher evaluation" (McLaughlin, 1990, p. 403). Commitment involves changing the norms and expectations of the organizational culture to value and support evaluation as a meaningful and worthwhile enterprise (Airasian, 1993; Poston & Manatt, 1993). Organizational commitment to quality teacher evaluation can be demonstrated in a whole range of activities by administrators within the school system, especially the superintendent. Essential to such a commitment would be establishing teaching excellence as a priority, then allocating time and attention to the implementation of effective evaluation procedures, and lastly, devoting available resources, such as professional development funds and legal counsel, to supporting the evaluation process (Bridges, 1992; Bridges & Groves, 1990; Conley 1987; Duke, 1990; Groves, 1985/1986; Luck, 1985/86; Poston & Manatt, 1993).

Because teacher evaluation is mandated in most states (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 1995; Stronge, 1993), some of the other six components which facilitate effective evaluation (i.e., technically sound criteria and fair procedures) can exist in a school system without organizational commitment; but ideally, it serves to anchor and integrate the other six components. The credibility and worth of all aspects of the evaluation process is enhanced by the "active, express and visible commitment of the district superintendent"

(McLaughlin, 1990, p. 407), the administrative staff, and the school board (Johnson, 1984).

The first step in demonstrating an organizational commitment to effective evaluation requires the pursuit of excellence in teaching as district priority (Bridges & Groves, 1990; Conley, 1991). If there is no explicit value placed on quality teaching, then a sophisticated evaluation system which differentiates among levels of competence and encourages professional development is unnecessary. If quality teaching is a goal, superintendents and principals can demonstrate their commitment by dedicating time to the issue, talking about it, and modifying school routines to reflect its importance (Bridges & Groves, 1990; Conley, 1987). Excellence in teaching should be considered in all major administrative activities which reflect organizational priorities such as strategic planning, staff development, budgeting, and collective bargaining. Both symbolic and active support of teaching excellence help to define it as an organizational goal (Conley, 1987).

Once quality teaching is established as a goal, time and other resources need to be dedicated to the process of supervision and evaluation (Murphy & Pimentel, 1996). "If supervisors are to fulfill their responsibilities for evaluating the instructional staff, they need a variety of resources. Specifically, supervisors need time, authority, access to remedial assistance, access to legal counsel, and support" (Bridges & Groves, 1990, p. 53). Likewise, teachers need the availability of multiple resources for professional development (Duke, 1990; McLaughlin, 1990). "The availability of resources to respond to individual needs serves accountability of the most fundamental kind, accountability rooted in professional norms and values" (McLaughlin, 1990, p. 410).

Time is probably the most precious resource for busy educators and is the most difficult for superintendents to provide, but by reassigning other duties or giving priority to evaluation, principals and teachers can devote a greater amount of time to the task. Other useful resources include the availability of curricular specialists or master teachers for remedial assistance, funds for university courses, release time for teachers to observe

master teachers, an ongoing review and adjustment of the existing evaluation system, and legal counsel to principals in cases of possible dismissal (Conley, 1991). One example of additional resources is the "Supervisory Resource Team," composed of two principals and a central office administrator, which is used when a teacher in Nampa, Idaho is placed on a remediation plan (Joki, 1982). As noted by McLaughlin (1990), "teacher evaluation is not an event but a dynamic, evolving process" (p. 411) which needs continuous support and attention so that it is responsive to the organizational needs and the individuals (Murphy & Pimentel, 1996).

The last, and possibly most important resource that superintendents can make available, is basic support for the principal in the evaluation of marginal teachers. Strategies for reducing the principal's sense of being "out on a limb" include a review with the supervisor of the documentation before moving a teacher to a remediation plan, independent collection of performance information by the supervisor to validate the placement of a teacher on a remediation plan, the availability of an assistance team to help with the remediation process, and knowledge that the superintendent and school board will stand behind a recommendation for dismissal, if necessary (Conley 1991; Luck, 1985/86). The highly charged process of identifying an unsatisfactory teacher and potentially dismissing him or her is emotionally draining for the principal and can be politically risky, but a team effort during the remedial process and an understanding and assuring superintendent can help to offset the stress (Bridges & Groves, 1990; Conley, 1991).

Evaluator Training

Evaluator training addresses the need for the development of necessary skills in evaluation, a willingness to faithfully implement evaluation procedures, and competence in conducting observation, analyzing performance data, providing feedback, documenting performance, and assisting in improvement (Bridges, 1992; Conley, 1991; Groves, 1985/1986; Luck, 1985/86; Medley & Coker, 1987; Poston & Manatt, 1993; Wise et al., 1984). Typically "principals have been poorly monitored in terms of their supervisory skill

in conducting evaluations of teachers” (Poston & Manatt, p. 43). One way superintendents can strive for administrator competence is by holding evaluators accountable for good evaluation practice versus a marginalized activity to fulfill a bureaucratic requirement (Bridges, 1992; Joki, 1982; McLaughlin, 1990; Murphy & Pimentel, 1996). This emphasis encourages principals to dedicate the necessary time to the task and assures teachers that the process is important and will be done fairly. Unless fairness and consistency, the two major concerns of teachers, are present in the evaluation process, it will not have credibility for teachers (Bembry, 1995).

Accountability for proper evaluation can be achieved through checks and balances built into the evaluation process and through personal responsibility on the part of principals. For example, the Charlotte-Mecklenberg (N.C.) teacher evaluation system contains a variety of provisions such as multiple observations, an appeal process, and extensive documentation to ensure an “emphasis on fairness, professionalism, and expert judgment” (McLaughlin, 1990, p.411). A second means of assuring accountability is by making good teacher evaluation a basis of principal supervision and evaluation. The quality of evaluation reports can be raised by reviewing and critiquing evaluation reports in administrative meetings as is done in Moraga and Mountain View-Los Altos (CA.) school systems (McLaughlin & Pfeifer, 1988).

Ideally, evaluators should be trained in the chosen assessment techniques and be familiar with the overall evaluation system (Beckham, 1985; Frels, Cooper, & Reagan, 1984; Petrie & Black, 1983). The reality reported by the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, however, has been that “principals have provided superficial feedback to teachers with little or no constructive criticism, and a paucity of strategies for improvement” (Poston & Manatt, 1993, p. 43). Based on research such as this, an increasing number of school systems are addressing the issue of better and more targeted training for supervisors (Murphy & Pimentel, 1996). ERS (1988) reported that 84.8% of the school districts provided training to evaluators prior to their assessment of teacher

performance. Ten years earlier, only 61.4% of the schools provided similar training. The increased effort to provide more training, coming from the state level in some cases, was attributed to concerns with the credibility and effectiveness of teacher evaluation (ERS, 1988).

Formal training in the process of evaluation should focus on both the procedural and substantive use of the system (Conley, 1987). The procedural aspects of an evaluation system refer to an understanding of *what to do when*. This would include an understanding of the goals for evaluation, what performance information to collect, the timelines for doing so, what standards to use in judging information, and the requirements for developing an improvement plan. Skills in the substantive features involve *how* to carry out the evaluation procedures. Proficiency in these areas determine the actual quality of the evaluation process and include skills in data collection, documentation, data analysis, conferencing, goal-setting, report writing, and remediation. Training can help principals become better skilled in all areas of the evaluation process but especially those which are critical for working with unsatisfactory teachers: identification of instructional problems or weaknesses compared to established performance standards, the prescription of appropriate strategies to improve, and identification of available resources to assist in the improvement process (Conley, 1991).

Administrator-Teacher Collaboration

High quality teacher evaluation often means change, change in the norms and beliefs, which requires a sense of ownership by all participants in the evaluation process (McLaughlin, 1990). Administrator-teacher collaboration is a means of maintaining trust and mutuality in the evaluation process which is key to its success (Duke, 1990; Huddle, 1985; Poston & Manatt, 1993; Stronge & Helm, 1991). Both groups need to be involved in the design and implementation of new evaluation systems. Often teachers are excluded from the important phases of discussion and decision-making. McLaughlin (1990) argued that:

Teachers' involvement is an irreducible requirement. The exclusion of teachers from the process perpetuates a them/us schism between administrators and teachers, which is fatal to teacher evaluation and reinforces a view of teacher evaluation as indifferent to teachers' professional expertise and classroom realities. (p. 406)

In the Charlotte-Mecklenberg (N.C.) Public Schools, teacher involvement was cited as the main reason for the new evaluation system's success (McLaughlin & Pfeifer, 1988).

Involvement in the design and development process encourages three fundamental attributes of effective evaluation systems: (a) participants accept the validity of the system, (b) participants understand the mechanics of the system, and (c) evaluatees know that the performance criteria have a clear, consistent rationale (Conley, 1987). Unless the "majority of participants in the process feel that the system collects, analyzes, and feeds back information in a manner that accurately reflects their view of reality" (Conley, p. 61), the evaluation system loses its credibility and meaningfulness. Increasing the perceived validity of a system and the understanding of its mechanics can be achieved by having teachers participate in the original development of the system, providing yearly meetings to explain and discuss the evaluation procedures, and discussing the purposes of various aspects on an individual basis during annual conferences with teachers.

Various strategies that have been used to include teachers and administrators in the development, implementation, and ongoing revision of an evaluation system include appointment to evaluation steering committees, involvement of teachers' organizations, building level meetings, newsletters, suggestion boxes, service as peer coaches, and assistance in the remediation process (Duke, 1990; McLaughlin & Pfeifer, 1988; Wise et al., 1984). Once teachers are involved in the whole evaluation process, they contribute to its success by having greater commitment and motivation to participate fully, greater tolerance for inevitable mistakes, and expertise which contributes to the system's long-term viability (McLaughlin, 1990).

Collaboration also refers to the ideal working relationship between teachers and administrators during the ongoing process of supervision and evaluation. Performance feedback from principals and other supervisors can increase teacher effectiveness by enhancing awareness of his/her teaching practice. "Without external input, the capacity of teachers to grow is limited by their own cognitive structures" (Duke, 1990, p. 134). However, teachers may not be open to evaluative feedback unless there is a helping and trusting relationship with the administrator. Stiggins and Duke (1988) found that supervisor characteristics which contributed most to growth-oriented evaluation included: credibility as source of performance feedback, nonthreatening interpersonal manner, capacity to demonstrate or model needed improvements, and usefulness of suggestions for improvement. Thus, collaborative relationships between teachers and administrators have been found necessary to promote understanding and acceptance of teacher evaluation systems, and to make evaluation serve one of its two purposes, that of professional growth.

Organizational Integration

Lastly, organizational integration is the extent to which evaluation is part of the overall organizational goals of individual schools and the school system as a whole (Huddle, 1985; Poston & Manatt, 1993; Stronge & Helm, 1991). When evaluation is related to other personnel functions such as staff development and ultimately school improvement, it becomes integral to other school functions versus an isolated event with little or no meaning. For example, if a number of teachers are identified through the evaluation process as needing assistance in a particular area such as classroom management, a "cost-effective staff development program could be developed to provide coordinated training to many teachers with similar needs at the same time" (Dagley & Orso, 1991, p. 75). In this way evaluation serves as a needs assessment which informs the staff development program and both become more meaningful and effective in achieving organizational goals.

One example of this relationship is in Salt Lake City where teacher evaluation was embedded as one of many strategies in the “shared governance” model initiated to improve the quality of education in the district (Wise et al., 1984). Another example was the emphasis given to staff development and clinical training by the superintendent of Moraga (California) Public Schools for two years before addressing the teacher evaluation system (McLaughlin & Pfeifer, 1988). In this way, the priorities of teacher growth and development were stressed as a foundation and focus for evaluation. Toledo’s strong mentoring and advising program demonstrated the same commitment to improving the quality of the teaching force and was integral to the teacher evaluation program (Wise et al., 1984). These connections to other activities and aspects of school life give evaluation a context for meaning and utility.

“Most employees, including teachers, . . . are likely to resist an increased emphasis on evaluation unless it is embedded in a larger program of improvement that has a clear, positive, and central purpose” (Bridges & Groves, 1990, p. 70). Broader purposes for evaluation give it legitimacy. “When it [teacher evaluation] precedes rather than follows district-wide improvement initiatives, teacher evaluation most likely will be regarded as threatening and contrary to teachers’ professionalism” (McLaughlin, 1990, p. 406).

Summary of the Literature Review

A Nation at Risk (National Commission of Excellence in Education, 1983) was a wake up call for the educational community, shaking its complacency and demanding reform and restructuring of all facets of its functioning. The fundamental demand was for educational excellence through higher academic standards for students and better teachers. In the years since the report’s release, there has been a great deal of effort at the national, state, and local levels to address these basic shortcomings. While there is evidence that we have made progress (Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1996; Jennings, 1996), current reform efforts continue to address these same issues and efforts to circumvent the basic problem abound with options such as vouchers, school choice, and charter schools.

In recognition of the teacher as the basic unit of change in any reform effort, many authors have attempted to address the issues which impact a teacher's capacity for change and professional development. A primary vehicle for effecting change and promoting professional development has been teacher evaluation systems. Despite rhetoric to the contrary, Duke (1990) argued that "teacher evaluation systems tend to focus on accountability to the virtual exclusion of professional growth" (p. 131). And in spite of this focus, the new evaluation systems have not led to better evaluation or instruction. Fortunately teachers have a somewhat better perception of the effectiveness of teacher evaluation systems (Nolin, Rowand, & Farris, 1994), but they too reported a need for greater utility in both formative and summative uses of evaluation. Teacher evaluation has yet to achieve its potential in ensuring and improving teacher competence and skill.

One of the more dramatic measures of this shortfall at the lower end of the competence continuum is the discrepancy between the perceived incidence of teacher incompetence and rates of teacher dismissal. While most estimates of teacher incompetence range from 5 to 15% (Lavelly, Berger, & Follman, 1992), documented dismissal rates are less than one percent (Bridges, 1986). The inability or unwillingness of school systems to confront this dilemma negatively impacts thousands of children each day. This reason alone makes it imperative to continue the study of successful evaluation systems for their key components and better understand how they contribute to both accountability and professional development goals.

A synthesis of the literature yielded a list of seven interrelated but distinct components of a comprehensive evaluation system. The proposed seven components were: (a) evaluation criteria, (b) general evaluation procedures, (c) remedial procedures, (d) organizational commitment, (e) evaluator training, (f) administrator-teacher collaboration, and (g) organizational integration. These features create an organizational culture which is supportive of teaching excellence and maximizes the effectiveness of teacher evaluation as a strategy to achieve this goal. They provide a legally defensible and fair system which

supports teachers with ample opportunities for professional development but holds them accountable for meeting job-related expectations that relate to school-level priorities. Taken together, these components also provide support, guidance, and training for administrators in their role as instructional leaders. Furthermore, they assist school administrators in overcoming the natural deterrents to confronting incompetent teachers and recommending dismissal if necessary. While each component has independent value, Wise et al. (1984) noted that it was the combined effect of these features which distinguished highly successful evaluation systems.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The major purposes of this study were to: (a) assess the presence of evaluation system components which assist principals in responding to incompetent teachers, (b) explore the relationship of evaluation system components and the principal's perception of the evaluation system's effectiveness, and (c) explore the relationship of the evaluation system components to the incidence of administrative response to teacher incompetence. Administrative response was conceptualized broadly to include remediation of the teacher, reassignment of the teacher, inducement to retire or resign, and recommendation for dismissal. A cross-sectional survey design using a questionnaire was employed to collect data from a randomly selected sample of principals in Virginia's public school systems. The following section includes the research questions addressed in Phase I of the data analysis and the null hypotheses tested in Phase II of the data analysis.

Research Questions

Phase I: Prevalence of Teacher Incompetence and Presence of Components which Support an Effective Administrative Response.

- I.1 How prevalent is incompetent teacher performance in Virginia?
- I.2 How many tenured teachers are (a) identified, (b) remediated, (c) reassigned, (d) encouraged to resign/retire, or (e) dismissed each year as a result of incompetence?
- I.3 What evaluation system components are present to assist the principal in responding to incompetent tenured teachers?
- I.4 How effective is the overall evaluation support structure in responding to incompetent tenured teachers?

Null Hypotheses

Phase II: Relationship between the Presence of System Components and Measures of Effectiveness.

II.1 There is no significant relationship ($p < .05$) between the evaluation system components and an effectiveness measure of the overall evaluation support structure as perceived by principals.

II.2 There are no significant relationships ($p < .05$) among the evaluation system components and the incidence of administrative responses to teacher incompetence.

Independent Variables

The independent variables in this study were evaluation system components that have been linked with system effectiveness. These components included specific elements of teacher evaluation systems and associated implementation factors. Specifically, the system components studied were: (a) evaluation criteria, (b) evaluation procedures, (c) remedial procedures, (d) organizational commitment, (e) evaluator training, (f) administrator-teacher collaboration, and (g) organizational integration. The strength of each system component's presence was assessed by a series of five questions on the questionnaire. See Table 1 for a listing of items on the questionnaire which addressed each system component.

Dependent Variables

Two dependent variables were used to measure the effectiveness of existing evaluation system components: an effectiveness rating and an administrative response rate. The effectiveness rating was generated based on principals' opinions of their school system's evaluation system; the administrative response rate was an actual measure of the incidence of administrative responses to teacher incompetence. The perceptual measure of the evaluation system's effectiveness was calculated from responses given by principals to a series of questions on the survey instrument. The items addressing effectiveness were broad in nature and reflected some of the major issues which concern principals when they

consider the feasibility of taking action in cases of teacher incompetence, such as the legal viability of an evaluation system. The effectiveness rating was intended to measure principals' confidence in the integrity of their evaluation systems and school systems' support for the principal's actions in addressing teacher incompetence.

The second dependent variable was the actual occurrence of administrative response to cases of teacher incompetence. A series of questions on the survey instrument asked for information on the number of continuing contract (tenured) teachers who had been identified as performing less than satisfactorily and the administrative action taken. Specifically, information was requested on the number of teachers who had been remediated, reassigned to another school or position, encouraged to resign or retire, and recommended for dismissal. Although the literature (Bridges, 1986; Conley, 1991; Fuhr, 1993; Groves, 1985/1986) indicated that administrators sometimes respond to incompetent tenured teacher performance by intentionally ignoring it, this was not considered as a response category in the study.

Other studies (Bridges, 1986; Groves, 1985/1986; Ward, 1993/94) have used the rate of termination as a dependent variable to assess the effectiveness of evaluation systems. A simple termination rate was not used in the current study despite its appearance of being a tangible and straightforward measure of effectiveness because it has two major limitations as a dependent variable in research studies. First, the termination rate for teachers has been found to be so low, less than one percent (Bridges, 1986; Groves, 1985/1986; Ward, 1993/94), that its use would compromise the integrity of any calculated correlations (Borg & Gall, 1989; Tabachnick & Fidell, 1983); and second, it does not capture the full range of administrative responses to incompetence, such as remediation or reassignment. These responses can be equally effective in addressing the problem of teacher incompetence while preserving the teacher's employment and not resulting in a termination.

Sample

The population for this study was the principals employed by the 134 public school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia. A simple random sample of 200 principals was selected from the 1,690 elementary, middle/junior high, and high school principals listed in the 1995 Virginia Educational Directory published by the Virginia Department of Education. Due to the need for experience with the evaluation of teachers to answer accurately the survey questions, only full-time building administrators with three or more years of experience and at least two years in the same building were asked to complete the survey. The cover letter requested that only principals who met these criteria to complete the questionnaire. Based on recent survey research in Virginia (Sebastian, 1995), a response rate of 55% was expected to provide a sample of 110 responses which was adequate for drawing conclusions with a confidence level of 95% (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). In addition, this sample size was sufficient to satisfy the minimum requirement of 15 subjects for each variable in the multiple regression (Borg & Gall, 1989; Tabachnick & Fidell, 1983). Because this study examined the influence of seven variables, 105 subjects were required as a minimum sample.

Generalizability

The results of this study may be generalized to all public schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Because the response rate was less than 75%, a measure of the homogeneity of responses based on the type of school (i.e., elementary, middle, and high) was calculated. The results may have less generalizability to most other states given Virginia's non-union status. As an indicator of the generalizability of the results, the pattern of responses to the questionnaire were compared to those obtained by Groves (1985/1986) and Bridges (1986) in similar studies in the state of California.

Instrumentation

The purposes of this study were to identify teacher evaluation system components in the Commonwealth of Virginia and to explore their relationship to the effective resolution

of cases of teacher incompetence. A cross-sectional survey was selected for data collection because this methodology has been found to be valuable in collecting systematic information for the purposes of description and exploration of relationships (Borg & Gall, 1989). A questionnaire was chosen as the specific form of data collection due to its advantages in providing standardized information from a representative sample of principals on the somewhat sensitive issue of unsatisfactory teacher performance (Dillman, 1978).

A review of the previous survey work by Bridges (1986) and Groves (1985/1986) offered no instrument which would provide adequate information for the purposes of this study. Therefore, a questionnaire was developed (see Appendix B) based on the work by Bridges (1986), Conley (1991), Groves (1985/1986), Poston and Manatt (1993), and Wise et al. (1980). Although the questionnaire developed for this study had some similarity in focus and content with the various survey instruments used by Bridges and Groves, the construction of the items and data analysis differed substantially. Most of the items used in the instrument designed for this study, *Questionnaire for Principals on Teacher Evaluation*, were attitudinal measures and stepwise multiple regression was used as one means of data analysis to explore the relationships between attitudes and the effective resolution of cases of teacher incompetence.

The questionnaire included primarily closed-form questions to ensure the comparability of information and ease of response. The results of the responses to the questionnaire were used to answer research questions one through four and null hypotheses one and two. The questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of experts including principals who meet the selection criteria (e.g., three years of experience) for the study sample. Revisions to the questionnaire were made based on their feedback regarding general issues of construct validity and presentation. Recommendations regarding the following issues were requested specifically: (a) clarity of language, (b) clarity of directions, (c) length, (d) discreteness of items, and (e) comprehensive coverage of the

topic. Suggested revisions, deletions, and additions made by the reviewers were incorporated into the final survey instrument. The questionnaire was considered appropriate for the purposes of this study once the reviewers indicated that (a) the questions were thorough, appropriate, and understandable, and (b) the questionnaire, as a whole, required minimal effort to complete.

The questionnaire contained three major clusters of items. The first section, Part I, contained questions regarding general background information and the frequency of administrative responses to teacher incompetence. The second and largest section of the questionnaire, Part II, contained items about specific aspects of the teacher evaluation practices in each school division. The third and final group of items on the questionnaire, Part III, addressed overall aspects of evaluation systems. Each section of the questionnaire was preceded by specific directions for the completion of items in that section. In addition, a working definition of incompetency as “performance that is documented through evaluation to be consistently less than satisfactory” in boldface type was contained in the general directions at the beginning of the questionnaire. This definition was taken from a 1996 Virginia statute (Virginia School Laws, 1996, §22.1-306) and was used in numerous items in place of the word “incompetent.”

Questions in Part I, items 1-12, employed a short-answer response format to collect background information on the experience of the principal, the type of school in which he/she worked, frequency of formal evaluation, and the number of teachers evaluated. In addition, questions were asked about issues of incompetence such as the following: (a) the number of teachers currently on the respondents' staff who were less than satisfactory, (b) the number of probationary teachers who had been identified as demonstrating less than satisfactory performance, (c) the number of probationary teachers who had been recommended for nonrenewal, (d) the number of continuing contract teachers who had been identified as demonstrating less than satisfactory performance, and (e) the number of continuing contract teachers who had been recommended for various types of

administrative responses. The administrative responses considered were remediation, reassignment, encouragement to resign or retire, and recommendation for dismissal.

In Part II, a total of 35 items assessed the presence of seven elements in the school system's teacher evaluation system from the principal's viewpoint. Five statements addressed each of the following seven system components: evaluation criteria, evaluation procedures, remedial process, priority given teacher evaluation, collaboration between administrators and teachers, training for principals in evaluation, and how integrated teacher evaluation was with other school system activities. These seven system components were identified as the independent variables for the research study.

Five statements which explored critical aspects of each component were developed based on the existing research. For example, "evaluation criteria" was addressed by items 13 through 17 on the questionnaire. The five statements which were rated by principals dealt with (a) the school division adoption of criteria, (b) whether teachers were informed of the criteria prior to evaluation, (c) job-relatedness of criteria, (d) ability of criteria to assist in differentiating instructional skill levels, and (e) whether the criteria reflect job expectations which contribute to organizational goals. Each of these characteristics were addressed in the literature, as discussed in Chapter 2, and were considered important in the development and use of evaluation criteria.

The statements were rated on a four point Likert scale and were based on the principal's perception of his/her school system's teacher evaluation system. A four point Likert scale was used to reduce the "middle position" response pattern which is typical with three or five point scales (Presser & Shuman, 1989) and enhance the variability of responses (Dillman, 1978). The Likert scale used throughout this section ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. By scoring strongly disagree as a one, somewhat disagree as a two, somewhat agree as a three, and strongly agree as a four, a composite score was generated for each evaluation system component which reflected the perceived strength of its presence and effective implementation in the principal's school division.

Part III of the survey contained three groups of items which were used to generate an effectiveness rating of the principal's overall evaluation system, rate the perceived importance of the seven evaluation system components, and collect open-ended comments on aspects of the evaluation system each principal was currently using. All of the prompts requested responses with a particular focus on evaluating incompetent teachers.

In the first group of items for Part III, six statements addressing global issues of evaluation system effectiveness, such as moral support and confidence in the ability to dismiss an incompetent teacher, were rated on a four point Likert scale. Each of these six statements were based on effective mechanisms for dismissing incompetent teachers found in the literature. Consistent with the scale used in the earlier section, the scale for items 48-53 ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. By scoring strongly disagree as a one, somewhat disagree as a two, somewhat agree as a three, and strongly agree as a four, a composite score was generated. This composite score was called an "effectiveness rating."

The second group of items in Part III was a straightforward list of the seven evaluation system components. Principals were asked to rate each one in terms of its perceived importance to an effective administrative response to teacher incompetence. A three point Likert scale of not important, somewhat important, and very important was used. By converting the ratings to one, two, or three, respectively, and averaging the responses, the relative importance of these system components was determined.

The third group of items in Part III was composed of two open-ended questions addressing the most helpful aspects of their current evaluation systems and those aspects principals would change to better respond to incompetent teachers. Items 55 and 56 permitted comment on any issue not already addressed in the structured response items.

Multiple survey items were used to assess the presence and importance of each system component. The specific item numbers are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Survey Items which Address each System Component

System Components	Survey Items
1. Evaluation Criteria	13 - 17, 54
2. Evaluation Procedures	18 - 22, 54
3. Remedial Process	23 - 27, 54
4. Organizational Commitment	28 - 32, 54
5. Administrator-Teacher Collaboration	33 - 37, 54
6. Evaluator Training	38 - 42, 54
7. Organizational Integration	43 - 47, 54

Procedures

A transmittal letter and questionnaire were mailed to 200 randomly selected principals for completion during June 1996. Various strategies suggested in the research literature (Borg & Gall, 1989; Fowler, 1984) were employed throughout the data gathering stage to enhance the anticipated response rate. The cover letter explained the position of the researcher, the purpose and significance of the study, a description of the survey instrument, and criteria for participation in the study. The accompanying survey was three pages long, printed front and back. It was simple in format, with blanks to fill in or boxes to check for most responses. Every effort was made to make the items easy to read, understand, and complete. A stamped, self-addressed postcard was enclosed for respondents to return to the researcher separately from the survey to indicate its completion and request copies of the results of the study. The postcard was the only means used to track respondents, thus making survey responses completely confidential. A stamped, self-addressed return envelope was provided for return of the survey.

As noted by Fowler (1984), "the most important difference between good mail surveys and poor mail surveys is the extent to which researchers make repeated contact

with the nonrespondents” (p. 54). To that end, two follow-up mailings were made. As recommended by various authors (Borg & Gall, 1989; Dillman, 1978; Fowler, 1984) a postcard reminder was sent twelve days after the first mailing emphasizing the importance of full participation. Ten days later, a follow-up letter along with another copy of the survey, response card, and stamped envelope were sent to principals who had not responded to the earlier mailings. The transmittal letter, postcard, and follow-up letter are included in Appendix A and the questionnaire is located in Appendix B.

Data Analysis

Quantitative strategies, primarily descriptive statistics and stepwise multiple regression, were used to analyze the information collected from responses to the *Questionnaire for Principals on Teacher Evaluation*. Means and frequency distributions were used to summarize background information on the principals and to answer research questions one through four. Multiple regression was used to test null hypotheses one and two. Responses to the two open-ended questions about the principal’s current evaluation system were categorized based on simple content analysis and frequency counts.

Background information about the respondents was requested in items 1-7 and 9 on the questionnaire and is summarized as an introduction to the data analysis in Chapter 4. Information such as years as a principal, number of full-time equivalent teachers, and the number of teachers per evaluator in the school were provided as means with standard deviations and ranges. To address research questions one through four, descriptive statistics, such as frequency counts, percentages, and means were used.

Data for question one, “*How prevalent is incompetent teacher performance in Virginia?*,” was taken from survey item 8 and reported as mean frequency counts. The raw data was converted to a percentage of “full-time equivalent teachers” (item 7). The mean percentage of incompetent teachers compared to total teachers was reported.

To answer question two, “*How many tenured teachers are (a) identified, (b) remediated, (c) reassigned, (d) encouraged to resign/retire, or (e) dismissed each year as a*

result of incompetence?," responses were taken from items 11 and 12a-d and tabulated as mean frequency counts with standard deviations and ranges. The information was collected based on a three year period of time to increase the reliability of the data. To make comparisons across schools, the raw data was adjusted into rates based on a one year period of time and a staff of 100. To adjust the information, the following steps were taken:

1. The number of continuing contract teachers involved in the specified actions (items 12a-d) was divided by three to reflect a rate based on one year versus the three years in the questionnaire item.
2. The number resulting from step 1 was divided by the number of full-time teachers on staff (item 7) to reflect a rate which accounted for the size of the school staff.
3. The number resulting from step 2 was multiplied by 100 so that all rates were based on a school size of 100.

Rates were calculated for each type of administrative response to continuing contract teachers who had been identified as demonstrating less than satisfactory performance. The types of administrative response considered were remediation (item 12a), reassignment (item 12b), encouragement to resign/retire (item 12c), and recommendations for dismissal (item 12d). The following formula was used to adjust the rate of administrative response to teacher incompetence:

$$\frac{100 \times [\text{Number of continuing contract teachers involved in specified action (item 12a-d)}]}{3 \times [\text{Number of full-time teachers on staff (item 7)}]}$$

In addition, information on the number of probationary teachers identified as demonstrating less than satisfactory performance (item 10a) and recommended for nonrenewal (item 10b) was collected and analyzed. Responses were tabulated as mean frequency counts with standard deviations and ranges. The raw data for probationary teacher nonrenewal was adjusted into rates based on a one year period of time and a staff of 100 using a similar formula to the one explained above. The rate was calculated using the following formula:

100 x [Number of probationary teachers recommended for nonrenewal (item 10b)]

3 x [Number of full-time teachers on staff (item 7)]

Question three, "*What evaluation system components are present to assist the principal in responding to incompetent tenured teachers?*," was answered by two sets of items on the questionnaire. The first set of items was seven clusters of five items each on the questionnaire which addressed all of the evaluation system components. These items were rated on a four point Likert scale which ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. By scoring strongly disagree as a one, somewhat disagree as a two, somewhat agree as a three, and strongly agree as a four, a composite score was generated for each evaluation system component which reflected the perceived strength of its presence in the principals' school division. Specifically, the system components assessed were: (a) evaluation criteria, (b) general evaluation procedures, (c) remedial procedures, (d) organizational commitment, (e) evaluator training, (f) administrator-teacher collaboration, and (g) organizational integration. The results were reported as means and ranges for the ratings of each component.

The second set of items which addressed question three was the two open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire which asked about the most helpful aspects of their current evaluation systems and those aspects principals would change to better respond to teachers with less than satisfactory performance. Responses were categorized based on the framework of seven system components used throughout the study. Each response was analyzed for "word sense" (Weber, 1990, p. 21) and grouped as one of the seven components or as a miscellaneous response. Frequency counts were reported for each of the categories for comments.

Question four, "*How effective is the overall evaluation support structure in responding to incompetent tenured teachers?*," was based on a composite score of items 48 through 53 on the questionnaire. Six statements addressing key issues of effectiveness were rated by principals on a four point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly

agree. Each rating was assigned a numerical value of one to four, and the resulting composite score was called an effectiveness rating. The results were reported as a mean score with a standard deviation and range.

Stepwise multiple regression was used to analyze the data for Phase II, null hypotheses one and two. As a “multivariate technique for determining the correlation between a criterion variable and a combination of two or more predictor variables” (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 601), it provided a measure of the relationship between the two sets of criterion or dependent variables and the presence of evaluation system components, the predictor or independent variables. To test null hypothesis five, the first dependent variable, a rating of the perceived effectiveness of the overall evaluation support structure by the principal, was correlated with the presence of system components. The perceived effectiveness was based on the effectiveness rating generated to answer research question four. To test null hypothesis six, the second criterion variable, the actual incidence of administrative responses to teacher incompetence was correlated with the presence of system components. The administrative response rate was based on self-reported data provided in Part I of the questionnaire.

For null hypothesis one, “*There is no significant relationship between the evaluation system components and an effectiveness rating of the overall evaluation support structure,*” the presence of the individual and collective system components was correlated with an effectiveness rating of the overall evaluation structure. The individual system components which were correlated with the effectiveness rating were (a) evaluation criteria, (b) general evaluation procedures, (c) remedial process, (d) organizational commitment, (e) evaluator training, (f) administrator-teacher collaboration, and (g) organizational integration.

For null hypothesis two, “*There are no significant relationships among the evaluation system components and the incidence of administrative responses to teacher incompetence,*” the presence of individual system components was correlated with the (a)

the incidence of individual administrative responses and (b) the total incidence of identified administrative responses to incompetence. Individual administrative responses were considered to be the (a) number of teachers remediated, (b) number reassigned, (c) number induced to retire or resign, and (d) number recommended for dismissal. These actions were measured by self-reported responses to items 12a through 12d on the questionnaire.

For both hypotheses one and two, multiple correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the relationship between the dependent variable(s) and the system components, or independent variables. Based on the coefficients of determination (R^2), the relative importance of individual system components and their graduated cumulative effect on (a) the effectiveness rating of the overall evaluation structure and (b) the incidence of various administrative responses to teacher incompetence were determined.

Ethical Safeguards

This study was conducted in a manner that protected the anonymity of the school divisions and principals who participated in the study. To protect the confidentiality of those involved in the study, the principals' names and school divisions did not appear anywhere on the questionnaire. The principals' names and addresses were listed on a separate postcard which principals were asked to return indicating completion of the survey and whether they wanted to request a copy of the results. The postcard was used to check off participation of specific school divisions for the purposes of documenting the study's generalizability and determining the need for follow-up with principals who had not responded to initial mailings.

In the letter of transmittal, the researcher made a commitment to protect the confidentiality of the participating principals and their school divisions. In addition, the research proposal was submitted to and approved by the Human Subjects Committee of The College of William and Mary. The study was conducted in keeping with acceptable research practices. The results of this study were mailed to all principals who requested a copy.

Chapter 4: Analysis of Results

The current study investigated the presence of seven specific teacher evaluation system components in Virginia, particularly in terms of how they enabled principals to respond to teachers with less than satisfactory performance. In addition, research data were used to determine the relationship between specific teacher evaluation system components and measures of evaluation system effectiveness. Effectiveness was measured by two means: (a) the principal's overall effectiveness rating of the evaluation system and (b) the incidence of administrative response to teacher incompetence based on principals' self report. Administrative response was conceptualized broadly to include remediation of the teacher, reassignment of the teacher, inducement to retire or resign, and recommendation for dismissal. A cross-sectional survey design using a questionnaire was employed to collect data from a randomly selected sample of principals in Virginia's public schools.

The investigation was conducted in two phases. Phase I was designed to answer four research questions regarding the prevalence of teacher incompetence and the presence of evaluation system components which support an effective administrative response to teacher incompetence. Performance criteria, evaluation procedures, remedial processes, organizational commitment, administrator-teacher collaboration, evaluator training, and organizational integration were considered to be the components of a comprehensive evaluation system and were examined in this study. Phase II of the study addressed two research hypotheses which explored the relationship between the presence of system components and two measures of evaluation system effectiveness.

Return Rate

Within two weeks of the initial mailing of 200 questionnaires and cover letters, 82 (41%) of the questionnaires had been returned. A postcard reminder was sent at that time and 13 additional responses (6.5%) were received the following week. The third and final

mailing of a follow-up letter and another copy of the questionnaire to all nonrespondents was sent three weeks after the initial mailing and 42 more responses were received for an overall response rate of 69% ($n = 137$). Of the responses received, 112 (or 56% of the original sample) were usable and 25 responses were unusable. Twenty-three of the responses which were unusable came from principals who did not meet the study criteria of three years experience as a principal and two years of administration in his/her current school. An additional two responses were unusable due to (a) the lack of critical information on the questionnaire regarding years of administrative experience which was necessary to determine if the principal met the experience criteria for inclusion in the study and (b) responses to less than half the survey items which precluded analysis for multiple research questions.

In some cases, individual questionnaires were missing responses to only a few items which had a minimal effect on the data analysis and these questionnaires were used. Since all available information was used for each analysis, the sample size fluctuated somewhat and was noted in each table.

Demographic Information: Responding Principals

The *Questionnaire for Principals on Teacher Evaluation* included eight items to provide background information on the experience of the principal, the type of school in which he/she worked, frequency of formal evaluation, and the number of teachers formally evaluated each year. Means and standard deviations for the numerical information are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for Years of Experience, Number of Full-time Equivalent Teachers, and Number of Teachers Formally Evaluated Each Year

Background Information	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	Range
Years as a Principal	11.47	7.31	3 - 31
Years as a Principal in Current School	6.42	4.70	2 - 31
Number of Full-time Equivalent Teachers	38.69	24.43	6 - 120
Number of Teachers Formally Evaluated Each Year	23.25	16.95	0 - 83

$n = 112$

The experience level of the respondents ranged from 3 to 31 years with 11.5 years as a mean number of years. Of the 112 responding principals, 75% indicated that they had 6 or more years of experience and 20% had more than 19 years of experience. The majority of responding principals (71%) had been in their current school at least four years with a mean of 6.4 years and a range of 2 to 31. The number of full-time equivalent teachers ranged from a low of 6 to a high of 120. The mean number of full-time equivalent teachers was 38.7 with a majority of principals (80%) reporting more than 20 teachers. Of those teachers on staff, the principals reported that more than half (60%) were evaluated formally each year. A mean of 23.3 teachers are evaluated each year by the principals with a low of 0 teachers and a high of 83. The zero response was made by a principal who delegated evaluation responsibility to an assistant principal and, therefore, reported that he evaluated zero teachers during the year. This response was an anomaly.

Type of School

A multiple choice question was asked about the type of school in which the responding principal worked. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they worked in a(n) elementary, junior/middle, or high school. The option of "other" was offered for cases

which might not fit one of these categories. Information on the type of school in which responding principals worked was used to verify the generalizability of the survey results. Frequency counts and percentages for the types of schools in which the responding principals worked are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Frequency Counts and Percentages for the Type of School in which Respondents Worked

Type of School	Frequency Count	%
Elementary School	73	65.2
Junior/Middle School	18	16.1
High School	19	17.0
Other	2	1.8
Total	112	100.1

A majority of the responding principals (65.2%) worked in elementary schools, with 16% in middle schools and 17% in high schools. Two principals served schools with broader age ranges (i.e., grades 1 to 8) and accounted for 1.8% of the respondents. The original random sample contained principals from 131 elementary schools or 65.5% of the total sample, 35 middle/junior high schools (17.5%), 32 high schools (16%), and 2 miscellaneous schools (1%). A comparison of the schools represented in the original sample and by the respondents is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Comparison of School Level in Original Sample and Responding Sample

School Level	Original Sample	Responding Sample
Elementary	131 (65.5%)	73 (65.2%)
Middle/Junior High	35 (17.5%)	18 (16.1%)
High	32 (16.0%)	19 (17.0%)
Other	2 (1.0%)	2 (1.8%)
Total	200 (100.0%)	112 (100.1%)

The school assignments of the principals who responded to the questionnaire closely reflect the sample used in this study. The percentages for each school level fall within one and one half points and do not suggest any systematic bias in the response group based on this variable. A chi square test ($\alpha = .05$) analyzing the data for elementary, middle, and high schools yielded $\chi^2 = .43202$ ($df = 2$, $p = .80$). (The low frequency cell of “other” was excluded.) There were no statistical differences between the original sample and responding sample. There appeared to be homogeneity of the principals who responded to the survey and those in the original sample.

Evaluation Responsibility

As background information on evaluation practices in Virginia, a multiple choice question was asked about who was responsible for teacher evaluation. The choices given reflected typical practice for most school systems. The frequency counts and associated percentages for these choices are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Frequencies and Percentages for the Person(s) Responsible for Teacher Evaluation

Person(s) Responsible for Teacher Evaluation	Frequency Count	%
Principal Only	52	46.4
Principal w/ Administrative Help	55	49.1
Administrators w/ Teachers	3	2.7
Central Office Administration	1	.9
Other	1	.9
Total	112	100.0

In almost all cases (95.5%), the principal (46.4%) or the principal with administrative assistance (49.1%), usually the assistant principal, was responsible for evaluation. Only one respondent indicated that central office administrators were responsible for evaluation on a routine basis, but numerous principals noted in the comment section that central office personnel were available for assistance when called upon. In addition, three principals reported that teachers assisted administrators in the evaluation process.

Frequency of Evaluation for Probationary Teachers

For further information on the evaluation practices in Virginia, another item on the questionnaire asked principals how often they formally evaluated probationary or non-tenured teachers. Choices were given of three times a year, twice a year, once a year, and "other." Percentages for the responses are shown in Figure 1.

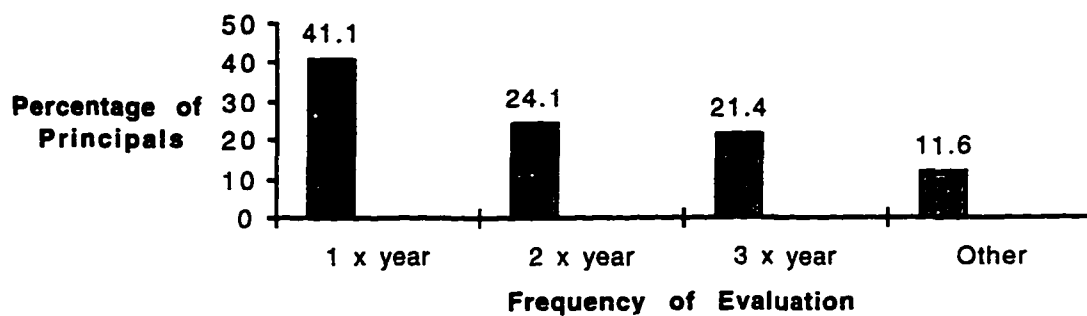


Figure 1. Percentage of principals who conduct formal evaluation of probationary teachers at indicated frequency levels.

The frequency of formal evaluation for probationary teachers was not consistent across the schools represented in the study. The greatest number of principals (41.1%) reported the formal evaluation of probationary teachers three times a year. Twenty-four percent reported formal evaluation twice a year and 21.4% conducted formal evaluation once a year. Thirteen principals (11.6%) reported “other” formal evaluation schedules with seven indicating that formal evaluation occurred four times a year for probationary teachers. In some schools, evaluation schedules varied across years with a decreasing number of formal evaluations for each year of employment. An example of this approach was the evaluation of probationary teachers four times in the first year, three times in the second year, and one time in the third year. There were two principals who did not respond to this item.

Frequency of Evaluation for Tenured Teachers

A final question was asked for background information about the frequency of formal evaluation of continuing contract or tenured teachers. The most common options of once per year, once every two years, once every three years, and “other” were given. The percentages of responses are shown in Figure 2.

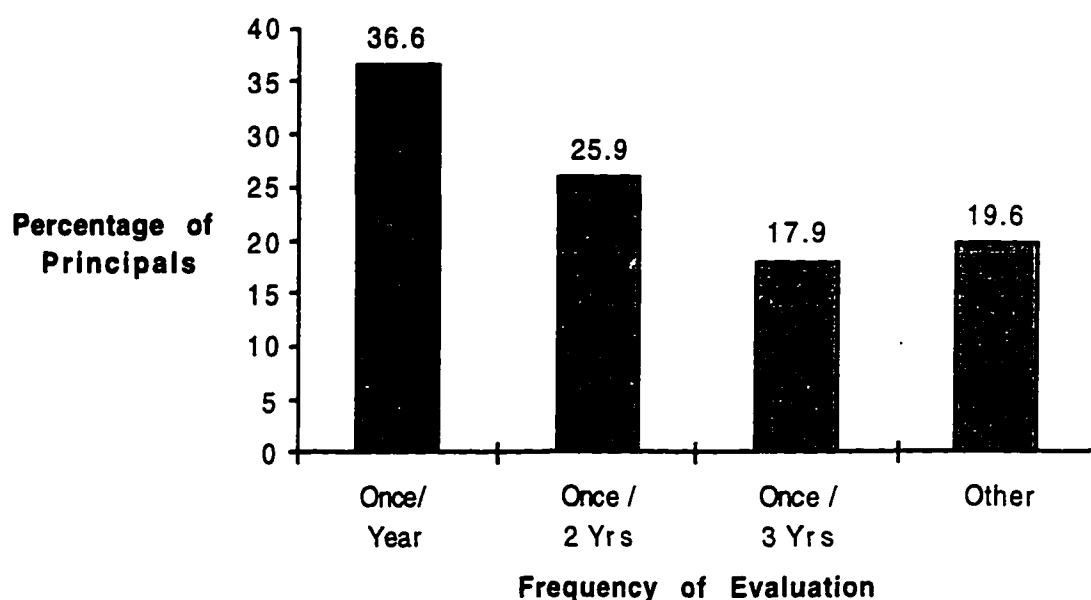


Figure 2 Percentage of principals who conduct formal evaluation of tenured teachers at indicated frequency levels.

For teachers on continuing contracts, the greatest number of principals (36.6%) indicated formal evaluation was done once per year, 25.9% reported once every two years, and 17.9% said once every three years. Almost 20% selected “other” to indicate a wide range of practices from one formal evaluation every four to five years to two formal evaluations in one year. The most frequent “other” comment was made by seven principals (6%) who commented that continuing contract teachers were formally evaluated twice a year and another four principals (3.6%) who reported the practice of two formal evaluations every two years. At the individual school level, formal evaluation was less frequent for tenured teachers than probationary teachers. Due to wide variation in the practices of different school systems, however; tenured teachers in some divisions seem to be evaluated as frequently as probationary teachers are in other divisions.

Findings for Research Questions

The study was conducted in two phases: (a) Phase I: Prevalence of teacher incompetence and presence of evaluation system components which support an effective administrative response and (b) Phase II: Relationship between the presence of system components and measures of evaluation system effectiveness. Phase I investigated four research questions and Phase II explored two research hypotheses. The results are presented by individually addressing the research questions and hypotheses in each phase of the study.

Research Questions for Phase I - Prevalence of Teacher Incompetence and Presence of Evaluation System Components which Support an Administrative Response

I.1. How prevalent is incompetent teacher performance in Virginia?

Prevalence of teacher incompetence. A 1996 Virginia statute defined incompetency as “performance that is documented through evaluation to be consistently less than satisfactory” (Virginia School Laws, 1996, §22.1-306). This definition of incompetence implies a higher standard of performance than the widely accepted one of “failure to perform at a minimally acceptable level” (Wheeler & Haertel, 1993, p. 70). Using the Virginia Code’s definition for incompetence, principals were asked to estimate the number of teachers on their staff whose performance was less than satisfactory, whether or not it was documented formally. The mean number of teachers reported by principals to have less than satisfactory performance was 1.63 with a standard deviation of 2.17 ($n = 111$). Responses ranged from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 10 teachers per school. Thirty-nine principals (36% of the respondents) reported zero teachers with less than satisfactory performance while 19 principals (17% of the respondents) reported four to ten teachers with less than satisfactory performance.

To determine the prevalence of incompetent teacher performance in Virginia, the number of incompetent teachers reported by principals was compared to their total number of staff members. Based on principal reports, there was a mean of 5% and median of 3.5%

incompetent teachers in the schools. Rates for individual schools ranged from 0% to 23% ($n = 110$). The distribution of incompetency rates reported by Virginia principals in this study is depicted in Figure 3.

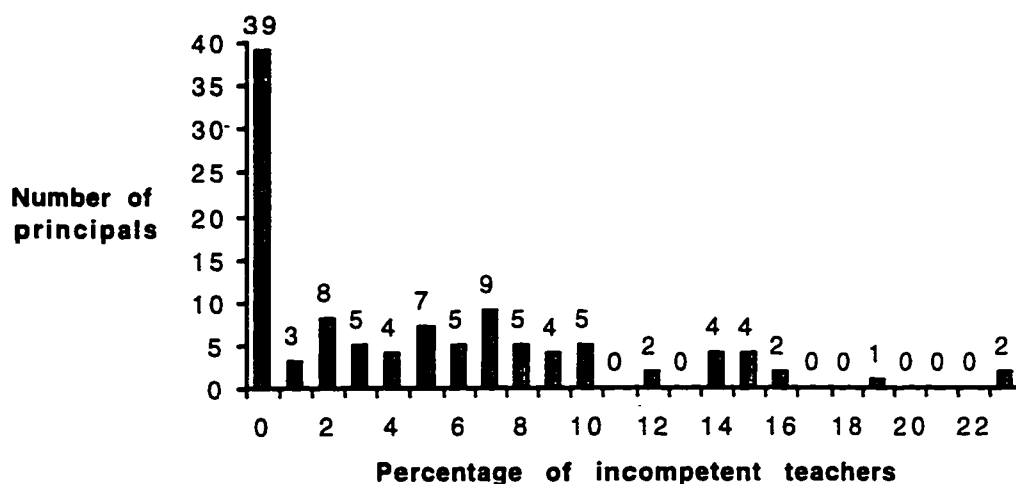


Figure 3. Percentage of incompetent teachers per school as reported by principals.

I.2. How many tenured teachers are (a) identified, (b) remediated, (c) reassigned, (d) encouraged to resign/retire, or (e) dismissed each year as a result of incompetence?

Administrative responses to tenured teachers. Based on a review of the literature and research on administrative responses to incompetent tenured teacher performance, four major responses were noted. The responses investigated were (a) remediation of the identified teacher, (b) reassignment of the teacher to a different role or school, (c) encouragement for the teacher to resign or retire, or (d) recommendation for the teacher's dismissal. Participating principals were asked to indicate how many continuing contract or tenured teachers they had "identified as demonstrating less than satisfactory performance" in the last three years. In a second item, they were then asked how many of these teachers they had responded to with each of the four administrative responses. Respondents were asked to select only one administrative response per identified teacher.

The means, standard deviations, and ranges for the identification of incompetent tenured teachers and the four administrative responses are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges for the Number of Incompetent Tenured Teachers Identified and the Administrative Action Taken

Administrative Response	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	Range
Identification	1.63	1.79	0 - 9
Remediation	.76	1.08	0 - 6
Reassignment	.25	.73	0 - 5
Encouragement to resign/retire	.43	.72	0 - 3
Dismissal	.11	.34	0 - 2
Total administrative responses	1.54	1.72	0 - 9

$n = 112$, The descriptive statistics reported in Table 8 reflect numbers reported over the previous three years (1993-1996) and are not adjusted staff size.

In a three year period of time, 76 principals reported formally identifying a total of 183 tenured teachers as demonstrating less than satisfactory performance. The mean number of tenured incompetent teachers formally identified per principal was 1.63. In response to the less than satisfactory performance, the most common strategy used by principals was remediation, 52 principals reported using this response in the last three years. The least common response was the recommendation for dismissal which was used by 11 principals. The mean numbers for the defined administrative responses were: (a) .76 for remediation, (b) .25 for reassignment, (c) .43 for encouragement to resign or retire, and (d).11 for the recommendation for dismissal. In some cases, principals noted "other" responses to teachers demonstrating less than satisfactory performance which did not fit the prescribed categories of administrative responses. These "other" cases included waiting

until the incompetent teacher retired (noted by two principals), incompetent teachers requesting transfers, and incompetent teachers resigning for reasons of their own.

The means for administrative responses to incompetent tenured teachers shown in Table 9 were based on a three year period of time and staffs of varying sizes. To compute adjusted rates of administrative response which would take these factors into account, a formula was used to generate information based on a one year period of time and a staff of 100. For example, an adjusted rate of 1.0 for "remediation" would mean that the typical principal with a staff of 100 teachers would have remediated one incompetent tenured teacher in a given year. In addition, since the standard staff size was set to 100, an adjusted rate can be interpreted as a percentage. A remediation rate of one would be the same as the remediation of one percent of the staff. The adjusted rates for identification, remediation, reassignment, encouragement to resign/retire, recommendation for dismissal, and total administrative responses are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Adjusted Rates for Identification and Administrative Response to Incompetent Tenured Teachers

Administrative Response	Mean Rate	SD
Identification	1.53	1.67
Remediation	.68	.92
Reassignment	.29	.94
Encouragement to resign/retire	.37	.68
Dismissal	.10	.46
Other	.08	.47
Total administrative response	1.52	1.73

$n = 112$, The descriptive statistics reported in Table 9 reflect adjusted rates for a staff size of 100 in a one year time period.

The results indicated that the average principal administratively responds, in one way or another, to one and a half teachers out of 100 in a given year or 1.5% of his/her staff. The most frequent response was remediation (.68) of the identified problems. Other actions in decreasing frequency were encouragement to resign or retire (.37), reassignment (.29), and recommendation for dismissal (.10). Recommendation for dismissal occurred at a rate of .1 teacher out of a 100, or .1%, per year. This would translate into one recommendation for dismissal every 10 years for a principal with a staff of 100 teachers.

Administrative response to probationary teachers. Based on a review of the literature and research on administrative responses to incompetent probationary teacher performance, the typical administrative response was nonrenewal. Thus, participating principals were asked to indicate how many probationary or untenured teachers they had "identified as demonstrating less than satisfactory performance" in the last three years and then how many of these teachers they had recommended for nonrenewal. The means, standard deviations, and ranges for the identification of incompetent probationary teachers and nonrenewal are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges for Administrative Response to Incompetent Probationary Teachers

Administrative Response	Mean	SD	Range
Identification	1.39	2.09	0 - 12
Nonrenewal	.69	1.21	0 - 9

$n = 112$

In a three year period of time, principals reported a mean identification of 1.39 incompetent probationary teachers. This is comparable to the average of 1.63 identified incompetent tenured teachers in the same time period. In response, principals reported the nonrenewal of .69 incompetent probationary teachers, much higher than the

recommendation for dismissal of .11 incompetent tenured teachers. It is unclear from the study what other administrative responses were taken with the balance of formally identified incompetent probationary teachers.

The reported means shown in Table 8 were based on a three year period of time and staffs of varying sizes. To compute an adjusted rate of administrative response which would take these factors into account, a formula was used to generate information based on a one year period of time and a staff of 100. For example, a adjusted rate of 1.0 for "identification" would mean that the typical principal with a staff of 100 teachers would have identified one incompetent probationary teacher in a given year, or 1% of his/her staff. The adjusted rates for identification and nonrenewal of incompetent probationary teachers are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Adjusted Rate for Nonrenewal of Incompetent Probationary Teachers

Administrative Response	Mean Rate	<u>SD</u>
Identification	1.12	1.35
Nonrenewal	.56	.86

$n = 112$

The adjusted rate for identification of probationary teachers in a one year period of time with a staff of 100 was found to be 1.12, or 1.12%, and the rate for nonrenewal of probationary teachers was found to be .56, or .56%. In practical terms, this would mean that a principal with a staff of 100 would identify one probationary teacher per year as being incompetent and would not renew the contract of one probationary teacher every two years. Given the relatively small number of probationary teachers on a faculty, one teacher would represent a substantial percentage of the total number of probationary teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 1993a).

I.3. What evaluation system components are present to assist the principal in responding to incompetent tenured teachers?

Presence of evaluation system components. Based on a synthesis of the research and literature on effective evaluation systems, seven key components were identified as contributing to the effectiveness of a comprehensive evaluation system. The seven components were: (a) evaluation criteria, (b) general evaluation procedures, (c) remedial procedures, (d) organizational commitment, (e) evaluator training, (f) administrator-teacher collaboration, and (g) organizational integration. Using a four point Likert scale which ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree, the responding principals rated thirty-five items on the questionnaire. Five items addressed various aspects of each component. By assigning numerals to the descriptors (e.g., 1 = strongly disagree), a composite score was generated which reflected the perceived strength of its presence in the evaluation system used by the principal. The higher the composite score, the more strongly principals agreed that the component was present. The lowest possible score was five and the highest was 20. The mean scores and the ranges for the ratings are reported in Table 10.

Table 10

Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Ranges for the Perceived Presence of Evaluation System Components

Evaluation System Components	Mean Score	SD	Range
Evaluation Criteria	17.36	2.42	8 - 20
General Evaluation Procedures	17.97	2.31	9 - 20
Remedial Procedures	17.30	3.35	5 - 20
Organizational Commitment	15.70	3.21	8 - 20
Evaluator Training	13.74	4.18	5 - 20
Administrator-Teacher Collaboration	14.01	2.72	8 - 20
Organizational Integration	12.00	3.90	5 - 20

n varies from 107 to 112

Principals rated most strongly the presence of general evaluation procedures (17.97), evaluation criteria (17.36), and remedial procedures (17.30). The rating for general evaluation procedures reflects 90% of the possible score of 20 points. The respective ratings for evaluation criteria and remedial procedures are 87% and 86%. These items typically are found in written evaluation guidelines for most school districts (Loup et al., 1996). The components considered to be implementation factors were rated as being present less often. In descending order of reported presence were organizational commitment (15.70), administrator-teacher collaboration (14.01), evaluator training (13.74), and organizational integration (12.00).

Perceived importance of evaluation system components. To verify the importance of the identified evaluation system components, principals rated the perceived importance of evaluation system components. The seven components rated were: (a) evaluation criteria, (b) general evaluation procedures, (c) remedial procedures, (d) organizational

commitment, (e) evaluator training, (f) administrator-teacher collaboration, and (g) organizational integration. For this analysis, a three point Likert scale was used which ranged from not important (1) to very important (3). The mean ratings, standard deviations, and ranges are presented in Table 11.

Table 11

Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Ranges for the Perceived Importance of Evaluation System Components

Evaluation System Components	Mean Score	SD	Range
Evaluation Criteria	2.85	.39	1 - 3
General Evaluation Procedures	2.86	.37	1 - 3
Remedial Procedures	2.84	.40	1 - 3
Organizational Commitment	2.82	.39	2 - 3
Evaluator Training	2.69	.54	1 - 3
Administrator-Teacher Collaboration	2.69	.55	1 - 3
Organizational Integration	2.59	.56	1 - 3

$n = 109$

The mean ratings of all system components indicated that they were considered somewhat important to very important by principals. There was little fluctuation in the mean ratings suggesting that they were perceived as equally important in their contribution to an effective evaluation system. The components of evaluation criteria, general evaluation procedures, remedial procedures, and organizational commitment were rated most highly and similarly (2.82-2.86). These same items were rated most highly for their perceived presence in the evaluation systems used by the principals. Evaluator training, administrator-teacher collaboration, and organizational integration were rated as somewhat less important and were present to a lesser extent in evaluations systems used by the principals.

Helpful system components. In addition to rating the importance and presence of evaluation system components, principals were asked the following open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire: "What aspect of your evaluation system have you found to be the most helpful to you in effectively responding to teachers with less than satisfactory performance?" Eighty-six principals (77%) gave responses. The verbatim text of those comments can be found in Appendix C. The comments were analyzed for "word sense" and grouped by the seven identified evaluation system components. In some cases, more than one component was addressed in a comment and the comment was coded to reflect multiple components. The category of miscellaneous was used for comments which did not fit one of the predetermined categories. The frequency with which each component was cited and the percent of total responses which addressed the component are shown in Table 12.

Table 12

Frequency Count and Percentages of Comments on Most Helpful Aspects of Current Evaluation Systems

Topic of Comment	Frequency Count	%
Evaluation Criteria	21	24
General Evaluation Procedures	40	47
Remedial Procedures	16	19
Organizational Commitment	16	19
Evaluator Training	6	7
Administrator-Teacher Collaboration	5	6
Organizational Integration	1	1
Miscellaneous	8	9

$n = 86$

Principals made the most comments (40) on the helpfulness of the general evaluation procedures. Numerous comments were also made regarding evaluation criteria (21), remedial procedures (15), and organizational commitment (15). The areas of training for principals in the evaluation process (6), level of administrator/teacher collaboration or trust (5), and the organizational integration of evaluation into other school system activities (1) received very few comments. Eighty-eight percent of the comments could be sorted into one of the pre-existing categories. The remaining eight comments were labeled miscellaneous. Table 13 provides specific examples of the more frequent types of comments given in each category. The number in parentheses after some comments indicates the frequency with which that point was made.

Table 13

Specific Examples of Comments on the Most Helpful Aspects of Current Evaluation Systems

System Component	Examples of comments
Evaluation Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • instrument is very specific (7) • covers all areas of classroom and extra-curricular activities (4) • observation guides which focus on instructional process and professional responsibilities
General Evaluation Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • documentation (6) • teacher/principal conferences (5) • growth plans (4) • face to face communication (3)
Remedial Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improvement plan (8) • assistance provided by central office in remediating staff (4) • <u>intensive help</u> from various sources (2)

Table 13 (continued)

Specific Examples of Comments on the Most Helpful Aspects of Current EvaluationSystems

System Component	Examples of comments
Organizational Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help from central office personnel (8) • support from the superintendent (3)
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extensive principal evaluation training • training in documenting performance
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • combined efforts of principal and teacher • developing a mutual respect
System Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have found that utilizing staff development and mentoring programs have a definite result in changing teacher performance towards improvement.
Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • administrative experience (2) • hiring practices of the school system • evaluation handbook

Forty comments were made addressing both the evaluation procedures in general (14) and specific aspects of the procedures such as documentation (6), teacher/principal conferences (5), growth plans (4), one to one communication (3), common ground provided by the procedures, and goals orientation. Comments on evaluation criteria typically addressed how comprehensive they were in covering all areas of professional responsibility and the level of specificity or clarity. Comments in the area of remedial procedures discussed the use of improvement plans or the assistance provided by central office in remediating staff members. In the area of organizational commitment, comments were usually about support or assistance from the superintendent or central office in the

evaluation process. Miscellaneous comments (8) about what was helpful to principals included comments regarding administrative experience (2), hiring practices of the school system, and the evaluation handbook used in the principal's school division.

System components in need of change. Principals were asked this second open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire: "What aspect of your evaluation system would you change to better respond to teachers with less than satisfactory performance?" Eighty-one principals gave responses. The verbatim text of those comments can be found in Appendix D. The comments were analyzed for "word sense" and grouped by the seven identified evaluation system components. In some cases, more than one component was addressed in a comment and the comment was coded to reflect multiple components. The category of miscellaneous was used for comments which did not fit one of the predetermined categories. The frequency with which each component was cited and the percent of total responses which addressed the component are shown in Table 14.

Table 14

Frequency Count and Percentages of Comments on Aspects of Current Evaluation Systems which Principals Would Change

Topic of Comment	Frequency Count*	%
Evaluation Criteria	16	20
General Evaluation Procedures	23	28
Remedial Procedures	13	16
Organizational Commitment	16	20
Evaluator Training	4	5
Administrator-Teacher Collaboration	3	4
Organizational Integration	2	2
Miscellaneous	15	19

$n = 81$, The total frequency count > 81 due to multiple codings.

In a pattern similar to that found for the most helpful aspects of their current evaluation system, principals made the most comments about the general evaluation procedures (23) with a secondary level of attention given to evaluation criteria (16), remedial procedures (13), and organizational commitment (16). Only minimal comment was made about evaluator training (4), administrator-teacher collaboration (3), and organizational integration (2). Comments which did not fit one of the pre-existing categories were labeled miscellaneous. Table 15 provides some specific examples of the more frequent types of comments given in each category. The number in parentheses after some comments indicates the frequency with which that point was made.

Table 15

Specific Examples of Comments on Aspects of Current Evaluation Systems which Principals Would Change

System Component	Examples of comments
Evaluation Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better defined criteria (3) • system needs to be more comprehensive and include all aspects of the teacher's responsibilities (2) • evaluation instrument needs to be rewritten to address current trends/policies (2)
General Evaluation Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • peer evaluation would be helpful (3) • spend less time with exemplary teachers (3) • too complex (2)
Remedial Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more mentoring and inservice to help remediate (5) • need exists for specifics on remediating those in need (3)

Table 15 (continued)

Specific Examples of Comments on Aspects of Current Evaluation Systems which Principals Would Change

System Component	Examples of comments
Organizational Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more help with legal & tenure areas (2) • involvement of central office supervisors (2) • support from the school board
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better training for administrators is needed (2) • more evaluator training (2)
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more collaboration
System Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • link evaluation and system goals
Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none (5) • time (2) • teacher unions and associations • do away with tenure • better screening of potential teachers

Principals identified the most needed changes in the area of general evaluation procedures (23). A number of principals (3) suggested that peer evaluation would be a helpful addition to their evaluation process while two other principals recommended the elimination of “peer observations.” A number of principals (3) also discussed the issue of focusing supervisory time on new teachers or those who need assistance instead of master level teachers. Two other principals noted that their evaluation systems were too complex for easy implementation. Comments regarding the evaluation criteria indicated that they needed to be better defined and more comprehensive in nature. The criteria also needed to

reflect more current practices such as cooperative learning. In the area of remedial procedures, five principals called for more assistance in the remedial process with mentors, inservice training, and coursework. They also recommended greater clarity on how to have a teacher demonstrate improvement. There were a number of ways in which principals wanted to improve organizational commitment to evaluation, suggestions included more help with legal and tenure areas, involvement of central office supervisors in evaluation, and support from the school board. Comments were sparse in the other categories; but, in general, principals wanted more and better training, more collaboration, and a linking of evaluation and system goals. There were fifteen miscellaneous comments, five of which indicated that no changes were necessary. Other comments addressed an array of problems which complicate the evaluation process such as time constraints, teacher associations, tenure, and current teacher selection practices.

I.4. How effective is the overall evaluation support structure in responding to incompetent tenured teachers?

Effectiveness of evaluation systems. Using a four point rating scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4), principals were asked to rate six statements addressing key issues of evaluation system effectiveness that were found in the literature. Each of the items focused on how the evaluation system assisted principals in responding to incompetent teachers. Mean ratings for each of the individual items ranged from 2.89 to 3.14. Principals agreed most strongly with the statement, "I believe the guidelines for teacher evaluation in my school division would stand up in court." Principals noted the least, but still moderately strong, agreement with the statement, "I am confident that I could dismiss a teacher using the teacher evaluation system in my school division."

The sum of numerical values from one to four assigned to each rating rendered a composite score which was considered an effectiveness rating for the evaluation system. The mean effectiveness rating was 18.5, with a standard deviation of 4.12. This effectiveness rating is 77% of the total possible score of 24 points indicating agreement to

some extent with the effectiveness of the evaluation systems, but not strong agreement. The range of effectiveness ratings was from 6 to 24.

Once the basic research questions were answered, an additional question was raised as to whether there were significant differences between the group of principals who acknowledged the presence of incompetent teachers on their staffs and the group who did not. To determine if principals in these two groups were statistically different in their responses to the questionnaire, they were compared using analysis of variance. The background characteristics, ratings of their current evaluation systems, and the rates of administrative response to incompetence were compared. Of resulting comparisons, the four which met a significance level of .05 are presented in Table 16.

Table 16

Means for Variables which Distinguish Principals with and without Incompetent Teachers on Their Staffs

Variables	<u>M</u> for Principals with No Incompetent Teachers	<u>M</u> for Principals with Incompetent Teachers
Years as Principal*	13.4	10.4
Full-time Equivalent Teachers on Staff	29.6	43.6
Number of Teachers Evaluated Yearly	19.0	25.6
Rate of Administrative Response to Tenured Incompetent Teachers	.009	.018

$\bar{n} = 111, p < .05.$, $*\bar{n} = 112, p < .05.$

Principals who acknowledged the presence of incompetent teachers on their staffs had an average of 2.9 incompetent teachers compared with principals who reported no incompetent teachers. Taking into account the size of their staffs, this meant a 7.8% incompetence rate for the schools where principals reported the presence of incompetent teachers. Principals who reported the presence of incompetent teachers had statistically significant fewer years of experience as a principal and more staff members. They also

reported that in the last three years they had a statistically significant higher rate of administrative response to incompetent tenured teachers.

Principals who acknowledged teacher incompetence and those who reported no teacher incompetence did not differ statistically on a number of variables including number of years in a school and ratings of current evaluation systems used in their school divisions. While not statistically significant, the group of principals who reported the presence of incompetent teachers did rate the presence of evaluation system components and the overall effectiveness lower. Thus, there appeared to be some differences between these two subgroups of principals, but these differences may have been artifacts of the analysis.

Findings for Null Hypotheses

Null Hypotheses for Phase II: Relationship between the Presence of System Components and Two Measures of Effectiveness

Analyses of data for Null Hypothesis II.1: Relationship of the evaluation system components and the effectiveness rating.

The relationship between the presence of system components and the effectiveness rating of the overall evaluation support structure was analyzed using stepwise multiple regression. This multivariate technique determined which of the seven predictor variables, or evaluation system components, best predicted the criterion variable, the overall effectiveness rating. The seven components entered into the regression were: (a) evaluation criteria, (b) general evaluation procedures, (c) remedial procedures, (d) organizational commitment, (e) evaluator training, (f) administrator-teacher collaboration, and (g) organizational integration. The results of the stepwise multiple regression are presented in Table 17.

Table 17

Stepwise Multiple Regression of the System Components on the Effectiveness Rating

System Component	<u>B</u>	<u>SE B</u>	<u>β</u>
Step 1: Remedial Procedures	.50	.11	.42
Step 2: Evaluation Criteria	.40	.09	.24
Step 3: Evaluator Training	.22	.10	.23
Step 4: Organizational Commitment	.26	.06	.20

Note. $R^2 = .69$ ($p < .05$).

The null hypothesis stating that “there is no significant relationship between the evaluation system components and an effectiveness measure of the overall evaluation structure as perceived by principals” was rejected. Statistically significant relationships were found among a cluster of evaluation system components and the effectiveness rating. The strongest predictor of the overall effectiveness rating was the presence of remedial procedures. A Beta weight of .42 indicated that it contributed most heavily to the predictive value of the multiple regression equation. The second, third, and fourth strongest predictors were evaluation criteria ($\beta = .24$), training ($\beta = .23$), and organizational commitment ($\beta = .20$).

Together these four evaluation system components yielded a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of .83 ($F = 52.98$, significant $F = .0000$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) was .69, meaning that 69% of the variance in the effectiveness ratings can be predicted from the combination of evaluation system components shown in Table 19. General evaluation procedures, administrator-teacher collaboration, and organizational integration were not used in the multiple regression equation because they did not increase the predictive ability of the first four components in a statistically significant manner.

To determine if the predictor variables for the effectiveness rating might be different for two subsets of responding principals, those (a) who had acknowledged the presence of

incompetent teachers on their staffs and (b) who had identified and documented incompetent teachers on their staffs, filters were used to analyze the responses of only principals who met these conditions. Similar predictor variables were identified in both multiple regressions and the coefficient of determination (R^2) was .69 for the group who had acknowledged the presence of incompetent teachers and was .71 for the group who had identified and documented incompetent teachers. The predictor variables were largely unchanged across these subsets of principals and the coefficient of determination was virtually constant.

Analyses of data for Null Hypothesis II.2: Relationship of the evaluation system components and the incidence of administrative responses.

The relationship between the presence of system components and the individual and collective administrative responses to teacher incompetence was analyzed using stepwise multiple regression. This multivariate technique determined which of the seven predictor variables, or evaluation system components, best predicted the criterion variables. In this case, five different criterion variables were analyzed: remediation rate, reassignment rate, encouragement to resign/retire, recommendation for dismissal rate, and the collective administrative response rate. The seven components entered into the regression equation as predictor variables were: (a) evaluation criteria, (b) general evaluation procedures, (c) remedial procedures, (d) organizational commitment, (e) evaluator training, (f) administrator-teacher collaboration, and (g) organizational integration. The results of the stepwise multiple regression for the collective administrative response rate are presented in Table 18.

Table 18

Stepwise Multiple Regression of the System Components on Administrative Response Rate to Incompetence

System Component	<u>B</u>	<u>SE B</u>	<u>B</u>
Step 1: Evaluator Training	.0008	.0004	.22

Note. $R^2 = .05$ for Step 1, ($p < .05$).

The null hypothesis stating that “there are no significant relationships among the evaluation system components and the incidence of administrative responses to teacher incompetence” was rejected in part. Statistically significant relationships were found between training and two measures of administrative response to teacher incompetence: (a) the overall administrative response rate and (b) the rate for reassignment of incompetent tenured teachers. No other statistically significant relationships were found among the evaluation system components and the incidence of administrative responses to teacher incompetence.

Training was found to be a predictor variable of the collective administrative response rate with a Beta weight of .22. No other predictor variables contributed to the predictive ability of the equation to a statistically significant extent once training was entered as the first step. Training yielded a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of .22 ($F = 5.005$, significant $F = .0275$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) was .05, meaning that 5% of the variance in the collective administrative response rate can be predicted from training. While statistically significant, these results are not significant in any practical sense.

To determine if the predictive variables for the collective response rate might be different for two subsets of responding principals, those who (a) had acknowledged the presence of incompetent teachers on their staffs and (b) had identified and documented incompetent teachers on their staffs, filters were used to analyze the responses of only principals who met these conditions. Again, training was identified in the multiple

regression for the first subset, the group who had acknowledge the presence of incompetent teachers, and the coefficient of determination (R^2) was found to be .12 ($F = 8.95$, significant $F = .0039$). While statistically significant, this result was not significant in practical terms. No predictor variables were identified for the subset who had identified and documented incompetent teachers.

In addition to analyzing the data for the ability of the evaluation components to predict the overall administrative response rate, the predictor variables were used in regression equations to predict individual administrative response rates. A statistically significant relationship was found between training and the reassignment rate. No multiple regression equations were found to predict the rates for remediation, encouragement to resign/retire, and recommendation for dismissal. The results of the stepwise multiple regression for the reassignment rate are presented in Table 19.

Table 19

Stepwise Multiple Regression of the System Components on Reassignment Rate

System Component	B	$SE B$	β
Step 1: Evaluator Training	.0004	.0002	.21

Note. $R^2 = .04$ for Step 1, ($p < .05$).

Similar to the results for the collective administrative response rate, the one and only predictor of the reassignment rate was the presence of training with a Beta weight of .21. No other predictor variables contributed to the predictive ability of the equation to a statistically significant extent once training was entered as the first step. Training yielded a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of .21 ($F = 4.5732$, significant $F = .0350$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) was .04, meaning that 4% of the variance in the administrative response rate can be predicted from training. Again, while statistically significant, these results are not significant in any practical sense.

Chapter 5: Summary, Discussion, and Recommendations

A concise summary of the research findings along with a discussion of how these findings relate to other work in the field of teacher evaluation are presented in this chapter. In addition, the implications of the research findings for administrative practice are discussed and possible directions for future research are recommended.

Summary of Findings

To analyze the role of evaluation system components on the administrative response to teacher incompetence, a random sample of 200 principals from the Commonwealth of Virginia were surveyed using an instrument specifically designed for this study, the *Questionnaire for Principals on Teacher Evaluation*. Fifty-six percent ($n = 112$) of the responses by principals were usable. The study was conducted in two phases with Phase I addressing the prevalence of teacher incompetence and the presence of evaluation system components which support an effective administrative response. Data for the four research questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings for each research question were summarized as follows:

Research Questions for Phase I - Prevalence of Teacher Incompetence and Presence of Evaluation System Components which Support an Administrative Response

I.1. How prevalent is incompetent teacher performance in Virginia?

The mean number of teachers reported by principals to be incompetent was 1.83. When compared to the average full time equivalents for the respondents, this number reflected an incompetence rate of 5%.

I.2. How many tenured teachers are (a) identified, (b) remediated, (c) reassigned, (d) encouraged to resign/retire, or (e) dismissed each year as a result of incompetence?

1. The mean percentage of tenured teachers who were identified formally as incompetent by principals in a one year period of time was 1.53%.
2. The mean percentage of tenured teachers who were identified formally as incompetent and remediated by principals in one year was .7%.
3. The mean percentage of tenured teachers who were identified formally as incompetent and reassigned by principals in one year was .3%.
4. The mean percentage of tenured teachers who were identified formally as incompetent and encouraged to resign or retire by principals in one year was .4%.
5. The mean percentage of tenured teachers who were identified formally as incompetent and recommended for dismissal by principals in one year was .1%.
6. The mean percentage of tenured teachers who were identified formally as incompetent and were remediated, reassigned, encouraged to resign/retire, or recommended for dismissal by principals in one year was 1.5%.
7. The mean percentage of probationary teachers who were identified formally as incompetent by principals in one year was 1.1%.
8. The mean percentage of probationary teachers who were identified formally as incompetent by principals and whose contracts were not renewed in one year was .6%.

I.3 What evaluation system components are present to assist the principal in responding to incompetent tenured teachers?

1. Of the seven evaluation system components, the presence of evaluation criteria, general evaluation procedures, remedial procedures, and organizational commitment were noted most frequently by principals.
2. All seven evaluation system components identified in the study were rated by principals as somewhat important to very important.
3. In response to open-ended questions, principals commented most frequently about the following evaluation components: evaluation criteria, general evaluation procedures, remedial procedures, and organizational commitment.

I.4 How effective is the overall evaluation support structure in responding to incompetent tenured teachers?

Principals gave their evaluation systems an effectiveness rating of 18.5 out of a possible 24. This rating indicated agreement, but not strong agreement, with numerous statements regarding the effectiveness of the evaluation system used in the principal's school division for responding to incompetent teachers.

Null Hypotheses for Phase II: Relationship between the Presence of System Components and Two Measures of Effectiveness

Stepwise multiple regression was used to test the null hypotheses regarding the relationships of evaluation system components and two measures of effectiveness: (a) the effectiveness rating and (b) the administrative response rates. Hypothesis II.1 which stated that no relationship existed between the evaluation system components and the effectiveness rating was rejected due to the following finding.

A multiple correlation coefficient (R) of .83 ($F = 52.98$, significant $F = .0000$) was found for the effectiveness rating and the four evaluation system components of *remedial procedures, evaluation criteria, evaluator training, and organizational commitment*. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was .69 which indicated that 69% of the variance in the effectiveness rating was explained by these four evaluation system components.

Hypothesis II.2 which stated that no relationship existed between the evaluation system components and the collective and individual administrative response rates was rejected in part due to the following findings. There was evidence in some cases to reject the null hypotheses at the .05 level of significance and in other cases, there was insufficient evidence. The mixed findings were as follows:

1. Training was found to correlate with the total administrative response rate yielding a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of .22 ($F = 5.005$, significant $F = .0275$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) was .05.
2. Training was found to correlate with the reassignment rate yielding

a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of .21 ($F = 4.5732$, significant $F = .0350$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) was .04.

3. No statistically significant relationships were found between the evaluation system components and the rates for remediation, encouragement to resign/retire, and recommendation for dismissal.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study were compared and contrasted with findings of other research in the area of teacher evaluation for the purposes of assessing reliability of this study's findings and identifying patterns in the teacher evaluation practices of principals in the United States. As has been noted by numerous authors (Bridges, 1992; Groves, 1985/1986; Staples, 1990), the research in this area is limited and any observations based on the research at this point in time must be viewed as working hypotheses and not well-founded conclusions.

Demographics

Two national studies examining evaluation practices have been conducted in the last eight years which offer points of comparison in the data collected for the current study of practices in Virginia. A study conducted by the Educational Research Service (ERS) in 1988 was a comprehensive survey of evaluation practices in approximately 900 randomly selected school systems nationwide. A more recent study reported by Loup, Garland, Ellett, and Rugutt (1996) was a replication of a 1987 study which focused on the teacher evaluation practices in the 100 largest school districts in the United States. Overall, the findings of this study on the evaluation practices in the Commonwealth of Virginia were consistent with the results of these two national studies. While consistencies in the findings support the reliability of the current study, they also indicate that "little seems to have changed in teacher evaluation practices at the local district level during the past 10 to 15 years" (Loup et al., p. 218). Practices appear to be consistent across time and location.

In Virginia, the building principal was found to have primary responsibility for formal evaluation in almost all cases. Principals reported that they had sole responsibility for teacher evaluation 46.4% of the time and an additional 49.1% had responsibility for evaluation but with administrative assistance from assistant principals or personnel in central office. Collectively 95.5% of the Virginia principals reported that they had sole responsibility or were responsible for evaluation with the support of their assistant principal. The ERS Study (1988) found that at the elementary level, principals were responsible for evaluation 97% of the time, 96.2% of the time at the junior high level, and 93.7% of the time at the high school level. Loup et al. (1996) reported that principals were official evaluators 100% of the time and assistant principals were involved as evaluators 95.6% of the time. When this information was combined with the finding that principals were responsible for 38.7 full-time equivalent teachers, 23.3 of whom were formally evaluated each year, the enormity of the time requirements for evaluation begins to take shape.

While the involvement of principals and assistant principals in the evaluation process was quite consistent, there was variability in the percentage of schools indicating teacher involvement in the process. Despite recommendations from many researchers (Darling-Hammond, 1996; National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 1996; Peterson, 1995; Wise et al., 1984) to involve peers in the evaluation process, schools have been slow to do so. Loup et al. (1996) found teachers involved in the evaluation process 19.1% of the time, ERS (1988) reported a 6.2% rate, and in Virginia, only 2.7% of the schools indicated the involvement of teachers in the evaluation process. Virginia appears to involve teachers in the evaluation process to a lesser extent than is the practice in other parts of the country. In anecdotal comments, two principals indicated that they would like to involve other teachers to a greater extent in their current evaluation systems while two others stated that they currently involved teachers in their evaluation process and they would like to see this practice eliminated. Hence, there was no consensus among Virginia

principals on the practice of involving teachers in the evaluation process or any indication of it changing substantially in the future.

Unlike the consistency found on the question of who was responsible for formal evaluation, there was some variation in the frequency of formal evaluation as documented by these three studies. Both the question and choices used in the Virginia study reflected a similar item in the 1988 study by Educational Research Service. In the ERS study, the greatest number of school systems evaluated probationary teachers twice a year (39.8%). Eighteen percent of the school systems in the ERS study reported that they formally evaluated probationary teachers three times a year and 28.3% evaluated once a year. Loup et al.'s more recent study (1996) also found that the greatest number of school districts (38.2%) required two observations per year for nontenured teachers while 22.1% of the schools required one per year and 11.8% required three per year. It is interesting to note that similar results were found despite the use of different language, "formal evaluation" in the ERS study and "official observation" in the Loup et al. study.

In Virginia, the greatest number of school systems formally evaluate probationary teachers three times a year (41.1%) with decreasing percents for twice a year (24.1%) and once per year (21.4%). Twelve percent of the principals reported using "other" evaluation cycles, including four times a year. In Virginia, the frequency of formal evaluation for probationary or untenured teachers appeared to be much greater than is the practice across the country. A comparison of the frequency of evaluation or observation, depending on the terms used in the questionnaire, is presented in Table 20.

Table 20

Percentages for the Frequency of "Formal Evaluation" or "Official Observation" for
Untenured Teachers

Formal Evaluation for Untenured Teachers	ERS study 1988	Loup et al. 1996*	Virginia 1997
Three Times Per Year	18.0%	11.8%	41.1%
Twice Per Year	39.8%	38.2%	24.1%
Once Per Year	28.3%	22.1%	21.4%
Other	13.9%	27.9%	11.6%

Note. * used "observation" in survey item

Comparison of results from these different studies must be made cautiously. In the ERS and Virginia studies, the survey question addressed the frequency of "formal evaluation" for probationary teachers. In the Loup et al. study, the question addressed "official observations" for probationary teachers. While the results would suggest that these phrases were interpreted similarly, the comments made in the Virginia survey suggested that further clarification was needed. One principal wrote the following comment: "evaluated once per year, observed at least 3 times per year." In this case, the principal made the distinction between formal evaluation and observation. In other cases, principals seemed to equate formal evaluations and the number of classroom observations. Due to the lack of clarity in the meaning of the language used, the actual intent of survey results was questionable.

The reported frequency of formal evaluation for tenured teachers was more consistent than that for untenured teachers with the greatest number of tenured teachers being evaluated formally once a year. Specifically, the ERS study (1988) found 41.2% of the tenured teachers were formally evaluated once a year, 23.5% were evaluated every two years, and 17.1% were evaluated less frequently than every two years. Similarly Loup et al. (1996) reported that the majority of tenured teachers (48.5%) were "observed" once a

year and an additional 25% were “observed” twice a year. In Virginia, the majority of tenured teachers (36.6%) were evaluated formally once a year. Formal evaluation practices for tenured teachers in Virginia appeared to be very comparable with national trends reported in 1988 and somewhat less intensive than evaluation practice elsewhere in the country at this point in time. Many large school districts in the Loup et al. study reported more frequent “observation” of tenured teachers than reported by Virginia principals, but this may have been an inaccurate comparison due to the differing terminology. Tenured teachers in Virginia may have been observed just as frequently as elsewhere in the country but the formal evaluation cycle was less frequent and is reflected in the Table 21. A comparison of findings from all three studies is presented in Table 21.

Table 21

Percentages for the Frequency of “Formal Evaluation” or “Official Observation” for Tenured Teachers

Percent of Formal Evaluation for Untenured Teachers	ERS study 1988	Loup et al. 1996*	Virginia 1997
Twice a Year	15.0%	25%	6%
Once a Year	41.2%	48.5%	36.6%
Once Every Two Years	23.5%	NA	25.9%
Once Every Three Years	NA	NA	17.9%
Other	17.1%	NA	13.6%

Note. * used “observation” in survey item

NA = Not available

Again, these comparisons across studies must be made cautiously due to the differences in survey language. The ERS study (1988) and the Virginia study requested information on “formal evaluation” practices while the Loup et al. study (1996) asked for the number of “official observations.” While the results would suggest somewhat similar interpretation by respondents, there was undoubtedly some confusion regarding the terms.

Rates of Incompetence

For the purposes of this study, incompetence was defined as “performance that is documented through evaluation to be consistently less than satisfactory” (Virginia School Laws, 1996, §22.1-306). Based on this definition, principals in Virginia reported incompetence rates of 0% to 23% with a mean rate of 5%. This estimate fell within the range often cited in the extant literature of a 5% to 15% incompetence rate among teachers (Arnold, 1986; Bridges, 1986; Fuhr, 1993; Groves, 1985/1986; Gudridge, 1980; Lavelly, Berger, & Follman, 1992; McGrath, 1995a). In a similar statewide survey of California principals, Groves (1985/1986) found that 11% of teachers were considered to be unsatisfactory in the classroom. Likewise, based on a review of available studies on the incidence of incompetence, Lavelly, Berger, and Follman (1996) concluded that the incompetency rate was approximately 10%. By comparison, Virginia’s reported incidence of incompetence was low.

The relatively low incidence of incompetence in Virginia could reflect better conditions in the state for the retention of highly competent teachers or it could reflect an inability on the part of principals to recognize teaching incompetence. Given that 36% of the principals ($n = 40$) reported no incompetent teachers, the latter conclusion seems more plausible. The report that 40 schools out of 112 had no incompetent teachers is consistent with a finding by Bridges (1992) that school principals estimated “about 30-45 per cent of the administrators will not confront a bad teacher” (p. 26). This blind eye to incompetence and overestimation of teaching competence would appear to be an unfortunate manifestation of the Lake Wobegon Effect, “a phenomenon in which most individuals or groups perform above average” (Wheeler & Haertel, 1993, p. 82). Typically this term is used in conjunction with student achievement, but it also is very apt in the case of identifying teacher incompetence. Numerous authors have noted a problem of inflation with principals’ ratings (Loup, Garland, Ellett, & Rugutt, 1996; Peterson, 1995; Webster, 1994). Inflation can affect ratings at any point along the continuum from unsatisfactory performance

through outstanding performance. One avenue for future research would be the verification of the principals' perceptions of competence and incompetence by comparison with estimates by other stakeholders such as central office staff, teachers on staff, or parents.

One other possible explanation for the principals' perception of no incompetent staff members could have been that the principals had "cleaned house" in previous years, but this was not found to be the case. Based on information covering their previous three years of administrative duty, there was a lower rather than higher rate of past administrative response (i.e. remediation, reassignment) to incompetence by principals who had reported no incompetent teachers in their schools as compared with principals who did report the presence of incompetence.

Identification of Incompetent Teachers

Administrators formally identified incompetence among tenured teachers at the mean rate of 1.53. This indicated that they had identified 1.53 tenured teachers out of a staff of 100 each year as incompetent. Because this rate was based on a staff of 100, it also can be interpreted as a percentage. Therefore, 1.53% of tenured teachers were identified annually as incompetent. In addition, principals had formally identified incompetence among untenured teachers at a mean rate of 1.12 or 1.12%. Taken together these rates of identification (2.65%) were somewhat less but comparable to those found by Loup et al. (1996). They reported that 79.4% of the largest school districts gave unacceptable annual evaluations to 3% or less of their teachers, both tenured and untenured. This means that in Virginia and elsewhere in the country, less than 3% of the teachers are identified formally through the evaluation process as incompetent each year.

The 2.65% rate of identification of incompetent teachers is approximately half of even the most conservative estimate of 5% incompetence rate among teachers found in Virginia and elsewhere. What is being done to address the problems of the remaining incompetent teachers? When the rate of identification is compared to other estimates of 10% to 15% incompetency rates among teachers, there is a substantial gap between the problem

and the response. In addition, there are questions as to whether these estimates accurately capture the extent of the problem. How many more teachers would be considered marginal, that gray area between incompetent and competent, and in need of administrative attention for the purposes of remediation? It appears that Fuhr (1993) was correct when he noted that “principals don’t like to talk about the marginal or the incompetent teacher. No one likes to admit these [teachers] exist in a school. It doesn’t look good” (p. 26). Thus, it appears that for the sake of appearances, incompetent and marginal teachers are unidentified and their problems are not addressed. These incompetency rates may seem inconsequential, but a 5% to 10% incompetency rate equals 120,000 to 240,000 teachers with a negative educational impact on millions of American students each and every day. Can educators afford to overlook such a serious problem?

Administrative Response to Incompetent Probationary Teachers

Because the contracts of probationary teachers can be nonrenewed without cause in most states (Adams, 1988/1989), it was assumed for the purposes of this study that nonrenewal was the primary administrative response to incompetent probationary teachers (i.e., those without continuing contracts). In the study of Virginia principals, however, the nonrenewal rate (.56%) accounted for only half of the reported identification rate (1.12%) for incompetent probationary teachers. Further research is necessary to determine what other administrative actions were taken with identified incompetent probationary teachers. The .56% nonrenewal rate for probationary teachers in Virginia was found to be similar to the total dismissal rate found by Bridges for all categories of teachers in California. In a 1982-1984 study of 141 California school districts, Bridges (1986) found a dismissal rate of .6% but this rate included tenured, probationary, and temporary teachers. Tenured teachers accounted for only 5.2% of the dismissals, while probationary teachers (25%) and temporary teachers (69.8%) accounted for the vast majority of the dismissals. Based on the Virginia study, school boards here are more aggressive in removing probationary teachers than boards in California were twelve to fourteen years ago.

Administrative Response to Incompetent Tenured Teachers

Administrative responses to incompetence among tenured teachers can vary widely depending on the number, nature, and severity of the problems. For the purposes of this study, administrative responses were interpreted broadly to include (a) remediation of identified problems, (b) reassignment to another role or school, (c) encouragement to resign or retire, and (d) recommendation for dismissal. Information reported by principals was used to calculate adjusted rates of response to incompetence among tenured teachers based on a one year period of time and staffs of 100 teachers. The most frequent administrative response was remediation which occurred at a rate of .68 which indicated .68 teachers out of a staff of 100 were remediated each year. In descending order, other rates for administrative response were encouragement to resign/retire (.37), reassignment (.29), and recommendation for dismissal (.10). In addition, these rates can be interpreted as the percentages of teachers on a school staff who were responded to with the indicated administrative action.

When these rates of administrative response were compared to the rate of tenured teachers identified as incompetent, it is interesting to note that principals used remediation as an administrative response to incompetence in 45% of the cases. An additional 24% of the identified incompetent teachers were encouraged to resign or retire and 17% were reassigned. Only 7% of the total number of identified incompetent tenured teachers were recommended for dismissal.

In a comparable study of 100 principals in California, Groves (1985/1986) reported a similar rate of recommendation for dismissal. In a one year period, he found that only 10 teachers per 10,000 (.1%) were given 90-day notices of incompetency. Groves documented an even lower rate for cases in which teachers were encouraged to retire or resign; he found that only 14 teachers per 10,000 were induced to resign, which translated to a rate of .14% as compared to the rate of .37% in Virginia. Assuming administrative response rates have remained relatively constant in California over the last ten years,

principals in Virginia appear to recommend dismissal at a similar rate as those in California (.1%) and are more aggressive in encouraging retirement or resignation. However, it is important to note the relatively low response rate to incompetence in both states, given the documented and estimated rates of incompetence.

As a final point of comparison, the national study conducted by ERS (1988) indicated a .5% termination rate for tenured teachers. This rate included teachers who had “either resigned or been fired” (p. 61). When the Virginia rates for resignation/retirement (.37%) and dismissal (.10%) were combined, their sum of .47% approximated the .5% rate found by ERS. These results indicated that the termination rate for tenured teachers in Virginia is comparable to the national rate found eight years ago. One possible interpretation of these comparisons was that termination rates are quite stable across geographic location and time.

Comparison of Administrative Response Rates to Probationary and Tenured Teachers

One recommendation made by numerous authors in the quest to improve the quality of teachers in our schools (Bridges, 1992; Castetter, 1992; Frase, 1992; National Commission of Teaching & America’s Future, 1996; Peterson, 1995) has been to set higher standards for teaching competence prior to making the decision to offer tenure or a continuing contract to probationary teachers. This means intensive supervision of probationary teachers to assist in their professional development, careful scrutiny of their teaching skills, and prediction of their future teaching potential. State statutes defining probationary status were written for this very purpose but school systems have been criticized for not making this tenure decision more carefully (Bridges, 1992; Peterson, 1995). Instead of the automatic granting of tenure or a continuing contract, a number of authors (Bridges, 1992; Peterson, 1995) have recommended a more deliberate tenure review process. The recommendation for more thorough tenure review processes has a great deal of face validity and deserves careful consideration.

Currently, it is unclear how many school systems use a formal tenure review process, however, the evidence suggests that school systems are fairly discriminating in the renewal of contracts for probationary teachers. In the ERS study (1988), 71.9% of the school districts had terminated (through resignation or firing) one or more probationary teachers during the prior two years as compared to 44.2% of the school districts that had terminated one or more tenured teachers. Specific rates of termination for these two groups of teachers were even more dramatic. As noted above, Bridges (1986) found that tenured teachers accounted for only 5.2% of total dismissals in California, while probationary teachers accounted for 25%, a dismissal rate for probationary teachers five times greater than that for tenured teachers. Virginia principals reported a .10% dismissal rate for tenured teachers and a .56% nonrenewal rate for probationary teachers. Similar to Bridge's findings, the nonrenewal rate for probationary teachers was found to be more than five times greater than the dismissal rate for tenured teachers. Given the smaller proportion of probationary teachers compared to tenured teachers in the general teaching ranks, these differential rates for nonrenewal and dismissal become even more significant (U.S. Department of Education, 1993a).

Presence of Evaluation System Components

Virginia principals most strongly rated the presence of general evaluation procedures, evaluation criteria, and remedial procedures in the evaluation systems they were currently using. These same components were rated as those components which were most important according to principals in a separate set of questions. These three items represent the technical aspects of most evaluation systems (i.e., the formal elements of a written evaluation guide). The other four evaluation system components of organizational commitment, evaluator training, administrator-teacher collaboration, and organizational integration have been referred to as implementation factors (Wise et al., 1984). Wise et al. argued that the technical aspects of an evaluation system were necessary but insufficient for a successful evaluation system and only by addressing the implementation factors could an

evaluation system perform optimally. Principals indicated that these implementation factors were present, but to a limited extent, which suggested that the evaluation systems currently in use by these principals are underdeveloped for fully effective practice.

In anecdotal comments by principals, they primarily focused on general evaluation procedures both in terms of what was most helpful about their current evaluation system and what needed the most changes. Their comments indicated that principals wanted evaluation systems to be less complex and more prescriptive in terms of the documentation of performance and how to work with marginal teachers. Principals also made numerous comments regarding evaluation criteria, remedial procedures, and organizational commitment. Organizational commitment was the most frequently discussed of the four components considered to be implementation factors, both in terms of what was most helpful (19% of comments) and what needed to be changed (20%). Principals reported that they wanted more help with legal issues, more involvement of central office supervisors, and more support from the school board. The presence of these forms of assistance were noted as being some of the most helpful aspects of the current evaluation systems used by principals. There were infrequent comments about evaluator training (5% of the comments on what needed to be changed) which many researchers (Bridges, 1992; Loup et al., 1996; Wise et al., 1984) have argued are important in ensuring validity and reliability in the evaluation process. Principals in this study seemed to view their current level of training as sufficient for the task of evaluation. This may have been an accurate assessment or principals may not fully appreciate the complexities of reliable and valid evaluation practice.

Effectiveness of Overall Evaluation System

Principals were less than enthusiastic about the effectiveness of their current evaluation systems based on typical practitioner benchmarks. The mean effectiveness rating was 18.5 out of 24 points, or 77% of the maximum possible score. While this would be considered a “passing” mark, it is a mediocre effectiveness rating at best. On individual benchmarks of effectiveness, the statement which received the highest rating was: “I

believe the guidelines for teacher evaluation in my school division would stand up in court.” The statement which received the lowest rating was, “I am confident that I could dismiss a teacher using the teacher evaluation system in my school division.” This paradoxical finding suggested that no matter how legally sound an evaluation system might be, principals are not confident they can dismiss a teacher. This belief reflects a common but unfortunate myth and outright fallacy that it is impossible to dismiss a teacher, particularly a tenured one (Barber, 1985; Fuhr, 1993; Lawrence, Vachon, Leake, & Leake, 1993; McGrath, 1993).

Evaluation System Components Most Predictive of Effectiveness Rating

While all the evaluation system components were found to significantly correlate ($p < .05$) with the effectiveness rating, the following four were most useful in predicting the effectiveness rating: remedial procedures, evaluation criteria, evaluator training, and organizational commitment. Using a stepwise multiple regression, these four elements collectively were found to explain 69% of the variance in this rating. Two of these components, remedial procedures and evaluation criteria, are tangible elements of most evaluation systems; evaluator training and organizational commitment often are considered implementation factors which support the effectiveness of evaluation practice.

It is interesting to note that remedial procedures alone accounted for 53% of the variance in the effectiveness ratings. The importance of remediation procedures to the overall effectiveness rating may be tied to the fact that remediation was the most common administrative response to incompetence. Principals reported that nearly half of the teachers (45%) that were identified as incompetent were remediated. If remediation is the preferred administrative response to teacher incompetence, these research findings would suggest the importance of combining well-defined remedial procedures with job-related evaluation criteria, evaluator training for principals, and organizational commitment. Taken together, these evaluation system components would better assist the principals in their primary response to incompetent teachers--remediation.

Evaluation System Components Most Predictive of Administrative Response Rate

No evaluation system component was found to have any practical predictive relationship to the overall administrative response rate to teacher incompetence or any individual administrative responses (i.e., recommendation to dismiss). Evaluator training was found to be predictive of the overall response rate and the reassignment rate in a multiple regression equation at a statistically significant level ($p < .05$), but the coefficients of determination were so small that they had no practical value. These results would suggest that variables other than the evaluation system components examined in this study affected the actual administrative response (or lack thereof) to teacher incompetence.

Conclusions

According to Virginia principals in this sample, only 5% of the teachers were viewed as incompetent based on the following definition found in a recent state statute: “performance that is documented through evaluation to be consistently less than satisfactory” (Virginia School Laws, 1996, §22.1-306). This percent was inclusive of 40 principals who reported they had no incompetent teachers whatsoever. By comparison, most researchers estimate the national incompetence rate to be approximately 5%-15% (Lavelly, Berger, & Follman, 1992). The low incompetency rate reported by Virginia principals indicates that either Virginia has fewer incompetent teachers than the rest of the country or Virginia principals are more generous than others in their assessments of teacher competence.

Regardless of the accuracy of this incompetency rate, principals also reported that only 2.65% of probationary and tenured teachers were being identified formally as incompetent on average in each of the last three years. That is, 2.65% of the teachers were documented in writing using the existing evaluation system as being incompetent. If 5% of the teachers were incompetent, but only 2.65% were identified formally as incompetent, then the question arises as to what was done about the other half. Based on the principals’ reported estimate of incompetence, they are responding to only half of the problem.

Of those teachers who were identified formally, the most frequent response to probationary teachers was nonrenewal and the most frequent response to tenured teachers was remediation. Approximately half of the probationary teachers who were identified in a formal manner as incompetent did not have their contracts renewed. In contrast, only 7% of the identified incompetent tenured teachers were recommended for dismissal. Almost half of the incompetent tenured teachers (45%) were remediated. Principals appeared to be more rigorous in the termination of probationary teachers than tenured teachers. While the low dismissal rate for tenured teachers raises questions about administrative avoidance of a serious problem (Bridges, 1992; Fuhr, 1993; Groves, 1985/1986; Staples, 1990), many experts in the field (Bridges, 1992; Castetter, 1992; Frase, 1992; National Commission of Teaching & America's Future, 1996; Peterson, 1995) support the careful consideration of granting tenure (or a continuing contract) to probationary teachers. The nonrenewal of probationary teachers' contracts generally is viewed as a proactive strategy to ensure the quality of tenured teachers.

The current study was undertaken to determine what components of a comprehensive evaluation system contributed to its overall effectiveness in addressing incompetence as measured by (a) an effectiveness rating of the overall system and (b) the actual rate of administrative response to incompetence. Performance criteria, evaluation procedures, remedial processes, organizational commitment, administrator-teacher collaboration, evaluator training, and organizational integration were considered to be the components of a comprehensive evaluation system. Principals rated all of these elements as somewhat important to very important and agreed with their presence, to some extent, in the evaluation systems their school divisions were using. Based on the results of this study, however, principals indicated that the presence of numerous components of a comprehensive evaluation system was weak. This finding suggested that many evaluation systems in Virginia school divisions were underdeveloped based on what research has documented as key elements of effective evaluation systems (Bridges, 1986; Wise et al.,

1984). This was consistent with Wise et al.'s conclusion that "relatively few school districts have highly developed teacher evaluation systems, and even fewer put the results into action" (p. 3). Peterson argued that one of the reasons teacher evaluation practice at the local level has not changed despite its current limitations has been because "very little talent and resources have gone into [the] development of teacher evaluation" (p. 27). Clearly, if evaluation systems are to be viewed as more effective and have a greater impact on the administrative response to incompetent teachers, greater talent and resources must go into evaluator training and development.

All seven evaluation system components were found to correlate with the overall effectiveness rating and remedial procedures alone accounted for 53% of the variance in the effectiveness rating. Given that the most frequent administrative response to tenured teacher incompetence was remediation, it seems logical that remedial procedures which guide and facilitate the remedial process was one of the major predictors of an effectiveness rating by the principal. Conley (1991) argued that when remedial procedures do not exist, principals are less likely to even undertake the task of remediation. Therefore, the presence of well-developed remedial procedures were important to enhancing the perception of evaluation system effectiveness and assisting the principal in remediating marginal or incompetent teachers.

The most disturbing finding of the study was the lack of any relationship between the evaluation system components and the incidence of administrative response to incompetence. While evaluation system components affected the perception of evaluation system effectiveness, this study did not find them predictive of any administrative action. Evaluation system components did not correlate with the collective measure of administrative responses or the individual administrative responses (i.e., recommendation for dismissal). Despite confirmation of the importance and presence of the evaluation system components by the respondents, the components did not predict administrative action. The lack of any statistical relationship may be due to the low incidence of

administrative response and thus a possible underestimation of the influence of evaluation system components. In addition, it does appear that some other variable or combination of variables (i.e., personality characteristics of the principal) are responsible for administrative response (or non-response) to incompetence. While further development and integration of a school division's evaluation system may contribute to its perceived effectiveness by principals, it does not seem to be sufficient to ensure administrative action in cases of incompetence.

One avenue for further research would be the effect of personality characteristics on administrative responsiveness to teacher incompetence. A number of authors have noted that working with incompetent teachers requires strength of character (Fuhr, 1993; McGrath, 1992; Staples, 1990) and this may be the most important determinant of all. Wise et al. (1984) found that "almost all respondents [to a survey of 32 district central offices] . . . felt that principals lacked sufficient resolve and competence to evaluate accurately" (p. 22). What constitutes "resolve"? What aspects of character impact the evaluation process? How can these qualities be encouraged and fostered by the administrative structure within schools? These questions need to be addressed and translated into selection criteria and professional development opportunities for principals. These issues will require organizational attention and commitment if evaluation practices are to improve.

Another possible explanation for the finding of no relationship between evaluation system components and administrative response to incompetence may be that principals do not have sufficient time to implement existing evaluation systems. They may have responsibility for the evaluation of far too many teachers, on average 38.7 teachers, 23.3 of whom are evaluated in a given year. The intensive work which is necessary in dealing with an incompetent teacher may not be humanly possible when a principal is evaluating at least 22 other teachers annually, handling student discipline, and completing all the other professional responsibilities of an administrator. If instructional supervision and evaluation of teachers are organizational priorities, then more time and resources must be committed to

them. "If supervisors are to fulfill their responsibilities for evaluating the instructional staff, they need a variety of resources. Specifically, supervisors need time, authority, access to remedial assistance, access to legal counsel, and support" (Bridges & Groves, 1990, p. 53).

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Many principals (36% in this study) did not acknowledge that any incompetence existed among the teachers in their schools. While this seems highly unlikely, further clarification of the incompetence rate would be helpful in determining the discrepancy between the problem and the response. One avenue for future research would be the verification of the principals' perceptions of competence and incompetence by comparison with estimates by other stakeholders such as central office staff, teachers on staff, or parents.
2. Approximately half of the identified incompetent probationary teachers did not have their contracts renewed. It is unclear how administrators responded to the other half. Further research is necessary to determine what other administrative actions were taken with identified incompetent probationary teachers.
3. The current study was unable to determine a relationship among evaluation system components and administrative responses to incompetence among tenured teachers. Further research is necessary to identify other variables which predict administrative response to incompetence. The area of personality characteristics was not addressed by this study but has been identified by numerous authors as having an impact on administrative responsiveness to teacher incompetence. This may be a promising line of study in the future.

Postscript

Recently, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) proposed the following goal: "By the year 2006, America will provide all students in the country with what should their educational birthright: access to competent, caring, and

qualified teachers” (p. 5). If we are to achieve this goal, part of the solution must be better teacher evaluation. The educational community can no longer afford to pretend that all our children attend schools in Lake Wobegon where all the teachers are competent and all the children score above average. We cannot ignore the potential for educational damage to millions of children each year as a result of incompetent teachers. We have an incompetency problem which is estimated to range between 5% to 15% and yet we respond administratively to less than 3% of those teachers. This is a serious dereliction of duty. This study has supported the further development of existing evaluation systems to address this problem and has indicated the need for further study of other variables which may affect the administrative responsiveness to the problem of incompetency.

Appendix A
Correspondence to Principals in the Sample



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May 29, 1996

(Inside address)

(Transmittal Letter)

Dear (Principal):

One of the most troubling challenges to school principals is working with teachers who are performing less than satisfactorily. As a follow-up study to a three year grant through the U.S. Department of Education on personnel evaluation, we are conducting a study to identify what variables support principals in effectively responding to less than satisfactory teachers. How can school systems help principals respond in a constructive manner for both the school and the teacher?

Your candid response, as a principal, to the enclosed questionnaire would be very helpful in answering this question. We know this is a busy time but we really need your help. We are asking for 20-30 minutes of your time. The questions are straightforward with yes/no responses for the majority. We do request that the completed survey forms be returned in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope by June 10, 1996.

Survey information is being gathered from principals in school systems throughout Virginia. To protect the anonymity of the school divisions and individuals, no name or code will be used on any questionnaire. To determine how representative the response is to the questionnaire, there is a postcard included with each survey which we ask that you mail back separately so that we can track who has responded to the survey without compromising the anonymity of the survey responses on the questionnaire itself.

The questions on the survey require experience in evaluating teachers and familiarity with your school system's evaluation system. If you have less than three years experience as a principal or have been in your current school less than two years, would you please pass the survey on to another principal in your school division who does meet these criteria?

If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact Pamela Tucker at 804/221-4002 (Work) or 804/253-1326 (Home). To receive a summary of the survey results, check the appropriate box on the enclosed postcard or contact us directly by phone or fax. Your participation, of course, is voluntary but we do hope you'll take the time to respond. Please accept our sincere thanks for your assistance with this project. The enclosed pen is a token of our appreciation.

Sincerely,

James H. Stronge
Professor and Area Coordinator,
Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership

Pamela D. Tucker
Doctoral Candidate



The College Of
WILLIAM & MARY

School of Education
Post Office Box 8795
Williamsburg, Virginia 23187-8795
Office: 804/221-4002
Fax: 804/221-2988

James H. Stronge
Professor
Pamela D. Tucker
Doctoral Candidate
Home: 804/253-1326

June 21, 1996

(inside address)

(Follow-up Letter)

Dear Principal:

Now that students have departed for the summer, we hope that you can respond to the "Questionnaire for Principals on Teacher Evaluation." Three weeks ago, we wrote asking for your help in a study to identify what variables support principals in effectively responding to less than satisfactory teachers. The response has been positive, but we need even more responses to ensure reliable results for the study. As a principal selected for the random sample, it is extremely important to have your views on the important issue of teacher evaluation.

The questionnaire is anonymous, but to determine how representative the responding principals are, we ask that you mail back the enclosed postcard separately so that we can track who has returned the survey.

The questions on the survey require experience in evaluating teachers and familiarity with your school system's evaluation system. If you have less than three years experience as a principal or have been in your current school less than two years, please simply note this on the postcard and return it?

If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact Pamela Tucker at 804/221-4002 (Work) or 804/253-1326 (Home). To receive a summary of the survey results, check the appropriate box on the enclosed postcard or contact us directly by phone or fax. Your participation, of course, is voluntary but we do hope you'll take the time to respond. We hope that the pen sent in the earlier mailing expressed our sincere thanks for your assistance with this project.

Sincerely,

Pamela D. Tucker
Doctoral Candidate

James H. Stronge
Professor and Area Coordinator,
Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership

(Postcard sent with transmittal and follow-up letter.)

(Principal)
(Inside Address)

- Check here to indicate that you have completed the survey and mailed it back to Pamela Tucker.
- Check here to request a copy of the research results.

(Postcard sent as a reminder to return questionnaire.)

(Principal)
(Inside Address)

Dear Principal:

Just a quick reminder to please return the Questionnaire for Principals on Teacher Evaluation as soon as possible. We very much appreciate your valuable time and support in this research effort.

James H. Stronge, Ph.D.

Pamela D. Tucker

Appendix B
Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRINCIPALS ON TEACHER EVALUATION

The purpose of this survey is to identify what factors support principals in effectively responding to incompetent teachers. Based on a 1996 Virginia statute, incompetency is defined as **“performance that is documented through evaluation to be consistently less than satisfactory.”** The questions will cover general background information and the teacher evaluation practices in your school and school division. Anonymity will be maintained for all respondents.

Part I: The following are general background questions. Please answer them to the best of your knowledge.

1. How many years have you been a principal? 1) _____
2. How many years have you been a principal in your current school? 2) _____
3. The school in which you work is a(n)

<input type="checkbox"/> elementary school	<input type="checkbox"/> high school
<input type="checkbox"/> junior/middle school	<input type="checkbox"/> other (please specify _____)
4. In your school division, who is responsible for teacher evaluation?

<input type="checkbox"/> principal only	<input type="checkbox"/> administrators with teachers
<input type="checkbox"/> principal with administrative help	<input type="checkbox"/> central office administration
<input type="checkbox"/> other (please specify: _____)	
5. In your school division, how often are probationary (non-tenured) teachers formally evaluated?

<input type="checkbox"/> three times per year	<input type="checkbox"/> twice per year	<input type="checkbox"/> once per year
<input type="checkbox"/> other (please specify: _____)		
6. In your school division, how often are continuing contract (tenured) teachers formally evaluated?

<input type="checkbox"/> once per year	<input type="checkbox"/> once every two years	<input type="checkbox"/> once every three years
<input type="checkbox"/> other (please specify: _____)		
7. How many full-time equivalent teachers (FTEs) are on your staff? 7) _____
8. Of those teachers currently on your staff, what number would you estimate to be less than satisfactory as a teacher (regardless of whether it was documented or not)? 8) _____
9. Approximately how many teachers do you formally evaluate each year? 9) _____
10. In the last three years, how many probationary (untenured) teachers have you:

a. identified as demonstrating less than satisfactory performance?	10a) _____
b. recommended for nonrenewal?	10b) _____
11. In the last three years, how many continuing contract (tenured) teachers have you identified as demonstrating less than satisfactory performance? 11) _____

12. Of those continuing contract (tenured) teachers identified as less than satisfactory in the last three years,
- a. how many have you helped to remediate? 12a) _____
 - b. how many have you had reassigned to another school? 12b) _____
 - c. how many teachers resigned or retired due to your influence? 12c) _____
 - d. how many teachers were dismissed based on your recommendation? 12d) _____
 - e. how many do not fit any of the above categories? 12e) _____
- (Items 12a through 12e should add up to the number in item 11.)

If you had any teachers who did not fall into categories 12a) through 12d), please briefly explain why not.

Part II: Items 13 - 47 explore specific aspects of the teacher evaluation practices in your school division. Please indicate your opinion by checking the response on the scale of agreement from "Strongly Disagree" through "Strongly Agree."

The first five statements in this section address the **evaluation criteria** used in your school division. Criteria are the specific expectations on which a school division bases its evaluation of teachers. Typical categories of evaluation criteria include planning, instruction, assessment, classroom management, and professionalism.

	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>
13. My school division has adopted a set of specific criteria which are to be used in evaluating teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. All teachers are informed of the evaluation criteria prior to the evaluation process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. The evaluation criteria closely reflect actual job requirements.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. The evaluation criteria help me to differentiate between teachers with different skill levels.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. The evaluation criteria reflect expectations for teachers which contribute to the achievement of school system goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The next five statements address the **evaluation procedures** used in your school division. Procedures would include a description of how information on performance is collected (for example, observation), by whom, when, and using what forms.

	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>
18. My school division has adopted a set of specific procedures to be used in evaluating teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Teachers are informed of the evaluation procedures prior to the beginning of the evaluation process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>
20. The evaluation procedures make it clear what steps I should take if a teacher is performing unsatisfactorily.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. The evaluation procedures assess teacher responsibilities outside the classroom, such as communication with parents and professional service.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. The evaluation procedures generate a written record of teacher performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The next five statements address the **remedial process** used in your school division. This would be the steps taken with teachers whose teaching was unsatisfactory in one or more respects, including any assistance in the improvement process.

	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>
23. My school division has adopted a formal set of guidelines or procedures for the remediation process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. I can offer unsatisfactory teachers formal types of remedial assistance such as peer coaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. The remedial process provides the teacher with a detailed notice of deficiencies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. The remedial process provides the teacher with clear directions for improvement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27. The remedial process provides the teacher with a reasonable time for improvement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The next five statements address the **priority** given teacher evaluation in your school division.

	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>
28. My superintendent places a high priority on teacher evaluation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29. If I decide that a teacher should be dismissed for "incompetence," I can count on support from the superintendent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30. If I decide that a teacher should be dismissed for incompetence, I can count on support from the local School Board.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31. My school division provides feedback to principals regarding their performance in evaluating teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32. My school division provides adequate resources for evaluators, such as legal counsel.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The next five statements are about the level of **collaboration** between administrators and teachers in your school division.

	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>
33. The evaluation process promotes regular communication between teachers and administrators about instructional practice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
34. The current evaluation system was developed by teachers and administrators in a collaborative process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35. In most cases, the evaluation process is perceived as a collaborative exchange in which there is mutual respect and two-way communication.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
36. In my school division, there are remedial teams composed of highly skilled teachers to assist teachers who are performing less than satisfactorily.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
37. In my school division, teachers serve on peer review committees as part of the evaluation process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The next five statements address the **training** provided in your school division for principals in their role as evaluators of teacher performance.

	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>
38. As a principal, I receive training in identifying unsatisfactory classroom performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
39. As a principal, I receive training in conferencing with teachers who are performing unsatisfactorily.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
40. As a principal, I receive training in prescribing remediation for teachers who are performing unsatisfactorily.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
41. As a principal, I receive training in preparing reports for documentation of unsatisfactory performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
42. As a principal, I receive training in the legal issues related to dismissals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The next five statements are about **how integrated** teacher evaluation is with other aspects of your school division such as staff development, mentoring programs, or an incentive pay system.

	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>
43. In my school division, teacher evaluation results guide professional development efforts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
44. Teacher evaluation is tied to programs such as career ladders or incentive pay.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
45. Teacher evaluation directly promotes the attainment of division-wide goals (for example, those in a strategic plan).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
46. Support programs for new teachers are integrated into the teacher evaluation system.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
47. Teacher evaluation is related to the goals in school improvement plans.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Part III: The next few items address the overall effectiveness of your school division's evaluation practices. Please check the response which best reflects your perceptions.

	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>
48. My school division's evaluation system provides sufficient guidance for me in the process of <u>identifying</u> teachers who are performing less than satisfactorily.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
49. My school division's evaluation system provides sufficient guidance for me in the process of providing <u>assistance</u> to teachers who are performing less than satisfactorily.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50. My school division provides sufficient moral support for me in the process of working with teachers who are performing less than satisfactorily.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
51. I am confident that I could dismiss a teacher using the teacher evaluation system in my school division.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
52. I believe the guidelines for teacher evaluation in my school division would stand up in court.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
53. I feel supported by the school division's overall teacher evaluation process in responding to less than satisfactory, tenured teachers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

54. Based on your experience, indicate how important each of the following variables is in effectively resolving cases of unsatisfactory teacher performance.

	<u>Not Important</u>	<u>Somewhat Important</u>	<u>Very Important</u>
• evaluation criteria	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• evaluation procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• remedial procedures and assistance.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• organizational commitment and support for the evaluation process.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• evaluator training to conduct quality evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• administrator-teacher collaboration in developing and implementing the evaluation process.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• integration of the evaluation process with other aspects of the school system such as staff development and mentoring programs.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

55. What aspect of your evaluation system have you found to be the most helpful to you in effectively responding to teachers with less than satisfactory performance?

56. What aspect of your evaluation system would you change to better respond to teachers with less than satisfactory performance?

Thank you for your time and thoughtfulness. Please drop the postcard in the mail to indicate that you have completed the survey and check the appropriate box if you would like to receive a summary of the research findings. Return this questionnaire separately using the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

Pamela Tucker
College of William and Mary
School of Education
P.O. Box 8795
Williamsburg, Va. 23187-8795
804/221-4002

Appendix C
Verbatim Text of Comments

Verbatim Responses to Question #55

What aspect of your evaluation system have you found to be the most helpful to you in effectively responding to teachers with less than satisfactory performance?

Respondent	Comment	Coding
1	help from central office personnel, my previous administrative experience	4, misc
2	developing a job target process	2
3	use of the newly established Professional Review Board	2
4	plan of improvement (action)	3
5	extensive principal evaluation training; support of teacher evaluation supervisors; excellent handouts/manuals for resources	5, 4
6	The support from the superintendent is excellent.	4
7	teacher/principal conference with goal setting and follow up conference	2
9	all aspects of probationary teacher process (criteria are excellent, timelines different)	2, 1
10	observation guides which focus on instructional process and professional responsibilities	1
11	training, support from directors and superintendents	5, 4
12	Very little - our current model is totally out-dated. It does not respond to current teaching practices - cooperative learning, team teaching, design technology, computer integration, peer coaching, etc. If the teacher is "good" you can write the evaluation to reflect the above. If the teacher is "bad" however, the evaluation tends to affirm lecture style, teacher centered instruction.	misc
13	frequency of evaluation and the utilization of central office personnel in evaluations	2, 4
14	The observation instrument is very specific in identifying strengths and weaknesses. It is very helpful in conferencing with teachers to review strengths or weaknesses.	1
15	conference can start after the evaluation	2
16	The evaluation instrument focuses on 10 areas based on research and good teaching practices. Each area is detailed and provides a focus on what is expected with the teacher. Allows for growth and remediation.	1
17	face to face communication to discuss areas of concern and to plan for improvement	2
18	It does allow me to communicate specific (and predesignated) areas of strength and weakness	1
19	consistent, clear, supported by School Board, opportunity for discussion & feedback (pre-conference & post-conferences required)	2
20	Validation Evaluation System for non-tenured teachers, great set up for the process & procedures	2
21	documentation	2
22	one to one communication with written follow-up	2
23	central office personnel's willingness to provide necessary assistance	4
24	not much	misc
27	support for supervisors and central office personnel	4

What aspect of your evaluation system have you found to be the most helpful to you in effectively responding to teachers with less than satisfactory performance?

(continued)

Respondent	Comment	Coding
28	combine efforts of principal and teacher	6
29	having an organized structure with a format and assistance to develop a plan of action (improvement plan)	2, 3
30	timelines, procedures help foster growth	2
31	the evaluation criteria and procedures, additionally my training and experience in working with marginal teachers	1, 2, 5, misc
33	the narrative that's written by the principal	2
34	It gives me a <u>common ground</u> to deal with the process of determining satisfactory performances.	2
36	covers all areas of classroom and extra-curricular activities	1
37	The current system provides a checklist to complete. I do not feel that the form gives an accurate picture of what is expected in the instructional process. The form addresses many aspects of a teacher's job. I would like to see a very specific instructional evaluation tool.	misc
38	detailed criteria, specific timelines, and remediation assistance have been of value in addressing unsatisfactory performance	1, 2, 3
40	We have a teacher assistance team we can call into force. Made up of central office personnel	3
43	the plan of assistance - collaboratively developed by teacher and principal, including objective, strategies, and specific timelines; also, weekly conferences to monitor progress serve as an effective accountability tool	3, 2
44	specific criteria to evaluate, clear guidelines, help for teachers	1, 2, 3
45	writing a structured growth plan for the teacher	3
47	the growth plan	2
48	checklist with O (observed) and N (not observed; would have been useful)	1
50	covers all area	1
52	pre/post conferences	2
53	observation/follow-up/evaluation	2
55	developing a mutual respect - same goals orientation with each individual teacher	6, 2
56	written procedures, strong central office support, colleague collaboration	2, 4, 6
57	having the actual training of an evaluation process	5
58	outside observers	4
59	criteria, procedures	2
60	central office personnel is willing to help with improving performance	3 misc
61	name change from teacher evaluation to teacher appraisal	4
62	complete and total support of central office staff	misc

What aspect of your evaluation system have you found to be the most helpful to you in effectively responding to teachers with less than satisfactory performance?

(continued)

Respondent	Comment	Coding
64	county hiring practices of releasing first year teachers without any reason; personnel does an excellent screening of new hires but tenured staff are safe!	2, 3
65	written documentation of performance and efforts to remediate	2
66	the sit down face to face conferences	1
67	Having the eight standards and clear definitions for each standard makes the process of identification of weaknesses and strengths easier. We have some specific skills to be looking for.	1
69	evaluation criteria	4
70	input from central office administrator serving as "building rep"	2
71	observing, conferencing using guidelines and research developed procedures	2
72	using an "action plan" to bring about desirable instruction, classroom management	3
73	growth plans	2
74	criteria and procedures	1, 2
75	the checklist for non-tenured teachers is helpful	1
76	I have found that utilizing staff development and mentoring programs have a definite result in changing teacher performance towards improvement. On early release days in our school system, staff members are asked to participate. I can say that if a certain topic or discipline is introduced in the staff development the employees generally meet the expectations.	7
77	the process only	2
78	A professional growth document is available to group such teachers with specific areas in remediation, their job performance (as a part of the professional growth plan)	3
79	remedial procedures and assistance	3
81	written procedures, training in documenting performance	2, 5
82	Our evaluation system includes a "look for" items section to be used as teachers are observed that define each area on the evaluation instrument; therefore, the system becomes an excellent job description for teachers	1
83	documentation process (instructional concerns); support from Asst. Supt. for personnel	2, 4
84	teacher/administrator collaboration in developing a plan for improvement	6, 3
85	support from central office	4
86	documentation	2
88	evaluation handbook for all staff	misc
91	use of an improvement plan which is tailored to the needs of the teacher and collaboratively developed. Our existing criteria for classrooms are general enough to allow judgments of each criterion	2, 6, 1
92	Our division has developed the complete paper trail necessary to implement the process.	2

What aspect of your evaluation system have you found to be the most helpful to you in effectively responding to teachers with less than satisfactory performance?

(continued)

Respondent	Comment	Coding
94	interim evaluation, goal setting, plan of action, documentation has stood up to 2 teachers in their dismissal over 15 years. These were the only teachers I recommended for dismissal.	2
97	I have specific areas that have been evaluated unsatisfactorily that have been documented in the instrument to share with teacher(s).	1
98	classroom visits outside of the regular evaluation process	2
101	The evaluation system is very strong in evaluating the instructional program and classroom performance. The flaw in the system occurs when trying to identify a teacher's interpersonal relationships with students and parents. There is no way to effectively document this area.	2
102	Training in use of a template for all written communication with staff.	5
103	script tape, more than 1 observation both formal and informal, previous history (observations), meetings to discuss the teacher's concerns	2
104	remediation teams, staff development funds to permit observations and training for the teachers	3, 4
106	having teachers write a specific "plan for improvement"	3
107	support from teaching specialist/guidance from Director of Human Resources	4
109	the <u>intensive help</u> component, 12 weeks of help from various sources	3, 4
110	the evaluation instrument itself	1
112	consistent identifiable practices of those behaviors teachers demonstrate to enhance the teaching process	1

Code:

- 1 = evaluation criteria
- 2 = general evaluation procedures
- 3 = remedial procedures
- 4 = organizational commitment
- 5 = training
- 6 = administrator-teacher collaboration
- 7 = organizational integration
- misc = miscellaneous

Verbatim Responses to Question #56

What aspect of your evaluation system would you change to better respond to teachers with less than satisfactory performance?

Respondent	Comment	Coding
1	none at all	misc
2	time - all teachers currently require some number of observations & forms - little distinction in full or partial evaluation process	misc, 2
3	more collaboration; evaluation instrument (currently being rewritten)	6
4	bring in outside consultant/resources to better meet teachers' needs and help with process	4
5	teacher unions and associations are so challenging and prepare teachers with suggestions to fight evaluations, etc.	misc
6	The system needs to be more comprehensive and include all aspects of the teacher's responsibilities (i.e., professionalism, communication with parents, and performance regarding attaining goals for student achievement).	1
7	The check list system is not effective.	2
9	lack of criteria in tenured teacher program	1
10	too complex: given the demands on principal time, it is all too easy to miss a detail and subsequently have the case rejected for "technical" reasons	2
11	support from the school board is needed	4
12	The evaluation product itself - to reflect real and effective current teaching practices.	1
13	peer evaluation would be very helpful	2
14	The evaluation instrument would reflect the same behaviors as the observation form. Then the evaluation would have more meaning. The data collected would help teachers see their areas of strength and areas that needed development.	1
15	involve central office supervisors in the evaluation process	4
16	X's instrument is in the process of being redesigned to reflect "domain" and is currently being used with principals. The teacher instrument will include a portfolio. This new instrument will assist the unsatisfactory teachers.	1, 2, 3
18	An evaluation system often does little to "remediate." Generally, it allows one to communicate a level of performance but is very separate from any other internal system which provides support.	3, 7
19	more mentoring program and inservice to help remediate	3
20	need exists for specifics on remediating for those in need	3
21	none	misc
22	ask other principals to evaluate	4
23	The entire evaluation instrument needs to be rewritten to address current trends/policies.	1
24	do away with tenure	misc
27	I think our system is great!	misc
28	required evaluations and paperwork when it is not necessary for an individual	2

What aspect of your evaluation system would you change to better respond to teachers with less than satisfactory performance?

(continued)

Respondent	Comment	Coding
29	I would like to see the evaluation process finished before Feb. 1 each year. this would give six weeks of remediation and improvement time. A review committee including two teachers, two central office staff, and an administrator to make a final recommendation.	3, 2
30	assistance teams could be added	4
31	more support from administration - specifically the ability to eliminate "benevolent employer" practices, "waiting out retirement," "moving the lemons around." Perhaps my naiveté clouds my perspective, but I wish these listed areas could be addressed.	4
34	I would outline, more clearly, steps and/or procedures that the teacher(s) needed to take in order to improve their performance to a satisfactory level. I would have more specifics and not general statements.	3
37	I would like a separate evaluation form for each component. I also need more assistance with observing teachers and giving them feedback.	4, 1
38	Our system is too extensive and focuses equal time on all employees initially. With an experienced staff, it is clear that annual summative assessment is not necessary. Therefore, a system of rotation would be of assistance.	2
40	better support and understanding for central office	4
41	better training for administrators is needed	5
43	more assistance for the evaluator/principal	4
45	new system - need more time to answer this question	misc
47	none	misc
48	one based on scripting, scoring, and collaboration; Connecticut has an interesting plan	2, 6
53	better plan for assistance/remedial procedures	3
55	better defined goals, procedures, policies, criteria, etc. However, some teachers do their "own thing" and are successful, but by a "checklist" they would be evaluated poorly.	1, 2
56	weak, non-tenured teachers should not receive 2-3 years of assistance if it is determined that performance is less than satisfactory during the first year	3
57	How can we gather and document all of the materials of an unsatisfactory teacher performance, get the superintendent's support, then present to the School Board in which the School Board very rarely accepts?	4
58	build in stronger support for remediation	3
59	more resources	4
60	the evaluation forms	1
61	division wide support/mentor team	4
62	better organized, more in-depth screening of potential teachers to insure that all people interviewed will be of good quality; screening processes by the colleges that would deny certification to students not possessing the necessary skills to be good teachers	misc
64	legal assistance and demonstrated help in releasing "tenured" staff	4

What aspect of your evaluation system would you change to better respond to teachers with less than satisfactory performance?

(continued)

Respondent	Comment	Coding
65	eliminate or modify drastically the formal, evaluative procedures for your top 5% of teachers	2
67	I would spend less time on exemplary teachers and more time with teachers who need assistance or dismissal	2
69	remedial procedures and assistance	3
70	omitting the use of "peer observations" and their subsequent ratings of "mastery" by administrators	2
71	required additional courses, seminars, coaching involvement - not optional for deficient teachers; provisions to vacate, hire latitude which marginal teachers then know, at school level, mediocrity has removal	3, 2
73	evaluation criteria are being reviewed by committee to make observation, forms, and evaluation items easier to document	1
74	criteria	1
75	The system for tenured teachers is not helpful for the less than satisfactory teacher. It is very effective for other teachers because it is a professional growth process.	2
76	I would like to better respond to teachers by explaining evaluation criteria at the outset of employment. If I communicate job expectations I feel that teachers will be more apt to perform satisfactorily.	2
77	1) improve the input of teachers, 2) new evaluation, 3) support for young, inexperienced staff by tenured quality staff, 4) link evaluation and system goals, and 5) develop growth in teaching seminars and evaluation	6, 7
78	None at the present time. X County Public Schools are currently implementing a new employee evaluation system which includes self-evaluation and the employee writing his/her own professional growth plan which is overseen by the employee's supervisor.	misc
79	Implementing remedial teams to assist teachers with less than satisfactory performance	3
80	remediation assistance	3
81	provide continuing training [in documenting performance]	5
82	The one aspect that could be very useful is a formal and potentially unprecedented peer-coaching system. This system has been used however, informally and has not become the usual procedure.	2
83	documentation for non-instructional issues - PTA attendance, extra duty coverage, working with colleagues, etc.	2
85	prescribed peer-help program	2
86	to address interpersonal skills in more detail with the teacher, how the teacher empowers her/his students	1
88	even more support from central office staff	4
90	For me the crucial issue is not the evaluation system but the TIME to do more than a superficial evaluation of T-scale employees. I suggest a complete restructuring of the elementary school.	misc

What aspect of your evaluation system would you change to better respond to teachers with less than satisfactory performance?

(continued)

Respondent	Comment	Coding
91	more assistance from experienced teachers for younger or less skilled teachers, include observations by experts in a teacher's discipline when formal observations are done, provide training to all probationary teachers	4
92	Too much time is spent with experienced and good classroom teachers. If you know your curriculum, you know the teachers who need assistance.	2
92	staff development for administrators	5
94	The entire teacher evaluation needs to reflect the idea that teachers need to "work on the work" they give children, designing meaningful work to the correct level for students. Also teachers need to set goals each year and provide a portfolio for how they are achieving the goals.	2
97	a) the instrument itself, b) someone from central office (who is thoroughly trained in evaluation techniques) to do the evaluations with input from building principal	1, misc
99	My one "less than satisfactory" teacher tried to say I was picking on her because she's black. She went to the Assistant Superintendent who is also black. I subsequently gave up trying to put her on a growth plan. I'm not a prejudiced person, so I was totally disheartened.	misc
101	Develop a model that would reflect all aspects of the teaching domain, i.e., instructional areas, classroom performance, and interpersonal relationships	1
103	criteria needs to be more definitive	1
104	more communication to teachers from central office re: what qualifies teachers for each rating	1
105	We have a new pilot program that will go on line this year.	misc
106	would adopt a system (such as Danville City, where I used to work) which placed much of the process on "teacher trust" initiative	2
107	more evaluator training	5
109	more help with legal & tenure areas	4
110	none	misc
112	develop peer help/peer observation and modeling	2

Code:

- 1 = evaluation criteria
- 2 = general evaluation procedures
- 3 = remedial procedures
- 4 = organizational commitment
- 5 = training
- 6 = administrator-teacher collaboration
- 7 = organizational integration
- misc = miscellaneous

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