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A Study of Teacher and Administrator Perceptions of the Impact of Feedback on Teacher Instructional Practices in Reading

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A STUDY OF TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF THE

IMPACT OF FEEDBACK ON TEACHER INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES IN

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Tiffany Chatman

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A STUDY OF TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF THE

IMPACT OF FEEDBACK ON TEACHER INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES IN

READING

By

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Dedication

It has been a long journey and I would not have made it without the support of my family and friends that provided constant encouragement, support, and love. I would like to dedicate this to my loving parents that inspired to me to always shoot for the moon. You poured so much into me throughout my life and I hope that I have and will continue to make you proud. Thank you to my village of aunts, uncles, and cousins that encourage me but also keep me humble and focused. Thank you to my tribe. It is said that your network determines your net worth. If this is so, then I am truly a rich person. I am so grateful to have a strong and supportive tribe of women that encourage me, push me, and inspire me to be my best and never dim my light to appease anyone around me. I am forever grateful for how much they challenge me through their words and through their actions to work better, to do better, to be BETTER. I am excited to see that we all will continue to accomplish individual and as a group. We are becoming the women that we always wanted to be, and I look forward to the continued journey. Thank you to my brother for always giving me the kick in the rear to get me in gear like only a brother can do. You are my "little" brother, but you give me such jewels of wisdom on a regular basis. Your best advice, "Figure out how to do your job better than anyone else and do it DAILY." I keep this jewel close and recite it often. It inspires me to keep trying to be better though I am beginning to see as I get older that becoming better will never end. It will be a constant personal challenge to myself. Thank you for this. Lastly, thank you to everyone that has invested in me as a person, as a leader, and as a student. There are far too many people to acknowledge individually but please know that I am forever grateful and humbled that you believed in me enough to invest your time, resources, and words of

wisdom into me. My hope is that as I grow, I will be able to invest in others as you have invested and continue to invest in me. This has been such an incredible journey and I am happy to be closing this chapter and beginning another. The journey continues…

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Acknowledgments

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Abstract

Effective reading instruction is paramount to the success of students in school and well into adulthood. Students that read below grade in third grade are more likely to drop out of high school and earn less income as adults. Teacher effectiveness is critical in helping to close these ongoing gaps with regards to reading. Teacher quality is very important to student achievement and as a result, teacher evaluation processes have become essential in determining and retaining quality teachers. Additionally, teachers' and administrator's perceptions of evaluations, particularly, perceptions of administrative feedback given and the impact it has on changing instructional practices, is important because teachers have a direct impact on student achievement and are one of the single most important factors in student performance.

This study utilized a pragmatic paradigm for program evaluation as the theoretical framework to identify K-5 teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the impact of administrators' feedback on teacher instructional practices in reading in a rural school district in Virginia. Focus groups and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from teachers and administrators regarding their perceptions of feedback and the impact on instructional practices in reading. Transcript and thematic analysis were used to analyze the data collected through the focus group and interviews that were conducted in this case study.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background

School districts and administrators all over the country have sought and continue to seek out ways to address achievement gaps in reading and reading achievement in order to meet requirements under No Child Left Behind [NCLB, 2002] and more recently, the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015). Students who are reading below grade level in third grade are more likely to remain below grade level readers throughout their education (Kilpatrick, 2015; McGrath, 2010). Reading difficulties also may put students in later elementary school at higher risk for depression. Additionally, students that are poor readers in third grade are four times more likely to become high school dropouts compared to students reading on grade level in third grade (Kilpatrick, 2015).

Given the importance of reading instruction in meeting policy requirements and more importantly, on determining success in adult life, many school districts spend exorbitant amounts of money on reading remediation programs in order to address ongoing achievement gaps (Kilpatrick, 2015); however, the prevention as opposed to remediation approach has been recommended by many reading researchers (Murphy, 2004) which emphasizes the importance of sound reading instructional practices by effective teachers (Kilpatrick, 2015).

Teacher Effectiveness

There is a multitude of research that demonstrates teacher effectiveness is one of the single most important factors related to student learning and academic success (Alexander, 2016; Antonis, 2014; Ford-Brocato, 2004; Hopkins, 2013; La Masa, 2005; Lyon, 2009; Phillips, 2005; Sagona, 2012; Stronge, 2007). Highly effective teachers can impact student learning in a positive way which is the primary school-based factor that impacts student academic achievement (Alexander, 2016; Lyon, 2009; Stronge, 2010). Students who are instructed by effective teachers show more academic growth in the same amount of time as teachers who are not effective (Stronge, 2010). There also are cumulative effects of having an effective teacher over time. Students who are placed in highly effective teacher classrooms for multiple years will outperform their peers in classrooms with ineffective teachers (Hopkins, 2013; Stronge, 2010). When this happens at the primary levels, research has indicated that the education lost by students in an ineffective teacher's classroom can be irreversible (Stronge, 2010). Additionally, there are residual impacts of teachers' effectiveness on student achievement. If students have fewer effective teachers in their first years in school and highly effective teachers in subsequent years, their academic achievement would still not exceed those students who were assigned to effective teachers each year (Gallagher, 2002; Stronge, 2010). The ability or inability of all students to have access to effective teachers may help to explain the disparities that continue to exist in reading despite legislation aimed at addressing these disparities.

Effective Reading Instruction

Studies have been conducted to understand why some students fail to learn to read at the same rate as their same age peers and the conclusions have pointed to inappropriate

teaching methods, low academic standards, insufficient language stimulation, and individual child characteristics (Murphy, 2004).

Effective reading instruction requires instruction in foundational reading skills and reading comprehension skills (Foorman, 2007, p. 24). Components of an effective reading program include:

- phonemic awareness and phonemic decoding skills,

- fluency in word recognition and text processing,

- construction of meaning,

- vocabulary,

- spelling, and

- writing.

Effective reading practices must also be viewed from the school-wide level and classroom level. Schools with strong reading programs had positive school climates, strong instructional leadership, and high expectations to name a few components. Additionally, schools with effective reading programs found that the teachers focused more time on instructional activities, had more small group instruction, and good classroom management (Foorman, 2007; Murphy, 2004).

Effective reading instruction requires knowledge of effective reading practices and the ability of teachers to successfully implement those practices in daily classroom instruction. Building administrators carry the responsibility of ensuring that effective instructional practices are occurring in classrooms and must ensure that effective instruction takes place daily by providing proper supervision of teachers through frequent classroom visits to monitor the instructional program. In addition to visiting classrooms, administrators must be capable instructional leaders that provide meaningful, valuable,

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timely, and actionable feedback to teachers to help ensure that effective reading practices

take place in classrooms (Clark & Duggins, 2016; Kilpatrick, 2015; Murphy, 2004).

Principal Feedback and Impact on Effective Instruction

The most important thing that an instructional leader can do is to strengthen

teachers (Clark & Duggins, 2016). Feedback is an effective way to change practice and

"is one of the most powerful influences on how people learn and perform" (Clark &

Duggins, 2016, p. xiii). Feedback is defined as information about how teachers are

progressing towards their efforts to reach a goal (Wiggins, 2012). Instructional leaders

are tasked with providing feedback to teachers and though administrators do not have a

direct impact on student achievement, they do have the ability to influence student

achievement by providing meaningful feedback about instructional practice to teachers

(Hammit, 2014). In order to change teaching practices to impact student learning in a

positive manner, feedback must be valued, make sense to the person receiving the

feedback, be timely, useful and actionable (Clark & Duggins, 2016). In order to provide

timely, useful, actionable, and valuable feedback, effective principals visit classrooms,

provide specific feedback to teachers about teaching and learning, and offer ideas for

improvement (Murphy, 2004).

One of the main tasks of school administrators is to make sure that effective

instruction is put into practice in classrooms through observations and supervision (Clark

& Duggins, 2016). The importance of ensuring that effective instruction take place is

pivotal to student achievement. According to Stronge (2010), gains made by students

who were instructed by highly effective teachers exceeded expected levels of growth. In

fact, effective teachers perform well when working with both below and above level

students as opposed to ineffective teachers with both types of students. Additionally,

despite entering achievement levels, students of ineffective teachers (those in the bottom quintile) did not make satisfactory gains. As teacher effectiveness increased, lower achieving students benefited first and were followed by average and lastly, above average students regarding increased achievement (Stronge, 2010). Thus, the importance of effective teaching and the impact on instruction cannot be overstated.

This study sought to identify K-5 teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the impact of administrator feedback during the evaluation process on teacher instructional practice in reading in a rural school district in Virginia. The most recent reauthorization of the ESSA (2015), continues to put a substantial focus on student achievement, particularly in areas of reading and math. Therefore, it is imperative that we continue to find ways to improve student academic outcomes. The most pivotal way to improve student academic outcomes is through ensuring that all students, no matter their socioeconomic status, race, locality, etc. have equal access to effective teachers (Alexander, 2016; Antonis, 2014; Ford-Brocato, 2004; Hopkins, 2013; La Masa, 2005; Lyon, 2009; Phillips, 2005; Sagona, 2012; Stronge, 2007). Teacher evaluation and feedback has the potential to serve a vital role in helping to identify and shape effective teachers to subsequently help to improve academic outcomes.

Program Context

The school district that was studied is a small rural school district in Virginia which will be referred to as Lyons County Public Schools (LCPS) for this study. The district serves 4,864 students in Grades PK-12. The district is comprised of one comprehensive high school (Grades 9-12), one middle school (Grades 6-8), four elementary schools (Grades Pre-K-5), a Career and Technical Education Center (housed within the district's high school), and an Alternative Education Center. As of the 2016-

2017 academic year, 44.31% of students in the division qualified for free and reduced-price lunch. Student racial breakdowns are as follows: White students (74%), Black students (18.3%), Asian students (<.01%), Alaska Native/American Indian (<.01%), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (<.001%), Multiracial (7.7%). Within the division, 44% of teachers have master's degrees, and 1% have doctorate degrees (Virginia Department of Education, 2017).

During 2011, the school district lost two schools, the high school and one elementary school, as a result of the earthquake that hit the area. During that time, the school district and staff were able to maintain its commitment to student learning and success by creating a schedule that allowed high school and middle school students to share the middle school building to reduce the amount of instructional time lost as well as combine two elementary schools into one building to continue to instruct students. The district has made student achievement and growth a priority at all levels with a focus on reading in the four elementary schools. Data from the Virginia Department of Education from the 2015-2016 school year, indicate that the district had a 78% pass rate on the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) test for reading for students in Grades 3-5, which means that 22% of third-fifth grade students were not performing at a proficient level for reading (Virginia Department of Education, 2017). Additionally, the pass rate for students in third grade in the district was 78% which, again, means that 22% of third-grade students are not performing at a proficient level on their third-grade SOL reading assessment.

Based on reading data, the director of elementary instruction and assistant superintendent for instruction has worked with teacher leaders, teachers, and school administrators to reduce the number of children reading below grade level. The emphasis

on this task led the director and school administrators to provide teachers with professional development each year to help teachers improve reading instruction. The district aims led to discussions related to administrator feedback as well as the ability of administrators in the elementary schools to provide meaningful feedback that would help to improve reading student achievement.

Description of the Program

In order to conduct this program evaluation, it was critical to develop an understanding of the program that will be evaluated. Logic models are used in program evaluation to "display the sequence of actions in a program, describes what the program is and will do, and describes how investments will be linked to results" (Mertens & Wilson, 2012, p. 560). Logic models show resources/inputs, activities, processes, and outcomes. In order to aid in the program evaluation and understand the perceptions of teachers and administrators of feedback given during teacher evaluation, the researcher developed a logic model of the existing program in which teachers receive feedback to organize the inputs, process, and intended outcomes.

Inputs. In LCPS, all teachers are provided with feedback and participate in gathering multiple data as a part of the teacher evaluation system. The LCPS Performance Evaluation System uses the goals and roles performance model developed by Dr. James Stronge. This system defines expectations in order to guide effective instructional practice with the goal of supporting continuous growth and development of each teacher. This is accomplished by monitoring and analyzing data in a system of meaningful feedback (LCPS Teacher Performance Evaluation System Handbook, 2014). Teacher effectiveness for LCPS and expectations for professional performance are defined using a two-tiered approach. Figure 1 illustrates the two-tiered approach.

Figure 1. Two-tiered approach to professional performance standards.

The performance standards are the main duties and there are seven performance standards for teachers. They are:

- Standard 1: Professional knowledge.

- Standard 2: Instructional planning.

- Standard 3: Instructional delivery.

- Standard 4: Assessment of and for student learning.

- Standard 5: Learning environment.

- Standard 6: Professionalism.

- Standard 7: Student academic progress.

Each performance standard in the evaluation system has a set of performance indicators that were developed to provide examples of observable behaviors one might observe to indicate that a performance standard is successfully met (LCPS Teacher Performance Evaluation System Handbook, 2014).

The LCPS Teacher Evaluation System uses multiple data sources to provide a comprehensive view of teacher work in their summative evaluation year (LCPS Teacher Performance Evaluation System Handbook, 2014). Table 1 describes the data sources used for teacher evaluation in LCPS during the evaluation cycle. Continuing contract

teachers who are not in the summative cycle should participate in each of the data sources

listed in Table 1 with differences in the number of observations required, and their

Table 1

Data Sources for Teacher Evaluation

Action	Data Source
Goal setting for student progress	Teachers have a definite impact on student learning and performance through their various roles. Depending on grade level, content area, and students' ability level, appropriate measures of academic performance are identified to provide information on learning gains. Performance measures included standardized test results as well as other pertinent data sources. Teachers set goals for improving student progress based on the results of performance measures. The goals and their attainment constitute an important data source for evaluation.
Observations	Classroom observations provide key information on several of the specific standards. All probationary and continuing contract teachers in their summative evaluation year will be observed at least three times per year. Two observations will occur prior to **December 15th** and the third by **February 15th**. Teachers employed under continuing contract will be observed at least once per year in interim years. Additional observations for any staff member will be at the building administrator's discretion. All observations will include a classroom observation of at least 20 minutes and a postconference. A preconference may be conducted at the request of the teacher or the administrator.
Teacher documentation log	The documentation log includes both specific required artifacts and teacher-selected artifacts that provide evidencee of meeting selected performance standards.
Student surveys	Teachers are required to survey their students twice a year. It is required that teachers enter a summary of the results in their documentation log. These surveys will provide additional data to the teacher which can influence teacher strategies in several of the standards.

LCPS Teacher Performance Evaluation System Handbook (2014).

teacher documentation logs are expected to be updated but not complete until they enter the summative evaluation cycle.

Goal setting for student progress. During the summative process, teachers can be identified as Exemplary, Proficient, Development/Needs Improvement, or Unsatisfactory as their single summative rating which reflects the overall rating of the employee's performance (LCPS Teacher Performance Evaluation System Handbook, 2014). Summative ratings apply the rating for each of the seven performance standards. Each of the first six standards is weighted at 10% and standard 7 is weighted at 40% for both tenured and nontenured teachers resting upon student growth measures. A teacher's final summative rating will be either *Exemplary* = (4), *Proficient* = (3), *Development/Needs Improvement* = (2), and *Unacceptable* = (1).

Observations. The number of formal observations differ between tenured teachers and nontenured teachers, but the expectations are standardized for both by the district. Nontenured teachers (Years 1-5) must receive a minimum of three formal observations each school year. The first observation must be completed before the end of the first 9 weeks, the second observation must be completed no later than the second week in December, and the third observation must be completed by the second week in February (LCPS Teacher Performance Evaluation System Handbook, 2014). Tenured teachers who are continuing contract in their summative year (continuing contract, Year 3) have the same observation requirements as probationary teachers. Summative evaluations are due every 3 years for tenured teachers. Tenured teachers who are not in their summative year in the evaluation cycle must be observed a minimum of once during the year by the second week in February. It is at the building administrator's discretion to conduct more formal observations if he or she deems it necessary for some teachers

whether they are tenured or nontenured. Observations last at least 20 minutes and must be followed by a postobservation conference (LCPS Teacher Performance Evaluation System Handbook, 2014). Lastly, the district has a standard form that all administrators use for teachers for formal observations. The number of walk-throughs that are completed for teachers, both tenured and nontenured, are at the discretion of building principals.

Teacher documentation logs. Teachers are required to complete a teacher documentation log to provide evidence of performance related to specific standards (LCPS Teacher Performance Evaluation System Handbook, 2014). There are five required items for the teacher documentation log which include a cover sheet, student progress goal setting form, student survey summary form, parent communication log, and professional development. Though the aforementioned items are required, other documents can be included that relate to teacher evaluation standards. The documents included in the documentation log give administrators information that they would not see during an observation. The documentation log is intended to encourage teachers to reflect on their work, demonstrate the quality of their work, and provide a mechanism of two-way communication with an administrator (LCPS Teacher Performance Evaluation System Handbook, 2014). Documentation logs are reviewed annually.

Student surveys. Tenured and nontenured teachers are required to give two student surveys (survey one by December and survey two by May) as part of the teacher evaluation system yearly in order to collect information for teachers to reflect on their practice (LCPS Teacher Performance Evaluation System Handbook, 2014). Student surveys help to provide information to administrators that may not be observed during an observation. Teachers should administer surveys to their entire class or at least two of

their classes in situations where students change classes. The teacher is required to include a summary of the survey data in the documentation log.

     Professional development. Teachers and principals were also given professional development for the tool used in the district evaluation process, Talent Ed®, which is the software the district uses for the evaluation process and reading professional development. School principals and teacher leaders received training on the district evaluation process at a district professional development day for school principals in 2012, and were tasked with providing teachers at each district school with professional development about the adopted evaluation process during school-wide professional development sessions. In 2014, the school district purchased Talent Ed® software to house documents related to the district evaluation process. School principals and teacher leaders were trained on the use of the software and were responsible for training teachers and staff at each of the district schools. All schools delivered the professional development to the entire staff on a single day or during a half-day professional development at the start of the 2014-2015 school year.

     During the 2015-2016 school year, the assistant superintendent for instruction and the director of elementary instruction relaunched the district's aim to improve reading student achievement in elementary schools with a renewed focus on reading instruction. Elementary teachers and school principals were required to attend district level professional learning communities (PLCs) about reading instruction that were offered by a consultant from Virginia Beach, VA. The district paid for selected teachers to take courses on word study instruction as well as for school principals, reading specialists, and Title I teachers to attend conferences related to reading such as the Virginia State Reading Association. Lastly, the district began to look at principal feedback to teachers

as a focus during the 2016-2017 school year and enlisted a consultant from James Madison University to work with principals on identifying effective instruction as well as giving teachers feedback to improve their instructional practice. Additionally, the assistant superintendent for instruction funded professional development for elementary school teachers. The professional development was provided by a consultant from James Madison University and focused on effective instruction to improve student achievement.

Process. LCPS has devoted 3 years to implementing the strategies for effective reading instruction into K-5 classrooms across the district. In order to help with the ongoing implementation of the strategies first learned at professional development, the school district offered ongoing professional development for both teachers and school principals about effective reading instruction through yearly PLCs geared towards reading instruction. The director for elementary instruction also worked to provide ongoing professional development at the district level and at the school level by providing continued professional development to the reading specialist in each elementary school (there is one reading specialist in each elementary school). Reading specialists in the district receive ongoing reading professional development. The professional development is provided by a reading specialist/consultant from Virginia Beach, VA. Reading specialists as well as school principals are responsible for ensuring that the reading strategies learned through professional development are implemented at each elementary school. Reading specialist coach teachers and plan with them either weekly or biweekly to assist in writing lesson plans. School principals and reading specialists worked to plan professional development at the school level and provide teachers with feedback on their reading instruction.

Outcomes. The district strongly believes in improving reading achievement. The district implemented a teacher evaluation program and a strong focus on reading instruction to support increasing student reading achievement at the elementary levels to prepare them for success in secondary and postsecondary education. There were several outcomes of the program that include both short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes. The initial intended outcome of the program was to increase knowledge of effective reading instruction for teachers and principals. Teacher effectiveness is critical to improving student achievement in reading. Principals must also be able to support teachers as they implement the intended reading instruction in their classrooms by being knowledgeable of the reading program and effective reading instruction. Additionally, it is important for teachers to reflect on feedback that they receive from school principals to help with their reading instruction. Intermediate intended outcomes include increasing principal competence in providing teachers with feedback on their reading instruction and increasing teacher competence in delivering effective reading instruction by implementing into their teaching practice strategies that they learned in professional development. Lastly, long-term intended outcomes are that administrators will become effective instructional leaders that are able to lead strong reading programs and that teachers will become effective practitioners that teach using effective reading instructional practices daily. The ultimate long-term intended outcome is that the school district will increase the number of students who are proficient in reading based on standardized reading assessments.

Figure 2 displays the logic model of the reading evaluation program.

Input

Funding for software and professional development

District evaluation process (teachers, admin, school district leaders)

Professional development on Talent Ed evaluation process/software for admin and teachers

Professional development on school district feedback (evaluation) process

School walk-through forms (admin)

Professional development on effective reading instructional practices K-5 teachers and principals

Process

Ongoing professional development at the district and school levels

County-wide implementation of reading strategies covered in professional development (principals and teachers)

Conduct teacher observations using district formal observation forms in Talent Ed (principals)

Conduct post conferences to give teachers feedback on instruction (principals)/Pre-conferences optional

Conduct teacher walk-throughs using respective school walk-through form (principals)

Short-term Outcomes

Increase knowledge of effective reading instruction (teachers and principals)

Teachers receive and reflect on principal feedback

Intermediate Outcomes

Administrators increase competence in giving feedback to teachers about their reading instruction.

Teacher increases competence in delivering effective reading instruction and successfully implements strategies in teaching practice

Long-term Outcomes

Administrators are effective reading instructional leaders

Teachers are competent and effective practitioners that teach using effective reading instructional practices daily

Increase in number of students proficient in reading based on reading standardized assessments
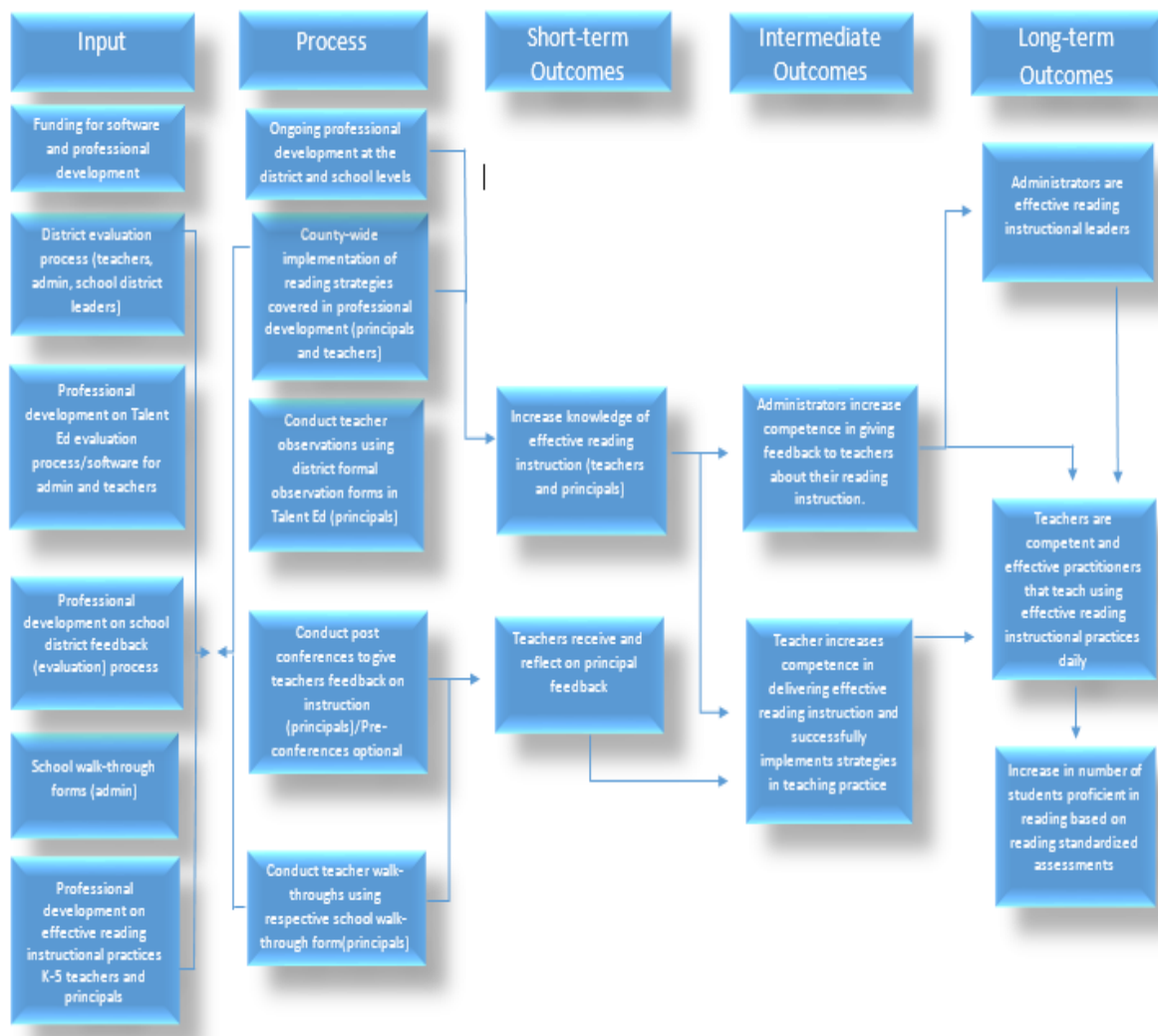
Figure 2. Logic model of reading evaluation program.

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Program Evaluation Model

Program evaluation is done in order to gain insights and information on how well a program is working (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). It also serves to help in gathering information and conducting formative evaluation during the implementation of a program to determine how the program is progressing and make recommendations for improvements of the program (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). The district evaluation process and reading professional development will be ongoing initiatives in the school district and therefore require formative evaluation in order to determine how the program is working and what changes may be necessary.

The pragmatic paradigm of program evaluation will serve as the foundation for this program evaluation. The pragmatic paradigm emphasizes flexibility and is not committed to one system of philosophy (Creswell, 2014; Mertens & Wilson, 2012). The pragmatic paradigm and qualitative research design of a case study will assist in gaining insight into teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the teacher evaluation process in the district, specifically perceptions of feedback teachers receive in formal observations and the impact of the feedback on instructional practices in reading.

This program evaluation will help the school district leaders to understand more fully how the feedback given during teacher evaluation can be used to focus on teacher effectiveness and, thus, help close achievement gaps of students from rural backgrounds in the area of reading. This evaluation study will also give teachers the opportunity to critique the evaluative feedback given by administrators in order to help make improvements in this area and to help the teacher evaluation process. Likewise, building and district leaders will be able to use the results of this study to make feedback to teachers more meaningful so that it has a stronger impact on teacher instructional

practice. Additionally, district leadership can also use the information to provide much needed professional development to administrators who are ultimately responsible for carrying out the evaluation program.

Lastly, teacher and administrator buy-in is important to implementing and sustaining educational reforms (Adomou, 2011; De Larkin, 2013; Lawrence, 2014; Leahy, 2014; Winslow, 2015). This evaluation will help to inform leaders at the building and district level, how teachers and administrators perceive the evaluation process and its role in helping to meet accountability standards.

Evaluation model. The context, inputs, process, and product (CIPP) model was used for this program evaluation (Stufflebeam, 2001). Stufflebeam's model is a 4-part model of evaluation. The context evaluation helps to prioritize goals; the input evaluation helps to assess approaches to achieve the goals; the process evaluation helps to assess how plans are implemented; and the product evaluation helps to assess intended and unintended outcomes (Stufflebeam, 2001). The CIPP model helped to recognize the importance of considering the information that stakeholders need as they implement various programs and initiatives. The CIPP model was used for this program evaluation because of its' flexibility and consideration of stakeholders needs as this is critical to this program evaluation.

Focus of the evaluation. The focus of this program evaluation is on teacher and administrator perceptions about the impact that feedback given by administrators in formal observations has on instructional practices regarding reading instruction in elementary schools within the district. Figure 3 illustrates the focus of this program evaluation.

Process

Ongoing professional development at the district and school levels

County-wide implementation of reading strategies covered in professional development (principals and teachers)

Conduct teacher observations using district formal observation forms in Talent Ed (principals)

Conduct post conferences to give teachers feedback on instruction (principals)/Pre-conferences optional

Conduct teacher walk-throughs using respective school walk-through form(principals)

Short-term Outcomes

Increase knowledge of effective reading instruction (teachers and principals)

Teachers receive and reflect on principal feedback

Program Evaluation Focus

The program evaluation sought to understand K-5 teachers' and principals' perceptions of the feedback given by principals related to reading instruction. This relates to the "conduct teacher observations, "conduct post-conferences," "conduct teacher walk-throughs," and "teachers receive and reflect" boxes under the Processes column of the logic model.

Figure 3. Focus of program evaluation.

In order to address these achievement gaps within our district, students must be offered extensive literacy instruction from highly effective teachers. Thus, understanding teacher and administrator perceptions of the impact of feedback given during evaluations on developing and maintaining strong literacy instruction may help to lead to improved instructional practices among teachers in reading and improved reading outcomes for students. This study will evaluate the degree to which teachers and administrators perceive the feedback given during the teacher evaluation process to be valuable to improving instructional practices in reading. The findings from the study may help to provide insights that will help building and district leadership understand how to better support teachers in the evaluation process to improve student achievement in reading.

Evaluation questions. This study sought to answer three evaluation questions:

1. What are elementary school teachers' perceptions regarding how school administrator feedback given in formal observations impacts their instructional practices in reading?

2. What are elementary school administrators' perceptions regarding how their feedback in formal observation impacts teacher instructional practices in reading?

3. What recommendations do elementary teachers and school administrators have to improve the positive impact of formal observations to support teacher improvement in reading instructional practices?

Definition of Terms

Continuing contract or tenured teacher: Teachers who have finished their probationary period (5 years) successfully are granted a continuing contract. Teachers who have a continuing contract must be afforded certain procedural rights before

dismissal from their positions. Rights include notice of grounds for the action and they must be given the opportunity for a hearing (Nixon, Packard, & Douvanis, 2010). Teachers on continuing contract receive a summative evaluation every third year. Each year, teachers on continuing contract will have an interim evaluation which includes at minimum one formal observation, walk-through observations, student surveys, and goal setting for student progress (LCPS Teacher Performance Evaluation System Handbook, 2014).

Feedback: Feedback is defined as what is given to teachers during the evaluation process about student goals, student achievement, and instructional delivery. Feedback is information about how teachers are progressing towards their efforts to reach a goal (Wiggins, 2012).

Formative evaluation: An evaluation that is the basis for professional development (Gregoire, 2009).

Nonsummative evaluation: Nonsummative evaluations are evaluations in which teachers are evaluated periodically during the evaluation cycle with a focus on how they are performing at a given period.

Perceptions: Perceptions are the ways in which teachers and administrators understand and interpret the feedback given in formal observations during the teacher evaluation process.

Probationary teacher or nontenured: Teachers who have not completed their probationary period (less than 5 years) are nontenured. Teachers who are in their probationary period are generally not afforded the same due process rights as tenured teachers. Probationary teachers are "at will" employees (Nixon et al., 2010).

Probationary teachers are on summative evaluation during each of their first 5 years in

the division. Probationary teachers receive a minimum of three formal observations and

a mid-year interim review to provide feedback prior to the summative review. These

teachers are evaluated using multiple data sources to demonstrate that the teacher has

shown evidence of each of the standards (LCPS Teacher Performance Evaluation System

Handbook, 2014).

Summative evaluation: Summative evaluations are evaluations in which teachers

are evaluated at the conclusion of the school year with a focus on outcomes.

Teacher evaluation: "Teacher evaluation refers to the formal process a school

uses to review and rate teachers' performance and effectiveness in the classroom.

Ideally, the findings from these evaluations are used to provide feedback to teachers and

guide their professional development" (Sawchuk, 2015, para. 1).

Teacher practice: The instructional strategies, resources, behaviors, and materials

that teachers use in order to instruct students

CHAPTER 2

Review of Related Literature

This chapter includes a review of literature that is pertinent to studying teacher and administrator perceptions of the teacher evaluation system with regard to impacting reading instructional practices. The literature review will show how the research questions from the study relate to extant research, review the gaps in current literature, and position this study within the broader field of study.

Teacher Effectiveness

Student achievement is a top priority for educators across the nation. There is a large body of research that suggests that teacher effectiveness is one of the single most important factors related to student learning and student achievement. Additionally, there is extant research that indicates that the number of well-qualified teachers in a state is a significant predictor of that state's student achievement in reading and math. Thus, highly effective teachers have the ability to impact student learning in a positive way and is the primary school-based factor that impacts student academic achievement (Alexander, 2016; Antonis, 2014; Clark & Duggins, 2016; Davis-Washington, 2011; Ding & Sherman, 2006; Ford-Brocato, 2004; Gallagher, 2002; Gutierrez, 2006; Hopkins, 2013; La Masa, 2005; Lyon, 2009; Nordheim, 2006; Phillips, 2005; Sagona, 2012; Stronge, 2007, 2010; Thomas, Wingert, Conant, & Register, 2010).

Research states that if we want to improve the quality of schools and have a positive effect on students, then we must change the quality of our teaching (Stronge,

2010). While curriculum is important, teachers ultimately are responsible for implementing the curriculum. In an analysis of achievement test performed by Allington and Johnston (2000), tests indicated that gains made by students instructed by highly effective teachers outpaced expected levels of growth. Additionally, value-added estimates of teacher quality were not correlated to initial test scores, which indicated that effective teachers perform well with both low and high ability students, whereas ineffective teachers were ineffective with low and high ability students (Aaronson, Barrow & Sander, 2007). These findings were the result of assessments of teachers' measurable impact on student achievement using the value-added approach (Stronge, 2010).

William Sanders developed a widely utilized statistical approach that was initially referred to as the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS). This approach was used for determining the effectiveness of teachers, schools, and school systems based on student achievement growth over an extended period of time (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). The database that Sanders developed merged longitudinal data to school systems, schools, teachers and student outcomes as they moved from grade to grade. Research that used the TVAAS indicates that neither ethnicity, socioeconomic level, class size, and classroom heterogeneity can predict student achievement growth but rather, teacher effectiveness is the major predictor of student academic achievement (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). TVAAS studies found that the impact of teachers on student achievement are directly related to the effectiveness of teachers. Thus, teacher effectiveness is critical to student achievement outcomes.

Defining teacher effectiveness. Given the importance of effective teachers,

researchers have tried to define effective teachers and they have defined them in many

ways (Davis-Washington, 2011; Ding & Sherman, 2006; Stronge, 2007, 2010).

According to Campbell, Kyriakides, Muijs, and Robinson (2004), "Teacher effectiveness

is the impact that classroom factors, such as teaching methods, teacher expectations,

classroom organization, and use of classroom resources, have on students' performance"

(p. 3). Stronge (2007) defines effective teaching as "the result of a combination of many

factors, including aspects of the teacher's background and ways of interacting with

others, as well as specific teaching practices" (p. 99). Goe, Bell, and Little (2008) gave a

5-point definition for effective teachers:

- Have high expectations for all students and help students learn value added or
  other test-based growth measures.

- Contribute to positive academic, attitudinal, and social outcomes for students
  such as regular attendance, on-time promotion to the next grade, on time
  graduation, self-efficacy, and cooperative.

- Use diverse resources to plan and structure engaging learning opportunities;
  monitor student progress, adapt instruction, and evaluate learning using
  multiple sources of evidence.

- Contribute to the development of classrooms and schools that value diversity

- Collaborate with other teachers, administrators, parents, and education
  professionals to ensure student success. (p. 8)

Davis-Washington (2011) states that the definition by Goe et al. (2008) provides a

comprehensive definition of teaching and emphasizes the impact of effective teachers on

students. Additionally, Gupton (2010) cited research that indicated that important indicators of teaching effectiveness are the teachers' ability to maximize time to increase student learning, matching materials to student needs, and high expectations that they hold themselves to and their students.

Teacher effectiveness has also been defined in relation to teacher certification. Literature indicates that certified teachers in a state is a significant predictor of that state's student achievement in math and reading on standardized tests (Stronge, 2010). Some studies have indicated that uncertified teachers do not achieve as much with students as teachers with appropriate and in field certification. Additionally, the number of uncertified teachers in a building is one of the best predictors of low student achievement in individual schools. Furthermore, teachers who teach at a grade level or a subject in which they are not qualified may convert a highly effective teacher into an ineffective teacher (Stronge, 2010).

Content knowledge has been another indicator of teacher effectiveness. Teachers who have a strong content knowledge have been identified consistently as a critical component by researchers who study effective teaching; however, training programs that focus on content-knowledge and not pedagogical knowledge are less effective in preparing teachers than programs that offer both (Stronge, 2010). Teachers who have content knowledge can teach the content at a deeper level. Wenglinsky (2002) found in his study that teachers with a major or a minor in the content area in which they taught had higher student achievement. Furthermore, other studies by Wenglinksy indicate that teachers who have more content knowledge can ask higher level questions, allow more student-directed activities, and involve students more in their lessons (Wenglinksy,

2002). Conversely, Hattie's (2012) research indicated that teachers' subject matter knowledge had little impact on the quality of student outcomes. In fact, according to Hattie, the distinction is less about the amount of knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge but more about how teachers see the surface and deeper understanding of the subjects they teach and their views about how to teach as well as understand when students are learning.

Stronge (2010) also pointed to teaching experience in determining teacher effectiveness to an extent. Experienced teachers have gained experience through on the job experiences which give them a greater array of ideas for instruction. Teachers who are experienced and have content knowledge plan effectively and efficiently. Some researchers have stated that though teachers move from beginner to master of teaching at different rates, it can take anywhere from 5 to 8 years to master teaching. Though the rates that teachers become masters varies, there is research that indicates that teachers with more experience plan better, can apply a range of teaching strategies, demonstrate more depth and the ability to differentiate learning activities, know and understand their students' learning needs, and are better organized around routines. Additionally, experience accounts for about 40% of the variation in student achievement (Borko & Livingston, 1989; Covino & Iwanicki, 1996; Cruickshank & Haefele, 2001; Ferguson, 1991; Jay, 2002). Furthermore, schools that have a lot of new or beginning teachers tend to have lower student achievement than schools with more experienced teachers (Betts, Rueben, & Danenberg, 2000; Fetler, 1999).

Hattie (2012) went further and explored the difference between experienced teachers versus expert teachers. Through his research, he found that expert teachers

differ from simply experienced teachers in how they organize and use their content knowledge. According to his research, expert teachers have knowledge that combines new knowledge content with students' prior knowledge, they can relate content to other content areas and are able to adjust lessons to match the needs of their students (Hattie, 2012). Hattie's research also indicated that expert teachers created tasks that were more challenging for their students and were more aware of context and had a deeper understanding of the content taught. Though there was not a lot of difference between surface level achievement outcomes between experienced and expert teachers, there were large differences in surface and deeper understandings. Students that have expert teachers have understandings that reflect both surface and deep level understanding while experienced teachers who are not considered experts were adept at surface level understanding but not deep learning (Hattie, 2012).

Teacher effectiveness and educational policy. Despite the extant literature that details the characteristics of effective teachers, unfortunately there are many students who are not instructed by effective teachers when using any of the many definitions of the term. In fact, poor and minority students are more likely than other students to have teachers who lack experience, are teaching out of their fields, and are not certified (Stronge, 2010). For the past decade, states have participated in the task of establishing a common understanding of educator effectiveness and improving the quality of the educator workforce (Berg-Jacobson, 2016). The recent reauthorization of the ESSA (2015) ushered in a new policy that is characterized by the states being given more flexibility and decreasing federal oversight. Under ESSA, states are required to modify their vision of educator effectiveness. The definition of ineffective teachers signifies the

change that states are now required to address. Despite the provisions related to equity

that existed under NCLB (2002) are maintained under ESSA, a significant change is that

states now must ensure that low-income and minority students are not served at

disproportionate rates by ineffective teachers, and not unqualified ones (Berg-Jacobson,

2016; Thomas et al., 2010). ESSA contains the following legislation related to teacher

effectiveness:

- 20 U.S.C. §6311(g)(1)(B) of Title I states that each state plan shall describe

  how low-income and minority children enrolled in schools assisted under this

  part are not served at disproportionate rates by ineffective, out-of-field, or

  inexperienced teachers, and the measures the State educational agency will

  use to evaluate and publicly report the progress of the State educational

  agency with respect to such description [emphasis added].

Title II, Part A authorizes states to use funds for "improving equitable access to effective

teachers." If states use Title II funds in this way, then they must describe the purpose in

their state applications as well as report on the use of funds for this purpose (Berg-

Jacobson, 2016, p. 14). Based on the research regarding effective teaching and new

regulations under ESSA, it is critical for schools to recruit and retain effective teachers

who will positively impact student achievement.

Teacher effectiveness and student achievement. Using TVAAS, studies have

been able to measure student achievement gains based on teacher effectiveness (Stronge,

2010). There are many studies that have produced findings about student learning with

effective teachers versus ineffective teachers. Students who are instructed by effective

teachers show more academic growth in the same amount of time as teachers who are not

effective (Stronge, 2010). Rockoff (2004) drew data from a set of approximately 10,000 students. He found that one standard deviation increase in teacher quality raises student test scores by about 0.1 standard deviation in reading and math on nationally standardized assessments. Additionally, Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain (2005) found that one standard deviation increase in average teacher quality for a grade raises average student achievement in the grade by at least 0.11 standard deviations of the total test score distribution in math and 0.09 standard deviation in reading. Stronge, Ward, Tucker, and Hindman (2008) conducted a study based on prediction models on third grade teachers. Most of the students' actual achievement scores were within a close range of their predicted scores. In the same study, the teacher effectiveness scores ranged from more than a standard deviation above predicted performance to more than a standard deviation below which indicated a wide range of teacher effectiveness. Teachers who were highly effective, in that they produced higher student achievement gains than expected in one end of course content test (reading, math, social studies, and science), also tended to produce top residual gain scores in all content areas. Conversely, teachers who were ineffective in one content area were more likely to be ineffective in all four content areas.

There also are cumulative effects of having an effective teacher over time. Students who are placed in highly effective teacher classrooms for multiple years will outperform their peers in classrooms with ineffective teachers. In fact, teachers not only have a large influence on student achievement, but the measures of effectiveness are stable over time (Davis-Washington, 2011; Gutierrez, 2006; Hopkins, 2013; Mendro, Jordan, Gomez, Anderson, & Bremby, 1998a; Stronge, 2010). Students who have two, three, or four strong teachers in a row will perform well, no matter their background,

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compared with students who have two ineffective teachers in a row and will gain 1.5 grade level equivalents in contrast to a bad teacher that will get .5 years for one academic year (Davis-Washington, 2011). When this happens at the primary levels, research has indicated that the education lost by students in an ineffective teacher's class can be almost irreversible (Stronge, 2010; Thomas et al., 2010).

Additionally, there are residual impacts of teachers' effectiveness on student achievement. If students have fewer effective teachers in their first years in school and highly effective teachers in subsequent years, their academic achievement would still not exceed those students who were assigned to effective teachers each year (Gallagher, 2002; Stronge, 2010). The ability or inability of all students to have access to effective teachers may help to explain the disparities that continue to exist despite legislation such as ESSA (2015) which emphasizes teacher accountability. Urban schools are more likely to suffer from teacher shortages than rural or suburban schools (Gutierrez, 2006). In fact, Darling-Hammond (1988) argues that the single greatest cause of educational inequity is the disproportionate exposure of minority and low socioeconomic students to inexperienced teachers . In order to address disparities, effective teachers are critical.

A study indicated that there was no difference in the response of students from different ethnic groups when the teacher is effective (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Highly effective teachers also produced student literacy achievement that exceeded the best standardized tests (Allington & Johnston, 2000). In addition to student achievement, strong teachers also affect student attitudes in reading and math (Emmer & Everston, 1979). So, not only do effective teachers positively impact student achievement, but also their attitudes towards core academic subjects, thus, showing the need for effective

teachers (La Masa, 2005; Lyon, 2009; Phillips, 2005; Sagona, 2012; Stronge, 2007, 2010; Thomas et al., 2010).

Strong instructional leadership impacts student achievement as well (McEwan, 2003). Hallinger and Heck (1996) synthesized 15 years of research on the impact that principals have on schools. They concluded that principals have a measurable, but indirect, effect on school effectiveness and student achievement. Thus, in order to impact student achievement, principals must become instructional leaders.

Consequently, by not only successfully identifying the traits that comprise an effective teacher but using research to develop policy and incorporating research to guide practice, it can help school administrators not only to hire the most talented teachers but also to retain effective teachers through effective teacher evaluation (Sagona, 2012; Stronge, 2007, 2010).

Effective Instruction and Reading

Schools and administrators across the country continue to look for ways to increase reading achievement and decrease achievement gaps (McGrath, 2010). Research indicates that students who are reading below grade level when they leave third grade are less likely to read on grade level after third grade than do students who read at or above grade level. Federal statistics show that 30% of fourth grade students score below a basic level in reading (Kilpatrick, 2015). Kilpatrick (2015) cites a study in which 1,300 adults who were diagnosed with a reading disability at age 7 were found to be less likely to earn postsecondary degrees and earned lower incomes than students who were average or above average readers in third grade when researchers followed up with these adults 30 years later.

Teachers have a great impact on reading achievement. Economists Rivkin et al. (2005) concluded at the end of their study that teachers have powerful effects on reading achievement. Results from their study indicated that a standard deviation increase in average teacher quality for a grade raised average student achievement in the grade by .095 standard deviations in reading (Stronge, 2010). Additional research suggests that lower achieving students benefit when teacher effectiveness increases and there is a negative cumulative effect of ineffective teachers on student achievement over time (Gallagher, 2002; Stronge, 2010).

As instructional leaders within schools, districts hold principals responsible for student achievement. Though principals do not have a direct impact on student achievement, research does point to the pivotal role principals play in implementing instructional programs (J. Anderson, 1998; Clark & Duggins, 2016; McGrath, 2010; Murphy, 2004; Stronge, 2010; Walker, 2014). Schools that are effective in teaching children to read have strong instructional leadership (Murphy, 2004). It is important for elementary principals to support reading instruction through ensuring school-wide alignment and common practices across grade levels (McGrath, 2010). The goal of school administrators is to make sure that the system-wide goals are translated into practices in the classroom by supervising classroom instruction through class observations and evaluating instruction to impact teacher behaviors (Anderson, 1998; McGrath, 2010; Murphy, 2004; Zesiger, 2015). In order to provide feedback during classroom observations, principals must be familiar with effective pedagogy related to reading instruction.

Principal Feedback and Impact on Effective Instruction

"Two leadership tasks invariably affecting the instructional climate are supervision and evaluation of teachers" (Gupton 2010, p. 93). Teacher evaluation has the potential to improve teacher and student performance (Gutierrez, 2006). Research has shown that quality teachers can improve student achievement. Wise, Darling-Hammond, Bernstein, and McLaughlin (1984) state that the main goal of teacher evaluation is to improve individual and collective teaching performance in schools. When teacher performance and quality improve, students will have a higher likelihood of being successful. Additionally, Wise et al. (1984) state that the most important relationship to establish is between teacher evaluations and student achievement. More so than the organization, leadership, or financial conditions, differences among teachers is the most significant reason for differences in achievement. Therefore, there is a great opportunity to improve student performance by focusing on teacher quality and performance in teacher evaluation (Stronge, 2010). Few if any school reforms or improvement plans can lead to improved changes in student achievement unless they positively impact teacher effectiveness (Stronge, 2010). School level reforms that focus on instruction but do not seek to address teacher classroom effectiveness, usually do not have noticeable correlation with higher student achievement.

School principals are typically tasked with implementing district evaluation systems and giving teachers feedback on their performance, and thus have the power to influence school performance and impact student achievement (Anderson, 1998; Clark & Duggins, 2016; McGrath, 2010; Murphy, 2004; Stronge, 2010; Walker, 2014). When classroom instruction is weak, the principal has significant responsibility to help to

improve teacher practice in order to impact student achievement (Gutierrez, 2006). In

order to make the evaluation process lead to changes in instructional practices and

improved student outcomes, school districts must examine how teachers are given

feedback.

Effective teacher evaluation practices for teachers and administrators.

Research indicates that teacher evaluation systems must meet the needs of educational

goals, management style, concept of teaching, and community values of the school

district and offer plausible solutions to concerns that are perceived to be major concerns

within schools, districts, and communities (Gregoire, 2009; Wise et al., 1984). Likewise,

school districts must also decide the purpose of the teacher evaluation system and match

the purpose to the process. Additionally, clear decisions regarding use of data and goals

of teacher evaluation needs to be considered when developing teacher evaluation systems

as well as the evaluation system being objective and standardized information about

teacher performance. Thus, district leadership plays an important role in determining the

effectiveness of the teacher evaluation system. Teacher evaluation must a high priority to

top level district leadership and necessary resources and time must be allocated to make it

a successful process for teachers and administrators (Gregoire, 2009; Walker, 2014).

Administrators need continuous training on current practices, knowledge, and skills in

order to conduct objective evaluations, identify high quality teachers, and drive

professional development and teachers need training on the process (Gregoire, 2009;

Mathes, Mixon, & Betts, 2009; Walker, 2014; Wolfrom, 2009).

Teacher evaluation should include involvement of stakeholders on multiple levels

to include teachers (Gregoire, 2009; Mathes et al., 2009; Walker, 2014; Wise et al.,

1984). Successful school districts employ the assistance of master teachers and/or site-based teams who have knowledge in specific content areas to help with evaluating teachers. While it is generally accepted that principals' expertise is enough to assist beginning teachers, there is evidence that evaluators with subject area expertise are needed to help competent teachers to grow professionally (Gregoire, 2009).

It is also important that all stakeholders involved in teacher evaluation understand their important role in the process. For instance, teachers must be involved and use the evaluation process as a "supplement" to self-evaluation and must be involved in the ongoing evaluation of teacher effectiveness (Davis-Washington, 2011; Sorenson, 2010). Additionally, teachers and administrators should be more aware of the importance of teacher evaluation and the impact it can have on teacher quality and student achievement (Davis-Washington, 2011).

Furthermore, research states that effective teacher evaluation should include both formative and summative evaluation (Davis-Washington, 2011; Gregoire, 2009; Sorenson, 2010; Winslow, 2015; Wise et al., 1984; Wolfrom, 2009). Formative evaluation is to help improve instruction through ongoing feedback and summative evaluation is to judge the effectiveness of a teacher (Gregoire, 2009). Empirical studies about the use and effectiveness of formal evaluation by school principals shows that the formal evaluation process is important to the overall teacher evaluation process and most principals believe the formal observation is effective (Davis-Washington, 2011).

Lastly, teacher and administrator collaboration, common voice, professional growth, and practice of self-assessment are also essential components in effective evaluation practices (Walker, 2014). In order to accomplish this, leadership must foster

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supportive cultures and learning organizations, reflective practice by educators that is linked to practice, and leaders developing relationships (Murphy, 2004; Sorenson, 2010; Walker, 2014; Wolfrom, 2009). McGrath (2010) states that due to the need of principals to impact teacher behavior, it is important that principal behaviors be viewed as supportive by teachers. Principals can accomplish this by creating a collaborative culture in the school. In order to create a culture of feedback, there should be a time to share developmental ideas with colleagues in order to establish common language for thinking and discussing feedback; ask colleagues how best to support them when offering feedback; the feedback giver should consider their own way of knowing and how it may influence their way of giving feedback; consideration and aim to close gaps in lack of consistency between evaluators; colleagues over-reliance on positive or surface level feedback in order to protect relationships (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2014).

Impact of school administrator feedback on teacher performance. Providing meaningful feedback is critical to formative assessment (Hammitt, 2014). In much the same way, feedback is important to formative evaluation of teachers (Antonis, 2014; Clark & Duggins, 2016; Sorenson, 2010). Sadler (1989, p. 120) defined feedback as a "gap" and that the purpose of feedback is to reduce the gaps between where the student "is" and where he or she is supposed to be. Hattie and Timperley (2007) defined feedback as "information provided by an agent regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding" (p. 81). Hattie (2012) stated that feedback can

> provide cues that capture a person's attention and helps him or her to focus on succeeding with the task; it can direct attention towards the processes need to accomplish the task; it can provide information about ideas that have been

misunderstood; and it can be motivational so that students invest more effort or skill in the task. (p. 129)

Feedback should be given to all students, not just those students who are lower achieving. All students and teachers do not always find success the first time nor do they always know what to do next. Acknowledging errors allows for opportunities and Hattie (2012) defined errors as the "the difference between what we know and can do, and what we aim to know and do" (p. 130). Knowing errors is crucial to moving towards success and this is the fundamental purpose of feedback. Providing teachers with quality feedback is as important as providing feedback to students and has been identified as one of the most important practices instructional leaders can implement in their schools (Clark & Duggins, 2016; Sorenson, 2010).

Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2014) argued that it is critically important to give and receive "meaningful, actionable, and effective" feedback to colleagues no matter their positions in schools (p. 16). In fact, without clear feedback from instructional leaders, it is almost guaranteed that there will be no transfer of information gained through professional development into classroom practice. Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2014) developed a new approach to feedback called feedback for growth. In this approach, feedback is intentionally differentiated so that adults can best hear feedback, learn from it, receive it, and improve their instructional practice. According to Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2014, p. 18), research indicates that most adults make meaning with one of four different developmental systems: the instrumental knowers ("tell me what I need to do"), socializing knowers ("make me feel valued"), self-authoring knowers ("let me demonstrate competency"), or self-

transforming knowers ("we can figure this out together"). These developmental systems influence how adults make sense of the world and, specifically, influence the way feedback is received. Our lens, or developmental systems, impact the types of feedback that are found to be helpful or not.

Characteristics of effective feedback. Effective feedback is specific and useful. It provides "actionable" information (Wiggins, 2012). Actionable feedback must also be accepted by those receiving the feedback in order to help teachers grow (Antonis, 2014; Clark & Duggins, 2016; Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2014; Wiggins, 2012). According to Wiggins (2012), many times feedback interactions lead to arguments because the givers of feedback are not as descriptive as they need to be and make inferences from the data instead of just presenting the data. In clinical observation, goal oriented and objective feedback is necessary. In order for principals, who are charged with providing teachers feedback to provide actionable feedback or effective feedback in general, they must be properly prepared. Effective supervisors and coaches are careful to observe and make comments on what they observe based on clear goal statements. Effective coaches also are sure to give actionable feedback based on what went well as well as what did not go as well. In addition to specific feedback, it is important to provide it in a way that does not overwhelm the person receiving the feedback (Wiggins, 2012). Supervisors should give performers one important thing that they noticed that if the performer changes will yield quick and noticeable improvements. Additionally, feedback should be timely. In education, timely feedback is often an area of concern. Feedback must also be ongoing. We adjust our feedback when we have opportunities to use it in addition to receiving it. When the feedback comes too late, the performer does

not have the opportunity to adjust their performance. The more that feedback is given in a timely fashion that is in real time, the better the performance will be.

Teachers liked having administrators visit their classrooms (Muhonen-Hernandez, 2005). In fact, walk-throughs that were frequent, brief, and unscheduled by administrators can foster a culture of collaborative learning and dialogue (Clark & Duggins, 2016; McGrath, 2010; Muhonen-Hernandez, 2005; Murphy, 2004; Walker, 2014; Wolfrom, 2009). Thus, frequent classroom observations by administrators can lead to improved teacher practice if they are conducted in a "positive, respectful way, providing constructive feedback" (Muhonen-Hernandez, 2005, p. 108).

Effective instructional leaders agree that observation and feedback are near the top of the list in terms of ways that improve instruction (McEwan, 2003). In order to provide feedback that will improve instruction, instructional leaders must understand instructional strategies and models. During observations, principals must be able to focus in order to capture details as well as the big picture and be able to communicate their observations in written form. They must then share their feedback in a manner that encourages open discussion and leads teachers to reflect on their teaching. Bird and Little (1985) stated that this "reciprocity" must be done and suggested five steps principals should do to ensure that observations results in improving instruction and student learning:

- Principal must bring knowledge and skill to the observation to help the teacher
- The teacher must acknowledge that they have something to learn from hearing the principals discuss their teaching

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- The principal must demonstrate a level of skill and knowledge to give credence to their statements about the teacher's performance

- The principal must be able to provide teachers with a detailed recording of the observation, an idea or suggestion of a different technique or practice, a description of what went well in the lesson, and be able to personally teach a lesson if necessary

- Teachers must try to change their teaching practices in response to the observation and evaluation. (pp.17-18).

Barriers to feedback. Educational leaders have voiced their views on the importance of feedback. In a 2014 survey of school and district leaders in New York City, 75% responded that giving feedback was the most important skill they wanted to build and grow related to having difficult conversations (Drago-Severson & Blum-Stefano, 2014). Research suggests that most teachers prefer feedback from administrators but perceive the feedback they receive not to be helpful in their practice (D. Anderson, 2016; Clark & Duggins, 2016). Feedback scholars have stated that feedback exchange has challenges such as a lack of meaningful feedback or collaboration and the time demands of formal observation systems in schools (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2014). This may be due in large part to the lens or developmental system that teachers operate under which impacts their views of feedback that they are given (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2014). Teachers also have perceptions about the level of expertise of principals and their ability to judge teacher quality (Gregoire, 2009). Commonly cited concerns of teachers are lack of subject area expertise, lack of understanding of classroom context, and timing of evaluation (Gregoire, 2009).

In the past, administrative feedback has not influenced teaching practices. In addition to teacher perception of the feedback, this has been, in part, due to feedback that has lacked connection to student learning (D. Anderson, 2016; Winslow, 2015). The evaluation part of principalship is most often seen as time consuming that creates more problems that can impede a teacher's professionalism rather than helping to facilitate growth (Gupton, 2010). Furthermore, the feedback from standard annual and biannual observations conducted by administrators do not allow instructional leaders to assess the true quality of instruction (Gupton, 2010).

The barriers to principals in becoming instructional leaders capable of providing quality feedback have been noted to be lack of teacher cooperation and lack of time. When there is distrust of principals on teachers' part, there is distance between principals and teachers which results in principals visiting classrooms less. This impacts their knowledge of what is happening in the schools and inside classrooms (McEwan, 2003). Lack of time is another reason cited as a barrier to instructional leadership; but one of the differences between strong instructional leaders and average principals is how they choose to spend the time that they have available.

Strong instructional leaders work to break down the barriers by attending curriculum training programs with their teachers, teaching lessons to students, and observing master teachers to learn effective instruction. Strong instructional leaders delegate in order to spend more time on teaching and learning as opposed to average leaders that focus on management (Gupton, 2010). Additionally, strong leaders conduct frequent drop-ins between 10-15 minutes per classroom to allow them to visit more classrooms each day. These visits allow them to not only connect with students but also

to gather insights into how to assist teachers. Furthermore, strong leaders spend more time in the classrooms of weak teachers in order to keep track of what is going on. Strong and effective principals have a good sense of what is happening in the classroom (Gupton, 2010).

Instructional leadership requires that performance evaluation and feedback focus on facilitating growth and development among teachers to improve student learning. The professional community of a school can transform the evaluation system from being traditionally oriented observations and checklists that are top down to collaborative processes where the teachers and administrators work together to help each other grow and learn (Gupton, 2010). Just as principals expect teachers to improve in instruction, principals must be willing to improve their observation and conferencing skills (McEwan, 2003). Effective administrators are clearly moving toward a role as a facilitator of teacher and staff growth and development.

Teacher and Administrator Perceptions of Teacher Evaluation and Feedback

Over the years, studies have been conducted in order to gain a better understanding of perceptions of those involved in the evaluation process, both teachers and administrators, and how perceptions of the evaluation process impact the evaluation system (Antonis, 2014; Winslow, 2015). There is literature that indicates that many teachers and administrators do not believe that evaluation systems have a positive impact on teacher practices and student outcomes (Antonis, 2014; Beresh, 1987; Gregoire, 2009; Winslow, 2015). In fact, many teachers do not believe that they can earn higher ratings no matter the amount of effort they put forth. This way of thinking relates to "locus of control," which is about the extent that individuals believe that they can control events

that affect them (Rotter, 1966, p. 5). Teachers who have an internal locus of control believe that their success or failure is the direct result of their hard work. Likewise, teachers who have an external locus of control believe that their success or failure is the result of factors outside of their control, such as fate and luck (Rotter, 1966). This concept impacts teacher and administrator perceptions of evaluation.

Teacher and administrator perceptions of the evaluation process and the extent to which these key stakeholders believe that the process has a positive impact on teacher practice and, ultimately student achievement is important to understand for the evaluation process. Research has suggested studies of validity do not change teachers' perceptions if they believe the teacher evaluation system is invalid (Gregoire, 2009). The perception of validity is also essential in the ability to maintain the viability of the teacher evaluation system (Gregoire, 2009). Furthermore, research suggests that educational reforms that support teachers and staff members directly involved have a higher likelihood of being successful (De Larkin, 2013; Hopkins, 2013; Lawrence, 2014; Leahy, 2014; Muhonen-Hernandez, 2005; Wyman, 1999). Therefore, teacher and administrator buy-in is essential to the evaluation process and requires increased understanding.

Ames (1989) found that there were discrepancies among the principals' perceptions of themselves in his study of 250 principals and teacher perceptions of those principals. In this study, principals were asked if they spent time supervising teachers and almost half of them responded that they did compared to teacher reports that only 30% of the principals did it. Additionally, when principals in the same study were asked if they spent time managing the curriculum, nearly 75% responded that they did compared with teacher responses that indicated that less than half of the principals spent

time managing the curriculum. Thus, there are clear differences in perceptions of principal practice between teachers and principals related to evaluation and feedback.

Summary

Highly effective teachers can impact student learning in a positive way and is the primary school-based factor that impacts student academic achievement (Alexander, 2016; Davis-Washington, 2011; Ding & Sherman, 2006; Gallagher, 2002; Gutierrez, 2006; Lyon, 2009; Stronge, 2010). If students have fewer effective teachers in their first years in school and highly effective teachers in subsequent years, their academic achievement would still not exceed those students who were assigned to effective teachers each year (Gallagher, 2002; Stronge, 2010). Thus, teaching and instruction matter significantly to student achievement.

Teacher evaluation and administrators have a great deal of potential to improve teacher practice and student performance through meaningful feedback (J. Anderson, 1998; Clark & Duggins, 2016; Gutierrez, 2006; McGrath, 2010; Murphy, 2004; Stronge, 2010; Walker, 2004). In order to impact teacher practice and, ultimately, student performance, administrators and teachers must believe in the validity of teacher evaluation and administrator feedback (Antonis, 2014; Beresh, 1987; Gregoire, 2009; Winslow, 2015). Obstacles such as teacher perceptions of the fairness of evaluation systems and the belief that they do not receive helpful feedback from administrators has a negative impact on changing teacher practices for the better (Gregoire, 2009). In order to address this perception by teachers, administrators must create trusting environments that promote collaboration as well as create mechanisms to ensure that teachers receive

quality feedback in their instructional areas by knowledgeable evaluators (Gregoire, 2009; Murphy, 2004; Sorenson, 2010; Walker, 2014; Wolfrom, 2009).

Literature points to the fact that principals serve an important role in the evaluation process. Administrators provide teachers with feedback to improve their instructional practice, but teacher perceptions of teacher evaluation observation and the impact they believe it has on their practice is still being studied. Likewise, administrator perceptions of the impact of their feedback on teacher instructional practice also requires additional research considering the extensive role administrators play in the evaluation process (Antonis, 2014). The literature strongly suggests that teachers' perceptions are a major factor in influencing the degree to which they accept an evaluators rating. While there have been many studies on perception of the teacher evaluation system, there are few studies that examined the impact of formative feedback on changing specific teacher practice (D. Anderson, 2016), particularly in the area of reading. As we continue to strive to improve student reading achievement, close achievement gaps, and ensure that no students are disproportionately exposed to ineffective teachers and practices per ESSA, it is important to explore teacher and administrator perceptions regarding the impact of formative feedback during evaluations on teacher practices in reading instruction. Thus, this study of teacher and principal perceptions of the feedback given as a part of the teacher evaluation program in a Virginia school district seeks to provide district leaders and school leaders with more information about how to better support teachers during the evaluation process by helping leaders to understand teachers' and administrators' perceptions of evaluation and feedback on reading instructional practice.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to identify how teachers and administrators perceive the teacher evaluation process, specifically, teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the impact of administrator feedback in formal observations during the evaluation process on teachers' reading instructional practice. In order to achieve this purpose, a qualitative study was conducted using a semistructured interview process for teachers and administrators as well as focus groups for teachers who participated in the study to collect data.

Chapter 2 provided a review of literature that pertained to teacher effectiveness, effective reading instruction, the impact of principal feedback on teacher instruction, and teacher and principal perceptions of teacher evaluation and feedback. Feedback given during teacher evaluation can improve teacher practice and student performance through meaningful feedback, but teachers must believe in the validity of principal feedback (Anderson, 1998; Clark & Duggins, 2016; Gutierrez, 2006). The difference between teacher and principal perceptions has been shown to be an obstacle to teacher feedback according to extant literature. Many teachers want feedback as indicated through research but do not believe that the feedback that they receive from principals is helpful or useful (Ames, 1989; Antonis, 2014; Beresh, 1987; McEwan, 2003). According

to research, there are a number of reasons for these teachers' perceptions which include their own development lens, lack of content knowledge on behalf of principals, and lack of timely feedback to name a few; these barriers must be addressed by administrators creating trusting environments that promote collaboration as well as administrators ensuring that teachers receive quality feedback in their instructional areas (Gregoire, 2009; Murphy, 2004; Sorenson, 2010; Walker, 2014; Wolfrom, 2009). Due to the importance of feedback on the part of teachers and principals, this study focused on evaluating teacher and principal perceptions of feedback given by principals and received by teachers and the impact that it has on changing teacher instructional practices in reading instruction.

Evaluation Questions

In order to study the perceptions of feedback given by K-5 principals by both teachers who receive feedback and principals who deliver feedback, the following evaluation questions were developed to understand the inputs, process, and outcomes of the evaluation program, specifically focusing on feedback:

1. What are elementary school teachers' perceptions regarding how school administrator feedback given in formal observations impacts their instructional practices in reading?

2. What are elementary school administrators' perceptions regarding how their feedback in formal observations impacts teacher instructional practices in reading?

3. What recommendations do elementary teachers and school administrators have to improve the positive impact of formal observations to support teacher improvement in reading instructional practices?

Method

This study used a pragmatic paradigm for program evaluation as the theoretical framework to identify K-5 teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the impact of administrators' feedback on teacher instructional practices in reading in a rural school district in Virginia. Trochim (1998) defined program evaluation as "the profession that uses formal methodologies to provide useful empirical evidence about public entities in decision-making contexts that are inherently political and involve multiple often-conflicting stakeholders, where resources are seldom sufficient, and where time-pressures are salient" (p. 243). This definition is an accurate and appropriate definition for this study of teacher evaluation feedback perceptions in K-5 schools.

The CIPP model of program evaluation is the program evaluation type that was used for this study. The CIPP model was developed by Daniel Stufflebeam (2001). His 4-part model of evaluation includes the context evaluation (prioritizes goals), input evaluation (assesses different approaches), the product evaluation (assesses the intended and unintended outcomes). The input evaluation is used to assess the plan for implementing the reading professional development and the LCPS Teacher Performance Evaluation System, specifically the portions of the program that relate directly to principal feedback to teachers. Process evaluation is used to monitor the ongoing implementation of strategies learned from professional development provided by LCPS, as well as principal feedback given to teachers regarding their implementation of the reading strategies. The product evaluation is used to determine the impact of the initial intended outcome of the program in increasing knowledge of effective reading instruction for teachers and principals and reading instructional practice. This evaluation adheres to

the program evaluation standards in the areas of propriety, utility, feasibility, and accuracy. The standards help to guide evaluators and the evaluation process to ensure evaluation quality (Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011).

Participants. The participants in this study were teacher and administrator representatives from three of the four elementary schools in the LCPS district.

Teachers. The target population for this study was K-5 teachers in three of the four elementary schools in a small rural Virginia district that is being referred to as LCPS. Twelve teachers—four from each of the three schools—were selected from the elementary schools using purposeful sampling based on tenure status, grade level, and subject area (reading). Two teachers were selected in Grades K-2 from each of the schools, and one was tenured and the other nontenured. Additionally, two teachers were selected in Grades 3-5 from each of the schools, and one was tenured, and the other teacher was nontenured. This purposeful convenience sample of teachers that included selection from each school was determined based upon an effort to achieve a representative sample. The researcher collaborated with the administrators within the school buildings to identify all teachers in K-2 and 3-5 within the district. Grades 3-5 are departmentalized, so it was important to the researcher for administrators to help identify which teachers in Grades 3-5 that teach reading. Once all teachers in the district had been identified, the researcher also worked with building administrators to determine which teachers were tenured and nontenured. Once this information had been collected, the researcher used the information that had been provided on number of years in the classroom and their grade levels and selected participants for the study using purposeful sampling. Twelve teachers were selected using this process to participate in the focus

group. Selected teachers were contacted individually to inform them of their selection for participating in the focus group as were building level administrators.

   Principals. Three administrative teams were interviewed for this study, which consisted of the principal and assistant principal from each of the three elementary schools located in the school district.

Data Sources

   This study used the CIPP model (Stufflebeam, 2001), which falls under the use branch of program evaluation. Program evaluations in this branch typically focuses on mixed methods for data collection but my study used the qualitative approach for data collection which included teacher and principal interviews and a teacher focus group. Qualitative design is usually associated with process evaluations and this is the specific area that I focused on in this study of principal feedback to teachers regarding the reading program.

   Teacher interviews. A primary data source for this study was a semistructured interview for teachers. In a semistructured interview, the researcher asks open-ended questions, with queries that probe for more detailed and contextual data. Participants' answers provide rich and in-depth information that helps us to understand unique and shared perspectives (Cachia & Millward, 2011). The teacher interviews were conducted prior to conducting the teacher focus group to limit the influence of the focus group on teacher responses during the individual interviews. The interview instrument contained 14 open-ended questions.

   The interview began with participants responding to three questions to provide background information including the grade level that they teach, the number of years

that they have taught overall and within the district, and the school in which they teach. Each question asked teachers to provide information regarding the teacher observations and feedback received during formal observations. Please refer to Appendix A for the complete list of teacher interview questions.

Teacher interview protocol. The interview protocol developed for this study was based on the research and work of Towe (2012) on teacher perceptions about the influence of the teacher evaluation process, and on Winslow's (2015) study of teacher and administrator perceptions of the effectiveness of the feedback in terms of improving teachers' instructional practices. Towe's (2012) and Winslow's (2015) interview questions were adapted with written permission from the authors (Appendixes B and C). Interview questions and protocol for the study were developed for teachers after questions were adapted with written permission from the authors. The interview protocol included information related to the time and date the interviews took place as well as the persons who were interviewed. The protocol also included directions the researcher shared with interview participants as well as a script for the researcher to use to introduce the project and its purpose. The interview protocol for teachers was developed in order to help with reliability. The same interview questions were used for all teachers who were interviewed. Teacher interviews took 60 minutes to complete.

Using a standardized teacher interview protocol helped to ensure reliability and that all interviews were conducted in the same manner. I read the directions for each teacher interview and asked each teacher the same questions in the same order as outlined in the interview protocol. Responses from the teacher interview were audio recorded and

transcribed. I took notes during each teacher interview. Both the transcription and notes taken during each teacher interview were analyzed.

Focus group. Another data source that was used for the study was a teacher focus group. Focus group research is a process for collecting qualitative data that involves engaging a small number of people in an informal group discussion (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009). It is a popular way to use a group interview setting for data collection (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). This data source is less threatening to many research participants and is helpful for participants because it enables them to discuss perceptions and opinions (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). The benefits to using focus groups are that they are efficient in obtaining data from multiple participants, the environment of focus groups are "socially oriented" which helps to create a sense of belonging which can help them to feel safe to share information, and the interactions that occur between participants during focus groups can also help provide additional information (Onweugbuzie et al., 2009). Chiu (2003) used focus groups extensively in her research. She developed an approach to integrate the steps of action research with focus group methodology ad created these three basic stages:

- Stage 1: Problem Identification. Evaluators need to build their knowledge of the community to identify stakeholders and build relationships with participants at all levels of the program
- Stage 2: Solution generation. Focus groups can be used to develop solutions and identify resources to support the implementation of the program. This is done by building on identified concerns and issues.

- Stage 3: Implementation and evaluation. Focus groups can be used to problem

    solve regularly during implementation and evaluation is a way to reflect on

    the effectiveness of the intervention as well as the intervention itself. (p. 167)

Chiu's (2003) approach to focus groups aligns well with the aims of this study and her

integration of action research and focus group methodology were incorporated into the

design of this study. In order to prevent contamination of individual teacher responses,

the focus group will be conducted after individual teacher interviews. This will also help

to gather additional insights that were not obtained during the individual teacher

interviews.

Focus group protocol. The questions and protocol for this teacher focus group

were developed for use in meeting with a group of 12 teachers, and discussion of their

perceptions of the feedback given in formal observations, thus purposeful sampling was

used. The teacher focus group will represent multiple grade levels and schools within the

district. Additionally, the focus group represented teachers who were both tenured and

nontenured with varying years of experience in the classroom teaching reading. The

focus group protocol included a script for the researcher to read at the start of the focus

group to introduce the purpose of the study. The focus group met for a duration of

approximately 90 minutes.

The questions for the focus group included three questions to provide background

information: the grade level they taught, the number of years that they had taught in total,

the number of years that they had taught in the district, and the school in which they

work. The questions for the focus group also included nine questions related to teacher

evaluation feedback questions. Please refer to Appendix D for the complete list of questions to be used in the focus group.

Several strategies were used to ensure validity and accuracy of the focus group design and questions. The research instrument for the focus group was reviewed by three practicing school administrators, including a current assistant superintendent in instruction and two elementary principals who provided their expertise as current practitioners in the field. Participants reviewed the questions, directions, and format of the administrator interview as well as the protocol for the focus group. The expert reviewers reviewed the focus group protocol and interview to ensure that the questions in the interview included content that is relevant to the study and supports the research questions.

In order to ensure reliability with the use of the protocol with the focus group, I followed the focus group protocol which included following the directions outlined in the focus group procedures. Responses from the focus group were audio recorded and transcribed. I also took notes using the focus group form. Both the transcription and notes taken during the focus group were analyzed.

Administrator interviews. Another primary data source for the study was semistructured interviews with principals and their assistant principals in three of the four elementary schools in the district. During the semistructured interview, the researcher asked open-ended questions. Interview questions and protocol were developed for administrators after it was adapted with written permission from Towe (2012) and Winslow (2015). The administrator interview instrument contained nine open-ended questions. The administrator interview began with participants responding to three

questions to provide background information including the number of years participants

had been administrators overall and within the district, years of teaching experience prior

to becoming an administrator, the subject area(s) they taught prior to becoming

administrators, and the school in which they led. Each question asked administrators to

provide information regarding the teacher evaluation and feedback given in formal

observations. Please refer to Appendix E for the complete set of administrator questions.

Administrator interview protocol. The administrator interview protocol included

information related to the time and date the interviews took place as well as the persons

who were interviewed. The protocol also included directions the researcher shared with

interview participants as well as a script for the researcher to use to introduce the project

to administrators and its purpose. The administrator interview protocol helped to ensure

reliability and that all interviews were conducted in the same manner. I read the

directions for each administrator interview and asked each administrative pair the same

questions in the same order as outlined in the interview protocol. Administrator

interviews took 60 minutes to complete.

The teacher interview focus group protocol, and administrator protocol were

reviewed by three experts knowledgeable of teacher evaluation or interview design to

help ensure the accuracy and validity of research results. Panel experts reviewed the

questions, directions, and format of the teacher interview as well as the protocol for the

interview. The expert panel members reviewed the interview protocol and interview

questions to ensure that the questions in the interview included content that was relevant

to the study and supports the research questions. A panel of experts were solicited to

help with ensuring the validity, accuracy, and reliability of all instruments.

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Recommendations and final revisions by the panel of expert reviewers were incorporated into the final teacher and administrator interviews as well as the questions for the teacher focus group.

One final procedure that I used to make sure the results from the study were accurate, valid, and reliable was to clarify research bias. Clarification of researcher bias "provides the reader with information as to how the researchers interpreted the findings" (Gould, 2015). Information was given about the researcher's background to provide insights into the researcher that may have influence research interpretations and analysis. It is important to clarify research bias in qualitative studies due to the more subjective role of the researcher than is found in quantitative research (Gould, 2015).

Data Collection

Teacher interviews. Teacher interviews were conducted prior to conducting the focus group. I set up individual interviews with six teachers who would be participating in the focus group and interviewed two teachers from each of the three schools using a semistructured interview. Teacher interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes. Data from individual interviews were collected by tape recording the interviews and taking notes simultaneously. The interview audio tape was transcribed as well as notes taken during the interviews by the moderator and assistant moderator.

Teacher focus group. The focus group was conducted in a location within the school district and had a moderator facilitating the discussion. The moderator for this study was the researcher. The researcher in this study was previously employed in the school district as a building principal for 3 years and an assistant principal for 3 years. Due to previous employment, the researcher had knowledge of many key stakeholders

within the school district. Additionally, due to working in the district, the researcher did not include the elementary school in which she worked previously in order to limit bias. The moderator recorded the session, took notes, and analyzed and/or interpreted the focus group data. The moderator recorded responses using a recording device and took notes on visual cues that could not be recorded using an audio recording device by using the focus group interview sheets (see Appendix F).

Additionally, an assistant moderator took notes to focus not only on the collective responses of the group to focus group questions but also to gather insight about the individual views that may be have been held by focus group members. The assistant moderator gathered information regarding consensus and dissention of the focus group around the 10 questions asked during the focus group using the matrix for assessing level of consensus or dissension within focus group. The assistant moderator is a retired secretary who has extensive training and experience with taking notes and transcription. She has no previous working relationship with the school district that was used in this study, which helped to limit potential bias. The researcher provided adequate training to the assistant moderator on how to code responses from participants using the pre-established codes for taking notes on individual and group responses to the focus group questions.

The researcher used the consensus and dissention matrix developed by Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009) because most focus group analysts use the group as the unit of analysis; however, using the group as the unit of analysis prevents the analysis of individual focus group members. Focusing on the group as the unit of analysis would prevent the researcher from documenting focus group members who do not contribute to

questions, categories, or themes (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). The following codes were

used to gather insight into the views held by the group as a collective as well as to

provide some insights into different views that may have been held by members of the

focus group regarding the 10 questions that they were asked: *A* (agreement: verbal or

nonverbal), *D* (disagreement: verbal or nonverbal), *SE* (provided significant statement or

example suggesting agreement), *SD* (provided significant statement or example

suggesting disagreement, *NR* (did not indicate agreement or disagreement: no response).

In order to gain insights into individual group members, Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009)

recommends that researchers should not only record verbatim statements but also, they

should include information about the proportion of members that are a part of the

consensus that leads to emerging themes. By including this information, it will help to

enhance the researcher's implementation of Chiu's (2003) action research and focus

group methodology regarding identifying problems of the group through emerging

themes, generate possible solutions, and evaluate the implementation of the program.

While Onwuegbuzie and colleagues' (2009) approach to focus groups is a newer

approach with limited support, it does address concerns related to responses of focus

group members being limited at times due to being uncomfortable in the focus group

setting and/or silencing voices of participants that may be less articulate in presenting

their points of view. It is important not to silence the voices of those participants that

may articulate their views in a way that the researcher finds useful or have limited

responses due to the setting (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). A sample of the matrix for

assessing level of consensus and dissension in a focus group is included below in Figure

4.

Focus Group Question	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6	Participant 7	Participant 8	Participant 9	Participant 10	Participant 11	Participant 12
1												
2												
3												
4												
5												
6												
7												
8												
9												
10												

Figure 4. Matrix for assessing level of consensus in focus group. Adapted from "A Qualitative Framework for Collecting and Analyzing Data in Focus Group Research," by A. Onwuegbuzie, W. Dickinson, N. Leech, and A. Zoran, 2009, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 8*, p. 3.

Principal interviews. The researcher conducted team interviews with the three principals and three assistant principals in the elementary schools. The three administrative teams (consisting of the principal and assistant principal in each of the three schools) were contacted via phone call and e-mail. The interview of each administrative school team was conducted at different times but the principal and assistant principals at each school were interviewed together. It was anticipated that the administrator team interviews would last approximately 60 minutes. Data from interviews were collected by audio recording the interviews and taking notes simultaneously. The interview audio tape and notes taken during the interview were transcribed by the moderator and assistant moderator.

Data Analysis

The moderator and assistant moderator transcribed teacher and administrator interviews as well as the teacher focus group. All words stated were transcribed verbatim but sounds that participants made (e.g., hmm and/or uh) were not transcribed. Other reactions such as pauses, and laughter were transcribed. Nonverbal behaviors were not

transcribed. Once transcription was completed for teacher and administrator interviews and the focus group, the data from interviews with teachers and administrators and the teacher focus group were analyzed using transcript-based analysis. In this analysis, the researcher included the transcription of audiotapes as well as field notes that were constructed by the moderator and assistant moderator (Mertens & Wilson, 2012; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009).

Evaluation question 1. *What are elementary school teachers' perceptions regarding how school administrator feedback given in formal observations impacts their instructional practices in reading?* Evaluation Question 1 results were analyzed using transcript-based analysis of teacher responses during the focus group and individual interviews as well as thematic analysis.

Evaluation question 2. *What are elementary school administrators' perceptions regarding how their feedback in formal observations impacts teacher instructional practices in reading?* Evaluation Question 2 results were analyzed using transcript-based analysis of teacher responses during the focus group and individual interviews as well as thematic analysis.

Evaluation question 3. *What recommendations do elementary teachers and school administrators make to improve the positive impact of formal observations to support teacher improvement in reading instructional practices?* Evaluation Question 3 results were analyzed using transcript-based analysis of teacher responses during the focus group and individual interviews as well as thematic analysis.

Once transcription was completed, I gave participants the opportunity to check the transcriptions to ensure that their ideas and statements were captured accurately.

Thematic analysis. After member checking of transcriptions by interview participants (both teacher and administrator interview participants) and focus group participants, I did several reads of the transcripts to become more familiar with the material. I merged data from all sources, otherwise known as triangulation, which helped with the credibility of the study (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). Member checking involves evaluators sharing their data with participants in order to obtain feedback on the perceived accuracy and the quality of their work. This is done in order to enhance credibility with qualitative data collection (Mertens & Wilson, 2012).

Creswell (2014) states that in qualitative data analysis, it is important to segment and take apart the data as well as putting it back together. I adhered to Creswell's suggestion by reading the transcripts of interviews and the focus group the first time to become more familiar with the material. During the second reading and subsequent readings, I began to identify key ideas or themes to establish a baseline for coding. Codes are the "building blocks of qualitative data analysis" (Mertens & Wilson, 2012, p. 445). Codes are typically developed after careful reading of transcripts. After repeating this process, major themes and other categories may emerge and specific codes are assigned. After coding information from interviews and the focus group, I found emergent themes by identifying common language and ideas present in interview and focus group transcriptions. Identifying emergent themes helps to identify trends that make sense of the data (Creswell, 2014). According to Gibson and Brown (2009), coding qualitative data is nontechnical and that the ultimate purpose is to find common themes in data to help make sense of phenomenon.

Table of specifications. A table of specifications is included to provide a clear correlation between the evaluation questions of the study and the questions included in the instruments used for the focus group, teacher, and administrator interviews (Table 2).

Table 2

Table of Specifications

Evaluation question	Data sources	Data analysis
1. What are elementary school teachers' perception regarding how school administrator feedback given in formal observations impacts their instructional practices in reading?	Teacher Interviews (Questions 1-13)	Transcription based analysis and thematic analysis.
2. What are elementary school administrators' perceptions regarding how their feedback in formal observations impacts teacher instructional practices in reading?	Administrator Interviews (Questions 1-8)	Transcription based analysis and thematic analysis.
3. What recommendations do elementary teachers and school administrators make to improve the positive impact of the formal observations to support teacher improvement in reading instructional practices?	Teacher Interviews (Question 14) Teacher Focus Group (Question 9) Administrator Interviews (Questions 7, 9)	

Delimitations, Limitations, Assumptions.

Delimitations. This study includes the following delimitations:

- Participation in this study was limited to public school K-5 teachers in a rural school district in central Virginia. Six to 12 teachers within the district as well as private and charter school teachers were excluded from this study.

- This study was limited to teacher and administrator perceptions of the impact of feedback on reading instruction. Perceptions of feedback on other subject areas such as math, social studies, and science will not be included in this study.

Limitations. This study had several limitations, including:

- The sample size of the population in the study was limited given the fact that it focused only on K-5 teachers in one Virginia school district.

- Teachers and administrators may not have been as forthcoming in their responses due to the small size of the participant population.

- All elementary schools used the same evaluation tool, but the manner of the feedback varied from school to school, which could impact teacher perceptions at different schools.

Due to the aforementioned issues and the limited nature of the study, this study cannot be generalized to populations that differ significantly from the sample used in this study. Instead, this study will help to inform practice within the school district involved in this study.

Assumptions. The school district where this program evaluation took place initially implemented the teacher evaluation system in 2011. There have been new teachers and administrators to the district, but this study assumes that all new staff members have been trained in the teacher evaluation system. Furthermore, this study assumes that all participants involved in this study understand that feedback is a part of the school district's evaluation program. Lastly, this study assumes that teachers and

school principals in the school district of study all follow the prescribed teacher performance evaluation program in the district.

Ethical Considerations

The evaluator received approval for the study from The William and Mary School of Education Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to beginning any research per the requirements of the College of William and Mary, and in accordance with 45 CFR 46, of the Code of Federal Regulations, The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, before proceeding with the program evaluation (Gould, 2015). Additionally, the researcher submitted the proposal to the school district's superintendent for instruction for review and approval before proceeding with the program evaluation.

Adherence to Professional Evaluation Standards

This evaluation adhered to the program evaluation standards in the areas of propriety, utility, feasibility and accuracy. The standards help to guide evaluators and the evaluation process to ensure evaluation quality (Yarbrough et al., 2011).

Propriety. Propriety standards serve to make sure that evaluations are ethical, moral, proper, legal, and professional (Mertens & Wilson, 2012; Yarbrough et al., 2011). I ensured that these standards were met through the process of my evaluation by making certain that every participant's privacy and psychological well-being was protected throughout the study. I have made sure that the evaluation process was transparent to participants and to the district that allowed me to conduct the evaluation. I was responsive to concerns and questions throughout the evaluation process and scheduled regular meetings with district representatives to report progress and give key stakeholders the opportunity to ask questions and express concerns. My contact information was also

provided for participants to ask questions and express any concerns during the evaluation process. Participants were free to withdraw from the study at any point. In addition to the aforementioned actions, propriety standards were also ensured through the review and approval of the proposal by my dissertation committee, The College of William and Mary's School of Education Internal Review Committee, and the school division's input to ensure protection to participants.

Utility. I have worked in the district that was the focus of my evaluation for 6 years. During that time, I have been able to establish relationships with members of central office as well as other building principals. I believe that these relationships assisted me during the evaluation due to the level of trust that had been established through my working relationships. Also, during that time, I experienced firsthand the evaluation process which also served to give me credibility with stakeholders as I had also worked directly with the evaluation system. My background using the teacher evaluation process was very helpful in establishing myself as a credible evaluator.

It is my intention that the results of this study will be useful to stakeholders within the school district in which this evaluation took place. In order to further the utility of this evaluation, I maintained open communication with central representatives, teachers, and administrators to better understand their ongoing needs and give a voice to stakeholders that had limited opportunity to share their perceptions of the evaluation process within their school and the district.

The data collected from the program evaluation were shared with stakeholders throughout the study and they will be able to use the information in whichever way will best suit them.

Feasibility. In order to ensure feasibility with the program evaluation, I discussed the teacher evaluation program with key stakeholders in the district to determine program evaluability. In keeping with Yarbrough et al. (2011), I conducted an evaluability assessment to ensure that the teacher evaluation program was prepared for a program evaluation prior to undertaking the evaluation. I reviewed handbooks and spoke with stakeholders to gain a deeper understanding of the overall context of the evaluation would be conducted, current values around the teacher evaluation program, and considered the resources that would be needed in order to complete the evaluation. All of this was done in order to increase evaluation feasibility (Yarbrough et al., 2011). Additionally, the format in which data were collected (focus groups and interviews) was familiar to participants which made our ability to complete the data collection process efficient as well as effective.

Accuracy. In order to ensure accuracy, I used reliable and valid research design with sound methodologies that provided data that the school district can use to make decisions regarding the teacher evaluation program in the division. I will report all findings and conclusions based on the data to minimize inconstancies, distortions, and misconceptions (Yarbrough et al., 2011). I will report all findings to the school district to help ensure all reporting and communication is valid.

About the researcher as participant. As a current building administrator, I conducted the study within a school district that I had worked in previously as a building level administrator. In order to minimize potential for bias or conflict of interest, I did not include participants in the elementary school where I served as principal in this evaluation. I only conducted this evaluation in the remaining three elementary schools.

This was done to improve the level of objectivity when interacting with participants and when analyzing evaluation data. The potential for bias may have arisen with interviewing the principals for the study due to my previous working relationships with them. In order to minimize potential for bias there, I had multiple people review the data I collected as well as analysis of the data which included stakeholders from the district central office, my dissertation chair, as well as my dissertation committee. These individuals helped to ensure objectivity.

CHAPTER 4

Results

This study sought to identify K-5 teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the impact of administrator feedback during the evaluation process on teacher instructional practice in reading in a rural school district in Virginia. The findings from the study may help to provide insights that will help building and district leadership understand how to better support teachers in the evaluation process to improve student achievement in reading. In order to achieve this purpose, a qualitative study was conducted using a semistructured interview process for teachers and administrators as well as focus groups for teachers in order to collect data.

Demographic Information

In order to collect data for this study, a series of individual teacher and administrator team interviews and a teacher focus group were conducted. The researcher reached out to elementary building principals for assistance in identifying two teachers from each of the three elementary schools to participate in individual teacher interviews. The researcher asked that principals provide the name of one K-2 teacher and one 3-5 teacher, tenured and one nontenured. Additionally, the researcher asked for the principals' assistance in identifying 12 potential teacher participants for the teacher focus group. Each principal identified four teachers from their buildings, sharing their names and e-mail addresses with the researcher to contact for participation in the teacher focus

group. The email included a brief overview and explanation of the study. The consent letter, documenting the details of the study, was attached to the e-mail and can be found in Appendix G.

Principals were asked to identify teachers who met the following criteria: two teachers who taught Grades K-2 and two teachers in Grades 3-5. Additionally, the researcher requested that two of the teachers be tenured (one K-2 teacher and one Grades 3-5 teacher) and two nontenured (one K-2 teacher and one 3-5 teacher). Third through fifth grades are departmentalized in each of the elementary schools and the researcher requested that 3-5 teachers be identified that taught reading. This purposeful sampling of teachers was implemented in order to achieve a representative sample of teachers in the school district.

Once principals provided the researcher with names of potential study participants, the researcher reached out to the six teachers identified by principals for teacher individual interviews and the 12 teachers identified for the focus group. Some of the participants were the same for the individual teacher interviews and teacher focus group. The two teachers who were interviewed from School 1 were also invited to participate in the teacher focus group. The researcher gave schools and teachers numbers in order to maintain confidentiality. Individual teacher interviews occurred on March 26, 2018. Five of the six teachers were interviewed, an 83% participation rate.

The teacher focus group scheduled to take place on March 26 was canceled because only three teachers confirmed. Due to the small number, the researcher reached out to principals from the three elementary schools once more for assistance in soliciting participation from teachers. The teacher focus group occurred April 12, 2018. Due to the

need to reschedule the teacher focus group, the assistant moderator was not able to attend the rescheduled date. As a result, there was not a second person to record the interviews nor complete the consensus matrix for the teacher focus group as stated in the methodology section. The criteria for teacher participation limited the number of teachers who were eligible to be invited to participate based on their teaching experience, and in Grades 3-5 the fewer number of teachers who taught reading because of departmentalization. Team interviews with the principals and assistant principals for each of the elementary schools took place on March 19th and another team interview took place on March 26th. The participation rate for school administrator interviews was 100%. Ultimately, five teachers were interviewed individually for teacher interviews out of the six that were invited, five teachers participated in the teacher focus group out of the 12 teachers who were invited to participate, and six administrators were interviewed out of the six administrators who were invited to participate in the interviews.

Teachers who were interviewed individually ranged in experience from 1-year teaching experience to 10 years teaching experience. Teachers who participated in the focus group ranged in teaching experience from 2 years to 29 years of teaching experience. Lastly, the school principals interviewed ranged in experience from 4 years to 11 years as an administrator and school assistant principal experience ranged from 2 years to 4 years as an administrator.

Thematic analysis was used to determine themes based on participant responses given in interviews (individual and focus groups). Once themes were identified, tables were created to illustrate the number of times the theme was noted in participant responses.

Evaluation Question 1. What are elementary school teachers' perception regarding how school administrator feedback given in formal observations impacts their instructional practices in reading?

Five teachers were interviewed individually for the study. School 1 and School 3 each had two teachers interviewed for the study while School 2 only had one teacher that was interviewed. In School 1, Teacher 1 taught kindergarten and had been teaching for 2 years, both of those years were within the district. Teacher 2 in School 1 taught fourth grade and had been teaching 10 years, all 10 years were within the district. In School 2, Teacher 1 was a kindergarten and first grade exceptional education teacher in her first year of teaching. In School 3, Teacher 1 was a kindergarten teacher with 6 years of teaching experience, all in the district. Teacher 2 was a fifth-grade teacher in her second year of teaching, both of which were in the district.

Five teachers participated in the teacher focus group. Three teachers represented School 1, two teachers taught Grades K-2, and one taught Grades 3-5. Schools 2 and 3 each had one teacher participant. The teacher from School 2 was a K-2 teacher and the teacher from School 3 was a Grades 3-5 teacher.

Teacher interview results. Teacher interview questions 1-13 are related to Research Question 1 of the study. Thirteen themes emerged in the individual teacher interviews. The themes that emerged were affirmation of current instructional practices, district reading professional development is offered but no additional professional development is sought, feedback is valuable for instruction, purpose of feedback is to improve instruction, adjusting teaching based on administrator feedback, feedback helping teacher development, the feedback process, administrator follow-up to feedback,

teacher and administrator dialogue about observation feedback, timeliness of feedback, time given to observe teachers, helpfulness of administrator feedback, administrators' recommendations affect teaching in reading, positive feedback from administrators.

In individual teacher interviews, teachers stated that they were provided with affirmation through the feedback process that they stated was important to them. This sentiment was stated five times during teacher interviews. Three teachers stated that affirmation that they are given from their administrators was helpful in that it helps to affirm their teaching practices. The following quotations illustrate teacher beliefs related to administrator affirmation:

> I mean, again, it just—I think for me—it's when—it's just helpful to feel like affirmation that what you're doing is right or do I need to fix something. Again, like for me, I need to be affirmed that, you know, you're doing this right and that was a really strong lesson on concept of word. You know, just specific feedback I think is just really helpful to me. You know, in order to improve. I know the last time I was observed, he said that my concept of word lesson was really strong, so I know that I'm doing that right —that I can keep going with that and, you know —and just seeing different areas. Again, I think that specific feedback about each component is really helpful to me.

Teachers stated that hearing the instructional practices that they were observed doing that were effective, helped them to realize that they are doing many things correctly which helped to give them confidence about their practice.

Four teachers stated that they attended professional development that was helpful to their instructional practice that helped improve their practice. They stated that the

professional development at the school level as well as district PLCs at the district level helped them to learn effective strategies from other teachers in the district. It was stated several times that the district has provided a plethora of professional development related to reading in recent years to such a degree that teachers stated that they did not often have to seek out additional professional development due to the amount of reading professional development readily available. The three teacher quotations below indicate teacher responses regarding this theme:

- I really like the meetings we have in the central office —reading meetings what we have for the whole [district], because that gives us really good ideas of what the [district] expects. In particular to personal professional development, I haven't really looked into anything as far as needing improvements in reading, but those meetings in the central office definitely helps.

- There is a lot of professional development offered and I was actually gonna get to go to a school in Virginia Beach, but it got cancelled because of the weather, so I was gonna get to observe and just due to weather that just didn't happen, but there's always professional development being offered through the [district] and in the school as well. Like our reading resource teacher, like I said, she is great and will always be there to lend a helping hand if there's an area specifically, that you're uncomfortable with.

- We constantly learn things to incorporate into our lessons to make them better, so they play a huge role. We do a lot of planning at those professional developments.

Three of the five teachers directly stated that they found feedback from administrators to be valuable to their instruction. One of the five teachers stated that she did not find the feedback process to be valuable to her and stated that the feedback she gets from her administrators only provides a recap of her lessons versus specific suggestions for improvement to address instructional concerns. The following quotations exemplify teacher comments regarding this theme:

- The feedback is always beneficial. As teachers, we don't get as much of an opportunity to observe others, so this is a great chance for someone to observe you and to let you know what somebody else has done that may work better or that you can improve, especially since our reading curriculum has changed significantly in the last 2 years. It's great to know maybe, you know—if there is something you're not doing quite right or something that may be off. Just a better way to instruct it.

- The last observation, I did not receive reading feedback. My only feedback—like it was just more anecdotal what I did in my lesson. I mean I did get positive points about my quality of instruction with the strategies and how they liked certain things, but I guess the only like feedback to work on would have been more like a writing thing actually, of how they could not have a line of people waiting at my desk to get editing at one time, but as far as the lesson goes, no reading feedback.

- Currently in my experiences, I haven't really found it that valuable. Like I said—I think a lot of it's been just recapping that one lesson. And I think as teachers who are teaching so many lessons all the time, that it's like one tiny

lesson in the grand scheme of things. And so it's hard to spend so much time

just talking about one lesson. That kind of takes some value out of it for me

because I don't know if people are getting a true picture of who I am as a

teacher based off of one lesson. And I think, you know, I think that we have

so many professional development where sometimes you tend to get more of

that because we're given a lot more of what we can do to fix some things or

what we're supposed to be doing and how—what we can do to achieve that a

little bit more in the professional development with people, you know, your

peers, your teaching peers, who are doing the same things you do daily.

She also stated that she had very few observations completed to assess her instructional

practice. Another teacher stated that she believed that the feedback was valuable because

it caused teachers to think and reflect on their instruction:

Let's see, the feedback has been helpful. Again, because I know like what centers

are working, if I need to add more to it—again, if it's challenging enough. He

also wants to check and see if they are differentiated, if each center is meeting

each of the student's needs—so that helps. He also causes you to think—like do I

need to push these students a little further, if something is too challenging for

them if may, I need to back up a little bit—and then also, I feel like—again in my

small group, he also gives like suggestions as to what I can add, as to whether it

needs to be more challenging or different, things that I'm missing—so I think that

the feedback helps you in a way that you can just improve as a teacher in order to

help students learn more effectively.

One teacher specifically stated that she found the feedback to be helpful due to the observational tool used by administrators to give teachers feedback (the observation form) and stated:

> I like that everything is on one form and easy to access, it's easy to print off if we want to keep it for our own records, and it's easy to communicate on the form as well, not just person to person.

The teachers that stated that the feedback was useful during the individual teacher interviews had between 1-6 years of teaching experience. The teacher that stated she did not find the feedback to be helpful had 10 years of teaching experience. Teacher responses on this theme are listed below:

- I think [feedback] is very helpful. Sometimes though, they don't see the entire lesson within the 20 minutes of their observations, so sometimes the feedback may be on things that I'm already practicing and so then that why the [postobservation meetings] are important, because those are times to have those conversations, but I think that the feedback is very helpful. [Administrators] are really suggesting that we use the school from Virginia Beach strategies that we're already doing, as well as they base their feedback on what the [district] is expecting. So that is what drives [administrators'] feedback to us.

- I think the big one was the "I can" statement. I always like more feedback I mean, I'll get one or two suggestions but, I want to know everything that the think. So the "I can" statement one was really helpful and there are other

helpful ones in there that I continue using; cueing strategies and things like
that, but the more feedback the better.

- It's just helpful to feel like affirmation that what you're doing is right or do I
need to fix something. Again, like for me, I need to be affirmed that, you
know, you're doing this right and that was a really strong lesson on concept of
word.

- [Feedback being helpful]—almost a weakness in some of those—that they
can name some things but it's hard to always come up with a solution to fix
some of those problems with the feedback. So, they might see something that
maybe needs worked on, but as far as like helping to come up with a
solution—sometimes those opinions are not given.

Three of the five teachers also stated that they believed that the purpose of the feedback
was to help in improve instruction:

I think that the main purpose of it is areas that we can grow, a better look at what
we need to improve upon, something that we do day to day, so the feedback is just
areas that somebody else sees, as something we could do even better.

Two teachers stated that they believed that the purpose of feedback was to adjust lesson
plans to district expectations and to improve instructional alignment in each elementary
school to match district expectations for reading instruction. The teacher quotation that
illustrated this theme is included below:

To allow all of the grades to be consistent and to make sure that the country's
view of the way that literacy should be taught is the way that it is being taught,
also to give suggestions for improving the implementation of those ideas.

Three teachers stated that feedback helps to further develop teachers professionally and listed examples in which feedback from administrators assisted them in their development. Examples given for teacher improvement feedback related to reading center activities, differentiation, and time management and teacher comments that related to this theme are included below:

- I believe that it's to tell you what's going well in your lesson and with your teaching style, and to give you information on what you can do to improve your instruction and become a stronger teacher.

- I think it [feedback] helped me in—to know better how to differentiate my small group instruction, which is a tough thing to do in reading, and I've gotten some good feedback on how I can differentiate between my different levels of students at small group.

- Honestly, I've had very good evaluations, and there have been a few things needed time management wise, making sure that I spend a little less time in one area and more time in another area. But I personally just enjoy reading the minute by minute notes the reading instructor posts after each observation.

- The feedback has been helpful. Again, because I know like what centers are working, if I need to add more to it—again, if it's challenging enough. He also wants to check and see if they are differentiated, if each center is meeting each of the students needs—so that helps. It also causes you to think—like do I need to push these students a little further, if something is too challenging for them if maybe I need to back up a little bit—and then also, feel like— again, in my small group, he also gives like suggestions as to what I can add,

as to whether it needs to be more challenging or different, things I'm

missing—so I think that the feedback helps you in a way that you can just

improve as a teacher in order to help the students learn more effectively.

Three of the five teachers stated that they believed their administrators took adequate

time to observe their reading instruction. Two teachers stated that they would like for

their administrators to observe them more due to only having received one formal

observation because they were not on summative cycle or because their administrator did

not observe their whole reading block. Both teachers stated that they wanted their

administrator to get a full understanding of their reading instruction by observing them

teach whole group and small group instruction more. Teacher quotations that support

these themes are bulleted below:

- Yeah. He usually takes, I would say anywhere between 45 minutes to an hour

  to observe. I feel like he gets to see like a couple reading rotations—at least

  two reading rotations, two reading groups—that he gets to see, so I think

  that—and they're usually differentiated; so I think he gets to see a wide range

  of instruction, you know, for some of the lower kids and then the higher

  kids—so I think that [the principal] being in there that long he kind of gets a

  different feel for the different levels of students.

- Yes, the evaluator takes time to observe my performance in reading.

- I think that it would be more beneficial if [administrators] stayed in for a

  whole reading block. Because sometimes they just see a small piece of the

  reading lesson and it's not necessarily me the entirety of the lesson, so.

- I don't believe so with that. I think so far this year like I've only had one observation and that was mid-year. And I think it's hard when they are in there for, you know, less than—well usually about 30 minutes—basically seeing one time 30 minutes—really does not give an accurate description of my reading instruction.

Four of the five teachers stated that they adjust their teaching based on administrator feedback. One teacher stated that she enjoys receiving the affirmation from administrators and recommendations from her administrators help her to become better instructionally by helping her to learn different strategies. A teacher quotation that exemplified this theme has been provided below:

So, you're asking if [administrator] feedback has an effect on my practice? Yeah, for sure, I would say for sure. And a lot of it, like for me it's just, you know, like affirmation that what I'm doing is correct. Do you know what I mean? Like I'm doing it correctly---it's effective what I'm doing, or no, it's not working, you know---maybe you should try something different. And again, I think it just helps me become a better teacher and it helps the students to learn more effectively when I'm just learning different strategies—then they are, you know, like suggesting different strategies or different ways to do it, then um—I think for sure it makes me a better teacher.

One teacher stated that she tries to implement feedback provided by administrators immediately and takes administrator feedback very seriously. One teacher stated that she does not adjust her teaching in the area of reading, based on administrators' feedback because she believes that the feedback was based primarily on one lesson. She stated that

one lesson is not an accurate depiction of her instruction (she was not on the summative cycle). She did state that she believes this has changed as she has become a more experienced teacher (she has 10 years of teaching experience):

I would say probably not too often. Again, it tends to be one lesson, so it's very hard to take that. I definitely will think about myself like—oh yeah, I probably could improve that or know I'm doing the right thing, but I don't know how much I really take recommendations and go use it right away. I think [it has changed since becoming a veteran teacher]. I really do think that it has an effect on it as well. I'm always open to new things but I feel like it's easier to kind of learn sometimes as you go or through the professional development. Like I said, I'm always trying to improve it, but through this evaluation process and them not necessarily seeing us a whole lot of the school year, it's hard to—it's hard to use those without them getting—knowing who you are as a teacher.

All five teachers stated that the postobservation meeting involved administrators reviewing classroom observation notes and asking teachers follow-up questions. One teacher stated that she found it helpful for her because it informs her how she can be a better teacher. The following quotes exemplifies teacher comments regarding this theme:

- I enjoy the post-observation meeting because it's a great opportunity for the teacher to ask questions. Maybe if there is something written on the observation form that we don't agree with or don't frequently understand, questions that the administrator had during the observation, it's a great chance just for that communication.

- During the meeting, he pretty much goes overall of his notes from our

  observation, or from when he observes me. And then he'll say some things

  that I did effectively. Like if he thinks that, you know, a center was a good

  choice or it that's something at that time that they need to be working on, like

  are they working on sight words, you know, should—can they do something a

  little more challenging. So, you know, and then once we go over each

  component he tells you whether its, you know, what each component is.

  Whether it's proficient or exemplary or if you need more work, and I think

  that helps because, you know—it helps you see what you need to improve on

  or if you need to add something to change something. So again, we just go

  over each component of the observation and he just gives you feedback as to

  what he sees and observes in the classroom and what's going on, you know—

  are kids off track, do you need to get them on track again, or in what ways can

  you get them on track while you're at your small. So, it's just really helpful to

  see what you can implement to be able to be a more effective teacher.

Two teachers stated that they felt comfortable with the process because their

administrators gave them opportunities to respond to the feedback given and asked if they

disagreed with any observations. One teacher stated that she believed the meetings were

rushed but administrators did ask questions about how reading instruction was

implemented in her classroom.

> They're usually pretty rushed. Most of the time the administrator will just go
>
> over what they saw during your lesson and they have anecdotal notes of your
>
> entire lesson that they'll read over. Then they'll go over ay areas that they could

possibly see improvement for and then they ask your thoughts on how things are going. Anything that they can do to help improve what's going on.

All five teachers stated that the post-observation meeting was a dialogue between them and their administrators and administrators gave teachers opportunities to respond to feedback given in the observation and clarify lesson components. All five teachers also stated that the feedback from administrators was timely, usually given within a few days or a week. Four teachers stated that receiving timely feedback was helpful because it allowed them to implement recommendations from administrators sooner. The following quotation shows teacher beliefs related to this theme:

> [Feedback is] usually within—I'd say within a couple of days. I mean, think, probably within 3 to 5 days the feedback is given for a formal observation. Sometimes it's not event that long, maybe 3 days. It is helpful to get the feedback immediately because—I mean, you, you forget what happens day to day. And then, you know, if they're coming in to observe they forget, as well, what they've seen. You know if they have stuff going on in their minds and you have stuff going on in your mind and then they bring something up and you're like I don't remember that happening or I don't remember doing this with them. So, I think the immediate feedback—and again, that way you can implement it sooner. You know whatever they're seeing or whatever they're suggesting that you need to try. You know—you can get started on that right away and make changes that you need to make. So, I think that immediate feedback is definitely more helpful.

Two teachers stated that post-observation meetings were difficult to schedule due to scheduling conflicts and some did not occur within a week of the observation. The following quotation illustrates teacher comments about this theme:

> I think that's been the rough part this school year. Just with timing of things we tended to have our conferences be set up and been cancelled and stuff like that. It's usually within a week of your observation that you can meet with them at some point to discuss it. I would say within a week. You can make some notes with the lesson. I don't know—overall, I don't know how much I am able to use some of the comments. Maybe for future lessons, definitely I can keep that in mind.

All teachers in interviews stated that they received positive feedback from administrators and four stated that administrators followed up with feedback given either in data meetings or walk-through observations:

- It's usually very positive. It's always more positive than negative feedback on there. Like I said, I always want more areas to improve upon and I think it's just—everything is in there to help us grow. It's not in a negative or scolding way. It's to help us grow.

- It's very constructive and positive. It's never—I never go out feeling that I'm being looked down upon or that I have major improvements to make. It's mainly just suggestions on how to do what I'm doing better not change what I'm doing completely. I feel really comfortable within the meetings discussing the feedback.

- Myself personally? I've had a great observer. She lets me know—my observer this year seemed more eager and she has let me know that she enjoys seeing how much I differentiate between my reading groups, as I had students are on an F and D read and those who are on a second grade level all in the same classroom, and she enjoys seeing how much I differentiate between each of those groups.

- Okay. Usually like, the feedback that I've been given specifically—I mean it's usually pretty positive feedback for me.

Table 3 lists the number of times teachers made statements related to the themes.

Teacher interview question 1: What do you perceive as the purpose of feedback given during observations in your school? Three out of the five teachers (60%) stated that they perceived the purpose of feedback was to lead to teacher improvement, saying things like:

I think that the main purpose of it is areas that we can grow, a better look at what we need to improve upon, something that we do day to day, so the feedback is just areas that somebody else sees, as something we could do even better.

The other two teachers stated that they perceived the purpose of feedback from observations to be to adjust lesson plans to district expectations and to improve instructional alignment in each elementary school to match district expectations for reading instruction and the teacher quotation below demonstrates teacher beliefs related to this theme:

Table 3

Results of Thematic Analysis of Teacher Interviews

Theme	Response frequency
Affirmation of current instructional practice.	12
County reading professional development is offered but no additional professional development sought.	5
Feedback is valuable for instruction.	3
Purpose of feedback to improve instruction.	3
Feedback helps teacher development	3
Administrators review observations and ask questions.	5
Administrators follow up with teacher after feedback.	4
Administrators and teachers have dialogue about observation feedback.	5
Feedback is timely.	5
Administrators take adequate time to observe teachers.	3
Feedback from administrators is helpful.	3
Administrator recommendations affect teaching in reading.	4
Feedback from administrators is positive.	5

Note. n = 12 teachers

[The purpose of feedback] to allow all of the grades to be consistent and to make

sure that the [district's] view of the way that literacy should be taught is the way

that it is being taught, also to give suggestions for improving the implementation

of those ideas.

***Teacher interview question 2: What impact, if any, has feedback had on
improving your teaching overall?*** Three of out of five teachers (60%) stated that
feedback from administrators had an impact on their teaching overall because it helped
them to become better and the following teacher quotation illustrates teacher beliefs
regarding this theme:

> I think it has a great impact on how I have adjusted to different lesson plans.
> Sometimes we don't know—since we're not always aware of things we are saying
> and how we are saying them to the students until we read them back in a formal
> observation format, and then we can see some things that might be funny or
> things that maybe we should clarify or check the vocabulary, but I feel like—I
> feel that it's very effective.

The other two teachers interviewed stated that the feedback they received impacted how
they adjusted their instruction to match recommendations (40%) to the use of the new
lesson plan template required for small group instruction in the district, or that they
implemented recommendations from feedback as soon as possible. The following
quotation typifies teacher comments related to this theme:

> I think it has a great impact on how I have adjusted to different lesson plans.
> Sometimes we don't know. Since we're not always aware of things we are saying
> and how we are saying them to the students until we read them back in a formal
> observation format, and then we can see some things that might be funny or
> things that maybe we should clarify or check vocabulary, but I feel like—I feel
> that it's very effective.

Teacher interview question 3: What is the post-observation meeting like? One-hundred percent of teachers interviewed stated the post-observation meeting involved administrators reviewing their notes they took as they observed in classrooms with teachers and asking teachers what they believed went well with the lesson and what areas could be improved. Teachers were asked clarifying questions throughout the meeting to give administrators additional insight into the observed lesson as well. Teachers also can share their thoughts on the observation and two stated that they were asked if they disagreed with any portion of the lesson during their meetings with administrators. The teacher quotation below shows teacher comments regarding this theme:

> I enjoy the post-observation meeting because it's a great opportunity for the teacher to ask questions. Maybe if there is something written on the observation form that we don't agree with or don't frequently understand, questions that the administrator had during the observation, it's a great chance just for that communication.

One teacher stated that she believed the meetings following observations were usually rushed:

> They are usually pretty rushed. Most of the time the administrator will just go over what they saw during your lesson, and they have anecdotal notes of your entire lesson that they'll read over and then they'll go over any areas that they could possibly see improvement for, and then they ask your thoughts on how things are going, anything that they can do to help improve what's going on— those are usually the things—and if we have any questions about how reading is going in our classroom as well.

Teacher interview question 4: How helpful is the feedback? Specifically, what types of recommendations are made for improving reading instruction? Three out of the five teachers (60%) stated that they found the feedback from administrators to be helpful. One teacher stated that the feedback was helpful in that it offered affirmation for her instruction; another teacher stated feedback was helpful because it helped to inform teachers of other effective teaching practices observed elsewhere in the building; and the third stated that the feedback is helpful but full lessons are not always observed. The following quotation shows a teacher comment about this theme:

> I think it's very helpful. Sometimes, though, they don't see the entire lesson within the 20 minutes of their observations, so sometimes the feedback may be things that I'm already practicing and so then that's why the meetings are important, because those are times to have those conversations, but I think that the feedback is very helpful.

Specific feedback that was given related to reading was recommendations for "I can" statements, reading cueing strategies, and effective use of reading strategies that the district adopted from the reading model observed at a school in Virginia Beach, VA. The following teacher quote demonstrates teacher comments about this theme:

> I think the big one was the "I can" statement. I always like more feedback. I mean, I'll get one or two suggestions but, I want to know everything that they think. So, the "I can" statement one was really helpful and there are other helpful ones in there that I continue using; cueing strategies and things like that, but the more feedback the better.

Teacher interview question 5: What happens following the feedback? Four out of the five teachers (80%) interviewed stated that administrators follow up with teachers to monitor implementation of feedback from previous observations. The follow-up from administrators takes the form of discussing status of implementation of recommendations during data meetings or by conducting walk-through observations. The teacher quote below demonstrates comments about this theme:

> I think they kind of check in and then do walk-throughs more to see if you are implementing the changes and how they can support you. We have a really great reading resource teacher too that also offers—she offers to help me to make things to make the reading instruction as meaningful as possible, and we have our weekly reading planning meetings. So, I think they communicate to them what we need more support on.

One teacher stated that post-observation meetings follow feedback (formal observations). Another teacher stated that nothing happens following feedback but did state that sometimes, administrators follow up with other observations to check on how recommendations are implemented from previous feedback but typically, nothing more is said about feedback given previously and stated, "Usually not much. Sometimes if there is like another observation later, they'll go back to the feedback to see how it's going, but usually nothing more is said."

Teacher interview question 6: What is the nature of the feedback you receive post observation? What is the nature of the feedback you receive post-evaluation that is specific to reading instruction? What does the feedback process look like? All the teachers (100%) interviewed stated that they received positive feedback from

administrators. For reading specifically, two teachers stated specific reading feedback and the feedback given by administrators was how teachers broke down components of reading lessons to assess whether what they observed teachers doing was effective (word study, phonics, etc.) and/or administrators gave feedback on whether or not all required components of reading instruction were being implemented, effective use of reading cueing strategies, and differentiation of small group reading instruction. The following quotations exemplify teacher comments related to this theme:

- Myself personally I've had great a observer—She lets me know—my observer this year seemed more eager and she has let me know that she enjoys seeing how much I differentiate between my reading groups, as I had students who are on an F and D level and those who are on a second grade reading level all in the same classroom, and she enjoys seeing how much I differentiate between each of those groups.

- Okay, what is the feedback as far as reading instruction? Again, it's just telling me—I mean, we have all different components and it's just, you know, are you implementing, the sight words, you know, at this point, you know, if they've reached a certain level then there are questions. And it's like, why are they, you know, why are they doing this and is this effective, do you feel like that is something you can improve on, you know, in reading, and then like, as far as, like, with our word study, you, like, is that helpful to go over each component with reading instruction and just asking if it's effective. Like, is what you're doing effective? Are there ways you can improve on or do you need to add something? And then he gives suggestions like maybe you could

do this, this would be more effective, or try this, maybe this would push the

students a little bit further in their thinking, or maybe this a little bit too

challenging. Do you feel like that they understood and they know what they

are doing with that?

One teacher, the veteran, stated that she had not received any feedback related to reading

instruction and made the following comment:

The last observation I didn't get any reading feedback. My only feedback—like it

was just more anecdotal what I did in my lesson. I mean I did get positive points

about my quality of instruction with the strategies and how they liked certain

things, but I guess the only like feedback to work on would have been more like a

writing thing actually, of how they could not have line of people waiting at my

desk to get edited at one time, but as far as the lesson goes, no reading feedback.

Teachers stated that the feedback process involved teachers receiving feedback

from administrators in written form (given in advance of post-observation meetings) to

allow them an opportunity to view administrators' notes before the post-observation

meeting. Teachers also stated administrators review their feedback of instruction during

the conference and asked teachers questions about their lesson during the post

observation meeting. One teacher stated in this question that the process does not involve

a lot of questioning, rather, administrators reviewing with teachers their observations of

what occurred during the lesson.

Teacher interview question 7: To what extent did you have a conversation or

dialogue about the feedback? To what extent did it involve dialogue that was back and

forth between you and the administrator? All teachers (100%) stated that they have

dialogue with their administrators regarding feedback and that they can ask their administrators questions regarding their observations. Four out of the five teachers (80%) stated that they are asked questions related to their lessons. The following quotation illustrates teacher comments regarding this theme:

> As far as like in our post meeting? Yeah, I mean, like the entire time—the entire meeting—we're just back and forth. Then, he's, you know, like, telling me what he saw and then asking me questions about, you know, —why did you do this? And you know, is there something differently that you can do? And then I'm able to respond to that. And so, it's the back and forth dialogue between us.

One teacher pointed out that while they can ask administrators questions and have a dialogue about their observations, solutions to problems of practice are not always reached during these meetings and she would like to see this area improve. She made the following statement:

> I think our administrators are very open to conversation if you have them. For instance, when they did bring up the writing thing we had a conversation about what possibly we could do to cut that down, what other teachers may do, and so I'm definitely able to ask them questions if I have them. I wouldn't say that a solution is always reached during the meeting times if there is something to work on.

Teacher interview question 8: How quickly is feedback given? If feedback is given immediately, describe if this was helpful for you to have it immediately and why?
All teachers (100%) stated that written feedback is given quickly (given a few days to within a week of observations). Teachers stated that it was helpful to receive feedback

quickly because it allows them to implement recommendations from administrators sooner rather than later and one teacher stated, "Usually within—I'd say within a couple of days. I mean, I think, probably within 3 to 5 days the feedback is given formal observation. Sometimes it's not even that long, maybe three days." One teacher stated that there is sometimes a delay in her written feedback due to problems with the observation tool used (Talent Ed®) but despite these technical difficulties, she receives written feedback quickly. One teacher stated that she also receives quick feedback via administrator walk-through observations because administrators leave little notes about their observations during their walk-through. She likes having this immediate feedback during walk-through observations:

> I think it is helpful—sometimes they'll just do a quick walk-through and they'll leave a little note on my desk of how things went, how they went, how things could have been improved, and like that because I can quickly, it is something I can quickly tweak if needed or know that I should continue.

Two teachers mentioned that scheduling post-observation meetings to discuss formal observations has been challenging due to unexpected scheduling conflicts but receiving the written feedback at least allows them to see feedback sooner. One teacher mentioned that due to some delays with getting feedback or having post-observation conferences later due to scheduling conflicts makes it difficult to use the comments/recommendations from administrators.

Teacher interview question 9: Does the evaluator take adequate time to observe your performance in reading? How many administrative observations have you had this school year? Does the evaluator know and understand the standards and rubrics?

Three out of the five teachers (60%) stated that they believed that their administrators took adequate time to observe their instruction. Two of the five teachers stated that they would like for administrators to observe in their classrooms longer and one teacher made the following statement:

> I think that it would be more beneficial if they stayed in for a whole reading block. Because sometimes they just see a small piece of the reading lesson and it's not necessarily me the entirety of the lesson, so.

The amount of time and frequency that teachers stated administrators observed in their classrooms varied from 30 minutes and only one observation completed to 45 minutes to an hour for an observation and having three formal observations. The amount of time and frequency of observations did relate to one teacher's opinion of evaluators taking adequate time to observe her reading instruction (she had only received one formal observation for 30 minutes because she was on nonsummative cycle) and she stated that she does not believe her one observation gave an accurate depiction of her reading instruction:

> I don't believe [the evaluator took adequate time to observe my performance in reading]. I think so far this year like I've only had one observation and that was mid-year. And I think it's hard when they are in there for, you know, less than— well usually about 30 minutes—basically seeing one time 30 minutes—really does not give an accurate description of my reading instruction.

Another teacher had received three formal observations and several walk-through observations but stated that she would like for her administrators to observe a whole

reading lesson because her administrators typically only observe a small piece of her reading lessons.

Two of the five teachers (40%) stated that they also received walk-through observations to add to the amount of feedback that they received through formal observations and one teacher mentioned that she would like her administrators to do more walk-through observations so that they can understand her instruction in more detail and give more suggestions based on their observations. The following quotation demonstrates some teacher comments related to this theme:

Yeah, I think it would be more helpful if they were—did more informal walk-throughs throughout the year. That way they would have a better idea of what goes on and kind of what they need—that we do, do you know what I mean? Like I think if they know—if they're in our classroom more, kind of more observing informally, just walking through and kind of seeing what's going on, I think that that would be more helpful because then they would have a better grasp on—not that they necessarily don't know it, but I think that what they know is sort of broad being that, you know, they don't see what we do exactly. But I think just informal walk-throughs and just being able to see what happens day-to-day and, you know, I think being in the classroom more they will be able to pick up— well this is supposed to go this way or this teacher does it this way, maybe this teacher will know to do it that way. You know, they can kind of pick up from other teachers and offer suggestions, which he has done that before, so that's been helpful.

All teachers (100%) stated that they believed that their administrators understood the standards and rubrics related to teacher evaluation.

Teacher interview question 10: Do administrative recommendations have an effect on your teaching practice? If so, how? If not, why? Four of the five teachers (80%) stated that administrative recommendations impact their teaching practice. One mentioned the affirmation of her teaching practices helps as well as any recommendations given about different reading strategies she could use to improve her instruction:

> So, you're asking if their feedback has an effect on my practice? Yeah, for sure, I would say for sure. And a lot of it, like for me, it's just, you know, like affirmation that what I'm doing is correct. Do you know that I mean? Like I'm doing it correctly—it's effective what I'm doing, or no, it's not working, you know, maybe you should try something different. And again, I think it just helps me to become a better teacher and it helps the students learn more effectively when I'm just learning different strategies—then they are, you know, like suggesting different strategies or different ways to do it, I think for sure it makes me a better teacher.

Others stated that they really like getting feedback and will try to implement recommendations from administrators immediately. One teacher stated that if she disagrees with feedback or a recommendation, she felt comfortable asking why and would still try to implement the recommendation given to her from administrators. If it does not work, she is comfortable sharing that with her administrators and offering suggestions of how it can be done to best fit her class. One teacher (20%), a 10-year

veteran, stated that she believes administrative recommendations can have an impact on her teaching practice, but she does not receive a lot of comments/recommendations of things that she could work on instructionally. She stated that she would like to receive more recommendations from her administrators:

> I think they can. I think maybe I've been lucky. I feel that mine have been a little more positive words like—I like what you're doing, continue what you're doing. I guess I haven't gotten a lot of comments about things that I can work on. I wouldn't mind having more of that actually, because I do want to become even better as a teacher. So, I don't feel necessarily feel like I get a lot of things that I could work on with my lessons.

Teacher interview question 11: How valuable did you find the feedback process that you described during this interview? And to what extent do you believe you could achieve this learning on your own without the feedback from administration? Three out of five teachers (60%) specifically stated that they found the feedback process to be valuable but did not state the extent that they believed they could achieve the learning from the feedback on their own without receiving feedback from the administration. None of the teachers stated any ways that professional development has been on their radar based on recent observations in reading. The following quotations represent teacher comments related this theme:

- It's very valuable and it's efficient. I like that everything is on one form and easy to access, it's easy to print off if we want to keep it for our own records, and it's easy to communicate on the form as well, not just person to person.

- Well, me—or just given that we have professional development opportunities over the summer for reading instruction at a school in Virginia Beach. And I have already signed up for all five days, because it is important. It is important that we continue to grow in professional development whether we think that, you know, we are doing everything correctly or not. There is always something to learn.

One teacher stated that the feedback plays a huge part in helping students to learn. Another teacher mentioned that she wanted more examples of what constitutes exemplary or proficient on the formal observation form:

I find it very valuable. I think though, when they [administrators] are rating us, based on what they've evaluated, if we knew what each one of those ratings looked like—for example, like its exemplary or proficient—having examples of what those ratings looked like—for example, like it's exemplary or proficient— having examples of what those things look like in particular would be more helpful to know how to treat things, to more improve or where we should change them.

One out of the five teachers (20%) did not find the feedback process to be helpful stating that the feedback just recapped the lesson:

Currently in my experiences, I haven't really found it that valuable. Like I said— I think a lot of it's been just recapping that one lesson. And I think as teachers who are teaching so many lessons all the time that it's like one tiny lesson in the grand scheme of things. And so it's hard to spend so much time just talking about one lesson. That kind of takes some value out of it for me because I don't know

if people are getting a true picture of who I am as a teacher based off of one lesson. And I think, you know, I think that we have so many professional development where sometimes you tend to get more out of that because we're given a lot more of what we can do to fix some things or what we're supposed to be doing and how—what we can do to achieve that a little bit more in the professional development with people, you know, your peers, your teaching peers, who are doing the same things you do daily.

Teacher interview question 12: To what extent has professional development been on your radar related to your most recent observations in reading? None of the teachers interviewed stated that they looked for professional development based on observations in reading but three out of the five teachers (60%) specifically stated that they receive lots of professional development from the district. The following quotation exemplifies teacher comments related to this theme:

Again, I really think what we do at our professional development has been really brought into each lesson that we try to do through [the professor who provides professional development to teachers and administrators in the district], you know, steps of engagement to our PLCs. Like we are constantly learning things to incorporate into our lessons to make them better, so they play a huge role. We do a lot of planning at those professional development [sessions].

The other two teachers (40%) stated that they received professional development from attending a regional kindergarten conference or visiting another school district for reading professional development to observe in a specific school in Virginia Beach.

There is a lot of professional development offered and I was actually gonna get to

go to a school in Virginia Beach, but it got cancelled because of the weather, so I

was gonna get to observe and just due to weather that just didn't happen, but

there's always professional development being offered through the [district] and

in the school as well. Like our reading resource teacher, like I said, she is great

and will always be there to lend a helping hand if there's an area, specifically, that

you're uncomfortable with.

Teacher interview question 13: Do recommendations have an effect on your

teaching practices in reading? Four of the five teachers (80%) stated that

recommendations have an impact on their teaching practices in reading. Teachers did not

elaborate on ways in which recommendations impacted their reading teaching practices

and the following quotation shows teacher comments related to this theme:

I would say yes, they have an effect. If they recommend that I do something

different I'll at least try it, and if it doesn't work, I'll talk to them about why it's

not working or how I can change it, so it could work in my classroom.

One teacher stated that recommendations do not impact her instructional reading

practices often. One teacher stated that the recommendations are helpful because they

learn about effective reading practices of other teachers from their administrators which

helps them to improve their instruction:

Yeah, I would say for sure. I mean just, again, just having them think—you know

he might recommend things like try it this way or sometimes, like I said, he's

mentioned that other teachers maybe do this way, maybe you could try it this way,

you know, so and so does it this way, and, you know, I think it's just being able to

improve as a teacher—it's just helpful to get someone else's perspective in the classroom because a lot of times you think that things are going well but really, you know, you have so much you need to work on or maybe these students over here are completely off task and you know they are not doing what they are supposed to and—so yeah, the feedback has been really helpful.

The idea of growth was stated by another teacher and she stated that there are always more areas to grow with instruction. One teacher stated that administrative recommendations do not impact her reading instruction because the feedback is usually based on one lesson and she does not believe that one lesson is an accurate depiction of her reading teaching overall. She did state that changing her practice based on administrators' recommendations has changed as she has become a more experienced teacher (she has taught for 10 years) and made the following statement:

[Do recommendations have an impact on your teaching practices in reading?]

I would say probably not too often. Again, it tends to be one lesson so it's very hard to take that. I definitely will think about myself like—oh yeah, I probably could improve that or know I'm doing the right thing, but I don't know how much I really take recommendations and go use it right away.

[Do you think that's changed since you have become more of a veteran teacher?]

I think so. I really do think that it has an effect on it as well. I'm always open to new things but I feel like it's easier to kind of learn sometimes as you go or through professional development. Like I said, I'm always trying to improve it, but through this evaluation process and them not necessarily seeing us a whole lot

of the school year, it's hard to—it's hard to use those without them getting—knowing who you are as a teacher.

Teacher focus group results. Teacher focus group questions 1-8 related to Research Question 1 of the study. Six themes emerged in the teacher focus group. The themes that emerged were value of administrator feedback to teacher affirmation, district reading professional development and seeking additional professional development, post-observation meeting format and dialogue between teachers and administrators, impact of administrators' recommendations on teaching, and feedback given for reading instruction.

Two teachers in the focus group stated that they found the feedback from administrators to be helpful because it offered them affirmation. These two teachers also participated in individual teacher interviews and made similar statements which are listed below:

> I think they [observations] has helped—the formal evaluations has helped me boost my confidence, cause sometimes I feel like I'm not doing something well, or I feel like, wow, I don't think that went well and then with the feedback it's the total opposite and they say 'wow' I was really impressed with this, and I really liked how this went or I liked how you had this set up. Things that I don't realize that have gone well, so.

One teacher stated that she found the feedback to be helpful because it let her know that she was practicing effective reading instruction and that administrators share ideas from other teachers that she can implement. One teacher stated that she found the feedback she received from attending district reading professional development. All teachers in

the focus group stated that they found the district reading professional development to be helpful and as a result, they did not seek out any additional professional development based on administrator recommendations. One stated that she believed that teachers in the district were receiving a lot of help with reading instruction and thus, this minimized their need to seek out professional development on their own. Two teachers in the teacher focus group stated that they valued the time they had to learn effective reading practices from other teachers in the district during district reading professional development.

All of the teachers in the focus group stated that administrators reviewed observations with them during post-observation meetings and asked teachers questions related to their instruction during the observation. Three teachers stated that their administrators provided very detailed notes of their observations to describe the lesson for teachers. Two teachers stated that most of the post-observation meetings are spent reviewing the details of what occurred to the lesson and not as much time is spent on offering teachers suggestions for improvement based on observation. Four of the teachers stated that administrators and teachers had a dialogue about administrator feedback during post-observation conferences and that teachers were also able to ask questions to administrators. Teachers stated that administrators asked about parts of the lesson that they believed went well and what areas they thought could be improved and about teacher plans for future lessons.

One teacher in the focus group stated that their instruction was impacted based on administrator recommendations and specifically stated that administrator feedback is particularly helpful to her as she works towards integrating content instruction into

reading and writing. Three teachers stated that they did not receive a lot of specific

feedback to reading instruction and that they wanted administrators to offer more

suggestions for teaching practice. The following quote represents the teacher comments

related to this theme:

> I feel like that they could offer more suggestions as far as, you know, what you
>
> could do more effectively. They do ask questions like, you know, why are doing
>
> this, this, and this, but I feel like they could ask like, well what do you need to do
>
> in this area for so and so to improve in this. So just to push us maybe a little
>
> more, to, you know, maybe to go to the next level in what we're doing.

It has been stated that veteran teachers needed feedback from more

knowledgeable observers for them to find it to be valuable (Gregoire, 2009; Mathes et al.,

2009; Walker, 2014). During the teacher focus group, three of the five teachers

responded with statements that mentioned the importance of receiving affirmation about

their current instructional practices. They ranged from 7 to 29 years of teaching

experience. The other two teachers did not respond. Two teachers stated that they found

the reading professional development was helpful and they had 10 years of teaching

experience and 29 years. The other three teachers did not respond to the question. Two

teachers stated that the feedback they were given from administrators was valuable and/or

caused them to reflect on instruction. They had 2 years of teaching experience and 20

years of teaching experience. The other three teachers did not respond to the question. In

looking at the responses given and number of years of teaching experience, no patterns

were observed in the teacher focus group related to experience and responses to focus

group questions. Table 4 lists the number of times teachers made statements related to the themes in the teacher focus group.

Table 4

Results of Thematic Analysis from Teacher Focus Group Interviews

Theme	Response frequency
Feedback valuable because of affirmation.	2
District reading professional development is offered but no additional professional development sought.	5
Administrators review observations and ask questions.	5
Administrators and teachers have dialogue about observation feedback.	4
Administrator feedback impacts teaching.	3
No feedback training on reading instruction.	3

Note. n = 5 teachers

Teacher focus group question 1: What do you perceive as the purpose of formative feedback given during observations in your school? Two out of the five teachers in the teacher focus group (40%) stated that they perceived the purpose of formative feedback in observations to determine how teachers are performing and to identify areas of improvement and one stated, "I believe that the purpose is for them to keep track of what you're—how you're performing in the classroom and for them to tell you what you are doing well and what you need to improve upon." Two of the five teachers in the focus group (40%) stated that the purpose was to observe what is occurring in the classroom. One teacher (20%) stated that the purpose of formative

feedback was to encourage teacher reflections about instruction and commented, "I would just add that as [administrators] do observe us that we are able to reflect more on our teaching; that would just be a part that goes along with it."

Teacher focus group question 2: What effect, if any, has formative feedback had on improving your teaching overall? What effect, if any, has formative feedback given during observations had on improving your instruction in reading? Three out of the five teachers (60%) stated that formative feedback has encouraged them to use and be aware of more effective instructional strategies. The quotation below shows teacher comments related to this theme:

> I would agree that sometimes it's just affirmation that you're doing things right. And then also it has helped me, cause [sic] he's offered suggestions like from other teachers things that he's noticed that they are doing right and then he offers that to you and you're able to kind of make those adjustments to be a better teacher—to be more effective like in that area.

Two of the five teachers (40%) stated that the impact of the instruction that they received was that it helped to give them confidence that they were providing effective instruction to students. The following quotation illustrates teacher comments regarding this theme:

> I think it has helped—the formal evaluations has helped me boost my confidence, [because] sometimes I feel like I'm not doing something well, or I feel like, "Wow, I don't think that went well," and then with the feedback, it's the total opposite and they say, "Wow, I was really impressed with this, and I really liked

how this went" or "I liked how you had this set up." Things that I don't realize that have gone well.

The teachers who made this statement mentioned this same sentiment in the individual teacher interviews. Other comments made were that the feedback helped with classroom management, helped to set personal goals related to integrating content and reading, work on rigor, and helped them to write detailed reading lesson plans due to weekly reading meetings. These themes are demonstrated in the following teacher quotation:

I think even prior to the evaluations we started doing these reading meetings once a week with the reading specialist, and, at times, admin does come in, but they also get the documents and they can see what are you doing for your equity lesson? What are you doing for your writing lesson? What are you doing for your independent lesson? What are you doing for your writing lesson? What are you doing for your independent lesson? What are you doing for your small group lesson, and you know, starting us off a few years ago with formal ways to write your lesson plan. So as teachers we really are thinking about it and so it makes me not as nervous with formal evaluations because I know I have all my plans detailed out and they have given us that support to help us with that.

One teacher did not answer the specific question that was asked and stated that principals are sharing more effective instructional practices with other teachers.

Teacher focus group question 3: What is the post-observation meeting like? All the focus group participants (100%) responded to this question. Three of the five teachers stated that the post-observation meeting is very detailed and that administrators

discuss everything that they observed during their observations. The following quotation

is an example of the teacher comments that relate to this theme:

> My post-observation meetings with my principal always go well. We enjoy
> discussing at length everything that's gone on in the classroom in detail, and we
> just enjoy talking about education and so it gives us the time to chat about things
> that we need to talk about—students and what's going on in my classroom. It's
> always a good experience.

One participant, who was also a teacher interview participant, stated that they spend

more time on reviewing details of observed lesson and less time with giving her

feedback. Another participant, who also participated in the teacher interviews, stated that

administrators review their observations with teachers and give areas for improvement,

but she would like administrators to offer more suggestions for teachers during post-

observation meetings. She made the following statement:

> I would agree with Participant 1. I feel like that they go over what they saw from
> their perspective and they offer improvement, you know, things that you could do
> differently or more effectively, and I think that it would be helpful if they offered
> more suggestions, maybe of what improvements we could make instead of just
> telling us what they saw in our classroom—to offer maybe more detailed
> suggestions.

One participant stated that the focus of her post-observation meetings is on students who

she is the most concerned about regarding their reading.

>   ***Teacher focus group question 4: What is the nature of the feedback you receive***
> ***post-observation overall? What is the nature of the feedback you receive post-***

observation specific to reading instruction? Three of the five participants responded to this question and two of them participated in the teacher individual interviews. The three participants stated that they do not believe that they get a lot of feedback to improve their instruction but rather received more of an overview of the lesson administrators observed in detail. The quotation below represents teacher comments related this theme:

> Regarding reading instruction, I don't necessarily feel like I get a lot of feedback to improve the instruction. You know, they'll say that things they see that's going good, but it tends to be, again, an overview of the lesson more than what work on or things they need to see or just checking that. They do ask a lot of questions about what are you doing for this or what are you doing for that, so we have the conversation. But as far as suggestions, I think that they might—I think, in my opinion, they could probably add some more of those.

All three stated that they would like to receive more feedback and one stated that she would like to receive more specific feedback for reading instruction. She stated, "I agree with Participants 1 and 3. More feedback would be good, more specific feedback, especially on reading instruction at this time. Because it's really important!"

Teacher focus group question 5: What does the feedback process look like? To what extent are you asked questions? Describe. Four of the five participants (80% response rate) responded to this question and one participant participated in the teacher interviews. Teachers stated that the administrators asked teachers what they believed went well and what teachers believed could have been improved in the lesson. The comment below exemplifies teacher comments about this theme:

He often asked what did I feel went well, what do I feel could have been

improved, and a lot of times it goes back to that—the students that he can tell are

my struggling reading students, but that's because they are the kids I get for

reading but I feel like it often goes back to the that, but definitely asks what went

well and what could I improve.

Teachers also stated they can have conversations about what is occurring in their

classrooms pertaining to past, present, and future lessons. Lastly, teachers stated that

administrators asked them to discuss students who are struggling readers and what

remediate is done to address the needs of those students. She stated, "I think they also ask

for areas of concern with reading and what you're doing to remediate or help out with

those areas of concern."

Teacher focus group question 6: How valuable do you find the feedback process

that you all have described and to what extent do you believe you could achieve this

learning on your own without the feedback from the administrators? Only two

teachers in the focus group responded to this question out of the five participants (40%

response rate) and they were two of the teachers who participated in individual teacher

interviews. Both stated that they found the feedback process to be valuable because they

were given affirmation about their instructional practices. The following quotation shows

a teacher comment that relates to this idea:

I find it to be very effective because again, a lot of it is just affirmation that you're

doing things right. I mean, there's no time to question whether or not—because

you don't really see what other teachers are doing in their classroom. So then to

come in and tell you, you know, you did that really well or maybe you could do

this and this and this—so I find it to be very effective for me and then in that way you can implement that, so.

One stated that she found the feedback given from district reading PLCs to be more valuable:

I agree that it is good to get the affirmation, that we do need to hear that, especially from our bosses, that we're doing our job the best way that we can. But I think sometimes with our PLCs that we're doing currently, that there are definitely other ways to kind of get that affirmation and know that we are doing the right things, as we talk to other teachers in other schools and other reading specialists, that kind of tell us what we are supposed to be doing at that time. So I, almost—sometimes I feel like I can get more feedback from those PLCs.

Teacher focus group question 7: Do administrative recommendations affect your teaching practice overall, and reading? Only one teacher responded to this question (20% response rate) and stated that administrative feedback impacts how she implements integration of content (science and social studies) and reading instruction.

I will say that yes, it definitely impacts the other subject areas, and especially as we're working towards, in second grade, integrating content into reading and writing into content. So the discussions that we had, definitely with our principals, you know, effect those other areas. Because we're just making plans for doing that, and we're also, you know, I think our schools are heading into looking different because there is gonna be more time coming up in the future, I feel in [name of district], where you walk into a classroom and you are not sure,

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in the lower grades, what you're teaching, if you're teaching writing or content or reading. It's gonna be more integrative. It's just the way that we're moving.

Teacher focus group question 8: To what extent has professional development been on your radar related to your most recent observations in reading? Three of the five participants (60% response rate) responded to this question. One participant did participate in teacher interviews. All three teachers stated that they had not sought out any professional development opportunities on their own based on their recent observations in reading because teachers have been provided with so many professional development opportunities for reading in the school and at the district level. The following quote demonstrates the teacher comments related to this theme:

> I have not sought out professional development because we are bombarded at this point with reading help at this point. For the last 2 years we've really changed the way we're doing reading—and we visited the schools, we've done all kinds of things that has really helped [me] see what the reading, or what their reading expectations are at this point. So, I haven't looked for professional development, but I have definitely had a lot.

One teacher stated that the district has changed quite a bit in the past 2 years regarding reading instruction, and teachers have also been able to visit schools to observe teachers to help them implement new district expectations. She stated that all of this has helped her understand the new reading expectations:

> I'll agree with Participant 4. I think—I have not personally sought out professional development based on observations; however, a lot of other teachers that have been around they come back, and we meet as a whole school or grade

level, and they kind of share what they've learned and, you know, we'll meet on

it, we'll talk about it, you know, we'll create things, you know, that kind of thing.

Another teacher stated that she has sought out professional development related to

intervention for students who are not making adequate progress in reading and they

discuss with other teachers in Grades 3-5 and stated the following:

I have not sought out professional development because of an observation. But I

do know that we spend a lot of time, again, talking about the areas of concern, as

we kind of work as a third through fifth grade team. And so I've sought out some

professional development to, you know, to get some intervention and other

teaching ideas by taking the fundamentals of literacy to help out with those ideas.

Evaluation Question 2: What are elementary school administrators' perceptions

regarding how their feedback in formal observation impacts teacher instructional

practices in reading?

Six elementary school administrators were interviewed for this study and had a

variety of background experience. School administrators were interviewed in

administrative teams that consisted of the school principals and assistant principals from

three of the elementary schools in the district. Principal 1 has been an administrator for 3

years in the district and 10 years overall. He taught sixth grade for 12 years prior to

becoming an administrator. Assistant Principal 1 has been an administrator for 3 years,

all within the current district. She taught 13 years as an exceptional education teacher

before becoming a school administrator. Principal 2 has been an administrator for 4

years, all of which have been within the current district. Prior to becoming an

administrator, he taught health and physical education for 4 years. Assistant Principal 2

has been an administrator for 2 years, both of which have been in the current district. Prior to becoming an administrator, she taught for 12 years as a second, third, and fourth-grade teacher. Principal 3 has been an administrator for 11 years and 3 of those years have been in the current district. Prior to becoming a principal, he was a special education teacher for 6 years, a general education teacher for 2 years, and a Title I math teacher for almost 2 years. Assistant Principal 3 has been an administrator for 4 years which have all been in the current district. She was an exceptional education coordinator, a reading resource coach, and a school improvement coach before becoming an administrator.

All six administrators were asked a series of questions. Questions 1-8 were directly related to the second research question. Four administrators stated that the purpose of feedback was to improve instruction and one stated, "I think it's a snapshot of someone's teaching and it serves as a dialogue started to help them grow as professionals." Other reasons given were to improve student achievement, help teachers to grow as professionals, and to make sure that teachers used best instructional practices. The following quotation shows administrator comments regarding this theme:

> I guess the main purpose would be to provide teachers with new insight to—the goal would be for them to like, improve their instruction, so thus, providing insight to them that will eventually improve their instruction, which in turn will lead to student achievement. I feel that if we can give them suggestions on how their instruction can improve it will help the students meet the main goal.

Four administrators stated that their role is to provide teachers with feedback. Other reasons listed were to ensure teachers meet expectations set by administration and district

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guidelines, ensure lesson plans are carried out effectively and with fidelity, pacing is adhered to as well as alignment to standards, and to maintain evaluation process timelines. The following administrator quotation typifies administrator comments about this theme:

> My role is to ensure teachers are meeting expectations set by administration and [district] guidelines and policy. My role is to ensure that teachers are implementing best practices. My role is to ensure that lessons are effectively being carried out and planned. My role is to ensure students are the center of their educational practices in the classroom and to enhance teacher growth and development.

Six administrators stated that they received training on how to give feedback in previous districts, the district's leadership retreat, technical assistance meetings, the feedback that they were given when they were teachers, learning through administrative program coursework, and working with other principals. The following quotation exemplifies administrator comments about this theme:

> I received a brief training at one our leadership retreats a few years back but, I learned through what principals have done with me in the past. And I've also learned as an administrator working with other principals, as well as I've learned through some of my coursework as well.

Four administrators stated that they did not receive formal training on how to give feedback for reading instruction but had learned through working with mentors and watching others. When asked, "Have you received training in giving teachers formative feedback in general?" one administrator stated, "Not since I was in graduate school. I've

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worked with my administrator who's taught me how he gives feedback. But as far as like a structured program or structured professional development, no." Two administrators stated that they had received training on giving reading feedback by either the district providing look-for forms specific to reading or in a district one administrator worked in previously. All six administrators stated that they had proper knowledge to give teachers feedback in reading and stated that they gained this knowledge from on the job training, experiences as a teacher, professional studies, working with other administrators, and feedback they received as teachers. The following administrator quotation illustrates administrator comments about this theme:

> I think so. I think over the years of being in this position I have definitely learned a lot. More on the job as opposed to like learning in the classroom when I was getting my administrative degree, or like I said, I did have some training in the different divisions so I think that helped, but I think having done it this long I feel like I have an idea of what's required to evaluate them and give proper feedback, especially since I have been using the same evaluation system now, even over the course of—it's been like six or seven years in different divisions that have used the same system—that has helped a lot too.

Four administrators stated that this is an area in which they would like to continue to grow.

Four administrators stated that they give teachers written feedback of observation prior to the post-observation meeting and all six stated that they engaged teachers in dialogue about observations during post-observation conferences and ask teachers questions about the lesson to encourage dialogue in post observation conferences. Three

administrators stated that the specific type of feedback that they gave teachers was regarding instructional delivery such as resources that could be used to make the lessons more effective, offers recommendations and commendations of observed instructional practice.

Three stated that they plan professional development based on observing trends during classroom observations. Two administrators stated that they share trends with the director of elementary instruction in order to help guide district-wide professional development for K-5 teachers. One administrator stated that she makes recommendations for professional development based on student data. Two administrators stated that they are attempting to encourage their teachers to take more ownership of their own professional development and the following administrator quotation shows administrator comments about this theme:

> What we're trying to do is, we're trying to make the teachers more—take more ownership of professional development. So, we're strengthening and empowering their correlates, trying to share data so that teachers own their professional development and they are then able to reflect upon expectations.

Overall, administrators believed that they had an impact on reading instruction as evidenced by the follow-up walk-through observations they completed to monitor the implementation of administrator instructional recommendations given to teachers. One administrator also pointed to the fact that he believed that the instruction in his building has become more efficient and targeted based on the feedback they give teachers and stated, "I think instruction has become more efficient. The use of instructional best practices and instructional strategies has become more prevalent. Timelines, master

scheduling is adhered to fairly well, behaviors, teachers' responses to behavior,

relationship building— have become more effective."

Table 5 shows the number of times the major themes listed appeared in

administrators' responses to interview questions.

Table 5

Results of Thematic Analysis from Administrator Interviews

Theme	Response frequency
Purpose of feedback to improve instruction.	4
Role of administrator to provide feedback to teachers.	4
Received training on how to give feedback.	6
Did not receive training on how to give feedback for reading instruction.	4
Proper knowledge to give teachers feedback in reading.	6
Give teachers written feedback prior to observation meetings.	4
Engage teachers in dialogue about observed lesson.	6
Feedback to teachers on delivery of instruction.	3
Professional development from observing trends.	3

Note. n = 6 administrators

Administrator interview results.

Administrator interview question 1: What do you perceive as the purpose of

formative feedback given during observations in your school? Four out of six

administrators (66.7%) of administrators stated that they perceived the purpose of feedback to be to improve instruction and the following quote demonstrates administrator comments about this theme:

> I guess the main purpose would be to provide teachers with new insight to—the goal would be for them to like improve their instruction, so thus, providing insight to them that will eventually improve their instruction, which in turn will lead to student achievement. I feel that if we can give them suggestions on how their instruction can improve it will help the students if we can give them suggestions on how their instruction can improve it will help the students meet the main goal.

Two out of the six (33.3%) stated that they perceived the purpose of feedback to be to impact student achievement. One administrator stated, "The purpose of feedback is to help improve teacher craft, to make sure our best practices are being implemented and to ensure student achievement and success." Other perceptions were that the purpose of feedback is to help teachers to grow as professionals and make sure that teachers utilize best practices.

> ***Administrator interview question 2: What is your role in the formal observation process in your school?*** Four of the six administrators (66.7%) stated that it was their job to do observations and to provide feedback to teachers. The quotation below represents administrators' comments about this theme:

> As assistant principal, I assist the principal in doing the formal observations as he assigns staff to me, who I observe either three times a year or one time a year formally, at least, and I meet with them after the observation to discuss the observation and give my feedback to the teacher.

Two of the six administrators (33.3%) stated that their job was to make sure that lesson plans were carried out effectively and with fidelity. Additional roles listed by administrators were to make sure district guidelines pertaining to reading instruction were being met, ensure teachers implement best practices, enhance teacher professional development, and maintain evaluation timelines.

Administrator interview question 3: Have you received training regarding how to give teachers formative feedback in general? Have you received training in giving teachers formative feedback in reading? All six administrators (66.7%) stated that they had received some training on how to give feedback. Two of the six (33.3%) stated that they received training on giving feedback from their previous districts and one administrator made the following statement:

> When I was in a different county, different district, we did have some professional development for principals during the school year about providing feedback for observations, not specific to reading, but just in general in trying to get specific feedback during observations.

One administrator stated that she had received training on giving feedback when she worked as a data analyst at a school in improvement by attending technical assistance meetings where she learned how to give teacher feedback:

> One year I worked at a school which was an improvement and I went to the technical assistance meetings with the principal and at those meetings, it was focused on inter-rater reliabilities and we had a lot of discussion about that as well as how to give appropriate feedback to teachers and I do incorporate a lot that learning into my practice. Of course, during my administration training that was a

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topic, that, you know, that I learned about as well. The principal and I have had discussions about how we provide feedback and he has given me some guidance on that, but as far as specifically in reading—the [district] has provided some samples like walk through, reading look-fors, things like that, which there have been several of those types of things given and discussed so that would be the only specific reading training.

One administrator received training at one of the district's leadership retreats, and three stated received training in their administrator coursework. Four of the six administrators (66.7%) stated that they had not received training on how to give feedback specific to reading. Two of the six (33.3%) stated that they had received training to give reading feedback in the form of reading look-fors provided by the district or through professional development on reading instruction.

Administrator interview question 4: Do you feel you have the necessary knowledge to properly evaluate teacher performance and give effective feedback? Do you feel that you have the necessary knowledge to properly evaluate teachers in reading instruction and give them effective feedback? Do you know and understand the standards and the rubrics related to reading in your school/district? All the administrators (100%) stated that they had necessary knowledge to properly evaluate teachers. Four of the six administrators (66.7%) stated that their knowledge is due to on-the-job training, personal professional development and study, and the feedback that they received when they were in the classroom. The following administrator quotation exemplifies administrator comments regarding this theme:

Yes, I think I do [have knowledge to properly evaluate teacher performance and

give feedback]. A lot of it comes from feedback I have gotten in the past from

administrators or my own classroom experience, but I would be—I wouldn't be

completely honest if I didn't say I would want more professional development or

more education to have a better way to give formative feedback.

Three administrators (50%) stated that knowledge is an area in which they would like to

continue to grow. All administrators (100%) stated that they have knowledge to give

teachers feedback in reading, though expertise varies. The quote below exemplifies

administrator comments related to this theme:

I work closely with [the director of elementary education] and, you know, looking

at the [district's] policies and expectations of what we want to see in reading. So

I think I have a firm understanding of what the [district] wants to see done and

also I pair that with my own, you know, professional knowledge and, then you

know, just go off that.

Two administrators (33.3%) stated that they wanted to learn more about primary reading

instruction. Two administrators (33.3%) were confident in their knowledge of reading

instruction. One stated that he has difficulty keeping track of best practices and applying

those practices to the district's current instructional model for reading and made the

following statement related to the theme:

Yes. [I have the necessary knowledge to properly evaluate teacher performance].

However, keeping current on best practices and educational trends tends to be a

bit of a problem—tends to be problematic in that applying that to the current

reading model, there is still some discrepancy areas.

All administrators (100%) stated that they understand teacher evaluation rubrics and have

a good understanding of the standards.

Administrator interview question 5: What is the post-observation meeting like?

To what extent did you provide feedback? Four of the six administrators (66.7%) stated

that they give teachers written feedback after formal observations before teaches attend

post-observation meetings and the following administrator quotation typified the

administrators' comments regarding this theme:

> I provide drafted feedback to teachers right after formal observation and try to
>
> leave it open for them to feel free to tell me if there is something I need to add,
>
> something that's not correct. I'd say—the conferences are far more structured
>
> with new teachers and with those who maybe are struggling more than some of
>
> the veteran teachers. But you know, we—sometimes if I have to consider or a
>
> question that they have the answer to, I don't necessarily delete that feedback, but
>
> I'll put in upon conversation so and so said—what have you.

All administrators (100%) stated that they ask teachers about the lesson (e.g., what went

well, how it went, what would they improve) during post-observation meetings and the

following quotation exemplified administrator comments related to this theme:

> There's the seven standards is what we evaluate each teacher upon and throughout
>
> the lesson I try to script so that I have examples that I can speak directly to both
>
> positive and negative. . . the evaluation form is provided to the teachers prior to
>
> the post-observation conference that way they can come in with what my point of
>
> view is and then we have conversations from there. I do allow them an
>
> opportunity for discussion, unless it's something blatant, you know, I try to keep

an open mind. I don't necessarily always have the correct perception or whole

story, just based on a momentary observation.

One administrator stated that the meeting is differentiated based on teacher experience.

Three administrators (50%) stated that they specifically reference the seven teaching

standards in their observation meetings and review the teaching standards during

meetings.

Administrator interview question 6: What is the nature of the feedback that

teachers receive from your post-observation conferences? Three of the six

administrators (50%) stated that they give teachers feedback on delivery of instruction.

The following quotation demonstrated administrator comments related to this theme:

So, I mean—they receive—I give feedback on like what I saw as far as their role

as an instructional leader in the classroom, you know, what I saw from their

delivery, what I saw from how the lesson was planned, the environment that

they've created in the classroom. I try to give examples of strengths. Each

standard has indicators and so there are certain indicators that like they did really

well with and I'll try to highlight those. Or if it something that we had talked

about from previous observation that they may have improved on—like if I

mentioned that they lacked closure in the last lesson, I'll come back and say I saw

that you had closure this time, you did a good job on that. And then, also, I will

highlight any areas where maybe there were some concerns that maybe it wasn't

as strong it should be or didn't meet one of the indicators or maybe a question that

I had about why something was done a certain way or there was something that

took place that I wasn't sure—like what led to that and what was going to come

after and maybe to ask questions about that as well.

Three out of six (50%) stated that they give feedback on teaching strengths or

commendations. One administrator stated that she is careful to only provide strictly

observations and limits judgment statements unless she adds commendations as

additional comments:

So typically, I share with teachers that I feel like in a formal observation or walk-

through that I'm going through to try to collect evidence of their meeting the

standards, so oftentimes the feedback that I put in there is very like—it's just

strict observation—what I saw, you know, just describing what I've seen. I

usually do—at the end of the observation there like an additional comment so I

might put some commendations for things I really—things I saw that were really

stellar or some questions I might have or whatever—but the rest of the feedback

that's written is primarily just straight up observation for what I've seen that kind

of meets those standards, or doesn't.

Other areas administrators stated that they gave feedback on classroom environment,

student engagement, and instructional alignment.

Administrator question 7: How has instruction been impacted by formative

feedback given during your formal observation? Two out of the six (33.3%)

administrators stated that they conduct follow-up walk-through observations to monitor

impact of their feedback on teacher instruction. One administrator shared:

I think it varies from teacher to teacher and from grade level to grade level. But I

will say that once I offer recommendations and considerations, I will do a follow-

up walk-through and I would like to see those suggestions put in place. So, for the most part I do see some teachers changing their instructional delivery or craft based on some of the evaluations that I have given. I'm also—typically, if I will go in a lesson and I will see that a number of our teachers are struggling with the same component then I do make sure that our next instructional meeting or PLC that's something that we do target and I work closely with our math lead teacher and our reading specialist to make sure that does happen. So, I think overall, changes are made based on the formative feedback that I do give.

Two out of the six (33.3%) administrators stated that they look for improvement in areas noted in their feedback. One administrator stated that he uses data from observations to determine professional development:

So, when I meet with the teacher if there is some specific deficit or whatever that I notice I make a point to make sure that I look for that again when I go back in to observe it a second time. And so, by and large, as I see improvement in the things that we talk about I try to be specific about things and not to—not have a laundry list of things. Rather I focus on some highly impactful, I think, practices. Then, in addition to that there are patterns that I see I'll discuss that with the principal and there may be things that he and I both see as patterns for staff and we can address that through professional development.

Administrator interview question 7: How has reading instruction been impacted by formative feedback given during formal observations? Only two administrators (33.3%) stated ways in which reading instruction has been impacted by formative assessment in their building. One of these two administrators stated that reading teachers

have benefitted from the feedback in reading and as a result, have grown in their confidence of reading instruction. This administrator's comments are shown below:

> I think teachers—it does vary by teacher, but most teachers that I work with seem to be very open to any suggestions that I offer. They are very fluid and flexible as far as their thinking. I don't have a ton of teachers that seem very fixed on teaching reading in a certain way, they are open to suggestions. So, I would say they are positively impacted and that they've grown a little bit stronger in their confidence as reading teachers.

The second of these two administrators stated that she observed that reading interventions have been impacted due to feedback from administrators:

> I think our interventions have been positively impacted. This year I happen to be the evaluator for our two Title I reading interventionists—so we've been able to see if groups need to change sizing in the room, those types of things—and I think it's helped during regrouping in doing those things.

The other administrators stated that district expectations, such as the new lesson plan model for small group instruction, have been utilized to help guide discussions about observations with teachers; feedback has been critical to teachers and administrators since the districts have implemented a new reading instructional model, walk-throughs are conducted with the building reading specialist to determine professional development needed and make recommendations to teachers; and trends are observed during observations to make sure the instructional model is followed. The following administrator quotation represents administrator comments related to this theme:

I think specifically during reading given the changes that we've had through the

new model the school [district] is using, feedback has been extremely important

because there are a lot of new practices that teachers are not accustomed to, using

the new lesson plan template, things like that that teachers have only been able to

improve on with our feedback. When we've noticed, you know, that maybe they

aren't familiar with a certain element of the lesson plan or lack of communicative

awareness activities then we can provide them with training on that or get with

our reading specialist and she can provide them with training on that, so it

eliminated some of the issues that teachers have had with the new system.

Administrator interview question 8: How have your recommendations for

professional development activities been influenced by the teacher observation

process? Two of the six administrators (33.3%) enlisted the assistance of reading

resource teachers to help provide professional development and the following

administrator quotation shows administrator interview themes:

I feel like a lot of our PD [professional development] gets influenced also by our

data meetings. We've had a lot of meaningful conversations centered around

reading benchmarks, where our kids should be, how we're getting them there. It

all piggybacks on—or I should say it all kind of comes to a head when we come

and sit back and look at the data and see how they are performing. And then we

kind of adjust what we're doing to drive instruction and achievement in the right

direction. We also have a phenomenal reading resource teacher who plans with

our staff weekly; so I feel like some of it is from the formative feedback that they

get but a lot of it is the fact that we focus so heavily on reading instruction and it's

layered throughout everything we do—our data meetings, our planning meetings, our PLCs, our correlates, it's just in the forefront.

Two of the six administrators (33.3%) stated that they shared the needs of their schools and teachers to district leadership to help the district provide meaningful reading professional development to teachers during district-wide PLCs. The quotation below shows administrator comments about this theme:

I'll just echo what he said as well. I think that when we notice things that kinda keep coming up in our observations or even with talking with teachers, you know, I will often ask them if there are needs they have at the conclusion of my meeting with them are there things we can help you with or whatever—if things continue to come up then we may use that information to plan some professional development. Additionally, there is professional development that happens at the school division level and sometimes we will share with people who are running that professional development some things our teachers have mentioned as needs.

Two of the six administrators (33.3%) stated that they wanted teachers in their building to reflect on their own professional development needs and to take make more ownership of their professional development. The administrator comment below illustrates this theme:

I would say—like the principal is saying, we try to let the teachers take some ownership of selecting what they need. So I feel likes it's almost been more like a—I don't want to say, round about, but I feel like maybe based on our feedback it's given them some time to reflect and identify what their needs are, which is then helping them drive or select what they need.

Three of the six administrators (50%) stated that they develop professional development opportunities based on observing trends during classroom observations. One administrator stated that she looks to data to assist her teacher and principal on planning professional development in the school.

Evaluation Question #3: What recommendations do elementary teachers and school administrators have to improve the positive impact of formal observations to support teacher improvement in reading instructional practices?

Teachers and administrators were asked for their recommendations, if they had any, to improve the impact of feedback on instructional practices in reading. Teacher Interview Question 14, Teacher Focus Group Question 9, and Administrator Interview Question 9 related to Research Question 3 of the study.

The results of the thematic analysis indicate that teachers and administrators both strongly recommend that more observations take place in order to better determine the instructional needs of teachers, to be more knowledgeable of teacher instructional practices, and to give more effective feedback. This theme came up one time during individual teacher interviews, five times during the teacher focus group, and five times during administrative team interviews. The following comment illustrated this theme:

> I think that they, again, need to be in the classroom more. Just seeing how it goes in more informal observations rather than the formal. Just come in and walk through and see how that's going and, you know, because with a formal observation you're prepared and you're ready, you know, and you're on your game, but informal observations, I think they should do more of those so that they can really see what's going on. And I think that would be more helpful.

A second theme that was noted from teachers was the need for more specific feedback from school administrators in order to improve their instructional practices in reading. This theme arose three times during individual teacher interviews and once during the teacher focus group interview. Teachers and administrators also stated during interviews that they would like for feedback to be specifically targeted to improving reading instruction which they believed was most effective from someone with a solid understanding of literacy instruction. This theme appeared one time during individual teacher interviews, one time during the teacher focus group interview, and two times during the administrator interviews. One teacher stated that she believed that the feedback would be more effective if administrators were more knowledgeable about reading instruction which would then help to improve teacher instructional practices for reading. She stated that she received more feedback that helped improve her reading instruction from the reading specialist in her school building:

> I would say that in order for the feedback to be more effective, again, I would think that they—administration would maybe need to know more about the subject or, you know, like as far as like what we do in reading, specifically. I mean, I know it's hard for administration to know everything about, you know, what each teacher is doing, but I feel like just if they had a better idea of what we did about each specific—it would be more beneficial to us, because then they would be able to be more specific with what they tell us then—so yeah, I definitely think if they kind of knew more—I know that's asking a lot.

Two school administrators also stated that they believed that the reading specialists in their respective buildings should take a more active role in observations and giving

teachers feedback on their instruction due to their more in-depth knowledge of reading instruction.

The final theme that emerged from the study was restructuring the observation process to allow for more time to do more walk-through observations based on teacher needs and to have the formal observation form itself to align more to formal observations. This sentiment was stated six times during the administrator interviews. The administrators stated that restructuring the process would allow them more flexibility to conduct more walk-through observations and possibly, conduct more walk-throughs for the teachers who may need more based on observation. One administrator made the following statement related to this theme: "I would recommend that [the formal observation process] be more fluid in nature; not necessarily locked into the number of years, the number of observations is based on the number of years on a rotational basis, summative versus nonsummative." Administrators also stated that restructuring would allow them more time to make the observation process more meaningful to teachers by providing more quality feedback to teachers. Two administrators also stated that the form did not align well to conducting formal observations and that some portions of the form were too global for formal observations. For example, one administrator stated that Standard 4: Assessment of and for Student Learning, should not be assessed during formal observations, but rather during mid-years and summative observations when a long-range view of assessment data could be analyzed. Another administrator stated that she believed the form should reflect more of what administrators should look for during formal observations. It was also stated that the online form should include a reading

checklist for administrators to utilize to assist them in further homing in on reading instruction.

Table 6 summarizes the responses from teachers and administrators related to Research Question 3 as well as interview questions and responses that correspond to Research Question 3.

Table 6

Improvement Recommendations from Teachers and Administrators for the Formal Observation Process

Recommendations for improvement	Response frequency		
	Teacher	Focus group	Administrator
More observations/feedback (formal or informal).	1	5	5
More specific feedback to improve instruction.	3	1	0
Feedback from knowledgeable evaluators (principals or reading specialists).	1	1	2
Restructuring the number of times of observations and the formal observation form.	0	0	6

Teacher and administrator recommendations.

Teacher interview question 14: How would you improve the formative feedback given in your school so that it would be more effective in strengthening/changing your instruction in reading? Two out of the five teachers (40%) stated that they would like more feedback and/or more walk-through observations to be completed. The following quotation demonstrates the teacher comments regarding this theme:

I think if we had a little bit more feedback about—if there is an area of weakness

that they see—about what we can do more to fix that. Like actually be given

some ideas of things we could use in the classroom instead. And I think also just

actually observing more often in the school year. Because I think if there would

be more conversations about how things are going in the classroom and a little bit

more open conversation about that.

One teacher (20%) stated that she would like for her administrator to know more about

reading instruction in order to give her more effective feedback:

I would say that in order for the feedback to be more effective, again, I would

think that they—administration would maybe need to know more about the

subject or, you know, like as far as like what we do in reading, specifically. I

mean, I know it's hard for administration to know everything about, you know,

what each teacher is doing, but I feel like just if they had a better idea of what we

did about each specific—and that sounds like a lot I know—component they

could give us more effective feedback—it would be more beneficial to us,

because then they would be able to be more specific with what they tell us then—

so yeah, I definitely think if they kind of knew more—I know that's asking a lot.

One teacher (20%) stated that she wanted more guidelines for what constitutes the

different ratings on the formal observation form, mid-year form, and summative form:

I think going back to having those guidelines of what each, you know, level

should look like, of what they expect would definitely help set—because

sometimes just to know exactly what they expect is difficult unless it's straight up

public. So just maybe having a guideline of what they expect and then seeing

how we can implement hat in the classroom.

Another teacher (20%) stated that she would not change anything about the feedback she

received from her administrator. She liked the minute-by-minute notes she received from

her administrator in observations and said:

I don't think I would change anything, especially the way the evaluator does the

observations. She puts, you know, minute-by-minute what you're doing, what

you're saying, different quotes. She is very efficient, and she is my only

evaluator this year.

Teacher focus group question 9: How would you improve the observation

process used in your school so that it would be more effective in strengthening your

instruction overall, that's with any subject? How would you improve the reading

evaluation process in your school so that it would be more effective in strengthening

your instruction in reading? Four out of the five teachers (67%) in the focus group

stated that more observations were needed for administrators to know what goes on in

classrooms and in order to effectively rate teacher proficiency. Two out of the six

teachers (3.3%) stated that administrators needed to observe their entire language arts

block in order to observe both whole group and small group reading instruction to give

knowledgeable feedback to teachers on all aspects of their instruction and one teacher

made the following statement, "Seeing the entire reading block rather than one particular

area and more often." One teacher (16.7%) stated that she did not want to be penalized

unfairly because the administrator did not mark an indicator that they may not have seen

in the portion of the lesson they observed (whole group versus small group instruction). The following quotations illustrate teacher comments about the theme:

- In regards to being observed for just a whole group lesson when you have that part of the evaluation when they're talking about differentiation, but it's the whole group lesson to everybody so, you know, that makes it difficult for the teacher when it's supposed to be the same, equity is supposed to be the same for every student for that 30 minute block of time.

- I totally agree with that and especially when you do see something that could be even marked down one point—and differentiation, it's like well, it's like that's not part of the lesson. Like how do you know that based off of seeing a whole group lesson that's for everybody? So, it's hard to understand where that comes from.

Another teacher stated that she wanted administrators to observe the entire reading block in order to give her more effective feedback on the lesson pertaining to whole and small group instruction. One teacher (16.7%) stated that she found data meetings more helpful to her instruction than formal observations and made the following statement:

We have a lot of meetings. We have data and reading meetings. I tend to find those way more helpful than formal observations. I'm just gonna be honest with that part. The data meetings, though, I don't always love them but feel like we talk a lot more about individual students and I guess that's what I want in the end. Just to get some feedback on the students. So, I think those meetings are way more helpful to me than formal observations.

Administrator interview question 9: What changes, if any, would you make to the formal observation process in order to make it more effective in strengthening teacher instruction and teacher professional growth in your school? Two out of the six administrators (33.3%) stated that they would recommend that more walk-through observations be done for reading observations and one of the administrator comments is included below:

> I think well—part of the evaluation system allow for walk-through observations but—I think those could be valuable, unfortunately the attendance or time constraints prevents a lot of this from happening, and I now that depending on where teachers are in the observation system some of them need three formals, some of them need one. I guess what I'm trying to say is I wish we could do more walk-throughs maybe and use that as a way to provide more feedback. Sometimes when we get to do the formals it takes so much longer and that might eliminate opportunities to do more walk-throughs—if that makes sense.

They stated that the number of formal observations that must be completed impact their ability to do more walk-through observations on a more frequent basis for reading instruction. Three out of the six administrators (50%) stated that they would like the process to be restructured to allow administrators to give more time to observe staff that need it most based upon ongoing observations. The following quotations exemplify administrator comments:

- The real issue is time, and so I think there may be some restructuring missing that will give us more time with staff that is in need of more time. And what I mean by that is you know, with the new like 5-year timelines for being on the,

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what do you call it—probationary status or whatever, sometimes you get—

there are a lot of teachers who are on summative evaluations and there may be

some teachers who are performing at such a level that they don't require so

many formal observations every year and that will give more time to focus on

other staff that perhaps need more formal observations. I also agree with his

statement about walk-throughs and I think they have a lot of impact. Of

course it's very valuable to sit for an entire lesson to see, you know, the whole

lesson but I think as I mentioned before, I'm doing observations just to collect

evidence of their following all these standards and the more frequently I can

be in there the better to get an idea, so time often prohibits that.

- I would like to do more walk-throughs and kind of do a cumulative

observation based on all those walk-throughs. I feel like the due dates and me

trying to be on time really just takes over and I focus more in getting them

done not the quality of the feedback that I'm providing. I would like to be

able to go into classrooms like every day at the same time and then kind of

take cumulative look at those walk-throughs and then put them into one, so

that you see the same time period over a longer extent of time. I also think the

form is very involved and repetitive, especially when you have to formally

observe someone three times, you're writing very similar comments—

hopefully similar comments, for your proficient teachers over and over and

over again. So, I'd like to change the length of the form and I guess the

amount of times we're expected to formally observe people. I'd like to

change the way that looks so that it's not so traditional.

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Three out of the six administrators (50%) stated that they would like the form to change to better reflect what they should be observing for reading instruction specifically, not just a general observation form. The following quotes demonstrate administrator comments:

> I feel like it is becoming quite cumbersome on administrators the number of teachers who are now in a summative cycle since [the probationary period is] now up to 5 years as opposed to just the 3 years. So, I feel like when that happened, I'm constantly trying to catch myself in making the feedback valuable and not something that I'm not just checking off a list to do to get done, and so, you know, I don't know, it's different. Like for instance, there are standards like the assessment one. I don't want to go in while they are testing, so I feel that shouldn't be on the form. I feel like that should be as a mid-year and summative, but some of them, like that standard and then the standard about the SMART goal, I feel like they don't have a place in a formal observation, and I think that if things like that were taken out then I think we could focus more on things that are important to teaching.

Administrator question #9: What changes, if any would you make to the formal observation process in order to make it more effective in strengthening teacher instruction and teacher growth in reading? Three out of the six administrators (50%) stated that they wanted to conduct more walk-through observations in order to get a better idea of instructional practices daily. Two out of the six administrators (33.3%) stated that they wanted to have the building reading specialist take a more active role in the

observation feedback process due to their knowledge of reading instruction. The

following quotation illustrates administrator comments:

> Part of this is the same the walk-through piece. Part of this—and like I said, this is
>
> a personal opinion, not like changing the evaluation system, but being able to do
>
> like observations with the reading specialist like tandem ones—I think would help
>
> and then we can both, the administrator and reading specialists can together share
>
> ideas and all be on the same page as to what professional development is needed
>
> for either individual teachers or for staff in general. I don't know if that really
>
> goes with the evaluation system, but that would be something.

One administrator (16.7%) stated that she wanted a reading checklist to be a part of the

observation form for reading to make feedback more specific to reading instruction:

> Well, something that was crossing my mind as the principal was speaking—it's
>
> almost as if we need a reading checklist as part of that walk-through form. But I
>
> agree. I feel like our current template is so global and I see that it probably needs
>
> to be, but I think to really home in on that reading instruction it would be great to
>
> have like a checklist on our online system.

One administrator (16.7%) stated that she would like to do more preobservation

conferences to give teachers more opportunities to express what areas that they would

like to improve upon in their reading practice and gave the statement below:

> I think I'm gonna agree with Principal 2 when he said preconferencing. So much
>
> of the feedback that teachers need they could ask for because they know some of
>
> their weaknesses, but because we aren't necessarily allotted with time to meet
>
> with them, they can't convey what we should be looking for or could be giving

them feedback on that they require or desire. So, preconferencing would be super

helpful. I think that's it.

Summary of Findings

Based on transcript and thematic analysis, teachers' and administrators'

perceptions of the evaluation process, specifically, the feedback given during the process,

vary but there are some commonalities. In terms of how helpful teachers found

administrator feedback, the teachers in this study acknowledged that they have found

feedback to be helpful in different ways. Some teachers mentioned specific strategies

that they were given from their administrator (e.g., classroom management strategies and

reading cueing strategies) but the one consistent way teachers believed that feedback was

helpful was that it affirmed that they were practicing effective reading instructional

practices.

Teachers listed some specific feedback for improving reading instruction given to

them by their administrators, such as recommendations for lesson components,

monitoring implementation of reading components, effective use of cueing strategies, and

differentiation of small group instruction. All teachers stated that the professional

development offered in the district has helped them to learn effective reading instruction

and offered opportunities to learn effective strategies from other practitioners (teachers)

within the district. During individual teacher interviews, most teachers stated that they

found feedback to be helpful and that it impacted their instruction. It must be noted that

the teachers who expressed this sentiment had between 1-6 years of teaching experience.

The teacher that had 10 years of experience did not find administrator feedback to be as

helpful as her peers which can suggest that perhaps feedback is viewed differently based

upon teaching experience; however, there was not a similar pattern observed in the responses given from teachers in the teacher focus group.

Analysis of administrators' perceptions of the impact of their feedback on reading instruction is that the impact varies but that their feedback does have some impact on instruction. This belief was based on administrators conducting follow-up walk-through observations to monitor the implementation of feedback they previously gave to teachers. Administrators also stated that they connect instructional practices from observations to professional development to further impact reading instructional practices.

Lastly, teachers and administrators both stated that they believe the number of walk-throughs should increase in order to get a better understanding of day-to-day instructional practices. Teachers believed that more observations (specifically walk-through observations) would give administrators a better understanding of them as instructors and would lead to a more robust understanding of their instruction. Administrators agreed that more observations would help them to learn about instructional practices in their building and help them to get to know their teachers. Teachers and administrators also stated that they would like to either receive more specific feedback about improving reading instruction (teachers) or give more specific reading instruction feedback (administrators). Teachers believed that this would be accomplished by administrators having more knowledge of reading instruction whereas administrators believed that this could be achieved by having the reading specialists in each building to complete observations with administrators since they have a deeper knowledge of effective reading practices/instruction.

Lastly, administrators also stated that they would like some flexibility in the observations themselves and the process to assist them in giving teachers meaningful feedback. Administrators mentioned that they would like more time to complete observations by reducing the number of formal observations that they are required to complete to allow them to do more informal observations more frequently. They also wanted more flexibility in determining how many observations teachers would get and stated that this should be done according to need as established through continued observations. Some administrators also wanted the form to be adjusted to better align to formal observations and recommended that some components on the formal observation form be removed.

CHAPTER 5

Recommendations

Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the results of study as well as implications for both policy and practice based upon the study findings. Specific recommendations also are discussed and connected to previous studies about teacher and administrator perceptions of feedback that was provided in the literature review in Chapter 2.

Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions held by both teachers and administrators about the impact of administrator feedback on teacher instructional practices in reading instruction. The results of this study found that teacher and administrator participants from the three elementary schools had myriad perceptions of the feedback process as well as feedback given during administrator observations. Some themes that emerged from teacher interviews were affirmation of current instructional practices, district reading professional development is offered but no additional professional development is sought, feedback is valuable for instruction, purpose of feedback is to improve instruction, adjusting teaching based on administrator feedback, feedback helping teacher development, the feedback process, administrator follow up to feedback, teacher and administrator dialogue about observation feedback, timeliness of feedback, time given to observe teachers, helpfulness of administrator feedback, administrators' recommendations affect teaching in reading, and positive feedback from administrators.

The teachers in the study found administrator feedback to be helpful in different ways with some examples given by teachers of getting helpful feedback on classroom instruction, reading cueing strategies, learning targets, etc. Though teachers stated that they found various types of feedback given to them from administrators to be helpful to their instruction, a common area that teachers in both individual interviews and the teacher focus group believed was helpful about administrator feedback was that it was positive and offered them affirmation that they were doing many things correctly. This affirmation gave them confidence in their instructional practices.

Though most teachers stated that the purpose of feedback is to improve instruction, that they found administrator feedback to be valuable, and that they adjust their instruction based on feedback, most teachers did not state a specific way in which administrator feedback had impacted their instruction. Additionally, teachers stated that they found professional development to be helpful and several teachers stated that they found this to be more beneficial than formal observations. Teachers also stated that they believed that administrator feedback did impact their instruction because they were sure to try to implement instructional recommendations made by administrators, but teachers gave limited responses regarding the specific ways in which administrator feedback impacted their instruction. If administrators want to strengthen this area for teachers, it is important to provide specific feedback about reading instruction (Wiggins, 2012). Effective coaches must give actionable feedback based on what went well and what did not go as well. In addition to specific feedback, it is important to provide it in a way that does not overwhelm the person receiving the feedback. Supervisors should give

performers one important thing that they noticed that if the performer changes will yield quick and noticeable improvements (Wiggins, 2012).

Teachers in the study stated that they believed that they were given feedback from their administrators in a timely fashion, and teachers found this to be helpful in implementing recommendations in a timely manner. This supports the research of Wiggins (2012), whose research found that feedback should be timely and ongoing. Wiggins concluded that people adjust to feedback when they have opportunities to use it in addition to receiving it. When the feedback comes too late, the performer does not have the opportunity to adjust his or her performance. The more that feedback is given in a timely fashion, that is in real time, the better the performance will be. Thus, the timeliness of the administrators' feedback to teachers in the elementary schools in the district in this study is recognized as a strength in the observation process.

Further analysis was done to determine if there was an association between teacher perceptions of administrator feedback and years of teaching experience. There appeared to be some relationship as evidenced in the teacher interviews: four of the five teachers stated that they found the feedback to be valuable had 1-6 years of teaching experience, and the fifth teacher who did not find it valuable had 10 years of experience. This association was not observed in the responses given by teachers in the teacher focus group and as result, no correlation could be made between perceptions of feedback and years of teaching experience.

Nine themes emerged from the administrator interviews: the purpose of feedback is to improve instruction, the role of the administrator is to provide feedback to teachers, administrators received training on how to give feedback, administrators did not receive

training on how to give feedback for reading instruction, knowledge to give teachers feedback in reading, administrators give feedback to teachers prior to observation meetings, teachers are engaged in dialogue about observed lesson, feedback to teachers on instructional delivery, and professional development based on observed trends.

Administrators stated that they received training on how to give feedback but not all administrators had received training on how to give effective feedback for reading instruction. Even though all administrators had not received training on giving feedback in reading, all administrators stated that they believed that they had adequate knowledge to give teachers feedback on their reading instruction. Additionally, administrators believed that they did have an impact on reading instructional practices and used evidence from their follow-up walk-through observation to support whether instructional recommendations were implemented in teaching practice. Furthermore, administrators stated that they believed instruction for reading is impacted through professional development opportunities based upon observations. They stated that they would craft their professional development for teachers based on their observations, and one administrator also stated that he shared his observational findings with district leadership to assist in planning district-wide development if similar trends were observed in the other elementary schools.

Teachers and administrators both stated that there was a need for administrators to conduct more walk-through observations to get a better idea of day-to-day instructional practices in reading. Teachers stated that this would help administrators learn more about the instructional practices of teachers as opposed to relying on a few formal observations and administrators expressed a similar viewpoint. These findings support the results of

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earlier studies such as the study conducted by Muhonen-Hernandez (2005). Researchers in this study found that teachers liked having administrators visit their classrooms. These findings are also aligned with recommendations of Ginsberg and Murphy (2002), who found that walk-throughs that were frequent, brief, and unscheduled by administrators can foster a culture of collaborative learning and dialogue (Clark & Duggins, 2016; McGrath, 2010; Murphy, 2004; Walker, 2014; Wolfrom, 2009).

Administrators stated that more walk-throughs would help them learn more about the instructional practices in their building and offer more support to teachers who may require it most based on walk-through observations. Teachers also expressed that they would like more specific feedback from administrators to help improve areas of weakness regarding reading instruction and stated that more reading knowledge would help administrators in this area. Some administrators stated the need to include school reading specialists in the observation process to provide teachers with in-depth and specific reading instruction feedback. These findings support the research of Wiggins (2012) in which the results showed that in clinical observation, goal-oriented and objective feedback is necessary. For principals, who are charged with providing teachers feedback or to provide actionable feedback or effective feedback in general, they must be properly prepared. Effective supervisors and coaches are careful to observe and make comments on what they observe based on clear goal statements (Wiggins, 2012).

Lastly, administrators stated that they would like more flexibility in the observation process to include revising the number of observations teachers require to allow them to focus more on teachers who need more assistance, and to also create more time for more frequent walk-through observations which they stated would be more

impactful to instruction. This finding supports the research of Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStafano, 2014). Feedback scholars have stated that feedback exchange has challenges such as a lack of meaningful feedback or collaboration and the time demands of formal observation systems in schools (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2014) and the findings of this study support these ideas. The evaluation part of principalship is most often seen as time consuming, which creates more problems that can impede a teacher's professionalism rather than helping to facilitate growth (Gupton, 2010). Furthermore, the feedback from standard annual and biannual observations conducted by administrators do not allow instructional leaders to assess the true quality of instruction (Gupton, 2010) and this idea emerged several times in the current study. Administrators also mentioned revising the formal observation form to more closely reflect reading instructional look-fors so that the form was more specific to reading and less global.

The literature review in Chapter 2 emphasized the importance of the teacher evaluation process and administrators to improving teacher practice and student achievement (Anderson, 1998; Clark & Duggins, 2016; Gutierrez, 2006; McGrath, 2010; Murphy, 2004; Stronge, 2010; Walker, 2004). For the observations to have an impact on practice, both administrators and teachers must believe in the validity of the evaluation system and administrator feedback (Antonis, 2014; Beresh, 1987; Gregoire, 2009; Winslow, 2015). In this study, several teachers stated that they did find the feedback from administrators to be helpful which, in turn, impacted their willingness to implement administrator recommendations. Other teachers stated that they did not find the feedback from administrators or formal observations to be helpful because the administrators did not observe enough of their instruction due to where they were in the observation cycle or

simply not observing more of their literacy instruction to include whole group and small

group instruction. Some teachers stated that they did not believe some portions of the

evaluation were fair based on the administrators not adequately observing more of their

reading lesson or observing them in multiple reading lessons. This led them to question

the validity of the process and the feedback given to them. This finding supports research

conducted by Gregoire (2009). According to Gregoire (2009), teacher perceptions of the

fairness of evaluation systems and the belief that they do not receive helpful feedback

from administrators has a negative impact on changing teacher practices. Several

teachers expressed this sentiment during teacher interviews and the teacher focus group.

Likewise, administrators also stated concerns with the quality of the feedback that they

gave to teachers about reading instruction due to the number of formal observations that

they had to do based on the number of formal observations that had to be completed for

probationary teachers and tenured teachers on summative cycle. The new probationary

period extends the amount of time new teachers are considered probationary (from 3

years to 5 years) and puts more teachers on full cycle at once that must receive three

formal observations while on full cycle. Administrators stated that the number of formal

observations required made it difficult to give quality feedback and they felt they were

completing observations as part of a checklist as opposed to always giving meaningful

feedback. Some administrators and teachers also stated that they wanted to see the

number of walk-through observations increase so that administrators could get a better

picture of reading instructional practices of teachers. The desire of both teachers and

administrators to increase the number of walk-throughs points to the need for more

studies on the importance of formative feedback in providing more frequent feedback to teachers.

Lastly, teachers and administrators stated a need for those giving feedback to have in-depth knowledge of reading pedagogy and instruction. Several of the administrators in the study stated that they do not have the depth of knowledge in reading instruction as a reading specialist and stated that reading specialists should take a more active role in the observation process for teachers. Likewise, some teachers stated that they would like more specific solutions and feedback about reading instruction to help them improve and believed that administrators needed a more in-depth understanding of reading instruction to accomplish this task. These findings also support the research of Gregoire (2009). Teachers have perceptions about the level of expertise of principals and their ability to judge teacher quality (Gregoire, 2009). Commonly cited concerns of teachers are lack of subject area expertise, lack of understanding of classroom context, and timing of evaluation (Gregoire, 2009).

Administrators also stated a need for observation forms that are more reading specific that could be used for providing teachers with feedback on reading instruction and providing a checklist or look-fors for reading instruction to assist administrators in providing meaningful feedback for reading. Murphy (2004) stated that administrators must create mechanisms to ensure that teachers receive quality feedback on their instructional areas by knowledgeable evaluators. The results of this study support Murphy's assertion and highlight the need for the school district in this study to create supports to assist school administrators in providing quality feedback to teachers for

reading instruction by supporting improving their knowledge of effective reading instruction.

Implications for Policy and Practice

This section provides recommendations based on the study findings. A summary of findings as well as the recommendations associated to those findings can be found in Table 7.

Recommendation 1- Administrators should be sure to affirm teachers when they observe instruction aligned to the district reading model. Elementary teachers stated that feedback was helpful in different ways, but one common theme was that feedback was helpful because it affirmed that they were practicing effective reading instructional practices. This theme is shown in the following teacher comment:

> [Formative feedback] I think has helped—the formal evaluations has helped me boost my confidence, because sometimes I feel like I'm not doing something well, or I feel like, "Wow, I don't think that went well," and then with the feedback it's the total opposite and they say, "Wow, I was really impressed with this, and I really liked how this went," or "I liked how you had this set up." Things that I don't realize that have gone well, so.

As a result of this, administrators should continue to provide teachers with positive feedback about areas of instructional strength as well as areas to grow since this was very important in how effective teachers perceived themselves to be.

While most teachers expressed that observational feedback was helpful because it affirmed their teaching practices, some teachers stated that while affirmation is appreciated, they did not find this to make a positive impact on their instruction.

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Table 7

Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Finding	Related recommendations
Elementary teachers stated that feedback was helpful in different ways, but one common theme was that feedback was helpful because it affirmed that they were practicing effective reading instructional practices.	Administrators should continue to provide teachers with positive feedback about areas of instructional strength as well as areas to grow since this was very important in how effective teachers perceived themselves to be. During interviews, a few teachers stated that they do not often have the opportunity to see reading instruction to get ideas so speaking with other teachers and completing peer observations could be beneficial to teachers. This could assist in helping teachers to either continue to be affirmed in the strength of their instruction as well as to get more feedback pertaining to their reading instruction from their peers.
Elementary administrators stated that they believed their feedback impacted reading instruction as evidenced by follow-up observations to monitor implementation of recommendations and the development of professional development based on teacher observations.	Ensure that all school administrators are completing walk-through observations in follow-up to recommendations to monitor implementation of reading recommendations. District leadership should also work with school administrators in analyzing walk-through data for trends to help develop district-wide reading professional development in the building and schedule walk-through observations with respective building reading specialists to observe reading instruction to monitor instructional trends and form ideas for professional development. District leadership should also give building administrators the opportunity to discuss reading instructional trends at their respective schools to encourage collaboration for professional development among elementary schools.
Teachers and administrators stated that more observations are needed to better understand day-to-day instruction.	Administrators should complete more informal observations or walk-through observations of teachers to learn about daily instructional practices in their respective buildings. Administrators should work to create schedules to allow for more frequent walk-through observations to observe whole and small group reading instruction.
Teachers stated that more specific feedback related to reading instruction is needed to improve reading instructional practices.	Administrators and reading specialists in each building should collaborate to conduct tandem walk-through observations of reading instruction to give teachers specific feedback about their reading instruction. District leadership, in collaboration with building specialists and administrators, should also develop a reading specific walk-through form for administrators to use when performing observations.
Administrators believe that more flexibility is needed for the number of observations required to allow for more time to give quality feedback and do more frequent walk-through observations and that the formal observation form should be more specific to reading.	District leadership should consider adjusting the formal observation/teacher evaluation process in terms of reducing the number of formal observations required to be conducted of teachers in summative evaluation. District leadership should also consider decreasing the probationary period from 5 years to 3 years to reduce the number of teachers who are on summative cycle at once. Lastly, district leadership should consider adding an online reading checklist to the formal observation form on Talent Ed® administrators to use when completing reading observations. The form should include research-based components that should be observed during reading instruction for whole group reading instruction and small group instruction to help align observations to reading instruction.

Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStafano (2014) argued that adults make meaning with four different developmental systems: "instrumental knowers" (tell me what I need to do), self- "authoring knowers" (let me demonstrate my competency), "socializing knowers" (make me feel valued), and "self-transforming" (let's figure this out together). Since teachers are at different development spaces and need different types of feedback in order to perceive it to be helpful, administrators must learn their teachers in order to differentiate the type of feedback approach they should employ to ensure that feedback is helpful to all teachers. This can be accomplished by giving teachers surveys at the start of the year or asking teachers specific questions at the start of the year or during preobservation conferences to gain this insight.

In addition to continuing to provide teachers with positive feedback, teachers should also be allowed to do more classroom observations themselves to learn further effective reading practices and share feedback with other teachers as well. During interviews, a few teachers stated that they do not often have the opportunity to see reading instruction to get ideas so speaking with other teachers and completing peer observations could be beneficial to teachers. This theme is represented below in the following quotation:

> The feedback is always beneficial. As teachers, we don't get as much of an opportunity to observe others, so this is a great change for someone to observe you and to let you know what somebody else has done that may work better or that you can improve; especially since our reading curriculum has changed significantly in the last 2 years.

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This could assist in helping teachers to either continue to be affirmed in the strength of their instruction as well as to get more feedback pertaining to their reading instruction from their peers. Studies have found that teacher evaluation should include involvement of stakeholders on multiple levels, including teachers, who have knowledge of specific content areas to help with evaluating teachers (Gregoire, 2009; Mathes et al., 2009; Walker, 2014; Wise et al., 1984). Thus, involving other teachers in the feedback process could be helpful in having a positive impact on reading instructional practices.

There are many studies on perception of the teachers' evaluation system but there are few studies that examine the impact of formative feedback on changing specific teacher practice (D. Anderson, 2016).

Recommendation 2: All administrators should complete consistent follow-up walk-through observations to monitor implementation of reading feedback/recommendations. Some elementary administrators stated that they believed their feedback did impact reading instruction as evidenced by their completing follow-up observations to monitor implementation of recommendations and the development of professional development based on teacher observations. Thus, it is recommended that all administrators in the district complete regular walk-through observations to follow up on the implementation of reading based feedback given by administrators to ensure instructional alignment to the district reading model.

Additionally, district leadership should also work with school administrators in analyzing walk-through data to determine trends to help develop district-wide reading professional development for teachers. School administrators should collaborate with their reading specialist to provide reading professional development in the building and

schedule walk-through observations with respective building reading specialists to observe reading instruction to monitor instructional trends and form ideas for professional development. District leadership should also give building administrators the opportunity to discuss reading instructional trends at their respective schools during principals' meetings to encourage collaboration for professional development among elementary schools.

Recommendation 3: Administrators should conduct more walk-through observations in general. Teachers and administrators in the study stated that more observations are needed to better understand day to day instruction. Studies found that teachers like having administrators visit their classrooms (Muhonen-Hernandez, 2005). Walk-throughs that are frequent, brief, and unscheduled by administrators can foster a culture of collaborative learning and dialogue (Clark & Duggins, 2016; McGrath, 2010; Murphy, 2004; Walker, 2014; Wolfrom, 2009). Teachers in the study stated that they did not always believe that their respective administrator had a true understanding of teachers as reading instructors based on just formal observations due to the limited number of observations, especially teachers who were not on summative evaluation. The lack of observations leads some teachers who participated in the study to doubt the validity of the feedback given by their administrators and this theme is illustrated in the following quotation:

> I don't believe [the evaluator takes adequate time to observe our performance in reading]. I think so far this year, like, I've only had one observation and that was mid-year. And I think it's hard when they are in there for, you know, less than

well usually about 30 minutes—basically seeing one time 30 minutes—really

does not give an accurate description of my reading instruction.

The view that formal observations provided a limited view of instruction caused several

teachers to become anxious about the evaluation process and they stated that they

preferred walk-through or informational observations to the formal observations they

received under the teacher evaluation system. The quotations below typify the teacher

comments around this theme:

- I feel like more informal observations would be easier because I know that

  when a formal comes around for me and my nerves will—I get very nervous.

  So, I feel like maybe a lot more informal where they are just walk-throughs

  and things like that, to make the other times a little bit easier also. Leave

  some feedback from those walk-throughs but maybe not just one or two

  formal observations that you feel like your whole year is judged in that couple

  of times.

- I think that [administrators] need to be in the classroom more. Just seeing

  how it goes in more informal observations rather than the formal. Just come

  in and walk through and see how that's going and, you know, because with a

  formal observation, you're prepared and you're ready, you know, and you're

  on your game, but informal observations, I think they should do more of those

  so that they can really see what's going on. And I think that would be more

  helpful.

As a result, it is recommended that administrators complete more informal observations

or walk-through observations of teachers to learn about daily instructional practices in

their respective buildings. Administrators should work to create schedules to allow for more frequent walk-through observations to observe whole and small group reading instruction. This recommendation is based on the research of Gupton (2010). The difference between strong instructional leaders and average principals is how they choose to spend the time that they have available (Gupton, 2010). Strong instructional leaders delegate responsibilities in order to spend more time on teaching and learning as opposed to leaders that focus on management (Gupton, 2010). Additionally, strong leaders conduct frequent drop-ins between 10-15 minutes per classroom to allow them to visit more classrooms each day. Conducting more frequent short drop-ins will allow administrators to observe common instructional practices to get to know teachers. This may also lead to teachers having a more positive view of administrator feedback due to believing that administrators know them better as reading instructors. Several studies support this recommendation because administrators and teachers must believe in the validity of the teacher evaluation system and the feedback that they receive from their administrators in order to adjust their instructional practices (Antonis, 2014; Beresh, 1987; Gregoire, 2009; Winslow, 2004). Gregoire (2009) further stated that a negative perception of teacher evaluation and a belief that the process is unfair presents an obstacle to changing teacher practices and there were several teachers in the current study that made statements that support this research finding.

Recommendation 4: Administrators must give teachers meaningful and specific feedback. Teachers stated that more specific feedback related to reading instruction is needed to improve reading instructional practices and the following quotation demonstrates this theme:

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Regarding reading instruction, I don't necessarily feel like I get a lot of feedback to improve the instruction. You know, they'll say that things they see that's going good, but it tends to be, again, an overview of the lesson more than what to work on or things that they need to see or just checking that. They do ask a lot of questions about what are you doing for this or what are you doing for that, so we have the conversation. But as far as suggestions, I think that they might—I think, in my opinion, they could probably add some more of those.

Meaningful, actionable, and effective feedback is important and without clear feedback from leaders, it is almost guaranteed that there will be no transfer of information gained through professional development into classroom practice (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStafano, 2014). Studies have found that teacher evaluation must meet the needs of educational goals and offer plausible solutions to concerns that are perceived to be a major concern within schools and districts (Gregoire, 2009; Wise et al., 1984). Additionally, research demonstrates that administrators need continuous training on current practices, knowledge, and skills in order to conduct objective evaluations; identify high quality teachers, and drive professional development (Gregoire, 2009; Mathes et al., 2009; Walker, 2014; Wolfrom, 2009). Thus, it is recommended that administrators receive ongoing professional development related to effective reading pedagogy and practices in order to help offer meaningful feedback to teachers.

Administrators and reading specialists in each building should collaborate to conduct tandem walk-through observations of reading instruction to give teachers specific feedback about their reading instruction. Some administrators stated in the study that they did not believe that they possessed the depth of knowledge about effective

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reading instruction to give teachers specific feedback on their reading instruction. The following quotation exemplifies the administrator comments that relate to this theme:

> I will say that I would like to see the reading specialist also be more of an administrator, so she can give those formal evaluative observations in nature that we are tasked to do. In the role as a principal, you have to know a little bit about a lot of things. I think—I'm not trained to be a reading specialist or reading teacher but if my reading specialist were to be able to evaluate teacher performance in reading, which she is trained to do, as far as content knowledge is concerned, I think that we could do a lot more tightening up of the reading program.

Likewise, some teachers stated that they did not always believe that the feedback they received from administrators offered specific solutions to issues of practice raised during observations and the following statement, "More feedback would be good, more specific feedback, especially on reading instruction at this time. Because it's really important!" Just as principals expect teachers to improve in instruction, principals must be willing to improve their observation and conferencing skills (McEwan, 2003). Effective administrators must move toward a role as a facilitator of teachers and staff growth and development. Successful school districts employ the assistance of master teachers and/or site-based teams who have knowledge in specific content areas to help with evaluating teachers. While it is generally accepted that principals' expertise is enough to assist beginning teachers, there is evidence that evaluators with subject expertise are needed to help more experienced and/or competent teachers to grow professionally (Gregoire, 2009). Administrator and reading specialists tandem walk-throughs would assist

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administrators in improving their instructional knowledge and assist them in giving more meaningful, specific feedback to teachers.

Finally, district leadership, in collaboration with building specialists, master teachers, and administrators, should also develop a reading specific walk-through form for administrators to use when performing observations. It would be helpful to also share this form with teachers to assist them in becoming more knowledgeable of the components of effective reading instruction in whole group and small group.

Recommendation 5: Flexibility in the observation process and forms. Some administrators who participated in this study stated that more flexibility is needed for the number of observations required to allow for more time to give quality feedback and do more frequent walk-through observations and this theme is reflected in the following administrator comment:

> I would recommend that [the formal observation process] be more fluid in nature; not necessarily locked into the number of years, the number of observations is based on the number of years on a rotational basis, summative versus nonsummative. I think by looking at trends, looking at previous evaluations, you can adjust for more or less observations, which is going to motivate teachers also to take more ownership of it.

Some administrators also stated that the formal observation form should be more specific to reading. District leadership should consider adjusting the formal observation/teacher evaluation process in terms of reducing the number of formal observations required to be conducted of teachers in summative evaluation. The state only requires that tenured teachers on summative evaluation have two formal observations conducted per year. By

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reducing the number of formal observations required of teachers on continuing contract in their summative cycle, it could help create more time for administrators to conduct more informal observations or walk-through observations. District leadership should also consider decreasing the probationary period from 5 years to 3 years to reduce the number of formal observations new teachers must receive. Decreasing the probationary period from 5 years to 3 years and reducing the number of formal observations for tenured teachers who are on summative cycle, would decrease the number of formal observations that administrators must complete. This could also help to create time in order to allow administrators to conduct more informal observations or walk-through observations. Studies have shown that lack of time is a barrier to instructional leadership and principals must delegate tasks in order to make teaching and learning a priority (Gupton, 2010; McEwan, 2003). Reducing the number of required formal observations can help give administrators more time to complete informal observations (walk-throughs) and spend more time in the classrooms of weaker teachers. Studies show that strong leaders spend more time in the classrooms of weak teachers in order to keep track of what is going and provide constant feedback on their instruction (Gupton, 2010).

Lastly, district leadership should consider adding an online reading checklist to the formal observation form on Talent Ed® for administrators to use when completing reading observations. The form should include research-based components that should be observed during reading instruction for whole group reading instruction and small group instruction to help align observations to reading instruction. Likewise, these forms should be made available online for informal observations as well to reinforce effective reading instruction during both formal observations and informal observations.

Additional Recommendations. Bird and Little (1985) suggested five steps for administrators to do to ensure that observations result in improving instruction and student learning:

1. The principal brings knowledge and skill to the observations to help teachers.

2. Teachers acknowledge that they have something to learn from administrators.

3. Administrators must demonstrate a certain level of skill and knowledge to give them instructional credibility.

4. Administrators must provide teachers with a detailed recording of the observation, an idea or suggestion of a different technique or practice, a description of what went well with the lesson, and be able to personally teach a lesson if necessary.

5. Teachers must try to change their teaching practices in response to the observation and evaluation.

It is recommended that administrators implement these steps into the observational practices in order to make the feedback from formal observations and walk-through observations meaningful for teachers.

Recommendations for Future Research

Additional research should be conducted on the impact of how teacher perceptions impact their view of feedback and instructional practices. Given the role that teacher perception plays in the observation/feedback process, it would be beneficial to further study how developmental systems or teacher personality may impact how feedback from administrators is perceived and eventually, impacts instructional practices, specifically reading instructional practices. Additionally, more research should be

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conducted on the benefits of frequent walk-through observations on changing teacher instructional practice, specifically for reading instruction.

Summary

In conclusion, observations and feedback have great potential to impact teacher instruction but specific practices must be implemented to make teacher observations, to include formal observations and informal observations or walk-throughs, more meaningful to teachers, otherwise the evaluation process loses its value. Administrators play a critical role in helping to ensure strong instructional practices are implemented in their respective schools. Administrators must get to know their teachers in order to effectively differentiate the way that approach giving teachers feedback as well as the types of feedback that they offer. In order to do this effectively, administrators must possess adequate knowledge and skills to give teachers specific feedback on their reading instruction. Without specific reading feedback that is clear to teachers, it is unlikely that recommendations from feedback or professional development will be transferred to teaching practice.

In revisiting the logic model, the focus of the study was to determine if short-term objectives were met such as having teachers receive and reflect on administrator feedback and while study results indicate that teachers receive feedback and reflect on comments provided by administrators, this reflection may not always impact reading instruction, though most teachers stated that administrator feedback did impact their instruction. When asked to give ways in which feedback impacted reading instruction, teachers offered limited responses which may indicate that while teachers may believe they adjust reading instruction based on feedback, it may not be to the degree in which they think.

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The purpose of feedback is to help impact instruction and if this does not occur, it defeats the purpose of feedback during the evaluation process.

Additionally, administrators must constantly seek out professional development opportunities to stay current on effective instructional practices to help offer teachers plausible solutions and strategies to concerns related to instructional practices. Furthermore, collaborating with content area experts, such as reading specialists and master teachers, to conduct walk-through observations and learning walks would also assist administrators in learning more about reading instruction and help them to provide teachers with more specific feedback regarding their reading instruction. Additionally, administrators must have a good knowledge of common instructional practices in their building and teacher practices by conducting frequent observations of instruction. This can be accomplished by incorporating more walk-through observations. Not only will this help administrators learn more about the teachers and practices in their building to guide the development of professional development and to offer specific feedback, it will also help address teacher perceptions and concerns about lack of understanding of their instruction by administrators who conduct infrequent observations in their classrooms. If teachers believe that administrators have an accurate understanding of what takes place in their classrooms, it will help to build trust in administrator feedback and teachers will perceive the feedback to be more valid. This in turn will lead to more transfer of recommendations regarding reading instruction into instructional practice. It is also important for administrators to conduct more walk-throughs to monitor the implementation of the district's instructional reading program and to follow up on recommendations made to teachers regarding their reading instruction.

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Furthermore, district leadership should consider reducing the number of required formal observations during the teacher evaluation process for probationary teachers and those on summative evaluation to allow for administrator's time to conduct more walk-through observations and give them more flexibility to observe ineffective teachers more frequently. The district should also consider reducing the probationary period from 5 years to 3 years to help reduce the number of formal observations for probationary teachers as well as the number of teachers on summative cycle at once. Additional support for administrators, such as reading specific forms, should also be created in order to help administrators provide more specific reading feedback to teachers.

Lastly, while the study will be helpful to the district in identifying ways to improve the feedback process for elementary teachers and administrators, generalizability is limited due to the convenience sampling approach and the limited number of participants, specifically in the teacher focus group. The criteria for participation was very specific and this limited the number of teachers who were eligible to be invited to participate, and as a result, the participant pool was limited. Twelve teachers were invited to participate in the teacher focus group but only five teachers participated in the end. A higher participation rate for the focus group may have provided more insights for this study.

Achievement gaps are still present in many of our nation's schools. As long as achievement gaps persist, there will continue to be a spotlight placed on teacher effectiveness and student learning. Building administrators, teachers, reading specialists, and district leadership must continue to find ways to make a positive impact on instruction to close those achievement gaps. Teacher effectiveness is the single most

important factor in student learning, thus, we must be sure to not only hire well but to provide instructional leadership and feedback to strengthen teacher instructional practices. Our students and their futures depend on it.

APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol for Teachers

Project: _____

Time of Interview: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewees: _____

Position of Person Being Interviewed: _____

Directions: This is a semi-structured interview. Each question should be asked with the teachers' responses recorded and transcribed.

[*Good morning/Good afternoon. My name is Tiffany Chatman and I am a doctoral candidate at the College of William and Mary. Thank you for consenting to participate in this interview regarding your ideas and perceptions about the impact that formative feedback given in the teacher evaluation process has on your instructional practice in reading. As you know, the district has implemented several changes in the reading program this year. We want to know how supported you have felt as you have implemented these changes in your classrooms through the use of administrator feedback. The administrators in the district have expressed the desire to provide better support to teachers in the form of meaningful feedback and would like to gain insight into how teachers currently view the evaluation process and feedback given as well as how it can be improved. With your permission, I would like to record your responses so that I can maintain your responses accurately. Your responses will be kept confidential so please respond to the questions to the best of your ability. This interview will take approximately 60 minutes. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Allow time for questions*]

[Have the interviewees read and sign the consent form.]

[Turn on the digital recorder and test it].

Background Information

1. What grade level do you teach?
2. How many years have you been teaching? How many years have you been teaching within the district?
3. What school do you work in?

Interview Questions

1. What do you perceive as the purpose of feedback given during observations in your school?
2. What effect, if any, has feedback had on improving your teaching overall? What effect, if any, has formative feedback given during observations had on improving your instruction in reading this school year?
3. What is the post observation meeting like?
4. How helpful is the feedback? Specifically, what types of recommendations are made for improving reading instruction?
5. What happens following the feedback (e.g., coaching, professional development)?
6. What is the nature of the feedback you receive post-observation overall? What is the nature of the feedback you receive post-evaluation specific to reading instruction? What does the feedback process look like? To what extent are you asked questions? Describe.
7. To what extent did you have a conversation or dialogue about the feedback? [if it was a conversation:] To what extent did it involve dialogue that was back and forth between you and the administrator [prompts: did it feel like an equal conversation?]
8. How quickly is feedback given? If feedback is given immediately, describe if this was helpful for you to have it immediately and why?
9. Regarding the evaluator:
    a. Does the evaluator take adequate time to observe your performance in reading? How many administrative observations have you had this school year?
    b. Does the evaluator know and understand the standards and the rubrics?
10. Do administrative recommendations have an effect on your teaching practice? If so, how? If not, why?
11. How valuable did you find the feedback process that you described? [If value was attributed to learning: [To what extent do you believe you could achieve this learning on your own without the feedback from the administrator?
12. To what extent has professional development been on your radar related to your most recent observations in reading?
13. Do recommendations have an effect on your teaching practices in reading?
14. How would you improve the formative feedback given in your school so that it would be more effective in strengthening/changing your instruction in reading?

APPENDIX B

PERMISSION TO USE QUESTIONS FROM DR. TOWE'S STUDY

RE: Permission to use Teacher Interview Questions from your dissertation 📁 Inbox ×

Princess Towe <pbtowe@aol.com>   Dec 3 (6 days ago)
to Tiffany, me

Good Morning, Ms. Chatman,

Thank you for requesting permission to use "some" of the questions used in my dissertation in one of the instruments for your study titled: *A Study of Teacher and Administrator Perceptions of the Impact of Formative Feedback on Teacher Instructional Practices in Reading.* Although it is not clear which questions you wish to use, I grant permission for use of the questions in whole, in part, or in modification that align with your work.

If I may be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I wish you much success.

Best regards,
Princess B. Towe, Ed.D.
973-819-8788

Education: The Guardian of Freedom

Sent from Mail for Windows 10

APPENDIX C

PERMISSION TO USE QUESTIONS FROM DR. WINSLOW'S STUDY

Research Permission 📁 Inbox x

Rodney Winslow <rodney.winslow@tcusd2.org> Dec 4 (5 days ago)
to tlchatman, me ▾

Good Afternoon

I received communication from Dr. Puchner that you are interested in using some of the questions that I used in my research study for my dissertation. I am more than happy to support your research process with allowing you to use questions in my study. What questions were you interested in using?

Once you are complete with your dissertation, would you be willing to provide me a copy of your research? Let me know if there is anything else I can do to help.

Thank you

...

Tiffany Chatman <tiffanychatman@gmail.com> 12:23 PM (10 hours ago)
to Rodney ▾

Good afternoon Dr. Winslow,

Thank you for allowing me to use some of your questions. I would like to use question the following questions:

3b-To what extent did you provide feedback?
4-To what extent do you think teachers made changes to their teaching based on the observation feedback? Describe.

I would be happy to provide you with a copy of my research. Thanks again!

Tiffany Chatman
Principal
Ward Elementary School
Phone: 804-795-7030

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Focus Group Protocol

Interviewer: _____ Date: _____

Time of Interview: _____

Focus Group Participants:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Begin the focus group with this statement:
[*Good morning/Good afternoon. My name is Tiffany Chatman and I am a doctoral candidate at the College of William and Mary. Thank you for consenting to participate in this focus group regarding your ideas and perceptions about the impact that formative feedback given in the teacher evaluation process has on your instructional practice in reading. As you know, the district has implemented several changes in the reading program this year. We want to know how supported you have felt as you have implemented these changes in your classrooms through the use of administrator feedback. The administrators in the district have expressed the desire to provide better support to teachers in the form of meaningful feedback and would like to gain insight into how teachers currently view the evaluation process and feedback given as well as how it can be improved. With your permission, I would like to record your responses so that I can maintain your responses accurately. Your responses will be kept confidential so please respond to the questions to the best of your ability. This focus group interview will take approximately 90 minutes. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Allow time for questions*]

Background Information
1. What grade level do you teach?
2. How many years have you been teaching? How many years have you been teaching in the district?
3. What school do you work in?

Teacher Evaluation Feedback Questions
1. What do you perceive as the purpose of formative feedback given during observations in your school?

2. What effect, if any, has formative feedback had on improving your teaching overall? What effect, if any, has formative feedback given during observations had on improving your instruction in reading this school year?
3. What is the post observation meeting like?
4. What is the nature of the feedback you receive post-observation overall? What is the nature of the feedback you receive post-observation specific to reading instruction?
5. What does the feedback process look like? To what extent are you asked questions? Describe.
6. How valuable do you find the feedback process that you described? [If value was attributed to learning: [To what extent do you believe you could achieve this learning on your own without the feedback from the administrator?
7. Do administrative recommendations have an effect on your teaching practice? If so, how? If not, why?
8. To what extent has professional development been on your radar related to your most recent observations in reading?
9. How would you improve the observation process used in your school so that it would be more effective in strengthening your instruction overall? How would you improve the evaluation process in your school so that it would be more effective in strengthening your instruction in reading?

APPENDIX E

Interview Protocol for Administrators

Project: _____

Time of Interview: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewees: _____

Position of Person Being Interviewed: _____

Directions: This is a semistructured interview. Each question should be asked with the administrator's' responses recorded and transcribed.

[*Good morning/Good afternoon. My name is Tiffany Chatman and I am a doctoral candidate at the College of William and Mary. Thank you for consenting to participate in this interview regarding your ideas and perceptions about the impact that formative feedback given in the teacher evaluation process has on teacher instructional practice in reading. As you know, the district has implemented several changes in the reading program this year. I would like to gain insight into how administrators currently view the evaluation process and feedback given as well as how it can be improved. With your permission, I would like to record your responses so that I can maintain your responses accurately. Your responses will be kept confidential so please respond to the questions to the best of your ability. This interview will take approximately 60 minutes. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?* Allow time for questions]

[Have the interviewee read and sign the consent form.]

[Turn on the digital recorder and test it].

Background Information

1. How many years have you been an administrator? How many years have you been an administrator within the district?

2. Prior to becoming an administrator, how many years did you teach? What subject areas did you teach?

3. What school do you work in?

Interview Questions

1. What do you perceive as the purpose of formative feedback given during observations in your school?

2. What is your role in the formal observation process in your school?

3. Have you received training regarding how to give teachers formative feedback in general? Have you received training in giving teachers formative feedback in reading?
4. Do you feel that you have the necessary knowledge to properly evaluate teacher performance and give effective feedback? Do you feel that you have the necessary knowledge to properly evaluate teachers in reading instruction and give them effective feedback? Do you know and understand the standards and the rubrics related to reading in your school/district?
5. What is the post observation meeting like? To what extent did you provide feedback?
6. What is the nature of the feedback that teachers receive from you post observation?
7. How has instruction been affected by formative feedback given during formal observations? How has reading instruction been affected by formative feedback given during formal observations?
8. How have your recommendations for professional development activities been influenced by the teacher observation process?
9. What changes, if any, would you make to the formal observation process in order to make it more effective in strengthening teacher instruction and teacher professional growth in your school? What changes, if any, would you make to the formal observation process in order to make it more effective in strengthening teacher instruction and teacher professional growth in reading?

Research Question One

Teacher Interview Question #1: What do you perceive as the purpose of feedback given during observations in your school?

School 1, Teacher 1: Improvements can be made

School 1, Teacher 2: Inform teachers what goes well with their lessons and give information on how to improve instruction

School 2, Teacher-1: To identify areas teachers can grow and improve.

School 3, Teacher 1: To help the teacher to make adjustments in their teaching.

School 3, Teacher 2: Improve school wide instructional alignment to the district's expectations

Teacher Interview Question #2: What impact, if any, has feedback had on improving your teaching overall? What effect, if any, has feedback had on improving your instruction in reading?

School 1, Teacher 1: Informs teachers how to be more effective. Feedback on reading centers, if they are challenging enough, if they are differentiated

School 1, Teacher 2: Helped to be a more confident teacher, time management, and organizational skills.

School 2, Teacher 1: Tries to implement feedback to be a better teacher

School 3, Teacher 1: Had a great impact on how to adjust to new lesson plans (small group)

School 3, Teacher 2: Takes the feedback very seriously and implements as soon as possible. Likes the getting the feedback as a new teacher.

Teacher Interview Question #3: What is the post observation meeting like?

School 1, Teacher 1: Goes over each component in the lesson and goes over notes from the observation. Helpful to see what you can implement to be a better teacher.

School 1, Teacher 2: Usually pretty rushed. Administrator just goes over what they saw during the lesson and they have anecdotal notes of the entire lesson and go over areas they would like to see improvement. Then ask for teacher thoughts on how things are going in the class and how reading is going in the classroom.

School 2: Go over things with the principal. He gives comments from observation in advance. Always asks for her feedback or if she disagrees with anything.

School 3, Teacher 1: Gives teachers opportunities to ask questions about the observations and get clarification about observation notes.

School 3, Teacher 2: Administrators go through what they witnessed during their observation. They start with strengths and then they give feedback on things that could be improved. They also make sure that the teacher agrees with everything on the form before they submit it which makes it more comfortable.

Teacher Interview Question #4: How helpful is the feedback? Specifically, what types of recommendations are made for improving reading instruction?

School 1, Teacher 1: Helpful to feel affirmed

School 1, Teacher 2: Feedback is a weakness due to admin not coming up with solutions to observed issues

School 2, Teacher 1: Likes receiving a lot feedback. Received feedback for I can statements and cueing strategies.

School 3, Teacher 1: Feedback is beneficial due to informing teachers of other teaching practices. Really helpful since reading curriculum has changed.

School 3, Teacher 2: Feedback is helpful but full lessons not always observed. Recommending that teachers use strategies from school in Virginia Beach and given feedback on what the district is expecting.

Teacher Interview Question #5: What happens following the feedback?

School 1, Teacher 1: Pick apart feedback to see what she can implement to be more effective. Principal follows up with feedback during data meetings for teacher accountability.

School 1, Teacher 2: Usually not much. Sometimes if there is another observation later, they will go back to the feedback to see how it is going, but usually, nothing more is said.

School 2: Check in and do walk-throughs to if changes from observations are being implemented and how they can support teachers. Has a great reading resource teacher that offers help to make reading instruction meaningful. Administrators communicate with reading resource teacher what teachers need help with and she targets these areas during weekly planning meetings.

School 3, Teacher 1: They have a post observation meeting. Gets a chance to tweak lesson plans and implement the changes that were requested.

School 3, Teacher 2: Nothing in particular. Administrators look for things that they have suggested next time they do an observation.

Teacher Interview Question #6: What is the nature of the feedback you receive post observation? What is the nature of the feedback you receive post-evaluation that is specific to reading instruction? What does the feedback process look like?

School 1, Teacher 1: Feedback is positive and helpful. What he sees in the classroom about what is going well and what needs to be improved. Breaks down each part of the reading lesson and asking if it is effective or it each component of reading lesson components are being implemented. Gives feedback and asks questions about reading lesson plan and components.

School 1, Teacher 2: Did not receive reading feedback in last observation but received positive feedback before about using strategies. Suggested to teacher to think of a different way for students to see her to get feedback on their writing. The feedback process is administrators reviewing what you did in your lesson. Not a lot of questioning. Just observations of what happened during the lesson

School 2, Teacher 1: Positive feedback. More positive than negative.

School 3, Teacher 1: States that she enjoys seeing differentiation in instruction during reading groups. Not asked questions during the observation but there are questions on the observation form online that teachers can look at and have an idea of how to answer those questions before the post evaluation meeting.

School 3, Teacher 2: Very constructive and positive feedback. Similar with reading. Feels comfortable with the post observation conferences. No major complaints given in feedback during meetings about reading instruction. Feels comfortable discussing the slight changes they want her to make.

Teacher Interview Question #7: To what extent did you have a conversation or dialogue about the feedback? To what extent did it involve dialogue that was back and forth between you and the administrator?

School 1, Teacher 1: The entire meeting is back and forth. Asks questions about what he saw.

School 1, Teacher 2: Administrators very open to conversation and is able to ask them questions. A solution is not always reached during the meeting so that can be worked on.

School 2: Administrator led the meeting but there are times for teacher to speak and ask questions. Administrator gives opportunity for teacher to add information to observation conference that may not have been observed during reading instruction. There is conversation and not just someone talking at you.

School 3, Teacher 1: Administrator asks questions and makes it clear that the feedback is intended to help teachers with improvement, not to tell teachers what they are doing wrong.

School 3, Teacher 2: Will ask why she did certain things or how could things be improved. Many times, her ideas of what needs to be improved match her administrator's recommendations. They meet 15 minutes or less. If there are more questions, administrators are open to helping out. Feedback is first written, they send it to teachers, and teachers look over feedback prior to the meeting. Would say that overall it is an hour of dialogue between the teacher and administrator, including the digital dialogue.

Teacher Interview Question #8: How quickly is feedback given? If feedback is given immediately, describe if this was helpful for you to have it immediately and why?

School 1, Teacher 1: Within a couple of days (3-5). It is helpful because you forget what happens day to day. Immediate feedback helpful and you can implement it sooner.

School 1, Teacher 2: That was tough this school year. They were scheduled then cancelled. Usually given within a week of observation. Not sure how much the comments can be used. Maybe for future lessons.

School 2: Pretty quickly. Sometimes a delay using Talent Ed with being able to view feedback. Have to agree on a time to meet which can be difficult due to scheduling conflicts. The more immediate the feedback is given, the better because she keeps thinking of what she did right and wrong.

School 3, Teacher 1: Very quickly. Within a week. It is helpful to get feedback soon so that you can adjust your lessons sooner.

School 3, Teacher 2: Within a few days. Typically meets within a week but they send the evaluation form within 24 hours for teacher to look at. It is helpful to get feedback immediately. Sometimes administrators complete quick walk-throughs and leave little notes about how things went. Likes this because it is something that she can quickly tweak.

Teacher Interview Question #9: Does the evaluator take adequate time to observe your performance in reading? How many administrative observations have you had this school year? Does the evaluator know and understand the standards and the rubrics?

School 1, Teacher 1: Yes, he takes anywhere between 45 minutes to an hour to observe. He gets to see a couple reading rotations, which are differentiated, so he sees a wide range of instruction. Had three formal observations. For the most part, he understands the rubric, but it would be more helpful if he did more informal walk-throughs

throughout the year. That would help him to have a better idea of what happens in the

classroom and can give teachers more suggestions based on what they see.

School 1, Teacher 2: I don't believe so. Only had one observation that took place mid-

year. Administrators only observe for 30 minutes. Does not give accurate description of

reading instruction. Administrators do understand the rubric.

School 2: Yes, they take adequate time to observe. He observes circle a lot.

Administrators do walk-throughs as well which is not as formal but still a great way to

get feedback. Had two formal observations so far and several walk-throughs.

Administrator knows the rubric and they always reference them in the observations, in

formal observations, at the end.

School 3, Teacher 1: Yes. Has had three formal observations. Administrator knows the

rubric.

School 3, Teacher 2: It would be more beneficial if they stayed the whole reading block.

They sometimes only see a small piece of reading lessons. Had three formal observations

and a few walk-throughs. Administrators understand the rubric.

Teacher Interview Question #10: Do administrative recommendations have an effect

on your teaching practice? If so, how? If not, why?

School 1, Teacher 1: Yes, for sure. A lot of it is affirmation that what she does is correct.

It helps her to become a better teacher by learning different strategies.

School 1, Teacher 2: I think they can. Recommendations have been more positive. Not a

lot of comments given for what to work on. Wouldn't mind having more of that to help

become a better teacher.

School 2: Yes, they do. Always an area for teacher to grow. Likes getting feedback.

School 3, Teacher 1: Yes. She is a pleaser and wants to do things right. She does her job and wants administrators to see that in her lessons.

School 3, Teacher 2: Yes, they do. Takes suggestions very seriously and try to implement it right away. If she disagrees with feedback, she will ask why.

Teacher Interview Question #11: How valuable did you find the feedback process that you described during this interview? And to what extent do you believe you could achieve this learning on your own without the feedback from administration?

School 1, Teacher 1: Plays a huge role in helping students learn and how you can differentiate your lessons or encouraging students to think at a higher level through higher level questioning.

School 1, Teacher 2: Have not found it to be valuable. Feedback just recaps the lesson. Spends too much time discussing one lesson takes the value out of it because people are not getting a true picture of who the teacher is based off of one lesson. Gets more from professional development through talking with teacher peers.

School 2, Teacher 1: Feedback very valuable and she wants more.

School 3, Teacher 1: Feedback very valuable and efficient. Likes that everything is on one form.

School 3, Teacher 2: Feedback is valuable but wants more examples of exemplars

Teacher Interview Question #12: To what extent has professional development been on your radar related to your most recent observations in reading?

School 1, Teacher 1: Attended a kindergarten conference to learn new instructional strategies and went to visit a school in Virginia Beach to see reading instruction

School 1, Teacher 2: Information implemented from professional development opportunities. Constantly learns new things to incorporate in lessons to make them better.

School 2, Teacher 1: Lots of professional development offered through the district and in the school and she was going to visit a school in Virginia Beach. Always PD offered in the district and school, like the reading resource teacher.

School 3, Teacher 1: Professional development opportunities for teachers over the summer for reading instruction at a school in Virginia Beach. She has already signed up for all five days of PD for reading to continue to grow.

School 3, Teacher 2: Likes the district reading professional development with teachers across the district because it gives teachers an idea of what to expect. She has not looked into anything on her own but PD at central office helps.

Teacher Interview Question #13: Do recommendations have an effect on your teaching practices in reading?

School 1, Teacher 1: Yes. He recommends things or mentions what other teachers do. Helps to improve as a teacher. Helpful to get someone else's perspective about your class and students.

School 1, Teacher 2: Not too often. Tends to be feedback on one lesson so it is hard to take that. Reflects on lessons myself but not sure how much recommendations are used right away. Changed since becoming a veteran teacher. Not seeing us a lot during the school year makes it hard to use feedback from the evaluation process without administrators getting to know teachers.

School 2: Yes, because there are always areas to grow.

School 3, Teacher 1: Always.

School 3, Teacher 2: Yes. If administrators recommend something, she will at least try it. If it does not work, she will talk to administrators about it and what she can do to make it work in her classroom.

Teacher Focus Group Question #1: What do you perceive as the purpose of formative feedback given during observations in your school?

Participant 1: Determine how teachers are performing and areas of improvement

Participant 5: Determine how teachers are performing and areas for improvement

Participant 5: Observe what instruction is occurring in classrooms

Participant 3: Offers teachers a different perspective of what is happening in the classroom

Participant 2: Observations encourage teacher reflection

Teacher Focus Group Question #2: What effect, if any, has formative feedback had on improving your teaching overall? What effect, if any, has formative feedback given during observations had on improving your instruction in reading this school year?

Participant 4: Made her rethink effective instructional practices

Participant 1: Received helpful feedback on classroom management

Participant 5: Helped to boost confidence

Participant 3: Affirmation that teachers are doing the right things

Participant 2: Reading feedback helped to work on personal goals (integrating content and reading)

Participant 4: Encouraged to work on rigor

Participant 1: Incorporating effective reading instructional practices

Participant 2: Principals becoming more aware of effective reading instruction

Participant 5: Helped with writing detailed lesson plans through weekly reading planning meetings

Participant 1: Principals sharing more effective instructional practices observed during observations

Teacher Focus Group Question #3: What is the post observation meeting like?

Participant 5: It is very detailed. I know they spend a lot of time writing on it because it's a lot for them to fill out, but I feel pretty comfortable.

Participant 2: My post observation meetings with my principal always go well. Discuss everything that's gone on in the classroom in detail

Participant 1: I feel like during those conversations it tends to… they go over---spend much of the time going over what they saw, and it is very detailed. Probably a little bit less time of it on the feedback side, but more time for just viewing what they saw.

Participant 3: I would agree with participant 1. I feel like that they go over what they saw from their perspective and they offer improvement in on things that you could do differently or more effectively). I think that it would be helpful if they offered more suggestions, maybe of what improvements we could make instead of just telling us what they saw in our classroom.

Participant 4: Focus on the students that I'm most concerned about, especially in reading.

Teacher Focus Group Question #4: What is the nature of the feedback you receive post-observation overall? What is the nature of the feedback you receive post-observation specific to reading instruction?

Participant 1: Regarding reading instruction, I don't necessarily feel like I get a lot of feedback to improve the instruction. More of an overview of the lesson more than what to work on or things that they need to see or just checking that. They do ask a lot of questions about practice. Should add more suggestions for teaching practice.

Participant 3: I agree with participant 1. I feel like that they could offer more suggestions as far as, you know, what you could do more effectively. They do ask questions about practice. Wants to be pushed more to get to the next level.

Participant 2: I agree with participants 1 and 3. More feedback would be good, more specific feedback, especially on reading instruction at this time. Because it's really important!

Teacher Focus Group Question #5: What does the feedback process look like? To what extent are you asked questions? Describe.

Participant 4: He often asked what I felt went well, what do I feel could have been improved, and students struggling with reading.

Participant 5: Same things as participant 4. Also, helpful because they have conversations of other things going on in the classroom.

Participant 2: I agree with participant 5 because principal asks about previous lessons, current lesson, and future lessons. Important because it impossible to see all that he observes there in the room.

Participant 1: I think they also ask for areas of concern with reading and what you're doing to remediate or help out with those areas of concern.

Teacher Focus Group Question #6: How valuable do you find the feedback process that you described? To what extent do you believe you could achieve this learning on your own without the feedback from the administrator?

Participant 3: I find it to be very effective because again, a lot of it is just affirmation that you're doing things right and gives ideas from other teachers that can be implemented.

Participant 1: I agree that it is good to get the affirmation PLCs, talking to teachers in other schools and other reading specialists, that kind of tell us what we are supposed to be doing at that time, are more helpful than admin feedback

Teacher Focus Group Question #7: Do administrators recommendations have an effect on your teaching practice? If so, how? If not, why?

Participant 2: I will say that yes, it definitely impacts the other subject areas, and especially as we're working towards, in second grade, integrating content into reading and writing into content.

Teacher Focus Group Question #8: To what extent has professional development been on your radar related to your most recent observations in reading.

Participant 4: Not sought out professional development because teachers are getting a lot of help with reading instruction. For the last two years we've really changed the way we're doing, reading---and we visited the schools, we've done all kinds of things that has really helped (me) see what the reading, or what their reading expectations are at this point.

Participant 5: I'll agree with participant 4: I think…I have not personally sought out professional development based on observations; however, a lot of other teachers that

have been around they come back, and we meet as a whole school or grade level, and they kind of share what they've learned and create materials based on observing other teachers.

Participant 1: I have not sought out professional development because of an observation. But I do know that we spend a lot of time, again, talking about the areas of concern, as we kind of work as a third through fifth grade team. Sought out some professional development for intervention and other teaching ideas by taking the fundamentals of literacy to help out with those ideas.

Research Question Two

Administrator Interview Question #1: What do you perceive as the purpose of formative feedback given during observations in your school?

Principal 1: Improve Instruction and improve student achievement

Assistant Principal 1: Improve instructional practices and the impact on students

Principal 2: Improve teacher craft and to ensure achievement and success

Assistant Principal 2: Help teachers to grow as professionals

Principal 3: Formative feedback is to improve classroom instruction, make sure classroom instruction/teachers utilize best practices, and improve student and teacher relationships.

Assistant Principal 3: Safe way to give teachers feedback that gives teachers strategies to improve instruction and classroom management without being punitive.

Administrator Question #2: What is your role in the formal observation process in your school?

Principal 1: To observe teachers based on the evaluation system. To do observations, provide feedback, have conferences with teachers, share feedback, share recommendations.

Assistant Principal 1: Assist the principal with doing formal observations, discuss observations, and give feedback.

Principal 2: To ensure teachers are meeting expectations set by administration and district guidelines, teachers implement best practices, lessons are effectively carried out and planned, ensure students are the center of their educational practices in the classroom, and to enhance teacher growth and development.

Assistant Principal 2: Give feedback to teachers to make sure that they implement lessons with fidelity, lessons are aligned to standards, pacing adhered to, remediation adhered to, center discussions around data twice a month.

Principal 3: Administrators split who observes staff based on ranking. He likes to take more of the difficult cases.

Assistant Principal 3: Divide summatives and nonsummatives. The role is to do the best to maintain timelines and give feedback.

Administrator Question #3: Have you received training regarding how to give teachers formative feedback in general? Have you received training in giving teachers formative feedback in reading?

Principal 1: Received training in a previous district about feedback but not specific to reading instruction.

Assistant Principal 1: Worked at a school in improvement one year and went with the principal to technical assistance meetings with the principal where they focused on inter-

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rater reliability, how to give appropriate feedback, and she incorporates this in practice.
She has had conversations with her principal as well and he provides guidance. In terms
of reading, the district has provided some samples like walk-through reading look-fors as
it relates to specific reading training.

Principal 2: Received brief training at one of the district's leadership retreats. Also
learned through his experience working with principals in the past as a teacher and
working with principals. Learned some through coursework. No formal training in giving
reading feedback but learned from watching others and working with a mentor. He
created a look-for sheet for reading that was adopted by the district.

Assistant Principal 2: No training since graduate school. Worked with administrators
who taught her how to give feedback. No training in a structured program or
professional development. No feedback in giving reading feedback.

Principal 3: Received training in previous district overall and in reading instruction.

Assistant Principal 3: Received training in her admin program but not I the district. Did
not receive training on how to give reading feedback.

Administrator Question #4: Do you feel you have the necessary knowledge to properly
evaluate teacher performance and give effective feedback? Do you feel that you have
the necessary knowledge to properly evaluate teachers in reading instruction and give
them effective feedback? Do you know and understand the standards and the rubrics
related to reading in your school/district?

Principal 1: Yes, learned a lot over the years. More on the job training as opposed to
formal training. Yes, but it is an area of continued growth, especially with primary

reading. Understands the rubrics. Meetings were held to make sure that they understand the rubrics.

Assistant Principal 1: An area she has been growing in each year. Feels that she has the knowledge to evaluate teachers, specifically in reading, due to her training as a teacher and reading being focus. Knows a lot about primary reading. Knows a lot about the reading process and the development of reading. Administrators have been included in all of the reading training with teachers due to the big change in the reading program. Getting that information helps give feedback to teachers in meeting reading expectations. Understands the rubrics and relies heavily on those when giving feedback.

Principal 2: Yes, has necessary knowledge. Not a lot of formal training to get information. Learned through his professional studies, reading articles, doctoral program, and working with some individuals and other administrators. Feels he has necessary knowledge to evaluate teachers in reading. Works closely with division leadership in looking at the division policies and expectations. Has a firm understanding of what the division wants to see done and pairs this with his own professional knowledge. Does not know the standards as well as he should but does have a sense of knowledge of what should be looked for in certain components of reading, like word study, guided reading groups. Has an understanding of pacing guide and what teachers should be teaching. Knows professional teaching standards.

Assistant Principal 2: Feels that she has necessary skills and knowledge. A lot of it comes from feedback she received as a teacher. She wants more professional development to give better feedback. Feels stronger giving formative feedback in reading instruction for grades 2-5. Wants more education in lower elementary school reading. Difficult to know

what feedback to give K and 1 since she never taught those grade levels. Knows the standards pretty well but feels that they are moving targets. Could brush up on them and know them a little deeper as far as unpacking the standards. Knows professional teaching standards.

Principal 3: Yes, but keeping track of trends of best practices and educational trends is a problem. Hard to apply those things to the current reading model. There is still some discrepancy. Feels he has skills to evaluate teachers in reading. Does not feel that he understands the rubric related to reading in the current district.

Assistant Principal 3: Yes, feels stronger in some content areas than others. Feels she has necessary skills to evaluate teachers in reading instruction. Believes she understands the rubrics related to reading in the school district.

Administrator Question #5: What is the post observation meeting like? To what extent did you provide feedback?

Principal 1: Fills out evaluation form and sends to teacher. Ask teachers if they have any questions about the observation. Asks teachers to talk about the lesson, what went well and what did not. Sometimes he may go through the standards one at a time.

Assistant Principal 1: Does written feedback in advance, sends it to the teacher. Starts conference with asking teacher what they want to share about how the lesson went and these questions start the conversation. Does not usually go standard by standard.

Principal 2: Sits down with the teacher and reviews the observations. Asks them about what they noticed about the lesson and what changes they would make. A time for teachers to show how they think the lesson went and give feedback based on his professional knowledge. Feedback is mostly teacher reflections. Time for teacher

reflection is very powerful. Discussing instructional expectations is also a part of post observation conferences.

Assistant Principal 2: Teachers come in and administrators ask how they think the lesson went and goes through the lesson from beginning to end. They go through the form on Talent Ed and discuss standards. Ends conferences by asking teachers how administrators can support them.

Principal 3: There are 7 standards that are used to evaluate teachers. Scripts lesson to that he can speak to examples in feedback. Feedback form is given to teachers prior to observation meeting. Allows teachers the opportunity for discussion unless something is blatant. Tries to keep an open mind.

Assistant Principal 3: Provides drafted feedback to teachers right after formal observations and tries to leave room to tell her if there is something for them to add or something that is not correct. Conferences are more structured with new teachers than veterans or those that may be struggling.

Administrator Question #6: What is the nature of the feedback that teachers receive from your post observation conferences?

Principal 1: Gives feedback on what he sees in lessons pertaining to delivery, how the lesson was planned, the environment they have created in the classroom. Gives teachers feedback on strengths. Follows up with previous feedback given in prior observations.

Assistant Principal 1: Shares with teachers that she tries to collect evidence of them meeting the standards and feedback is strict observation. May add commendations for additional comments if she observes something she likes.

Principal 2: Feedback varies. Looks for engagement of students and the delivery of content. Discusses resources that could have been implemented to enrich lessons.

Assistant Principal 2: Gives teachers a point to ponder and it is in the instructional delivery write up that she does. Gives recommendations on instruction and classroom management. Does not like to point out a problem without also offering a solution.

Principal 3: Gives a summary of the lesson to help build on common ground and teachers discuss their intention for the lesson versus what was observed. Makes sure that classroom instruction aligns with assessment.

Assistant Principal 3: The format is written and verbal. Tries to work with them on seeing how they can grow, where they need support, and what they want him to look at in future observations.

Administrator Question #7: How has instruction been impacted by formative feedback given during your formal observation?

Principal 1: Feedback given on what is going well and what is not. Conducts follow-up walk-throughs to observe changes

Assistant Principal 1: Observes for deficits and continue to look for improvement in that area

Principal 2: Varies by teacher. Completes follow-up walk-throughs to observe changes and determines professional development based on observed trends

Assistant Principal 2: Varies by teacher. Most teachers are open to suggestions

Principal 3: Instruction is more efficient and uses more best practices

Assistant Principal 3: Teachers more reflective. Improvement in learning targets and assessments, improved instructional alignment

Administrator Interview Question #7: How has reading instruction in particular been impacted by formative feedback given during formal observations?

Principal 1: Admin uses the division lesson plan to discuss observations with teachers

Assistant Principal 1: Feedback has been important due to the new model for reading in the division

Principal 2: Completes lots of walk-throughs with building reading specialist and debriefs on observations to determine professional development needs and weekly planning focus. Admin makes recommendations based on data

Assistant Principal 2: Reading teachers are positively impacted by feedback and teachers have grown in their confidence

Principal 3: Uses observations to find commonalities and trends to ensure instructional model is followed

Assistant Principal 3: Interventions have improved due to feedback

Administrator Question #8: How have your recommendations for professional development activities been influenced by the teacher observation process?

Principal 1: Looks for trends and uses trends to provide professional development. Noticed one time that independent work during small group was an area in need of improvement and they planned professional development with reading specialist to help teachers make it rigorous and impactful.

Assistant Principal 1: Notice things that keep coming up in observations or when talking with teachers and will ask them about their needs at the end of post observation conferences. If trends continue to come up, uses that information to plan professional

development. Will also mention teacher instructional needs to division leadership to help with division professional development.

Principal 2: Professional development is heavily based on observations. Likes to make professional development meaning. Debriefs on classroom observations. Tight alignment to the formative feedback that administrators give teachers that goes back to school PDs. Also shares observations with director of elementary education so that she can address those areas during district PLCs.

Assistant Principal 2: PD is influenced by data meetings. Lots of discussion around reading benchmarks. Adjust instruction based on data. Reading resource teacher helps to plan weekly with staff. Focus heavily on reading instruction and it is layered throughout everything that they do.

Principal 3: Trying to make the teachers take more ownership of professional development. Strengthening their correlates, trying to share data so that teachers own their professional development and to reflect on expectations.

Assistant Principal 3: Let the teachers take some ownership of selecting what they need. Teachers reflect and identify their needs based on feedback which helps them to select that they need.

Research Question Three

Teacher Interview Question #14: How would you improve the formative feedback given in your school so that it would be more effective in strengthening/changing your instruction in reading?

School 1, Teacher 1: Helpful if administrator knew more about reading instruction for more effective feedback

School 1, Teacher 2: Wants ideas from administrators to use for instruction and wants more classroom observations

School 2, Teacher 1: Would like more areas she can improve upon from administrators. Wants more feedback

School 3, Teacher 1: Would not change anything. Likes minute by minute notes she is given from administrator in observations

School 3, Teacher 2: More guidelines as to what constitutes different ratings on formal observations (exemplary, proficient, etc.)

Teacher Focus Group Question #9: How would you improve the observation process used in your school so that it would be more effective in strengthening your instruction overall, that's with any subject? How would you improve the reading evaluation process in your school so that it would be more effective in strengthening your instruction in reading?

Participant 3: Administrators in classrooms more and if administrators knew more about reading instruction to offer more feedback

Participant 2: The number of formal observations should be set at 3 each year for all teachers, not just those on cycle

Participant 4: More informal observations would be beneficial and not just a few formal observations that indicate your proficiency

Participant 5: Observe different classes at different times to get a better idea of overall instruction

Participant 1: More observations. Hard to get to know teachers with only one or two observations a year. Administrators should also stay for an entire language arts block to see all of reading lesson components.

Participant 5: Administrators should stay to observe both whole and small group instruction to give adequate feedback on lessons (components of whole group and small group instruction)

Participant 1: Administrators need to see all of the lesson to determine which indicators to mark in formal observations. Teachers may get penalized unfairly because all of the lesson is not observed.

Participant 4: Data meetings and reading meetings are more helpful than formal observations

Participant 1: Administrators should see the entire lesson during reading instruction

Participant 3: Administrators need to be in the classroom more and conduct more frequent informal observations

Administrator Interview Question #9: What changes, if any, would you make to the formal observation process in order to make it more effective in strengthening teacher instruction and teacher professional growth in your school?

Principal 1: Conduct more walk-through observations. Time constraints limit walk-through observations

Assistant Principal 1: Time is an issue so recommends restructuring to give administrators more time with staff that needs it most. Five-year probationary period puts a lot of people on full cycle at the same time.

Principal 2: Change the form to be more reflective of what principals should be looking for during observations. More time in the process to do more pre-observation conferences.

Assistant Principal 2: Wants to do more walk-throughs and would like to see a cumulative observation based on all of the walk-throughs. Number of observations make the process more about getting the observations done versus doing quality observations. Length of the form needs to change as well as the amount of time that administrators are expected to observe teachers.

Principal 3: Would like to see more flexibility and not the number of observations be tied to the number of years of teaching experience. Believes administrators should be allowed to look for trends from previous evaluations and adjust number of observations for teachers based on information from these observations.

Assistant Principal 3: The process is cumbersome to administrators. Five-year probationary status puts a lot of teachers on cycle at the same time. Has to constantly make sure that the feedback is valuable she is giving and not something that she is checking off of a list to get done. Some standards (Standard 4) should not be on the formal observation form, only on the mid-year and summative forms.

Administrator question 9: What changes, if any would you make to the formal observation process in order to make it more effective in strengthening teacher instruction and teacher growth in reading?

Principal 1: Conducting more tandem walk-through observations with school-based reading specialist to determine professional development needs based on observed trends

Assistant Principal 1: Would like to do more walk-through observations because they have more impact because it gives a better idea of daily instructional practices.

Principal 2: Would like the reading specialist to be more of an administrator so that she can conduct formal observations of teachers due to her knowledge of reading instruction.

Assistant Principal 2: Would like to do more pre-observation conferences to give teachers the opportunity to express areas they would like administrators to look for during observations because teachers know their own weaknesses.

Principal 3: Wants more walk-through observations because they give a better image of instruction through the school day versus formal observations. This would be fairer in evaluating teachers and evaluators would have more examples of strengths as well as what is needed for growth.

Assistant Principal 3: Administrators need a reading checklist as a part of the walk-through form. The current formal observation form is too global and needs to better home in on reading instruction. Would like to have a checklist on the online system.

Consent Letter

March 2018

Dear Colleague:

My name is Tiffany Chatman and I am a doctoral student at the College of William and Mary. As part of the process for my dissertation proposal, I am conducting a study in the area of teacher and administrator perceptions of the feedback given in formal observations in the teacher evaluation process and the impact these stakeholders believe the feedback impacts instructional practices in reading.

The purpose of my study is to give teachers and administrators an opportunity to share feedback about the feedback they give/receive in order to make the formal observation component of teacher evaluation more helpful. The recommendations will be given to principals and district leaders. If you choose to participate in the interviews and/or focus group, you will be providing valuable information to inform practices pertaining to formal observations, specifically, feedback given.

I guarantee that your responses will not be identified with you personally. Please know that your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty if you do not participate. You may also withdraw from this study at any time. If you choose to participate, your responses will be very useful in gaining insight into perceptions of formal observation feedback.

Should you have any questions about this study, you may contact my dissertation chair, Dr. James Stronge at (757) 221-2339 or jhstro@wm.edu. To report any dissatisfaction with the study, please contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Committee, Tom Ward, at tjward@wm.edu.

Thank you again for your time.

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