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## Teacher Perceptions Of The Virginia Evaluation Process: A Program Evaluation Of Northshore High School's Teacher Evaluation Process

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TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE VIRGINIA EVALUATION PROCESS:  
A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF NORTSHORE HIGH SCHOOL'S TEACHER  
EVALUATION PROCESS

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A Dissertation

Presented to the

The Faculty of the School of Education

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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By

Douglas Fulton

June 2019

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A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF NORTSHORE HIGH SCHOOL'S TEACHER  
EVALUATION PROCESS

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## **Dedication**

This research is dedicated to all the excellent teachers, administrators, and other educators I have worked with or had the pleasure to meet in over three decades of public-school work. The educators who treat their career as a professional and who are open to continual learning have inspired me.

I would like to make a special dedication to elementary teacher and my wife Diane Fulton. Diane embraces teaching and her students with a passion that continually brings out the best in students. Her ability to reach students at their level and build relationships is why she enables her students to love learning. Diane and teachers like her, bring a sense of joy and a spirit of dedication to our profession.

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## Abstract

Teacher evaluation systems have served to remove ineffective teachers and support teacher professional development. Even with changes in evaluation systems that incorporated student-growth measures, teacher evaluation systems are more likely to serve for teacher development than teacher removal. This qualitative study focused on teacher perceptions of one school's evaluation components in supporting teacher professional growth and student learning. The study broke the teachers into career level experience groups of *novice*, *early career*, and *experienced*. The required district/state evaluation components of goal conferences, classroom observations, and student-growth measures were selected for the study. The study also looked at the school practice of teacher-reflection in the evaluation system. Twenty-one teachers participated in focus group interviews designed to understand how teachers use goal setting conferences, classroom observations, student-growth measures, and teacher reflection. Focus groups were designed to protect teacher anonymity and reduce bias in the study. The results revealed differences in how teachers value the evaluation components based on the teacher's experience level. At times teachers questioned the value of the evaluation system, goal meetings, classroom observations, and student-growth measures, yet teachers understood the need for the components in evaluations. Teachers requested more frequent observations and opportunities to review goals, and professional practices. They also wanted fidelity in the evaluator the tools for the evaluation. Perceptual data identified teacher reflection emerged as the most influential component in improving teacher practices.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Effective, confident teachers are a significant contributor to the academic development of students and overall school climate (Hall & Simeral, 2015; Miller, Ramirez, & Murdock, 2017; Stronge, 2010a). Effective teachers are also a major part of a successful school culture. Developing and creating a culture that encourages teachers continued professional growth falls on the shoulders of the building principal. Relatedly, a Wallace Foundation report (2011) stated the principal is responsible for combining the variables, including teacher development, that create a successful school environment.

Research on teacher quality has led to changes in teacher evaluations throughout the United States (Danielson, 2010; Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011; Stronge, 2007). As part of any effort to support teacher quality and a positive school climate, teacher evaluations and evaluation components such as classroom observation, goal conferences, teacher reflection, and student-growth measures are tools principals use that play a role in improving teacher performance. The evaluation methods adopted in Virginia and many other states are reflect research-supported standards for effective teachers. These standards have been used to construct new teacher evaluations and to create teacher training. As of 2013, 31 states in the United States were using results and data from teacher evaluations to construct state-wide or school-based teacher professional development (Hull, 2013). With the changes in teacher evaluations, there is a need to

understand more about the effectiveness of evaluation components as they relate to teacher improvement.

### **Background**

Principals take on many roles in a school; however, the role that often comes to the forefront in the age of education reform is that of instructional leader. Federal accountability measures passed through policies such as No Child Left Behind Act ([NCLB], 2002) and Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) emphasize the role of principal as both the key figure in improving teacher performance and in removing ineffective teachers. A Michigan study found principals evaluate on average 25 teachers a year and consumed approximately 31 full workdays to complete the evaluations (Rowan et al., 2018). The principal's support, leadership, and confidence the evaluation will improve teacher performance is vital for the success of evaluation systems (Derrington & Campbell, 2015; Finnegan, 2016). Additionally, as instructional leader, the principal is often both the leader for professional development and the primary developer of teacher talent.

Based on the need to keep and develop effective teachers, the importance of the evaluation process to improve teacher performance is vital for the success of schools. Research labels the teacher as the most crucial factor in student growth (Aaronson, Barrow, & Sander, 2007; Danielson, 2010; DiPaola & Hoy, 2014; Stronge, 2010a). Hanushek (2011) found effective teachers can improve student performance by 0.2 to 0.3 standard deviations above an ineffective teacher. Hattie's list of high-yield educational interventions notes teacher skills as three of the top five effects on student learning, with teacher attributes (1.62) having the greatest effect (Killian, 2017).

Teacher evaluation systems become a significant part of school reform, school accountability, and school culture. Evaluation systems can be avenues to support and build professional development, by identifying strengths and areas of growth. Teacher evaluation components, when developed and used effectively, become tools that principals can use to improve teacher effectiveness (Danielson, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2014).

Improving the teaching craft is one established goal of teacher evaluations. Evaluations can also be the basis to remove or reassign ineffective teachers. This combination of teacher improvement and teacher accountability creates a heightened focus on evaluation systems (Aldeman, 2017; Danielson, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2014; Stronge, 2010b) and often puts the principal in a management or supervisory role (Wiles & Bondi, 2004). While the two purposes of teacher evaluation systems have stayed primarily the same for many decades, federal and state legislation in the early 2000s highlighted teacher evaluation as a tool for teacher and school accountability. Thus, evaluations are now a principal's primary tool for "quality assurance and professional growth" (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 9). Darling-Hammond (2014) called this era a "critical moment in teacher evaluations" (p. 4).

Despite federal and state foci on teacher evaluation as a tool to rate teachers, effective principals and other school-based administrators strive to avoid the teacher removal purpose of evaluation. A Measures of Effective Teacher analysis found 98% of teachers were rated "satisfactory" (Kane & Staiger, 2012). A separate study of state evaluations found the number of teachers with unsatisfactory ratings stayed the same or dropped even after states adopted high-stakes evaluations (Hull, 2013). A 2015 study of

state evaluations also found the number of teachers with unsatisfactory ratings stayed the same or dropped after the surveyed states adopted high-stakes evaluations (Aldeman, 2017). Only seven states reported more than 5% of teachers rated below proficient (Aldeman, 2017, p. 66). While many states have moved toward high-stakes teacher evaluations that incorporate student-growth measures, the results do not show the practice is removing ineffective teachers.

The reasoning for not using evaluations as a tool to remove ineffective teachers is two-fold. First, there complex and expensive processes of removing a teacher for cause must withstand the scrutiny of the teachers' union, central office staff, and judicial review (Chait, 2010). Principals may search for methods to retain teachers, especially in schools with ineffective evaluation systems (Chait, 2010).

The second reason for retaining teachers is the current teacher shortage and concern about teacher turnover may leave administrators without any other options to replace a teacher who is removed. Teacher shortages (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016) may force a school administrator to keep a teacher instead of taking the chance of not finding a satisfactory replacement. Like many states, Virginia has a shortage of qualified teachers. According to Virginia Secretary of Education Artif Qarni, Virginia opened the 2018-19 school year with 935 unfilled teaching positions (personal communication, September 12, 2018). Further Virginia reviews on teacher retention focused on other negatives of removing teachers through evaluations. Katz (2018) noted high teacher turnover negatively impacts student achievement and creates added expenses for teacher recruitment to replace teachers who have left or been removed for cause.

The primary purpose of teacher evaluation system appears is to develop effective teachers and then support those effective teachers. Principals need to differentiate between *evaluation as supervision* and *evaluation as professional development* (Mette et al., 2017). DiPaola and Hoy (2014) stated teacher evaluation systems should include relevant and timely feedback for teachers and reference specific instructional strategies. Additionally, evaluation systems should rely on identified standards or descriptors of effective teachers (Stronge, 2007). If teacher evaluations are to meet this primary purpose, there is a call for greater understanding among school principals related to how evaluations can produce effective teachers and support those teachers who are already effective in their practices.

### **Program Description**

The purpose of this study is to review major components of the teacher evaluation system at Northshore High School (a pseudonym) in Virginia to understand whether teachers perceive the components of the evaluation system as contributing to improvements in teacher performance. Northshore High School teachers are evaluated using required processes of the Virginia Board of Education and the school district's board of education. Northshore High School administrators added components to the teacher evaluation designed to provide unbiased coaching and peer support, and to promote teacher reflection. The current district evaluation system is used as both a formative tool to improve teacher practices and a summative tool to grade a teacher on their performance.

Fullan (2014) wrote that principals maximize the impact of their leadership when they have the right drivers in place. Fullan identified these drivers as *capacity building*,

*collaborative effort, pedagogy, and systemness.* At Northshore High School, school leaders tried to create an environment in which the teacher evaluation system is formative and implemented to encourage teachers to be part of a growth process. For the teacher evaluation system to have the desired impact, there was a need to construct an understanding of the components of effectiveness and ensure the evaluation system was not composed of fragmented strategies (Fullan, 2014, p. 25). The components needed to align in the overall evaluation system to produce the desired effect of teacher growth. This study of the teacher evaluation components was intended to help better understand the effectiveness of each evaluation component through the perceptions of teachers who had completed at least one evaluation cycle (1 school year) at Northshore High School. To achieve this purpose, a qualitative study constructed the reality of how teachers view, use, and understand the evaluation system and selected key components. Through the study, school-based administrators developed an improved understanding of how they can use the evaluation processes to support teacher growth and teacher professional development and improve student learning. This study did not look at the teacher's final evaluation score or summative purpose of teacher evaluations. Rather, this research focused on whether evaluation components can lead to professional growth or be a formative tool for teacher development.

### **Context**

In 2011, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) adopted a new teacher evaluation system and required its implementation statewide. The Virginia 2011 teacher evaluation was based on the research of Stronge (YEAR[s]), who served as consultant in the development of the evaluation system (VDOE, 2011b). A state committee that

included superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, and members of the VDOE, used the research to draft the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers* (VDOE, 2011a). The stated purposes of the evaluation system include optimizing student learning, improving instruction, promoting collaboration between teacher and evaluator, and promoting self-growth (p. 5).

The VDOE requires teacher evaluations in each of a teacher's first 3 years in the state. After the first 3 years, teachers with successful evaluations (an overall rating of at least *proficient* in Year 3) become continuing contract teachers. After the first 3 years, continuing contract teachers must be formally evaluated every 3 years. However, a school administrator may place teachers on formal evaluation in any year if there is concern about teacher performance.

The guidelines list seven teacher professional standards that are intended to define qualities of effective teachers (see Table 1). Forty-eight indicators of teacher performance were aligned with the full set of standards. The VDOE then published *Virginia Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers* (2011c). In this document, key elements were listed with each standard. The number of key elements aligned to a standard differed depending on the standard and the content taught. Virginia legislative code requires student-growth measures must be included in the teacher evaluation. The code states teacher evaluations “shall include student academic progress as a significant component and an overall summative rating” (Quality of classroom instruction and educational leadership, 1984, 2004).

Table 1

*Virginia Teacher Evaluation Standards*

Standard	Description
1: Professional Knowledge	Teachers demonstrate an understanding of the curriculum, subject content, and the developmental needs of students by providing relevant learning experiences.
2: Instructional Planning	Teachers plan using the Virginia Standards of Learning, the school’s curriculum, effective strategies, resources, and data to meet the needs of all students.
3: Instructional Delivery	Teachers effectively engage students in learning by using a variety of instructional strategies to meet individual learning needs.
4: Assessment of and for Student Learning	Teachers systematically gather, analyze, and use all relevant data to measure student academic progress, guide instructional content and delivery methods, and provide timely feedback to both students and parents throughout the school year.
5: Learning Environment	Teachers use resources, routines, and procedures to provide a respectful, positive, safe, student-centered environment that is conducive to learning.
6: Professionalism	Teachers maintain a commitment to professional ethics, communicate effectively, and take responsibility for and participate in professional growth that results in enhanced student learning.
7: Student Academic Progress	The work of the teacher results in acceptable, measurable, and appropriate student academic progress.

The VDOE established Standard 7 as a growth measure required by the legislative code of Virginia. Standard 7 represents 40% of the overall teacher evaluation.

Clarification of Standard 7 came from the teacher guidelines published by the Virginia Board of Education and the VDOE in *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers* (2011a):

To the extent possible, teachers and administrators should choose measures of student academic progress based on validated quantitative measures and provide data that reflect progress in student learning. Validated assessment tools that provide quantitative measures of learning and achievement should be the first choice in measuring student academic progress. Often, a combination of absolute achievement, as measured by nationally validated assessments and goal setting (described later in this document) is appropriate. (p. 43)

Virginia teachers meet state expectations for Standard 7 through writing specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART) goals and keeping data to document student progress.

Virginia Code required school district to adopt the standards, but districts did not have to adopt all the indicators. The school district in this study used a committee of administrators, teachers, and parents to create an evaluation that used 47 indicators (the study site's handbook, 2013).

Subsequently, the school board incorporated the VDOE seven performance standards and 47 indicators into its teacher evaluation system. Each indicator is aligned with one of the seven standards (Appendix A). The same indicators are used for all district teachers. Teachers are evaluated on the standards using a 4-point scale of *exemplary* (4), *proficient* (3), *developing/needs improvement* (2), and *unacceptable* (1). The first six standards are valued at 10% each and Standard 7 is valued at 40% of the final evaluation. Teachers need to earn a 3 or higher overall average score for a proficient rating.

The school district that is the setting for this study trained administrators on how to use the evaluation system to rate teachers. The training is offered every summer and administrators are encouraged to take refresher training. In the summer of 2017, the school district provided a more in-depth training on the evaluation system through the new department of Human Resources and Talent Development (HRTD).

**Description of the program.** The growth of Northshore High School's student and staff population and the addition of school-based evaluation components to the teacher evaluation process are factors in the selection of the school for a program evaluation. In the 2018-2019 school year, Northshore High School served a student population of more than 2,000 students and had 148 instructional staff. Since the 2012-2013 school year, Northshore High School's student population increased by over 500 students. The student growth has created 57 new staffing positions since 2012-2013, with 94 teachers hired (new or replacement) in the same time span. Approximately 54% of teachers hired at Northshore since 2012 were first-year teachers.

The rapid addition of teachers, especially teachers new to the profession, makes Northshore High School a suitable selection to document teacher growth and perceptions about their growth. Of the 124 Northshore High School teachers who have completed a full evaluation cycle, 26 were second- or third-year teachers during the 2018-2019 school year. For this study, teachers with fewer than three years of experience, but with at least one full evaluation cycle at Northshore High School, are considered *novice teachers*. Teachers with more than three years but less than eight are considered *early career* and teachers with more than eight years are considered *experienced* teachers.

The district requires three specific teacher evaluation components that form the basis of this study: goal conferences, classroom observations, and student-growth measures. Northshore requires an additional component—teacher reflection—that will also be included in the study. Northshore aims to exceed district requirements for teacher evaluations (Table 2). Additional elements were added to promote teacher and administrator collaboration, teacher peer collaboration, and teacher reflection on instructional practices. Teacher reflections, in which teachers are asked to write about how their instructional strategies impacted student growth, were added to Northshore teacher evaluations during the 2012-2013 school year.

Table 2

*Northshore High School Teacher Evaluation Components and Elements*

Elements	Virginia Requirement	District Requirement	Northshore Requirement
<b>Goal Writing</b>			
PLC Training		☐	☐
Goal Meeting	☐	☐	☐
Mid-Year Meeting			☐
Common Planning			☐
Final Evaluation	☐	☐	☐
<b>Classroom Observation</b>			
Mentor		☐	☐
District Coach		☐	☐
Primary Evaluator	☐	☐	☐
Secondary Evaluator			☐
Primary Evaluator	☐	☐	☐
Peer			☐
<b>Standard 7: Student Growth</b>			
Goal Writing	☐	☐	☐
Tiered Students			☐
Instructional Strategies		☐	☐
Documented Student Growth	☐	☐	☐
<b>Reflection</b>			
Teacher reflection on student progress and on teacher’s instructional strategies			☐

*Note.* Mentors are required for first-year teachers and teachers new to the district. Teacher reflection questions were suggested in state guidelines.

The proposed study will gather data related to teacher perceptions of selected evaluation components. The other added components of the Northshore teacher evaluation—peer reviews, tiered placement of students, and implementing instructional strategies for each tier, could be discussed during the teacher focus group interviews. Table 3 reflects the Northshore teacher evaluation timeline. Additionally, the following subsections provide details for four important aspects of the evaluation process: goal

setting conferences, classroom observations, student-growth measures, and teacher reflection.

Table 3

*Northshore High School Teacher Timeline of Teacher Evaluation*

Timeframe	Teacher Evaluation Activities
First Seven Weeks of School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty meeting held for all teachers on evaluation cycle.</li> <li>• Teacher evaluations covered in weekly administrative meetings</li> <li>• Teacher assesses their student’s current knowledge and skills in content area</li> <li>• Teacher tiers students</li> <li>• Teacher writes a student-growth goal</li> <li>• Teacher develops instructional strategies (3)</li> <li>• Teachers are observed by primary evaluator using a school selected classroom observation document.</li> <li>• Teacher and evaluator meet within 10-days after observation.</li> </ul>
End of First Quarter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goals and strategies are reviewed by teacher and primary evaluator</li> <li>• Teacher may adjust goals, tiers, and strategies</li> <li>• Division’s classroom observation form is used a check on teacher overall evaluation</li> <li>• Teacher evaluations covered in weekly administrative meetings</li> </ul>
Second Quarter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secondary Evaluator completes a classroom observation</li> <li>• Teacher and secondary evaluator meet within 10-days after observation.</li> <li>• Teachers completes a mid-year assessment of student progress</li> <li>• Mid-Year meeting with primary evaluator and teacher</li> <li>• Goals are reviewed and adjusted if needed</li> <li>• Teacher evaluations covered in weekly administrative meetings</li> </ul>
Third Quarter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First year teachers, and teachers in need of support are observed a third time.</li> <li>• Teacher and evaluator meet within 10-days after observation.</li> <li>• Teacher evaluations covered in weekly administrative meetings</li> </ul>
End of April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher completes an assessment on student progress</li> <li>• Teacher submits data and reflection to primary evaluator</li> <li>• Teacher evaluations covered in weekly administrative meetings</li> </ul>
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrators meet to review all teacher evaluations</li> <li>• End of Year conference with teacher</li> </ul>

*Note.* This timeline only reflects evaluation components for this study.

**Goal setting conferences.** Northshore teachers meet with their primary evaluator (principal or an assistant principal) near the end of the first grading period. Prior to the conference, teachers have tiered their students through a diagnostic assessment, practice test, grades on assignments, or a combination of assessments. Teachers are asked to, if

possible, develop their tiers that gather the students based on current knowledge and skills. The first tier are the students starting at the highest level and the third tier is the students who will need the greatest support. Tiers are flexible throughout the school year.

For each tier, teachers will develop at least one instructional strategy to support student growth. The instructional strategy is “what the teacher will do.” Evidence collected for the strategies can include documentation on how often and fidelity of use and how did the student’s academic performance improve.

Three meetings or conferences will occur between teacher and the primary evaluator to review student-growth goals. During the initial goal setting conference, the teacher and primary evaluator will review the student tiers, the student-growth goal, the instructional strategies, and the evidence the teacher will use to document the impact of the strategies and student progress toward goals. A mid-year meeting between the teacher and primary evaluator will include a similar review. At this time, the teacher will have mid-year data to share. The teacher may adjust the goal during the mid-year review. In the end of year meeting, the teacher presents a review of student growth and discusses what impact the instructional strategies had on student growth.

***Classroom observations.*** The school district uses the final evaluation form for classroom observations. Northshore has received verbal permission from HRTD to use a different observation form. The district’s observation form is used as a teacher checkpoint at the end of the first quarter and at mid-year.

Northshore administration elected to use a school-based tool to provide better feedback about instructional planning, instructional delivery, and student engagement.

Northshore's administration felt many (24 of 47) of the indicators on the district's form, were not easily identified in a classroom observation. Northshore's classroom observation form has been modified four times since SY 2013-14. Northshore's classroom observation tool for SY 16-17 and 17-18 (Appendix B) and SY 18-19 (Appendix C) are the most recent forms. Northshore High school received permission from *AdvancEd* to use their classroom observation form in SY 18-19 (Appendix D).

***Student-growth measures.*** The student-growth measure is Standard 7 of the Virginia teacher evaluation system. Documenting student growth accounts for 40 % of the teacher's final evaluation.

District teachers are encouraged to develop SMART goals. SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely goals that document student growth during the school year. Teacher selected goals enables a teacher to select goals that relate to their content and meet student needs.

Northshore teachers set a goal that usually has specific growth measures for each student tier. The tiering of students allows a teacher to set specific growth measurements for student groups based on the student groups' levels of knowledge and skills. Goals are agreed upon by the teacher and primary evaluator in the goal setting meeting. Goals are reviewed at the mid-year meeting. Northshore does not use a rubric to grade a teacher's SMART goal.

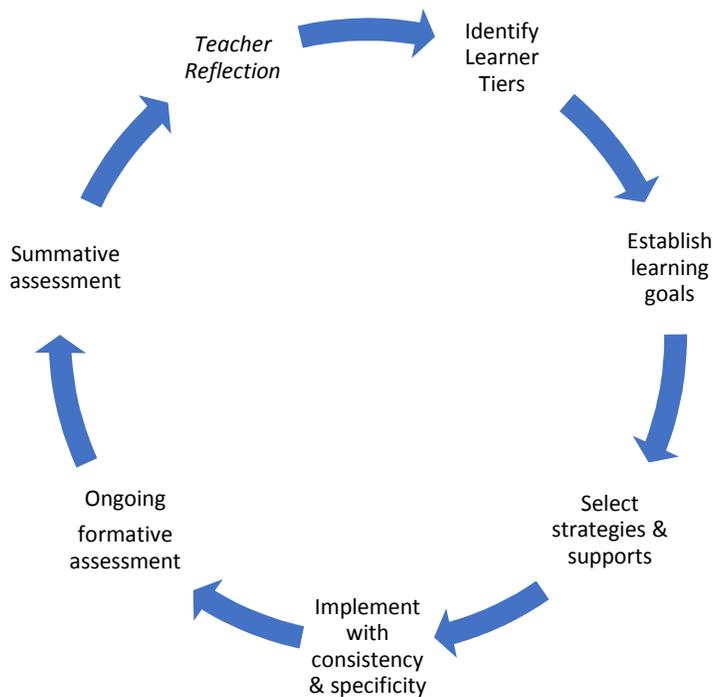
***Teacher reflection.*** Northshore added the reflection requirement (at first called a *teacher narrative*) in SY 13-14. Teacher reflections are not required by either the state teacher evaluation system or the district teacher evaluation system. Northshore administration added the reflection to encourage teachers to self-evaluate student

progress by describing the impact of their instructional strategies Teachers submit their reflection with the final data on student growth.

In the reflection, teachers are asked to *Describe how you met or did not meet your student-growth goals*. The teachers also respond to the following questions: *How effective were your instructional strategies in meeting those goals? As you reflect on the year, what have learned about your planning, instruction, and assessment practices?*

### **Overview of the Evaluation Approach**

The teacher evaluation system design provides opportunities for growth, collaboration, and improving teacher effectiveness. The teacher evaluation also is a summative assessment of the teacher's performance. Administrators need to find ways to use the evaluation formative components effectively. In general, teachers who are satisfied with their principal's instructional leadership and who are provided greater teacher autonomy in the evaluations are more likely to have a positive view of the evaluation process (Lacireno-Paquet, Bocala, & Bailey, 2016; Scudella, 2015). Nonetheless, more specific information is needed to determine whether the teacher evaluation and its components are viewed as promoting teacher improvement. The purpose is to determine whether teachers perceive selected evaluation components (goal conferences, classroom observations, student-growth measures, and teacher reflection). Specifically, the intention is to construct an understanding of how teachers view selected evaluation components if different stages of their teaching careers. Deeper understanding of teacher perceptions might lead to more effective and efficient evaluation systems. The Northshore teacher evaluation cycle is shown in Figure 1.



*Figure 1.* Northshore teacher support in the evaluation cycle.

The four program evaluation standards—propriety, utility, feasibility, and accuracy—are important characteristics of this program evaluation. Propriety ensures a fair and open evaluation process. Utility requires the evaluations have clarity of purpose and are completed by qualified staff. Feasibility ensures the evaluations are practical and applicable to a teacher’s specific job. Finally, accuracy requires the evaluators to link teacher performance to the effective Virginia teaching standards.

Teachers’ perceptions of evaluation are important for understanding what value teachers place in the evaluation processes. Extant research shows that teachers want accountability measures used both to remove poor teachers and improve good teachers (Clipa, 2011; Sartain & Steinberg, 2014). Moran (2017) found teachers wanted accountability for teachers who do not carry out their responsibilities. On the other hand,

some researchers have found teachers who receive quality feedback and work jointly with an administrator view the evaluation as a tool to improve their craft (DiPaola & Hoy, 2014; Lacireno-Paquet et al., 2016).

There is a need to include teacher perceptions in understanding the narrative of evaluations (Jiang, Spote, & Luppescu, 2015). Administrators who can build a collective focus and trust with teachers can generate greater student achievement (Hoy, 2002). Given these points, it is reasonable to state that the following six assumptions guided this research study (not listed in order of importance):

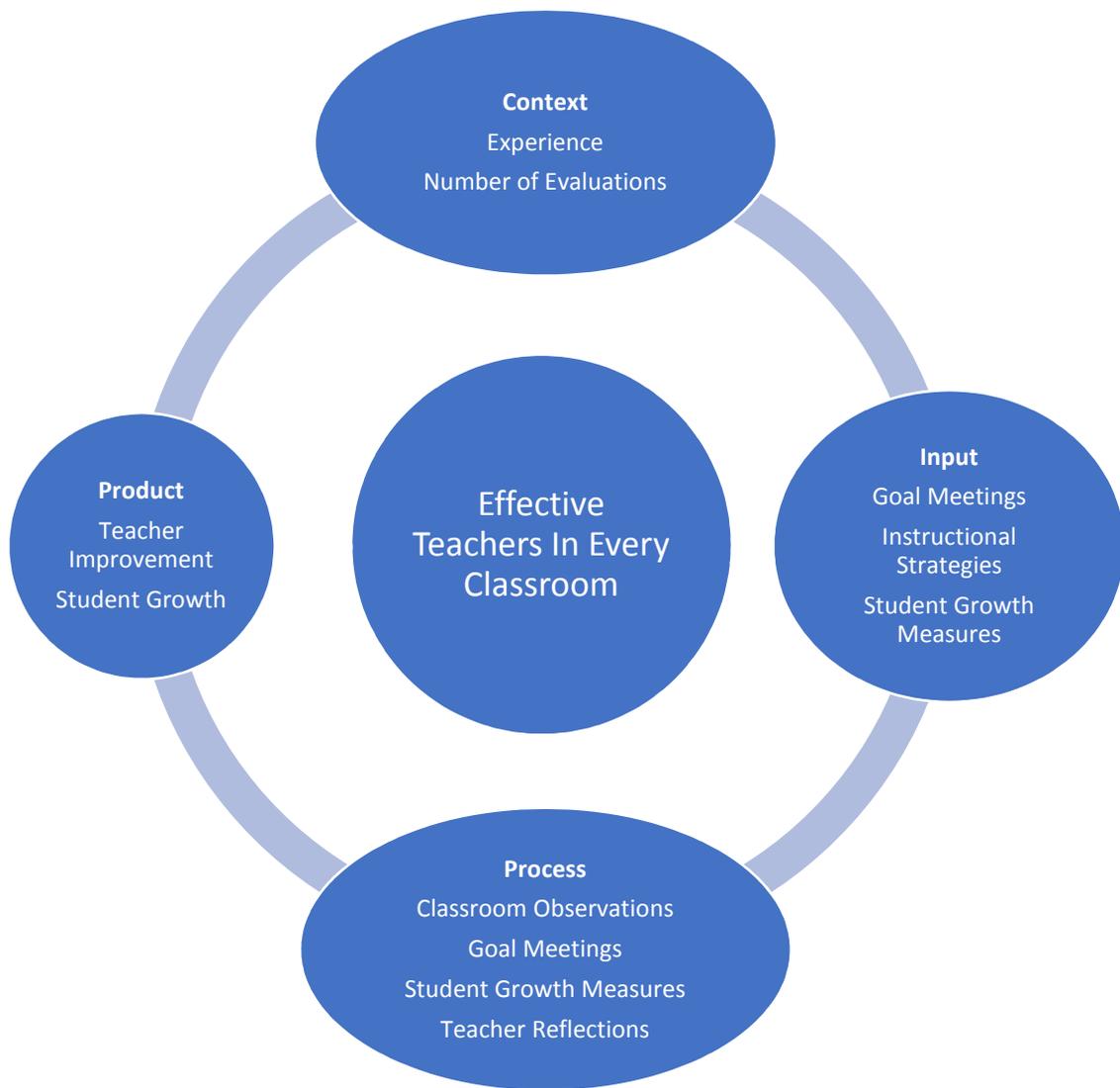
1. Effective teachers significantly improve student academic growth.
2. It is important for school leadership to understand teacher perceptions of the evaluation system and evaluation processes.
3. It is important for school leadership to understand how their teachers learn.
4. Teachers have a wide range of perceptions of the how their evaluation connects to student learning.
5. A teacher evaluation process that includes teacher reflection will help teachers see the direct impact on student learning from their pedagogical methods.
6. It is a moral imperative of school leaders to provide all students with an effective teacher.

## **Program Evaluation Model**

The research study was approached through a constructivist lens. Constructivists create meaning by listening to views of those living in the environment (Creswell, 2014). Through the research, I built an understanding of how teachers create meaning about the evaluation components (Ford, Sickle, Clark, Fazio-Brunson, & Schween, 2017; Jiang et al., 2015).

The CIPP Model (Stufflebeam, 2003) served as the framework for the evaluation of Northshore's teacher evaluation system (Figure 2). Stufflebeam's (2003, 2004) CIPP model includes context (teacher experience); input (mentors, evaluation resources, goal conferences); process (professional development, coaching meetings, classroom observations); and product (Did staff feel they grew professionally and did the evaluation process improve student learning?).

**Purpose of the evaluation.** Research connects the effectiveness of a teacher to student academic achievement. Effective teachers have a significant positive impact on student performance (Hattie, 2009; Stronge, 2010a). A teacher's effectiveness is the major factor in student academic growth for both low and high performing students (Stronge, 2010a; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997). Ineffective teachers produce less academic achievement no matter the level of the student (Stecher, Garet, Holtzman, & Hamilton, 2012).



*Figure 2.* Northshore teacher evaluation system with the intended outcome of effective teachers in every classroom.

Building effective evaluation processes is a key part of administrative leadership. To build and support effective teachers, administrators must enter a coaching and supporting relationship with their staff (Marzano & Simms, 2013). Sergiovanni (1992) wrote that a school leader must understand what motivates and inspires his or her staff. With an understanding of staff perceptions, a school administrator can develop effective ways to use the evaluation components to improve teacher performance.

**Focus of the evaluation.** The state of Virginia implemented a new evaluation system for the 2012-13 school year. The new system incorporated traditional evaluation components (observations) with a student-growth measure. If a school principal is to understand the effectiveness of evaluation components in the new system, there is a need to gather teachers' perceptions around the propriety, utility, feasibility, and accuracy of the evaluation components. For the principal to understand the effectiveness of the system in improving teacher performance, it is necessary to review whether teachers believe they have improved in practices because of evaluation components. The objective of this review is to provide school-based leadership with an understanding of how teachers use and view the evaluation process and to help principals improve the way evaluation components are implemented. Other researchers have evaluated evaluation systems (Moran, 2017; Sartain & Steinberg, 2014), but few have looked at the combined components or multiple data sources used in teacher evaluations.

**Evaluation questions.** Program evaluations that involve teacher perceptions of their employment reviews must ensure confidentiality of the participants. This study adhered to the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE) standards of propriety, utility, feasibility, and accuracy. The following research questions were developed to maintain the standards of JCSEE.

1. What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice (>1 and <3 years), early career (>3 years and < 8 years), experienced (>7 years) teachers regarding their instructional effectiveness in relation to the school district's teacher evaluation system?

2. What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice (>1 and <3 years), early career (>3 years and < 8 years), experienced (>7 years) teachers regarding the goal meeting component of the school district evaluation system?
3. What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice (>1 and <3 years), early career (>3 years and < 8 years), experienced (>7 years) teachers regarding the classroom observation component of the school district evaluation system?
4. What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice (>1 and <3 years), early career (>3 years and < 8 years), experienced (>7 years) teachers regarding the teacher evaluation component that relates to the school district's measure of student progress (Standard 7)?
5. What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice (>1 and <3 years), early career (>3 years and < 8 years), experienced (>7 years) teachers regarding the impact of the teacher reflection component of their evaluations on selected teaching practices (instructional planning, instructional delivery, assessment of/for learning, learning environment, professionalism, and student growth)?
6. What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice (>1 and <3 years), early career (>3 years and < 8 years), experienced (>7 years) teachers regarding how the teacher evaluation process can be improved to effectively support teacher quality and professional growth?

## **Definitions of Terms**

*Coach or coaching:* Evaluator or evaluator feedback used in a formative process for teacher improvement and professional development.

*Early career teacher:* Teachers who taught for more than 3 years in the school division, but less than 8 years in Virginia. Early career teachers are on continuing contract after three years of successful evaluations. Early career teachers have only been evaluated by the current Virginia evaluation system. Some early career teachers may have experience in other states.

*Evaluation components:* Parts of the evaluation system such as goal conferences, classroom observations, teacher reflection, and student-growth measures.

*Experienced teacher:* Teachers with 8 or more years teaching experience in Virginia. Teachers with 8 or more years' experience in Virginia, were evaluated at least once under the previous evaluation system.

*Formative teacher evaluation:* Components and processes in the teacher evaluation cycle that promote growth in teacher practices and effectiveness.

*Novice teacher:* A teacher with at least one completed evaluation cycle in the Northshore evaluation process but fewer than 3 years' total teaching experience. Novice teachers are under provisional contracts.

*School-based administrators:* Principals or assistant principals who evaluate teachers.

*Summative teacher evaluation:* The end of year evaluation score received by a teacher that labels a teacher's performance as *unsatisfactory, developing, proficient, or accomplished*.

*Teacher reflection:* A teacher narrative completed at the end of the evaluation year. A teacher's self-evaluation of their instructional, delivery, and assessment practices and the impact of those practices on student learning.

*Tiered students:* Northshore High School teachers placed students in tiers based on pre-test scores, class grades, and skill assessments using a combination of instruments. The three tiers identify levels of support needed for students to successfully meet course expectations, with Tier 3 students identified as in need of specialized instruction to make appropriate academic progress.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

It is imperative for a school principal to use the teacher evaluation process to develop effective teachers for every classroom. Effective teachers are vital for student success; emphasis on effective teachers has led to state and federal legislation focused on a teacher's abilities to drive student learning.

The literature review in this chapter provides background for Northshore High School's teacher evaluation components and describes the need for understanding teachers' perceptions of the evaluation components. Literature related to the four Northshore teacher evaluation components of classroom observations, goal conferences, teacher reflection, and student-growth measures are included in this review.

The literature review is divided into two sections. First, this chapter is a review of teacher evaluation systems from the 1980s to current evaluation systems. The review of teacher evaluations includes legislation directed at teacher evaluations, current evaluation systems with student-growth models, and recent research concerning teacher perceptions of evaluations. The second part of the chapter reviews literature related to three components of the Northshore High School evaluation system—classroom observations, goal conferences, and teacher reflections.

#### **History and Purpose**

Most teacher evaluation systems through the 1980s were clinical observations based on a belief that physical and personal trait made an effective teacher (Danielson &

McGreal, 2000) or were driven by school or state initiatives to change teaching practices (Richardson, 1990). Characteristics such as voice and physical appearance were evaluated as important teacher skills (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). The clinical supervisory practices were based on the works of Harvard Education professor Morris Cogan and a student in the Harvard Master of Arts program, Robert Goldhammer (Marzano et al., 2011). Marzano and colleagues wrote that the original ideas of the Goldhammer supervisory model that included dialogue and the importance of student teacher interaction sometimes were reduced to a checklist of observable teacher actions (Marzano et al., 2011).

The next influence of teacher supervision came through the works of Madeline Hunter. A teacher and administrator, Hunter developed a teaching model and framework that emphasized drills and skills (Wilson, n.d.). Hunter's teaching model included seven steps: Stated objectives, Anticipatory set, Input Modeling/Modeling practice, Check understanding, Guided practice, Independent practice, and Closure. The Hunter model, not intended as tools for supervision, was made into evaluations that gained the support of local and state policy makers (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 14; Wilson, n.d.). Hunter's teaching model became a new set of checklists administrators used to rate teachers. However, there was no evidence of the impact Hunter's instructional strategies had on student learning (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 13). After a 3-year study, Slavin (1986) reported schools using the Hunter model documented a minimal impact on student achievement.

In the 1980s, as part of a Rand Corporation study, Linda Darling-Hammond and other researchers began searching for effective teacher evaluation systems. Darling-

Hammond (2014) reported she could find only a few exemplary models. She noted Toledo school districts in Greenwich, Connecticut developed the Peer Assessment and Review and a model of goal setting and continual feedback. Both these models viewed the teacher as a professional who best learned from continual feedback and peer support. Darling-Hammond (2014) wrote that, as use of successful models has spread, the “broad landscape” has seen little real change. However, change in teacher evaluation models was not widespread. Haefele (1993) wrote that evaluations continued to judge faults rather than strengths and Bryk and Schneider (2002) found that faculty lacked trust in school leadership to promote teacher development.

**Government influence.** By the 1980s, the federal government became a more active participant in defining effective teachers and teaching. The federal government’s intense focus on teachers and teaching skills dated back to when the National Commission on Excellence in Education published the *Nation at Risk* in 1983. Milton Goldberg (1984), the former Executive Director of the National Commission on Education, wrote that the *Nation of Risk* report emphasized two points directly related to the effect teachers, especially effective teachers, have on student learning: a set of teaching standards expected in the classroom and a way to recognize and understand the qualities of effective teachers.

*Nation at Risk* acknowledged not only the need to recognize the qualities of effective teachers, but also the need to improve teacher training. By the late 1990s, the government and the public wanted accountability measures to be part of evaluating teachers’ performance. Poor student performance on international tests enhanced the notion schools were failing to provide a quality education (Dillon, 2010). Using national

standards and state test scores as measures, the federal government got directly involved in teacher evaluations. With the No Child Left Behind Act ([NCLB], 2002), federal legislation was used to connect teacher performance with student academic growth.

Despite the renewed interest and NCLB measures to improve schools by removing poor teachers and identifying effective teachers, evaluation systems continued to focus more on teacher behaviors than teacher impact. Stronge (2012) noted that teacher evaluations often used classroom observations as the only standard for the evaluation. In a 2009 executive summary for the New Teacher Report, the authors stated teacher evaluations created the “widget effect” (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009). The widget effect refers to evaluations that created interchangeable parts expected from all teachers. The evaluations and the process did not identify areas of growth, did not link teacher performance to student performance, and was unlikely to change teacher practices (Weisberg et al., 2009).

**Research support.** By the start of the 21st Century, teacher evaluations linked to student academic growth became key legislative policy, but not always school practices. Legislators advocated measures to keep teachers accountable and improve student learning. The calls for changes in teacher evaluations also came from researchers. Researchers provided data that an effective teacher can produce a lasting effect on student academic growth (Marzano, 2014; Stronge, 2007, 2010a). The effect of good teachers is even more pronounced for student learning among struggling students (Aronson et al., 2007).

The new educational research demonstrated that effective teachers improve student learning and traditional teacher evaluations were not satisfactory in looking at

student growth (Aldeman, 2017; Danielson & McGreal, 2000). The result was further changes in teacher evaluations using research-based practices (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2014; DiPaola & Hoy, 2014; Marzano et al., 2011).

Advancement in education research also focused on using teacher evaluations as professional growth tools, with principals and teachers working together for professional growth. The new evaluation systems focused on real teacher practices (lesson planning, lesson delivery, assessment, professionalism) and encouraged administrators to look at collaboration with teachers as well as collaboration among teachers (Danielson, 2010; Marzano & Simms, 2013).

It seemed that researchers and legislators agreed that good teachers and good teaching matter for student growth. The changes in teacher evaluation designed to develop effective teachers satisfied policy directives such as NCLB and Race to the Top (2009). The federal policies emphasized an accountability measure in teacher evaluations, while the research advocated evaluations to develop and improve content and instructional pedagogy. The result of the mix of research and accountability led to current evaluations used by many states that connect teacher professional standards with student progress to provide an overall teacher rating. The Center for Public Education reported that since 2009, over two-thirds of the states made significant changes to their evaluation systems (Hull, 2013). Most states included teachers as stakeholders in designing the new evaluation system and all states included classroom observations in the systems (Hull, 2013).

**Student-growth measures.** Grants and waivers associated with NCLB and Race to the Top encouraged states to build student-growth measures into the teacher

evaluations. Even though ESSA has relaxed the expectation of including student-growth measures into teacher evaluations, only a few states with student-growth measures opened the door to revamp current evaluations and remove the growth measures (Sawchuck, 2016).

Researchers have continued to link teacher quality to student growth (Ford et al., 2017; Hattie, 2009; Napoles & MacLeod, 2016; Stronge, 2010a). By 2015, 45 states had a student-growth measure in their teacher evaluations (Doherty & Jacobs, 2015). In 18 states, student performance was made a significant factor; in 17 states, student performance was the “preponderant” factor in teacher evaluations (Doherty & Jacobs, 2015). In a 2016 report, The Education Commission of the United States stated 43 states had incorporated a student-growth objective into their teacher evaluation systems. The report listed 35 states where student achievement was either a preponderant or significant “criterion” in teacher evaluations (Education Commission, 2016). Virginia is one of 19 states where the student-growth measure is a significant criterion.

Growth measures varied by state. Tennessee and Florida created a Value-Added Growth Measure with specific student assessments and measures in their evaluation systems (Florida Department of Education, n.d.; Tennessee Department of Education, n.d.). New Jersey required teachers to use a Student Growth Objective set by the teacher and principal. Language arts teachers (Grades 4-8) and math teachers (Grades 4-7) are required to add to their evaluations a Student Growth Percentile measured through a state assessment (New Jersey Department of Education, n.d.). Virginia required the student-growth measure to account for 40% of a teacher’s evaluation rating, but the state did not prescribe a specific student assessment or measure (VDOE, 2011c).

There are challenges to the use of student-growth measures in teacher evaluations and mixed results concerning the effectiveness of such measures. Conroy and Loeb (2002) found states with high-stakes accountability measures saw greater gains in math scores than states without high-accountability measures. Despite the positive reports of student growth, a Brookings Institution report (Whitehurst, Chingos, & Lindquist, 2014) noted that only a small number of teachers (1 in 5) could be accurately evaluated using state exams. Teachers in disciplines outside of English, math, science, and social science, found the new evaluations were not effective measures of their performances (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015; Moran, 2017). Other teachers, such as Physical Education teachers, felt less confident in evaluation systems that were not designed to measure their performances (Norris et al., 2017). However, Hopkins (2013) found a strong agreement among K-12 teachers in Virginia that student-growth measures would improve teacher evaluations.

The use of growth measures faced legal challenges with varying results. Cases originating in Florida (*Cook v. Bennett*, 2015; *Robinson v. Stewart*, 2015) and heard before federal and state judges resulted in decisions that favored the state's ability to include student-growth measures in evaluations. The New York Supreme Court (*Lederman v. King*, 2016) found the teacher evaluation system to be arbitrary and capricious because the value-added measures hurt teachers with high-performing students. A 2016 California Superior Court ruling (*Doe v. Antioch*) stated school districts did not have to include student progress in teacher evaluations. This was despite California's 1971 legislative code that specified states schools could use student progress toward goals or state measures in teacher evaluations (Freedberg, 2016).

**Teacher perceptions.** Teacher perceptions related to the effectiveness of evaluations to improve instructional practices and student learning varied. Teachers want evaluations that can be used as accountability for poor teachers, not as a method to improve good teachers (Clipa, 2011; Sartain & Steinberg, 2014). Similarly, Moran (2017) found teachers wanted accountability for teachers who do not carry out their responsibilities. In research of six suburban school districts in New Jersey, Ladd (2016) found teachers understood the research and purpose of evaluations, but they lacked training opportunities to turn evaluation feedback into effective classroom practices. Teacher's confidence in evaluations can mirror teacher confidence in their principal. In a study of Chicago teachers, researchers found teachers were supportive of evaluations if they trusted the principal's instructional leadership (Jiang et al., 2015).

Teachers have often perceived the evaluation as a checkbox or required activity for principals. Researchers have found that teachers see evaluations as a summative process used to remove ineffective teachers and not a formative process to improve teacher skills (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015; Moran, 2017). Researchers who interviewed physical education teachers (Norris et al., 2017; Seymour & Garrison, 2016) and art teachers (Shaw, 2016) found teachers assigned to areas outside of the core content, or content areas without state tests did not perceive the evaluation process as contributing to their professional growth. In one New Jersey study, over 40% of the teachers surveyed in 2012 and 2014 did not see the evaluation as impacting their teaching practice (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015). Despite varying perceptions about the impact of teacher evaluations, researchers have found evidence that evaluations can improve teacher performance (Taylor & Tyler, 2012). Teachers in Cincinnati improved instructionally during the first

year with a new evaluation system and improvement continued over the next two years. When teachers are involved in determining the evaluation criteria, they are more likely to see the evaluation as a measurement of teaching professionalism (Kyriakides, Demetriou, & Charalambous, 2006).

If evaluation systems are going to have fidelity of purpose, the principal must have confidence the teacher evaluation will improve teacher practices. The principal, as instructional leader, is often required to put considerable time into the teacher evaluation process. A Michigan study found principals evaluate on average 25 teachers and consumed approximately 31 full work days of the principal's time. The support, leadership, and confidence the evaluation will improve teacher performance is vital for the success of evaluation systems (Derrington & Campbell, 2015; Finnegan, 2016).

Teachers' perceptions of evaluations are important for understanding the value teachers place on the evaluation processes. There is a need to include teacher perceptions in understanding the narrative of evaluations (Jiang et al., 2015). Principals who can build a collective focus and trust with teachers can generate greater student achievement (Hoy, 2002).

### **Multiple Data Sources in Teacher Evaluation**

The use of multiple data sources or evaluation components has become more prominent in teacher evaluation systems because the measures provide a more accurate representation of teacher effectiveness. Virginia's teacher evaluation system requires the use of multiple data sources (VDPE 2011a), including classroom observations, teacher goals, and student-growth measures.

Evaluations using multiple data sources, such as classroom observations and measurable goals, can produce a clearer picture of a teacher's abilities than systems that rely on only a single data source. Peterson (2000) called for the use of multiple sources of aligned information to improve teacher quality. The use of multiple data sources in evaluations is supported through research and is reflected in current teacher evaluation systems (Danielson, 2010; DiPaola & Hoy, 2014; Stronge, 2010a). Multiple data sources have also redefined the role of principal making the school leader more visible and involved with instruction (Neumerski et al., 2018). Multiple data sources can connect teacher planning and instruction to student learning and support professional development to improve teacher practices (Hanover Research, 2012).

### **Goal Setting Conferences**

Teacher goal setting and goal conferences between teacher and principal are established practices in Virginia and many other states teacher evaluation systems. States such as Virginia require the teacher's goals to relate to student academic improvement. Teacher goal setting is defined as setting a target for student learning and establishing how the student progress is measured (Stronge & Grant, 2009). In Virginia, the purpose of goal setting is for the teacher to establish clear expectations of how to support and measure student growth (VDOE, 2013). Virginia teachers are encouraged to establish SMART goals that document student growth during the school year.

Some states have teachers develop goals by incorporating student learning targets or objectives as part of the evaluation process. The student-growth measures are also referred to as student learning objectives (SLOs). Use of SLOs has been established in teacher evaluations in several school districts. Denver, Colorado, schools is credited with

starting the movement in 1999 and now New York, Georgia, North Carolina, Rhode Island, and Virginia are among the states where school districts use SLOs to measure teacher effectiveness (Reform Support Network, 2013). The use of SLOs for goal settings in the Virginia teacher evaluation system creates a direct relationship between teacher goal setting and student-growth measures used in Standard 7 (VDOE, 2013).

Teacher goal setting has been linked to teacher and student self-efficacy and improved student motivation (Aaronson et al., 2007; Awkard, 2017; Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Schmoker (2018) wrote that the most effective learning occurs when the student knows exactly what they are learning and how it is evaluated. Teacher goals show understanding of where the student starts and document where the student is expected to finish (Stronge & Grant, 2009). Hattie (2003) found effective teachers were better able to assess a student's level and rates student progress through goal setting. In Hattie's index of factors related to student achievement, four are connected to teacher goal setting. Hattie's factors of *teachers estimate of student achievement* (1.29), *learning goals vs. no goal* (0.68), *clear goal intentions* (0.48), and *goal commitment* (0.40) are all considered effective practices in the index (Waack, 2018). Teachers' goals should not only reflect the desire for student growth, but also a plan for teacher growth (Marzano & Simms, 2013). Strong and Grant (2009) wrote that student achievement goal setting is meant to "improve student learning and support teachers in their work with students" (p. 4). A review of consistently high-performing high schools found teachers in those schools incorporated state learning targets into their curriculum and goals (Dolejs, 2006). In a comparison of schools serving similar populations, the schools with clear and

measurable goals saw greater student achievement on a state assessment (Williams et al., 2007).

Successful goal setting has been linked to an important quality of effective teachers. Fisher and Frey (2014) used the word *purpose* rather than *goal* when they wrote that a teacher with a clearly defined purpose could help students meet learning targets (pp. 4-6). When teachers create specific and attainable student learning goals it can improve teacher effectiveness (Fisher & Frey, 2014; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2013). In their extensive review of teacher self-efficacy studies, Zee and Koomen (2016) found effective teachers were more likely to use goal setting and teachers who believed they could help students meet learning targets had higher degrees of self-efficacy.

Thus, goal setting appears not only as an avenue for student growth, but as a necessary skill of effective teachers. Developing goal setting skills should be part of a teacher's professional growth (Camp, 2017; Cwikla, 2003; Stronge & Grant, 2009). Elmore (2005) wrote that clear and consistent goals build effective practices and collegial support. Other researchers have found intrinsic motivators or teacher goals had a greater impact on teacher performance and development than organizational goals (Mintrop & Ordenes, 2017).

Support for using goal setting for teacher improvement originated with human behavior research (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Locke, 1996). The seminal work of Locke and Latham (1990) established five effective goal-setting principles of clarity, challenge, commitment, feedback, and task complexity. In later research, Locke (1996) found that the more specific a goal, the more performance is regulated. He also found people need to believe that a goal is valuable and attainable. Similarly, in their research on goal

setting within organizations, O’Hora and Maglieri (2006) found an increase in individual performance with goal setting. Locke (1996) advocated goal setting and training programs to help individuals manage their own performances.

There is a limited research in the value of goal setting conference in improving teacher performance. Several educational writers have defined the role and purpose of goal conferences between principal and teacher. Johnson, Leibowitz, and Perrett (2014) opined that the principal must “balance” expectations and supports while encouraging teachers (p. 9). Other authors have offered guidelines as to the role of principal as a coach, moderator, and evaluator in defining teacher goals (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; DiPaola & Hoy, 2014; Glickman et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2014). Goal conferences can produce different outcomes depending on the approach to the goal setting process (Glickman et al., 2013). Glickman and colleagues found conferences between administrators and teachers approaches and outcomes have followed four main styles: *nondirective* (teacher self-plan); *collaborative* (mutual plan); *directive informational* (supervisor-suggested plan); *directive control* (supervisor-assigned plan). A collaborative and coaching approach is advocated; the literature does highlight the need to understand teacher perceptions of the goal setting and whether it does improve their practices.

### **Classroom Observations**

Historically, many teacher evaluation systems have included classroom observations as a data source. A research review of teacher evaluation systems in several school districts found that all listed classroom observations as a required component (Kane & Staiger, 2012). In a Brookings study of urban schools, researchers found only

22% of teachers were evaluated using student scores, but 100% were evaluated with classroom observations (Whitehurst et al., 2014).

Danielson (2012) opined that classroom observations could be effective if the observations included practices that turned observation data into teacher professional development. Stronge (2010a) wrote that observations could be a useful data source, but the practice has limitations. Observations are a snap shot of teaching practices and often lack timely feedback to the teacher. Marzano and Simms (2013) advocated a coaching model where classroom observations would allow real-time feedback.

There is concern about the validity of classroom observations as a tool to evaluate a teacher's performance. A Hanover Research study (2012) noted classroom observations could provide a wealth of information about teacher activities and behaviors, but "observations suffer from a lack of a strong research base" (p. 13). Other researchers have noted the lack of reliability in classroom observations. Classrooms with higher performing students generated better teacher observation reports (Whitehurst et al., 2014). Observation ratings can also vary depending on the content taught or which class is observed (Lei, Li, & Leroux, 2018). Further, classroom observations lacked consistent ratings of teacher effectiveness (Wind, Tsai, Grajeda, & Bergin, 2018).

Focused observations that address identified standards could make connections between classroom observations and improving teacher practices. A 5-year study of the District of Columbia's teacher evaluation system found the required five structured classroom observations were a factor in improving teacher quality (Dee & Wyckoff, 2017). The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's extensive initiative to improve teaching

and student learning might not have achieved its overall goals, but teachers in the study felt classroom observations did improve their instruction (Stecher et al., 2018).

### **Teacher Reflection**

Teacher reflection has gained popularity in the past two decades. Reflection advocates believe principals who create an environment that uses reflection as a self-improvement tool can help teachers make strong connections between teacher actions (planning, instruction, assessment) and student learning. Virginia teacher evaluation guidelines refer to reflection as self-evaluation (VDOE, 2011a). Although there is not a clear definition of teacher reflection in literature, for this study *teacher reflection* is defined as a teacher's self-evaluation of his or her instructional, delivery, and assessment practices, and the impact of those practices on student learning.

Hall and Simeral (2015) described how reflective practices could improve teacher performances by helping teachers understand how their work impacts students. Danielson and McGreal (2000) called reflection the most powerful practice for professional learning (p. 24). DiPaola and Hoy (2014) called for principals to build a school culture that encourages reflection, trust, self-efficacy, and self-regulation. In their research on school principals, Kraft and Gilmour (2017) wrote that principals, through promoting self-reflection in teacher evaluations, could develop valuable professional growth. Other writers supported the use of self-reflection in teacher training programs to improve teachers' skills and to bolster their confidence (McFarland, Saunders, & Allen, 2009).

Despite the views of many that teacher self-reflection can be a source of professional growth, improve classroom practices, and support student learning, few

school districts or states require teacher reflection or self-evaluation in the evaluation process. In their review of teacher evaluation systems, Fireside and Lachlan-Haché (2015) found very few districts use teacher reflection beyond beginning-of-the-year goal setting. Reflection is different from self-evaluation (McFarland et al., 2009). Virginia used the term *self-evaluation*, but describes a reflective practice used so teachers can better understand the “effectiveness of their performance and for self-improvement” (VDOE, 2015, p. 35). Teacher reflection is sometimes confused with goal setting (Fireside & Lachlan-Haché, 2015) and much of the research related to teacher reflection focuses on teacher goal setting and student reflections to support their individual growth.

If not clear how to use in education, the practice of self-reflection is an authentic tool in professions outside of education. Self-reflection is used in professions to improve a professional’s knowledge and skills. In his seminal book on reflective professionals, Schön (1983) wrote that a reflective professional could draw on knowledge and experience to address situations. Schön found that reflective professionals could see the uniqueness in a situation and develop ways to address the new experience. Further support for using the reflective practices of other professions came from Procee (2006). In his philosophical support for reflection practitioners, Procee called reflection “one of the most promising innovations in education” (p. 237).

Airasian and Gullickson (2006) identified reflection can be a crucial factor in teachers’ self-assessment. Fireside and Lachlan-Haché (2015) wrote that a form of reflection or “self-evaluation” could be used in teacher evaluations during goal setting, an end-of-year reflection on performance, and throughout the year for problem-solving and professional growth. The designers of many current evaluation systems advocated for

teacher reflection as one of the evaluation components. Danielson (2010) called for teacher reflection for a self-assessment of work or for areas of growth. Marzano and Sims (2013) incorporated reflective questions into their coaching model of teacher evaluation. Stronge (2012) wrote that evaluation is a learning process where teachers “think” and “rethink” about their profession.

Although not yet a widespread practice, there are examples of teachers and some school districts using reflection as a tool for teacher growth. Boody’s (2008) literature review on teacher reflection led to his categorization of four types of reflection used for professional growth: (a) reflection as introspection, (b) reflection as problem solving, (c) critical reflection, and (d) reflection in action (p. 500). In their research on college professors, McAlpine and Weston (2002) identified three types of reflection: practical reflection, strategic reflection, and epistemic reflection. Practical reflection is a teacher’s reflection about a class or course, strategic is a reflection on skills or knowledge, and epistemic is cognitive self-evaluation of a teacher’s reflective practices. The authors noted most of reflection they observed was practical reflection. Reflection is a choice practice among educators and it is important to understand how the process works to improve teacher practices.

## **Summary**

Since the 1980s government and educational researchers have advocated for changes in teacher evaluations. Attempts have been made to move teacher evaluations from clinical checklists to systems of support and professional development. The state and federal government legislative push has been toward greater accountability for teachers. This accountability was reflected in the addition of student-growth measures

included in 43 states' teacher evaluation systems (Education Commission, 2016).

Researchers have documented the impact of effective teachers on student learning and described the characteristics of effective teachers.

Teacher evaluation systems also called for use of multiple evaluation components. Teacher evaluation components were bolstered by connecting behavioral research in areas such as goal setting and reflection to teacher professional growth. However, there is limited research on whether student-growth measures, classroom observations, goal conferences, or teacher reflections develop or improve teachers' skills. Despite changes to make evaluation systems better, teachers and principals might still have doubts about the value of new evaluation systems. Research has supported principals' need to have confidence in changes to teacher evaluation systems; teachers are more likely to support evaluation systems if they have confidence in the components. For principals to better use evaluation components to improve instruction, there is a need to better understand how teachers use or do not use evaluation components improve their professional practices.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODS**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gather and assess teacher perceptions of selected teacher evaluation components. It is essential that Northshore school-based administrators understand how teachers perceive the evaluation components of goal setting, classroom observations, teacher reflection, and student-growth assessments. The understanding of teacher perceptions will enable administrators to use these evaluation components to develop and improve teaching practices.

This chapter addresses the methods used in this study to understand more about how teachers use the teacher evaluation components of goal conferences, classroom observations, instruction and relating teacher instruction to student growth. This study was approached from a constructivist viewpoint with the goal being to develop a better understanding of how teachers use the evaluation components to improve instructional practices. The study consisted of a pre-survey and focus group interviews to build a descriptive analysis of how novice and veteran teachers perceive selected Northshore High School teacher evaluation components and the impact of the evaluation practices on the teachers' professional practice (Creswell, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This research design made it possible to gather and analyze teacher descriptions of the evaluation components and, subsequently, adjust the teacher evaluation process at Northshore High School to make it more effective. The study was designed to answer six research questions.

1. What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice (>1 and <3 years), early career (>3 years and < 8 years), experienced (>7 years) teachers regarding their instructional effectiveness in relation to the school district's teacher evaluation system?
2. What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice (>1 and <3 years), early career (>3 years and < 8 years), experienced (>7 years) teachers regarding the goal meeting component of the school district evaluation system?
3. What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice (>1 and <3 years), early career (>3 years and < 8 years), experienced (>7 years) teachers regarding the classroom observation component of the school district evaluation system?
4. What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice (>1 and <3 years), early career (>3 years and < 8 years), experienced (>7 years) teachers regarding the teacher evaluation component that relates to the school district's measure of student progress (Standard 7)?
5. What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice (>1 and <3 years), early career (>3 years and < 8 years), experienced (>7 years) teachers regarding the impact of the teacher reflection component of their evaluations on selected teaching practices (instructional planning, instructional delivery, assessment of/for learning, learning environment, professionalism, and student growth)?

6. What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice (>1 and <3 years), early career (>3 years and < 8 years), experienced (>7 years) teachers regarding how the teacher evaluation process can be improved to effectively support teacher quality and professional growth?

### **Participants**

Northshore High School was staffed by 136 teachers who were in evaluated on the division's teacher evaluation system. Teachers eligible for the study by category novice (29), early career (29), and experienced (47). Teachers not eligible for the study (29) had not completed a full evaluation cycle or were not available for other reasons (2) at the time of the study. Of the eligible teachers, 21 volunteered out of a total of 105 eligible staff members (20%). Five of 29 eligible novice teachers participated (17%). Seven of 29 eligible early career teachers participated (24%). Nine of 47 eligible experienced teachers participated (19%).

Participants represented all academic disciplines at Northshore High School (Career and Technical Education, English, English Language Learners, fine arts, health and physical education, math, science, special education, and social science). Thirty-two of the teachers invited to participate in the study were on formal evaluation during SY 2018-2019. The five novice teacher study participants were in an evaluation year in 2018-19. Data were not collected as to how many early career or experienced teachers were in an evaluation year in 2018-19.

Care was taken to ensure teacher anonymity. The decision to protect teacher participants sacrificed the opportunity for additional demographic data such as gender, race, age, and teacher instructional content. The decision to protect teachers was due to the sensitive nature of study. While I wanted to look at the formative nature of teacher evaluations, there is also a summative element in the teacher evaluation and individuals with evaluative roles were involved in the study.

School counselors, administrators, and other educational specialists were not included in the study. A presentation of the study was made to all Northshore teachers during small group professional learning meetings in March 2019. Teachers were instructed about the purpose of the study and assured of anonymity for participants. A trained front office staff was assigned as the contact for study volunteers. The trained front office staff member sent out a reminder email two weeks prior to the start of the study as well as a follow-up email targeting novice teacher after only four initially volunteered for the study.

Focus groups were selected to construct a collective view of teachers. Focus groups are used in social science and medical research to develop a deeper understanding of topics. The size of the proposed focus groups allows for more thorough discussions than individual interviews or larger groups (e.g., Mertens & Wilson, 2012; Morgan, 1997).

Focus groups can be selected if the participants represent a homogenous group. (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). The study participants represent a homogenous group in that they were all current teachers at Northshore High School who had completed at least one evaluation cycle of the Northshore High School teacher evaluation process since the

Virginia adaptation of the current *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers* (VDOE, 2011a). The homogeneity of the focus groups allowed for clarity and shared experiences of Northshore teachers in their responses (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008).

**Data sources.** Teachers in the study were asked to complete a pre-survey form (Appendix E) and turn the form in to a member of the front office staff who was trained to participate in the study. The pre-survey form was used to identify years of teacher experience, number of times evaluated as a teacher, number of years at Northshore High School, and number of years evaluated under Northshore evaluation since its adoption in SY 2012-2013. To protect volunteers, only the number of years of experience was used for the study. The front office staff member organized the teachers by groups and then disposed of the pre-survey forms.

Once teacher volunteers were organized by their experience, a trained front office staff member entered the names into groups based on teacher availability to participate in the study. No members of the Northshore High School administrative team had access to participants' names or groupings. The proposed study attempted to create six small groups of 4-6 teachers—two for each experience level. Conflicts in teachers' schedules limited the actual focus group participants to 2-4 members in each session.

The study took place from late April through early May 2019. Seven focus group interviews were conducted. Two focus groups were formed from the novice and early career teachers and three focus groups were conducted for the experienced teachers.

Participants were asked to submit a signed consent form to the trained member of the front office staff. The consent form complies with requirements from The College of William and Mary (Appendix F).

**Focus group questions.** A focus group interview questionnaire was developed for this study (Appendix G). A small focus group field tested the questionnaire. Research on classroom observations, goal conferences, student-growth measures, and teacher reflection were used to construct the focus group questions. The interview questions were open-ended to allow for better understanding of how the evaluation components work in each teacher's setting (Creswell, 2014). The focus group questions aligned with the research questions as presented in the Table of Specifications (Table 4).

Table 4

*Table of Specifications*

Research Question	Focus Group Prompt(s)
What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice, early career, and experienced teachers regarding their instructional effectiveness in relation to the school district's teacher evaluation system?	Question 1. Describe your impression of the school district's evaluation process as practiced at Northshore High School in relationship to the effect on your instructional skills as a teacher.
What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice, early career, and experienced teachers regarding the goal meeting component of the school district evaluation system?	Question 2. What are your impressions of the goal setting meetings in relation to your planning, instruction, and assessment. Question 3. In what ways do goal setting meetings help you understand and address student abilities?
What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice, early career, and experienced teachers regarding the classroom observation component of the school district evaluation system?	Question 4. What are your impressions of the classroom observation process and feedback you receive from your evaluator? Question 5. Describe how classroom observations affect your professional skills in terms of planning, instruction, or student assessment?
What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice, early career, and experienced teachers regarding the teacher evaluation component that relates to the school district's measure of student progress (Standard 7)?	Question 6. Describe your understanding of Standard 7, the student-growth measure, and the effect on your professional skills and teaching effectiveness.
What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice, early career, and experienced teachers regarding the impact of the teacher reflection component of their evaluations on selected teaching practices (instructional planning, instructional delivery, assessment of/for learning, learning environment, and professionalism)	Question 7. Describe the teacher reflection piece of Northshore High School's teacher evaluation process regarding the process of reflecting on your professional skills in supporting student learning. What impact does it have on: a. instructional planning? b. instructional delivery? c. assessment of/for learning? d. learning environment? e. student growth?
What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice, early career, and experienced teachers regarding how the teacher evaluation process can be improved to effectively support teacher quality and professional growth?	Question 8. Which evaluation components would you like to see improved and how?

The questions were designed to build descriptors of teacher perceptions related to the evaluation components of goal conferences, classroom observations, student-growth measures, and teacher reflections (Morgan, 1997). Focus group participants were asked to follow interview guidelines: recognition of the importance of their responses on the research, allowing all persons to speak, being respectful of others' opinions, and focusing responses on questions (Archer, 2007; Morgan, 1997).

**Focus group procedures.** The focus groups were organized by teacher experience (novice, early career, experienced). A district employee who serves as a teacher mentor moderated the focus groups. Two district non-teaching employees were trained to serve as scribes, and one scribe attended each focus group interview. The moderator and scribes formed the data collection team.

The team was trained on focus group effective practices. The focus group procedures created for the study are based on the work of Morgan (1997), Mertens and Wilson (2012) and Strauss and Corbin (1998). The guidelines were:

1. Welcome the participants as they arrive.
2. Read aloud the introduction as written. (Appendix H)
3. Ensure the confidentiality of responses. The responses will not be linked to the participant by name.
4. Ensure participant responses will not affect their status at Northshore High School or be used in any current or future teacher evaluations (Northshore's administrators did participate in the selection of participants or the focus groups. Focus group participants' names were not linked to responses.)
5. Explain the roles of each member of the data collection team.

6. Listen intently to responses.
7. Remember there are no right or wrong responses. Be careful not to provide value to an answer orally or through body language.
8. You may clarify questions at the request of the participants.
9. To encourage participants to share detail use phrases, “Will you explain further? Will you provide an example? Would you share your view on this matter?”
10. Allow for open responses in a semi-structured format. There will not be an order of responses, however every participant will be given the opportunity to speak.
11. After each focus group has addressed all questions, review written responses with recorded responses. If necessary, ask focus group participants to verify or adjust their responses.

**Field test.** A small focus group of three teacher volunteers participated in a field test. The data collection team and I meet with the field test participants prior to the study. Field test participants went through the entire focus group interview with responses to 8 questions (Appendix G). At the end of the interview, field test participants were asked about clarity and technical accuracy of the focus group interview questions and whether there are unclear or missing questions. The data collection team and I reviewed the field test participants’ responses to the eight questions and their feedback on clarity and technical accuracy. The analysis of question the field test group responses was used to clarify four questions (Appendix I). In addition, Question 7 was divided into two parts. For Question 7, the field test feedback was it was better to ask the first part of the

question and then ask, the second part five separate times so respondents address each teaching standard.

The goal of the field test was to establish the validity of the questions and to ensure that they would produce responses that support the study's purpose. Any changes to the procedures and questions had to be agreed upon by the data collection team and me. The selected questions and procedures were used for all seven study focus group interviews.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected through seven focus group interviews. The focus group interviews consisted of groups of 2-4 volunteers, with two groups of novice and early career teachers, and three groups of experienced teachers. In total, 5 novice, 6 early career, and 9 experienced teachers participated in the study. The focus group interviews were conducted over a 2 1/2-week period. The number of focus groups follow a guideline measure of 4-5 groups for data collection (Morgan, 1997). Each focus group was able to meet during the teachers' planning periods. The focus group interviews occurred in a central location at Northshore High School.

**Data collection team.** A focus group moderator and scribe composed the data collection team. No faculty members who are directly responsible for overseeing the teacher evaluation process at Northshore High School were present during the focus group interviews. Morgan (1997) noted that mixing of different authority levels within an organization during focus group interviews could create uneasiness and conversation could be geared toward conflict. Additionally, combining administrators with teachers

would have created a heterogeneous group based on authority levels of the participants (Mertens & Wilson, 2012).

Each focus group interview allowed approximately 75 minutes for questions and responses. The moderator reviewed the procedures (Appendix J) at the beginning of each interview sessions. The scribe recorded responses on a response sheet and an audio recorder was used. The audio recordings were submitted to Rev.com for transcription. The scribe then reviewed the transcription and removed any phrases that identified individual teachers. During one interview session, the audio recorder failed, so the scribe's notes and participant verifications were used instead of an electronic recording. The scribe submitted transcribed interviews to focus group participants, who were given four days to review their remarks and submit changes. The scribe received two changes to the original transcript. The scribe, after confirming and verifying responses, destroyed the recordings. The audio recordings were not shared with any Northshore administrator or anyone outside of the data collection team.

### **Data Analysis**

The scribe shared final transcripts of the focus groups with the data with the coding and analysis team. I reviewed the moderator's words from each focus group interview transcript. The review found the moderator adhered to the research guidelines and served as a passive interviewer (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Two veteran educators and I made up the coding team and served as the analysts. All analysts had at least 20 years of teaching experience and were current school-based administrators who had evaluated teachers using the Virginia teacher evaluation system. Two of the analysts had been evaluated as teachers under the current Virginia teacher

evaluation system. The data collection team and data coding teams were kept separate to ensure researcher accountability (Saldaña, 2016). A group analysis approach was used as an analytical tool to limit analytical bias or rut (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The coding team was instructed to be balanced in their analysis through a review of the JCSEE attributes of propriety, utility, feasibility, and accuracy (Mertens & Wilson, 2012).

The study was designed to construct an understanding of how teachers perceive the Northshore teacher evaluation components of goal conferences, classroom observations, teacher reflections, and student-growth measures, in relation to their years of experience. The construction of how teachers perceive the four evaluation components was completed first through axial coding and then code analysis to identify key themes in focus group responses. Finally, a constant comparative analyst (Glaser, 1965) reviewed responses based on the years of experience of the participants.

Constant comparative analysis developed by Glaser (1965) has three stages (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The first stage was open coding where information from the focus group responses was chunked into units and a code was assigned for each unit. The second stage was axial coding where the codes were grouped into categories. During the third stage, the analysts identified themes from the focus groups (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Saldaña (2016) recommended a coding recording sheet to move from data to theory. The team used a simple coding sheet to develop categories and identify themes (Figure 3).

Novice Teachers 2-3 Years	Early Career Teachers 4-7 Years	Experienced Teachers 8 Plus Years
Codes	Codes	Codes
Categories	Categories	Categories
Themes	Themes	Themes

*Figure 3.* Focus group analysis code organizer. The data analysis team used this chart to code teacher responses.

Stage one of the study’s analysis started with a reflective reading period by each member of the panel (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). Each analyst completed the reflective reading individually and identified data points. The analysts worked as a team to develop code descriptors from the data points that aligned with the research questions. Each descriptor or “code” was agreed to by the team and then applied to excerpts that related to the code (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). During the coding process, the analysts determined that focus group participants referenced the four evaluation components at different times during the interview and not just when asked the corresponding question. For instance, respondents referred to “reflection” for every question of the interview and not just Question 7 that was directed at the use of teacher reflection. The analysts determined that

responses that referred to an evaluation component would be coded with the corresponding research question.

During stage two, the analysts conducted axial coding. Axial coding helped the coding teams identify connections between categories and subcategories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Axial coding required the analyst to look for “answers to questions such as why or how come, where, when, how and what results, and in doing so they uncover relationships among categories” (p. 127). The analysts developed category descriptors from the second stage and lastly created themes that addressed the research questions.

For this study, the a priori categories were the evaluation components and years of experience of each teacher. The data analysts also identified emergent themes. Specially the coded responses were used to construct themes how teachers view the relationship between the teacher evaluation components and teacher professional development experience (Table 5).

The final stage was comparative analysis to identify one or more themes that express the responses of the focus groups. The analysts reviewed our conclusions for consensus about the types of relationships the focus group responses revealed between the evaluation components and teacher experience. The analysts’ process provided themes regarding teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of selected evaluation components. The themes were then compared between the prior category of teacher experience.

### **Researcher as Instrument**

Efforts were made to limit the bias in the data collection and analysis. The data collection team and data analysis teams were composed of separate members. I separated

myself from the processes of organizing participants and the collection of data. Two independent readers were used in the data coding and analysis.

Table 5

*Data Analysis*

Research Question	Data Sources	Data Analysis Techniques
What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice, early career, and experienced teachers regarding their instructional effectiveness in relation to the school district’s teacher evaluation system?	<b>Pre-Survey Focus Group Response to Q. 1</b> <i>Q. 2,3,4,5,6,7, and 8</i>	
What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice, early career, and experienced teachers regarding the goal meeting component of the school district evaluation system?	<b>Pre-Survey, Q. 2, 3</b> <i>Q. 6 and 8</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-Survey Data used to group responses between novice, early career, and experienced teachers</li> <li>• Reflective Reading</li> <li>• Consensus from analysts of words or phrases that reflect data points (“codes”)</li> <li>• Analysts review codes and construct themes</li> <li>• Analysts construct the story of teacher perceptions of the propriety of teacher evaluation components</li> <li>• Analysts compare themes between teacher experience groups</li> </ul>
What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice, early career, and experienced teachers regarding the classroom observation component of the school district evaluation system?	<b>Pre-Survey, Q. 4, 5</b> <i>Q. 1, 6, and 8</i>	
What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice, early career, and experienced teachers regarding the teacher evaluation component that relates to the school district’s measure of student progress (Standard 7)?	<b>Pre-Survey, Q. 6</b> <i>Q. 1, 2, 6, 7, and 8</i>	
What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice, early career, and experienced teachers regarding the impact of the teacher reflection component of their evaluations on selected teaching practices (instructional planning, instructional delivery, assessment of/for learning, learning environment, and professionalism)?	<b>Pre-Survey, Q. 7</b> <i>Q. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8</i>	
What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice, early career, and experienced teachers regarding how the teacher evaluation process can be improved to effectively support teacher quality and professional growth?	<b>Pre-Survey, Q. 8</b> <i>Q. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7</i>	

*Note.* **Bold** – Indicates interview questions assigned to the research question. *Italic* – Indicates the interview questions where participants’ answers addressed the research question.

## **Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions**

**Delimitations.** The study had three delimitations to note. The three delimitations were place of the study, the participants, and the selection of evaluation components. The delimitations were intended to create a feasible study that could lead to improvements in the Northshore teacher evaluation process. The study was intended to provide useful data related to teacher perceptions of the selected evaluation components.

The location of the study and participant sample were primary delimitations of the study. The study took place in one school in an urban-suburban school district. The district is close to a major city and is located within one of the wealthiest counties in the United States. All the participants were high school teachers. The study did not include school counselors, librarians, deans, athletic department staff, or middle and elementary teachers. The third delimitation was the selection of three evaluation components for the study. Evaluation components such as coaching from an assigned mentor, peer support, and support through professional learning communities were purposefully left out. Those evaluation components are not performed by school-based administrators and, thus, were excluded from the study.

**Limitations.** Three key limitations were evident in the study. Specifically, the study was limited by the development of original questions for the focus groups and the quality of the focus group responses. The study also was limited by the focus group participations who may not be comfortable criticizing an evaluation component or may not be comfortable disagreeing with a fellow focus group member. Steps were taken to ensure confidentiality of the participants' responses and to remove any school-based administrator from the selection, or identification of members within the focus groups.

However, the focus groups could have had internal hierarchical structures such as a dominant veteran teacher paired with younger teachers, or a department chair in a group.

Finally, while great efforts were made to eliminate bias, I was still involved in the data coding and analysis. For instance, the use of teacher reflection was a component I added to the Northshore teacher evaluation. This bias may be evident in the findings. I was conscious of controlling my bias during coding and analysis, but still acknowledge that the findings may have been influenced by bias.

**Assumptions.** Six assumptions guided the development of this study. The assumptions were based on the recent research about teacher evaluations, teacher perceptions, and literature on methods for school leaders to establish effective teacher evaluations.

1. Effective teachers significantly improve student academic growth.
2. It is important for school leaders to understand teacher perceptions of the evaluation system and evaluation processes.
3. It is essential for school leaders to understand how their teachers learn.
4. Teachers have a wide range of perceptions about how their evaluations connects to student learning.
5. A teacher evaluation process that includes teacher reflection will help teachers see the direct impact on student learning from their pedagogical methods.
6. It is a moral imperative of school leaders to provide all students with an effective teacher.

## **Ethical Considerations**

As the primary researcher, I ensured the data collection and analysis teams adhered to the JCSEE attributes of propriety, utility, feasibility, and accuracy (Figure 4) as applied to our research practices. The study received approval through the dissertation committee at The College of William and Mary, the College of William and Mary School of Education Internal Review Committee, and the Director of Research of the school district.

Teacher participants volunteered for focus group by submitting a participation form to a trained front office staff member. The trained office staff member and the data collection team were instructed to not share names of participants with any member of the data analysis team or any Northshore administrator. The data collection team included two school staff members—neither of whom were teacher evaluators. A member of the data collection team redacted from the written transcripts any characteristics that may have identified the focus group participants, such as courses taught. The data analysis team members were former teachers and current administrators in the district. The identity of the other two members of the analysis team was kept private at their request. These measures were used to encourage open conversation from focus group participants. The measures also protected the identity and assured focus group participant and the analysis team that their participation would not impact their professional careers.

The data collection and analysis team were given a review of JSCEE standards. As the lead researcher, I have served over 30 years in education. I spent 20 years as a teacher, and the last 12 as an assistant principal or principal. I was formally evaluated as

a teacher seven times; as a school administrator, I have conducted over 200 teacher evaluations.

Table 6

*JCSEE Standards of Research Team*

JCSEE Standard	Study Attributes	Study Methods
Propriety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsive to stakeholders</li> <li>• Agreement to consider needs and expectations of teachers</li> <li>• Protect human and legal rights</li> <li>• Understandable and fair</li> <li>• Complete description of findings</li> <li>• Present conflicts of interest</li> <li>• Account for all resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All teachers who completed at least one full teacher evaluation cycle at Northshore High School are eligible to participate.</li> <li>• Teacher names were kept off response forms.</li> <li>• Administrators with direct supervisory roles over teachers did not participate in selection of focus groups or take part in focus group interviews.</li> </ul>
Utility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualified researchers</li> <li>• Attention to all involved in teacher evaluations</li> <li>• Purposes identified</li> <li>• Value of participants</li> <li>• Needs of teachers and administrators</li> <li>• Activities to encourage teachers to rediscover, reinterpret, or revise their understandings and behaviors</li> <li>• Guard against negative consequences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have over 30 years in education. I have been evaluated as a teacher and completed over 200 teacher evaluations as an administrator.</li> <li>• The focus group moderator has over 20 years in education and is currently a lead mentor teacher</li> <li>• Focus group responses were not linked to names.</li> <li>• Focus group responses were not linked to evaluation.</li> </ul>
Feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluations should use effective management strategies</li> <li>• Procedures should be practical</li> <li>• Balance cultural and needs of individuals and groups</li> <li>• Effective use of resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus groups took place during teachers' planning periods</li> <li>• Allowed all focus group members a chance to voice perceptions</li> <li>• There was no additional cost to Northshore or the school district</li> </ul>
Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Justified in context</li> <li>• Serve purpose and be valid</li> <li>• Yield dependable information</li> <li>• Purposeful evaluation</li> <li>• Systematic collection, review, verification, and storage of information</li> <li>• Technically adequate analysis</li> <li>• Clear documentation of analysis</li> <li>• Guard against misconceptions, bias, distortion, and errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewed focus group responses with focus group participants</li> <li>• Individual coding by review panel</li> <li>• Group review of focus group responses</li> <li>• Axial coding by review panel</li> <li>• The importance of accurate information needed to improve teacher evaluation components</li> </ul>

*Note.* JCSEE = [Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation]

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS**

Strauss and Corbin (2012) wrote that a qualitative researcher must decide on the “main analytical message” (p. 252). The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how teachers in different stages of their careers perceived selected evaluation components of goal conferences, classroom observations, student-growth measures, and teacher reflection. Teachers were divided into novice (2-3 years’ experience), early career (4-7 years’ experience), and experienced (8 more years’ experience) focus groups and perceptual data were gathered to build a teacher story on how the evaluation components impacted teacher practices.

Qualitative data were obtained from the responses of seven focus group interviews. The data analysis team constructed an understanding of how teachers from the three experience groupings perceived the four evaluation components. Each analysis team member completed an independent reading to identify data points from each teacher experience group. The team then met and developed codes from the data points based on responses that addressed specific research questions. Next, the analysis team developed categories based on the coded responses. The categories were used to develop themes. Themes were used to construct the story of each experience group’s perceptions of the four components. Themes were compared across the three levels of teacher experience. A comparative analysis identified similarities and differences between novice, early career, and experienced teachers. I then constructed a story of teacher perceptions based

on the identified themes and the comparison of those themes. Through the analysis, the team also identified an emergent theme of *teacher reflection* that went beyond the six research questions and provided an area for further research (Mertens & Wilson, 2012; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Focus group participants cited teacher reflection as a tool teachers use throughout the evaluation process. This emergent theme is discussed further in Chapter 5.

### **The Study**

The study had 21 participants out of 105 eligible staff members (20%). Five of 29 eligible novice teachers participated (17%). Seven of 29 eligible early career teachers participated (24%). Nine of 47 eligible experienced teachers participated (19%). Other than years of experience, no other descriptors were used to identify teachers. The lack of other descriptors helped ensure the anonymity of the participants.

The eight guiding research questions are discussed considering the findings that emerged from the study. Focus group participants addressed each of the research questions throughout the interviews. The primary focus group interview questions intended to generate data for each research question are listed in Appendix I

#### **Research Question 1**

*What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice (>1 and <3 years), early career (>3 years and < 8 years), and experienced (>7 years) teachers regarding their instructional effectiveness in relation to the school district's teacher evaluation system?*

Virginia adopted the current teacher evaluation system for the 2012-13 school (VDOE 2011b). Under Virginia's teacher evaluation system all new teachers are

evaluated each year their first three years and are evaluated every third year thereafter. A new teacher is placed on a *provisional contract* during his or her first three years. After three years of successful evaluations, teachers are moved to *continuing contracts*. Data for the first research question were gathered from all eight interview questions.

Respondents who were asked about their perceptions of the current teacher evaluation system as practiced at Northshore High School mentioned points supporting the evaluation system and expressed concerns about the effectiveness of the system (Table 7). There was disagreement about the purpose and value of the evaluation process among the participants in the *early career* focus group and even greater disagreement among the participants in the *experienced* focus groups.

Table 7

*Focus Groups Responses Aligned to Research Question 1*

Novice	Early Career	Experienced
<i>Codes</i>		
Forced	Reflections	Sets up expectations
Appreciate	Makes us look at what we should	Time-consuming
Beneficial	be doing	Minimal impact
Uncomfortable	Does not change what I do	Data collection small part
Awareness	Restricts (a little bit)	Just to see growth
Avenue or path	Loses importance with time	Forced meetings
Platform	Little change in me	Checked off meetings
Understanding of skills	Fruitful	Clarity
More discussion	I used self-reflection	Takes time away from students
Understanding the evaluation process	It does not change my daily process	How to define what an effective teacher looks like?
Jumping through hoops	Like the idea of a forced reflection	Like jumping through hoops
Not anyone could remember all the standards	It helps	End of the day it says these are the standards we operate by and that is a useful message
Good feedback my first year	Good meetings with my evaluator	Antiquated system
Helped with instructional delivery		Student engagement vs. being compliant?
I have no idea if I am average, succeeding, or going above		Choose your evaluator
The numbers do not mean anything		It is a time suck on the entire system—the way it is on both ends
		Politically driven
		Healthy challenges
<i>Categories</i>		
Need Support	Requires reflection on professional skills	Review of professional expectations
Like Support	Limited impact	Time consuming
Consistent and frequent feedback	Question purpose	Little professional impact
Develops an understanding of the profession	Support from evaluator	Importance of evaluator
<i>Themes</i>		
<i>Novice teachers expressed a need for consistent and frequent feedback. They also expressed uncertainty of how they are performing as measured by the evaluation system.</i>	<i>There are conflicts among early career teachers in seeing the value of the evaluation system. While some teachers stated the evaluation, system did support professional growth and evaluators can create chances to reflect, there also is a perception evaluation have limited effect on job performance.</i>	<i>There are conflicts in how experienced teachers perceive the evaluation system. Experienced teachers did cite an understanding of the need for evaluations and the desire to have a professional relationship with their evaluator. Teachers also stated the time put into evaluation does not create results in student growth or professional practice.</i>

Novice teachers identified the need for consistent and frequent support throughout the evaluation process. Novice teachers wanted to have a clear understanding of how

they were performing based on the standards and expectations of their evaluator and the evaluation system. One teacher stated, “I have a general sense... of how things may be working and might not be working...but I really don’t know [until] the end of the year.” Another novice teacher noted, “I have no idea if I’m average or succeeding or going above and beyond.” Novice teachers were less likely to question the process and more likely to admit to limited understanding of how they were performing than early career or experienced teachers.

There was a conflict in responses about the evaluation process among early career teachers. One early career teacher stated, “[the evaluation process] gives you something to reflect on.” Another noted it gives the teacher time to reflect on what they need to “improve,” and another stated it makes the teacher look at different instructional strategies. However, other early career teachers referred to the evaluation process as “box checking.” One early career respondent noted the evaluation process had little to no impact on how she taught.

Experienced teachers provided greater and more immersive detail on the evaluation process compared to novice and early career teachers in the study. Experienced teachers went deeper in describing both their understanding of evaluations and the purpose of the evaluations. Experienced teachers saw a need for the evaluation to provide standards, expectations, and clarity about what is expected of teachers. Respondents also questioned whether the evaluation process truly identified their instructional goals or impact on students. They noted the time to complete evaluations and one teacher stated, “[Evaluations] take time from me being able to put that energy in my classroom.” Another participant called the evaluations a “political measure” to

review teachers and another questioned the school district's reasoning for the evaluation system.

Evident from all focus groups was the importance of the relationship between evaluator and teacher. Novice teachers needed guidance to and through the myriad skills required to be successful educators. Novice teachers also needed reassurance about their job performance. Early career and experienced teachers cited the need to connect with their evaluator throughout the evaluation. The relationship between evaluator and teacher improved teacher receptiveness to feedback and appeared to encourage teachers to adjust in planning, delivery, and assessments. Experienced teachers noted the connection with an evaluator enabled greater professional growth.

## **Research Question 2**

*What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice (>1 and <3 years), early career (>3 years and < 8 years), and experienced (>7 years) teachers regarding the goal meeting component of the school district evaluation system?*

Northshore teachers have their initial goal meeting with their primary evaluator (principal or assistant principal) near the end of the first grading period. During the initial goal setting conference, the teacher and primary evaluator review student tiers, student-growth goals, instructional strategies, and the evidence the teacher will use to document the impact of the strategies and student progress toward goals. Two more meetings or conferences occur throughout the evaluation cycle between the teacher and the primary evaluator. A mid-year meeting between the teacher and primary evaluator includes a similar review as the initial goal meeting. At this time, the teacher should have mid-year data to share. The teacher may adjust the goal during the mid-year review. In

the end-of-year meeting, the teacher presents a review of student growth and discusses what impact the instructional strategies had on student growth. Data for Research Question 2 were collected through participant responses to Interview Questions 2, 3, 6, and 8 (Table 8).

Table 8

Focus Group Responses Aligned to Research Question 2

Novice	Early Career	Experienced
<i>Codes</i>		
Clarity	Set obtainable goal	Checklist meeting
More assistance	Helped to work toward the goal	Impacts paperwork, not teaching practices
Cohorts help	Just numbers	Means to clarify understanding.
Need assistance after meeting	Checking of boxes	District initiatives do not relate to goals
Clarity through explanation	Not enough support	Easier to do a multiple choice to get results
Ok to fail	Evaluator helps keep goals realistic	Uncertainty of what evaluator wants
Want more 1 on 1 feedback	Felt guided	Uncertain of progress
Understanding	Forces more traditional testing	Meeting has nothing to do with students
Evaluator differences	Pretests are meaningless	Meeting is about teacher growth
Hard to know tiers/students	Keeps me focused on students and my population	Process is laborious
Forced experiences which can be a good thing	Understand what students were capable of	
	Gives a template	
<i>Categories</i>		
Support	Student-focused on growth	Just a requirement
Comfort and encouragement	Traditional student measurements	Questioning (self-reflection)
Survival mode	Supported through process	Dependent on evaluator
		Time consuming
		Questioning measurements
<i>Themes</i>		
<i>Novice teachers stated a need for feedback and support through the goal setting process. There is confidence among novice teachers that evaluator is there to support teacher; however, novice teachers were uncertain about their professional effectiveness and their ability to impact student growth.</i>	<i>Early career teachers have developed an understanding of how they impact student growth. Teachers placed different levels of value in goal meeting depending on the guidance and support of the evaluator.</i>	<i>Experienced teachers stated goal meetings lead to greater understanding of how they impact true student growth and leads to reflection questions about measurements. Teachers also expressed the importance of the evaluator clearly defining expectations. Teachers questioned the time and quality of student measurements.</i>

Novice teachers stated uncertainty about their ability to determine student levels (tiers) and how they as teachers impact student growth. One novice teacher stated, “I feel like my goals and my strategies continued to fall apart.” Another novice teacher added, “[My goal] could work at the beginning of the year and in December it’s totally not working.”

In novice teachers' responses to the actual goal meeting, they cited the value of feedback and support. "My evaluator was very open...the meeting really gave me a better understanding and someone to bounce ideas off," stated one novice teacher. Another said,

[The evaluator] gave the feeling that it is okay to fail. So, I was really relaxed going into my goal meeting. They did inform me that maybe the goal was a little too easy to obtain. Maybe you could stretch it out a little bit. So, it was a very open conversation.

Early career and experienced teachers appeared more confident in their abilities to support student growth. Teachers in both groups cited the importance of the goal meeting to justify or support their strategies. One experienced teacher said, "the goal meeting is a means to clarify my understanding." Another added, "Breaking it down to tiers is helpful. It shifted my thinking on how I am going to meet the needs and adapt to the group of kids." A third said, "the actual meeting doesn't help. It's the process that helps." An early career teacher added, "It gives a template of what our goals should be...it helps fine tune what the assessment should be."

Both early career and experienced teachers were also critical of the purpose of goal meetings primarily in connection to the student-growth measure in the evaluation. The teachers noted the need to establish goals limited what they could measure, and they fell back on traditional tests. One experienced teacher stated, "It makes me feel guilty about the goal I choose because it is easiest for data collection." Another stated, "I wanted to improve critical thinking skills. But how do you measure that?"

Like the response for Research Question 1, the role of the evaluator played an important role in the value of the goal meeting. All three groups of teachers cited the importance of the evaluator in explaining, supporting, clarifying, or understanding their goals. A few noted that having different evaluators every year could diminish the value of the goal meeting and one experienced teacher asked if teachers could select their evaluator to improve the quality of the goal meetings.

### **Research Question 3**

*What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice (>1 and <3 years), early career (>3 years and < 8 years), and experienced (>7 years) teachers regarding the classroom observation component of the school district evaluation system?*

Northshore's school district had selected a form like the final evaluation form as the classroom observation tool. Since 2013-14, Northshore received permission from Human Resources and Talent Development (HRTD) to use a different observation form. Northshore's classroom observation form has been modified four times since SY 2013-14. Northshore's classroom observation tool for SY 16-17 and 17-18 (Appendix B) and SY 18-19 (Appendix C) were the most recent forms available at the time of the study. Focus group participants' responses to Interview Questions 3 and 4 that directly asked about classroom observations generated the primary data for Research Question 3. Interview responses from Questions 1, 2, 6, 7, and 8 also referred to classroom observations (Table 9).

Table 9

*Focus Groups Responses Aligned to Research Question 3*

Novice	Early Career	Experienced
<i>Codes</i>		
Frequent visits helpful	No clear expectations	The sample size is too small
More visits made the teacher less nervous	Makes a difference who is observing	Multiple observations, not 2
Want more often	Enjoy post-observation meetings	Come to the same section to see student growth
Need consistent feedback	Fast feedback	Observer bias
Different evaluators—make it different	Want fast feedback	Believe evaluator wants to find something wrong
Uncertainty of evaluator expectations	Limited information	Does not change practice for that day
Teacher growth	More flexibility	Value in post-observation meetings
Would like a comparison	More teacher training required to understand	Good conversation about education and being a good teacher
More transparency	First year was especially helpful	Rare to have an educational conversation about admin—liked it
Job is isolating	Observer is genuinely interested	Makes me more reflective
Appreciate feedback	Concern of evaluator knowledge	Leads to tension
Gives feedback on performance	Observations are important	
	Self-reflection should be used after formal observations	
	Return visits to give feedback and support for struggling classes	
	Observation depends on the classroom	
	Some teachers need the unannounced observations	
<i>Categories</i>		
Consistent and frequent feedback	Consistent and frequent feedback	Consistent and more targeted feedback
Supports instructional growth	Frequency of classroom visits	Conscious of observer bias
More visits, not fewer		
Value		
<i>Themes</i>		
<i>Novice teachers need confirmation about performance and skill development. The confirmation from evaluators is beneficial while novice teachers are in “survival mode.”</i>	<i>Early career teachers like more confirmation about what they are doing well. Teachers also noted they have a willingness to ask for help, and that help should come in consistent feedback.</i>	<i>Experienced teachers cited a need for consistent and frequent discussion to support professional growth.</i>

All three teacher groups noted the advantage of multiple observations. Novice teachers needed consistent feedback and support to help them understand how they were performing. Early career teachers desired frequent confirmation of their performance. Experienced teachers appreciated the professional discussion from consistent and frequent feedback. A novice teacher stated, “Knowing I am going to be observed gives a

little more motivation.” Another added, “It is really important to show what you are capable of doing.” An early career teacher said, “Both my assistant principals have given me positive criticism.” The value of clarity and effective feedback appeared to be key factor in teachers seeing value in the observation.

However, teachers also noted the lack of frequent observations and the lack of clarity in the current evaluation process. Novice and early career teachers wanted observations to understand if they were meeting expectations. Both early career and experienced teachers cited that two or three observations a year were not enough to understand how well a teacher is performing.

#### **Research Question 4**

*What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice (>1 and <3 years), early career (>3 years and < 8 years), and experienced (>7 years) teachers regarding the teacher evaluation component that relates to the school district’s measure of student progress (Standard 7)?*

The student-growth measure is Standard 7 of the Virginia teacher evaluation system and accounts for 40% of a teacher’s final evaluation. District teachers are encouraged to develop SMART goals to document student growth during the school year. Teacher-selected goals enable a teacher to select goals that relate to his or her content and meet student needs. Northshore teachers set a goal that usually has specific growth measures for each student tier. The tiering of students allows a teacher to set specific growth measurements for student groups based on each group’s level of knowledge and skills. Goals are reviewed at mid-year and end-of-year meetings. Data for Research Question 4 came from focus group Interview Questions 1, 2, 6, 7, and 8 (Table 10).

Table 10

*Focus Groups' Responses Aligned to Research Question 4*

Novice	Early Career	Experienced
<i>Codes</i>		
Data are not real	Like the reflective process	The county and school use it to cover our butts
Students could have bad day	Very helpful	Helps integrate new strategies
Should be skill driven	Everything else they check off; this is the only we get some say	There is student growth that I can't measure
Only think about it on days I have meetings	Provide self-analysis on what could be done differently	I don't if the data I collect has an impact on my professional skills
I don't want to test, but at the end of day I need to test	Good because you think about your why	Does not measure relationships
Not fair; student growth can be measured in many different ways	What strategies worked and did not	Does not relate to PBL (Project Based Learning)
Fear of failure	Helps to recognize if you have enough help	Not super effective early in career, but more effective now
Confusion about type of assessment	Helpful for me to go forward	It does affect my planning
Over-testing	Writing about something that went well cements it in my head	I have changed how I assess kids
Reflection on how you are going to deliver instruction next year	Get yourself into a routine	Integrate more writing and more formative assessments
End of year is too late	Think about how you can change for next year to hit those goals	We are using the process in the process
Trying to adjust assessment to make it more real world to show better student growth	Comes too early	It makes me consider what worked, and what has not worked
Students could learn by osmosis	The way we analyze data is different for me each year per evaluator; confusing	Focuses on tier 3 students
Teacher questioned value of data; education data is a messy thing	I am prepping for 120 kids and a standardized test—that is more important	Suddenly have a microscope on a handful of students and that is very useful
My value as a teacher is based on how I get students to perform		Data are due in April and we are not finished with students
Felt I was dinged on how I presented my data		I collected data; I changed how I assess throughout the year, not just an end of year thing
I go back to the diagnostic; it is the easy and safe root		It is like teaching to a test
How do we measure the engagement and not compliance?		
<i>Categories</i>		
Uncertainty of how to measure student growth	Make connections between their performance and student growth	Supports teacher/student growth
Fear of teacher performance and the impact on students	The process supports teacher self-efficacy and is an accountability measure	Impact on professional practices Teachers questioned if data used reflects student growth Political measure
<i>Themes</i>		
<i>Novice teacher are uncertain whether they are measuring student growth. They also perceive they do not have a great understanding about what is real student growth.</i>	<i>Early career teachers see student-growth measures as a method to validate teacher work. The student-growth measure makes connections to student growth.</i>	<i>There is a conflict among experienced teacher perceptions about the student-growth measure. Some experienced teachers see the student-growth measure as a path to improve planning, instruction, and assessments, while others question the purpose and value of the student-growth measure.</i>

Early career teachers identified more value to the student-growth measure used in Virginia schools than novice or experienced teachers. Early career teachers liked the accountability of setting and meeting goals. They also noted the control over the student-growth measure in the evaluation process. One early career teacher noted, “I went back [to last year’s goals] when I was setting up my goals this year. What is it that I need to change? I want to get a 3 or 4.” Another said, “So at the end of this year the [student] didn’t meet your goal. Why? So, what are the barriers. You rethink and remember this student missed five assignments.”

Experienced teachers saw value in the student-growth measure to focus teachers on the students. One teacher said, “The [student-growth measure] was not very effective early in my career. It is much more effective now. It tells me how my students are doing.” Experienced teachers also questioned whether the student-growth measure was politically motivated to create public trust in school. They questioned whether the student-growth measure really reflects student improvement.

Novice teachers reported struggling with the ability to measure student growth. They also had trouble identifying what impact they had on student achievement. Their uncertainty about their abilities and impact was heightened by the fear of the how their students would perform and the impact of student performance on their evaluations. One novice teacher shared,

With the teacher evaluation at the end of the year, I don’t know how it will impact the same year students. Maybe you won’t do an assessment but a lab instead...maybe you will change how you are delivering instruction.

Another added, “I am getting feedback, but I have no idea how I am doing to the end of the year. The job is so isolating.”

### **Research Question 5**

*What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice (>1 and <3 years), early career (>3 years and < 8 years), and experienced (>7 years) teachers regarding the impact of the teacher reflection component of their evaluations on selected teaching practices (instructional planning, instructional delivery, assessment of/for learning, learning environment, professionalism, and student growth)?*

Northshore added the reflection requirement (at first called a *teacher narrative*) in SY 13-14. Teacher reflections are suggested by the state teacher evaluation system, but not required. The district teacher evaluation system does not require teacher reflection in the evaluation. The reflection requirement was added in the Northshore teacher evaluation to encourage teachers to self-evaluate their connection to student progress by describing the impact of their instructional strategies on student growth. Teachers submit their reflection with the final data on student growth at the end of April.

In the reflection, teachers are asked to “Describe how you met or did not meet your student-growth goals.” The teachers also respond to the following questions: “How effective were your instructional strategies in meeting those goals?” and “As you reflect on the year, what have learned about your planning, instruction, and assessment practices?” All eight of the focus group interview questions and responses contributed data for Research Question 5 (Table 11).

Table 11

*Focus Groups' Responses Aligned to Research Question 5*

Novice	Early Career	Experienced
<i>Codes</i>		
Meaningful	More reflections throughout the year/mid-year	Like reflection piece a lot
Save my reflections from year to year	I think about specific behavioral issues and how I can change my instruction	More from the process of sitting down with the APs and talking
Trying to implement certain strategies and writing about them	Made me reflect on how I ask questions	More of the human element when you sit down with admin and just talk
Makes you think about how you are going to deliver instruction next year	Teachers must look at their learning environment	Makes me consider what did/did not work
Reflecting on learning environment is a huge catalyst on how students do on assessments	Self-reflection should be used after formal observations	Helps you focus on individual students
More about teacher growth, not student growth	I self-evaluate a lot more than I used to	I talk a little about Tier 1 or 2 but those are not the ones that show growth
Helps you focus on students	Focuses on the full student but not what we do	It changed how I assess kids
Helps you understand student growth is more than SOL score	Timing is an issue	It challenges me, and I got away from direct instruction
Put a lot of emotion in mine	Focuses on how students grow throughout the year	Writing a reflection makes me more conscious
Pushed me to try new things	Can celebrate every achievement of students	Helps me look at a specific area
Worked because it made me reflect regularly	Useful to keep in your head throughout the year	Makes teacher reflect on what to change and how
I should be reflecting all year	Fear of being truthful	Reflection changes not current students, but next year's students
I consider the students I have in my class		Allows teacher to document
Should use the reflection for the next year		Does not affect the learning environment in my class.
It happens so late		Reflection has taught me that they are not going to learn from you unless they respect you
Helps change practices		Shapes my year
Need training on how to reflect		
<i>Categories</i>		
Develops professional skills	Develops professional skills/confidence	Develops professional skills
Focused on teacher improvement	Focused on teacher improvement	Focused on teacher improvement
Need an earlier start	More frequent use	Reflection can justify teacher performance
Impacts planning	Identifies areas of growth/change	Identifies areas of growth/change
Identifies area of change/growth	Value	Value
Value		
<i>Themes</i>		
<i>Novice teachers saw the value of frequent reflection to better understanding their students and improve their own professional skills.</i>	<i>Early career teachers saw the value in reflection for focused professional improvement and to document student growth.</i>	<i>Experienced teachers thought reflection kept teachers focused on student improvement and refined professional skills such as planning, instruction, and assessment.</i>

All three teacher groups spoke favorably about teacher reflection as an overall practice. There were several comments from focus group participants linking reflection to positive student growth. Each experience grouping connected teacher reflection to teacher self-evaluation and self-improvement. The data analysis team coded these responses as *professionalism*. Early career and experienced teacher groups found value in the reflection process to improve their development of student assessments and the learning environment. Novice teachers made a stronger connection between reflection and planning.

One early career teacher stated, “I like the reflective process. You can look back throughout your year and really talk about what worked—what didn’t. How you change for next year to hit those goals...and get more students to those goals.” A second early career teacher said, “the whole reflection process is what went well and what did not go well and based on your data is there anything to change...that is great information.” An experienced teacher said, “in the end, I get to think about what I did that year and that’s when it comes into focus. It really shapes my year.” A novice teacher noted, “I believe that every lesson you have to start looking at how could I have done that better.”

In all three groups, it was evident that reflection had changed a teaching practice of either planning, instruction, assessing, or learning environment for at least some of the participants. A novice teacher who had been evaluated in her first three years said, “I haven’t done the same thing twice. I’ve had maybe the same content, but it hasn’t been delivered or the lesson hasn’t been delivered the same way because of the reflection process.” An early career teacher stated, “it made me look at my assessment differently. I look at what I did here and there and how did that affect the assessment.” One

experienced teacher also shared that reflection changed how he assessed students. Another noted, “it definitely taught me that [students] are not going to learn anything unless they respect you and that [it’s] all about building relationships and making a positive environment.”

### **Research Question 6**

*What are key similarities and differences in the perceptions of novice (>1 and <3 years), early career (>3 years and < 8 years), and experienced (>7 years) teachers regarding how the teacher evaluation process can be improved to effectively support teacher quality and professional growth?*

The current teacher evaluation system was in its seventh year at the time the study was conducted. During all seven years it was in place at Northshore, I had served as principal. The goal of this research question was to develop an understanding of teacher perceptions of where the evaluation system could be improved. Interview Question 8 was designed to address Research Question 6. However, the data analysis team found relevant data from the responses of all eight questions asked during the focus group interviews (Table 12).

Table 12

*Focus Groups' Responses Aligned to Research Question 6*

Novice	Early Career	Experienced
<i>Codes</i>		
Hard to see how it can be improved	Consistency among evaluators	Flexibility in the process depending on classroom
Student feedback would be beneficial	More visits	Standard 7 is like teaching to a test
It goes both ways; it really is beneficial and sometimes it is jumping through hoops.	I would rather they give me a checklist and say show me how you have done this	Feedback from students
Gear evaluation towards teacher experience	EOY data are due too early	Maybe do away with all the data collection
Different things should be focused on different people at different times	Want to use SOL goals; the timing of final evaluation	It is a time suck on the entire system, the way it is on both ends
I have no idea if I am average, succeeding, or going above	Evaluation questions are very generic	Should not attach grade or number to evaluation
The numbers do not mean anything	Greater value for things outside the classroom	
More frequent observations	We like to focus on the whole student; I don't feel the same in our evaluation	
Am I not supposed to pay attention to numbers	Desensitized by scores	
Like feedback	Not beneficial if you get 4s and another person get 2s	
What is professionalism, that is a weird metric		
Is the value of a teacher to get students from A to B, or the other stuff?		
I don't see on that (administrator) side of evaluation		
I really don't know what other options there are		
I had a good experience, I thought this had to do with the evaluator		
We need clarity on how to collect data		
<i>Categories</i>		
Lacked knowledge to compare to other system	Evaluations end too quickly	Flexibility
Would like to clarify expectations and teacher measurement	Flexibility	Remove "grade"
Frequent feedback		
<i>Themes</i>		
<i>Novice teachers need consistent support and defined focus on how to be an effective teacher.</i>	<i>Early career teachers would like to personalize the evaluation.</i>	<i>Experienced teachers would like more teacher-led evaluation components with additions such as student feedback and flexibility based on teacher's content area.</i>

Two themes emerged through the coding of participant responses to the focus group questions. First, novice teachers had little to compare with on how to improve the

evaluation system, but they did need focused and clear feedback on how to be an effective teacher. Second, early career and experienced teachers wanted a more personalized teacher evaluation system.

Novice teachers described their uncertainty with the evaluation system. They questioned the purpose of the numbers assigned to teachers for each standard, their ability to collect data, and their ability to define student growth. One novice teacher wanted goal setting to focus specifically on a teacher goal to improve instead of “getting students from A to B.” Novice teachers also wanted clarity in the evaluation system with consistent support and guidance from evaluators. One novice teacher expressed this need, “I feel the more the evaluator comes, the better.” The teacher stated if there was more communication between the evaluator and the teacher, it could create an improved understanding of what is happening in the classroom for both the teacher and the evaluator.

Early career and experienced teachers would personalize the evaluation system and remove the teacher score. They stated the current system would better serve teachers by allowing flexibility, but neither group gave specific ideas for how to personalize the system.

### **Summary of Findings**

The findings revealed a difference in teacher perceptions of evaluations across teachers’ years of experience. Novice teachers called for greater support in goal setting, classroom performance, student-growth measures, and reflections. Early career and experienced teachers saw value in the four evaluation components but were more likely to differ within groups as to what impact goal setting, classroom observations, and

student-growth measures had on their teacher performance. Teachers across all three groups wanted fidelity from their evaluator and clarity about the expectations of the evaluation. All three groups, but especially experienced teachers, saw the relationship between teacher and evaluator as being an important part of an effective evaluation.

Teachers also noted a desire for more observations during the evaluation process. Teachers saw the value in frequent observations as a method to provide feedback. Novice teachers, especially, needed reassurance they were performing to expectations. All teachers expressed a desire for evaluators to provide consistent and clear feedback after the observation. Teacher reflection was connected to teacher growth. Teachers connected reflection to self-evaluation. All three groups saw their ability to reflect as a link to improving planning, instruction, classroom environment, and assessment.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Discussion of Findings**

Principals and assistant principals devote a significant amount of their school year to teacher evaluations (Rowan et al., 2018). At Northshore High School, administrators time in the current teacher evaluation system is used for classroom observations, goal meetings, weekly administrative reviews of teacher performance and needed support, and teacher professional development. To justify whether the time and effort spent on evaluations is worthwhile, there is a need to gather teacher perceptions and understand the narrative of evaluations (Jiang et al., 2015).

This study was approached from a constructivist viewpoint (Creswell, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), with the goal of developing a better understanding of how teachers use four evaluation components at Northshore High School to improve instructional practices. The study was designed to build an understanding of how teachers create meaning about the evaluation components (Ford et al., 2017; Jiang et al., 2015) so Northshore administrators can better support and promote teacher growth. The CIPP Model (Stufflebeam, 2003) served as the framework for the evaluation of Northshore's teacher evaluation system.

In the era of student-growth measures and increased teacher accountability, teachers have not always seen evaluations as a method to improve their skills (Clipa, 2011; Sartain & Steinberg, 2014). The contrast in the dual purpose of evaluations serving

as both a formative and summative process was evident in this study. Novice teachers were concerned about their overall abilities. They were focused more on a summative judgment than improvement. Early career and especially experienced teachers questioned the value of a summative rating and the time spent into completing evaluation requirements. Early and experienced career teachers noted the summative rating does not always lead to teacher improvement.

Northshore teachers cited value in the feedback from classroom observations, but also noted the limited number of classroom observations and the variance in feedback from the observations. Increasing classroom observations can increase the value of the observation tool (Whitehurst, Chingos, & Lindquist, 2015). The use of classroom observation in the teacher evaluation could require less additional work for a teacher—teachers already need to plan and deliver a lesson—and more work for the administrator.

Increased classroom observations could lead to teacher improvement if a coaching piece is added to the evaluator feedback. Frequent classroom observations can also lead to more coaching opportunities for evaluators. Northshore teachers understood the time commitment required of administrators for classroom observations and follow-up meetings. The teachers cited that more frequent, but shorter, observations with specific feedback would be more beneficial to their growth.

Grissom, Loeb, and Master (2013) found classroom observations were seldom seen by teachers as a tool for professional growth and were a limited predictor of student growth. The authors did note that tools that create coaching opportunities were a more productive use of principals' time in teacher development and student growth.

Early career and experienced Northshore teachers emphasized the importance of a relationship and professional communication with their evaluators. It appeared a professional relationship between teacher and evaluator led to teachers perceiving the evaluation components more as a tool for teacher-growth than a summative measure. Research has suggested that teachers believe administrative support along with administrator confidence in the evaluation process has the potential to improve teacher performance (Derrington & Campbell, 2015; Finnegan, 2016). Additionally, administrators who successfully build trust with teachers can, in turn, generate greater student achievement (Hoy, 2002).

There were important differences in how teachers perceived evaluation components based on experience levels. Novice teachers cited the need for reassurance and support throughout the evaluation process. Early career teachers expressed confidence in their abilities and worried about the time commitment of evaluations. Experienced teachers offered a more detailed understanding of the evaluation process but were more likely to question the purpose of the results of the evaluation.

Novice teachers need the support of the evaluator and see that person as trying to improve their skills. They question their abilities to understand student growth and their ability to impact student growth. They need reassurance from evaluators through classroom observations and feedback. Early career teachers are confident in their abilities to link their practices to student growth. They know how to measure the growth and see value in classroom observations; they need observations to reaffirm they are doing well. Experienced teachers are confident in their abilities. They understand how to succeed in meeting the expectations of goal setting, classroom observations, and student

growth. However, they question the evaluation process and the general worth of components of classroom observations and student growth goals. Their questioning the evaluation components could lead to deeper questions about how to truly evaluate student progress.

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

The six research questions were used to develop a descriptive story of how Northshore teachers perceive the evaluation components of goal setting, classroom observations, student-growth measures, and teacher reflection. Using data collected and analyzed from this study I made recommendations for the 2019-2020 teacher evaluation components of goal setting, classroom observations, student growth goals, and teacher reflection to the Northshore administrative team to improve current practices in the Northshore teacher evaluation system (Table 13). The recommendations incorporated the differences in how novice, early career, and experienced teachers perceived and used the teacher evaluation. The administrative team is composed of four assistant principals, the director of counseling, the athletic director, the assistant athletic director, the Special Education Dean, and me. All members are the evaluators of the Northshore staff; however the athletic director, assistant athletic director, and Dean do not formally evaluate teachers.

Table 13

*Recommendations to Improve Current Practice in Northshore's Teacher Evaluation System*

<i>Research Question(s)</i>	<i>Findings</i>	<i>Related Recommendations</i>
1 and 6: Evaluation System	Teachers find both positive reasons for the components and areas of growth. Suggested changes to the evaluation process included more classroom observations, fidelity of evaluators and evaluation components, removal of the score, and personalized evaluations.	Develop guidelines and effective practices for evaluators on goal meetings, classroom observations, and building supportive relationships with teachers. Conduct yearly reviews of all evaluation components through feedback from teachers and evaluators. To the extent allowed by the state and the district, evaluations should be individualized for teacher experience and content area.
2: Goal Setting Meetings	As teachers progress through their careers, they demonstrate a better understanding of how to set goals, but also question whether goals set measure student growth. Teachers need to have a good rapport with the evaluator for effective goal meetings.	Train evaluators on how to build and run supportive goal meetings. Provide teacher training prior to start of the school year and provide specific feedback during goal meeting and throughout the year for novice teachers in how to set measurable goals. Increase meetings between novice teachers and evaluators from 3/year to 2/quarter (8 for the year).
3: Classroom Observations	Teachers want more classroom observations that provide reassurance to novice teachers and specific feedback and support to early career and experienced teachers.	Increase classroom observations for novice teachers to 3-5/quarter (at least 15 minutes each). Increase classroom observations for early career and experienced teachers on evaluation to 3-5/semester (at least 15 minutes each). Encourage teachers to request an observation at a specific time or course so evaluator can see an instructional strategy, assessment, or classroom environment method in practice. Create an observation tool that is an open-ended document where evaluator can highlight strengths and provide specific areas for growth as well as suggestion to achieve growth. Observation tool should allow for evaluator and teacher to ask questions and allow for teacher to provide feedback.
4: Student-Growth Measures	As teachers progress through their careers, they have more confidence in their ability to impact student growth. However, there is conflict about the value of the student-growth measures to improve teacher performance or measure goals that align with current school district initiatives.	Provide for specific methods and feedback on goal setting. Set up goal setting during professional development days prior to beginning of the school year. Allow teachers to review previous year's goal. To the extent allowed by the state and the district, allow for student-growth goals to reach beyond what is measured on a traditional test.
5: Teacher Reflections	Teacher reflection is a valuable tool for teachers to analyze and improve their professional skills.	Start the reflection process during professional development days prior to opening of the school year. Have teachers use reflections to create goals, plan lessons, build classroom environment, and write assessments. Incorporate a review of reflection in all meetings between evaluator and teacher.

**Goal setting.** The significance of teachers understanding their students and establishing learning goals is documented in research connecting goals to student growth. Researchers have suggested that effective teacher goal setting is linked to teacher and student self-efficacy and improved student motivation (Aaronson et al., 2007; Awkard, 2017; Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Teachers in the early career and experienced groups at Northshore were confident in their ability to meet goals, but some questioned the process and purpose of goal setting. Novice teachers expressed uncertainty about their ability to set measurable and meaningful goals and in their goal-making abilities.

Training for evaluators and teachers was the focus of two recommended improvements in the Northshore teacher evaluation process. Northshore needs to impress upon all teachers the value of goal setting, while also supporting teachers through goal setting that leads to effective planning, instruction, and assessments. The development of goal setting skills should be part of a teacher's professional growth (Camp, 2017; Cwikla, 2003; Stronge & Grant, 2009).

***Specificity and feedback.*** The first recommendation is to provide teachers with specific methodology and feedback on goal setting. Evaluators should schedule goal setting meetings early in the evaluation process. The desirable time is during professional development days prior to opening of the school year. During this goal-setting process, teachers can learn how to develop a SMART goal and, if available, review data from the previous year's student-growth goal.

***Goal setting flexibility.*** The second recommendation is to allow flexibility in how teachers determine student growth. Flexibility will encourage teachers to define the student growth for their course or discipline. The process of the determining goals that

measure growth aligned with district initiatives to go beyond end-of-course examinations is challenging. Measuring creativity or “deeper learning” is not as simple as measuring content and skills through traditional assessments. By encouraging teachers to experiment with their student-growth measurements, Northshore administrators can engage teachers in finding value in the process and building teacher self-efficacy.

**Classroom observations.** Four recommendations were made to improve the effectiveness of classroom observations in improving teachers’ professional practices. The recommendations included differentiated models for novice, early career, and experienced teachers. The first two recommendations call for an increase in observations. The increase in classroom observations may also increase the number of post-conferences, but the desire for clarity (all three experience levels) and intellectual conversations with evaluators (experienced teachers) were of high importance to teachers.

Observations can vary in purpose, feedback, and effectiveness when measuring teacher efficacy depending on the content and evaluator (Wind et al., 2018). Research has also produced some connections between observations and teacher effectiveness. The findings from this study indicated that teachers sought reassurance and support through classroom observations. These findings align with previous research suggesting classroom observations have the potential to improve instruction. Dee and Wyckoff (2017) found simple focused observations were a factor in supporting teacher improvement. Stecher and colleagues (2018) found the teachers in their study felt classroom observations improved their instruction. The feedback from Northshore teachers indicated the need for trust between teacher and evaluator. This trust can be

built by clear and consistent feedback (Danielson, 2012) and building a model of coaching and support (Marzano & Simms, 2013). Finally, Northshore teachers supported more frequent classroom observations. Both novice and experienced teacher groups understood the complexity and time commitment of evaluators and all three experience levels advocated shorter, but more frequent, visits.

***Increase observations of novice teachers.*** The first recommendation is to increase classroom observations for novice teachers from three full class period observations a year to 3-5 observations per quarter, lasting at least 15 minutes each. By the end of the year, evaluators would make 12-20 classroom visits in novice teachers' classrooms. The frequent observations and follow-up feedback would provide ongoing support and reassurance to novice teachers.

***Increase observations of early career and experienced teachers.*** The second recommendation is to increase classroom observations for early career and experienced teachers who are on the evaluation cycle from 2-3 full class period observations per year to 3-5 observations per semester, lasting 15-20 minutes each. Observation notes will be emailed to the teacher and the evaluator will follow up with brief 3-minute coaching meetings (Rutherford, 2013). The number of observations will increase, but the decrease in length from 60-90 minutes under the current evaluation model. Each observation will last 15-20 minutes. Under this proposed change evaluators can make 2-3 observations of different teachers during one class period.

By the end of the year, early career and experienced teachers would participate in 6-10 classroom observations and short feedback meetings. The increased frequency of

observations will generate more opportunities for feedback and discussions of professional practices between teacher and evaluator.

***Teacher requests for observations.*** The third recommendation is to encourage teachers to request observations during a specific time of lesson or in a specific class period. Teacher control of the observation will enable teachers to focus evaluators on teacher strengths or areas of growth. Early career and experienced teachers in this study saw value in having their evaluator observe struggling classes more than once to provide feedback; novice teachers wanted evaluators to conduct multiple observations in the same class to see teacher improvement after initial feedback.

***Simple, open-ended observation form.*** The fourth recommendation is to create a simple observation form. In an open-ended observation document the evaluator can highlight strengths and provide specific areas of growth followed by suggestions to achieve growth. The observation tool should allow the evaluator to ask questions and the teacher to provide feedback and reflection.

**Student-growth measures.** Researchers have documented varying results from teacher evaluation systems that incorporate student-growth goals into teacher evaluations. Conroy and Loeb (2002) found states with high-stakes accountability measures saw greater gains in math scores than states without high-stakes accountability measures. However, a Brookings Institution report (Whitehurst et al., 2014) noted that only one in five teachers could be accurately evaluated using state exams. Student-growth goals did not seem to fit into all teacher evaluations. Teachers in disciplines outside core subjects saw the measures as ineffective indicators of their performance (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015; Moran, 2017; Norris et al., 2017).

Findings from the current study also indicated differences in how teachers perceived student-growth goal measures required in Virginia evaluations. Novice teachers questioned their own ability to truly measure student growth; early career teachers expressed confidence in their abilities to improve student growth and thought the goals helped their students grow academically; experienced teachers had confidence in their abilities but were more likely to question the purpose for the growth measure.

Northshore teachers established their own measures of student-growth goals; however, teachers were not always confident their measures could document student growth or whether their student-growth goals aligned with the student achievement they desired. Two recommendations are aimed at improving clarity about student-growth goals and providing flexibility in what teachers measure.

***Evaluator training.*** It is recommended Northshore evaluators produce guidelines and methods to support teachers throughout the goal-setting process. There is a need for both teacher and evaluator to make a strong connection between goal setting and planning, assessment, instruction, and to student academic growth. Northshore evaluators should create a plan to provide guidance and constructive feedback to teachers based on the works of Danielson and McGreal (2000), DiPaola and Hoy (2014), (Glickman et al., 2013), Marzano and Simms (2013), Johnson et al. (2014), or a combination of several of these. Through evaluator training, Northshore can improve the fidelity of goal meetings, thus increasing teacher self-efficacy in the area of goal setting (Aaronson et al., 2007).

Based on the findings, improvement in three areas of growth were noted in Northshore's evaluator practices. The first area is the need for a holistic support to the

evaluation system by *improving administrative skills in supporting teacher professional development*. The second area calls for an *annual review of the evaluation process* to build a system of continued growth and reflection from administrators. The third area is, to the extent possible given district and state policies, Northshore should *individualize the teacher evaluation process* by allowing teachers to set specific and targeted professional growth and student achievement goals.

***Teacher training and feedback.*** The second recommendation related to student growth measures is that Northshore provide teacher goal-setting training for novice teachers prior to start of the school year and then continue to provide specific feedback during goal meetings on how to review progress toward measurable goals.

Effective teacher goals show an understanding of where the student starts and document where the student is expected to finish (Stronge & Grant, 2009). The ability to develop effective goals may come through experience. Teachers in the early career and experienced groups expressed confidence in their abilities to set goals and manage student growth. Northshore should develop practices that differentiate goal setting training for novice teachers from the practices for early career and experienced teachers. To support novice teachers, the goal meetings between evaluator and teacher should increase from 3 per year to 2 per quarter—a total of 8 meetings for the year. Novice teachers expressed a need for assistance in understanding student intervention levels (tiers), identifying measurements (assessments), and creating measurable student-growth goals. The increase in frequency of goal meetings will assist novice teachers in finding connections between their goal setting and their planning, instructional, and assessment practices.

The number of goal meetings for early career and experienced teachers and evaluators should remain at 4 per year. However, evaluators should structure the meetings to allow teachers to discuss their goals in each meeting. The purpose of this discussion is for the teacher to reflect on whether his or her students are making progress toward the goal and how the teacher is helping students meet the goal.

**Teacher reflection.** Reflection is used in many professions (Schön, 1983) but is not a required part of Virginia's teacher evaluation system. Hall and Simeral (2015) described how reflective practices could improve teacher performance by helping teachers understand how their work impacts students. Danielson and McGreal (2000) called reflection the most powerful practice for professional learning (p. 24). DiPaola and Hoy (2014) opined principals should build a school culture that encourages reflection, trust, self-efficacy, and self-regulation. Northshore teachers identified reflection or self-evaluation as the component most strongly connected with their professional growth and student achievement.

Northshore teachers were not always conscious their reflection was impacting students during the evaluation year, but they did mention reflection in responses to all eight focus group questions. Additionally, all groups of teachers interviewed discussed in-year changes in practices, assessments, planning, or learning environment based on their reflections.

Improved teacher performance and professional learning connected to reflection was evident in the Northshore study. The analysis team identified a culture of encouraging reflection and using reflection to improve planning, instruction, and

assessments. Two recommendations were made to further entrench reflection into teacher practices and professional development to support student growth.

***Start the reflection process early.*** Northshore teachers highlighted the reflection process as an effective tool in their own growth. Teachers across all three groups lamented that the formal reflection process came too late in the school year and had limited impact on the academic growth of the current students and a greater impact on the academic growth for students of the following year.

By starting the reflection process early, during the August professional development days, Northshore teachers could improve connections between teacher reflection and changes in instructional practices and improve teachers' self-assessment (Airasian & Gullickson, 2006). In the pre-year reflections, teachers should use reflections from the previous school year, if available, to create goals, plan lessons, build classroom environment, and write assessments for the current school year.

***Incorporate reflections in all evaluation meetings.*** Northshore can use the self-reflection process throughout the teacher evaluation process. By incorporating reflection into all evaluation meetings, Northshore would align to the methods of teacher self-evaluation prescribed by Fireside and Lachlan-Haché (2015), who wrote that reflection can improve problem-solving and provide professional growth.

Northshore's reflection process could also align to the three types of reflection (McAlpine & Weston, 2002). Evaluators should encourage teachers through: *practical reflection* (How do I plan, deliver, and assess my students?), *strategic reflection* (How did my planning, delivery, and assessments impact student growth?), and *epistemic reflection* (Has my reflection developed greater knowledge for my professional

practices?). By incorporating evaluations that encourage and support reflective practices, Northshore could encourage teachers' further professional growth (e.g., Kraft & Gilmour, 2017).

**The teacher evaluation system.** Some teachers perceive the evaluation process as a checkbox for management and not as a tool for their improvement (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015). Like findings from Ladd (2016), some Northshore teachers felt they lacked training to improve their practices through evaluations. Teachers suggested methods to improve the evaluation process to support their own growth. Teachers identified a need for more classroom observations; saw the value of reflection; noted the importance of the relationship between evaluator and teacher; and desired an individualized evaluation that considered teachers' content, courses, and student levels. Northshore can (and should) make changes in its teacher evaluation processes but making changes in the evaluation system can only be accomplished at the district or state level. Improving evaluation practices to develop effective teachers could have a significant positive impact on student performance (Hattie, 2009; Stronge, 2010a; Wright et al., 1997).

Based on the CIPP model, several recommendations were made to improve teacher quality and support student growth (Figure 5). Gathering teacher feedback and teacher performance data and using the data and feedback to make recommendations for the following year's teacher evaluations are recommended additions to the Northshore teacher evaluation cycle. The changes allow for a model of continuous improvement in teacher evaluations and the development of effective teachers in every classroom.



*Figure 5.* Northshore teacher evaluation system with research support; intended outcome of effective teachers in every classroom.

### **Adopted Recommendations**

The recommendations were presented to the Northshore administrative team in the summer of 2019. The Northshore administrative team accepted most of the recommendations from the study (Table 14). The administrative team adopted a calendar for the 2019-2020 teacher evaluations (Appendix K). The calendar included the adopted changes to the four teacher evaluation components.

The administrative team expressed a need for further professional development in how to hold meaningful teacher goal meetings and how to provide consistent and

valuable teacher feedback. The team also stated a need to better understand how to give teacher support in building student growth goals that measure areas such as student creativity and problem solving. The administrative team differed on the effect of classroom coaching observations versus traditional classroom observation reports that looked for specific teacher performance indicators. Some members of the team wanted to focus on specific instructional practices that should be in every lesson, while others supported the recommendation to provide specific feedback on what a teacher did in the observation and the observable impact on student learning.

I elected to recommend using classroom observations for a coaching tool and not a report. Permission was received from Rutherford (personal communication; see Appendix L) to compose a new classroom observation tool (Appendix M).

The administrative team agreed there was a need for continued professional development for the evaluators. The Northshore administrative team begin professional development on supporting teachers during goal setting, classroom observations, student growth measures, and teacher reflection. The professional development started with all members attending a principals' conference during the summer. The works of Mike Rutherford (2013) and Rutherford Learning Group (n.d.) were used as resources to guide evaluator professional development. The administrative team elected to continue in-house professional development through the 2019-2020 school year led by me and supplemented by selected reading materials. The professional development will include reviews of evaluators goal meetings, classroom observation notes, and reflection questions provided to teachers. The reviews will be conducted weekly during administrative meetings.

Table 14

*Recommendations Adopted by Northshore Administrative Team*

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Administrative Team Decision</i>
Develop guidelines and effective practices for evaluators on goal meetings, classroom observations, and building supportive relationships with teachers	Adopted. The teacher evaluation components will be reviewed throughout the 2019-2020 SY.
Conduct yearly reviews of all evaluation components through feedback from teachers and evaluators.	Adopted. Evaluators expressed the need for continued training and understanding of “non-traditional” goals.
To the extent allowed by the state and the district, evaluations should be individualized for teacher experience and content area.	Adopted. Evaluators begin training in the summer of 2019.
Train evaluators on how to build and run supportive goal meetings.	Adopted.
Provide teacher training prior to start of the school year and provide specific feedback during goal meeting and throughout the year for novice teachers in how to set measurable goals.	Adopted.
Increase meetings between novice teachers and evaluators from 3/year to 2/quarter (8/year).	Adopted with changes. Evaluators will still conduct 3 formal meetings with novice teachers, but will attempt to have frequent, but brief informal meetings with novice teachers.
Increase classroom observations for novice teachers to 3-5/quarter (at least 15 minutes each).	Adopted.
Increase frequency of observations for early and experienced career teachers 3-5/semester (at least 15 minutes each)	Adopted.
Encourage teachers to request an observation at a specific time or course so evaluator can see an instructional strategy, assessment, or classroom environment method in practice.	Adopted.
Create an observation tool that is an open-ended document where evaluator can highlight strengths and provide specific areas for growth as well as suggestions to achieve growth.	Adopted. See Appendix M
Observation tool should allow for evaluator and teacher to ask questions and allow for teacher to provide feedback.	Adopted. See Appendix M
Provide for specific methods and feedback on goal setting. Set up goal setting during professional development days prior to beginning of the school year.	Adopted. Further training needed for evaluators and teachers on goal setting.
Allow teachers to review previous year’s goal. To the extent allowed by the state and the district, allow for student-growth goals to reach beyond what is measured on a traditional test.	Adopted.
Start the reflection process during professional development days prior to opening of the school year.	Adopted.
Have teachers use reflections to create goals, plan lessons, build classroom environment, and write assessments.	Adopted.
Incorporate a review of reflection in all meetings between evaluator and teacher	Adopted.

## **Areas for Further Research**

When students receive a paper with a grade, they usually go directly to the grade and many times never read the comments crafted carefully by the teacher to improve student skills. Principals are placed in a sticky trap of referring to a job evaluation tool as a means for encouraging teacher growth. Teachers' reluctance to change may also stem from having the formative goal of evaluation components overshadowed by the summative grade of the evaluation. Evaluations try to encourage change, risk taking, and creativity in teacher skills, yet are weighed down by a heavy final grade looming at the end of the year. Teachers may choose not to look for improvement because the knowledge of how and why to change or improve is not clear, and student results may be uncertain. It is easier for a teacher to rely on the certainty of lessons, instruction, and assessments that worked well enough in the past.

There were three areas that emerged for further study to understand and improve evaluation components. The first area is to develop a greater understanding of how teachers use the evaluation system depending on their level of experience. The more experienced Northshore teachers were, the more confident they were in their teaching skills. There is an important gap in teacher perceptions based on teacher experience. What is uncertain is whether experience leads to continued teacher improvement or just teacher confidence in navigating the evaluation system.

Along with understanding perceptions based on experience levels, it is recommended future studies look at other variables. Content areas, gender, and race could be relevant variables in teacher perceptions. The combination of variables could lead to greater teacher retention by understanding how to support teachers at different

stages in their careers. Greater understanding of factors such as content area, gender, or race, could lead to significant changes in personalizing the evaluation system.

Two areas of further research are needed to advance teacher evaluations into a formative tool for a cycle of teacher improvement. There is need to understand how principals can use evaluation components as effective tools that support both teacher development and student growth. Studies on the impact of classroom observations and teacher reflection could construct a deeper understanding of how teachers can use the evaluation as tool for professional growth. Further, there is also a need to understand the dual purposes (formative and summative) of the evaluation process, which may hinder the use of evaluation components for teacher growth.

Classroom observations are a major component of Northshore's and most other teacher evaluation systems. Classroom observations can take up a significant amount of time for administrators. Research that identifies tools and effective practices is needed to better understand whether classroom observations are productive methods to improve teacher skills.

The importance of teacher reflection was an emergent theme in this study. The data analysis team found extensive teacher focus on reflection through the evaluation cycle, not just at the end of the year when teachers completed the required reflection. Teachers' reflection was evident in their planning, instruction, assessment, and learning environment, but also in the importance teachers placed on the evaluator-administrative relationship. Teacher reflections on evaluation brought out a sensitivity to evaluation scores, the quality of the evaluator, fidelity of the evaluation components, and the importance of receiving quality feedback.

Teachers may choose not to change because the knowledge of how and why to change is not clear, thus it is easier to rely on what has been done in the past. Teachers' reluctance to change may also emerge when the formative goal of evaluation components is overshadowed by the summative nature of evaluations. Teacher reluctance to change or improve may be driven by job security needed through an acceptable score on the evaluation.

It is possible Northshore teachers could be in what Schön (1983) refers to as a “[crisis] of confidence in professional knowledge” (p. 13). Many teachers are slow to change or adjust their instructional practices. While other professions use feedback or coaching support, coaching for teachers has had mixed results. In a meta-analysis of coaching on improving instruction and achievement research, researchers found coaching for teachers was a promising strategy but faced challenges in improving instruction and student achievement (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018). The solution to this problem may be in using the evaluator to develop practices that guide and support teacher reflection. The use of effective reflection in teacher evaluations could become a driving force in moving teaching from traditional direct instruction and traditional student assessment to the deeper learning advocated by Northshore's school district.

### **Summary**

Findings revealed teacher perceptions of evaluation components vary at different stages of their careers. Evaluation components should be modified to meet the teachers' experience level and, if applicable, content area. There is also a need for improved training for teachers in goal setting and for administrative training in holding effective evaluation meetings. Teachers in the study saw value in increasing the number of

classroom observations and improving the fidelity of observation practices. Finally, the value of reflection as a tool to improve teacher practices emerged as a key theme in need of further research.

## APPENDIX A

### School District Teacher Evaluation Standards and Indicators

#### 1. Professional Knowledge

*The teacher demonstrates an understanding of the curriculum, subject content, and the developmental needs of students by providing relevant learning experiences.*

Has a broad and growing command of relevant subject matter, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make the subject matter meaningful for all students.

Understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and is able to differentiate instruction to meet diverse student needs.

Integrates key content elements and facilitates students' use of higher level thinking skills during instruction.

Understands and exhibits a working knowledge of the governing policies of the educational profession. Stays abreast of and uses current research, diverse perspectives, and new strategies within the discipline(s) taught.

Demonstrates ability to link present content with past and future learning experiences, other subject areas, and real-world experiences.

Demonstrates an understanding of the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development of the age group to diversify the learning environment.

#### 2. Instructional Planning

*The teacher plans using the Virginia Standards of Learning, the school's curriculum, effective strategies, resources, and data to meet the needs of all students.*

Uses prescribed curriculum guides, objectives, student learning data, and the I.E.P. (if applicable) to develop and guide long-range goals and daily lesson plans which relate to the needs, abilities, and interests of students.

Organizes lessons in a logical, sequential order to provide a stimulating and varied program of learning.

Ensures active engagement of student learning by selecting, evaluating, and refining a variety of teaching methods and instructional strategies. Plans time appropriately for pacing instruction, transitioning of activities, student demonstration of content mastery and lesson summary.

Promotes the development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills through the use of comprehensive materials, resources, and technology.

### 3. Instructional Delivery

*The teacher effectively engages students in learning by using a variety of instructional strategies in order to meet individual learning needs.*

Uses a variety of materials, technology, and resources that promote the development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.

Provides for guided practice, corrective feedback, and student independent practice to reinforce learning.

Engages and maintains students in active learning.

Differentiates instruction to meet students' needs.

Explains and restates to ensure understanding and comprehension of content material.

Employs teaching techniques appropriate to subject matter and learner readiness.

Communicates clearly and checks for understanding.

### 4. Assessment of/for Student Learning

*The teacher systematically gathers, analyzes, and uses all relevant data to measure student learning, guide instructional content and delivery methods, and provide timely feedback to both students and parents throughout the school year.*

Seeks to assess the strengths and weaknesses of students through records, observations, resource personnel, testing, and student and/or parent contacts.

Conducts ongoing student assessments based on a variety of criteria and objectives.

Communicates performance expectations and progress to parents and students.

Involves students in setting learning goals and monitoring their own progress.

Uses grading practices that report final mastery in relationship to content goals and objectives

Gives constructive and frequent feedback to students on their learning.

Uses a variety of formative and summative assessment strategies and instruments that are valid and appropriate for the content and student population.

Uses data to assess prior knowledge in order to develop learning goals, to differentiate instruction, and to document learning.

## 5. Learning Environment

*The teacher uses resources, routines, and procedures to provide a respectful, positive, safe, student-centered environment that is conducive to learning.*

Treats each student with respect and encourages mutual understanding of individual differences.

Maintains student interest and involvement in learning.

Actively listens and pays attention to students' needs and responses.

Establishes clear expectations with student input for classroom rules and procedures early in the school year and enforces them consistently and fairly. Uses cultural competencies as a framework for responding to a diverse student population, including language, culture, race, gender, and special needs.

Creates a supportive environment for all students, encouraging social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

## 6. Professionalism

*The teacher maintains a commitment to professional ethics, communicates effectively, and takes responsibility for and participates in professional growth that results in enhanced student learning.*

Follows established School Board policies.

Sets a good example by exhibiting appropriate dress, demeanor and behavior as well as correct oral and written expression.

Works in a collegial and collaborative manner with peers, school personnel, parents, and the community to promote and support student learning.

Adheres to federal and state laws, school policies, and ethical guidelines.

Builds positive and professional relationships with parents/guardians through frequent and effective communication concerning students' progress and well-being.

Serves as a contributing member of the school's professional learning community through collaboration with teaching colleagues.

Provides service to the educational profession through participation in such activities as co-curricular sponsorship, school improvement or district-wide committees, or active membership in professional organizations.

## **7. Student Academic Progress**

*The work of the teacher results in acceptable, measurable, and appropriate student academic progress.*

Seeks to assess the strengths and weaknesses of students through records, observations, resource personnel, testing, and student and/or parent contacts.

Uses effective questioning techniques to evaluate student knowledge, skills, and conceptual understanding related to student achievement progress.

Conducts ongoing student assessments based on a variety of criteria and objectives.

Establishes learning goals for students and promotes self-monitoring of progress toward goals.

Meets individually with students periodically to discuss academic performance and progress.

Uses available performance outcome data to regularly document and communicate student progress and develop Interim learning goals.

Participates in Individual Educational Plan (IEP) meetings and maintains appropriate documentation regarding performance of students with disabilities.

### **Rating**

4 Accomplished

3 Proficient

2 Developing/Needs Improvement

1 Unsatisfactory

*Comments*

## APPENDIX B

### Teacher Observation Form 17-18

**Date:** Click or tap to enter a date.

**Teacher:**

**Course:**

**Evaluator:**

**Block:**

1A

2A

3A

4A

5B

6B

7B

8B

#### List of Classroom Activities

Warmup

Discussion of objective and agenda

Review of previous lesson

Activity to reinforce previous lesson

New lesson

Discussion of homework/preparation for next class

- Wrap-up/exit ticket

### **Evidence of Professional Knowledge**

- Shows broad knowledge of the topic of instruction
- Facilitates higher level thinking skills during instruction

**Additional comments of clarification regarding evidence of professional knowledge:**

### **Instructional Planning**

- Evidence of lesson planned with clear objective(s) or learning target(s)
- Evident that teacher follows prescribed curriculum
- Lesson organized in a logical and sequential order
- Pacing of lesson is appropriate through appropriate transitions between activities
- Students are actively engaged through the use of a variety of instructional strategies
- Evidence of following IEP accommodations, 504's, Child Studies if applicable
- Inquiry instruction or project/problem based learning

**Additional comments of clarification regarding evidence of instructional planning:**

### **Instructional Delivery**

- Promotes critical thinking and problem solving
- Questions asked at higher levels of Bloom's Cognitive Domains
- Seed Questions
- Provides practice and feedback to reinforce learning

- Ensures students are engaged in active learning
- Evidence that lesson is differentiated to accommodate IEPs and differing learning styles
- Explains and restates to ensure comprehension of material
- Communicates clearly and frequently checks for understanding
- Power zone
- Recognizing and Reinforcing
- Effective use of questioning strategies

**Additional comments of clarification regarding instructional delivery:**

#### **Assessment of/for Student Learning**

- Communicates performance expectations through clearly stated expected outcomes
- Provides constructive and frequent feedback throughout lesson to ensure understanding
- Changes prescribed lesson when evidence shows that students are having difficulty understanding

**Additional comments of clarification regarding assessment of/for student learning:**

#### **Learning Environment**

- Mutual respect amongst students is evident
- Mutual respect between students and teacher is evidence
- Evidence that teacher actively listens and pays attention to student needs
- Evidence that behavior expectations are established and enforced consistently and fairly

- Evidence of supportive environment that engages social interaction and engagement by all
- Evidence that diversity and individual differences are respected by all

**Additional comments of clarification regarding learning environment:**

**Professionalism**

- Evidence that school board policies are followed
- Evidence that Freedom High School policies are followed

**Additional comments of clarification regarding professionalism:**

**Role of the team teacher, if one is present:**

**Areas of commendation:**

**Suggestions for future growth:**

**Additional comments of clarification regarding Classroom Activities:**

**Any details of activities you would like to share?**

**Date of post conference & observation:** Click or tap to enter a date.

## APPENDIX C

### Teacher Observation Form 18-19

*Based on AdvancEd Elliot Form*

**Date:** Click or tap to enter a date.

**Teacher:**

**Course:**

**Evaluator:**

**Secondary Evaluator:**

**Block:**

1A

2A

3A

4A

5B

6B

7B

8B

**Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners have equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners are treated in a fair, clear, and consistent manner**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners demonstrate and/or have opportunities to develop empathy/respect/appreciation for differences in abilities, aptitudes, backgrounds, cultures, and/or other human characteristics, conditions, and dispositions**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners strive to meet or are able to articulate the high expectations established by themselves and/or the teacher**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners demonstrate and/or are able to describe high quality work**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners engage in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks that require the use of higher order thinking (e.g. analyzing, applying, evaluating, synthesizing)**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners take responsibility for and are self-directed in their learning**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners demonstrate a sense of community that is positive, cohesive, engaged, and purposeful**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners take risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners are supported by the teacher, their peers and/or other resources to understand content and accomplish tasks**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners demonstrate a congenial and supportive relationship with their teacher**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners discussions/dialogues/exchanges with each other and the teacher predominate**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners make connections from content to real-life experiences**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners are actively engaged in the learning activities**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners collaborate with their peers to accomplish/complete projects, activities, tasks, and/or assignments**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners monitor their own learning progress or have mechanisms whereby their learning progress is monitored**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners received/respond to feedback (from teachers/peers/other resources) to improve understanding and/or revise work**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners demonstrate and/or verbalize understanding of the lesson/content**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners understand and/or are able to explain how their work is assessed**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners speak and interact respectfully with teacher(s) and each other**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners demonstrate knowledge of and/or follow classroom rules and behavioral expectations and work well with others**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners transition smoothly and efficiently from one activity to another**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners use class time purposefully with minimal wasted time or disruptions**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners use digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners use digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Learners use digital tools/technology to communicate and/or work collaboratively for learning**

Choose an item.

**Comments:**

**Instructional Planning:**

- Evidence of lesson planned with clear objective(s) or learning target(s)
- Evidence that teacher follows prescribed curriculum
- Inquiry instruction or project/problem based learning
- Lesson organized in a logical and sequential order
- Pacing of lesson is appropriate through appropriate transitions between activities
- Students are actively engaged through the use of a variety of instructional strategies
- Evidence of following IEP accommodations, 504's, Child Studies if applicable

Additional comments of clarification regarding evidence of instructional planning:

**Professionalism**

- Evidence that school board policies are followed

Evidence that Freedom High School policies are followed

Additional comments of clarification regarding professionalism:

Date of Post Conference: Click or tap to enter a date.

Comments/Suggestions:

## APPENDIX D

### AdvancEd email Permission

You can certainly choose to use this tool as an observation tool. In addition, we have the new student engagement surveys that are aligned to the tool.



**Kathleen Smith**  
**Director**

4909 Cutshaw Avenue  
Richmond, VA 23230  
888.413.3669, ext. 5660  
888.41EDNOW (888.413.3669) ext. 5660  
804.892.2509 (Cell)

[ksmith@advanc-ed.org](mailto:ksmith@advanc-ed.org)  
[www.advanc-ed.org](http://www.advanc-ed.org)



Explore our [Professional Learning Calendar](#)

**From:** Douglas Fulton [<mailto:Douglas.Fulton@lcps.org>]  
**Sent:** Monday, June 18, 2018 11:26 AM  
**To:** Kathleen Smith  
**Subject:** classroom Observation

Kathleen:

I would like permission to use the AdvancEd classroom observation tool as the observation tool we use this year for teachers on the evaluation cycle.

Doug

Douglas Fulton, Principal

## APPENDIX E

### Pre-survey Responses

How many years have you been a teacher? \_\_\_\_\_

How many times have you been formally evaluated at Northshore High School since the 2012-13 school year? \_\_\_\_\_

Since the 2012-13 school year have you ever been evaluated at another Virginia school? \_\_\_\_\_

Since 2012-13 school year have you been evaluated at a school outside the Commonwealth of Virginia? \_\_\_\_\_

When are your planning blocks? \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX F**

**Participant Consent Form**

**Teacher Perceptions of the Virginia Evaluation Process:  
A Program Evaluation of Northshore High School’s Teacher Evaluation Process**

---

**CONSENT FORM**

***The College of William and Mary***

This research study concerns teacher perceptions of the Northshore High School teacher evaluation system. Presentations and manuscripts may result from the analysis of these data. Information gathered through this study may benefit and inform others on effective use of teacher evaluation components. There are no anticipated risks or benefits to participating other than those encountered in daily life. The researcher is conducting this study as part his doctoral dissertation at the College of William and Mary.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact the principal investigator, Douglas Fulton@ douglas.fulton@lcp.edu, my faculty advisor, Dr. James Stronge, 757-221-2339, jhstro@wm.edu; or Dr. Thomas Ward, chair of the Education Internal Review Committee (EDIRC), 757-221-2358, tjward@wm.edu.

**Please read the following statements and indicate your permissions below.**

I understand that my involvement in this study is purposeful in that permissions and consent will be obtained only for those included in the narrative. I understand that I may be asked to voluntarily read portions of the narrative that are associated with my involvement in the researcher’s experience as they are composed. Additionally, I may be asked to offer feedback on the written representation using specific guidelines prepared by the researcher.

I further understand that the researcher will hold my information in strict confidence and that no comments will be attributed to me by name without my specific permission. I have the option to provide a pseudonym of my choice, but I also recognize there is a possibility of identification given the nature of the study.

I recognize that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw my participation in this study at any time or decline to give permission in a instance. Any artifacts provided or created during the course of the study may become part of the permanent research files unless otherwise requested. By signing below, I give consent that my involvement and interactions may be included in the study.

After signing the document, please complete the pre-survey form and bring the document to Hope in the main office.

Participant \_\_\_\_\_ .Date \_\_\_\_\_

Pseudonym (if desired) \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Douglas Fulton

## APPENDIX G

### Focus Group Prompts

#### *Field Test Focus Group Interview Questions*

---

Question 1. Describe your impression of the school district's evaluation process as practiced at Northshore High School in relationship to the effect on your instructional skills as a teacher.

Question 2. What are your impressions of the goal setting meetings?

Question 3. In what ways do goal setting meetings help you support students?

Question 4. What are your impressions of the classroom observation process and feedback you receive from your evaluator?

Question 5. Describe how classroom observations affect your professional skills?

Question 6. Describe your understanding of Standard 7, the student-growth measure, and the impact of Standard 7 on your professional skills and teacher effectiveness.

Question 7. Describe the teacher reflection piece of Northshore High School's teacher evaluation process regarding the process of reflecting on your professional skills in supporting student learning, instructional planning, instructional delivery, assessment of/for learning, learning environment, student growth?

Question 8. Which evaluation components would you like to see improved and how?

## APPENDIX H

### Focus Group Introduction

Good morning/afternoon, I am \_\_\_\_\_. I currently serve as \_\_\_\_\_. The data collection team includes \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. Will each of please introduce yourself.

I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. We are here today to develop greater understanding of how teachers perceive the teacher evaluation components. Your responses are important to construct an understanding of the effectiveness and areas of improvement of the teacher evaluation system and the evaluation components.

You have signed a consent form and agreed to participate. There are no anticipated risks or benefits to participating other than those encountered in daily life. The researcher is conducting this study as part his doctoral dissertation at the College of William and Mary. *(Pause and allow time for clarifying questions).*

Your responses will be recorded by an audio recorder. Additionally, one member of the data collection team will type your responses onto a document. The final question asks for your suggestions on how to improve the current teacher evaluation process. After the final question and response, our data collection team will review all your responses for accuracy. I want to remind you; your responses will be kept confidential and your name will not be linked to any responses. Your responses have no effect on the ratings for your current or future teacher evaluation. Rather, the responses will identify areas of strengths and areas of growth under the current teacher evaluation system.

*(Pause and allow time for clarifying questions).*

Please look through the protocol guidelines in front of you. *(Pause and allow time for reading).*

We are ready to begin the focus group interview.

## APPENDIX I

### Focus Group Interview Questions

(Italicized areas were changes made from field test)

---

Question 1. Describe your impression of the school district's evaluation process as practiced at Northshore High School in relationship to the effect on your instructional skills as a teacher.

Question 2. What are your impressions of the goal setting meetings in relation to your *planning, instruction, and assessment*?

Question 3. In what ways do goal setting meetings help you understand *and address student abilities*?

Question 4. What are your impressions of the classroom observation process and feedback you receive from your evaluator?

Question 5. Describe how classroom observations affect your professional skills in terms of *planning, instruction, or student assessment*?

Question 6. Describe your understanding of Standard 7, the student-growth measure, and the impact of Standard 7 on your professional skills and teacher effectiveness.

Question 7. Describe the teacher reflection piece of Northshore High School's teacher evaluation process regarding the process of reflecting on your professional skills in supporting student learning.

*What impact does it have on:*

*a. instructional planning?*

*b. instructional delivery?*

*c. assessment of/for learning?*

*d. learning environment?*

*e. student growth?*

Question 8. Which evaluation components would you like to see improved and how?

## **APPENDIX J**

### **Focus Group Norms**

Welcome, and thank you for participating in this focus group.

1. Please keep all responses heard today confidential.
2. Responses will not affect your status at Northshore High School or be used in any current or future teacher evaluations.
3. Your responses are recorded by an audio recorder.
4. Please speak clearly into the microphone.
5. Please take a turn in responding to all questions.
6. Please listen intently to responses of other participants.
7. Allow time for other participants to finish their statements.
8. There are no right or wrong responses.
9. You may ask the focus group leader to clarify questions.
10. Please try to add detail to your answers.
11. After the focus group has addressed all questions, please review your written responses with recorded responses.
12. If necessary, ask to clarify or adjust your response.

## Appendix K

### Northshore Teacher Evaluations for 2019-2020

Areas in italic are changes that resulted from the study. Northshore’s administrative leadership team approved all changes.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Staff</b>
August 12, 2019 New Teacher Days	<b>New Teachers (Proteges) and Mentor Meeting</b>	All first-year teachers All teachers new to LCPS
<i>August 20, 2019 PD Days</i>	<b><i>Goal Setting Professional Development</i></b> <i>Teachers will reflect on previous goals and work in small groups to establish student growth goals for 2019-2020</i>	
August, 2019	<b>Writing growth goal, tiering students, identify instructional strategies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· All teachers will write student growth goals for the 2019-2020 school year</li> <li>· Teachers will determine a method of tiering students.</li> <li>· Teachers will draft instructional strategies</li> <li>· When ready, teachers should enter goal, strategies, into MLP</li> </ul>	
August 22, 2019	<b>First Day Review</b>	All teachers new to Freedom
<i>Between August 22 and September 5</i>	<b>Mentor observation of first-year teachers</b>	All teachers assigned a mentor
Between August 22 and September 30. <i>The goal meeting was moved up by a month.</i>	<b>Goal Meetings w/primary coach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Teachers and evaluator will review goal.</li> <li>· Teachers may adjust or modifications on the goal until the end of the second quarter.</li> <li>· Teachers and evaluator will review tiers.</li> <li>· Teachers will discuss at least three instructional strategies they wish to implement for the year.</li> </ul>	All teachers on formal evaluation

Between August 22 and September 30	<b>Complete Peer Observation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers on evaluation will complete at least one peer observation of a teacher outside their department</li> <li>The purpose is to understand planning, instructional, assessment strategies or classroom environment supports that could benefit your classroom</li> </ul>	All teachers on formal evaluation
Between September 13 and January 16	<b>Classroom Observations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each observation will last between 15 and 88 minutes</li> <li>Follow-up reflection meetings between 3 minutes and 45 minutes.</li> <li>Teachers may request some observations</li> <li>Some observations will be completed by secondary coach</li> </ul>	<b>Teachers year 1-3</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3-5 observations per quarter</li> <li>6-10 per semester</li> </ul> <b>Teachers year 4 plus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3-5 observations per semester</li> </ul>
Between November 6-22	<b>First Quarter Check-In w/primary coach</b> <p>Review of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student Growth Goal</li> <li>Tiered Students</li> <li>Instructional Strategies</li> <li>During meeting, teacher will reflect on the student learning effect of their instructional strategies</li> <li>Peer Observation</li> </ul>	All teachers on formal evaluation
Between January 16 - 28	<b>Second Quarter Check-In w/primary coach</b> <p>Review of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student Growth Goal</li> <li>Tiered Students</li> <li>Instructional Strategies</li> <li>During meeting, teacher will reflect the student learning effect of their instructional strategies</li> </ul>	All teachers on formal evaluation
Between January 21 and March 26	<b>Complete Peer Observation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers on evaluation will complete at least one peer observation</li> </ul>	All teachers on formal evaluation

<p><i>Between January 21 and May 1</i></p>	<p><b>Classroom Observations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <i>Each observation will last between 15 and 88 minutes</i></li> <li>· <i>Follow-up reflection meetings between 3 minutes and 45 minutes.</i></li> <li>· Teachers may request some observations</li> <li>· Some observations will be completed by secondary coach</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teachers year 1-3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <i>3-5 observations per quarter</i></li> <li>· <i>6-10 per semester</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Teachers year 4 plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <i>3-5 observations per semester</i></li> </ul>
<p><i>May 1</i></p>	<p><b>Final Data and Reflection Submitted</b></p>	<p>All teachers on formal evaluation</p>
<p><i>Between May 11 and May 29</i></p>	<p><b>Final Coaches Meeting w/primary coach</b></p>	<p>All teachers on formal evaluation</p>

## APPENDIX L

### Mike Rutherford email permission

Hello Doug,

Good to speak with you last week. This email can serve as granted permission for you to use/adapt any of the published *Artisan Teacher*, *Feedback & Coaching Lab*, or *7 Tools for Developing Teachers & Teaching* materials at your school. I'm grateful that you've found the materials and ideas valuable and we're excited that you'll be using them at your school. Please let me know if there are ways we can further support your work.

All best wishes,

Mike



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## **APPENDIX M**

### **Northshore Classroom Observation Form 2019-20**

**Teacher**

**Observing Coach**

**Primary Coach**

**(Teaching) I noticed you**

**(Learning) The students**

**Tag**

**Other observations**

**Questions to ponder**

**Follow Up**

*The observation form is an on-line document that is submitted to the teacher, observer, and primary coach (evaluator).*

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Zee, M., & Koomen, H. M. Y. (2016). Teacher self-efficacy and its effects on classroom processes, student academic adjustment, and teacher well-being: A synthesis of 40 years of research. *Review of Educational Research*, *86*(4), 981-988. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654315626801>

## Vita

### Douglas B. Fulton

#### Education

Doctor of Education in Educational Policy, Planning & Leadership (2019), The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA. Dissertation: TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE VIRGINIA EVALUATION PROCESS: A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF NORTHSORE HIGH SCHOOL'S TEACHER EVALUATION PROCESS

Master of Arts in Administration and Supervision (2000), George Mason University, Fairfax, VA

Master of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction (1993), George Mason University, Fairfax, VA

Bachelor of Arts in History and Education (1984), Graceland University, Lamoni, Iowa

#### Academic Employment

Teacher, Fairfax County Public Schools, VA, 1986 –2004; Loudoun County Public Schools, VA, 2004-2008.

Administrator, Loudoun County Public Schools, VA, 2008-present.

#### Presentations at Professional Meetings

*Surviving the Island. Skills to Navigate Your First Year as a Principal*, Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals, Summer Conference, 2013.

*The Creation of a Teacher Fair Share* co-presented with Dr. John Brewer, Virginia Association of Assistant Principals, Summer Conference, 2016.

*Building a Suicide Protocol*. Virginia Association of Assistant Principals co-presented with Director of Counseling Ken Christopher, VASSP Summer Conference, 2017.

*Building a Mental Wellness Program in Your School*, National Association of Secondary School Principals, July 2019.

#### Professional Membership

President VASSP, 2018-2019

Board Member VASSP, 2013-present

#### Awards

Virginia Student Council Principal of the Year, 2018