12-2016

Elementary Principal Perceptions of the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model

Jason W. Vance
East Tennessee State University

Elementary Principal Perceptions of the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model

---

A dissertation

Presented to

The faculty of the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirement for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

---

by

Jason Willie Vance

December 2016

Dr. William Flora, Chair

Dr. Bethany Flora

Dr. Pamela Scott

Dr. Rick Osborn

Keywords: Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model, TEAM, Teacher Evaluation

ABSTRACT

Elementary Principal Perceptions of the

Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model

by

Jason Willie Vance

The Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) had been in a state of reform since being awarded the Race to the Top Grant. Few teachers admit that an evaluation influenced them significantly; additionally, few administrators agreed that when they evaluated a teacher, it did not significantly affect the teacher or students. The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine the perceptions of building-level principals regarding the effectiveness (i.e., increased teacher participation and quality) and efficiency (i.e., produces the required results) of the TEAM in regard to teacher evaluations. Four elementary school principals from East Tennessee participated in the study. The researcher provided data from this study to inform stakeholders of strengths and weaknesses of the state evaluation model. Additionally, the researcher used the data to provide recommendations for improvements to the TEAM model and to identify support principals needed to adapt their leadership style to effectively execute TEAM mandates. The research revealed that the principals believed the model was a strong one that was research based; however, the model could prove to be ineffective in the delivery and inefficient in the follow-through if the proper supports were not in place.

DEDICATION

From this doctoral journey, I have learned many valuable lessons. The people who love you the most will always support you no matter what challenge you face. Being a life-long learner is a challenge but also an example for others to follow.

To Emily and Will, my babies, thanks for understanding the value of education. I hope through this process that I have shown you both that it is important to set a goal and work toward that goal. Truly, you both are amazing and I look forward to being a small part of your remarkable futures.

To my mom Tara, mom-in-law Suzann, and dad Randy, it has taken a village to complete this process. Thanks for the sacrifices you made, support you provided, and always for your constant encouragement.

To my Savior, Phillipians 4:13 reigns true always and in every aspect of my life, "I can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens me." I am forever thankful for the many gifts you have given me, especially salvation.

To my bride Amanda, I am forever thankful for all of the love, encouragement, and support that you have provided me during this journey. Without you this would not have been possible nor worth the effort. Thank you for your love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During my time in education I have been truly blessed. There have been many individuals and groups that have provided support and encouragement to me along this journey. I would like to extend my appreciation to all of the folks that have been supportive during this doctoral dissertation process. Dr. William Flora, committee chair, supplied support and motivation to complete the journey. Thank you for your support. Dr. Bethany Flora, methodologist, pushed me to consider multiple ways to enhance my study and creatively problem solve. Dr. Pamela Scott supported me throughout the coursework by providing feedback to improve my skills. Dr. Rick Osborn has been a great support through his knowledge of education and positive feedback. A special thank you to Dr. Gary Ubben for his friendship and encouragement. He is a proven mentor committed to lifelong learning. I would like to acknowledge the administrative team and board of education at Loudon County Schools for all of your support and drive to continually meet our vision for excellence for all students. You are truly an inspiration to me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

LeTellier (2007) stated, “Teaching and education are the foundation of our society and the basis for individual and societal improvement and increased quality of life” (, p. 15). According to The American Diploma Project’s (2004) Executive Summary:

> More than 70 percent of graduates quickly take the next step into two- and four-year colleges, but at least 28 percent of those students immediately take remedial English or math courses. Transcripts show that during their college careers, 53 percent of students take at least one remedial English or math class. The California State University system found that 59 percent of its entering students were placed into remedial English or math in 2002. The need for remedial help is undoubtedly surprising to many graduates and their parents—costly, too, as they pay for coursework that yields no college credit. (p. 3)

To determine students’ progress and to recognize areas of weakness, prior to 1988 Tennessee had assessed students with the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP). According to the 2007 United States Chamber of Commerce Report:

> In 2007, the United States Chamber of Commerce gave Tennessee an ‘F’ for ‘Truth in Advertising’ about student proficiency. While large percentages of students were proficient on 2005 Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program in math and reading, much smaller percentages of students were proficient in scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. (p. 2)

To increase student achievement, the Tennessee State Department of Education transitioned to new academic standards for kindergarten through 12th grade students. D’andrea (2010) stated, “In 2007, the Tennessee Diploma Project was created to better prepare students for

college and to help boost achievement in public schools". Teachers and administrators facilitated these standards from 2007-2010. After this time the Federal government announced the Race to the Top (RTTT) grant initiative.. The state of Tennessee applied for and obtained the grant. Marzano and Toth (2013) stated, "On July 24, 2009, President Barack Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced the $4.35 billion education initiative United States Department of Education (Burris & Welner, 2011).. Designed to spur nationwide education reform in K-12 schools…" (p. 3). Marzano and Toth indicated:

> The program offered states significant funding if they were willing to overhaul their teacher evaluation systems. To compete, states had to agree to implement new systems that would weigh student learning gains as part of the teachers' yearly evaluation scores and had to implement performance-based standards for teachers and principals. (p. 3)

Marzano, Frontier, and Livingston (2011) indicated that stakeholders criticized state Departments of Education for teacher evaluation practices. Educational leaders called for major changes regardingteacher evaluation practices.

According to Wright (2012) administrators transformed the 1997 teacher evaluation instrument. Administrators transitioned from the Framework for Evaluation and Professional Growth (FEPG) (2009) to the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM).

In 2010 the Federal government awarded a RTTT grant to the state of Tennessee. As part of the grant public school districts implemented a new teacher intensive evaluation system (Tennessee First to the Top [FTTT] Act, 2010). Beginning in 2013, under the TEAM model, school admnistrators evaluation tenured teachers 20-30 times in a 5-year period to provide greater support to teachers who were not meeting minimal levels of expectations, as set forth in the evaluation model (Tennessee Department of Education [TDOE], 2015a). Moreover, TDOC

intended these evaluations to be a support opportunity for teachers who were not supporting student achievement.

Statement of the Problem

In 2009 Weisberg et al. described former teacher evaluation practices as weak. To strengthen teacher performance and increase student achievement, Tennessee began the process of "…making significant revisions to the practice around teacher observation" (Hill, Charalambous, & Kraft, 2012, p. 57). As a result of TEAM requirements principals more than doubled the number of scheduled classroom observations (Wright, 2012). The State and Federal Departments of Education required principals to complete paperwork for the school as well as the evaluations, and principals expressed frustration about the amount of time invested in evaluations for teachers and the evaluation tool (Range, Scherz, Holt, & Young, 2011).

Between 2007 and 2010, TEAM required a school administrator to formally observe tenured teachers once per year and nontenured teachers at least three times per year. A principal responsible for 30 tenured teachers and 10 nontenured teachers performed 60 formal evaluations each academic year. Under the TEAM model the same principal would be responsible for 160 teacher evaluations. Because this evaluation model used a clinical design with pre evaluation and post evaluation meetings, school administrators devoted additional time and for observations and documentation (Boser, 2012).

In this study the researcher interviewed Tennessee elementary school principals to examine their perceptions of TEAM. Principals reflected on prior experiences and provided personal opinions about the implementation focused on elementary principals' perceptions of the effectiveness and efficiency of the TEAM model for teacher evaluations. The researcher also obtained principals' suggestions of changes that should be made to the TEAM evaluation

process. Finally, the principals reflected on and reported their perceptions of how implementation of TEAM affected their leadership style.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine the perceptions of building-level principals regarding the effectiveness (i.e., increased teacher participation and quality) and efficiency (i.e., produces the required results) of the TEAM in regard to teacher evaluations. The researcher provided data from this study to inform stakeholders of strengths and weaknesses of the state evaluation model. Additionally, the researcher used the data to provide recommendations for improvements to the TEAM model and to identify support principals needed to adapt their leadership style to effectively execute TEAM mandates.

Research Questions

1. How did elementary principals in Tennessee perceive the effectiveness of the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model?
2. How did elementary principals in Tennessee perceive the efficiency of the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model?
3. What did elementary principals in Tennessee suggest as changes to the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model?
4. How did elementary principals perceive the implementation of the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model has changed their leadership style?

Significance of the Study

School districts across the state of Tennessee experienced a change in the teacher evaluation system. As a result of this study, the researcher added to the body of research in the field of teacher evaluations. The researcher also provided recommendations that enhanced

evaluations for future reference. Additionally, this study provided information to the TDOE as they continued to refine the teacher evaluation process.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined for the purpose of this research study.

Effective Evaluation–Marzano and Toth (2013) suggested that a reliable evaluation was effective if it increased teacher participation and pedagogical skills.

Efficient Evaluation–Fraser (1994) suggested that efficiency was measured by the resources it took to achieve the desired goal.

High Achieving School–According to Stone's (2015) work with the Education Consumers Foundation, in a high achieving school students had an average achievement score greater than 50 based on TVAAS.

High Performing School – Stone (2015) identified a high performing school as one with an average student growth score greater than 2.6 based on the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) (Stone, 2015).

Low Achieving School–Stone (2015) also identified a low achieving school as one in which the students' average achievement scores were less than 50 based on TVAAS.

Low Performing School–In contrast to a high performing school, a low performing school was one in which students' average growth score was less than 2.6 according to TVAAS (Stone, 2015).

Race to the Top–RTTT was a federally funded block grant that was dependent upon restructured teacher evaluation system (Tennessee FTTT, 2010).

Teacher Evaluation – To determine teachers' performance in the classrooms, school administrators conducted teacher evaluations as period observations. According to Danielson

and McGreal (2000) effective teacher evaluations determined teachers' knowledge of the standards for acceptable performance in the classroom, appropriate teaching strategies, and trained evaluators.

Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model–TEAM was the Tennessee state evaluation model for teachers (TDOE, n.d.a).

Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System–TVAAS was the measurement of student growth from the previous school year (TDOE, n.d.b).

Limitations and Delimitations

Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009) identified limitations of a study as variables that may affect the results of the study but of which a researcher has no control. With only four participants in this study, a limitation was the small sample size. Through the interviews in this study, the researcher collected deep, rich data; however, due to the nature of qualitative inquiry and the restricted number of participants, the results may not have been generalizable to larger populations. During the time of the study the evaluation model's requirements for implementation, execution, and recording changed. Perceptions among participants may have been affected by this instability, which constituted a limitation in the study.

By imposing restrictions on the study that narrowed the scope, the researcher delimited participants to Tennessee public elementary school principals who governed schools that included a minimum of two grades levels between third and eighth because these were grades evaluated by official TCAP testing.. The researcher also delimited the study to schools that implemented the TEAM evaluation model. Additionally, the researcher only interviewed principals about perceptions of TEAM. Finally, the study did not evaluate perceptions of principals implementing other state approved evaluation models.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Evolution of Teacher Evaluations

The evaluation of teachers in the United States of America began in pre revolutionary times and in one room school houses of the 1700s (Tracy, 1995). In these church-related schools local church pastors evaluated teacher competency (Tracy). As public schools developed local Boards of Education began hiring, judging the quality of, and firing teachers. Even though teachers had higher achieved higher education levels (e.g., graduated at least eighth grade) in the community, there was little recognition of pedagogical expertise (Tracy, 1995).

During the 1800s the industrial revolution and the growth of cities demanded larger, more complex school systems (McDonald, 2005). McDonald stated, "The Common School movement began in Massachusetts and spread throughout the Midwestern states and territories. Its chief proponent was Horace Mann, Superintendent of Massachusetts Common Schools" (2005, p. 11). Graded elementary schools developed as well as secondary schools with teachers who specialized in individual subjects. At the district level supervisory committees were appointed by the local board of education to help guide the schools under their jurisdiction. These supervisory committees had almost unlimited power to judge the quality of instruction and to hire and fire teachers (Burke & Krey, 2005); however, there was little agreement regarding what constituted quality instruction.

By the late 1800s and during the 1900s, two competing philosophies of supervision and evaluation of teachers emerged. The concept of scientific management had gained prominence in the business world influenced by the work of Frederick Taylor (Taylor, 1911). Taylor explained that the tasks of industrial workers could be studied with the goal of selecting the most

efficient ways of performing a task. While Taylor focused on the world of industry, his principles began to influence the K-12 education world and how teachers should teach. At the same time the education philosopher John Dewey saw democracy, not scientific management, as the desired basis for determining the direction of education. Dewey stated that schools should be organized so that students could practice citizenship and develop values around the concepts of democracy (1902). He envisioned schooling as a subsystem of modern societies. Teacher evaluation systems in the early 1900s were based on one of the following constructs: the factory model designed to produce the product in the most efficient manner possible or the democracy model designed to allow students to experience the real world in the microcosm of the classroom. Dewey focused more on the purpose of schooling, which may have been as a precursor to standards in 2016 (Dewey, 1902).

Edward Thorndike, known by researchers as the father of modern day educational testing and measurement, began to influence educators to consider more scientific approaches to measure the educational attainment of children (Cubberley, 1929). Thorndike suggested that Taylor's principles of scientific management could be used to manage schools much as his principles were used for factories. Cubberley (1929) also suggested the teachers' evaluators provide specific including an A-F scale on performance and a listing of lesson weak points and suggestions for improvement.

Wetzel (1929) built on Cubberley's work and proposed the use of student test data to evaluate teachers and schools. This information, in turn, was to be used as a basis for decisions leading to improvement. He suggested three components of his system: the establishment of clear measureable objectives for each course, the use of aptitude tests to measure the ability of each student, and the use of reliable measures of student achievement (Wetzel, 1929). The work

of Cubberley and Wetzel were forerunners of the evaluations systems of the early 2000s. Cubberley's and Wetzel's work were attempts to measure the effectiveness of educational organizations.

During the late 1900s the focus of teacher evaluation systems began to shift away from the concepts of scientific management. The role of the evaluator began to shift also (Coleman, 1945). Supervisory expectations began to include tasks such as classroom visits, evaluation forms, and direct assistance for marginal or ineffective teachers. Additional supervisory responsibilities such as textbook adoption and curricular decision making continued to increase the demands of the school principal (Curtin, 1964).

At Harvard University, Massachusetts, Cogan began working on a supervisory approach for student teachers similar to what teaching hospitals used for teaching their interns (Cogan, 1973). The purpose of the model was to produce reflective dialogue between teacher and supervisor. Reflective dialogue required an open trusting conversation. When the teacher had weak performance and the supervisor was cast into the role of evaluator, the dialogue became less than fully trusting and the thought underlying the five phase model greatly diminished (Cogan, 1973).

Goldhammer (1969) developed the concept of a cycle of clinical supervision in a five-phase model: 1) Preobservation Conference; 2) Classroom Observation; 3) Analysis of Data; 4) Supervision Conference; and 5) Analysis of the Analysis. This concept of the five-phase model was continued in the TEAM model. The FEPG model did not include all of the steps that Goldhammer included in his model; however, the TEAM model provided for each of these steps.

Hunter (1980) also contributed to teacher supervision and evaluation processes by developing a seven-step model of a lesson: 1) Anticipatory Set; 2) Objective and Purpose;

3) Input; 4) Modeling; 5) Checking for Understanding; 6) Guided Practice; and 7) Independent Practice. This lesson model became the de-facto content of many of the states' teacher evaluation systems using a clinical supervision framework. Hunter (1980) also suggested the use of scripting as a means of gathering data during a classroom observation.

Also during the 1980s ideas began to develop around the concept that neither the same supervisory model nor the same intensity of supervision needed to be maintained for all teachers (Hunter, 1980). Glatthorn (1984) developed three different levels of supervision (i.e., clinical, collaborative, and self-directed), depending on the situation and level of experience of the teacher. The procedures used in the evaluation process should be different for those at different stages in their careers (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). The TEAM model seemed to follow these steps in regard to the level of support teachers needed. An apprentice teacher would receive more support than a professional teacher according to the suggested observation pacing (TDOE, 2016).

Glickman (1985) advocated that the most important goal of supervision was the improvement of instruction. He stated many activities should grow out of the evaluation system (e.g., direct assistance to teachers, learning community or group development, professional development, curriculum development, and action research). All of these should be used as tools and prescriptions following the evaluation cycle.

The attention of supervision and evaluation during this period focused on a differentiated evaluation system. Danielson (1996, 2008) developed a model of evaluation that included four domains: 1) Planning and Preparation 2) Classroom Environment 3) Instruction and 4) Professional Responsibility. Within these four domains are a total of 76 components each divided into four performance levels: Unsatisfactory, Basic, Proficient, and Distinguished. To

compliment Danielson's research, the TDOE partnered with National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) (TEAM Evaluator Training, 2013):

> The NIET rubric is based on research and best practices from multiple sources. In addition to the research from Charlotte Danielson and other prominent researchers, NIET reviewed instructional guidelines and standards developed by numerous national and state teacher standards organizations. From this information they developed a comprehensive set of standards for teacher evaluation and development. (p. 8)

Tucker and Stronge (2005) developed a model (i.e., TVAAS) to add value to student learning and, therefore, attempt to quantify teacher effectiveness. Applying statistical techniques that can control for the dissimilarities among students and measuring only the value (i.e., learning) generated by an individual teacher, standardized achievement tests were again used as part of the teacher evaluation systems. The focus was on student achievement rather than on teacher technique (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). When evaluating teacher performance using value-added student achievement data, teacher performance was shown to have a cumulative effect of future student growth and learning (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Anderson (2010) explained that factors, including TVAAS, were responsible for supporting the grant. Anderson explained:

> Tennessee, which received 442.2 points and was backed by 93 percent of its teacher unions, was one of the first states to begin using value-added assessment. The data, which have been collected since 1992, will be used, by law, as a significant part of teacher evaluations beginning in the 2011-12 school year. (p. 3)

Toch and Rothman (2008) wrote a criticism of teacher evaluations systems across the United States. Information from the Toch and Rothman report was used to determine the

weakness of existing evaluation systems. The report also helped educational leaders to identify some of the leading concepts and better prepare programs of evaluation. Several of these programs were designed around teaching standards based on the work of Danielson and McGreal (2000), including The Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) that has served as a basis for some of the evaluation models adopted in Tennessee. Toch and Rothman (2008) addressed the use of multiple measures of teacher performance with measures of teamwork with multiple evaluators, portfolios, and student achievement including value-added measures. "Comprehensive evaluations are valuable regardless of the degree to which they predict student achievement. They contribute much more to the improvement of teaching than today's drive-by evaluations" (Toch & Rothman, 2008, p 39).

Framework for Evaluation and Professional Growth Model

In 2004 Kaneal Alexander, the director of teacher evaluation in the SDOE, worked with other state officials to revamp the FEPG. This framework consisted of six domains: planning, teaching strategies, assessment and instruction, learning environment, professional growth, and communication (TDOE, 2004). The FEPG model did not include the use of student test scores as a component of teacher evaluation. Changes to the evaluation system from 2004 to 2007 increased the number of evaluations for teachers and principals. Wright (2012) stated:

> Prior to 2007, teachers with a professional license were required by law to be evaluated only twice over a ten-year period; however, in 2007, the state statute was revised to require these teachers to receive one formal evaluation and two informal evaluations (Performance Assessments) every five years. (p. 1)

The FEPG teacher evaluation model consisted of the principal observing the teacher's classroom, the teacher reflecting on the lesson that was taught, and then the principal reviewing

the teacher's professional growth at the end of the school year. The evaluation process was conducted three times a year for nontenured teachers and twice in a 5-year span for tenured teachers. The Framework for Evaluation and Professional Growth Comprehensive Assessment (2009) presented:

> Within each domain, indicators identify the expected teacher behaviors and characteristics. Each indicator is further defined through criteria that are directly aligned with three performance levels: developing, proficient, and advanced. The performance levels are designed to provide clear, observable behaviors that define teacher behavior specific to the criteria and indicator, within each domain. For each indicator, data sources that must be used by the evaluator and observer are listed. (p. 7)

Under the FEPG, teachers received one of four ratings: unsatisfactory, developing, proficient, or advanced. Huffman (2011), Commissioner of the TDOE in 2011, stated, "…virtually all teachers were automatically tenured after three years, and tenured teachers were evaluated (without data) twice every ten years. The system was broken, and a bipartisan coalition of political leaders stepped in and took action" (p. 1).

During the administration of the FEPG principals were not required to make personnel decisions based upon the evaluation results. However, under the provisions set forth in the RTTT grant, principals were to make personnel decisions based on evaluation outcomes. "When Tennessee's new evaluation system debuts in 2011, it will serve as a platform for making all critical human capital decisions in our state's education system: recruiting, granting tenure, compensating, promoting, retaining, providing professional development, and recognizing exceptional teachers" (USDOE, n.d.).

TEAM Evaluation Model

The purpose of the TEAM evaluation system was to increase student achievement. According to the RTTT grant:

> Having an effective teacher in the classroom and an effective principal leading a school matters more than any other factor when it comes to raising student achievement – more than curriculum, class size, facilities, or education funding. Tennessee views as its responsibility not only to create pathways to attract the most talented professionals to its public education system, but also to differentiate performance and career opportunities, reward high performance, and provide customized support to help educators improve their ability to elevate student achievement levels. Tennessee believes the foundation for and most important component of a teacher and principal evaluation system is growth in student achievement. Although we are committed to designing an evaluation system that consists of multiple measures, classroom observation, and stakeholder feedback, increasing student achievement will be a significant factor in identifying effective teaching, as well as rewarding, retaining, and strategically utilizing our highest performing educators. For example, the Benwood Initiative in Hamilton County (Chattanooga) identifies highly effective teachers and has them lead professional learning and take on new roles as classroom coaches. The data are not just being used to sort teachers, but to have the best teachers help increase student achievement by coaching their peers to greater levels of effectiveness. (RTTT, 2011, p. 83)

Mathers and Oliva (2008) suggested that establishing a statewide committee may allow positive conversation about how to measure teacher growth ensuring students' success. Stakeholders established a teacher evaluation model that provided a rubric that measured 12

different instructional areas incorporated in the TEAM model (Davis, 2014). According to the TDOE's website for TEAM the following indicators were listed as factors for evaluation: "standards and objectives, motivating students, presenting instructional content, lesson structure and pacing, activities and materials, questioning, feedback, grouping students, teacher content knowledge, teacher knowledge of students, thinking, and problem solving" (TDOE, 2015b, p. 1). Under the new (TEAM), Tennessee teachers would be evaluated 20 to 30 or more times in the same 10-year period.

Multiple measures were incorporated in the TEAM evaluation model. These measures included classroom observations that are scored using a rubric, student achievement data, and student growth data. Nontenured teachers and teachers considered less than effective were evaluated six times per year and tenured teachers as well as teachers who were considered to be effective according to the TEAM model were to be evaluated at least four times per year. According to the report, "In November 2011, the State Board of Education approved a flexibility provision that gives the option for the observation of two domains (i.e., planning and instruction or environment and instruction) in a single classroom visit" (TDOE, 2011, p. 9). Stakeholders worked to create a pacing guide for principals to follow when observing teachers (TDOE, 2016). Teachers and administrators were required to participate in initial and post-conferences. The model outlined that teachers having scores of four and five had fewer overall observations. According to the guide, teachers with scores three and below had more intensive support from principals consisting of additional observations as well as pre and post conferences.

According to Tennessee State Board of Education Policy 5.201 (SBOE, 2014):

> All educators, other than apprentice teachers, teachers with individual student growth scores who earned a level five on such growth scores or final evaluation in the preceding

> school year, and administrators, will have a minimum of four observations, with at least two domains observed in a given semester, for a minimum total of at least sixty minutes each school year. At least half of all observations will be unannounced. Apprentice teachers, other than those with individual student growth scores who earned a level five on such growth scores or final evaluation in the preceding school year, will have at least six observations, with at least three domains observed in a given semester, for a minimum total of at least ninety minutes each school year. Any educator with individual student growth scores who earned a level five on such growth scores or final evaluation in the preceding school year will have a minimum of one observation that includes each of the three domains, as well as two walk-through observations during the second semester. Any educator with a professional license and with individual student scores who earned a level one on such growth scores or final evaluation in the preceding school year will have the same minimum number of observations as an educator with an apprentice license. An LEA may choose to allow principals to conduct a required observation relative to the instructional domain in conjunction with a required observation relative to the planning or environment domain, provided the requisite minimum time, semester, distribution and notice (announced versus unannounced) are met. (pp. 5-6)

Some teachers expressed that the model was too intensive (Moran, 2013). According to Bogart (2013), many teachers feared the evaluation system. He stated, "Fear of anything causes a change in the behavior of the individual who is in fear. This fear of the teacher evaluation system led to teacher evaluations being less productive than intended for the teachers" (p. 34). Educators also questioned if the number of evaluations required under the TEAM model was the best use of time for both teachers and their principals (TDOE, 2012). Within the framework of

the TEAM modules, principals were required to evaluate the best teachers the same number of times as teachers who were in need of more assistance (Anderson, 2012). Under the TEAM model teachers were evaluated on a one to five scale ranging from significantly above expectations to significantly below expectations; however, with TEAM evaluators were expected to provide timely feedback after each evaluation, specifically, evaluators were to provide feedback within a week after observing the teacher's lesson (TDOE, n.d.).

Race to the Top

Tennessee was awarded more than $500 million dollars in the initial funding of RTTT (Crowe, 2011). There were requirements attached to the grant requiring states to implement major reform in their educational systems. The USDOE (2010) indicated:

> The Race to the Top state competition is designed to reward states that are leading the way in comprehensive, coherent, statewide education reform across four key areas:
>
> 1. Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace;
> 2. Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals how to improve instruction;
> 3. Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and
> 4. Turning around their lowest-performing schools. (para. 7).

The state of Tennessee was one of the first states to receive the RTTT grant funding, which was renamed FTTT (Nixon, 2011). Many felt that Tennessee was well positioned due to their long-lasting experience with TVAAS. The TDOE explained how the *Teachers and Leaders* section of the grant was to be applied to a new teacher evaluation system. In July 2011

Tennessee became one of the first states in the country to implement a comprehensive, student outcomes-based, statewide educator evaluation system (Crowe, 2011). For a general education teacher who generates TVAAS data, 50% of evaluation scores were based on student achievement data, 35% based on student growth as represented by the TVAAS, and the other 15% based on other measures of student achievement adopted by the State Board of Education (SBOE) and chosen through mutual agreement by the educator and evaluator (TDOE, 2015a). The remaining 50% of the evaluation was determined through qualitative measures such as teacher observations, personal conferences, and review of prior evaluations and work (TDOE, 2015a). The governor appointed a Teacher Evaluation Advisory Committee (TEAC), that consisted of a 15-member body and was charged with the task of creating guidelines for a new teacher evaluation system (Doyle & Han, 2012).

To be considered for the grant funding, the RTTT Application asked states to complete six different sections.

1. Section A (125 possible points) asked for success factors;
2. Section B (70 possible points) addressed standards and assessments;
3. Section C (47 possible points) spoke about data systems to support instruction;
4. Section D (138 possible points) referenced great teachers and leaders;
5. Section E explained how states were turning around the lowest achieving schools; and,
6. Section F was a general category. (USDOE, n.d.)

These sections had potential to overlap in their scope of work. For the purposes of this study, Section D for *great teachers and leaders* was the focus, as this section contained the most

information about teacher evaluations. However, one may have also considered other sections depending on the nature of the work.

Tennessee scored well as compared to other states in Section D, the Great Teachers and Leaders section of the application. The state of Tennessee scored 114 points out of a potential 138 points for this section. In section (D)(1) providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals, the state scored 15 out of 21 possible points. In section (D)(2) improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance, the state scored 53 out of a potential 58 points. In subsection (i) measuring student growth, the state scored perfect five out of five points. The state had a history of longitudinal data through the use of TVAAS that assisted in this area. In subsection (ii) developing evaluation systems, the state scored 13.6 out of 15 possible points. In subsection (iii), conducting annual evaluations, the state scored a perfect 10 out of 10 points. The research from the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) reported that Tennessee was in the top three for the highest number of evaluations of teachers (Doherty & Jacobs, 2013). For this reason Tennessee scored well in this area. In subsection (iv), using evaluations to inform key decisions, Tennessee scored 24.4 out of a possible 28 points. In section (D)(3), ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals, the state scored 18.4 out of 25 points. These were the categories that focused on teacher evaluation reform.

The RTTT application had a rubric that provided states a potential to score 500 points. The largest section on the rubric was D, Great Teachers and Leaders. This section accounted for 28% of the overall rubric or 138 possible points. This section also included points for implementing a new teacher evaluation system. Of the possible 138 points for section D, Tennessee scored 114 points. This section asked states to consider the following actions:

providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teacher and principal, improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance, measuring student growth, developing evaluation systems, conducting annual evaluations, using evaluations to inform key decisions, ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals, ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools, ensuring equitable distribution in hard to staff subjects and specialty areas, improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs, providing effective support to teachers and principal programs (USDOE, n.d.).

The RTTT Technical Review form commended Tennessee for having a student data system, the TVAAS, which tracked student performance data since 1992 and continuing through the time of this study. The reviewers also praised the state for allowing teachers access to the TVAAS system. "Now with 100% teacher accessibility, it could become a model for the rest of the nation" (RTTT Technical Review Form, 2011, p. 4). Additionally, the state was lauded for having an evaluation plan that centered on student achievement.

State Board of Education Policy 5.201

The Tennessee State Board of Education (SBOE) created a 12-page Teacher and Principal Evaluation policy under section 5.201 (Tennessee SBOE, 2014). The policy mandated that local boards develop or adopt an evaluation model for teachers and principals. The policy provided guidelines and criteria for successful selection of the models. Four general expectations were given priority. The first point explained that the evaluation model was to identify and support instruction that would lead to high levels of student achievement. The second point provided that LEA were to use these models as a guide for human capital in areas such as hiring, professional development, tenure, placement, promotion, dismissal, and compensation. The third point expressed the evaluations were to differentiate effectiveness

ratings into five groups: significantly above expectations, above expectations, at expectations, below expectations, and significantly below expectations. After the guidelines the policy defined that the evaluation process was to be comprised of 50% student data, which would contain 35% from student growth and 15% from other student measurement data. The remaining 50% was to be comprised from the qualitative evaluation instrument. The fourth point explained schools that had a discrepancy that was too high would lose opportunities and have to be trained. In the fourth point, the Tennessee SBOE (2014) stated:

> For the purposes of these guidelines, performance level discrepancies between individual student achievement growth scores and observation scores of three or more will be considered outside the acceptable range of results. The 10% of schools with the highest percentage of teachers falling outside the acceptable range of results will be required to participate in additional training and support as determined by the department. Districts that have 20% or more of their teachers fall outside the acceptable range of results will, as determined by the commissioner, lose their ability to apply for or implement alternate evaluation models or TEAM Flexibility the following school year. (p. 1)

"As of July 2011, the Tennessee State Board of Education approved four teacher evaluation models—the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM), Project COACH, Teacher Effectiveness Measure (TEM), and Teacher Instructional Growth for Effectiveness and Results (TIGER)." (Springer, 2015 p. 3)

Hamilton County implemented Project COACH teacher evaluation model and accounted for 5% of Tennessee teachers. Memphis City Schools implemented the Teacher Effectiveness Measure evaluation model and accounted for 11% of Tennessee teachers. A collection of districts, according to a report published by SCORE, 2011, included Alamo City, Alcoa City,

Bradford Special, Greeneville City, Lebanon Special, Lenoir City, Lexington City, Maryville City, Milan Special, Paris Special, Trenton Special, and Trousdale County, implemented the Teacher Instructional Growth for Effectiveness and Results model and accounted for 2% of Tennessee Teachers. All other districts across the state implemented TEAM, which accounted for 82% of Tennessee teachers (State Collaborative on Reforming Education [SCORE], 2012).

Race to the Top and TEAM

According to the Tennessee Department of Education *Teacher evaluation in Tennessee: A report on year 1 implementation* (2012), "Tennessee's teacher evaluation system is improving both the quality of instruction in the classroom as well as the establishment of accountability for student results" (p. 23). TEAM was implemented as the state teacher evaluation model after the state won a RTTT grant. According to requirements of the grant stakeholders were to implement reform in the state teacher evaluation model. As a result of this work stakeholders recommended TEAM as the state's model for teacher evaluations. Principals have a positive influence on student achievement through motivation of teachers and creating a positive atmosphere (Horng & Loeb, 2010). However, "A fundamental change in the teacher-evaluation process will require a rethinking of the principal's role in evaluation as well. Specifically, authority dynamics must be renegotiated, and a school- and district-wide system of support is required" (Derrington, 2011, p. 53).

Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model

The state department of education adopted TEAM as the state's teacher evaluation model of choice in 2011 following the RTTT grant award. According to Wright (2012):

> Prior to 2007, teachers with a professional license were required by law to be evaluated only twice over a ten year period; however, in 2007, the state statute was revised to

require these teachers to receive one Formal Evaluation and Performance Growth Plan and two informal evaluations every five years. (p. 1)

The newly adopted model called for apprentice teachers to be observed at least six times per year and all other teachers to be observed at least four times per year. Additionally, the observer would be required to meet and conduct a post conference within at least 1 week after the observation to reflect and provide academic feedback about the specific lesson.

TEAM had three components that comprised teacher evaluations. Fifty percent of the teacher's overall evaluation score was comprised of the observed instructional lesson conducted by an administrator or teacher who was trained using the TEAM system. The other half of the teacher's score would be derived from student achievement data; specifically, 35% was based upon student growth as represented by the TVAAS. The remaining 15% was based on an additional measurement of student achievement that was agreed upon by the teacher and the school principal. Originally in the TEAM model the principal made the final decision about what the 15% measurement was in the evaluation (Tennessee FTTT, 2010); however, in 2014 the model was updated to allow the teacher to have the final decision when determining which measure to choose for the 15% of the evaluation score in relation to additional student achievement measures. The teacher was provided a variety of assessment choices to account for the 15% of the evaluation. After the evaluation was completed, the teacher was then assigned a score on a scale of one to five. The level one represented teacher who were the most ineffective, and level five represented teachers who were the most effective. This ranking system was new to Tennessee teachers (Wright, 2012). According to the TDOE the scale represents the following: a score of one equated to significantly below expectation, a score of two equated to

below expectation, a score of three equated to at expectation, a score of four equated to above expectation, a score of five equated to significantly above expectation (Tennessee FTTT, 2010).

After TEAC decided on an evaluation instrument to champion, state department officials presented 4-days of professional development for those who would administer the evaluation (Dixon, 2011). This professional development was provided by NIET (NIET, 2011) and paid for from the FTTT grant. Four days of teacher evaluation training was provided to every principal and assistant principal in the state of Tennessee (NIET, 2011). The department provided guidance to school principals to conduct a minimum of a half-day training for teachers in regards to the new teacher evaluation.

The TEAM evaluation model called for teachers to be evaluated at least two or more times throughout the year. This was a change from the FEPG system that called for teachers to be evaluated two times in a 5-year period. A SCORE (2012) report, Supporting Effective Teaching in Tennessee, reported:

> In the past, meaningful feedback for teachers has been an important missing link in the efforts to improve instruction in classrooms across Tennessee. Under the old system, tenured teachers could go years without evaluations and the feedback they needed to improve instruction. (p. 3)

The TEAM evaluation was comprised of four distinct areas—Planning, Environment, Instruction, and Professionalism—based on the work of Charlotte Danielson (Danielson, 2008) (see Figure 1) ... Each indicator was scored on a scale of one to five with one being the least effective and five being the most effective. Colby, Bradshaw, and Joyner (2002) proposed that a positive teacher evaluation system should include components to improve instruction and have student learning as the leading focus.

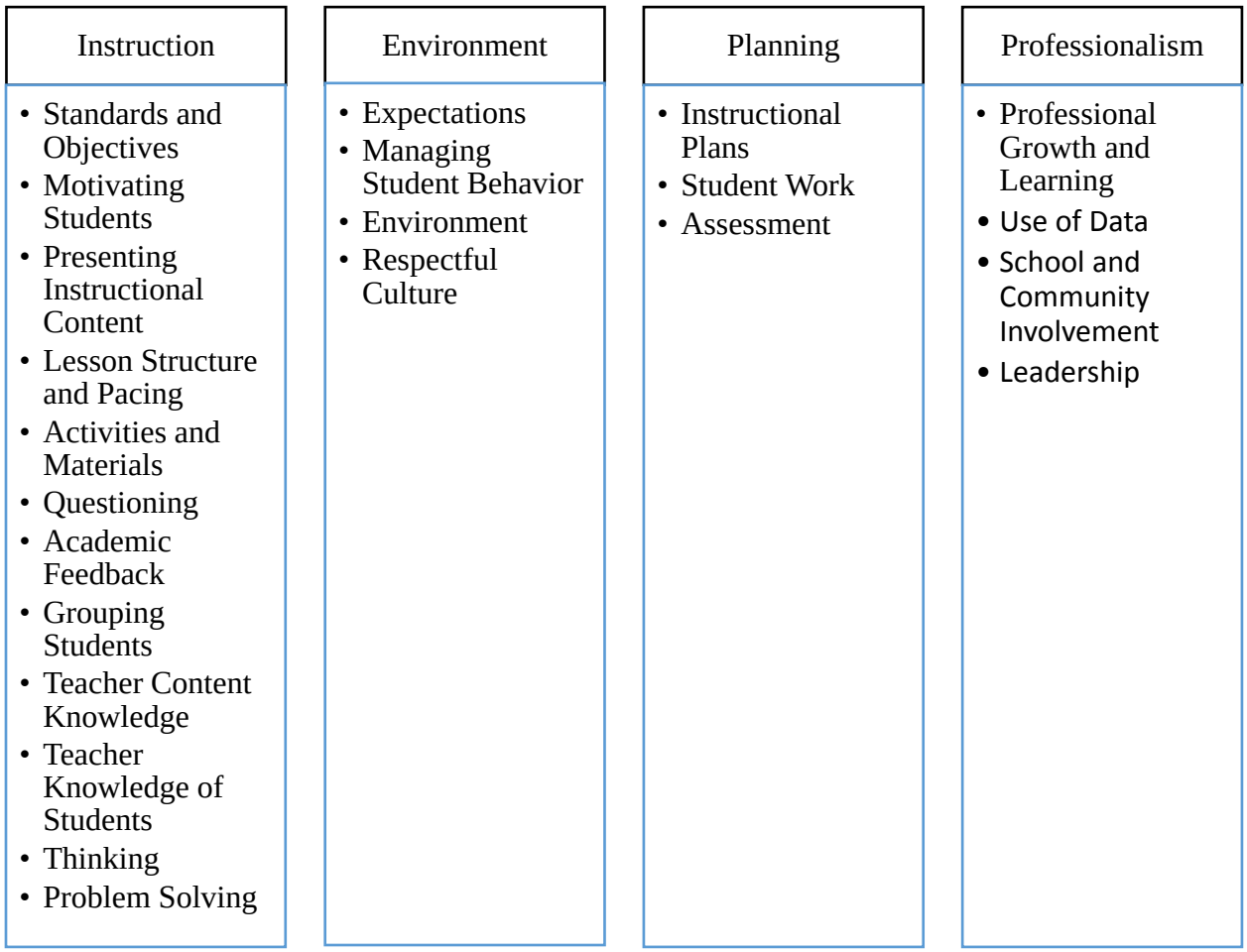

Figure 1. Four components of TEAM with corresponding indicator

National Institute for Excellence in Teaching

According to NIET (2011), during the 2010-2011 school year Tennessee piloted four different evaluations in over 30 school districts. Upon review of the standards, TEAC recommended adoption of the TEAM rubric from NIET. The TEAC explained that they considered different variables but decided on this model after considering research that linked the instrument to increased student achievement and the fact that NIET had resources that supported Tennessee teachers in regard to a new evaluation instrument (DeMonte, 2013).

Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System

Tennessee implemented in 1993. According to the RTTT grant (2011):

> …the Volunteer State is recognized for having one of the nation's oldest and most robust databases for tracking• student growth, or a child•s improvement in the classroom over time. Our database for tracking growth is known as the TVAAS, and by now has accumulated 18 years of continuous longitudinal data, which we now will use as a significant part of teacher evaluations. (pp. 11-12)

The grant application continued:

> Tennessee has the most sophisticated value-added assessment system in the United States. For tested grades and subjects, our state can track each child's achievement, link it back to his or her teachers, and measure not just the absolute performance of a school, but the actual academic growth that school and its teachers are making or not making, as measured by standardized tests. The richness of our data allows Tennessee to perform unique and statistically significant predictive analyses of every child–predicted trajectories of students all the way up to graduation, ACT scores, and even success in STEM majors. (pp. 14-15)

William Sanders created the TVAAS, a system implemented to help administrators and teachers evaluate individual student performance, comparing one year of academic performance to the following year's academic performance. Sanders and Rivers (1996) explained that the effects of a teacher's performance on student achievement was additive and cumulative; when teacher performance increased, then lower achieving students were the first to benefit. Ethnicity was ruled out as a factor when considering teachers within the same quintile of effectiveness (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). In elementary schools this tool was used for students in fourth grade through eighth grade. At the high school level the model predicted student outcomes in End of Course Exams.

The TVAAS model was cited as a factor for Tennessee's winning the RTTT Grant. In 2010 TNReport cited Tennessee's then Governor Bredesen to say that incorporating changes (i.e., calculating a percent of the teacher's evaluation score that would be tied to the TVAAS) to the teacher evaluation system would help Tennessee win the RTTT grant. However, there is another side that state and federal officials were interested in exploring. Stone (2015) explained:

> The real story is that a critical mass of Tennessee officials and their constituents had long suspected that some schools are far more effective than others, but only recently did they realize that they have the means to measure and prove it. An increasingly widespread understanding of TVAAS is at the heart of this change. (p. 1)

In the original RTTT application (2010), Section A(1)(ii)(b), the application stated:

> Similarly, we sent the U.S. Department of Education's sample Scope of Work because we believed our goals were aligned with it. We are pleased that 100% of our 136 participating districts and 4 state special schools committed to each and every reform criterion, as the summary table demonstrates. We achieved this sign-on rate even though all participating LEAs will have to implement a bold set of policy and practice changes, including using student growth as one of the multiple measures in evaluating and compensating teachers and leaders; denying tenure to teachers who are deemed ineffective as gauged partly by student growth; relinquishing control over their persistently lowest-achieving schools; increasing the number of students who are taught by effective teachers; and, in many cases, opening their doors to more charter schools. (pp. 17-18)

Arne Duncan, the United States Secretary of Education 2009-2016, stated, all educators want to do a great job for their students, but too often they struggle at the beginning of their

careers and have to figure out too much on the job by themselves. Secretary Duncan continued, Whether they land jobs in their subject field, how long they stay and how their students perform on standardized tests and other measures of academic achievement (Burris & Welner, 2011).

The commissioner of education and other stakeholders affirmed the TVAAS system was a grounded system that supported the teacher evaluation model through a multitude of data. In the RTTT application, when speaking about TVAAS, state officials explained, "conditions are ripe in Tennessee" (2010, p. 12). It was obvious the state department supported the grant that incorporated the value-added system. However, there were others who did not agree with value-added being a part of the teachers' evaluation. Ballou explained that Sanders and others were too vague in reporting standard error and further stated that the data was fallible when correlating teacher contributions to student learning (Lissitz, 2005).

At the inception of the TEAM, TVAAS accounted for 35%-50% of a teacher's overall evaluation measure. In 2014 the state department changed the percent of a teacher's evaluation score from 35 to 25 if that teacher did not teach a class that generated a value-added measure (e.g., teachers of kindergarten, first grade, second grade, art, music, and physical education). Those who generated TVAAS scores were teachers in math, reading, science, and social studies in fourth grade through eighth grade and high school End of Course classes that included English I, English II, English III, Biology I, Algebra I, Algebra II, U.S. History, and Chemistry. However, for the purposes of this study, the researcher focused on elementary school level.

National Council for Teacher Quality

In 2013 The NCTQ outlined how each state and the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) performed based on teacher evaluations and how the evaluations impacted state policy. NCTQ explained that as of 2013 only 27 states (including Tennessee) and DCPS required an

annual evaluation for all teachers. Only 19 states, including Tennessee, and the DCPS used student achievement and student growth scores as the preponderant criterion for teacher evaluation (Doherty & Jacobs, 2013). The study also explained that only 10 states, including Tennessee, provided an evaluation model and provided districts the opportunity to provide the district's own model after state approval. Doherty and Jacobs (2013) also explained that Tennessee was also one of 15 states that mandated approval of teacher evaluations if the district choose to implement one other than a state recommended model).

The state of Tennessee conducted more teacher evaluations per teacher per year than other states, "For nonprobationary: 4; for new teachers: 6" (Doherty & Jacobs, 2013, p. 16). In the RTTT grant (2010), Section D(2)(iii) stated, "All participating LEAs in the state will be required under the FTTT Act to use the new multiple measures evaluation system (with some degree of district innovation) to conduct annual reviews of its teachers and principals" (p. 86). The number of teacher evaluations increased from previous years due to the RTTT grant stipulations. Tennessee agreed to implement a new teacher evaluation system to earn points in the grant application (RTTT grant, 2010).

The NCTQ discovered Tennessee was one state of eight across the nation with teacher preparation programs that established accountability system for the effectiveness of teachers related to the teachers' colleges and universities. Additionally, Tennessee was one of three states where the colleges and universities placed student teachers in effective teachers' classrooms to gain experience (Doherty & Jacobs, 2013).

Improving the Teacher Evaluation Process

Once the RTTT award was granted, former Governor Bredesen appointed a 15-member board to the TEAC (Doyle & Han, 2012). According to the TN Report this committee was

comprised of the Commissioner of Education, who was to serve as the chair of the committee; the Executive Director of the SBOE; the Chairperson of the Education Committees of each house; a K-12 public school teacher appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives; a K-12 public school teacher appointed by the Speaker of the Senate; and nine members appointed by the Governor, which was comprised of three public school teachers, two public school principals, a public school superintendent, and three additional stakeholders. The purpose of this committee was to establish policy recommendations for the teacher and principal evaluation process. In September 2010 the committee voted to send the initial policy recommendation to the SBOE. Later, in January 2011, the committee considered alternative measures for the 15% of the total teacher evaluation scores that would comprise the teachers' student achievement measurement. The TEAC then presented the final recommendation for the teacher evaluation program to the SBOE (Huffman, 2011).

Even though the committee recommended acceptance, Zelinski (2010) reported comments from the committee's teleconference in July 2010. During the conference members of the TEAC worried that principals may find the new evaluation time consuming. For example, conference members indicated they were not sure there were enough hours in the day for principals to complete teacher evaluations (Zelinski, 2010).

Tennessee Consortium on Research, Evaluation, and Development. The TDOE asked the Tennessee Consortium on Research, Evaluation, and Development (TNCRED) to report on the evaluation process. This research group from Vanderbilt University, Tennessee, attended teacher evaluation training, conducted informal interviews, and surveyed teachers and administrators to evaluate the effectiveness of the evaluation process. Stakeholders from the

TDOE conducted a survey titled Tennessee Educator Evaluation Survey. The consortium recommended five points for the state department to consider:

> To begin, the Consortium recommends that the TDOE continue to monitor the implementation of teacher evaluation programs through an annual survey. A number of critical issues have emerged from this survey that should be further examined as teacher evaluation moves forward. Second, considering the increased workload on evaluators, TDOE should explore technological efficiencies that minimize the burden of both observations and evaluations such as a tablet or laptop evaluation program that automatically communicates with the proposed statewide, centralized system. Third, the process used to train field test evaluators on utilizing the TAP Rubric should be maintained during statewide scale-up. Evaluators should also be periodically assessed on the consistency of their rating standards. Fourth, in order to ensure that the reform momentum from the originating year of the First to the Top continues, TDOE should make every effort to provide consistent and clear communications with the Tennessee teachers and other stakeholders, particularly as it related to educator evaluation. TDOE should examine the evaluation model to ensure the TAP Rubric sufficiently allows for variations within teaching responsibilities, and that appropriate adjustments be considered for use with non-classroom positions such as librarians and instructional coaches. Finally, the department should consider the diffusion of evaluator responsibilities, particularly in the observation process and promote greater engagement on the part of assistant principals, as well as central office leadership and other school-based leaders such as lead teachers or instructional coaches. (TNCRED, 2011, p. 5)

State Collaborative on Reforming Education. SCORE is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy group that was founded by former Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, M.D. The group actively promotes two goals related to education. The first goal is for every student to graduate prepared for college or career, and the second goal is for Tennessee to be the fastest growing state in reading, math, and other benchmarking areas that relate to students being prepared for college and careers. A 15-member board of directors, as well as a 29-member steering committee, led the SCORE work.

Some of SCORE's work was to evaluate the perceptions of educators and education stakeholders in regards to educational reform. From July 7, 2010, to July 13, 2010, SCORE polled 600 likely Tennessee voters to gauge their attitudes about education reform with the school system. SCORE reported that many voters had mixed reviews about certain educational reforms. When SCORE posed the question about Tennessee's new legislation related to teacher evaluations, the public survey indicated 40% of voters supported Tennessee's new law requiring that half of a teacher's evaluation be based on student test scores and student performance data while one third of voters (34%) opposed the law, with 26% undecided (SCORE, 2012).

In December 2011 Tennessee's Governor Haslam asked SCORE to conduct a statewide evaluation of the state's teacher evaluation process. The SCORE Team's role was to listen and gather information from teachers, principals, superintendents, and other stakeholders. The team held roundtable discussions, conducted an on-line survey, interviewed teachers, and created a team of teachers and principals that worked to gather the perceptions of teachers on the new evaluation system. SCORE reported similarities between the old evaluation system and the new evaluation system and detailed positive feedback on the new evaluation system, as well as feedback on challenges and concerns on the new evaluation system. The report concluded with

recommendations that focused on creating a system that supported the current teacher evaluation system.

SCORE recounted that the new evaluation process provided a clear set of expectations that was more clear and more rigorous than before, as well as provided a framework that helped the educators understand what constituted effective teaching. Additionally, educators received feedback more regularly, and this feedback was specific to the educator's lesson. Educators reported they had taken this clear feedback and implemented better self-reflection as well as collaboration with their peers. Finally, educators reported these data helped them generate conversations about improved instruction and outcomes for students.

The report outlined challenges the educators identified with the new evaluation process. Teachers indicated they did not see the value in the new evaluation system that principals reported. Teachers did not feel as though they had access to professional development tied to the evaluator's recommendations and also felt that the evaluation may not be fair due to the fact that 35% of the evaluation score was based upon TVAAS. There was also concern due to the low number of teachers that actually generated a TVAAS score, only 33% of teachers create a TVAAS score.

The SCORE team had seven recommendations after the process was complete (TDOE, 2012):

1. Ensure current and prospective teacher and leaders receive[d] sufficient training in the evaluation system.
2. Link the feedback that teachers receive[d] with high quality, collaborative, and individualized professional learning opportunities so that they can improve their instruction.

3. Address challenges with the current quantitative and qualitative measures of teacher effectiveness.
4. Support school and district leaders in becoming strong instructional leaders capable of assessing and developing effective teaching–and hold them accountable for doing so.
5. Re-engage educators in those districts where implementation of the teacher evaluation system has faltered during the first year of work.
6. Integrate the ongoing implementation of the teacher evaluation system and the Common Core State Standards so that they work together to improve student outcomes.
7. Drive continuous improvement of the teacher evaluation system at the state, district, and school levels. (pp. 56)

National Institute for Excellence in Teaching. In 2011 NIET partnered with Tennessee to create a new teacher evaluation for Tennessee teachers. According to TDOE (2014):

> The NIET rubric is based on research and best practices from multiple sources. In addition to the research from Charlotte Danielson, NIET reviewed instructional guidelines and standards developed by numerous national and state teacher standards organizations. From this information they developed a comprehensive set of standards for teacher evaluation and development." (p. 8)

Tennessee Department of Education. The TDOE prepared a new teacher evaluation system that provided the opportunity for a great deal of reflection on classroom practices. Sullivan and Glanz (2005) indicated that teachers were inclined to change their instructional behaviors after effective evaluations. In *The Teacher Evaluation in Tennessee: A Report on Year*

1 Implementation, state department explained teacher evaluations had played a role in improved student achievement (TDOE, 2011).

During the 2012 school year four new modifications to the teacher evaluation system were introduced. These modifications were based upon feedback that organizations such as SCORE and TNCRED had gathered to provide feedback to the state department of education. The first modification was to allow an evaluator to decrease the number of times a level five teacher was to be evaluated. A teacher who scored at a level five would have earned the highest level of competence and be referred to as *significantly above average*. This differentiation was intended to reward teachers for performing well. The second change was on the opposite side of the spectrum of the level of teacher competence. A level one teacher, scoring *significantly below average*, was required to have a coaching conversation with the evaluator before the next evaluation process began. Next, the state increased the weighting for observations from 50% to 60% and decreased the weighting for growth scores from 35% to 25% for teachers who did not generate an individual growth score through the TVAAS component of the teacher evaluation system. Finally, the state included special education students into calculations of teachers' growth scores (TDOE, 2011).

The department of education has published two reports on the findings of a study on the teacher evaluation system implemented as part of FTTT grant. The second report identified areas in which the department of education changed the evaluations:

> Changes to schoolwide growth scores, inclusion of students with disabilities in individual teacher value-added scores, legislative change for teachers who receive the highest scores on student growth, differentiation in the allocation of time spent conducting classroom

observations, increased district flexibility through approval of more than 40 plans to further and customize the evaluation model. (p. 19)

Tennessee Public Chapter 158. Tennessee Public Chapter 158, formerly House Bill 108 presented by Representative McCormick and cosponsored by Senator Norris SB 119, was cited to be *Tennessee Teaching Evaluation Enhancement Act*. This bill amended Tennessee Code Annotated (TCA) 4910302(d)(2) by adjusting the percentages that applied to teacher evaluations based on student growth data generated by the state assessment. For the 2015-2016 school year the legislation allowed school systems to count 10% of the growth toward their overall evaluation criteria as compared to the original 35%. In subsequent years, the percentages would increase. In 2016-2017 school year, the teacher was accountable for 20% of the evaluation score based upon the current and previous years' scores. In the 2017–2018 school year, the teacher was accountable for 35% of the student growth component. This was the original percent that was formerly drafted in the first legislation. Section (iv) of this bill explained:

> For the 2015–2016 through 2017–2018 school years, the most recent year of student growth data shall account for the entire percentage of growth data required in a teacher's evaluation if such use results in a higher evaluation score. (TCA, 2015)

Costs of Teacher Evaluations

Hoenack and Monk (1990) proposed that the costs of the teacher evaluation system was justified by the impact on student learning:

> Comprehensive costs to school districts are often overlooked in teacher evaluation systems. Costs include the expense in time, personnel, morale, side effects, and dollars to do (or not do) high quality teacher evaluations, as well as direct costs for student

achievement testing, survey construction and analysis and expense of trained observers from outside the school district. (Peterson, 2004 p. 69)

The cost of evaluating a staff of teachers increased since the FTTT Act. Every evaluator responsible for evaluating teachers had to participate in a 4-day training. Additionally, each of these evaluators had to renew his certification by taking an on-line re-certification exam or traveling to two days of professional development provided by NIET and presented by a trainer outside of the school and retake the on-line recertification exam provided by NIET. The implementation costs for the teacher evaluation were more than the administrators taking 4 days from their busy schedules, traveling to the site to be trained, and receiving training from a state-paid trainer. The evaluator then went back and trained teachers how to implement the rubric into the teachers' daily lessons. The state recommended taking 1 full day of professional development to show teachers how to implement the rubric. It was challenging to place a cost value associated with the lost time from the principal's office compared with time spent in years before the FTTT was approved.

Efficiency and Effectiveness

Barnard (1939), in his classic work on bureaucracies, conceptualized that organizations can strive to achieve both efficiency and effectiveness in their procedures. A number of researchers have since proposed variations and expansions of Barnard's early work (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Kotabe, 1998; Miller, 1981; Ostroff & Schmitt, 1993; Steers, 1975). While these studies were quite diverse, they all used the same definitions of efficiency and effectiveness (Steers, 1975). Efficiency referred to the amount of output obtained from a given input, while effectiveness referred to the ability of the organization to obtain resources. Organizations realized higher rates of return (i.e., success) when both dimension were emphasized. Also,

because measuring true multidimensional performance levels within organizations has proven difficult, researchers suggested using a number of different measures in order to capture an organization's true performance levels (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Researchers also suggested that the best performing organizations tended to be concerned with both effectiveness and efficiency. A study on organizational effectiveness and efficiency by Ostroff and Schmitt (1993) found that organizations excelled one of these dimensions, both, or neither.

Phillips and Phillips (2007), in their writing on efficiency and effectiveness, used the business concept of Return on Investment (ROI). Phillips and Phillips defined ROI as a comparison of the monetary value of the results with the cost for the program, usually expressed as a percentage or a benefits over cost ratio (BCR). ROI added the dimension of comparability by converting the answer to a percentage.

$$\frac{\text{Net Program Benefits}}{\text{Program Costs}} = \text{BCR} \times 100 = \text{ROI}$$

This concept of ROI when applied to education compared the benefit of the evaluation system (i.e., effectiveness) to the program cost of the evaluation system (i.e., efficiency, meaning the hours invested by teachers and administrators, costs of administering and analyzing tests, etc.). This was the ROI to the educational organization. This in turn allowed educators to consider if this was the best use of the limited tax dollars available to educate children.

One of the major criticisms of teacher evaluation systems such as the TEAM model had been the use of student test scores as part of the evaluation system. There had been growing concern regarding the validity and reliability of student scores as a measure of teacher performance and, therefore, the effectiveness of the system. In the paper *Problems with the Use of Student Test Scores to Evaluate Teachers*, Baker et al. (2010) stated, "While there are good

reasons for concern about the current system of teacher evaluation, there are also good reasons to be concerned about claims that measuring teacher' effectiveness largely by student test scores will lead to improved student achievement." (2007, p. 2)

The use of student test score data as an aspect of teacher evaluation in the TEAM model was based on the statistical Value-Added-Model. This statistical measure addressed the growth of an individual student over time and then produced a classroom growth score for the individual teacher, school, or district based on a moving 3-year average of student performance. While this system is more fair than a point-in-time measure, there was still broad agreement among statisticians, psychometricians, and economists that student test scores alone were not sufficiently reliable or valid indicators of teacher effectiveness to be used in high stakes personnel decisions (Amrein & Berliner, 2002). The qualifier in this may have been in student test scores alone, which raises the question of how much can test scores count. The model was based on a series of assumptions that student learning:

1. Was well measured by a given test;
2. Was influenced by the teacher alone;
3. Was independent of growth of classmates; and
4. Was independent of other aspects of classroom environment.

None of these assumptions was well supported by evidence (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2012). This raised the question of reliability, and thus the question of effectiveness. If test score data were highly unpredictable (i.e., did not provide consistent results over time), they may not have been accurate.

Amrein and Berliner (2002) were far harsher with their criticism of using student test score data for teacher evaluation. Because of the significance of the decisions based on data

from these test scores (e.g., curriculum; teacher and administrator employment, transfer, or dismissal; school and district funding; teaching methodology; professional development), Amrein and Berliner referred to the students' achievement evaluation as high stakes.

Nichols, Berliner, and Nodding (2007) suggested the greater the social consequence of a quantitative measure, the more likely that the indicator itself would be corrupted over time, and the underlying validity of the data would be destroyed. Teaching students test-taking skills, narrowing the curriculum, increasing the amount of instructional time designated for a tested subject, and helping students during their exam were illustrations of these phenomena. Changing answers on student tests, as was the experience in Atlanta, Georgia, with resulting conviction of a number of educational administrators and teachers, were more extreme examples (Jonsson, 2011). Nichols et al. suggested that if students' test scores were influenced by something other than teacher effectiveness, then the validity of the test scores as a measure of teacher performance came into question.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this study the researcher used qualitative research methods to discover principal perceptions of the effectiveness and efficiency of TEAM. The researcher provided an outline of the progression of teacher evaluation processes to describe the evolution of TEAM and used this information to components of TEAM that affect principal leadership. Additionally, the researcher identified principals' suggestions for improvement of the process and principals' perceptions of how their own leadership styles changed with the implementation of TEAM.

Qualitative Design

Watkins (2012) suggested that researchers used a qualitative methodology of research for detailed inquiry and analysis of an identified problem. Shields (2007) argued that no simple answers could be identified in qualitative research, a condition that makes case study research so advantageous:

> The strength of qualitative approaches is that they account for and include differences ideologically, epistemologically, methodologically – and most importantly humanly. They do not attempt to eliminate what cannot be discounted. They do not attempt to simplify what cannot be simplified. Thus it is preciously because case study includes paradoxes and acknowledges that there are no simple answers that it can and should qualify as the gold standard. (p. 13)

The researcher selected a qualitative approach to uncover principals' perceptions, experiences in relation to the evaluation instrument. This process involved comparing, cataloging, and classifying the participants' responses and generating overarching themes related

to the TEAM experiences. The research questions guided the study, and from these, the researcher developed open-ended interview questions to allow for participants to provide rich, thick detail in their responses (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Research Questions

1. How did elementary principals in Tennessee perceive the effectiveness of the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model?
2. How did elementary principals in Tennessee perceive the efficiency of the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model?
3. What did elementary principals in Tennessee suggest as changes to the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model based on prior use?
4. How did elementary principals perceive the implementation of the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model has changed their leadership style?

Role of the Researcher

Qualitative research includes the study of human beings. With the researcher being the primary investigator in these qualitative studies, there is a potential bias that must be addressed (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2003). The researcher must always be cognizant of these potential biases. This researcher, at the time of the study, served as a director of schools in Tennessee with the responsibility for supervising principals in charge of administering the state teacher evaluation process. A component of the evaluation instrument that I implemented to evaluate principals included a rating system that scored how well principals administered the TEAM evaluation for teachers in their respective schools. Prior to my experience as a director of schools, I served as a supervisor of instruction, principal. and assistant principal. In these roles I evaluated teachers using the former state evaluation model. These prior experiences provided me with insight to the

changes and processes in teacher evaluations. My experience presented both bias and strengths. As such, my biases were bracketed through field notes, clear analytic memos, and peer debriefing; however, my experience also served as a strength to the study because I fully understood the language, setting, and process of teacher evaluations in Tennessee, equipping me to spend less time asking for clarification and explanation about the formal processes and more time understanding the principals' perceptions of the efficiency, effectiveness, and personal changes that attributed to the TEAM process.

Ethics

Prior to beginning the data collection process, I obtained permission from East Tennessee State University (ETSU) Office for the Protection of Human Research Subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB). I obtained permission from the IRB (see Appendix A) to interview four principals from four different school districts asking their perceptions about the effectiveness and efficiency of the TEAM.

ETSU provided guidelines for using participants in research to protect the participants; this researcher used these guidelines and provided safeguards for the participants. First, it was explained in the Principal Contact letter (see Appendix B), which included Informed Consent, that participation was voluntary and participation could be discontinued at any point without penalty to the participant. Second, the researcher assigned each participant a pseudonym to provide anonymity. Finally, participants were notified that they would have the opportunity to member-check their interview transcription for clarity before the study moved to the next level.

Selection Criteria

The setting for this research was conducted in four different school systems in Tennessee. The researcher choose two city school systems and two county school systems with four

purposeful sampling criteria: (1) size of the school (2) socioeconomic status of the school (3) makeup of the school administration (i.e., whether or not the school had an assistant principal) and (4) effectiveness rating of teachers.

First, the selection of the participants was completed after consultation with TDOE officials from the Center of Regional Excellence Offices as well as superintendents from the four selected East Tennessee school districts to determine which principals may be the most appropriate to interview. This team implemented a maximum variation sampling strategy for the school size, and for the socioeconomic status, and criterion sampling strategy for the assistant principal and effectiveness ratings of teacher's selection (Merriam, 2009). For the East Tennessee region, the team jointly decided that a small school would be classified as any school with less than 500 students. Therefore, a large school would be a school with more than 500 students. The number of students in each school was obtained from an analysis of elementary schools in the East Tennessee region. For the purposes of this study, two schools were chosen that had population of 344 and 495 to represent the small schools and two schools that had populations of 650 and 1,250 were chosen to represent the large schools.

Second, the group of superintendents and educational leaders considered a school to be economically disadvantaged if greater than 50% of the students in the school qualified for free or reduced lunch. Therefore, a school that had a student population that had between 0% and 50% of the students that qualified for free or reduced lunch was not considered to be economically disadvantaged. Based on these criteria, the researcher choose two schools that were economically disadvantaged and two schools that were not economically disadvantaged. For the purposes of this study two schools were chosen that had free or reduced populations of 17% and 53.5% to represent the schools that were not economically disadvantaged. The two schools that

represented schools that were economically disadvantaged had free and reduced populations of 73.3% and 66.6%.

The third step involved considering if the schools had assistant principals to help support the teacher evaluation process or not. Three schools chosen for this study had an assistant principal and one of the schools did not have an assistant principal.

Sample

For the purpose of this study I chose public elementary school principals who worked in schools with at least two grade levels that use value-added measures ranging from grades third through eighth. Elementary schools that did not have at least two grade levels that generated a value measurement were eliminated from the sampling frame. For example, an elementary school that was comprised of kindergarten through third grade was eliminated because the school did not generate a value-added score. A second step to identifying the sample for the study was to identify principals who have evaluated teachers with the TEAM evaluation model. Additionally, the interviewee had to be the principal of the school for a minimum of 2 years.

Data Collection Procedures

Loudon County, Tennessee, school principals were used to pilot test the interview protocol. Three Loudon County principals were asked to participate in the interview process. During this process the researcher transcribed the participants' responses to determine how to best document and compare the data collected. Upon completion of the process, there were additional interview questions added and previous interview questions deleted. Additionally, the interview questions were reordered to ensure the interview was best suited for the interviewee.

Permission was obtained from school superintendents to interview principals in their respective school districts. Each superintendent signed permission forms at a monthly

superintendent meeting. For the purpose of this study all interviewee information will remain confidential. The researcher called each principal to explain the process and ask for participation. Additionally, a letter (see Appendix B) explaining the reasons for this study was e-mailed to them describing the project as completing partial requirements for the researcher's dissertation at ETSU.

Data were collected through individual interviews with elementary principals and a group interview with all study participants. Personal interviews were conducted at the interviewees' office; the researcher recorded and then transcribed the interviews. Upon completion of the interview, participant responses were reviewed and coded around the concepts of the research questions and then analyzed for similarities and differences.

During the group interview process the researcher choose to ask questions to each of the principals in random order with a random leader to begin the discussion process. This ensured that no one principal dominated the group interview discussion process. These notes were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Interviews. Aligned with the research questions, the open-ended interview questions allowed the respondents to speak. All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and conducted in person. The interview protocols for the individual interviews (see Appendix C) and group interview (see Appendix D) have been provided. The purpose for each of the interviews was to allow the principals the opportunity to express their opinions about the new teacher observation model in an open format that was unrestrained by the researcher's perspective or any past research findings (Creswell, 2008).

Data management. All participants in the study were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity and maintain anonymity. The participants' identifiable information was kept

separate from the interview data and transcribed notes for the study. These data were kept locked at my office, and only this researcher had access to the data collected.

Data sources. Three data sources were established from the principal interview. The initial interview provided data that the researcher transcribed verbatim. The second data source was derived from the member check to allow the principal to review the notes and provide additional insight and clarity. The final data source was compiled from a focus group interview, established in a group setting, that followed the first interview to allow all participants to provide final input related to key themes and findings about principal perceptions of the TEAM method. This group interview consisted of the four principals that were interviewed individually and allowed the principals to collaborate about the data previously collected.

Instrumentation. The interview instruments were designed to address the four research question topics of the study: the effectiveness of the TEAM model, the efficiency of the TEAM model, suggested changes in the TEAM model, and how the TEAM evaluation model has impacted principals' philosophy or leadership style. The interview instruments were designed in four stages to ensure empirical grounding and content validity.

1. A question item bank was generated with suggested questions based on the review of literature, documents circulated by the TDOE, and education experts including school supervisors, directors, principals, school board members, and teachers from different school districts.
2. The questions were grouped according to the four major research questions. These groups of questions were then reviewed by an expert panel of educators including a director, a supervisor, a school board member, and a teacher. From this pool of potential interview items, redundant questions were eliminated, combined, or selected

while others were added where the original questions appeared inadequate. Care was taken to ensure a balance of items addressing all four research questions.

3. From this set, a draft interview was developed and administered to three principals for comment, and a revised draft was developed based on the comments.
4. This draft of the interview instrument with modifications based on the principal review was then submitted to a panel of education experts consisting of teachers, school administrators, and education professors familiar with evaluation research.

Focus groups. The focus group interview instrument consisted of questions that related to the four research questions. The four principals were invited to discuss the initial findings of the individual one-on-one interview. This interview was held at an office provided by the researcher and was audio-recorded. At this point each of the participants had the opportunity to perform a member check and review the transcribed audio of the-recorded interviews to check for accuracy. During the group interview, the researcher presented common themes from principals and discussed areas in which there were some disagreement. Participants had the opportunity to reply to the questions and provide further input about their perceptions regarding the TEAM model. After the focus group interview concluded, the researcher transcribed the audio-recorded interview and provided copies to each of the principals to check for accuracy. After reviewing the interview notes, each of the principals agreed that the notes were accurate and correctly portrayed his thoughts and perceptions regarding the TEAM model. This focus group interview was centered on open-ended questions that were similar to the one-on-one interview, which further enhanced the qualitative data (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). These data are presented in Chapter 4 for further examination.

Measures of Rigor

Triangulation. Upon completion of the study, the researcher looked at all available data and establish codes and themes that added validity and credibility to the study. Patton (2002) explained that researchers would be more credible when they used multiple sources of data and analytical perspectives. The triangulation for this study consisted of a three-prong approach that included interviews with four public school principals, member check reviews to determine if the data were interpreted correctly, and the focus group interview of the four principals. This approach allowed the researcher to determine validity and ensure that the principals' perceptions were captured in the manner in which they described.

Member checks. Maxwell (2012) described member checks:

> …is systematically soliciting feedback about your data and conclusions from the people you are studying. This is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your biases and misunderstandings of what you observed. (pp. 126-127)

At the conclusion of the individual interview process the researcher provided the participants a copy of the audio transcripts. The participants then checked the transcripts for accuracy and provided the researcher with additional comments. After the review was completed the transcript was reviewed and coded a second time to generate additional insight. The researcher followed the same process with the group interviews.

Data Analysis

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explained, "Qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships

among the categories" (p. 367). McMillan and Schumacher further proposed that analyzing qualitative data consisted of a system of coding that provided an explanation of a particular phenomenon. This study implemented a coding method that provided themed categories from the principals' interviews.

Upon completion of the principal interviews, the researcher began analyzing the data. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. The data input to NVivo10, a data analysis software program. The researcher analyzed the data from the principals' perceptions of TEAM's effectiveness and efficiency, suggested changes to the teacher evaluation model, and data that referenced the principal's changed leadership style due to the new instrument.

The first stage of the data analysis began as the researcher meticulously transcribed the audio-recorded interviews. As the interviews were being transcribed, the researcher began to look for reoccurring themes. The researcher started coding each interview line-by-line. The second stage of coding, cross-comparison, continued as the researcher analyzed interviews for similarities and differences. It was during this section of the coding the researcher discovered themes that provided greater insight into the study. The third stage of the coding incorporated data collected in the group interview. At this stage the researcher asked each of the principals to come together to consider the previously recorded interviews. He addressed the common themes that the principals seemed to agree upon as well as the themes in which there appeared to be disagreement. At this meeting the principals had an opportunity to elaborate on the data. From this point, the researcher recorded the meeting similarly to the one-on-one interviews and transcribed this meeting for further analysis. These notes confirmed the previously recorded interviews and added to the data set.

The final stage of coding concluded with the group interview process. The researcher documented the principals' responses from the initial interviews. It was after this process that the focus group interview questions were generated. These questions were based upon the areas that were in need of follow up to support the data collection process; in essence, questions were asked where there were there was incomplete information. Much of the group interview focused on the potential leadership changes that the principal's described. Once the interview was concluded the data were recorded. These data are provided in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the perceptions of the implementation of TEAM for four elementary school principals in East Tennessee from four different school districts. Four research questions guided this qualitative study. Each participant completed a semistructured interview and a group interview to elaborate on his responses. The principals responded to questions about the effectiveness and efficiency of the evaluation model and suggested changes to the model. Finally, principals spoke about how the model had changed their leadership styles in education.

Case Profile

The four individual semistructured interviews occurred during the month of January 2016. After the initial interviews were completed, the participants were provided copies of the transcribed interviews. This member check provided an opportunity for the principals to ensure they were understood and provide further clarification if it was necessary. The group interview was challenging to coordinate; however, the principals agreed on a date 2 months after the initial interviews. For the purposes of this study each of the principals was assigned an alias: Principal One (P1), Principal Two (P2), Principal Three (P3), and Principal Four (P4).

The four principals came from different districts with diverse cultures. The better funded districts provided a better teacher evaluation to principal ratio than the districts that were not funded as well. Of the four districts, two city districts (i.e., a small rural town district and a small city district) and two county districts (i.e., a large urban district and a medium sized suburban district) were chosen. The researcher provided further explanation about the evaluation

requirement for each of the four principals (see Table 1). Three of the principals had at least one fulltime assistant principal which was responsible for supporting the principal in teacher evaluation process. P1 was the only principal which did not have an assistant principal to conduct teacher evaluations. Principal Four was the only principal which had lead teachers responsible for completing teacher evaluations. All of the principals had central office support to complete at least some of the teacher evaluations. Table 2 shows the teacher evaluation load of each principal.

Table 1

Comparison of Evaluations with Responsible Parties

	Principal 1	Principal 2	Principal 3	Principal 4
Required Evaluations (N)				
Total Teacher Evaluations	90	120	156	192
Evaluations by Assistant Principal	0	36	70	50
Evaluations by Lead Teacher	0	0	0	96
Evaluations by Central Office	36	6	12	21
Evaluations by Principal	54	78	70	25

Participant Profiles

P1, originally from the East Tennessee region, had worked in the same school her entire career, with 16+ years' experience and the last 3 years as the principal of the school. The principal had earned a master's degree in education. P1 did not have an assistant principal to help with administrative duties and had a staff of 20 certified teachers and more than 332 students. A majority of the teachers were nontenured and ranked at the Levels 1-3 in teacher

effectiveness. This required the principal to observe each of the teachers with at least two full-length observations.

P2 was from a school in the East Tennessee region. This principal had more than 13 years' experience in public education with the last 5 years in administration. P2 had earned an educational specialist degree. This principal had a full-time assistant which shared administrative duties such as teacher evaluations. The elementary school of P2 employed 33 certified teachers and housed 495 students.

P3 was also from the East Tennessee region and worked in an elementary school with approximately 48 certified teachers and 650 students. This principal had a full-time assistant principal which shared administrative duties including teacher evaluation. This principal had 23+ years' experience in public education with 16+ of those years as an administrator, which included experience at the elementary, middle, and high school. This principal had earned a doctor of philosophy degree in education. P3 had served as the assistant principal or principal of his current school for the past 6 years.

P4 was from the East Tennessee region and worked in a school with two assistant principals which supported administrative duties including teacher evaluations. This principal had earned an educational specialist degree. P4 had 15+ years' experience in public education as well as a background in sales prior to transitioning to the public education field; this principal had 6+ years as a school administrator with all of these administrative years at P4's school. P4 was in charge of a staff of 69 certified teachers and 1,250+ students. The principal noted that the school had six lead teachers that supported the evaluation process at the current school; this decreased the number of evaluations that administrators were required to complete. P4 had two

assistant principals which supported the evaluation process as well as central office personnel which evaluated new teachers.

Interview Data Analysis

The themes for this study evolved from coding that was identified among principals' responses to interview questions that were aligned with the study's research questions. Nvivo software was used to organize themes common among principals.

Research Question 1. *How did elementary principals in Tennessee perceive the effectiveness of the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model?*

Effective. Principals expressed differences of thoughts about the effectiveness of the TEAM model. Each of the four principals agreed that TEAM had effective areas, with consistent themes being fidelity, best practices, evidence, learning outcomes, and professional development.

The first research question referenced effectiveness. In the initial one-on-one interviews, the researcher explained that the study was seeking information about the principals' perceptions about the effectiveness of the TEAM model; specifically, was the model accomplishing the intended purpose as outlined by the TDOE? P1 said the following about the effectiveness of the TEAM model:

> As far as administrators, if they are working with your evaluators and doing the follow through. then that is where the effectiveness comes in; it just depends on how the system works. I believe the TEAM coaches have done a nice job. These are coaches provided by the state department. This is a state coach from the Center of Regional Excellence (CORE) office. Due to his support, our school was better able to implement the TEAM model.

P2 added, “Yes, the model is helping teachers improve their craft; so I would say it is very effective. Additionally, we are starting to see increases in student performances, which lead me to believe the overall influence has been positive.” P4 commented:

> Do I think a lot of thought went into it, yeah I do. It appears they did a nice job creating an effective tool. Our Lead Teachers that evaluate teachers are a great support. You can ask anyone in this building, I expect two things to happen in this building every day, teachers teach and kids learn, again, the TEAM helps with this process. The state asked for feedback to the TEAM model and made changes to related services providers, librarian rubric, and others to enhance opportunities for principals to evaluate more teachers that did not fall under the original model. The state did a nice job listening to principals to create a model that was more effective. The training required to be a certified evaluator has proven to help us as principals use the model effectively with our teachers. This supports us in our coaching conversations with teachers.

Fidelity. Each principal noted that when the evaluations were implemented with fidelity, the practices seemed to be effective. P1 stated, “It can be effective and I think a lot of that depends on the teacher and the evaluators who are administering the TEAM tool.” P2 stated, “Yes, the model is helping teachers improve their craft; so I would say it is effective, especially if the principal implements the TEAM evaluation model appropriately.” P3 said, “I believe the TEAM model is a strong tool if a school has the resources to implement it with fidelity.” P4 explained, “I think it is as effective as the people implementing it.”

Best practices. All of the principals agreed that the TEAM model provided teachers the opportunities to implement best practices into their classrooms. P1, P2, and P4 had the most to contribute this section; P3 had a single comment. Each of the four principals indicated that best

practices was a positive attribute that the TEAM model provided for principals and teachers. P1 stated:

> The TEAM model started out with what are teachers doing, or at least that was our interpretation, it has now evolved into looking deeper at what students are doing; which is what is important…This allows the administrators more time to coach new teachers and help them continue to improve their pedagogy…The TEAM model supports best practices in the fact that it allows principals and teachers to have open and honest conversations about what is going well and what we need to improve upon.

P2 indicated:

> Now teachers actually sit and have long conversations about how they can improve. They want to know what areas they did well in regards to the rubric and to whom they may be able to help in the building and where they can improve themselves. This model is based on work from NIET. This organization has placed considerable time and effort into creating a product that supports teachers and principals. In my opinion, this was well done by the state department of education.

P2 continued to explain, "The TEAM model has provided a framework that is easily understandable by teachers and principals. Therefore, there is common language about expectations. To me, this makes the process much more effective."

P3 agreed that the TEAM model provided for best practices as well, stating, "Every bit of the TEAM evaluation instrument is good and every bit of the evaluation instrument is based upon good research."

P4 explained, "Ironically, with improved instruction we don't have as many off task behaviors so we don't deal with discipline as much." P4 also stated, "So, we thought of the

TEAM rubric in regards of planning, instruction, and environment as a way of having common jargon around best practices." Additionally, this principal stated:

> I knew best practices based upon Marzano. They were really sort of disconnected. The TEAM model brought them all together. Some families value sports, church, and other things. As a school family we value two things: achievement and growth of our kids and quality instruction the TEAM has helped with this line of thinking. This research-based product is also based on the work from NIET. Our administrative group has studied the work from NIET and are pleased with the research they produce and certainly believe this is evidenced in the TEAM model.

Evidence. The principals described evidence as a two-fold meaning. First, it was a tool that supported the work the principals were doing with the evaluation. For example, if they observed a teacher and provided a score for an indicator, this was evidenced by the rubric from the TEAM model. Second, the work teachers provided was evidence that the teacher was implementing the model appropriately. P1, P2, and P4 had comments for evidence.

P1 explained, "It forces you to go into the classroom and see what is going on." P1 felt the previous evaluation model had not provided this type of structure and support for teachers from their principal.

P2 shared:

> Scores are based upon evidence as compared to opinion. Teachers are able to see what took place during an observation and the rubric justifies the scores…the self-reflection is an effective piece of the evaluation instrument because teachers can explain why they do something particular, which can clear up confusion that the evaluator may have.

P2 concluded, “The model isn’t perfect, however, it does provide talking points that support the principal’s scoring as they work with teachers to improve their practices.”

P4 shared:

> Teachers would sometimes say I don’t agree and I would feel as though I was not sharing evidence. I couldn’t understand why they would feel there was room to disagree with the facts; this model provided a way to prove what a teacher was doing well and what they needed to improve upon.

P4 further stated, “The evidence collected with the TEAM model assists the principal in tough conversations. For example, if I score a teacher at a level one or two then the model supports why I scored them at this mark.” P4 concluded:

> The state sends us reports to help us understand how closely aligned our classroom observations are in regards to the teacher’s TVAAS. When we are in alignment it shows teachers in my building and district that we are working through this process well.

Leaning outcomes. Each of the four principals described learning outcomes as an important piece of the evaluation. They described these outcomes as improved student achievement.

P1 had the following to say about learning outcomes, “It has made a good stab at what student behavior should be in a lesson.”

P2 explained, “The TEAM model has proved to push teachers to achieve a level five in all areas, based on my experiences. This has proved to help students achieve more academically.” P2 also specified, “The model seems to push teachers to score higher on the rubric than they did during the previous evaluation. This seems to have helped improve our test scores for students as well.”

P3 said, “There have been a couple of teachers in my building that have needed more assistance in regards to improving student achievement and this is where the evaluation model has helped us realign what they are doing in the classroom.”

P4 stated, “We are seeing improved instruction in our building. With improved instruction we are also seeing improved student learning, which is our ultimate goal.” This principal continued to elaborate to say, “Sometimes people look at it like a four letter word, however, it can absolutely change the culture of the school system to improve student outcomes and if it does then that is the sole purpose of our jobs, right.” P4 concluded

> We don’t talk about the model as an evaluation model. The connotation seems negative and intrusive. If we get better, the only way we get better is if the quality of our instruction improves. I think they made the connection early on, this is how we improve our student learning outcomes.

Professional development. The principals which were interviewed described professional development as an opportunity for teachers to improve their craft. They all seemingly agreed that the TEAM model provided professional development opportunities through the rubric. They also agreed the model allowed and supported the need for educators which are strong in an indicator to work with educators which need improvement in a similar indicator.

P1 explained that professional development enhanced her teachers’ ability to improve student achievement. This principal explained, “If the teacher is willing to take the feedback coming from the evaluator and then develop a plan and try to improve himself or herself then it has proven truly be effective.” P2 explained:

> We can take the data from the evaluations and implement specific and differentiated after school training to support teachers in their deficit areas. We can also take the information

and share with others in our district like administrators, staff, coaches, etc. to better support our teachers improve in all areas. These personnel can then use this data to informally observe the teachers and coach them for better practices. This also allows us the opportunity to assign teachers that are weaker in specific areas to teachers that may be strong in a specific indicator. As far as strength, we can take the data and give it to the coaches so they can coach the teachers as they see fit.

P3 agreed that professional development was important. He explained, "I think it can help teachers improve their teaching strategies if they implement the suggestions from principals." P4 replied:

> It gives us a venue to provide a great deal of formal and informal feedback all the time that will contribute to the growth of teachers. It's just about what you value. I think here it was a paradigm shift in terms of our roles. We are not managers; we are instructional teacher leaders as administrators. The TEAM model allows us to connect educators together for the purpose of strengthening each other professionally. For example, if an educator is strong in the indicator of grouping then they could lead a professional development session in our school. The TEAM model supports professional development because it allows me to see who in my building needs extra support. This process allows me to narrow our staff development so we can personalize our professional development.

Based upon these comments, the principals appeared to agree that the TEAM model brought several areas of strength to the new teacher evaluation model. There seemed to be consistency in the principals' interviews that would suggest they believed the model to be effective.

Ineffective. The ineffectiveness of the TEAM model was also addressed with the principal group. Two principals had comments about the ineffectiveness of the TEAM model. These principals spoke positively about the model in the aforementioned text; however, the following comments provided input about areas in which the model may be improved.

Stress. P1 offered the following statement about the TEAM model's ineffective area, specifically stress, "However, in day-to-day operations, especially since we are self-contained, it is challenging to hit all of the indicators contained in the rubric is asking for on a daily basis on seven different subjects. It's just not feasible." P1 also explained that it was challenging for some of the experienced teachers to adjust their teaching styles to fit the new teacher evaluation model. P1 specifically stated, "Some of my veteran teachers look at the model like a dog and pony show and it has been challenging to get them to change." When considering the teachers' stress levels in regard to the rubric, the principal offered the following statement, "Some of my teachers feel they may be fired if they don't perform well. This stress causes them to perform poorly and not have as much buy in."

P2 added, "In regards to the weaknesses, I believe that all teachers want to be a level five teacher in all domains, which sometimes causes stress to teachers." The principal went on to say, "This stress can sometimes cause friction between the teacher and principal."

Special area teachers. P1 felt the model seemed disconnected in regards to the difference between the regular and special area teacher evaluation. The principal explained:

> We have seen the biggest disconnect between the rubric and our small group or special area teachers because of the time constraints. About 20% of our students are special education. They have a limited time with each student and this makes it difficult to use the model effectively or efficiently. P2 said:

> I believe there needs to be a rubric built more like the regular teacher evaluations that principals can do rather than them having to record something and having to send it off to be scored. As a principal, I would be interested in the training for that rather than them having to send it off because I believe the feedback would be timelier on those evaluations.

Data. P2 also had concerns about the lack of student data in the principal evaluation. P2 explained that the data were present for TVAAS, however, they were not as prevalent in the classroom observation. P2 explained:

> I know you are evaluating the teacher and there are parts of the rubric that mention what the students are doing during the lesson; however, there needs to be more indicators that address what the students are doing and how well they are preforming. There should also be more of a data discussion piece. During the post conference teachers should be able to bring their data to show how well students performed on the lesson that was observed. The teacher should then be able to speak about what modification, if any, were made after reviewing the data.

Time constraints. P1 added an area of constructive criticism by saying, "I think that sometimes teachers' evaluations are hindered due to time constraints, even if the evaluator is there for an hour or an hour and a half. I would like to see a continuance." P1 communicated appreciation of the process, however, the principal explained the process could be altered slightly to improve the opportunities for the teachers. P2 explained, "I know you can extend your time past 50 minutes but I would like to be able to go back the next day and see the continuance of the lesson. This would provide me greater insight than a simple snapshot."

Research Question 2. *How did elementary principals in Tennessee perceive the efficiency of the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model?*

There was variation among the principals interviewed. Two of the principals expounded the model was efficient. These principals explained the model was research based and appropriate for use as it was designed. However, the other two principals stated it could have been more efficient by changing the number of evaluations that are currently required, lessening the amount of paperwork, and improving the teacher evaluation-to-principal ratio that exists in their current buildings.

Efficient. For the purpose of this study the researcher determined efficiency as what resulted if TEAM model accomplished the purpose of evaluating teachers in a manner that was well organized and not wasteful of the principals' and teachers' time.

Time management. When thinking about time management, P1 stated:

> I personally believe that a good principal should be in classrooms regularly. For me, this model seems to be very efficient. As I have had the opportunity to learn the TEAM Rubric, I have been able to decrease the amount of time I spend comparing and contrasting my classroom notes to the rubric when comparing indicators to levels. P2 stated:
>
> The TEAM model requires me to be in my teachers' classrooms often; however, I believe this is the right thing to do as an instructional leader. Additionally, I believe the model is structured in a way that provides a smooth flow from the classroom lessons to feedback from me. I can't think of a better way to spend the day, as a principal, than working with students and teachers. Therefore, this model is absolutely fine, in my opinion. In regards to efficiency, I believe this model is very efficient. Principals should be in teachers'

classrooms. How else would I be able to know they are delivering instruction appropriate for our students?

P4 concurred by saying:

> I didn't know the indicators and descriptors when I first started evaluating teachers. Now fast forward 5 years later, I know the rubric and now can have a conversation with anyone. I can stop in the hallway and have a conversation with a teacher about any piece of the rubrics, planning, instruction, and environment. Now I get how questioning is related to academic and how that is related to feedback and how that is related to thinking and how that is related to problem solving and so on. I'm spending considerably less time now than when I started this process. Even when I am gathering evidence I'm categorizing the lesson in my mind as I'm watching instruction. Icouldn't do that a couple of years ago.

TEAM rubric. Three of the four principals described the TEAM rubric as being appropriate for evaluating teachers and, therefore, seemed to be efficient. Only one of the principals disagreed with the TEAM rubric's efficiency.

P1 stated, "The TEAM rubric has provided a common place for me to help teachers understand why we are doing what we are doing. It is simply providing for best practices." This principal also stated, "The TEAM rubric provides a solid framework for teachers to base their lessons upon." P2 shared:

> The rubric provides an opportunity for me to provide evidence as to why I am scoring a teacher a certain way during her evaluations. This model provides common language for our staff and opportunities for us to grow together. It allows me the opportunity to point teachers that are weak in one indicator to teachers that excel in that same indicator. They

> want to know what areas they did well in regards to the rubric and to whom they may be able to help in the building and where they can improve themselves…I love the fact that the Tennessee State Department of Education has provided an instrument that is common across the entire state. This ensures that my teachers are getting the same coaching as compared to teachers across other county lines.

P4 stated, "The TEAM rubric is based upon research and best practices. This is a solid tool that provides us common jargon in which we can enhance our teachers' abilities." This principal also explained, "So, we thought of the TEAM rubric in regards of planning, instruction, and environment as a way of having common jargon around best practices. Simply stated, it is just about best practices." There were several times throughout the interview that P4 noted the TEAM rubric was based on best practices and research that supported teacher development and improvement. This principal explained:

> This model makes it easy for me to help teachers understand where they are in need of improvement and also point to areas in which they are excelling. The fun part is paring teachers up so they can help each other improve their craft. In my building, we have an atmosphere and attitude that everybody can learn. We expect that all of us are better than one of us and that we will improve as a unit and therefore are a better staff for our kids.

Professional development. Only two principals commented about the model being efficient in regards to professional development. P2 and P4 agreed that TEAM provided a way for them to organize professional development for their teachers in an efficient manner. P2 explained, "The evaluation model provides my school an opportunity to group teachers together based on strengths and areas of weakness. Therefore, I try to pair my weaker teachers with teachers that are strong in a particular area." The principal continued, "The evaluation system

has really supported our Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) better than most work we have had in the past."

P4 also commended TEAM for the professional development happening in the building. The principal explained:

> I have used indicators to lead professional development with all of my teachers. I believe that no matter how strong you are you can always get better. We started with the indicators and lead a professional development session each month on an indicator. My teachers have seemingly loved this activity and it has proven to be effective and efficient as we are improving student data.

While the overall impression of the principals was split regarding the overall efficiency of TEAM, during the group interview all four principals agreed that at least parts of the model were efficient. All of the principals agreed that the model would be efficient if schools had the supports in place to support the evaluation system. When the group of principals interviewed together, they tried to define the amount of support each school should have in regards to a ratio between assistant principals and teacher; however, after some time decided there were too many variables to determine an exact ratio for each school. The principals agreed that schools should also have support from lead teachers that helped evaluate and mentor nontenured teacher as well as Level 1 and Level 2 teachers according to the evaluation model.

Inefficient. For the purposes of this study TEAM was classified as inefficient when it was not fulfilling the intended purpose—evaluating teachers—in a manner that was well organized or if it was wasteful of the principal's time.

Team rubric. P3 explained, "The TEAM model took a great deal of work by a lot of professional people. However, there is simply too much for me and my assistant principal to complete in a year and still complete our other administrative duties." He continued to explain:

> I believe this model was founded on best practices that were research based. However, the rubric is too cumbersome for me to implement with fidelity across all of my teaching staff with only one assistant principal. In today's society when we are seeing more and more societal issues it is challenging to stay caught up on administrative duties that are required of me on top of the TEAM evaluation. I would like to be able to say I do a great job with the model. However, to be honest, it is challenging for me to implement it the way in which the state intends for me to do, especially with all of the other burdens that I have on a daily basis. In addition to it being a challenge to work within my schedule, it is also a challenge for my teachers. They are becoming more and more frustrated with the process. Not all of my teachers feel they need to work through the rubric and often feel as though they are doing it for show as compared to what they believe they need to do in order to sustain student learning.

Paperwork. Again, the results from the principal interviews were divided in regards to the model being efficient. P2 and P4 stated the model was efficient and P1 and P3 stated the model could have been more efficient with the amount of paperwork and length of time required to complete each component. The two principals that explained TEAM was inefficient stated the paperwork was burdensome and the time requirements were too challenging when coupled with other daily administrative responsibilities.

Two of the principals cited the paperwork as being too burdensome. During the interview process, P1 stated:

> I think a weakness of the model is the amount of paperwork and time that it takes to complete a singular observation correctly. It helps improve their teaching but it is also burdensome on the administrator. The model could be more efficient. Abetter use of our time would be to reduce the number of full observations and increase the number of informal walk through observations…So, it would be safe to say that I spend at least two and a half hours or more per observation, maybe closer to three hours if you include follow up meeting time and preobservation meetings. More than 100 hours per school year for my observation load. It is really tough on small systems to complete all of the required evaluations and the other administrative responsibilities that are required by the state and local leaders because we don't have enough personnel.

P3 stated:

> I simply cannot keep up with all of the paperwork with as many teachers as I have. It seems like my assistant principal and I do evaluations all the time and can't catch up on our other administrative duties due to the amount of time we spend completing paperwork. I simply can't keep up with the workload.

P3 continued to express frustration over TEAM in regards to the way in which he believed it should be implemented. He explained:

> The model is research based, however, I simply don't have the resources to complete it with fidelity. I do use it well for my struggling teachers. However, I just go through the motions for my strong teachers, as they don't need as much help. If I had the resources that other schools had then it would be more efficient. For example, if I had an additional assistant principal and lead teachers to support the evaluation process then we would be

fine. However, without these additional supports it is nearly impossible to make the model work with the number of teachers that we have in the building.

Stress. P1 and P3 explained the stress of the model made it inefficient. There were two different types of stress the model seemed to cause—stress for the principal in regards to the amount of work load and stress between the principal and teacher due to a conflict of opinion of evaluation scores. P1 stated:

> The model works well for the most part, however, it has caused some stress for my teachers. An area that is particularly challenging to me is when teachers continually score themselves higher on the rubric than I score them. This seems to cause great stress between them and me. We did not have this friction before the new state evaluation model. I am seeing a large number of teachers inflate their self-scores. This causes conflict between us as our scores don't match when this happens. It seems like I am the bad guy when I have to tell a teacher they are not as strong as they believe themselves to be.

P3 shared:

> It is somewhat frustrating to me when I know this is a solid evaluation system for teachers with a great deal of research to support the model. I also know it can be very efficient if you have the right amount of resources. I have witnessed it be successful in schools that have resources. However, when you don't, as is our case, it makes it significantly less efficient, at least in my opinion.

P3 continued by saying this was not only causing frustration to the administrative team but also to teachers.

There have been several times that I thought my great teachers were going to leave the profession due to the stress this new evaluation system placed on them. I have had to calm them down with several techniques. I present to them in faculty meetings, send out memos, and have informal meetings while passing in the hallway about how well they are doing. I continually encourage them to be strong and know that we will get through this together.

Ratios. P3 explained:

The model is not efficient in regards to our evaluator to teacher ratio. I go back to the fact: if you have TAP resources then I believe it can be very effective. However, with our limited resources we are just getting it done. The entire process is great and one that appears to be research based, however, there is just too much for my school administration. If we had what NIET intended for us to have then it would be a perfect fit for all schools, in my opinion.

During the group interview, P3 explained:

I do think this has added quite a bit of stress to the principal without the additional funding to support the mandate. To me this is like an unfunded mandate. I believe the model was designed to have additional supports like teacher leaders and teacher evaluators. We simply do not have funds in my system to support that type of infrastructure and, therefore, do not believe this model is efficient in my school.

Both P1 and P3 agreed there is a need for more administrative support in their schools. Neither of these schools had lead teachers which could help evaluate their teachers. Also, both explained their teacher to principal evaluation ratio could have been improved. If it was

improved they explained it would have been easier to implement the model the way the state intended.

Research Question 3. *What changes did elementary principals in Tennessee suggest be made to the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model?*

Each of the four principals interviewed had suggestions for changes to TEAM. The principals stated if these changes were implemented, it would improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the model.

Number of observations. Two principals suggested a need for changing the number of full-length observations for teachers based upon their level of competency. P1 suggested, "The TEAM model requires too many full observations." P2 went on to say, "I would prefer to do 10 walk through evaluations a year as compared to four major evaluations that take up so much time." The principal elaborated:

> When I do walk through evaluations I get a better sense of what is really going on in a teacher's classroom on a daily basis. Sometimes a teacher can fool a principal with a dog and pony show evaluation. However, if I have the opportunity to see a teacher on a more regular basis then I can establish a better picture for the instruction that is going on in their classroom. To me, it makes better sense to allow principals to have this as an option. I could understand if a principal did not want to exercise this option and wanted to keep the full-length observations as they currently stand. However, those of us that would like to do more walk through observations should have this option available.

P2 stated, "I would like to add walk through observations for my professionally licensed teachers that ranked between levels two to four." Additionally, the principal explained:

> I believe the teachers with a level five observation scores believe they have more observations than teachers that have levels less than a level two to four on the professionalism license. They really don't have more evaluations. They only have the one full-length observation with the walk through observations. However, they believe they have more observations.

P2 went on to say, "It would be nice to add walk through observations to level two through level four teachers to make their evaluations look more consistent with level five teachers with an added full-length observation."

P3 had the following thought, "Every indicator is good stuff, but there is too much. We need to find a way to simplify." He expressed that the paperwork for the process was too challenging if the principal did not have enough support. He continued by saying:

> As the principal, I should be able to limit the number of evaluations that a level three teacher would be required to complete as compared to a level one or two teacher. The state considers a level three to be on a level that is preparing students for college and career opportunities or at expectations. Therefore, they should not be required to be as accountable as teachers that are below or significantly below expectations. A teacher that is above expectations should have an evaluation cycle that is less than that of a teacher that is at expectations and a teacher that is significantly above expectations should have an evaluation cycle that was the least rigorous of all of the teachers.

These three principals suggested that adding walk through observations to all levels of teachers and allowing principals the autonomy to reduce or replace the number of full-length observations would make the process more equitable and manageable given time constraints.

Length of observation. Both P1 and P2 reported they would change the evaluation cycle to allow for a 2-day continuous observation of a singular lesson if the teacher made that request. P1 stated:

> I would like the option to continue the evaluation the next day. I know you can extend your time past 50 minutes but I would like to be able to go back the next day and see the continuance of the lesson. This would provide me greater insight than a simple snapshot.

P2 stated:

> It is so difficult to complete an evaluation in 30 to 45 minutes. So, I have explained to my teachers that I will stay in the classroom as long as it takes to complete a lesson, whether it is an hour or an hour and a half or even if the lesson runs over into the next day.

These principals explained that the state recommended around 50 minutes for an elementary lesson. However, there are times these lessons will be extended and the teacher will not be able to reach all of the indicators during that school day. Therefore, these principals suggested being allowed to go back the next day to finish up the observation.

Preconferences. P1 stated, "I would cut preconferences out altogether. As a former teacher, instructional coach, and now principal for the past several years I know my faculty and kids enough to cut this process out." The principal also suggested cutting the preobservation meeting and everyone at the school was familiar with each other and the principal was a former teacher, a former instructional coach, and a principal at the school for the last several years.

Unannounced vs. announced. P1 also noted another suggestion of making all of the observations unannounced as compared to half of them being announced. P1 reported that this style would show what true teaching and learning looked like as compared to a teacher being

able to prepare ahead of time. P1 specifically stated, “I have found that the unannounced observations are more effective and a better indicator of what happens in the everyday classroom as compared to the announced observations where I see a lot of canned lessons or at least they seem to be canned lessons.”

Additional student data. P2 also conveyed that the process should have included more student data. P2 shared:

> We went to an NIET training that focused more on the student aspect of the evaluation. I think that I would like a little more of a student component in the evaluation process. I know you are evaluating the teacher and there are parts of the rubric that mention what the students are doing during the lesson; however, there needs to be more indicators that address what the students are doing and how well they are preforming. Teachers should be able to explain to the principal how the students performed on an assessment and then be able to paint a picture of how the instruction will continue or be altered because of the data. This would allow us to make better data driven decisions that were in the best interest of our students.

Another suggestion from P2 was to create a rubric for special area teachers that were similar to general education teachers. P2 explained, “They currently have the opportunity to send off a portfolio; however, I feel this is not creating a learning environment that is consistent in my building.”

Evaluation redesign. P3 explained that he would like to have seen the model simplified overall, especially for teachers who have proven to be successful. He stated:

> I think for a level one or two teacher this model is beautiful. For a level three we could step the model back a little bit. For a level four step it back a little more as well. For a

level five who is a consistent five year in and year out, I might go back to a formal evaluation once every 3 years.

P3 did express frustration with TEAM due to the time constraints and the amount of paperwork was required for principals and assistant principals. He expressed that he felt this model was effective and would be considered efficient if he had more supports in place. He referenced a neighboring county stating, "This district was doing it right," with the amount of supports this district had in place for the teacher evaluation process.

Rebrand. P4 shared:

I think because it is research based and it is based on best practices I don't think there is anything that I would add to or take away. It is almost like the Bible in the fact that it is a solid foundational platform.

P4 did say that even though the principal believes the model was developed appropriately, the state should hold principals accountable for the way in which they evaluated teachers. "I believe that we may need to rebrand or remarket the model kind of like we need to hit the reset button and reestablish the intent so that people understand the intent." P4 concluded by stating, "If the student data returned poor for a school then the principal should not have several teachers under their leadership that were evaluated at the highest level possible with the rubric."

Research Question 4. *How did elementary principals perceive the implementation of the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model change their leadership style?*

Because of the differing experiences of the four principals, responses related to this research question were more varied than the previous questions. Each of the principals' leadership styles created difference in responses. P1 shared, "You have to pick and choose which hat to wear on a daily basis. Am I going to be the instructional leader or the

administrative leader or am I going to deal with student discipline that day." P1 explained the evaluation piece was better than the previous evaluation model. This principal went on to share, "This current evaluation piece takes a considerable amount of time to complete with fidelity. However, it does provide better for teachers than anything we have ever had." Further, the principal stated, "After the evaluations are complete, little time is left in the school day to manage all of the other administrative tasks, which require me to complete them after the normal workday," especially because this principal did not have an assistant principal to support the school. P1 did not complain about the extra time required to complete the observations; however, this principal stated that being a better leader would have been possible if better supports had been in place to help with either the administrative duties or teacher evaluations.

During the group interview, the researcher asked the questions to principals about their leadership styles in relation to TEAM. P1 explained, "I do believe that everyone that is a principal should be in teachers' classrooms regularly. I believe this was what I did previous to the state implemented model because it was the right thing to do." P1 also explained during the group interview:

> I would probably cut the number of evaluations down and refine the model. While I spent a good amount of time in teachers' classrooms before the model, I don't necessarily believe that all teachers need as many evaluations as they are currently required to receive. I believe that I would treat many of my level 3 and 4 teachers like the level 5 teachers are currently treated in regards to the evaluations they are required to receive. The state refers to level 3 teachers as those that are meeting expectations. Therefore, it seems like we should be able to lighten the amount of observations for these teachers as well as the level 4 teachers that are above expectations. Additionally, it is not

appropriate, in my opinion, to do the preobservations for all of the evaluations. I know my kids and my teachers. Therefore, it is a waste of time to have so many preobservations. One more thing that I would do would be including more walk through observations. I believe that we could replace a full-length observation with a walk through and be just as effective in our observation structure.

P1 responded that the new TEAM had improved overall student achievement. P1 stated:

> Yes, this new state evaluation system has contributed to the increase in student achievement. I'm sure that there were other factors that contributed as well; however, I believe the TEAM model seemingly put everything a teacher and principal need to be successful in one spot. I can now work with teachers that are above average and below average using the same rubric. It helps me to assign professional development based on a model that has been researched and proven to be best practices.

P1 explained TEAM had helped to create PLCs. P1 noted:

> The model has allowed me the opportunity to assign professional development based on a teacher's area of weakness. I also pair weaker teachers up with teachers that are stronger in a particular indicator. This has proven to be very effective for most of my teachers. It is also a good tool for my stronger teachers as they are helping my weaker teachers and earning opportunities for their professionalism rubric in the area of leadership.

P1 explained that there was more focus with TEAM than with the previous evaluation model at the principal's school. The principal indicated:

> I was in the classroom often before the new state model. However, I didn't have as many teacher evaluations and could get more accomplished administratively. Therefore, the model has caused me to be more focused. It has really challenged me in regards to my

time management skills. Since I don't have an assistant principal to help with the evaluation load, I have to be focused on when to get in a teacher's classroom and be efficient in scoring the evaluation. If I am not efficient then I spend a great deal of time after school catching up on other things that fell through the cracks while I was observing teachers.

P1 concluded that there was not have time to have fun anymore. P1 stated, "Before the TEAM model I would take time to read to classes, play with kids during recess, have special lunches with my students…However, now it seems like I am always running around trying to complete evaluations or catch up on the discipline, return parent phone calls, or try to spend a few minutes advocating for my school out in the community."

When asked about how TEAM had changed the principal's philosophy, P2 stated, "I personally believe that a good principal should be in classrooms regularly. For me, this model seems to be very efficient." P2 explained, "This model should be the expectation for all principal in all schools across the state of Tennessee." When P2 was asked the question about time management, the principal responded, "As far as the time goes, administrators have a great deal on their plates, during the day the kids and teachers should be the priority when considering time commitments." This principal concluded the interview by stating, "In regards to my leadership style, it has changed a little in the fact that I try to reach out and give as much support as possible. I also try to make sure my support is tailored to the teacher individually and make it as specific as possible."

During the group interview, P2 explained TEAM has been the only evaluation instrument that this principal had ever administered and could not make a comparison to previous evaluation models. The principal explained, "I appreciate the way the model is grounded in research. It has

a smooth flow that presents opportunities for teachers to grow in their pedagogical approaches." This principal also stated that the previous evaluation model was used during the time the principal was evaluated as a teacher; therefore, P2 understood how the previous model compared to the new model. P2 expounded:

> I suppose it would be fair to say that it has positively influenced me since I empirically believe it is a solid, research based tool that has help teachers across the great state of Tennessee improve in their craft. I would also say the model has helped me in the realm of professional development too. I have been able to better organize our teachers into areas that are strengths for them and areas in which they need to strengthen. From these groups we create PLCs that support learning opportunities for all of our teachers. I also believe the model provides us an opportunity to have a model for best practices.

When asked if the principal would change any practices if legislation repealed the mandate for TEAM, P2 replied:

> I do not believe that I would change a thing. It is important for principals to be in teachers' classrooms to monitor instruction and provide feedback that helps provide an environment that is conducive to learning. I would continue to use the evaluation just as it is currently intended. I suppose the one thing that I would change would be to rewrite how we handle the special area teachers' evaluations. It would be nice if they were more like my regular education teachers' evaluations.

P2 shared that TEAM had impacted student achievement. The principal explained:

> The state has data to prove that the test scores have risen over the past several years that the TEAM evaluation model has been in place. I appreciate that we have had other

variables that may have influenced the change in data. However, I am convinced that the TEAM evaluation model has been a direct influencer of this positive change.

P2 stated that there was more involvement with teachers due to TEAM, stating, "I understood that all teachers had needs. However, with the rubric being so involved it helps me to organize my thoughts about how to best support them in a sequential manner."

P3 explained, "The evaluation piece has been challenging for his school to embrace because there has been so much reform in Tennessee public schools. He said, "I feel as though I am the same instructional leader now that I was before the TEAM evaluation came into play, just busier." This principal said Tennessee principals had so much to absorb with new standards, new testing platforms, new technology, and now the new evaluation. This principal did agree that the evaluation model was a solid model for evaluation and professional development of teachers and that it caused principals to be more reflective when they provided feedback to their teachers and staff. During the group interview P3 expressed frustration with TEAM. The principal applauded the efforts to create the model; however, P3 explained that the resources to implement the model were currently not in place. The principal specifically stated:

> Well, I just have to be really honest, it has been challenging for us in our building. My assistant principal and I struggle to implement the model effectively. We don't have enough support to get around to everyone like we would like to put the model to action like it was designed, through research. I do think the model is a good model, in theory. However, we just don't have the resources that were intended to implement the model appropriately.

P3 explained that he would have some relief if the state released the evaluation model. The principal continued to explain how the model had created an environment of stress for the principal, assistant principal, and teachers in the building by stating:

> The model has caused a lot of stress for me as a principal and for many of my teachers. Many of them were getting ready to leave before we started coaching them about the great things that were going on in their classrooms. This model has caused great stress for my assistant principal and me.

P3 explained that his school would be just fine if the state were to do away with the evaluation model. The principal proposed the following changes:

> I do think that we would be able to carry on and establish a good sense of success in this building. We have some really strong teachers here and I believe we could do just fine without the state evaluation system. We would develop a rubric of some sort to continue to monitor our teachers. However, it would not be nearly as comprehensive as the TEAM model. We would provide a more intensive model for teachers that are struggling. However, for our teachers that are doing a great job [we] would have a significantly different model. It seems like we may be putting our teachers that have proven to be great in a more challenging position than is appropriate just to check a box for the masses. I do agree that we need to have a model this is more intensive for teachers that struggle, however, it doesn't make sense to me that we use the same model for everyone.

P3 did not agree that TEAM had directly influenced student achievement. The principal explained there were too many variables to say the model was responsible for the change. This principal said, "Some of our practices that we are implementing seem to be just as impactful.

Some of our trainings for teachers seem to be providing more positive results from kids. Our teachers just work hard." He applauded his teachers for working hard to create solid lessons for kids. The principal concluded:

> Those are the things that they do daily to make a difference in student achievement. They work diligently in their data teams and PLCs to create an environment that is student centered. I believe these things have been most impactful on student achievement. I can't say that this TEAM model has been what has changed or positively influenced student test scores.

When asked about PLCs, P3 responded:

> I do think the TEAM model can in theory align teachers with strong professional learning communities. It is certainly research driven and supported by a solid amount of data. We also believe it is a strong tool. I think that a strong principal will take a teacher's strength and weaknesses and assign them to PLCs based upon the evaluation of these criteria. This helps us make decisions, as principals, in regards to how we use our highflying teachers to support our teachers that are in most needs of improvement. We have a lot of highflying teachers here at our school based upon their data and TVAAS information. We can partner them in a PLC framework to provide things like strong feedback or put a teacher that implements great questioning with a teacher that needs to do a better job in this area. It allows the principal to do a lot with groups in a number of areas like academic feedback or pacing or anything else that the rubric calls for. This allows us to create PLCs that support our growth mind set. However, while I agree that the state model can help create these situations, I do not believe that all school have the resources that were intended to implement this model with fidelity.

P3 explained that the new model had put an additional burden on the principal and teachers:

> I do think this has added quite a bit of stress to the principal without the additional funding to support the mandate. To me this is like an unfunded mandate. I believe the model was designed to have additional supports like teacher leaders and teacher evaluators. We simply do not have funds in my system to support that type of infrastructure and therefore, do not believe this model is efficient in my school.

The researchers asked P3 to summarize his thoughts about TEAM and the way in which it has influenced change in his principal leadership. P3 explained that the model was solid that provided many positive attributes to teachers and principals. However, he stated the model was intended to have a greater allocation of resources, namely more personnel to provide support. P3 stated:

> As far as my practice is concerned, I have to sit back and evaluate how I do my scheduling to make sure I get out to observe all of my teachers. I have to prioritize the evaluation process as more important than other items. Obviously, when this happens something else takes on a lesser role and doesn't always get the attention it deserves. This is unfortunate, as I don't believe everything gets the time it deserves due to the state department mandates. This is due to the fact that we don't get the support that we need at the building level to be as successful as I believe we could be if we had the intended supports. In addition to this, we spend a great deal of time trying to calm the morale of our teachers. Often, teachers are frustrated with the model. If they have a 1, or 2, or sometimes even a 3 associated with their teaching, in regards to the evaluation process, they become very upset. I don't always agree with the assigned evaluation from the state

> and it is challenging to keep teachers in a mental state that is conducive to teaching and learning. So, I spend a lot of time in the hallways, at faculty meetings, and sending out positive e-mails and memos about how well they are doing, no matter what the state or community have to say in regards to criticism.

The last principal to be interviewed, P4, shared that the evaluation change was challenging the way that principals and assistant principals in Tennessee were reflecting on evaluations. P4 reported that the principal and assistant principal team at the school did not get the process right when they first started, and this helped them understand why teachers did not trust the model or process. The principal stated:

> We have a fail forward philosophy here. We try a lot of things that do not work but it is ok. When we fail we try to look at what we didn't do well and improve from that. Some stuff we keep and tweak. Some stuff we ditch and consider other options.

P4's team performed mock evaluations, and the principal's team would collaborate and align their scoring rubric. Members of the team presented and compared their scores, especially when there was a large discrepancy in a particular indicator. These meetings continued until the principal team evaluated the same lessons and derived the same scores. P4 also said:

> We started to see a shift in the way in which our teachers looked at the evaluation process. There were some growing pains. It wasn't like we just woke up and it started clicking on all cylinders here. We had to be honest with ourselves as an evaluation team. There were some things we weren't doing right.

This principal took ownership of TEAM and appeared to work through the challenges to make this process smooth for the teachers. P4 also spoke about how this model helped provide as much professional development to the teachers as possible through the indicators and rubric.

During the group interview P4 stated, “The TEAM model has caused me to evaluate my teachers and really take a closer look at best practices as well as how well our teachers are implementing these strategies in the classroom.” The principal explained TEAM makes principals at the school focus on professional development in terms of where the school has areas of weakness. P4 also explained that the model helped the administrative team look at areas in which they had strengths. These reflections helped them make professional development decisions. P4 stated:

> Overall, the TEAM model has positively molded my behavior as an instructional leader. In my opinion, the principal should be the model of instruction in the building. He or she should also be able and willing to help teachers improve in their craft.

P4 explained that it would be appropriate to continue with a similar path if the state did away with TEAM. The principal explained it was a strong framework that provided for students and teachers. P4 stated:

> This model is grounded in research and best practices, so I believe it is a strong model to use even if the state decided to go away from using the model itself. I would certainly keep a rubric that is similar to the one the state has developed. Again, this model was developed around a great deal of research and I know is good for teachers. I really like the 12-point instructional rubric and the information it provides teachers; this can really improve their craft if they will follow through with the prescribed professional development. I would look at our special area teachers and try to bring them into a similar model as my regular education teachers. It seems like this is an area that we might be able to better provide for. I do think the things that successfully improve

student growth should be considered as we continually move to get better with our fail forward philosophy.

When asked about TEAM's impact on student success, the principal explained that the overall impact of the new model improved achievement. P4 initially responded that this was a tough question to answer. However, after further reflection, the principal responded:

> I do believe the TEAM model has allowed us as educators to be more focused on our practice. It has forced us as principals to be in classes more often than we were in the past. This in turn has proved to be beneficial. As one of my building's instructional leaders, it is imperative that I'm in classes helping teachers improve in their pedagogy. The model has made me think about the other areas of my job that can become a distraction. If I am not efficient in discipline, communication, and many other areas that require me to manage my school, then I cannot be as effective and efficient at I need to in order to get my evaluations complete. I will say my county has provided me the much-needed support in order to be successful with the TEAM model. With this support we are seeing great gains in our students' test scores. I am having many more coaching conversations than I did before the TEAM model was implemented. Again, this has proved to be positive for my building. I'm proud to say that we no longer have any teachers that are level 1 in regards to their evaluation. I believe the TEAM model has helped provide the instructional rubric and professional development to help our teachers move from Good to Great as Jim Collins would describe. If teachers are not improving then I should be in their classes more often. As a leader I will also have my lead teachers and assistant principals to be in their classes more as well. It is not acceptable for kids not to learn. In our building we do two things really well, first, teachers teach and

secondly, kids learn. From these classroom observations we continue to have data driven conversations to decide how to best move forward to help our students learn, that is the most important goal of our jobs. Ultimately, this process has forced our teachers to evaluate their practices in a self-reflective process and I'm also forced to provide them with more frequent feedback. This will then lead to better student scores when these practices are married.

During the group interview the researcher asked the four principals about how TEAM had supported their respective schools with PLCs. P4 responded that TEAM had provided solid guidance and templates for teachers, explaining:

> I have seen teachers learn from each other over the past few years that we have been implementing the TEAM model. We like to use our toolbox to create better opportunities for our folks to be successful with. If we want to look at problem solving in a PLC then we would lay out some guidance that we are going to be covering this area. From this point forward, it would be our expectation that our teachers that excel in the area of problem solving would take the lead and provide guidance for the teachers that struggled in this area. I asked our team to look at differentiation last year in their PLC groups. It was amazing how efficiently and effectively they worked to improve in this area. It was evident that our teachers had been comfortable with previous work that we had completed in regards to PLC and Teacher Peer Engagement Groups. From these series of meetings our teachers really pushed each other to continue to support students through differentiated instruction. They did a great job of sharing strategies about how we could be successful as a school.

P4 explained that this process has encouraged principals to be more reflective now than they were before TEAM. The principal attributed this to the fact that principals are required to provide more detailed feedback to teachers. The principal stated, "I think one of the things that I do differently is that I am more reflective when I enter a teacher's classroom in terms of how they are using different components of the model." P4 explained that as a leader the principal was constantly looking for ways in which they could help better improve teachers' craft. P4 stated:

> It is common for me to constantly consider how I can pair my teacher up that have strong areas of reinforcement with those that have similar areas of refinement. I want all of my teachers to get better. We can all get better, including myself. When we are finished improving then we should look for another career to pursue. Children deserve for us to seek ways to continue to get better.

This principal concluded that the biggest difference when implementing TEAM rather than the previous state evaluation model was the fact that principals have to be more strategic in their scheduling practices. P4 explained, "I am blessed to have two wonderful assistant principals that are fantastic evaluators as well as six lead teachers that do a wonderful job implementing the model with fidelity." The principal also explained that the central office provided a support system of evaluating new teachers annually. P4 acknowledged having a strong support staff with assistant principals and lead teachers to complete the evaluations process. P4 said:

> Due to the fact that we have no level 1 teachers and most of my teachers are level 5 teachers we are not required to do as many observations. That coupled with the fact that I have such a strong support system makes the evaluation process very palatable for me as

a principal. The evaluation process is important to me. However, there are many other initiatives that are equally important to me that I am afforded the opportunity to see about due to the great leaders that help me with this process.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Chapter Summary

In this qualitative study the researcher examined the effectiveness and efficiency of Tennessee's state-approved teacher evaluation model—TEAM. In addition, participants provided suggestions for improvement of TEAM and reflected on how TEAM affected their leadership styles, all of which are synthesized below. Participants included East Tennessee school principals in four districts with varying demographics. The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with each of the four principals and then conducted one all-inclusive group interview with the same principals. Four research questions guided this qualitative study research. Based upon the individual and group interviews, the principals found the evaluation to be an overall positive one. In Chapter 5 the researcher presented a summary of findings, conclusions based on these findings, recommendations for practice, and recommendations for future research based on this qualitative study of TEAM.

Conclusions

Research question 1: How did elementary principals in Tennessee perceive the effectiveness of the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model?

Each of the four elementary principal participants agreed that the TEAM was effective in different areas and supported their opinions with evidence from practice that indicated improved teacher evaluation data. Principals also agreed that after using TEAM scores to evaluate teacher needs, the school used this data to provide relevant and effective professional development for its teaching staff. The data for the specific needs were available from TEAM's rubrics for

instruction, environment, planning, and professionalism. Three of the principals identified the 12 indicators in the rubric—as organized in the four separate categories in TEAM—as a tool that helped teachers improve their craft.

Two of the principals attributed part of this success to the NIET. The Tennessee State Department of Education contracted with NIET after winning the RTTT grant in 2011 to help reform the teacher evaluation model. These two principals also indicated that the entire model was research based and grounded in best practices for teaching and learning. Three of the principals referenced student achievement as the greatest indicator of success for TEAM.

In contrast, there seemed to be a few areas that caused the model to be ineffective according to the principals. Two of the four principals explained the model caused stress among principals and teachers, especially with the amount of paperwork associated with the model for principals, causing them to have time constraint issues in other areas. One principal stated that the model did not fit as well for special area teachers and believed the model should have a component that considered data on the full-length lessons. One of the principals attributed improvement of teachers and students' improved test scores to TEAM; however, this principal later concluded that these successes might have been related to other factors as well. It was stated during this principal's interview that the state had embraced so many new endeavors that it was challenging to identify which should receive the credit for gains in student achievement.

During the group interview each of the principals agreed that the model was based on research and best practices for students and teachers. They continued to explain the model had improved teaching, which lead to improved student outcomes. Therefore, they deemed this model to be effective.

Research question 2: Do elementary principals in Tennessee perceive the Tennessee educator acceleration model is efficient?

All participants stated that the evaluation had evolved and commended the state for listening to principals' suggestions. They also noted that they were able to learn the model in greater depth over the years and were then better able to implement it with greater fidelity. Those principals which had more administrative support for completing teacher evaluations expressed the model was more efficient. Two of the principals explained the model would be efficient if the state provided more support, as intended by NIET, was provided to their schools with TEAM rubrics, paperwork, stress, and teacher evaluation to principal ratios. These principals explained that they simply had too many teacher evaluations to complete and not enough time to complete the evaluations along with their other school-related administrative duties. They understood that the model was based upon best practices; therefore, they stated in order to be in compliance with best practices they needed more support in regards to personnel in their respective building in order to be completely successful.

Again, the question about efficiency in regard to TEAM seemed to receive split responses from the principals. Two of the principals agreed that the model was efficient and noted that it was research based. These two principals explained that a good principal should be in the classrooms as much as TEAM requires in order to be a strong instructional leader. However, the other two principals disagreed that the model was efficient.

Research question 3: What changes did elementary principals in Tennessee suggest be made in the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model?

Even though principals seemed to feel that TEAM was beneficial to the teachers and students, they each provided suggestions for improvement. Two principals agree that the LEA

should have the autonomy to alter the number of full-length observations depending on needs of the teacher, not the teacher's tenure status. Additionally, the principals explained the teacher's previous year's evaluation level should not determine the number of evaluations required for the following year Another area these principals agreed upon was the adding walk through evaluations at the discretion of the principal and LEA

One participant suggested omitting preconferences because they were ineffective and did not achieve the intended purpose. In addition to removing preconferences, one principal recommended allowing the building level principal the autonomy to evaluate the teachers with unannounced or announced observations because unannounced observations were a more genuine picture than the announced observations. Another principal concurred, adding that the unannounced observations yielded a point or more less on TEAM than the announced observations.

Principals also suggested observations including an additional component of student data to identify student mastery during that lesson, with the teacher being responsible for explaining transition to subsequent lessons based these data-driven decisions.

Research question 4: Do elementary principals perceive the implementation of the Tennessee educator acceleration model has changed their leadership style?

Three of the four participants agreed that the new TEAM model encouraged them to be more focused on teacher evaluations and to be more aware of the ways teachers teach. The experience of performing the evaluations also encouraged the principals to provide better feedback. Because of these improvements three principals agreed they would use an evaluation with TEAM components if the state chose not to mandate the model.

One of the principals, however, stated that TEAM had not affected his leadership style. He explained TEAM was an unfunded mandate from the state department of education. This participant stated he was busier after implementation of TEAM and would revert to the previous state evaluation system if given the option. This principal suggested that he was a similar instructional leader before and after the model was adopted.

Even with the one participant disagreeing that his overall leadership style had changed after TEAM, all of the principals agreed that TEAM helped them to align teachers with PLCs and created opportunities for professional development. They agreed that the 12-point indicator rubric was a strong tool that provided a great deal of resources to help teachers with areas to improve in their craft. All principals also agreed that TEAM had been a catalyst for them to be more focused on teacher and student needs because they had to remain focused and scheduled to complete required teacher evaluations.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Data collected from the researcher's one-on-one and group interviews provided information for all stakeholders when considering effective and efficient teacher evaluation systems, including TEAM. The state departments of education and LEAs must provide funding for sufficient and qualified personnel (e.g., assistant principals, lead teachers) to ensure valid and reliable teacher evaluation cycles for their schools. Providing sufficient resources for evaluators and professional development would reduce the stress of TEAM mandates on both the principals and the teachers. Professional development opportunities should be focused on thoroughly understanding each indicator in the evaluation model and supporting teachers in areas in which they needed to improve.

LEAs should solicit this required funding and should lobby the state department for flexibility in the number of evaluations for TEAM level 3, 4, and 5 teachers. Allowing principals more autonomy in decision making based on their schools' needs would benefit all involved. Principals could focus their support on the teachers who need more guidance and base those supports on the specific needs of the individual teacher. Teachers would benefit by receiving more evaluations, which ultimately leads to more relevant support, if they are struggling in the classroom; teachers who consistently score at or above expectations do not need as much support, and reducing the number of evaluations for these teachers would allow the principals more time to focus on teachers with need.

It is the recommendation of the researcher to call for change and flexibility to TEAM. Principals should have the autonomy to have flexibility when evaluating teachers which are at expectations and above expectations according to the state guidelines. LEAs should petition the commissioner of education and the Tennessee state department of education for flexibility in regards to the evaluation cycle for TEAM. This model is beneficial to some principals but is too cumbersome to others due to limited resources. It would be appropriate for the schools that have challenges in regards to being able to adequately cover the evaluation cycle to petition for some flexibility.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was limited to four principals' perceptions of TEAM in the East Tennessee region. Therefore, the scope was narrow as the state of Tennessee includes around 1,700 principals. This study provides a solid framework to continue further research. According to literature review and research most states are currently undergoing teacher evaluation reform.

With this in mind, it would seem appropriate to expand this study. The researcher suggests the following:

1. A replication of this study should be completed implementing a quantitative methodology. Through the use of a survey, a researcher could capture the entire group of 1,700 principals across the state of Tennessee. This would provide additional insight to their perceptions of the evaluation model.
2. This study should be expanded to include lower elementary and high school grade bands. This would include a larger principal participation pool.
3. This study should compare student achievement to the TEAM model over time to see if improvements correspond to implementation dates.

Summary of Research

TEAM is a research-based teacher evaluation model implemented in Tennessee that encouraged focused assessment of teachers' classroom performance. All principals must evaluate teachers' classroom performance, and a majority of Tennessee districts have chosen this model because of its efficiency and effectiveness in supporting teachers. By providing specific indicators teachers can identify areas of strengths and build on these as well as identifying areas of weakness and seek support in those areas. Although TEAM has been a positive experience for educators, principals, those in the field implementing this evaluation model, offered specific, positive suggestions for improvement. Just as this model has improved teachers' performance in the classroom, principals also recognize that their leadership has been strengthened by implementation of TEAM. By strengthening both administrators and teachers skills, the people who benefit most from this method of best practice are the students.

REFERENCES

American Diploma Project. (2004). *Ready or not: Creating a high school diploma that counts*. Retrieved from http://www.achieve.org/publications/ready-or-not-creating-high-school-diploma-counts

Amrein, A. L., & Berliner, D. C. (2002). High-stakes testing, uncertainty, and student learning. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 10*(18).

Anderson, J. (2012). States try to fix quirks in teacher evaluations. *New York Times*, A1.

Anderson, N., & Turque, B. (2010). Delaware, Tennessee win education awards in first Race tothe Top competition. *Washington Post*.

Baker, E. L., Barton, P. E., Darling-Hammond, L., Haertel, E., Ladd, H. F., Linn, R. L., ... & Shepard, L. A. (2010). Problems with the use of student test scores to evaluate teachers. Retrieved from http://www.epi.org/publication/bp278/

Barnard, C. I. (1939). *Dilemmas of leadership in the democratic process*. Princeton, NJ: University Extension Fund, Herbert L. Baker Foundation.

Barnard, C. (1938). 1. 1938. The functions of the executive. *Cambridge/Mass*.

Bogart, C. D. (2013). *Teacher evaluation and classroom practice: Teacher perceptions in Northeast Tennessee* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Electronic Theses and Dissertations. (Paper 1777).

Boser, U. (2012). *Race to the Top: What have we learned from the states so far? A state-by-state evaluation of Race to the Top performance.* Retrieved from https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2012/03/26/11220/race-to-the-top-what-have-we-learned-from-the-states-so-far/

Burke, P., & Krey, R. (2005). *Supervision: A guide to instructional leadership*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, Publisher, LTD.

Burris, C. C., & Welner, K. G. (2011). Conversations with Arne Duncan offering advice on educator evaluations: The national push for new teacher evaluations is real: Educators should not miss this opportunity to influence policy makers with solid evidence. *Phi Delta Kappan, 93*(2), 38.

Colby, S. A., Bradshaw, L. K., & Joyner, R. L. (2002, April). Teacher evaluation: A literature review. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Coleman, E. (1945). The supervisory visit. *Educational Leadership*, 11, 164-167.

Cogan, M. L. (1972). *Clinical supervision*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice, 39*(3), 124-131.

Crowe, E. (2011). *Getting better at teacher preparation and state accountability: Strategies, innovations, and challenges under the federal Race to the Top Program*. Retrieved from https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2012/01/05/10941/getting-better-at-teacher-preparation-and-state-accountability/

Cubberley, E. P. (1929). *Public school administration...Revised and enlarged edition*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Curtin, J. R. (1964). *Supervision in today's elementary schools*. New York: Macmillan.

D'andrea, C. (2010). *Tennessee's high school dropouts: Examining the fiscal consequences.* Retrieved from http://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Tennessees-High-School-Dropouts-Examining-the-Fiscal-Consequences.pdf

Danielson, C. (1996). Charlotte Danielson's A Framework for Teaching. *Retrieved March*, *3*, 2009.

Danielson, C. (2008). *The handbook for enhancing professional practice: Using the framework for teaching in your school*. ASCD.

Danielson, C., & McGreal, T. L. (2000). *Teacher evaluation to enhance professional practice*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Darling-Hammond, L., Amrein-Beardsley, A., Haertel, E., & Rothstein, J. (2012). Evaluating teacher evaluation. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, *93*(6), 8-15.

Davis, J. B. (2014). The relationship between the growth score and the overall TEAM observation rating for teachers in Tennessee.

DeMonte, J. (2013). High-quality professional development for teachers: Supporting teacher training to improve student learning. Retrieved from http://www.sheeo.org/sites/default/files/PD%20Research%20-%20High%20Quality%20PD%20for%20Teachers%2007-2013.pdf

Derrington, M. L. (2011). Changes in teacher evaluation: Implications for principals' work. *Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, *77*(3), 51-54.

Dewey, J. (1902). The school as social centre. *The Elementary School Teacher*, *3*, 73-86.

Dixon, A. (2011). Focus on teacher reform legislation in SREB states: Evaluation policies. *Southern Regional Education Board*. Retrieved from http://www.sreb.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/11s07_focus_teach_eval_0.pdf

Doherty, K., & Jacobs, S. (2013). *State of the states 2013: Connect the dots*. Retrieved from http://tinyurl.com/mzy8emf

Doyle, D., & Han, J. G. (2012). *Measuring teacher effectiveness: A look "under the hood" of teacher evaluation in 10 sites*. Retrieved from http://50can.org/sites/50can.org/files/Measuring%20Teacher%20Effectiveness.pdf

Framework for Evaluation and Professional Growth. (2009). *Comprehensive Assessment* Retrieved from https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:8X2Nolirry0J:https://www.tn.gov/assets/entities/education/attachments/tch_framework_for_evaluation.doc+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us

Fraser, M. (1994). Quality in higher education: an international perspective. In D. Green Ed.), *What is quality in higher education?* pp. 101–111. Buckingham, England: Open University Press and Society for Research into Higher Education.

Gay, L. R., Mills, G. E., & Airasian, P. (2009). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and applications.* Columbus, OH: Pearson.

Glatthorn, A. A. (1984). *Differentiated supervision*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Glickman, C. D. (1985). *Supervision of instruction: A developmental approach*. Newton, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Goldhammer, R. (1969). *Clinical supervision: Special methods for the supervision of teachers.* New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Hill, H. C., Charalambous, C. Y., & Kraft, M. A. (2012). When rater reliability is not enough: Teacher observation systems and a case for the generalizability study. *Educational Researcher*, *41*(2), 56-64.

Hoenack, S. A., & Monk, D. H. (1990). 23. Economic aspects of teacher evaluation. *The new handbook of teacher evaluation: Assessing elementary and secondary school teachers*, 390.

Horng, E., & Loeb, S. (2010). New thinking about instructional leadership. *Kappan, 92*(3), 66-69.

Huffman, K. (2011). Testimony of Kevin Huffman, Tennessee Commissioner of Education, before the House Committee on Education and Labor. *Tennessee Department of Education*.

Hunter, M. (1980). Six types of supervisory conferences. *Educational Leadership*, *37*(5), 408-12.

Johnson, R. B., & Christensen, L. (2004). *Educational research: Quantitative and qualitative, and mixed approaches* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Jonsson, P. (2011). America's biggest teacher and principal cheating scandal unfolds in Atlanta. Retrieved from http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2011/0705/America-s-biggest-teacher-and-principal-cheating-scandal-unfolds-in-Atlanta

Katz, D., & Kahn, R. L. (1978). Organizations and the system concept. *Classics of Organization theory*, 161-172.

Kotabe, M. (1998). Efficiency vs. effectiveness orientation of global sourcing strategy: A comparison of US and Japanese multinational companies. *The Academy of Management Executive*, *12*(4), 107-119.

LeTellier, J. (2007). *Quantum learning & instructional leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE

Marzano, R. J., Frontier, T., & Livingston, D. (2011). *Effective supervision: Supporting the art and science of teaching*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Marzano, R. J., & Toth, M. D. (2013). *Teacher evaluation that makes a difference: A new model for teacher growth and student achievement*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Mathers, C., & Oliva, M. (2008). *Improving instruction through effective teacher evaluation: Options for states and districts. TQ Research & Policy Brief.* Retrieved from http://www.gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/docs/February2008Brief.pdf

Kaplan, B., & Maxwell, J. A. (2005). Qualitative research methods for evaluating computer information systems. In *Evaluating the organizational impact of healthcare information systems* (pp. 30-55). Springer New York.

Lissitz, R. W., editor (2005). Value added models in education: *Theory and Applications*. Maple Grove, MN: JAM Press.

Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Sage.

McDonald, N. J. (2005). Ohio charter schools and educational privatization: Undermining the legacy of the state Constitution's common school approach. *Cleveland State Law Review*, *53*, 467.

McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2010). *Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry.* Boston, MA: Pearson.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Moran, R. M. (2013). *Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model: Teacher perceptions of one policy implementation* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange.

National Institute for Excellence in Teaching. (2011). *Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model evaluation system handbook*. Nashville, TN: Department of Education.

Nichols, S. L., Berliner, D. C., & Noddings, N. (2007). *Collateral damage: How high stakes testing corrupts America's schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education .

Nixon, G. (2011). *Tennessee First to the Top: Beginning the journey to college- and career-ready graduates*. New York, NY: Pearson.

Ostroff, C., & Schmitt, N. (1993). Configurations of organizational effectiveness and efficiency. *Academy of Management Journal, 36*(6), 1345-1361.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Phillips, P. P., & Phillips, J. J. (2007). *Return on investment* (pp. 823-846). John Wiley & Sons

Race to the Top Technical Review Form. (2011). Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/phase1-applications/tennessee.pdf

Range, B. G., Scherz, S., Holt, C. R., & Young, S. (2011). Supervision and evaluation: The Wyoming perspective. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability, 23*(3), 243-265.

Sanders, W. L., & Rivers, J. C. (1996). *Cumulative and residual effects of teachers on future student academic achievement*. Retrieved from http://www.cgp.upenn.edu/pdf/Sanders_Rivers-TVASS_teacher%20effects.pdf

Shields, C. M. (2007). *Can case studies achieve the "Gold Standard"? Or when methodology meets politics.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, Illinois.

Springer, M. G., Swain, W. A., & Rodriguez, L. A. (2015). Effective teacher retention bonuses: Evidence From Tennessee. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 0162373715609687.

State Collaborative on Reforming Education. (2012). *Supporting effective teaching in Tennessee.* Retrieved from https://www.joomag.com/magazine/score-evaluation-fullreport/01792010013890275 67?page=13

Steers, R. M. (1975). Problems in the measurement of organizational effectiveness. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *20*(4), 546-558.

Stone, J. (2015). Achievement vs. growth: "Birdshot" chart. Retrieved from http://education-consumers.org/school-performance-nationally/school-performance-tennessee/achievment-vs-growth/

Taylor, F. W. (1911). *The principles of scientific management.* Atlanta, GA: Engineering and Management Press.

TEAM Evaluator Training. (2013, July 15). *TEAM-TN*. Retrieved from http://team-tn.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/TEAM-Overview_7_15_13.pdf

Tennessee Code Annotated. (2015). 49-1-203. Retrieved January 22, 2016, from https://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/tncode/

Tennessee Consortium on Research, Evaluation, and Development. (2011). *Summary findings: 2011 Tennessee educator evaluation survey.* Retrieved from http://www.tnconsortium.org/projects-publications/evaluation/index.aspx

Tennessee Department of Education. (n.d.a). http://team-tn.org/evaluation/evaluation guidance/

Tennessee Department of Education. (n.d.b). http://www.tn.gov/education/data/TVAAS.shtml

Tennessee Department of Education. (2004). *Framework for evaluation & professional growth.* Retrieved from http://www.gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/docs/CompAssessment07-08_KAlexander.pdf

Tennessee Department of Education. (2011). *Teacher evaluation in Tennessee: A report on year 1 i*mplementation. Retrieved from http://team-tn.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Year-1-Report.pdf

Tennessee Department of Education. (2012, July). *Teacher evaluation in Tennessee: A report on year 1 implementation.* Retrieved from https://www.tn.gov/assets/entities/education/attachments/rpt_teacher_evaluation_year_1.pdf

Tennessee Department of Education. (2015a). *Student assessment in Tennessee*. Retrieved from http://tn.gov/education/section/assessment

Tennessee Department of Education. (2015b). *TEAMTN: Overview.* Retrieved from http://team-tn.org/evaluation/overview/

Tennessee Department of Education. (2016). *Suggested observation pacing.* Retrieved from http://team-tn.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Suggested-Observation-Pacing_Update-2.2.16.pdf

Tennessee First to the Top. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.tn.gov/education/about/fttt.shtml

Tennessee State Board of Education. (2014). *5.201 Teacher and principal evaluation policy.* Retrieved from https://tn.gov/assets/entities/sbe/attachments/1-30-15-I_C_Teacher_and_Principal_Evlauation_Policy_Attachment.pdf

Toch, T., & Rothman, R. (2008). Avoiding a rush to judgment: *Teacher Evaluation and Teacher Quality*. *Human Capital*, 32.

Tracy, S, (1995). How historical concepts of supervision relate to supervisory practices today, *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas, 68*(5), 320-325.

Tucker, P. D., & Stronge, J. H. (2005). *Linking teacher evaluation and student learning*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

United States Chamber of Commerce. (2007, September). Report card 2007: Overview and map. Retrieved from https://www.uschamber.com/report/report-card-2007-overview-and-map

United States Department of Education. (n.d.). *Race to the Top grant application for initial funding.* (CFDA Grant No. 84.395A). Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/phase1-applications/tennessee.pdf

Watkins, D. C. (2012). Qualitative research: The importance of conducting research that doesn't "count." *Health Promotion Practice*. Retrieved from: http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/93775/watkins2012.pdf

Weisberg, D., Sexton, S., Mulhern, J., Keeling, D., Schunck, J., Palcisco, A., & Morgan, K. (2009). The widget effect: Our national failure to acknowledge and act on differences in teacher effectiveness. *New Teacher Project*. Retrieved from http://tntp.org/assets/documents/TheWidgetEffect_execsummary_2nd_ed.pdf

Wetzel, W. Scientific Supervision and Curriculum-Building**,** The School Review 1929 37:2, 117-123

Wright, R. (2012). Recent teacher policy changes in Tennessee: Teacher evaluations. Retrieved from http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/Repository/RE/Teacher%20Evaluations.pdf

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd Ed., Vol. 5). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Zelinski, A. (2010). *Teacher evaluation panel hashes out first set of recommendations*. TNReport. Retrieved from http://tnreport.com/2010/07/09/teacher-evaluation-panel-hashes-out-first-set-of-recommendations/

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
Office for the Protection of Human Research Subjects • Box 70565 • Johnson City, Tennessee 37614-1707
Phone: (423) 439-6053 Fax: (423) 439-6060

ust be promptly informed of the change following its implementation (within 10

Accredited Since December 2005

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

September 2015

Dear Principal,

My name is Jason Vance, a doctoral candidate at East Tennessee State University (ETSU) in the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis (ELPA) program. I am conducting research on elementary principals' perceptions about the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM). The purpose of the study is to determine how effective and efficient principals perceive the model to be as well as determine if they believe there are changes that would make the model more beneficial. The committee chairperson for this research is Dr. William Flora, a professor with ETSU.

As an elementary principal, I would like to invite you to take part in this research. The department of education is always looking for ways to improve the teacher evaluation model and this research could potentially provide valuable information for them to consider.

Participation for this research will be voluntary. Any information collected will remain confidential and anonymous. Additionally, no identifying information will be released.

The survey should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me at (865) 458-4362 or at vancej@loudoncounty.org.

Sincerely,

Jason Vance

Doctoral Candidate

East Tennessee State University

APPENDIX C

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Pseudo Principal Name:_____Pseudo District:_____

How many years have you been a principal at this school?
0-2 years 3-6 years 7 or more years

Do you have an assistant principal that shares the responsibility for evaluating teachers?
Yes No

1. What recommendations do you have for improving or changing the state evaluation (TEAM) model?

2. When considering the effectiveness of the TEAM evaluation model (Is it accomplishing its purpose), what would you consider its strengths and weaknesses?

3. When considering the efficiency of the TEAM evaluation model (good use of time and effort on the part of teachers and administrators in achieving its purpose), what would you consider its strengths and weaknesses to be?

4. If you haven't already addressed this – If you could design a perfect evaluation model what components would you include, how many observations and conferences would you include, and for whom or which level of teacher would this model be appropriate.

5. Given Public Chapter 158, do you feel this is the correct direction to proceed in regards to the TEAM evaluation model?

6. How has the TEAM evaluation model impacted your school and how has this changed your leadership style?

7. Do you have any additional comments regarding the teacher evaluation in Tennessee?

   Follow-up probes may be asked depending on the participant's initial response.

APPENDIX D

GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do you think the TEAM model has influenced your behavior as a principal?

2. What would you do, knowing what you know now, if the legislators did away with the TEAM evaluation model?

3. How do you think the TEAM model has impacted student achievement?

4. How has the TEAM model helped the principal align teachers with Professional Learning Communities?

5. What do you do differently now than you did before you became so intensely involved with the TEAM evaluation system?

What is different about your practice now, given that the TEAM has taken some of your time as a principal leader?

VITA

JASON WILLIE VANCE

Personal Data:	Date of Birth: June 8, 1976 Place of Birth: Johnson City, Tennessee Marital Status: Married
Education:	Ed.D. Educational Leadership, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee 2016
	Ed.S. Instructional Leadership, Tennessee Technological University, Cookeville, Tennessee 2003
	M.S. Instructional Leadership Tennessee Technological University, Cookeville, Tennessee 2001
	B.S. Special Education Modified and Comprehensive Tusculum College, Greeneville, TN 1998
Professional Experience:	Superintendent of Schools, 2011 – Present Loudon County Schools, TN
	Assistant Superintendent of Schools, 2009 – 2011 Loudon County Schools, TN
	6-12 Instructional Supervisor, 2008 – 2009 Loudon County Schools, TN
	PreK – 5 Principal, 2004 – 2008 Loudon Elementary School, Loudon, TN
	K – 8 Assistant Principal, 2002 – 2004 Oliver Springs Elementary School, Oliver Springs, TN
	K – 12 Behavior Specialist / Special Education Teacher, 2000 – 2002 Monroe County Schools, TN
	4 – 6 Special Education Teacher, 1999 – 2000 Brown Intermediate School, Sweetwater, TN