

Summer 6-30-2015

# The Danielson Model of Teacher Evaluation: Exploring Teacher Perceptions Concerning Its Value in Shaping and Improving Instructional Practice

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THE DANIELSON MODEL OF TEACHER EVALUATION: EXPLORING TEACHER  
PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING ITS VALUE IN SHAPING AND IMPROVING  
INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE

BY

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education  
Seton Hall University

2015

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The printed pages of this dissertation represent far more than the culmination of years of study and commitment. These pages reflect the many treasured relationships I have made with inspiring people that I met since beginning my graduate work at Seton Hall University. I cherish each of their contributions to my development as a scholar and teacher. I am deeply appreciative of these individuals who have supported my work and continually encouraged me through the writing of this dissertation. Without their time and effort, attention, encouragement, thoughtful feedback, and patience, I would not have been able to see my dissertation process to completion.

To my dissertation advisor, Dr. Barbara V. Strobert, a gracious mentor, I thank her for trusting in my intellectual capacity. She taught me that scholars have a responsibility to use the privileges of academia to imagine and create a better world for both students and teachers. Her wisdom, knowledge and commitment to the highest standards inspired and motivated me. One would be hard pressed to find a better advisor. Her guidance, quick responses to my questions, editing and reading were invaluable. The time that she dedicated to my research and professional development will never be forgotten. I commend you.

I wish to thank the members of the dissertation committee, Dr. Gerard Babo, and Dr. Luke J. Stedrak for generously offering their time, support, guidance and good will throughout the preparation and review of this document. I thank them both for their encouraging words and thoughtful criticism. Your feedback has been instrumental in guiding this document.

I am also grateful to the following three educators who graciously served on my panel of experts:

Christopher Tienken, Ed.D. is a respected assistant professor of Education

Administration at Seton Hall University. He has public school administration experience

as a PK-12 assistant superintendent, middle school principal, and elementary school assistant principal. He is recognized as a researcher and author.

Michael T. Carr, M.S. my friend and unofficial mentor, is a vice principal at Hunterdon Central Regional High School. He has previous public school administration experience as an athletic director and supervisor of health and physical education. Carr has conducted professional development sessions for NJ school districts and conducts teacher observations.

Mary Beth Driscoll, M.S., my friend, respected colleague and golf partner, was in education for 29 years at the high school level. She taught at Chatham Township High School, West Essex Regional High School and Hunterdon Central Regional High School before retiring in 2014.

A sincere thank you goes to each of my professors at Seton Hall University for helping me gain wisdom through challenging and worthwhile learning experiences. I doubt that there exist professors with greater commitment, higher standards and support for such inquiry anywhere.

My sincere appreciation and admiration is given to Dr. Elizabeth Schroeder who might be the single most important person in my education as a teacher and instructional leader. Dr. Schroeder was my mentor through my undergraduate years at Montclair State University and she was the person who instilled in me the love of both teaching and learning. She gave me my first opportunity to do professional research and she literally changed my life. Besides being a great professor, mentor and colleague, I like to consider Dr. Elizabeth Schroeder a friend. I thank her for believing in me and challenging me to believe in myself.

I celebrate the fifteen dedicated high school teachers who participated in this study. Thank you one and all for your passion and commitment to better yourself and our profession. Without your willingness to be open and honest during the interviews and, to critically examine your own practices and thoughts concerning teacher evaluation using the Danielson Framework, this project would have never moved forward.

Kudos is also extended to the dedicated administrators at the participating school. Their effort and willingness to allow the teachers to share their experiences enabled me to complete my research and share with them valuable information that could help make this high schools' evaluation practices more meaningful to its teachers.

Love and thanks to my parents who taught me to love and value learning and who always made my education one of their top priorities. With their unconditional love and support, and their never-ending faith in me, they have been a great source of motivation. Thank you for encouraging me in all of my pursuits and inspiring me to follow my dreams.

Finally, to my wife Simona, who is my rock and inspiration to better myself and in doing so better my family. I promised you in my wedding vows that together, we would build a home filled with learning, laughter and love. Whatever good comes from the attainment of this goal, it is nothing compared to the joy you have given me. My world is a better place because you are in it, and I will forever love you. Thank you for loving and supporting me.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to all K-12 students who deserve an effective public education that provides them with great teachers that can empower every student with the knowledge and skills needed so that they can reach their fullest potential. I hope that each student acquires the skills to become critical thinkers, active citizens and life-long learners. May their teachers challenge their thinking and inspire them to make discoveries every day. And may we, their educators, continue to grow ourselves, and embrace and utilize teacher evaluation as a powerful tool that can improve our instructional practices to enhance the learning of all of our students.

## ABSTRACT

Since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, the school reform movement has offered many contrasting ideas and initiatives to make our nation's schools more effective and globally competitive. Today's educational leaders are faced with an array of complex demands as they are challenged at the state and federal level to improve teacher practices and learning outcomes within their schools. One of those demands for New Jersey administrators was to implement a teacher evaluation program that improves teaching and learning during the 2013-2014 school year. Mielke and Frontier (2012) believe that meaningful teacher evaluation has the potential to lead to improved instruction and professional growth and that the key to success in teacher evaluation may very well be the perceptions and attitudes of the teachers as they participate in the process. The purpose of this research study was to examine teachers' perception concerning their school's evaluation practices utilizing the Danielson Framework, specifically if these teachers believe that it is of value in shaping and improving their instructional practices.

This qualitative study gathered data from fifteen teachers from one New Jersey high school through semi-structured interviews and observations of the teachers' conversations with the researcher. The purposely-selected participants are all teachers at the selected high school representing a wide variety of content areas taught as well as a variety in teaching experience.

This research is relevant for school leaders contemplating how best to support, design, develop and implement an effective teacher evaluation system. This research can help districts transform teacher evaluation system from merely an exercise in state compliance into an effective tool that can link effective teacher evaluation to improved teacher practices.

The researcher believes that the teachers interviewed in this study perceive that if educators are given the opportunity to reflect deeply on their practice through a common framework like what is presented in the Danielson Framework, teachers can identify both their



strengths and weaknesses and set attainable goals. Through active involvement in the evaluation process, evidence-based feedback, and professional discussions between teachers and their supervisors, meaningful teacher evaluation practices can help both the school and the teacher determine the focus of each teachers' professional development based on what is actually occurring or not occurring in the classroom. The vast amounts of money, energy, and dedication currently being expended by Rolling Hills to reform their teacher evaluation system will only ensure the continuous improvement of teaching and learning if teacher learning is part of their evaluation. If a culture of meaningful evaluation, continuous feedback, and differentiated support does not already exist, then school leaders must provide the communication and actions to win over the trust of its teachers so that they all believe that professional growth is one of the schools purposes of evaluation.

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

Every person who has sat in a public school classroom recognizes the transformative power of an effective teacher. We can name the teachers who were good and which ones were very bad; the names of the ones who just did not have any impact on lives fade away over time. As said in the Talmud, “The bad teacher's words fall on his pupils like harsh rain; the good teacher's, as gently as dew.”

I know intuitively that high performing and effective teachers can help guide their students to success whether it is in further schooling or in the 21st century workplace. I also now know empirically that these effective teachers can have a direct influence in enhancing student learning (Baker et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Stronge & Tucker, 2003; Taylor & Tyler, 2012). To improve education in America, school leaders are challenged to support and cultivate effective teachers in our schools so that all children have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential. This study explores how teachers at a New Jersey high school perceived how their school's evaluation practices using Charlotte Danielson's (2011) Framework of Teaching, might address these challenges and help these teachers improve their instructional practices. This framework is designed to support student achievement and professional best practice through the domains of planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, professional responsibilities (Danielson, 2011).

#### Context of the Problem

Today's education leaders are faced with an array of complex accountability demands as they are challenged at the state and federal level to improve teacher practices and learning outcomes within their schools (Smyth, 2012; Tucker & Stronge, 2005; U.S. Department of

Education, 2009). One of these demands for New Jersey administrators was to implement a new teacher evaluation program that would improve teaching and learning during the 2013-2014 school year. Effective monitoring and evaluation of teachers is central to the continuous improvement of teachers in our public schools and is a vital step in the drive to improve student outcomes and raise educational standards across the country (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2005). Improving the quality and equity of schooling depends, in large measure, on ensuring that teachers in every classroom are highly skilled in pedagogy, knowledgeable in content, and motivated to perform at their best every day in the classroom. The call for rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills with the new Common Core Curriculum reinforces the need for improved, credible, and equitable teacher evaluation practices. Research has shown that there are good reasons to expect that well-designed teacher-evaluation programs can have a direct and lasting effect on individual teacher performance (Papay, 2012, Taylor & Tyler, 2012, Tucker & Stronge, 2005).

Depending through which lens, punitive or beneficial, teachers view their experiences with teacher evaluation, a teacher's beliefs about the purposes for evaluation can vary. A teacher may view the evaluation process as an opportunity to be validated by his or her administrator, to receive a promotion or to be denied tenure, or simply as a legal obligation to fulfill a state mandated policy. Yet, a more important purpose is missed if the evaluation system does not effectively function as a professional development tool that offers teachers an opportunity to reflect on their practices and acquire specific feedback that helps to formulate individualized development plans to improve instruction (Peterson & Peterson, 2006; Stronge & Tucker, 2003). Good evaluations should identify and reinforce good teaching and help teachers of all skill levels

to understand how they can learn more about their profession and improve their practices (Protheroe, 2002).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Highly effective teachers in every classroom, that is what parents and other stakeholders want, and certainly what school children deserve. Americans want to have the assurance that all students are given the necessary skills and knowledge to be prepared for success in higher education, the workforce, and life in the 21st century (Danielson, 2011; Rogers & Weems, 2010). If public school districts across the nation are driven by student achievement, the question becomes, What factors contribute to overall student achievement? Several factors have been identified as contributing to student achievement: student characteristics such as socio-economic status, limited English proficiency and minority status; and school characteristics like per-pupil spending, pupil teacher ratios, class sizes, and teacher quality. Of these factors, teacher quality has been found to be the most highly correlated with student learning and success (Darling-Hammond; 1999, Kimball et al., 2004; Odden et al., 2004).

The challenge that New Jersey and other states across the country have is ensuring that effective teaching practices are in every classroom and in every teacher's repertoire of professional practice. The answer lies in creating effective and credible teacher evaluation practices that are supported by a school culture that recognizes the need for improvement as an asset rather than a liability (Mielke & Frontier, 2012).

Since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (author?.1983) the school reform movement has offered many contrasting ideas and initiatives to make this nation's schools more effective and globally competitive. *A Nation at Risk* created public awareness of the "rising tide of mediocrity" (p.81) in public schools, and it heralded the need for the school reform movement. The report



offered several recommendations, including the need for highly competent, professional teachers and the need to design and implement a structured teacher evaluation procedure to identify these competent teachers (Eskro-Clemetsen, 2000).

The existing literature on teacher evaluation has identified that meaningful teacher evaluation has the potential to lead to improved instruction and professional growth, but unfortunately, in practice, this potential is often unrealized (Mielke & Frontier, 2012). There is a consensus among teachers, researchers, and school policy makers that the current teacher evaluation systems in most school districts do little to help teachers improve teacher practices and increase student outcomes (Darrington, 2011; Horng & Loeb, 2010; Howard & Gillickson, 2010; Mielke & Frontier, 2012; Papay, 2012; Phillips & Weingarten, 2013; Taylor & Tyler, 2011; Tucker & Strong, 2005).

The need for effective teacher evaluation was further identified when, on February 17, 2009, President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). ARRA provided \$4.35 billion for the Race to the Top competitive grants that allowed states to receive money for innovative projects to improve education. These competitive grants added a new dimension to the dialog on reform of teacher evaluation and created an unprecedented wave of state teacher-evaluation reforms across the country. Requirements in the application for grant monies called for teacher evaluation systems to have sophisticated, standards-based, evaluation systems and to include some form of student achievement data in the actual evaluation (United States Department of Education, 2009). Since 2009, over two-thirds of the states have made significant changes to how teachers are evaluated (Bornfreund, 2013).

This nation's focus on teacher evaluation also stems from a series of reports and studies that have been critical of the current status of educator evaluation across the nation and in New

Jersey ( New Teacher Project 2009; Donaldson 2009; National Council on Teacher Quality 2010). Among the most prominent concerns these studies raised were that current teacher evaluation policies and practices:

- are cursory, perfunctory, superficial, and inconsistent,
- do not provide educators with adequate feedback for improvement,
- lack sufficient connection to goals of student learning and growth,
- fail to differentiate levels of educator effectiveness,
- did not contribute to professional development as based in the needs identified in the evaluations, and
- do not place a high priority on the evaluation process and the instructional leaders were poorly trained.

These failures are particularly significant because they make it difficult for school districts to capitalize on the knowledge and skills of highly effective teachers and promote their professional growth and continuous learning. Research conducted by the New Teacher Project (2009) surveyed teacher evaluation systems in (14 large American school districts found that 98 %-of teachers were evaluated as satisfactory. And nearly every teacher is labeled *good* or *great*, no matter how much progress their students are making or if their school is considered as failing. Some teachers spend time planning new and dynamic lessons, while others simply do the bare minimum. “The truth is, that taking the time to create fascinating lessons, results in no recognition, while the failure to do so, results in no criticism” (Marsh, 1999, p.171).

Likewise, these flaws in teacher evaluation practices have prevented the identification and active support of teachers who had the potential to become highly effective with proper guidance and feedback from instructional leaders. Finally, these same flaws can inhibit the

dismissal of consistently poor performing teachers who fail to make progress, despite being provided with reasonable time, guidance, and support for improvement. Simply put, poor evaluation practices are a missed opportunity for the promotion of better teaching, better learning, and better schools ( New Teacher Project 2009; Donaldson 2009; National Council on Teacher Quality 2010).

States and school districts across the country have responded to the need for reform. In New Jersey, lawmakers passed the Teacher Effectiveness and Accountability for the Children of New Jersey (TEACHNJ) Act on August 6, 2012. This legislation requires all districts to implement a standards-based teacher evaluation system with a student achievement indicator, as well as classroom observations using a rubric that outlines best practices. The legislation required that all districts across the state implement a new system by 2013-2014 (Hoffman, 2013). The goal of the law was to “raise student achievement by improving instruction through the adoption of evaluations that provide specific feedback to educators, inform the provision of aligned professional development, and inform personnel decisions” (TEACHNJ, 2012,).

Ensuring that there are effective teachers in every classroom across the nation will not be achieved by improved evaluation policies and practices alone, but it cannot be achieved without them. It cannot be ignored that the success of evaluation practices, like the Danielson Framework, rests in large part on the support of the teachers to build legitimacy for these reforms as they are implemented. Research has found a strong correlation between teachers’ favorable and accepting reactions to evaluation systems and subsequent optimal use of the systems to improve teaching practice (Tobin, Tippins, & Gallard, 1994; Mielke & Frontier, 2012; Donaldson & Donaldson, 2012). A teacher’s perception of any evaluation process is derived from his or her past experience with teacher evaluation. Such perceptions have the power to

shape the climate and quality of instruction in their classroom. Teachers will do what they perceive will best serve their students and themselves (Donaldson & Donaldson, 2012; Mielke & Frontier, 2012 Tobin, Tippins, & Gallard (1994).

A specific problem endemic to teacher perceptions about teacher evaluations is that many teachers perceive their evaluation as a superficial, episodic event that is disconnected from their daily classroom teaching and learning. Teachers often feel like they are placed in passive roles as recipients of external judgment (Mielke & Frontier, 2012) and believe that because of the lack of feedback from school leaders, the evaluations do nothing to help them improve their teaching practices (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

As school leaders in New Jersey and across the nation scramble to meet the deadlines and to begin the implementation process of their new teacher evaluation systems, they must make efforts to identify and change these negative perceptions. It will be with new positive experiences and new perceptions that teacher evaluation can serve its purpose and improve teaching practices and improve student outcomes. Teachers and instructional leaders need to reframe their expectations concerning the teacher evaluation process and begin to view each evaluation session as an opportunity to improve instructional practices (McGuinn, 2012). Danielson (2011) stressed that, “A commitment to professional learning is important, not because teaching is of poor quality and must be “fixed,” but rather because teaching is so hard that we can always improve it” (p.60).

A teacher evaluation system that is supported by the teachers can have great potential for improved teacher practices and improved student learning (Donovan & Bransford, 2005, Mielke & Frontier, 2012). For these teacher-evaluation reforms to succeed, state policy changes must result in changes in district practice. Evaluation needs to be seen as supportive and not punitive.

In turn, changes in district practice must change the school culture and the behavior of principals and teachers at the school level, and all these changes have the potential to deliver better teaching and improved student performance (McGreal, 1988).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research study was to examine teachers' perceptions of their school's evaluation practices by utilizing the Danielson Framework; specifically, if these teachers believe that it is of value in shaping and improving their instructional practices. It has been shown that teachers' perceptions have the power to shape the climate and effectiveness of their classrooms (Donovan & Bransford, 2005; Tobin, Tippins, & Gallard, 1994). Examining teachers' beliefs and perceptions concerning the teacher evaluation process could provide school districts with information that can help them design, implement, and maintain more effective teacher evaluation practices. When the evaluation process improves and becomes more meaningful to teachers, their perceptions may change. By understanding and attending to the teachers' perceptions of the evaluation process, school leaders can build on the features that successful evaluation practices embody and make better use of their greatest assets, their teachers, to improve learning in our schools.

Due to the current national discussion regarding teacher evaluation as a key measure for determining teacher effectiveness and student learning, the examination of new teacher evaluation practices and their influences on school improvement is an important area of study. Despite growing momentum to reform teacher evaluation, very little research has been presented that examines whether current reforms, like the Danielson Framework, have influenced teachers' attitudes or perceptions concerning evaluation practices and its potential to improve teacher classroom practices and promote professional growth.

Limited descriptive empirical research exists on teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of the Danielson Framework since the adoption of TEACHNJ Act. More research is needed to address how this evaluation process might influence teacher effort, classroom practices, and effectiveness (Taylor & Tyler, 2012). I thought to add to that much needed research.

### **Research Questions**

This study investigated teacher perceptions of the teacher evaluation process using the Danielson Framework for Teaching at a large rural regional high school in New Jersey. The following five questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson Framework is beneficial to their professional growth as a teacher?
2. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson Framework creates a forum for discussion and feedback about teaching that promotes self-reflection?
3. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson Framework helps them to change and improve on their classroom practices?
4. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson Framework improves the working relationship between teachers and school leaders?
5. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses, if any, of the use of the Danielson Model of teacher evaluation as implemented at the regional high school?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical frames that guided my work were change, social cognitive theory, and reflective practice. My first frame addressed the change process, both organizational and change for the individual teachers. Change theories guided me in understanding how school teachers and their instructional leaders might accept the changes and embrace new thinking and through effective teacher evaluation can become reflective practitioners who continually evaluate and modify their practice, not only to meet the learning and developmental needs of students, but also to keep pace with a rapidly changing society and world.

### **Design and Methodology**

After being granted permission from the school district to conduct the research, I interviewed 15 purposely selected high school teachers at a regional high school in central New Jersey. All of the instructional staff from the selected school with at least 2 years of teaching at the school were invited to participate in this research. Participants were selected from the volunteer pool so that there was a mixture of teachers from different content areas with varied teaching experience. This study was best suited to a qualitative design because it aimed to describe these teachers' perceptions about their experiences with the teacher evaluation process at the selected school using the Danielson framework. Qualitative research typically deals with a small purposely chosen group of participants who are able to provide a "rich, thick description" of the phenomenon (Miller, 2001), in this case the phenomenon is the teaching evaluation process that uses the Danielson Framework. To attract participants who were willing to openly and honestly share information about their experiences, I assured participants that I would make every effort to ensure that the data they provide could not be traced back to them. Pseudonyms were used for both the participants and the school where the participants taught. All retained files

are kept in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher's home. The files include interview notes, printed papers, audio tapes, and encrypted USB sticks.

Timing was a major strength of this study because the implementation of many teacher evaluation models, like the Danielson Framework, was taking place across the nation at the same time that the study was being conducted. The newness of the educational policy changes regarding teacher evaluation created an atmosphere of national debate and discussion as to the impact of this change. What the participants said they believed, the feelings they expressed, and the explanations they gave were treated as significant realities. This information is their perceptions of their real-life experiences with teacher evaluation at the selected high school. Qualitative research methods are best suited for uncovering understandings and meanings people assign to their experiences (Creswell, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This qualitative research also identified the factors that teachers perceived as influencing their attitudes, along with the actions taken by their educational leaders, that contributed to their overall satisfaction with the implementation of the new evaluation practices.

The interview questions were created for this study based on the review of literature and the conceptual framework of the study. After the research questions were developed, I developed interview questions within each of these major areas covered by the research questions. Questions were designed to gather the most data concerning the teacher's perceptions of teacher evaluation practices using the Danielson Framework, so that the research questions could be fully addressed.

An important element to establishing the reliability and validity of the interview questions was that the questions were reviewed by an expert panel that consisted of a distinguished professor, a practicing school administrator, and an expert teacher. The expert



panel assisted the researcher in determining if there were flaws, limitations, or other weaknesses in the interview design and allowed an opportunity for necessary revisions prior to the implementation of the study. No member of the expert panel participated in the actual research.

The data collection method employed was audio-taped, one-on-one, face-to-face interviews of approximately one half-hour in length, with each participant guided by a set of semi-structured, open-ended questions related to teacher evaluation. The aim of the in-depth interview was to achieve both breadth and depth of coverage across key issues (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2003). Although during the interview process each participant was asked the same general questions, different probes and follow-up questions were used for further clarification or elaboration (Creswell, 2009).

In the analysis of the qualitative data, I followed the seven phases of analytic procedures set forth by Marshall and Rossman (2006): (a) organizing the data; (b) immersion in the data; (c) generating categories and themes; (d) coding the data; (e) offering interpretations through analytic memos; (f) searching for alternative understandings; and (g) writing the report.

### **Significance of the Study**

Howard and Gullickson (2010) recognized the importance of quality teachers in the classroom and noted a critical need to do research to investigate possible links between teacher practices, student performance, and school reform efforts. The increased attention placed on teacher evaluation by policymakers and practitioners has been accompanied by increased attention from researchers who seek to evaluate the implementation and credibility of these evaluation systems. The Danielson Framework has sparked even more interest since it is the primary teacher evaluation process used in New Jersey.

This study is significant to current practices and existing research in the fields of education leadership as it relates to the proposed educational reforms concerning teacher evaluation. As national and state school reform initiatives support high standards and accountability for teachers, all stakeholders are encouraged or in many cases are mandated to try new strategies and methods concerning teacher evaluations to support school improvement and improve student outcomes (Attiento, Lare, & Waters, 2006). This research is relevant for school leaders contemplating how best to support, design, develop, and implement an effective teacher evaluation system. This research can help districts transform teacher evaluation system from merely an exercise in state compliance into an effective tool that can link effective teacher evaluation to improved teacher practices.

Also, the findings of this study can serve as a catalyst to open productive dialogue between school leaders and teachers about how effective teacher evaluation can best improve teaching practices to advance student learning. I agree with the Department of Education Secretary, Arne Duncan(as cited in McGuinn, 2012), who remarked: "...because teacher evaluation systems are still a work in progress, it is vital that school leaders and administrators continue to solicit feedback, learn from their mistakes, and make improvements" Research is a way to increase the pool of feedback and take opportunities to learn from the mistakes and experiences of others who have walked the same road before you.

The results of the study can help all stakeholders to examine how teachers perceive the Danielson Framework evaluation process, and whether they perceive that their professional practices are changing and/or improving from their experiences with the evaluation process and feedback given to them. Awareness of these perceptions and contributing factors can be useful to instructional leaders as they use such standards-based evaluation systems for the purpose of

instructional improvement and, ultimately, increases in student achievement. Understanding the perceptions and experiences of teachers is a critical step toward understanding any potential effects, positive or negative, to utilizing the Danielson Model to evaluate teachers. Equally important, the mere process of discussing any evaluation systems helps to focus attention on the practice of good teaching and helps to create a culture in schools where teaching is highly valued and reflects the intellectual challenges and skills that are an integral part of teaching.

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

According to Miles Bryant(2004), the author of *The Portable Dissertation Advisor*, “Delimitations are the factors that prevent you from claiming that your findings are true or all people in all times and places” (p. 57). This study has delimitations in that it is narrowed to one

large regional high school in New Jersey. Delimitations of this study are as follows:

1. Teachers who participated in the study were required to be in at least their second year of teaching at the selected high school so that they had experienced at least a two-year exposure to the Danielson Framework so that they are familiar with this teacher evaluation system.
2. This study is also delimited to the teachers’ perspective without researching their actual impact on student learning.

Bryant (2004) stated that “Limitations are those restrictions created by your methodology” (p. 58). This study had the following limitations:

1. This study included a small sample of participants from one selected New Jersey high school. The school was selected because teacher cooperation with the interviews was anticipated and the Danielson Framework was used at this school to evaluate its teachers. The information gained from this study might not generalize to other teachers or other

school districts that use the Danielson Framework (i.e., findings might be unique to the relatively few people included in the research study).

2. The sensitive nature of the information and responses obtained from the participants may have an effect on their responses. Participants may have been unwilling to respond truthfully to questions related to their level of satisfaction of evaluation practices in their current position. Teachers might provide socially desirable answers, as they might fear loss of anonymity or negative reactions from school leaders.

3. I was an employee of the district at the time of the study, and therefore participants might have been hesitant to answer truthfully and given more socially desirable answers in the fear that their identity would be revealed.

4. It is possible that the study was limited because it only attracted teachers that, by their nature, were predisposed to participate in activities for continuous improvement, which may have impacted the findings of the study.

5. This study relied on qualitative research methods. The role of the researcher in a qualitative research study is one of active participant. Qualitative research acknowledges the impact of the researcher in shaping data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Creswell, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The results are more easily influenced by the researcher's personal biases and idiosyncrasies. This limits the study's potential applicability to other researchers in other settings.

## Definitions of Terms

The following definitions provide explanations for terms specific to this study.

**Authenticity of evaluation.** Objective meaningful teacher evaluations that accurately measures the quality of a teachers' classroom practices against an acceptable standard with the intent to expand teachers' growth and professional development; evaluation should not be based on a teacher enhanced version of the lesson.

**Clarity of expectations.** A shared sense of direction so that both the teachers and the supervisors are aware of what is expected of teachers in the classroom regarding their role, behavior, and teaching strategies that stem from established school mission and goals, the curriculum, and agreed-upon learning principles.

**Collaborative professional relationships.** Positive supportive relationship between teacher and evaluator in a shared commitment to reach mutual goals, improve and expand teacher practice, and improved learning for all students. The evaluator is open and willing to help and the teacher is open and willing to improve.

**Common language.** A body of words and the systems for their use common to both teacher and school administrators. In this research, the system is the Danielson Framework with its 22 components in the four domains.

**Deliberate reflective practices.** Danielson's Framework encourages teachers to analyze a lesson one element at a time and in doing so teachers become more analytical, more reflective, and more evidence-based in their thinking.

**Focus on student-centered classrooms.** Teacher uses student-centered teaching methods in their classrooms that shift the focus of classroom activity from the teacher to the learners.

These methods include active learning, cooperative learning, and inductive teaching and learning.

Goal setting. The process of deciding on something the teacher wants to achieve, planning how to get it, and then working towards the objective

Guided growth. Teachers were helped from meaningful evaluation, supervisors, feedback, and individualized professional development grow professionally

Higher order questioning skills. Development of questioning skills that use higher order thinking skills that promote critical thinking and problem solving skills, nurture insights, and stimulate independent learning

Motivation to change. Positive perceptions concerning the Danielson Framework and the schools intended purpose for teacher evaluation so that teachers are motivated to change and improve teaching practices.

Non-confrontational open dialogue focused on teaching and learning. A two-way conversation used for an exchange of ideas, opinions, and feedback on teaching and learning that is supportive and used for good intentions for the teachers' professional growth.

Professional growth. The acquisition of new knowledge that is then transformed into the continued development of an individual. It results in a qualitative change and movement to a new level of understanding (Duke, 1995).

Rigidity. Firm precise standards used to evaluate the teacher that reflects the requirement that each component in the Danielson Framework should be evaluated in each observation.

Scoring "4 is a place to visit." Rating the teacher on a scale of 1 to 4, specifically the concept that a teacher's rule of thumb is that it is expected for a teacher to "live in Accomplished but occasionally visit Exemplary"

Structured framework for discussion. Danielson's Framework with its 4 domains divided into 22 components that offers both the teacher and evaluator a map for the evaluation, a structured discussion, reflective practice and goal-setting.

Subjectivity. Relating to the way the evaluator experiences things in his or her own mind based on feelings or opinions rather than facts.

Teachscape. Developed in partnership with Charlotte Danielson and Educational Testing Services (ETS), Teachscape Focus, a web-based service, is designed to prepare teachers for observations, professional conversations, and reflective practice. Rolling Hills uses Teachscape *Reflect* to manage evaluations entirely online.

Time constraints. Issues that place conflicting demands on time management that prevents the teacher or evaluator from putting their full effort into the evaluation process.

Time-stamping. Recording of time to give an accurate snap shot of the timing of the observed lesson required by the evaluator during the observation.

Trusted and trained evaluators viewed as coaches. School administrators that evaluate teachers and who provides ongoing, detailed, constructive feedback regarding performance in a non-threatening two-way conversation, and offers in-the-moment support to guide teacher development., these evaluators are given the continuous professional development on the evaluation process and ample opportunity to practice so that the teachers are comfortable with the knowledge and skills of their evaluator and that teachers perceive that the evaluation is authentic and meaningful

“Whole teacher.” Acknowledging, evaluating, and supporting the whole teacher, both inside and outside of the classroom; recognizing the complexity of teaching.

## Summary

Chapter I of this study presents an overview of the current state of teacher evaluation practices and the importance of investigating the potential of teacher evaluation as an overlooked tool to improve teaching practices for all teachers. The chapter identified the problem under study, identified the five research questions, identified the conceptual frameworks, stated the significance of the study, identified the delimitations and limitations of the study, and defined fundamental terms of the research. Chapter II contains a review of literature related to the teacher evaluation process. This review includes an overview of the history of teacher evaluations, meaningful teacher evaluation, teaching-learning connection, a review of current literature on problems associated with the evaluation process, teacher perceptions of teacher evaluations, teacher evaluation in New Jersey, The Danielson Framework, and what is needed in our schools for teacher evaluation reform to succeed. Chapter III describes the research design employed to conduct the study, with particular attention to methodology and technique as applied to data collection and analysis. Chapter IV presents the study results in the form of data generated and analyzed through application of the research design. Chapter V presents a discussion of study findings and conclusions related to the research questions and reviewed literature. This concluding chapter also addresses the implications of the findings for practice and future research.



## **Chapter II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter provides a review of literature pertaining to teacher evaluation, beginning with an examination of the history of teacher evaluation and continuing with an examination of the teaching-learning connection; what constitutes meaningful teacher evaluations; and the identification of potential flaws in the teacher evaluation process. This is followed by an overview of the teacher evaluation policy in New Jersey and Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching. The literature review continues with a discussion of teacher perceptions about the evaluation process, and how they perceive it to impact their classroom practices. The literature review concludes with a brief discussion of what school districts can do to better support implementation and maintenance of effective teacher evaluation systems.

#### **Literature Search Procedures**

Boote and Beile (2005) wrote that a "thorough, sophisticated literature review"(p.57) lies as both the foundation and inspiration for meaningful and substantial research. A literature search was carried out in an effort to find studies that discuss any of the features of teacher perceptions on teacher evaluations practices, the Danielson Framework, and their historical underpinnings. I followed the framework for scholarly literature reviews developed by Boote and Beile (2005). Online academic databases were used for accessing the literature reviewed for this research, including ERIC, ProQuest, EBSCOhost, Academic Search Premier, Google Scholar, the United States Department of Education (USDOE) website, and the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) website. I also used Google to additional research. In addition, the Seton

Hall Library and Montclair State University Library were utilized to review and borrow books related to the research topic.

The following keywords were entered in multiple combinations into the databases to locate literature pertaining to the topic of focus: teacher evaluation practices, teachers' perceptions of teacher evaluations, Danielson Framework for Teaching, teacher-learning connection, teacher effectiveness, *A Nation at Risk*, No Child Left Behind or NCLB, Race to the Top, TEACHNJ Act, AchieveNJ, standards-based evaluation systems, reflective practice/practitioner, and feedback from evaluations.

Although most of the literature was published in peer-reviewed journals or dissertations within 15 years of the present research, I chose to include some older literature in order to establish the legacy of the historical, social, and political constructs of teacher evaluation and the Danielson Framework of Teaching.

### **Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion of Literature**

Studies were considered for inclusion for review, if the following criteria were met:

- English language literature and research articles published within the last 15 years, unless the work was historical or theoretical in nature;
- peer-reviewed journal articles;
- qualitative and quantitative scholarly research publications from peer-reviewed professional journals;
- evidence-based commentary in peer-reviewed journals;
- articles from respected Education and Educational Research journals;
- books and book chapters on teacher evaluation;
- books and book chapters on qualitative research;

- books and book chapters that approach the topic from a theoretical framework;
- conference papers;
- government reports on education;
- federal and state legislation as background and contextual information;
- newspaper articles providing details of NJTEACH Act and AchieveNJ,;
- evidence-based commentary from think tanks and focus groups; and
- doctoral dissertations.

Studies were considered for exclusion from the review if the following criteria were met:

- literature concerning the perceptions of higher education educators and pre-service teacher concerning teacher evaluation practices in order to limit the search results to studies and articles relevant to K-12 education,
- literature that is not written in English, and
- research studies performed in non-public schools in the United States.

### **Historical Context of teacher Evaluation: 1950 to Present**

Throughout the 20th century, different approaches to teacher evaluation that were based in the political climate and teacher evaluation research were designed and implemented (Eskro-Clemetsen, 2000). Until the 1950s, teacher quality was judged from a moralistic and ethical perspective; with judgments based on the grounds of teachers' personal traits (Ellet & Teddlie, 2003). Research conducted by H.E. Kratz (1896) found that students in Iowa felt that helpfulness was the number one characteristic of a good teacher but listed personal appearance as the next most influential factor. Danielson and McGreal (2000) stated that, in the 1940s and 1950s, educators and researchers emphasized the importance of presage variables. Presage variables took the form of traits teachers naturally possessed, such as voice, appearance, emotional

stability, warmth, trustworthiness, and enthusiasm. During this period, educators believed that teachers who possessed these traits were more likely to perform effectively, so these traits became the focal point of local teacher evaluation criteria. At the time there was no research available that linked presage variables to effective teaching or increased student learning (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

Even though the actual mechanics of teacher observation remain very similar to what has been seen throughout the past 70 years, there have been shifts in the philosophy of teacher evaluation (Weems & Rogers, 2010). From the 1950s onward the influence of scientific management led to measures of performance that were based on observable behaviors in the classroom, although there was only a slight link between these behaviors and student outcomes. Over time, the accumulated knowledge from these efforts came to form the criteria used in many teacher evaluation systems today (Ellett & Teddlie, 2003).

During the Sputnik era and the Cold War, evaluation was used to find better qualified teachers so that American students could compete with the Soviet students (Clark, 1993). America had been beaten in the space race, and the notion that the Russians were better educated did not sit well with the American public (Eskro-Clemetsen, 2000). The 1960s and 1970s began the emphasis to enhance student's basic skills acquisition and improve science and mathematics teaching. This led researchers to explore what teachers did or could do to improve the basic skills of students. It was during this time that research shifted its focus to the evaluation of the classroom skills of the teacher. This research helped to make significant advances in evaluation skills and classroom observation techniques (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

The period from 1960 through 1980 has been characterized as the period of "accountability-based approaches" (Peterson, 1982, p.45). Teacher evaluation focused on the

accountability of teachers' instructional performances in influencing their students' academic performances. Stronge (1997) stated that "...in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, the era of teacher effectiveness research in American classrooms boomed" (p. 109). Instruments such as time and event sampling, behavior checklists, category systems, sign systems, narrative records, and rating scales for the purpose of teacher evaluation rapidly increased in use (Stronge, 1997). Throughout the 1960s, educational spending increased as legislators and policymakers passed laws that emphasized and demanded teacher accountability. This was primarily in response to public outcries for ensuring that quality teaching and optimal learning in our public schools was guaranteed (Eskro-Clemetsen, 2000).

In 1969, Robert Goldhammer published *Clinical Supervision: Special Methods for the Supervision of Teachers*. Researchers were developing clinical supervision as a way to enhance instruction and designing observation instruments that allowed a more accurate glimpse of what occurred in the everyday classroom. This model was characterized by a set of performance standards and categories that could be checked off on a checklist (Duke, 1995; Glickman, 2001). The ability to document teacher behaviors led to the design of studies that sought to identify what kinds of teacher behaviors could be linked to student achievement. This teacher effectiveness research or as later named, the *research on teacher effects*, attempted to show associations between teacher behaviors and basic skill acquisition (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

In the 1970s, the work of Madeline Hunter. Madeline Hunter and her colleagues from the University of California Los Angeles established a theory-based approach to teaching that had its roots in a behaviorist view of basic learning theory. In assuming that human behavior is learned, behaviorists hold that all behaviors can also be unlearned, and replaced by new behaviors. According to Huitt and Hummel (2006), behaviorists see learning as a change in behavior

brought about as a result of experience or practice. Hunter and her colleagues established a set of prescriptive teaching practices designed to improve teacher decision-making, and thus enhance student learning. Hunter (1979) found that no matter what the teacher's style, the grade level, the subject matter, or the economic background of the students are, a properly taught lesson contained seven elements that enhanced and maximized learning. She labeled these seven elements and began two decades of teacher training. The Hunter model dominated views of teaching into the 1980s and began a trend towards instructionally-focused staff development (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

Shough (2010) reported that during the 1980s and 1990s an era of accountability was born. Teacher evaluation moved to the forefront of the educational reform movement. C.H. Peterson (1982) characterized the early 1980s as a period of "professional skills emphasis approaches" (p.104). Teacher evaluation and accountability became a prominent national issue when the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (1983). *A Nation at Risk* created public awareness of "rising tide of mediocrity" (p.87) of teachers in public schools and heralded the need for the school reform movement. It provided several recommendations regarding the need for highly competent, professional teachers and a structured teacher evaluation procedure (as cited in Eskro-Clemetsen, 2000, p.45). Shinkfield and Stufflebeam (1995) noted that *A Nation at Risk* helped the public to accept accountability in education and teacher evaluation systems became a priority in school districts across the country. As a result, 98% of school districts across America put a teacher evaluation model in place (*A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* in response to *A Nation At Risk*, 1983).

Brandt (1995) described the reform movement of the 1980s as deriving from intense interest on the part of politicians and business leaders in applying private sector solutions to public schools. Incentive pay systems became the focal point for teacher evaluation systems. Brandt (1995) stated that, “The most widely recognized immediate effect of the career ladder/incentive pay movement that marked the 1980s was an overhaul of traditional teacher evaluation practices” (p. 13). Due to the lack of support from the education community, the pay-for-performance plans began to dwindle away, new programs focusing on collaboration and professional development began to take shape, and controversial programs such as pay-for-performance were subsequently avoided (Brandt, 1995). However, even with all the reforms, when the economy deflated and teacher lay-offs occurred in many schools, seniority, rather than evaluation results, generally drove decisions about who would be laid-off. Similarly, interest and experimentation with teacher evaluation subsided over time, as money to support merit pay and evaluation reform ran out and new priorities, such as curriculum standards, took over (Donaldson, 2009).

Although teacher evaluation had many faults and imperfections, it was still seen as a major part of the education process. As Shinkfield and Stufflebeam (1995) stated, “Teacher evaluation was here to stay” (p. 24). Teacher evaluation during the 1990s focused on standards-based performance indicators, as well as expansion of the evaluation process. This expansion was spurred by the enactment of laws within states that mandated systematic teacher evaluation processes for use in improving the instructional process (Shough, 2010). The creation of teacher evaluation instruments that focused on academic and professional standards led to teacher evaluations that were effective tools for improving instructional practice and raising student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Consistent with the movement for standards for students, standard-based evaluations started with a comprehensive model or description of what teachers should know and be able to do. This was represented by explicit standards covering multiple domains and including multiple levels of performance defined by detailed behavioral rating scales. It typically requires more intensive collection of evidence, including frequent observations of classroom practice and use of artifacts such as lesson plans and samples of student work, in order to provide a more accurate picture of teacher performance. Charlotte Danielson (1996, 2007) led the development of standards-based teacher evaluation systems with her book, *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching* (1996). Danielson's work represented a milestone in the development of a standards-based teacher evaluation system, and over the next decade, many others joined in by developing similar tools for evaluating the effectiveness of teachers.

Odden et al. (2004) investigated the reliability and validity of the standards-based evaluation instruments that were developed by Danielson and others, and they sought to determine whether ratings from these instruments could reliably differentiate the effectiveness of teachers in relation to their ability to affect positive changes in student achievement. Odden et al. (2004) found a positive correlation between teacher ratings on the new standards-based teacher evaluation instruments and increased student achievement gains. Milanowski and Kimball (2003) found that standards-based teacher evaluation systems promoted a common conception of good teaching and acted as a performance competency measure useful to identify how to improve instruction, affect teacher selection and retention, and guide teachers to improve their skills.

In the 1990s, a more complex understanding of teaching and learning began to surface. Wiggins and McTighe (1998) explained that, because of the complexities of the new models of



learning, teachers could not be assessed accurately with a checklist or simply by standards: It was necessary to develop a more in-depth means of evaluating the instructional abilities of teachers. During this era, the use of standardized testing became popular. Education reformers believed that standardized testing was a way of holding educators, schools, and entire districts accountable for the learning of students. Soon, testing data from students were integrated into the evaluations of the very teachers who taught those students (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

Also during the 1990s, school districts involved themselves in the development of both formative and summative teacher evaluation systems. Research continued and provided insight about new types of evaluation strategies. A strong trend towards more formative means of teacher evaluation continued throughout the 1990s. The teacher evaluation process began to be seen as a means to improve teaching practice and drive professional development and not merely a means to make tenure and dismissal decisions (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 1995).

*What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* was published by the National Commission on Teaching and America Future in 1996. The project, directed by Linda Darling-Hammond and drafted by a panel of educators, policy-makers, researchers, and non-profit leaders, highlighted the key role teachers play in the education process and presented a series of recommendations to "recruit, train, and continually support" (p.45) the development of caring, competent, and qualified teachers. The Commission contended that the capability of the teacher has the strongest effect on student learning and that "recruiting, preparing, and retaining" (p.66) quality teachers is the most important way to improve education. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) also noted that education reformers must provide the support and conditions essential for teachers to teach effectively. The report mapped out a plan for providing every child with high quality teaching by attracting, developing, and supporting

excellent teachers. The report includes proposals that address the entire education system and go far beyond the current call to simply evaluate teachers based on test scores (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). Again, teacher evaluation was brought to the forefront of consciousness (Danielson, 2011).

The centerpiece federal law for K-12 education, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), set teacher quality as a major policy priority when it was reauthorized as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001. One of the central tenets of that law is to ensure teacher quality and to link student test scores to teacher evaluation. Highly qualified teachers were defined in this reauthorization based on their level of academic attainment (Rogers & Weems, 2010). Schools are required to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets based on student achievement determined by the rate of proficient test scores. All of these changes spurred an interest in school districts to develop ways to ensure that teacher performance in the classroom was of the highest caliber. Unfortunately, highly qualified performance focused on the degrees earned by the teachers, the years of experience the teachers had, or by the types of professional development trainings they had attended, and not on the effectiveness of their teaching skills (Rogers & Weems, 2010).

Since No Child Left Behind, emphasis on teacher evaluation has shifted from teacher behavior and practices to student achievement. In *Linking Teacher Evaluation and Student Learning*, Tucker and Stronge (2005) stressed the importance of student achievement as a criterion in the evaluation process. Specifically, they argued for evaluation systems that determine teacher effectiveness by using evidence from student gains in learning each year, as well as observations of the teacher's classroom instruction. Value-added analysis, a body of statistical approaches that enable researchers to estimate a student's achievement growth in a

specified time period, focuses squarely on student outcomes. Many districts and states are now laying the groundwork to base teacher evaluation at least partially on a teacher's impact on his or her students' achievement (Tucker & Strong, 2005).

Teacher evaluation had long been a responsibility left up to each individual school district, but federal programs made a move to make evaluation an important component by which schools were assessed regarding state and federal goals. The push for further reform emerged from a growing bipartisan consensus, joined by the Obama administration, that the old advancement model based on tenure and seniority was not always working and union-negotiated agreements were too often viewed as sometimes protecting bad teachers or blocking opportunities for young talent (Smyth, 2012).

The message for credible and effective teacher evaluation was reinforced and the stakes were raised even higher when, on February 17, 2009, President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). The ARRA provided \$4.35 billion for the Race to the Top (RTTP) competitive grants to the states, and cash-strapped states took note. The Obama administration created the Race to the Top grant program through which states could receive money for innovative projects to improve education. Race to the Top competitive grants added a new dimension to the dialog about the reform of teacher evaluation and an unprecedented wave of state teacher-evaluation reform across the country. Requirements for the application for grant monies called for teacher evaluation systems to have sophisticated standards-based evaluation systems and to include some form of student achievement data in the actual evaluation (United States Department of Education, 2009). For example, in section (D)(2)(ii) of the Race to the Top application (U.S. Department of Education, 2009) states are directed to "design and implement rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers

and principals that .....differentiate effectiveness using multiple rating categories that take into account data on student growth ... as a significant factor" (p. 34). This addition of student achievement data represented a politically sensitive step and an unprecedented shift toward increased accountability for individual teachers. Not only would this requirement have the potential to be controversial among teacher groups, it would stretch the resources and technical ability of many school districts to fairly and effectively measure student performance and tie the results to individual teachers (Braun, 2005).

Since 2009, over two-thirds of states have made significant changes to how teachers are evaluated. For most states, the change was motivated by incentives available through the federal programs Race to the Top, No Child Left Behind waivers, and the Teacher Incentive Fund. State applications for these funds earned additional credit for upgrading teacher evaluation systems so they take place annually and are based in part on student achievement (Bornfreund, 2013). Teachers' unions have shown a willingness to become partners in this work: The American Federation of Teachers, for example, awarded grants to local chapters that are helping to design new evaluation systems (New Teacher Project, 2010). Because of all the incentives, The National Council on Teacher Quality (as cited in McGuinn, 2012) reported that there has been a large increase in the number of states that require annual teacher evaluations, currently 43 states and those incorporating student achievement incorporating it into what?, 32 states, differentiated levels of performance in 26 states, annual classroom observations in 39 states, multiple observations each year in 22 states, and performance-based tenure decisions in 9 states (McGuinn, 2012).

States vary in the extent to which they have control over local district teacher evaluation policies. Some states require that all districts adopt a single evaluation system, while others allow

for a great deal of local flexibility in choice. A 2013 report from the Center for Public Education (Hull, 2013), an initiative of the National School Boards Association, found that 41 states required or recommended that teachers be evaluated using more than one measure of performance, which could include student test scores, classroom observations, student surveys, lesson plan reviews, and teacher self-assessments. Hull also found that 38 states required evaluations based on the teachers' impacts on student achievement; eight more states recommend this practice. Forty-one states required or recommended that teachers be evaluated on multiple measures for a more complete and accurate gauge of performance. Multiple measures could include student test scores, classroom observations, student surveys, lesson plan reviews, and teacher self-assessments. Classroom observations are a component of every state's evaluation system; and about a third of them require or recommend all teachers be observed at least once a year (Hull, 2013).

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

There can be several theoretical frameworks, depending on the researcher's purpose, that guide qualitative research in order to analyze data. In a qualitative study the researcher's purpose is to discover the different ways in which people experience, conceptualize, realize, and understand various aspects of phenomena in the world around them (Martin et al., 1992).

Many education leaders have adopted reform initiatives, like new teacher evaluation practices, with high hopes, only to see them fail. Successful implementation of a new reform involves more than providing staff with resources and training. An often-overlooked factor is the human element. Each teacher can respond to a new program with unique attitudes and perceptions, and each person will use a new program differently. In 1953, Spears made this point when he wrote that: "perhaps the value of a supervisory program can best be measured by the

affection and respect shown for it by the teachers. It may meet all the theoretical requirements for a good program; but if it is not accepted by those whom it is to serve, there is something wrong with it” (p. 443). To better understand the differences in perceptions regarding the Danielson Framework, the theoretical frames that guided my work focused on change, social cognitive theory and reflective practice.

### **John Kotter’s Leading Change**

John Kotter’s *Leading Change* (1996) provides a theoretical perspective about the process of adopting change in an organization and what effect school leaders can have on promoting successful change initiatives with their employees. Kotter’s work-eight steps to leading change that are relevant to school leaders whose role is to be a facilitator of change in their district. Although this study did not deal with the school leaders specifically, many of Kotter’s steps acknowledge key principles that could relate to how teacher’s perceive the changes made concerning new teacher evaluation practices. Kotter found that fundamental change is often resisted by the people it most affects: those who work in the trenches and in this case the teachers (Kotter, 1996).

The following are some of the steps in Kotter’s 8-step change model that can alter or impact a teacher’s perceptions concerning changes in teacher evaluation practices. It requires school leaders that are implementing change to,

1. Create a vision of the organization’s future – to help focus and direct the change.
2. Communicate that vision widely, repeatedly and consistently – from the leadership level down through all organizational levels, in language and in actions and behaviors.

3. Empower people in the organization to act on the vision –remove obstacles to change, improve processes and systems, encourage and enable people to take risks, engage in non-traditional thinking and activities.
4. Institutionalize new approaches – clearly articulate the connections between the new ways of working and organizational successes, encourage and develop ongoing leadership of change and anchor the changes into the organizational culture.(Cohen et al, 2009)

### **The Roger's Theory of Perceived Attributes**

In regard to how a teachers perception can influence the change process or adoption if new school reform, I examined Roger's theory of perceived attributes. Roger's (1995) postulated that individuals become more likely to adopt an innovation when it is perceived as having the following five attributes:

1. The innovation demonstrates an advantage over the status quo or a competing innovation.
2. The innovation is perceived to be compatible with existing values and practices.
3. The innovation is not overly complex.
4. The innovation has trialability (meaning that it can be tested for a specified time before full adoption.)
5. The innovation must present concrete, observable results.

In the past, research has shown that a teacher's attitudes about the evaluation process influenced how a teacher would benefit from the evaluation process. A favorable attitude allowed for greater benefits from the evaluation because the teacher became aware of specific strengths and weaknesses. Ideally, teachers will improve teaching performance as a result of a

positive perception of their evaluation experience (Wagoner & O'Hanlon, 1968; Donovan & Bransford, 2005; Tuytens & Devos, 2009).

### **Social Cognitive Theory**

According to social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986) human thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors cannot be fully understood unless they are examined within the social system in which they operates; in this study that is the schools. Teachers formulate beliefs and perceptions about their capabilities to change their teaching practices to produce the desired student outcomes. Teachers' perceptions reflect their individual experiences with students. These perceptions also develop as a function of feedback from the broader, school, social environment, which is comprised of other teachers and school leaders. According to Bandura (1977, 1986, 1989, 1997), human agency must be explained within an interdependent causal structure in which individuals' personal characteristics, behaviors, and surrounding environments interact; a model he terms *triadic reciprocal causation*. In this view, people are seen as both products and producers of their environments (Bandura, 1997), and individuals' thoughts and feelings play key roles in how they view and act on the world. Humans are capable of self-reflective thought, and through this self-reflection they evaluate their capabilities, surrounding environments, behaviors, and future actions. Self-efficacy is viewed as a crucial component of social cognitive theory and is defined as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3).

In the social cognitive view, personal and social change relies extensively on the empowerment of the individual. People have an ability to influence their own behavior and the environment in a purposeful, goal-directed fashion (Bandura, 2001). People can effect change in themselves through their own efforts towards self-reflection and self-regulatory processes.



Change is dependent on one's perceived belief about his or her ability to exercise control.

Effective teacher evaluation practices empower teachers and offer them the opportunity to self-reflect and set attainable goals (Bandura, 2001).

### **Dewey's View of Inquiry**

Few activities are more powerful for professional learning than reflection on practice. Dewey's view of inquiry (1938) and Schon's (1983) perspective of the reflective practitioner add to the theoretical foundation for this study regarding reflective practice. Dewey and Schon believed that teachers must participate in on-going systematic inquiry in order to produce sound conclusions about their practices.

John Dewey, who is often considered to be the father of reflection, defined reflective practice as an “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends... “(1933, p.6). From Dewey’s perspective, when teachers are confronted with situations they act either in routine or reflective ways. Teachers who act routinely accept the situation without questioning or changing their practices. Dewey (1933) pointed out that it is reflection that “emancipates us from merely impulsive and routine activity”(p.17), for he saw the teacher who was reflective as using reasoned principles that allowed the teacher to review, analyze, and evaluate the situation so to enhance their professional growth. As Dewey (1938) noted, “The most important attitude that can be formed is that of a desire to go on learning” (p. 49).

### **Schön's Reflection-On-Action**

Expanding upon this concept, Schön (1983) distinguished between reflection-in and reflection-on a teaching situation. The reflective practitioner not only thinks about and responds to what is taking place (reflection-in), but also takes the time to draw upon past experiences to

plan for future ones (reflection-on). Reflection-on-action is done later; after the class is finished and after the situation has occurred in the classroom. This is the most common reflection used in teacher evaluation practices. Teachers may write up their feelings, and/or talk things through with another teacher or a supervisor. The act of reflecting-on-action enables teachers to spend time exploring why they acted as they did and what was actually happening in the classroom environment. In the case of reflection-on-action, professionals can learn to review, describe, analyze, and evaluate their classroom practices with a view toward gaining insight into improving future practice (Schoen, 1983). Teachers, through effective teacher evaluation models, can practice and learn to become better reflective practitioners who can continually evaluate and modify their practices, not only to meet the learning and developmental needs of students, but also to keep pace with a rapidly changing education theories on best practices and the world (Argyris & Schön, 1974).

### **Meaningful Teacher Evaluation**

Creating effective and credible teacher development and evaluation systems is one of the most important challenges facing America's schools. There is nation-wide consensus that highly qualified teachers in every classroom can improve overall student achievement (Baker et al., 2010; Stronge & Tucker, 2003; Taylor & Tyler, 2012). To help teachers successfully fulfill their role in this endeavor, effective teacher evaluation systems that inform teacher professional development and improve instruction are essential (Baker et al., 2010). A sound teacher evaluation system begins with a shared discussion and vision about what good teaching looks like. According to Danielson and McGreal (2000), any attempt to develop a teacher evaluation system must answer two fundamental questions: (a) What do we believe good teaching looks

like?, and (b) What are the processes and procedures that will best fit what the school district wants the educational system to accomplish?

Meaningful teacher evaluation has the potential to lead to improved instruction and professional growth, but, in practice, this potential is often unrealized. Despite the fact that proper assessment and evaluation of teachers is fundamental to successful schools and positive student outcomes, this key element in school reform is too frequently neglected, due not to the absence of teacher evaluation, but rather to the implementation of poor evaluation systems and poor evaluation practices. Investigating the potential of teacher evaluation as an overlooked tool to improve teaching practices for all teachers and better outcomes for all students in public school is necessary in this climate. As Stronge and Tucker (2003) asserted, “Without capable, highly qualified teachers in America’s classrooms, no educational reform process can possibly succeed” (p. 3) Bill Gates (2012) showed his agreement for this position in a New York Times opinion-editorial piece and wrote that “developing a systematic way to help teachers get better is the most powerful idea in education today” (p.44). There are good reasons to expect that well-designed teacher-evaluation programs could have a direct and lasting effect on individual teacher performance (Taylor & Tyler, 2012).

In addition to the fact that both federal and state laws mandate teacher evaluations, the most fundamental reason for a meaningful evaluation process is because schools are public institutions that are funded by the taxpayer, and the public has the right to know that their education tax dollars are paying for highly qualified teachers who contribute to good student outcomes. Every school district must be able to provide documentation to reassure the school board and the public that teachers are highly qualified to teach in their district (Danielson, 2011a). This can only be achieved through meaningful teacher evaluation.

There are many other reasons to evaluate teachers: reassuring teachers that they are doing good work, informing all stakeholders of teacher performance, or informing personnel decisions such as promotion or tenure (Peterson & Peterson, 2005). Sergiovanni (1996) stressed, "If our aim is to help students become lifelong learners by cultivating a spirit of inquiry and the capacity for inquiry, then we must provide the same conditions for teachers" (p. 52). The two most cited purposes of teacher evaluation in the literature are accountability and professional development or summative and formative purposes (Isore, 2009; Stronge, 2006). Danielson and McGreal (2000) stated that summative purposes are aligned more with accountability and competence of the teachers, whereas formative purposes are aligned with enhancement and improvement.

The challenge to school districts is to combine these two purposes for teacher evaluation. School leaders need to create evaluative procedures that yield valid results that not only satisfy the legitimate demands for evaluating teacher competency, but also guide and promote professional learning for all teachers independent of their current teaching skills and practices and their years teaching (Danielson, 2011a). Stronge (2006) believes that there is room in teacher evaluation systems for both accountability and performance improvement purposes. In fact, evaluation systems that include both accountability and personal growth dimensions are both desirable and necessary for evaluation to productively serve the needs of individual teachers and the school and community at large (Stronge, 2006).

Research conducted by Marzano (2012) found that the vast majority of the 3,000 respondents surveyed believed that teacher evaluation should be used for both measurement and development, but that development should be the more important purpose. Teacher evaluation has the potential to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning by enabling teachers to receive high-quality guidance and feedback from instructional leaders, thus improving their

classroom practices. Evaluation could also enable principals to better identify the most and least effective teachers. This could allow school instructional leaders to remediate weak teachers, dismiss ineffective teachers, and reward highly effective teachers, which would motivate everyone to strive for greater effectiveness (Papay, 2012, Tucker & Strong, 2005)

Evaluation results should form the foundation for teacher development. Although there must be consequences for consistently poor performance, the primary purpose of evaluations should not be seen as punitive. Good evaluations should identify and reinforce good teaching and help teachers of all skill levels to understand how they can learn more about their profession and improve (Protheroe, 2002). When teacher evaluation is approached meaningfully, it can become an invaluable tool for instructional leaders to tailor professional development that can address the teacher's instructional needs. A well-designed evaluation system, according to Danielson (2007), is the best approach for "merging professional development with quality assurance in teacher evaluation" (p. 13).

The New Teacher Project (2010) states that evaluations should provide all teachers with regular experiences and beneficial feedback that helps them grow as professionals, no matter how many degrees they have or how long they have been teaching in the classroom. Effective post-observation conferences and feedback are vital to effective teacher evaluation (Kelly, 2006; Kimball, 2002; Tucker, 2001; Wang & Day, 2002). Danielson and McGreal (2000) suggested that, "Richer forms of data collection and more self-reflection on the part of the teacher are necessary activities within the context of the new expectations for effective teaching" (p. 16). They also concluded that, "When teachers take the time to pause and consider their work systematically, however, they are richly rewarded. The very act of reflection, it appears, is a highly productive vehicle for professional learning" (p. 48).

Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin & Bernstein (1984) concluded that four variables need to be evident in an effective evaluation system. First, the goal of the evaluation should match the goals of the district, as well as its values and mission. Second, teacher evaluation must be a top priority in the district and backed with the proper resources and available time. Next, principals and other educational leaders must be well trained in the evaluation process, and lastly, it was recommended that master teachers be assistants in the evaluation process and they have the content knowledge that the educational leaders may lack. Teacher evaluation can only be meaningful when it is valued and supported by the district and conducted by trained and trust school leaders (Milanowski & Heneman, 2001, Stronge & Tucker, 1999: Wise et al., 1984)

Evaluations should give schools the information they need to build the strongest possible instructional teams and should help districts hold school educational leaders accountable for supporting each teacher's development. Most importantly, they should create a school culture that prizes growth and excellence and where everyone in a school system, from teachers to the superintendent, can focus on quality instruction that can keep every student on track to graduate from high school ready for success in college or the workforce (Mielke & Frontier, 2012; New Teacher Project, 2010; Strong & Tucker, 1999).

In a positive school culture, teachers can be empowered to accurately assess their own practice and self-diagnose areas for growth. In such systems, teachers use comprehensive frameworks throughout the school year to collect data related to their teaching, reflect on their practice, and identify specific instructional strategies they can work on to improve their repertoire of skills. The school culture in such systems supports teachers by recognizing the need for improvement as an asset rather than a liability (Mielke & Frontier, 2012).

### Teaching-Learning Connection

Research offers a plethora of definitions to define an effective teacher. American author and poet, Maya Angelou (1998), wrote:

This is the value of the teacher, who looks at a face and says there's something behind that and I want to reach that person, I want to influence that person, I want to encourage that person, I want to enrich, I want to call out that person who is behind that face, behind that color, behind that language, behind that tradition, behind that culture. I believe you can do it. I know what was done for me.

We know intuitively that these highly performing and effective teachers can have an enriching effect on the daily lives of school children and their lifelong educational and career aspirations. More than four decades ago, researchers began documenting large differences in student achievement gains in different teachers' classrooms (Hanushek, 1971; Murnane & Phillips, 1981). Research suggests the most important factor in increasing student achievement is teacher effectiveness (Owings et al., 2006; Rutledge, Harris, & Ingle, 2010; Stronge, 2002). As Koops and Winsor (2006) asserted, "the quality of education depends primarily on the quality of teachers in the classroom" (p. 61).

Few topics in education have captured as much attention from policymakers and practitioners as the connection between teaching quality and student achievement. The core of education is teaching and learning, and the teaching-learning connection works best when we have effective teachers working with every student every day. Scholars have argued there is little consensus within the education community about how to define effective teaching (Ingersoll, 2001; Popp, Grant, & Stronge, 2011). The clearest and potentially most useful

example identified in my review of the literature comes from the Center for High Impact Philanthropy (2010),

A quality teacher is one who has a positive effect on student learning and development through a combination of content mastery, command of a broad set of pedagogic skills, and communications/interpersonal skills. Quality teachers are life-long learners in their subject areas, teach with commitment, and are reflective upon their teaching practice. They transfer knowledge of their subject matter and the learning process through good communication, diagnostic skills, understanding of different learning styles and cultural influences, knowledge about child development, and the ability to marshal a broad array of techniques to meet student needs. They set high expectations and support students in achieving them. They establish an environment conducive to learning, and leverage available resources outside as well as inside the classroom. (p. 7)

Howard and Gullickson (2010) stated, “the quality of teacher performance in the classroom supersedes all other elements in its significant effect on student learning” (p.338), and a student’s overall experience is linked to the teacher’s ability to “create an engaging learning environment” (p.338). Teacher quality has been cited as the most important single factor in determining student success ( Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004; Borman & Kimball, 2005; Kimball et al., 2004; Milanowski, 2004; Odden et al., 2004). Furthermore, a growing body of scholarly literature indicates that quality instruction is clearly connected to improvement in student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Gamoran, Porter, Smithson, & White, 1997; Sanders & Horn, 1998).

In two studies, conducted in Dallas, Texas researchers found similar results concerning teacher effectiveness. When first grade students were fortunate enough to be placed with three



high-performing teachers in a row, their average performance on the math section of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills increased from the 63rd percentile to the 87th, in contrast to their peers with similar scores whose performance decreased from the 58th percentile to the 40th; a percentile difference of 42 points. A similar analysis of reading scores found a percentile difference of 44 percentile points. The studies in Tennessee and Texas produced strikingly similar findings: Highly effective teachers are able to produce much greater gains in student achievement than their less effective counterparts (Jordon, Mendro & Weerasinghe, 1997). A 3-year study by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (2011) affirmed the impact of evaluations and found that huge variations existed between the most and least effective teachers, in some cases, up to an 11-month difference in student learning.

With evidence that teacher quality is a primary determinant of educational outcomes, teacher evaluation has gained prominence among strategies to reform education (Danielson, 1996). And, “without high quality evaluation systems, we cannot know if we have high quality teachers” (Stronge & Tucker, 2003, p. 3). Gallagher (2004) examined the validity of a performance-based teacher evaluation system by analyzing the relationship between teacher evaluation scores and student achievement in specific subject areas. In this case study, the results indicated that there was a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between teacher evaluation scores and student achievement in reading, and a positive, although not statistically significant, relationship in mathematics. The combination of research such as Gallagher’s (2004) and federal and state interest in measuring teacher effectiveness has galvanized support for reform of teacher evaluation systems. “Without capable, high quality teachers in America’s classrooms, no educational reform effort can possibly succeed” (Stronge & Tucker, 2003, p. 3). As more meaningful and credible teacher evaluation processes are

adopted across the nation, the teaching-learning connection will be tested with even more accuracy.

### **Common Problems Associated with Teacher Evaluations**

Given the recent nationwide drive towards increased academic standards and the accelerating momentum of the public school accountability movement, teacher effectiveness and teacher appraisal systems have come under much scrutiny and debate (Borman & Kimball, 2005; Ovando & Ramirez, 2007).

Unfortunately, many school districts across America lack a credible system of measuring the quality of their teachers' performances (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009; Toch, 2008; Weingarten, 2010). Toch (2008) seemed to find it hard to believe that an industry that spends \$400 billion of its annual expenditures on something so central to its success--the teachers--pays so little attention to the return on its investment. In a 2010 opinion article, the American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten acknowledged that “with rare exceptions, teacher evaluation procedures are broken—cursory, perfunctory, superficial, and inconsistent” (Weingarten, 2010, p.23).

Recent studies have highlighted the weak state of teacher evaluation and the need for reform in our schools (Bill and Melinda Gates, 2010; National Council on Teacher Quality, 2009; Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009; Toch & Rothman 2008). There are a number of documented reasons why teacher evaluation systems have generally failed to influence teacher quality and student learning. A variety of reports and research studies highlight two main failings of past efforts: (a) Teacher evaluation systems have not accurately measured teacher quality because they have failed to do a good job of discriminating between effective and ineffective teachers, and (b) Teacher evaluation systems have not assisted in developing a highly

skilled teacher workforce (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2011; Toch & Rothman, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2009; Weisberg et al., 2009).

Most teacher evaluations do not differentiate among teachers and the quality of their instruction nor do they emphasize teachers' influences on student achievement (Bill and Melinda Gates Measures of Effective Teaching Project 2010; Weisberg et al., 2009). The widget effect study, conducted by the New Teacher Project (2007), surveyed teacher evaluation systems in 14 large American schools and found that most current teacher evaluation programs assigned high ratings to nearly all teachers and the wide variations in teacher effectiveness were ignored. These evaluations stunted teachers' growth by giving them an inaccurate picture of their classroom performance. The study concluded that most teachers are evaluated infrequently and according to low standards. It revealed that teachers rarely received constructive feedback that helped them improve. The memorable statistic from that report is that 98 % of teachers were evaluated as *satisfactory*. And nearly every teacher was labeled *good* or *great*, no matter how much progress their students made. A 2007 study conducted by the New Teacher Project (2007) found similar results in that 87 % of the 600 schools in Chicago, including 69 schools that the city declared to be failing, did not issue a single *unsatisfactory* teacher rating between 2003 and 2006. In addition to rarely giving *unsatisfactory* ratings, principals rarely used the evaluations to help teachers improve instructional practices that could have bolstered student achievement. In the end, the education of American students has suffered from this negligent approach to evaluations (Measures of Effective Teaching Project, 2010; Weisberg et al., 2009).

Even more disheartening, research conducted by Weisberg et al. (2009) revealed:

Despite uniformly positive evaluation ratings, teachers and administrators both recognize ineffective teaching in their schools. In fact, 81% of administrators and 58% of teachers

say there is a tenured teacher in their school who is performing poorly, and 43% of teachers say there is a tenured teacher who should be dismissed for poor performance. Troublingly, the percentages are higher in high-poverty schools. But district records confirm the scarcity of formal dismissals; at least half of the districts studied have not dismissed a single non-probationary teacher for poor performance in the past five years.

(p. 6)

A host of other factors, often working in tandem, are credited for ineffective evaluations. Lack of accountability for school performance, staffing practices that strip school systems of incentives to take teacher evaluation seriously, teacher union ambivalence or overly restrictive bargaining agreements, and public education's practice of using teacher credentials as a proxy for teacher quality have produced superficial teacher evaluation systems that often lack credibility (Darrington, 2011; Toch, 2008; Weisberg et al., 2009). Donaldson (2009) blamed external constraints like vague district standards, poor evaluation instruments, and lack of time for ineffective evaluation systems. He also blamed internal constraints, such as the absence of high-quality professional development for evaluators, a school culture that discouraged critical feedback and negative evaluation ratings, and a district culture that offered little oversight and few incentives for administrators to evaluate teachers accurately (Donaldson, 2009).

Darrington (2011) seemed to believe that the typical teacher evaluation is, “too often a perfunctory, episodic event rather than a meticulous measure of teaching effectiveness and student achievement”(p.??). The check-list, obligatory, twice-a-year, and drive-by evaluations leave teachers as passive recipients of principals’ judgments (Darrington, 2011). These types of one-way, top-down communications are often experienced as punitive and appear to be less related to improvements in teacher practices and student performance than is accepted in practice

(Hornig & Loeb, 2010). Often teachers see themselves as the targets or victims of an evaluation system in which principals are viewed as trying to catch the teachers in an unsuspecting and negative light (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Conventional teacher evaluation, warned Barth (1990), often resembles a meaningless ritual. "Or even worse, it becomes a recurring occasion to heighten anxiety and distance between teacher and administrator, and competition between teacher and teacher" (p. 56). In short, it minimizes dialogue, reinforces institutional hierarchies, and risks poisoning otherwise productive working relationships among school professionals (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Hornig & Loeb, 2010).

The teacher annual observation process has been subjective in nature largely because it is usually done by principals. The problem with the subjective nature of the observation is further complicated by the general lack of training afforded to most principals on the skills they need for effective, consistent, and credible evaluations (Kane et al., 2010). Researchers at the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (Little et al., 2009) found that a "reliable classroom observation protocol may be wildly inaccurate or inconsistent in the hands of an untrained evaluator" (p. 21). Donaldson (2009) found that in order to be able to identify good instructional practices and evaluate teachers accurately, a great deal of commitment on the part of school leaders for training and professional development is required, but unfortunately districts rarely required that evaluators be trained (Stumbo & McWalters, 2010).

Another problem with teacher evaluation that can also be traced back to school leaders is that with the increasing demands placed on principals, the evaluation process is frequently perceived as an exercise that does little to improve practice or instruction (Peterson, 2000) and can become "little more than a time-consuming charade" (Stronge & Tucker, 2003, p. 6).

Danielson and McGreal (2000) contended that: "It yields little of value to either the teachers or

the schools in which they work, simultaneously feeling like a 'gotcha' to the teachers while consuming a great deal of administrator time" (p.65) especially as it is often seen as a process that simply meets a district or state requirement (Zepeda, 2003). Often, the communication related to the evaluation is a one-way top-down lecture by the evaluator and the teacher assumes a passive role. In a one-way conversation, the teacher spends little time in reflective thought and discussion related to his or her professional growth and improvement (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

Failure in the evaluation process also comes from the lack of constructive feedback to teachers that could promote the learning process. Post-observation conferences are either nonexistent or crammed into difficult time slots such that valuable two-way conversation is limited. Many observers are not adequately trained to lead effective coaching sessions, so the conferences appear to be one-way summative evaluations that tend to make teachers very defensive (Donaldson & Donaldson, 2012). The widget effect study (Weisberg et al., 2009) showed a lack of feedback as the primary problem with teacher supervision and evaluation systems. The study found that nearly three of four teachers received no specific feedback about how to improve their practice after their evaluation. Even when supervisors do provide feedback, it is often too infrequent to improve performance As Charlotte Danielson (2011) puts it, "if we want teacher evaluation systems that teachers find meaningful and from which they can learn, we must use processes that not only are rigorous, valid, and reliable, but also engage teachers in those activities that promote learning -- namely self-assessment, reflection on practice, and professional conversation" (p. 38). Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin, and Bernstein (1984) also agree that the primary goal of teacher evaluation should be for the professional growth of the individual teachers and the collective teaching performance in schools. Strong and colleagues

(2008) agree and believe that unless there is early, continuous, and meaningful communication between teachers and evaluators opportunities for teachers' growth will be missed.

Problems in evaluation practices can also arise when teachers fail to accept the judgments of these untrained evaluators and ignore their feedback. Donaldson (2009) contended that unless evaluators have high-quality professional development on the evaluation process, evaluations may be inaccurate and have little impact on teaching practices and student outcomes. Danielson (2011) seemed to believe that even when evaluators are properly trained they still need multiple opportunities to practice their skills and work with others school leaders so they can calibrate their judgment to ensure inter-rater reliability. Certainly, a lack of intensive and consistent training of evaluators can threaten the objectivity and reliability of any teacher evaluation system (Stumbo & McWalters, 2011).

Many of the same concerns about the new evaluations systems being implemented nationwide still exist. Early results from newly revamped systems in several states are showing that K-12 evaluators hesitate to differentiate between the best and the weakest teachers. In Michigan, 98% of teachers were rated *effective or better* under the teacher-evaluation systems recently put in place. In Florida, 97 % of teachers were evaluated as effective; Tennessee judged 98 % and Georgia gave good reviews to 94 % of their teachers (Sawchuk, 2013).

Problems have also arisen from the use of value-added measurements added to new evaluation practices. Although Jacob and Lefgren (2008) found that value-added measures did a slightly better job of predicting future test scores, adding principal ratings increased the accuracy of these predictions. Goldhaber and Hansen (2008) found that estimates of teacher effectiveness were not the same across years in reading or math. Other examples of problems that have occurred include the decision by the Los Angeles Times to calculate and publish online the

value-added scores of every teacher in the Los Angeles Unified School District, and the allegations of nation-wide cheating on tests that have been made across the country (Symposium: By What Measure, 2012). These efforts have simultaneously been labeled “a witch hunted “the salvation of education” In spite of these unresolved issues, the Obama administration made the use of multiple measures of teacher effectiveness, including those that tie teacher performance ratings with student test scores, a cornerstone of their Race to the Top incentive grants (“Symposium: By What Measure,” 2012).

Despite all the flaws concerning teacher evaluation, teacher evaluation systems are undergoing a shift in philosophy as leaders in both education and government have called for reforms that will lead to more effective ways to evaluate teachers and improve teacher practice and increase student learning. Recognizing the flaws of the past can help the design and implementation of new and effective evaluation practices (Milanowski & Heneman, 2001).

### **Teacher Perceptions of Teacher Evaluations**

One educational area that has been explored in research concerns the perceptions of teachers in regard to current teacher evaluation practices. Many studies reviewed have suggested that teacher beliefs are a critical ingredient in the factors that determine what happens daily in American classrooms (Tobin, Tippins, & Gallard, 1994). In recent years, teachers’ beliefs have been the subject of inquiry to clarify how beliefs can be improved and how they affect the teachers’ practices (Donovan & Bransford, 2005; Pajares, 1992). Examining prospective teacher beliefs and perceptions concerning the teacher evaluation process could provide school districts with information that can help them design and implement more effective teacher evaluation practices.



There is evidence of a connection between what teachers think and how they behave in a teaching situation (Shulman & Lanier, 1977). Teachers' beliefs have a powerful impact on their willingness to adopt new teaching strategies in their classrooms. The need to focus on teachers' beliefs is highlighted by Tobin, Tippins, and Gallard (1994), who stated that future research should seek to enhance our understanding of the relationships between teacher beliefs and education reform. Many of the reform attempts of the past have ignored the role of teacher beliefs in sustaining the status quo. More critical is the fact that perceptions affect behavior (Atweh, Bleicker & Cooper, 1998; Calderhead, 1996). In addition, teacher perceptions of their own effectiveness and their feelings of success provide the basis for teacher beliefs and ultimately teacher action (Fenstermacher, 1978).

Teacher evaluation systems should reflect a set of core convictions about good instruction. Unfortunately, most teachers believe that teacher evaluations reveal that all teachers are rated about the same, and that the primary purpose of evaluation is to identify and remove a small number of incompetent teachers before they are tenured (Teacher Evaluation 2.0). Many evaluation tools are seen by teachers as subjective, and most tools do not differentiate between strong and weak instruction, rendering evaluation meaningless to many teachers. In a 2010 speech, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan noted, "our system of teacher evaluation... frustrates teachers who feel that their good work goes unrecognized and ignores other teachers who would benefit from additional support" (Teacher Evaluation 2.0, 2010, p.33).

Early research has long confirmed that a teacher's attitude towards the evaluation process varies according the circumstance of the evaluation: formative versus summative, formal versus informal, and number of years in the profession (Nolin, Rowand, & Farris, 1994). A formative evaluation focuses on the connection between a teacher's performance and intervention

strategies, such as professional development, collaboration, and action research whose goal is to improve pedagogy. Conversely, the main goal of a summative assessment is to measure whether the goals of improvement have been attained. High stakes consequences like tenure, pay raises, and firings are tied to summative evaluations (Nolin, Rowand, & Farris, 1994). Teachers are most supportive of evaluations used to improve their own skills. Using evaluations to discharge incompetent teachers or, especially, to determine teachers' pay levels, met with less approval (Nolin et al., 1994, p. 14).

A specific problem endemic to teacher evaluations is that most teachers perceive teacher evaluation as a superficial, episodic event that is disconnected from their daily classroom teaching and learning. Teachers often feel like they are placed in "passive roles as recipients of external judgment" (Mielke & Frontier, 2012, p.??), and many believe that because of the lack of feedback from school leaders, the evaluations do nothing to help teachers improve their teaching practices (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Several authors have asserted that teacher evaluation is perceived as something that is done to teachers (Danielson, 2001; Peterson, 2000). Often teachers see themselves as targets or victims in the evaluation system, and principals are viewed as trying to catch the teachers doing something wrong or just meeting district or state requirements (Zepeda, 2002). In Sand's (2005) study, neither teachers nor administrators indicated that they believed teacher evaluation had any effect on teacher performance, especially in secondary schools. Cooper, Ehrensall, and Bromme (2005) found that teacher evaluation served more of a managerial than a collegial function, and it did little to help teachers improve instruction. Research conducted by the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project(2011), founded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, found that the current traditional teacher

evaluations did not provide teachers with “useable information to guide more effective teaching”.

Stiggins (1995) discovered that other barriers existed that prohibited attempts at successful teacher assessment. Stiggins stated that one such barrier was the teacher’s fear of assessment and evaluation. Stiggins seemed to believe that many educators were intensely anxious about the systematic assessment and evaluation of their classroom practices and performance. In the past, evaluation was primarily used to judge performance, but if evaluation is to serve the purpose of teacher improvement then teachers will need a new mindset about teacher evaluation.

Many district evaluation systems do not function well because, in the judgment of classroom teachers, they do not address valid performance competencies (Toch & Rothman, 2008). For example, evaluation systems that use overly rigid, narrow criteria for room arrangements, lesson-execution frameworks, and student behaviors often ignore the realities of the teacher who seeks to differentiate instruction and use creative pedagogy (Donaldson & Donaldson, 2012). The result is that teachers do not trust the evaluation process nor the administrators who implement it.

Donaldson (2009) found that teachers accepted judgments from evaluators they believed were skilled because they perceived the feedback as more useful. High quality and intense training is first required for evaluators to gain consistency in observations. Donaldson and Donaldson (2012) reported that in order for teachers to benefit from the feedback they receive from evaluators, the teachers need to trust the evaluators. “For teachers to find these conjectures credible and respond to them with efforts to build on their strengths and address their

weaknesses, they must trust the observer and have access to subsequent learning opportunities” (Donaldson & Donaldson, 2012, p. 80).

In contrast to all the negative perceptions of teacher evaluation, other studies (Astor, 2005; Colby, 2001; La Masa, 2005) have found that the majority of teachers surveyed believed that their experiences with teacher evaluation led to improved practices in the classroom or improved student outcomes. Also, according to research conducted by the University of Chicago (2013) concerning the perceptions and experiences of teachers and administrators during the first year of REACH (Recognizing Educators Advancing Chicago) implementation, school administrators and teachers expressed positive views of the potential of the teacher practice to support teacher growth and professional development. On the survey, 76% of teachers indicated that the evaluation process at their school encouraged their professional growth. Similarly, 76% of the administrators reported believing that the observation process would result in instructional improvement at their school, and 82% reported noticeable improvements in half or more of the teachers they had observed over the school year (Sporte et al., 2013).

Every teacher in Kelly’s (2006) case study indicated that the most positive aspect of teacher evaluation practices was the post-observation conference. Feedback is perceived as most useful by teachers when it is given in a safe non-threatening setting (Acheson & Gall, 2003; Brinko, 1993; Irvin et al., 2007) and in an atmosphere of collaboration and reflection (Acheson & Gall, 2003; Beers, 2006; Blasé & Blasé, 2001; Brinko, 1993). Teachers believe that effective feedback should lead to goal setting (Beers, 2006; Brinko, 1993), which can lead to improved student outcomes. These perceptions are strengthened by research. Cotton (2003) stated that, “researchers have identified a link between principals’ classroom observation and feedback ... and student academic performance” (p. 31). Teachers also believe that when the feedback

process is successful, it opens a two-way, ongoing, collegial conversation about teaching and learning that hopefully leads to reflection and professional growth (Acheson & Gall, 2003; Beers, 2006; Brinko, 1993).

Massive teacher retirements in the public schools have changed the environments of teachers and school leaders in today's schools and with these changes comes new perceptions (Donaldson, 2009). These younger teachers and principals are more receptive to the differential treatment of teachers than were those in prior generations. Donaldson (2009) found that in a representative sample of teachers 70% of new teachers indicated that the fact that teachers do not get rewarded for superior effort and performance is a definite drawback. Eighty-four percent of these teachers said that making it easier to terminate unmotivated or incompetent teachers would be an effective way to improve teacher quality. The influx of so many new educators also provides an opportunity for supervisors to evaluate teachers more rigorously, before these individuals gain tenure (Donaldson, 2009).

A teacher's perception about the evaluation process is derived from his or her past experience with teacher evaluation. These perceptions have the power to shape the climate and effectiveness of the classroom (Donovan & Bransford, 2005; Tobin, Tippins, & Gallard, 1994). Teachers will do what they perceive will best serve their students and themselves. School leaders must make the efforts to change any negative perceptions with new positive experiences so that teacher evaluation can serve its purpose and improve teaching practices and improve student outcomes.

### **Teacher Evaluation in New Jersey**

The National Assessment of Educational Progress places New Jersey's public school system among the nation's top performers. In 2013, academic outcomes in New Jersey ranked

second in the country. Rates of on-time graduation, preschool attendance, and statewide test scores have all been on the rise since 2006 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). However, New Jersey has some of the worst achievement gaps in the country, despite spending more per-pupil than most states (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Black, Latino, and low-income eighth-graders are nearly three grade levels behind their White and more affluent peers in both reading and math (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). Recognizing its shortcomings, New Jersey has often been in the forefront of educational reform.

Recent actions undertaken by Governor Chris Christie have made national headlines. The governor has proposed sweeping changes to the status quo on a number of fronts: funding, teacher salaries, superintendent salaries, teacher and principal accountability, highly qualified teachers, tenure, and parent outreach through NJ SMART, the state's student data system. He has proved himself to be a strong agent of change in his first term as governor. Christie is the first governor in many years who was elected without the support of the NJEA; once considered an impossible feat. The freedom from any ties to the union has allowed him to move forward quickly and decisively without having to worry about breaking promises and losing support from his constituents ("Chris Christy on Education," 2013).

It has long been recognized in New Jersey that teachers and educational leaders are the two top influences on student learning. Since 2010, the New Jersey Department of Education has been working to improve educator evaluation. These efforts have included a 2-year pilot program that involved more than 15,000 teachers and principals. Building on this work, on August 6, 2012, under Democratic Senator Teresa Ruiz's leadership, the New Jersey Legislature unanimously passed the Teacher Effectiveness and Accountability for the Children of New

Jersey (TEACHNJ) Act, which mandated the implementation of a new teacher evaluation system starting in the 2013 -2014 school year (as cited in Hoffman, 2013).

TEACHNJ defined specific requirements for educator evaluations as well as related professional development and tenure process changes, and a timeline for full implementation of teacher and principal evaluations across the state by 2013-14. The goal of the law is to “raise student achievement by improving instruction through the adoption of evaluations that provide specific feedback to educators, inform the provision of aligned professional development, and inform personnel decisions” (TEACHNJ, 2012,). It is the first time in the history of New Jersey public schools that teachers earn and keep tenure based on how effective they are in the classroom. Unlike previous evaluation systems, the new evaluations factor in objective student achievement data, as well as multiple classroom observations to distinguish between effective and ineffective teachers and to give them useful feedback to help improve their teaching practices (Hoffman, 2013).

The teacher evaluation reform in New Jersey took place during a multi-year process in order to gain insights from stakeholders and learn from implementation challenges identified from pilot studies. During the 2010-2011 school year, the statute created an Educator Effectiveness Task Force that recommended teacher-evaluation implementation pilot study in 10 school districts. Another 20 districts joined the original 10 during the pilot for the 2012-2013 school year. Pilot schools were selected through a competitive application process for those districts interested in participation. For the second year of the pilot study, the state department of education received 49 applications and 10 districts were selected to receive grants totaling \$1 million to support implementation (McGuinn, 2012). Also, there was a mandated requirement

that all districts in the state participate in a year of focused capacity building in advance of the statewide implementation scheduled for the 2013-2014 school year (McGuinn, 2012).

New Jersey's Department of Education created a State Evaluation Advisory Committee and District Evaluation Advisory Committees to solicit monthly feedback concerning implementation challenges during the pilot study. The education department also contracted with the Rutgers University Graduate School of Education to conduct an independent evaluation of the first year of the pilot that included site visits and administrator surveys. The Rutgers evaluation examined the distribution of evaluation ratings and student growth data. Another interesting aspect of New Jersey's reform is that New Jersey began to pilot a new teacher-evaluation system before the state legislature enacted the new evaluation and tenure law (TEACHNJ). This enabled the lessons learned from that pilot to be incorporated into the actual statute (McGuinn, 2012).

The first year of the pilot program had a number of challenges for the 10 districts. They found out that the majority of teachers did not have standardized assessments for their students, and even for those who did, the data system of the state had just begun to link student scores to individual teachers. Based on experiences from the first pilot, a number of changes were made for the second pilot. These changes included: increasing the number of observations for core teachers, introducing the use of double-scoring (two independent observations), shifting to unannounced observations, and increasing the flexibility for the weighting for tested and non-tested grades and subjects. To deal with the issue of biased evaluations by principals, schools were required to use external evaluators to provide a second set of observations. The external evaluators were required to be trained and be in accordance with the rubric of the school district



and come from another school, from the district office, or be a retired certified teacher (McGuinn, 2012). This was later changed by AchieveNJ.

On September 11, 2013, the State Board of New Jersey approved AchieveNJ; the first set of regulations to outline specific evaluation policies for the 2013–14 school year. On March 6, 2013, the department proposed a second round of regulations that included more details about the evaluation policies and procedures for the coming school year. AchieveNJ provides the details and support structures necessary to allow districts to implement the requirements of TEACHNJ effectively (AchieveNJ, 2013). Commissioner Cerf (as cited in Morgan & Vespucci, 2013), of the New Jersey Department of Education said, "We are committed to developing an educator evaluation system that honors our educators' achievements and ensures that they have the tools they need to continuously improve and help all of our students succeed". He continued with, "Achieve NJ is based on three years of research, piloting, and engagement with thousands of educators, and we believe the proposed regulations reflect the professionalism of our educators and ultimately will contribute to improved learning outcomes for students".

The New Jersey Educator Effectiveness Task Force released a recommended framework for an evaluation system that consisted of two segments. Those segments are student achievement and teacher practice. For the 110,229 teachers in NJ, the grading mix is for 55% classroom observation and 45% student achievement in tested grades and subjects, and for non-tested grades and subjects, it is 85 % observation and 15 % student achievement (McGuinn, 2012). Teachers are rated in one of four categories; *highly effective*, *effective*, *partially effective*, and *ineffective*. These ratings are based on both student learning and growth and multiple observations. Untenured teachers are required to attain two positive evaluations within their first

3 years. And, in a major change in educational policy in New Jersey, tenured teachers can lose their jobs after 2 consecutive years of ineffective evaluations (TEACHNJ, 2012).

Beginning in September 2013, all of New Jersey teachers are evaluated annually. Teacher practice is measured by performance on a state-approved teacher-practice instrument that is used to gather evidence, primarily through classroom observations. Non-tenured teachers have three required observations each year and multiple observers are required. This includes two long observations and one short observation in the first 2 years of employment, and one long and two short observations in the 3rd and 4th years of employment. Tenured teachers have three required observations each year. Multiple observers are recommended. This includes three short observations, and while it is not required that short observations be announced, at least one of the three observations must have a pre-conference (AchieveNJ: Teacher Evaluation and Support in 2013–14, 2013).

Observations of instructional practice must be conducted according to an approved teacher evaluation instrument selected by each individual district. As of June 18, 2013, the New Jersey Department of Education had approved 18 different teaching-practice evaluation instruments that met the technical requirements set forth by them. School districts choose from one of the NJDOE-approved frameworks or can develop their own evaluation, but all frameworks must be approved by the state (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2013). Danielson's (2011) Frameworks for Teaching--the most popular choice--has been adopted in almost two-thirds -- or more than 330 -- of the school districts in the state for the 2013-2014 school year (Mooney, 2013). The second most popular choice for the evaluation instrument is by James Stronge of the College of William and Mary, which was chosen by 65 districts (Mooney, 2013).

A central tenet of AchieveNJ is that educators are never evaluated on a single factor or test scores alone, but on multiple measures of both effective practice and evidence of student learning. The evaluations are based not only on multiple classroom observations that examine teaching practices, but also on student learning outcomes. Teacher evaluations are assessed on two different student growth indicators; Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs), which are based on the NJ ASK test, and Student Growth Objectives (SGOs), which educators set with approval from their supervisors and track over the course of a school year (Morgan & Vespucci, 2013). Rather than relying on absolute standardized test scores, a statistical formula determines student growth from year to year (called value-added) and the growth is compared to that of their peers (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2013).

Student Growth Objectives (SGOs) are academic goals for groups of students that are aligned to state standards and can be tracked using objective measures. Each teacher sets the student growth objectives with his or her principal or supervisor at the start of the year. They are developed using available student data and created to be ambitious but achievable. Principals are held accountable in their own evaluations for how well they help teachers with this process and for the degree to which SGOs are met by the teachers in their school (AchieveNJ, 2013).

Student Growth Percentile (SGP) data represent the growth an individual student in grades 4 through 8 makes on the NJ ASK from one year to the next and considers how that growth compares to gains made by that student's academic peers across the state. Academic peers are defined as students with similar academic history in previous years. This approach is more equitable than simply setting a proficiency target, since students start and end the year at different places. The median SGP is a percentage between 1 and 99, which is translated to a 4-level scale of effectiveness (AchieveNJ, 2013).

Educator evaluations are used to determine employment status as it relates to tenure. For the first time in New Jersey, the process of earning and maintaining tenure is linked to educator effectiveness, rather than years served. Before the implementation of these new evaluation practices teacher dismissals were rare. Between 2001 and 2010, only 17 of the 150,000 tenured teachers statewide lost tenure (Christie, 2011). Yet, national research shows that 43 % of teachers believe at least one of their tenured colleagues should be dismissed for ineffectiveness (Weisberg et al., 2009).

Christie has assured residents of New Jersey that tenure in New Jersey will change. In accordance with the TEACHNJ Act, any teachers, principals, assistant principals, or vice-principals hired after August 6, 2012 must be employed for 4 years and receive a rating of *effective* or *highly effective* in two of three evaluations in order to earn tenure. Furthermore, upon acquiring tenure, if a teacher is rated *ineffective* or *partially ineffective* 1 year and *ineffective* the next, the district must start the dismissal process (McGuinn, 2012). As in the past, each educator participates in a summary conference at the end of the school year to discuss his or her evaluation rating. Additionally, any educator rated *partially effective* or *ineffective* will develop, in conjunction with his or her supervisor, a Corrective Action Plan to provide additional targeted support to address areas of need (Morgan & Vespucci, 2013).

According to the provisions of TEACHNJ Act and AchieveNJ, every school must establish a School Improvement Panel (ScIP) the role of which is to ensure, oversee, and support the implementation of the evaluation for the district, professional development (PD), and mentoring policies at the school level. Also, The ScIP ensures that teachers have a strong voice and significant opportunity to help shape evaluation procedures within each school. The School Improvement Panel consists of a principal, an assistant or vice principal (or designee), and a

teacher. The teacher will be a “person with a demonstrated record of success in the classroom,” chosen in consultation with the union (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2013, p.32). Peter Shulman (as cited in McGuinn, 2012), chief talent officer/assistant commissioner of teacher and leader effectiveness for the New Jersey Department of Education commented, “First and foremost we have learned about the importance of stakeholder engagement and communication. We have heard from the field how important the District Evaluation Advisory Committees have been -- having this governing or advisory board has paid significant dividends in building transparency and trust—and so every district is going to have this” (, p.48).

TEACHNJ is a bold step forward for the state, and can continue to learn from AchieveNJ and continued research from implementation of new teacher evaluation practices both in New Jersey and other states to help improve New Jersey teachers and schools.

### **The Danielson Model**

In an attempt to improve teacher evaluation practices, many school districts nation-wide have moved toward performance-based assessments as a means to evaluate their teachers. This method involves classroom observation, but assesses the teacher’s instruction against a predetermined set of performance standards translated into detailed descriptors within a rubric (Oliva & Pawlas, 2004). While performance standards have been imbedded within prior evaluation systems, the difference in the more recently developed standards-based competency models is the explicit delineation of the expected competencies and behaviors (Odden, Borman, & Fermanich, 2004). Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching, aligned with the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium--or INTASC standards--is one of the most common systems chosen by schools across the country (Donaldson, 2009).

Some argue that performance-based assessments deliberately include teacher behaviors that, according to research, promote student learning. Thus, these evaluations provide an indirect assessment of student outcomes (Donaldson, 2009). Additionally, some performance-based evaluation includes consideration of student work (Heneman, 2006). Ultimately, however, the performance-based assessment method is focused more on teacher inputs than student outputs (Donaldson, 2008). It is believed that comprehensive teaching frameworks, like Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching can help school districts "empower teachers, not just judge them" (Mielke & Frontier, 2012).

The widely-used and research-proven Framework for Teaching, first created by Charlotte Danielson in 1996, marks its 17th anniversary with significant growth in states and school districts nationwide and overseas. In 2011, it was chosen by the New Jersey State Department of Education as one of the approved models for teacher evaluation in New Jersey. By implementing this framework, schools ensure a consistent process for evaluating teacher effectiveness that is based on a solid foundation of research and demonstrated to be strongly correlated to student growth (Kane et al., 2010; Taylor & Tyler, 2011). Danielson's framework is not intended to be used as a checklist for specific teacher behaviors or competencies or as an endorsement of a particular teaching style. Because of the generality of its format, teachers at every grade-level and for any course content can be identified as having good teaching behaviors or weaknesses, despite different teaching styles (Benedict, Thomas & Kimberling, 2013).

Charlotte Danielson, a career educator and educational consultant, is an internationally recognized expert in the area of teacher effectiveness who has specialized in the design of teacher evaluation systems that, while ensuring teacher quality, also promote professional learning. According to Danielson (1996), her framework "Conveys that educators, like other

professionals, hold themselves to the highest standards” (p.83). Danielson has taught all grade levels from kindergarten to college and has worked as an administrator, a curriculum director, and a staff developer (Yaple, 2012). She is currently an educational consultant and author based in New Jersey and holds degrees from Cornell, Oxford, and Rutgers. She advises state education departments and ational ministries and departments of education, both in the United States and overseas. In the educational community she is highly respected for her work in curriculum planning, performance assessment, professional development, and teacher growth. Teachers and administrators find her to be a reliable source. Education Week magazine’s online bloggers have called Danielson a “teacher evaluation guru” (Yaple, 2012, p.14).

Grounded in educational research, Danielson published, *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*, in 1996. This book was popular and widely used in the late 1990s and 2000s, long before legislative action in states began the recent overhaul of teacher evaluations. The book was updated in 2007, which was perfect timing with the beginning of the Race to the Top competition under the Obama administration. The Danielson model was viewed as a tried and tested framework that was readily available for school districts to evaluate teachers. In response to information gained from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation research project called Measures of Effective Teaching (MET), Danielson updated her framework again in 2011 (Danielson, 2013).

In response to the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and based on feedback from educators, Charlotte Danielson again updated her Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument with the 2013 edition. The 2013 edition incorporates the instructional implications of Common Core State Standards and includes language refinements to further improve scoring accuracy when using the framework for evaluations and observations

(Elliot & Moran, 2013). Danielson (2013) said, “The core concepts and architecture of the Framework remain the same. However evolving requirements from educators and the field continue to drive ongoing enhancements to the Evaluation Instrument, as they have throughout its history.

In the Framework for Teaching (1996) Charlotte Danielson described the importance of having a comprehensive teacher evaluation framework in place as follows:

A framework for professional practice can be used for a wide range of purposes, from meeting novices’ needs to enhancing veterans’ skills. Because teaching is complex, it is helpful to have a road map through the territory, structured around a shared understanding of teaching. Novice teachers, of necessity, are concerned with day-today survival; experienced teachers want to improve their effectiveness and help their colleagues do so as well; highly accomplished teachers want to move toward advanced certification and serve as a resource to less-experienced colleagues. (p. 2).

The Danielson framework allows for active and professional learning to take place that is teacher-centered. Professional learning is completed by the learner through an active intellectual process that has three essential features: self-assessment, reflection on practice, and professional conversation. Shulman (2004) agreed that the Danielson model allowed teachers to be active participants in inquiry concerning their own teaching practices and through writing, dialogue, and questioning authentic learning can occur.

Danielson (1996) explained that, “the components of professional practice are a comprehensive framework reflecting the many different aspects of teaching” (p.2). This framework can be used to guide both novice and experienced teachers, to provide a structure for reform efforts, and to communicate expectations to the community (Danielson, 1996). In the



framework (see Appendix A), "the complex activity of teaching is divided into 22 components (and 76 smaller elements) clustered into the four domains of teaching responsibility: planning and preparation (Domain 1), classroom environment (Domain 2), instruction (Domain 3), and professional responsibilities (Domain 4)" (Danielson Group, 2010, paragraph 1). Domain 1 takes in "demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy," "[demonstrating] knowledge of students," "setting instructional outcomes," "demonstrating knowledge of resources," "designing coherent instruction," and "designing student assessments"; domain 2 comprises "creating an environment of respect and rapport," "establishing a culture for learning," "managing classroom procedures," "managing student behavior," and "organizing physical space"; domain 3 incorporates "communicating with students," "using questioning and discussion [techniques]," "engaging students in learning," "using assessment in instruction," and "demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness"; and domain 4 encompasses "reflecting on teaching," "maintaining accurate records," "communicating with families," "participating in a professional [community] ", "growing and developing professionally," and "showing professionalism" (Danielson, 2011).

In a quantitative study completed by Sweeley (2004), it was found that, on average, a majority of teachers responded positively, agreeing or strongly agreeing, with all four domains of Danielson's (2007) framework for teaching. Sweeley (2004) determined that teachers in the state of Pennsylvania, where the Danielson's model is mandatory, believed that the framework for teaching was an effective instrument to increase student achievement and move teachers to pursue professional development opportunities to learn new strategies and methods of instruction.

With the *Excellence in Teaching Pilot*, the Chicago Public Schools implemented Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching and began a 2-year research study during the

2009-2011 school years. Overall, the research found that teachers believed that the Danielson framework was an improvement relative to the old evaluation system and worked as it was designed to evaluate teachers and create a shared definition of effective teaching. Specific findings included: (a) the classroom observation ratings were valid measures of teaching practice; (b) the classroom observation ratings were reliable measures of teaching practice; (c) principals and teachers said that conferences were more reflective and objective than in the past and were focused on instructional practice and improvement; and (d) over half of principals were highly engaged in the new evaluation system (Sartain, Stoelinga & Brown, 2011).

In the fall of 2009, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation launched the 2-year Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project to rigorously develop and test multiple measures of teacher effectiveness. The MET project is a collaborative effort between several independent research teams and nearly 3,000 teacher volunteers from seven U.S. public school districts. Danielson's framework for teaching was one of the five observation protocols selected for the 2-year study (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2011). This widespread adoption of the framework in schools nationwide and in research is a strong testament to its value as a framework for effective teaching evaluation and tool for professional growth.

### **What's Needed in Our Schools for Teacher Evaluation Reform to Succeed?**

Given the long documented history of weak teacher evaluations, designing, adapting and implementing a high-quality evaluation system is a necessary step forward in education reform that will hopefully improve teacher effectiveness and improved outcomes for public school students. Creating such a system is a complex act that requires an infrastructure of standards, constructive feedback, professional development, trained and unbiased evaluators, information management systems, and quality control processes that most school systems must establish and

refine. When all of this is in place a strong evaluation system will tell teachers how they are performing and give the school district important information about teacher performance that can then drive teacher growth and professional development, rewards and consequences (The Aspen Institute, 2011).

The National Council on Teacher Quality (2012) found that, the landscape is quickly and dramatically changing when it comes to rethinking and rebuilding teacher evaluations in school systems in the United States. There is a great deal of promise and potential in these policy trends. At the same time, however, it is clear that policy is only part of what is necessary...Even the best evaluation system can be implemented poorly or undermined.

It is difficult for change regarding teacher evaluation that comes from the state capitol to trickle down to the classrooms in the local school districts. For teacher-evaluation reform to succeed, state policy changes must result in changes in district practice. In turn, changes in district practice must change the school culture and the behavior of principals and teachers at the school level, and these changes at the school level have the potential to deliver better teaching and improved student performance (McGreal, 1988).

Commitment and district effort alone may not be sufficient for success, for, as Harvard's Richard Elmore (as cited in LeFlock, Boyle, & Therriault, 2008) argued, states suffer from a "capacity gap"(p.??) that undermines their abilities to monitor and enforce mandates and provide technical guidance. A 2011 study by the U.S. Government Accountability Office concluded that states were struggling to implement the reforms in their Race to the Top applications and that their "overly optimistic" timelines might not be met. As noted by The New Teacher Project, "Now comes the hard part. As states across the country have already learned, strong

implementation will determine whether a new evaluation system lives up to its potential. Even the most elegantly designed evaluation system won't succeed unless schools implement it consistently and accurately" (The New Teacher Project, 2011,). Adam Tucker, senior program officer at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, observed that implementation, "is very challenging work to implement at the school level where the rubber meets the road" .

All too often, educational reform has produced disappointing results (Clark & Astuto, 1994). Fullan (1996) noted that one of the reasons for failure of systemic reforms is fragmentation: "Fragmentation occurs when the pressures - and even the opportunities - for reform work at cross purposes or seem disjointed and incoherent" (p.420). Other reasons for the failure of systemic reforms are that reform efforts are implemented too quickly, from too many directions, and without regard as to how the reform effort and the subsequent changes will affect teachers (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000). Thus, many reform efforts fail.

To help avoid failure, the first step in designing or adopting a teacher evaluation system like the Danielson Model is that all stakeholders must come to a consensus as to the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that teachers must possess so that their classrooms can support learning. Building teacher ownership of standards and everything that is aligned with them is essential to the success of implementing a new evaluation system. Ownership impacts the credibility of the effort in the hearts and minds of teachers and affects whether the standards are seen as unreasonable expectations force upon them by the powers above (The Aspen Institute, 2011). At the standards development stage, credible involvement of teachers in writing the standards and sharing the standards at different stages of development for feedback are powerful and meaningful ways to both engage teachers and revise and strengthen the standards. Success and

teacher buy-in are easier when teachers perceive that their voices are given as much credence as those of administrators and outside consultants (The Aspen Institute, 2011).

Equally important for the success of any new evaluation system is the creation of a shared vision for all stakeholders and the development of a shared language to talk about teaching and the evaluation process (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013). An interactive relationship between the teacher and the school must exist to create a healthy environment ripe for the changes that must occur. What is good for the district must also be good for the growth of the teachers within that district. This type of synergistic relationship enhances the ability of both the teacher and the school to achieve their desired goals of the evaluation process (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013).

It cannot be ignored that the success of these new evaluation practices rests in large part on the support of the teachers to build legitimacy for these reforms as they are implemented. As mentioned previously, the literature reveals a strong correlation between teachers' favorable and accepting reactions to evaluation systems and subsequent optimal use of the systems to improve teaching practice (Tobin, Tippins, & Gallard, 1994; Mielke & Frontier, 2012; Donaldson & Donaldson, 2012). The key to success in teacher evaluation may very well be the perceptions and attitudes of the teachers as they participate in the process. In 1953, Spears made this point when he wrote that, "perhaps the value of a supervisory program can best be measured by the affection and respect shown for it by the teachers. It may meet all the theoretical requirements for a good program; but if it is not accepted by those whom it is to serve, there is something wrong with it" (p. 443).

Peter Shulman (as cited in McGuinn, 2012), chief talent officer/assistant commissioner of teacher and leader effectiveness for the New Jersey Department of Education, agrees that the

success of these reforms is linked to teacher buy-in: “We are trying to weave this into the fabric of the district, and that buy-in by folks at the local level is very important. There is a bridge between theory and practice that needs to be crossed so that the understanding on the ground and in the field matches that at the state level. It comes down to communication”. A school system that lacks communication usually lacks trust and the changes required in the reforms are often filled by people’s worst fears. Frequent, clear, and honest communication is critical for teacher buy-in. When teachers, principals, and central office staff repeatedly hear the same clear message from the senior leaders of the system, they begin to give more credence to the initiative. Having a high-touch approach with broad outreach is helpful as messages inevitably get distorted as they work their way through the organization (The Aspen Institute, 2011). Clear and consistent communication builds trust among the stakeholders (Bryk & Schneider, 2003).

According to Donaldson and Donaldson (2012), effective teacher evaluation fails more often because of organizational neglect than it does due to technical deficiencies in the evaluation system. In particular, school districts have not done a good job of managing the relational and political aspects of the process between teachers and supervisors. The result is usually that neither supervisors nor teachers find performance assessment a “constructive and respectful experience” (Donaldson & Donaldson, 2012).

Trust is essential to implementing new practices effectively and to building a culture of shared ownership. Evaluation conducted in a school environment that fosters mutual trust between the evaluator and the teacher holds the greatest potential for successful implementation that benefits both parties. Wang and Day (2002) stated that, “respect, safety, trust, and collaboration ... are considered key ingredients of effective teacher development, and hence need to be at the core of any teacher observation model” (p. 14). Castetter (1996) and Stronge

(1997) maintained that the quality of the relationship between the evaluator and person being evaluated plays a central role in the effectiveness of the evaluation system due to the fact that evaluation is personal and emotional. Although teacher evaluation can generate suspicion and sometimes even relational conflict, trust between the evaluator and person being evaluated can prevail in an effective personnel evaluation system (Stronge, 1991). Research conducted by the University of Chicago revealed that teachers believed that successful implementation of REACH, which was modeled after the Charlotte Danielson's 2011 Framework for Teaching, depended heavily on the level of trust between their administrators and the teachers. They stated in their survey responses that trust can help minimize the tension that exists when evaluation and support are provided by the same person using the same instrument (Spote et al., 2013).

The evaluator has a key role in the process of evaluation. The evaluator is the one who leads the performance and evaluation interviews. Therefore, the relationship between the evaluator and the teacher is a critical factor for a teacher's satisfaction with the interviews and for the effectiveness of an evaluation system that aims to improve instruction. In the case of a positive relationship, when teachers perceive the evaluation as a constructive process, they are more open to feedback and they are more willing to act upon the outcomes of evaluation (Chow, Wong, Yeung, & Mo, 2002, Kelly et al, 2008, Mo et al. 1998).

The credibility of the evaluator is also a critical factor. If teachers do not consider their evaluator competent, they fear receiving an undeserved assessment (Milanowski & Heneman, 2001). A credible evaluator (a) has the required competency to evaluate teachers, (b) has considerable experience in teaching, (c) is familiar with the subject of the teacher, and (d) has enough opportunities to observe and follow-up with the teacher (Chow et al., 2002, Milanowski & Heneman, 2001, Mo et al., 1998).

Donaldson (2009) found that in order to be able to identify good instructional practices and evaluate teachers accurately, a great deal of commitment on the part of school leaders for training and professional development was required. Policymakers should address principal preparation and in-service training to ensure that principals develop an ability to act strategically as human capital managers. Districts must provide their school instructional leaders with ongoing training and consultation that focus on the interpersonal as well as the technical aspects of observing and coaching teachers. Also, principals need opportunities to develop vital skills in how to assess instruction and communicate effectively regarding instructional quality (Donaldson & Donaldson, 2012). According to Peter Shulman (as cited in McGuinn, 2012), chief talent officer/assistant commissioner of teacher and leader effectiveness for the New Jersey Department of Education, there is a need for “training, training, and more training—high quantity and high quality” (pp.??).

Shulman (as cited in McGuinn, 2012) identified two key challenges facing New Jersey school districts. The first is that the reforms are a major cultural change and it takes time and the political and operational fortitude to see it through. Second is the need to better connect the evaluation process to professional development so that teachers can get feedback that allows them to improve and grow as an educator.

With regard to the challenge of a new school culture, a teacher evaluation system and the way a school system uses it provide insight into the values of a school system. The importance placed on teacher evaluation in a school district is a reflection of the values and expectations the system has for all those involved. Stronge and Tucker (1999) stated, “Performance evaluation achieves relevance only by becoming an integral component of other system-level initiatives” (p. 347). Teacher evaluation systems that address a relationship between the needs of the district and



the needs of the individual teacher foster greater improvements within the school district (Stronge & Tucker, 1999). According to Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin, and Bernstein (1984), “To improve a teacher’s performance, the school system must enlist the teacher’s cooperation, motivate him, and guide him through the steps needed for improvement to occur” (p. 12). The school culture in such systems supports teachers by recognizing the need for improvement as an asset rather than a liability (Mielke & Frontier, 2012).

Beside a school culture that views teacher evaluation as supportive and not punitive, Shulman (as cited in McGuinn, 2012) has expressed the view that the success of evaluation reforms depends on the way that districts connect their evaluation practices to a teacher growth and professional development. Teachers and instructional leaders need to reframe their expectations concerning the teacher evaluation process and begin to view each evaluation session as an opportunity to improve instructional practices to increase student learning. Schools need to transcend the idea that only teachers who are struggling in the classroom need an improvement plan (Mielke & Frontier, 2012). Danielson (2011) stressed that, “A commitment to professional learning is important, not because teaching is of poor quality and must be ‘fixed,’ but rather because teaching is so hard that we can always improve it. No matter how good a lesson is, we can always make it better. Just as in other professions, every teacher has the responsibility to be involved in a career-long quest to improve practice” (p.33).

Teacher evaluation merits an in-depth realignment to support high-performing teacher-leaders who work to improve their own practice and self-diagnose areas of growth. Duke and Stiggins (1986) stated that evaluators tended to focus on the small percentage of teachers who were not performing. Teacher evaluation in the past may have helped the novice teacher grow and could sometimes weed out the ineffective teacher, but it did not generally help long-term,

high-performing teachers improve. Due to its history, range of purposes, poor definition, and power structure, high performing teachers often find teacher evaluation meaningless (Peterson, 2000). If the goal of teacher evaluation is to improve instruction in all classrooms, then to succeed we need evaluation systems that promote the development of all teachers, not just those having difficulty. (Duke & Stiggins, 1986,).

Research tells us that teachers improve when they receive regular, specific feedback on their practice, the opportunity to reflect on it, and support to improve areas of weakness (The Aspen Institute, 2011). The satisfaction of teachers with their performance and the feedback they receive at their post-conferences play an important part in the evaluation process because they stimulate the acceptance and use of the evaluation system (Keeping & Levy, 2000). Every teacher in Kelly's (2006) case study indicated that they saw the post-observation conference as "the most positive aspect of the evaluation process" (p. 95). While years of experience can be valuable in the teaching profession, "experience without reflection does not improve instruction or teacher effectiveness. Rather, it is the combination of experience and thoughtful analysis that makes teachers more effective" (Tucker, Stronge, & Agrees, 2002, p. 79).

Effective feedback should lead to goal setting for teachers (Beers, 2006; Brinko, 1993), which can lead to improved student learning. Cotton (2003) stated that, "researchers have identified a link between principals' classroom observation and feedback ... and student academic performance" (p. 31). Feedback is perceived as most useful when it is given in a safe non-threatening setting (Acheson & Gall, 2003; Brinko, 1993; Irvin et al., 2007), and in an atmosphere of collaboration and reflection (Acheson & Gall, 2003; Beers, 2006; Blasé & Blasé, 2001; Brinko, 1993). Providing effective feedback is often described as a method of inquiry, the administrator should spend much of the time listening to the teacher and using probing questions

(Acheson & Gall, 2003; Beers, 2006; Blasé & Blasé, 2001; Stronge et al., 2008). When the feedback process is successful, it sparks an ongoing, collegial conversation about teaching and learning that leads to reflection and professional growth (Acheson & Gall, 2003; Beers, 2006; Brinko, 1993). Having an emphasis on holding such conversations “promotes reflection on practice and mutual learning... and recognizes the value of reflection in learning” (Danielson, 2001, p. 15).

To ensure success, a fundamental change in the teacher-evaluation process requires a rethinking of the principal's role in evaluation as well. Arguably, principals arguably play the most important role in ensuring that excellent teaching occurs in their school. Successful reform is not achievable without strong district leadership that makes improving teaching a way of life in every school (Donaldson & Donaldson, 2012). Research has shown that the impact of school leaders on student achievement is second only to teachers of all school resources (Hollinger & Heck, 1996). Kenneth Leithwood and his colleagues (2008) concluded,

As far as we are aware, there is not a single documented case of a school successfully turning around its pupil achievement trajectory in the absence of talented leadership. One explanation for this is that leadership serves as a catalyst for unleashing the potential capacities that already exist in the organization. (p.54)

Sullivan and Glanz (2005) compared the role of the principal to that of the teacher in the classroom – “a mentor, inspirer, and a facilitator of learning” (p. 162). Ponticelli and Zepeda (2004) contended that a trusting relationship cannot exist when the evaluation process is viewed as “an empty process or as retribution or manipulation” (p. 53). As Duke and Stiggins (1986) asserted, for teacher evaluation to lead to teacher improvement, there must be an obvious commitment to growth from the school leaders.

Principals need both district support and authority to implement the changes necessary to reform their teacher-evaluation system. Principals need to advocate aggressively for resources, funding, and especially time for teachers to reflect and gather evidence (Darrington, 2011). Donaldson and Donaldson (2012) believe that any successful performance assessment system must also include the time and professional development resources necessary to support teacher learning as well as administrator learning. When a teacher and instructional leader jointly identify a skill that needs developing, the professional development environment of the district must be flexible enough to support the teacher's pursuit of that skill and develop a personal professional growth plan. It also means providing ongoing professional development for principals and other instructional leaders regarding their own consultation and coaching skills with teachers (Donaldson & Donaldson, 2012). School leaders must convince all stakeholders that their district must invest in these systems and, as Phillips and Weingarten (2013) wrote, "it is more important to do it right than to do it cheap" (p.37).

The learning curve for local school districts, state education agencies, and the U.S. Department of Education during the implementation stage of these new teacher-evaluation systems will be steep and mistakes will inevitably be made. It is crucial that the work be transparent and that information about what is working and what is not is shared up and down the education delivery chain (McGuinn, 2012). Just as instructional leaders need to provide their teachers with constructive feedback and opportunities to improve, state education agencies and the U.S. Department of Education need to create a safe environment in which individual districts feel free to talk about their mistakes and the support they need without fear of punitive interventions by a higher authority (McGuinn, 2012). By attending to the challenges that have often plagued teacher evaluation and building on the features successful practices embody,

school districts across the country can improve the teacher evaluation process and in doing so use their greatest assets, their teachers, to improve learning in our schools.

### **Chapter III**

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this research study was to examine teachers' perceptions about the use of Danielson framework in the evaluation process at their school; specifically if these teachers believe that it is of value in shaping and improving their instructional practices. The design chosen for this study was a qualitative method. The phenomenological aspects of qualitative research allowed me to study the teacher's perceptions about their real-life experiences using the Danielson framework at the school where they teach. School documents pertaining to the districts evaluation practices and one-on-one interviews of selected teachers were used to examine these teachers' perceptions.

In this chapter, I explain my background and the reasons I became interested in research on teacher perceptions of the Danielson framework. I provide a description of the methods used to answer the research questions. Following an explanation of the design of the study, I describe how I selected the participants and provide a brief profile of the participating teachers. I then explain how I collected data, analyzed the data, and validated the research procedures and findings.

#### **Background**

Between when I began my quest to become a teacher in 2004 and the time of this study, school reform has been guided predominantly by the No Child Left Behind Act and the Race to the Top federal grant program. Both emphasize the importance of the quality of teachers for raising student achievement. The need for reform of teacher evaluation was identified, and an unprecedented wave of state teacher-evaluation reforms occurred across the country. Meaningful

teacher evaluation has the potential to lead to improved instruction and professional growth, but, in practice, this potential is often unrealized.

The timing of AchieveNJ and the implementation of new teacher evaluation models across New Jersey during the 2013-2014 school year impacted my decision to choose teacher evaluation for my dissertation. Investigating the potential of teacher evaluation as a tool to improve teaching practices for all teachers and better outcomes for all students in public school held my interest. Examining teachers' beliefs and perceptions concerning the teacher evaluation process could provide school districts with information to help them design, implement, and maintain more effective teacher evaluation practices. By understanding and attending to teachers' perceptions of the evaluation process, school leaders could build on the features that successful evaluation practices embody and make better use of their greatest assets, their teachers, to improve learning in our schools.

The following five questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson framework is beneficial to their professional growth as a teacher?
2. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson framework creates a forum for discussion and feedback about teaching that promotes reflective practices?
3. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson framework helps them to change and improve on their classroom practices?
4. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson framework improves the working relationship between teachers and instructional school leaders?

5. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses, if any, of the use of the Danielson model of teacher evaluation as implemented by Rolling Hills High School?

### **Design**

The design of this study was qualitative method. Qualitative research typically deals with a small purposely-chosen group of participants who are able to provide a “rich description” of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2002a): In this case, the phenomenon is teacher evaluation using the Danielson framework. Focusing on the phenomenological aspects of qualitative research allowed the study to reveal teacher’s perceptions about teacher evaluation experiences using the Danielson Framework at the school where they teach. This type of qualitative research aims to discover the different ways that people experience, conceptualize, realize, and understand various aspects of phenomena in the world around them (Martin et al., 1992).

Since teachers’ perceptions were the focal point of the data collection, the qualitative research design had to be flexible enough to allow for emerging themes and concepts to evolve through the process of collection, analysis, and interpretation of data the interview data. The real-life nature of this study is why the qualitative method was selected to explore the selected teachers’ perceptions. What the research participants say they believe and feel about the evaluation process was treated as their reality. Qualitative research methods are best suited in uncovering the understandings and meanings that people assign to their experiences (Creswell, 2002a, b, or both; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This present study sought to identify the factors that teachers perceived as influencing their attitudes, along with the actions taken by their education leaders that contributed to their overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the Danielson framework.



## Sampling

Instructional staff with at least 2 years of teaching experience from the selected high school were invited to participate in this research by way of an administratively-sanctioned mass email that was sent to all 244 full-time teachers (see Appendix B). The email was approved by both the superintendent and principal of the selected high school. All teachers who volunteered to participate in the study were sent a Demographic Profile Questionnaire to be completed and returned to me (see Appendix C). Selection ~~from~~ of the volunteers was purposeful. Maxwell (1996) described this type of sampling as a strategy by which particular settings, persons, or events are selected deliberately in order to provide pertinent information that cannot be obtained as well from either convenience or probability sampling. Glesne (1999) suggested using "criteria that the literature and your experience suggest are particularly important" (p. 30). The criteria for participant inclusion in this study was:

- gender representation,
- representation from different ages and years of teaching experiences,
- representation from teachers in a variety of course content areas, and
- minimum of 2 school years teaching at the selected high school with at least two years of being evaluated with the Danielson framework.

It was anticipated that interviewing teachers from different content areas, as well as teachers with varied years of teaching experience, would provide me with different insights because the teacher experiences collected would be varied, especially because some may have been evaluated by different supervisors. Thus, both veteran and novice teachers from several different content areas were chosen that provided varied experiences. From the 18 teachers who volunteered to participate and who met the criteria for inclusion, 15 were selected for interviews.

Three Health and Physical Education teachers were not chosen because I did not want too many teachers from the same content area. The three volunteers who were not chosen to be participants received an email from me thanking them for volunteering but explaining that I had too many Health and Physical Education Teachers.

### **Profiles of the Participants and Site**

To protect the confidentiality of the participants, the high school, and the school district selected, county names and idiosyncratic details are included in the profiles and findings. All participants and the selected high school were assigned pseudonyms.

The sample for this study was 15 high school teachers who had taught in the selected school for a minimum of 2 years. Teachers who met the criteria for participation were asked to complete a Demographic Profile Questionnaire (see Appendix C), sign an informed consent form (see Appendix D), and were assigned a code number. The teachers selected for the research taught in different content areas within the school. There was a mix of both male and female participants, and they had a variety of teaching experiences. The average age of the participant and the average number of years teaching were calculated from data supplied by the participants. To protect the identity of the participants, their exact ages and years of teaching experience were not listed but rather a range was used for published demographics.

Data was collected from nine male and six female participants from eight different content areas: English, Mathematics, Social Studies, Foreign Language, Business, Fine Arts, Television and Radio, and Health and Physical Education. The average age of the participant was 38, and combined they had 198 years of teaching experience. All but two of the participants had earned a master's degree. Two of the participants had taught at other schools before teaching at Rolling Hills High School. All but one of the teachers was tenured. All teachers reported that

they received, at a minimum, mostly 3s at their last evaluation during the 2014-2015 school year.

No documentation of these evaluation scores was gathered by me. Table 1 provides a summary of the demographic information for each participant in the study.

Table 1

*Summary of Demographic Information for Each Teacher*

Teacher Code	Sex	Age	Content Area	Highest Degree	Teaching Experience	Last Evaluation Rating
1	Male	20-29	Social Studies	Masters	2-5 years	3.5 mostly 3's and 4's
2	Female	50-59	English	Masters	21+ years	Mostly 3's
3	Male	40-49	Social Studies	Masters	11-15 years	Mostly 4s
4	Male	40-49	Health and PE	Masters	16-20 years	3.5
5	Male	30-39	Social Studies	Masters	6-10 years	Mostly 3s
6	Male	60+	Radio/Television	Masters	21+ years	Mostly 3s
7	Male	20-29	Mathematics	Masters	2-5 years	Mostly 3s
8	Male	30-39	Health and PE	Masters	2-5 years	Mostly 3s
9	Female	30-39	Foreign Language	Masters	11-15 years	All 3s and 4s
10	Female	50-59	Business	Masters	21+ years	3.4 Mostly 3s and 4s
11	Male	30-39	English	Masters	6-10 years	Mostly 3s

12	Female	20-29	Fine Art	Bachelors	2-5 years	Mostly 3s
13	Female	30-39	English	Masters	11-15 years	Mostly 3s
14	Male	20-29	Health and PE	Masters	2-5 years	Mostly 3s
15	Female	20-29	English	Bachelors	2-5 years	Mostly 3s and 4s

For the purpose of the study, a pseudonym, Rolling Hills High School, was used in place of the actual name of the study site. Rolling Hills High School was selected for this research because it had been using an evaluation model based on the Framework for Teaching since 1997, 1 year after it was written by Charlotte Danielson. The district formally adopted the Danielson framework for observing and evaluating teachers in 2001, and it continued to use this framework at the time of this study. When schools were required by AchieveNJ to select an observation tool by the spring of 2012, this high school selected the Danielson's 2011 framework of teaching.

According to the school narrative on the report card from the New Jersey Department of Education, Rolling Hills High School is a comprehensive, 4-year, public high school, in a regional school district that serves approximately 3,100 students from several municipalities in central New Jersey. The average class size was 21.0, the student to faculty ratio was 10.8 to 1, and the student to computer ratio was 1.6 to 1 (NJDOE Report Card, 2013).

The school had a dedicated professional staff of 244 full-time teachers that provide a rigorous and expansive academic program to their students. Approximately 67.7% of the staff held advanced degrees (e.g. MA, PhD, or EdD). The school has an outstanding academic curriculum that offers 226 general education courses, 46 honors level courses, 27 advanced placement courses, and 38 special education courses. Every course at the high school has been

revised to be in alignment with the national common core curriculum standards. According to the 2013 New Jersey Department of Education School Performance Report, Rolling Hills outperforms 89% of high schools statewide--as suggested by its statewide percentile ranking--and 94% of schools that are educating students with similar demographic characteristics as noted in its peer school percentile ranking in the performance area of academic achievement. The average composite SAT score was 1652.

The district offered a staff training program that achieved state and national recognition from The National Center for Public Productivity at Rutgers University, The New Jersey Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and it received a U.S. Department of Education-Professional Development National Award.

The school has been awarded the status of Blue Ribbon School twice by the U. S. Department of Education. This honor, the highest national recognition a school can achieve, is awarded for excellence in instructional delivery and educational environment. Also, Rolling Hills was the first school in the state of New Jersey to be designated as a Star High School by the New Jersey Department of Education. In 2010, the school was chosen as one of two schools in the state of New Jersey to receive a Best Practice Model for High School Redesign for technology integration and embedded professional development for teachers. It was also approved as a *choice district* for the 2013-2014 New Jersey Inter-district School Choice Program.

According to the website for the school, teachers at Rolling Hills are evaluated by soliciting input from various members of the administrative team including the superintendent, principal, curriculum director, department supervisors, and vice principals; all of whom are actively engaged in the teacher observation process. The teacher observation process in the

classroom, participation in departmental curriculum work, willingness to serve as advisors for extracurricular activities, willingness to serve as coaches in the athletic programs, and willingness to engage as an active contributing member of the overall school community are all areas that are considered each year. In addition, a strong commitment to professional development, as well as receptivity to instructional coaching by department supervisors and other administrators, are considered.

High-quality training is a crucial investment in establishing and maintaining implementation fidelity, as well as building educators' trust in the new process. The successful completion of such training is a major undertaking that is critical for the smooth, accurate application of the observation instruments that are a crucial part of the new evaluation requirements. Rolling Hills used a variety of approaches to train observers, including in-person training by the Danielson Group, whole group activities, video-training, and turnkey trainers. All N.J. school districts were given deadlines by which they were required to complete the training of administrators and teachers. Training for teachers had to be completed by the end of June 2013; training for administrators by Aug. 31, 2013. Rolling Hills began their training 1 year before any of the deadlines. During the summer of 2012, approval was given to employ The Danielson Group as educational consultants who prepared and presented 3 days of professional development to some of the Rolling Hills administrators. Those trained by the Danielson Group presented a 4-day training session to the rest of the administrative team. The administrative team became turnkey trainers to teachers over the course of 2012-2013 year.

The 2012-2013 school year also became a trial year for teacher evaluations both for the supervisors and the teachers. School supervisors, working in teams of two, evaluated teachers using the guidelines for the 2013-2014 implementation. These evaluations were for practice only.

The two supervisors met for post-evaluation conferences and compared their evaluations for inter-rater reliability. Teachers were required to go through the entire evaluation process step-by-step to help both the supervisor and teacher training process.

After the initial trial-year training, follow-up training through group observations (e.g. walkthroughs or instructional rounds) and reliability training helped school supervisors develop a deeper understanding of the teacher evaluation process using the Danielson framework. Evaluation of non-tenured teachers was still performed by two evaluators to ensure reliability.

To further facilitate the effective adoption of the framework for teaching, Rolling Hills added Teachscape for the 2013-2014 school year to enhance the Danielson framework. Developed in partnership with Charlotte Danielson and Educational Testing Services (ETS), Teachscape Focus, a web-based service, is designed to prepare teachers and supervisors for observations, professional conversations, and reflective practice. Teachscape provides online training in all four domains of the framework for teaching for teachers and observers. By using Teachscape Focus, districts can help ensure that teachers,

- share a common vision for classroom observations,
- develop confidence in the evaluation process, and
- understand and can apply the Framework for Teaching to reflect and improve on their practice. (Teachscape Focus, 2014)

### Data Collection

Because this aim of the present study was to reveal teachers' perceptions of their evaluations by the Danielson framework, I collected qualitative data from interviews with the teachers and from school documents about their evaluation practices. The interviews helped me to learn about the teachers' perceptions and how they believed the evaluations impacted their professional growth and teaching practices. The documents helped me to identify the evaluation practices and policies of the school and the purpose of teacher evaluation as published.

Table 2 provides an overview of the procedures that were used to collect data. Research question 1 and its sub-questions are provided as an example. The entire list of interview questions is provided in Appendix E.

Table 2

*Overview of the Procedures Used to Collect Data*

Research Question 1: To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson Framework is beneficial to their professional growth as a teacher?

Sub-questions	Data Source	Objective(s)
What do you believe is your districts intended purpose of the teacher evaluation process at Rolling Hills High School?	Interview	To understand what teachers perceive is the intended purpose of the evaluation process; measure teacher competence or teacher development or a balance of both.
	School's published policies	To understand what the school publishes to stakeholders as the intended purpose of the evaluation process
To what extent, if at all, has the Danielson Framework impacted your growth as a teacher?	Interview	To understand the possible impact of the Danielson Framework on professional growth.



What specific part of the Danielson Framework, if any, has helped you the most to grow as a teacher?	Interview	To identify specific aspects of the Danielson Framework that is perceived as beneficial to a teacher's professional growth.
What specific part of the Danielson Framework, if any, has hindered your growth as a teacher?	Interview	To identify specific aspects of the Danielson Framework that is perceived as a hindrance to a teacher's professional growth.

Approval to conduct this research was granted by the superintendent of the school district and the school principal (see Appendix F). Once I received approval from the University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix G) and the school system, an expert panel consisting of a distinguished professor, a practicing school administrator, and an expert teacher was selected to examine the validity of the interview questions. The expert panel helped me to determine if there were flaws, limitations, or other weaknesses in the interview design so that revisions could be made prior to the implementation of the study. No member of the expert panel participated in the actual research.

Each participant was asked to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix D). Informed consent is an important aspect of the ethical considerations for this study. Informed consent, "means that those interviewed should give their permission in full knowledge of the purpose of the research and the consequences for them taking part"(Somekh & Lewin, 2005, p. 56).

The data was collected from audiotaped, one-on-one, face-to-face interviews of approximately one-half hour in length with each research participant. The interviews were guided by a set of predetermined, semi-structured, open-ended questions that explored the teachers' perceptions as they related to their experiences with the teacher evaluation process using the Danielson framework (see Appendix E). Semi-structured interviews are conducive to candid and spontaneous responses that can be used to explore reflections, perceptions, and

feelings. The semi-structured interview seems best suited for garnering descriptive insights (Bogdan & Bicklen, 2003). Although during the interview process each participant was asked the same general questions, different probes and follow-up questions were used for further clarification or elaboration on the teacher's responses, as suggested by Creswell (2009). All interviews were conducted at a mutually convenient time, either in the teacher's classroom or in the library. I took care to make sure that there was no one who could overhear the interviews. It was important for the research participant to feel comfortable and free to give honest answers.

The interview questions were created expressly for this study based on the review of the literature and the conceptual framework of the study. Questions were designed to gather the most data regarding the teachers' perceptions of the teacher evaluation practices that used the Danielson framework. Table 3 provides some sample interview questions developed from the theoretical framework of the study.

Table 3

*Sample Interview Questions Raised by Theoretical Framework*

Sample Interview Question	Theoretical Framework(s)	Theorist(s)
How if at all, has the Danielson Framework offered you the opportunity to reflect on your teaching practices?	Reflective Practice Social Cognitive Theory Reflection-on-action	John Dewey Albert Bandura Donald Schon
How if at all, has the Danielson Framework improved the quality of professional conversations with your school administrators?	Social Cognitive Theory Rogers Theory of Perceived Attributes	Albert Bandura Everett Rogers
Do you find value in the feedback you	Social Learning Theory	Albert Bandura

received from your school administrators in your post conferences? Why or why not?	Roger's Theory of Perceived Attributes	Everett Rogers
When you teach a lesson that was previously evaluated using the Danielson Framework, did you make the changes in your lesson that were recommended or agreed upon at the post-evaluation?	Social Learning Theory Roger's Theory of Perceived Attributes Reflection-on-action Leading Change	Albert Bandura Everett Rogers Donald Schon John Kotter

Seidman (2006) explained the purpose of interviewing participants in qualitative research as follows:

The purpose of in-depth interviewing is not to get answers to questions, nor to test hypothesis, and not to “evaluate” as the term is normally used. At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experiences of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. (p.9)

Field notes were taken during each interview. Field notes provided an opportunity to record what I saw and heard outside the immediate context of the interview. As noted by Spencer, Ritchie, and O'Connor (2003), ifield notes can include the thoughts about the dynamics of the encounter, ideas for later clarification, and issues that may be relevant during analysis. Also, these notes included observations related to the participant's body language, facial expressions, reactions, and descriptions of the interview setting. I also included reflective notes, which are described by Bogdan and Biklen (1992) as, “speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices” (p.121).

At the end of each interview there was debriefing during which I spoke with each participant about their experiences and feelings so as to better clarify and understand their perceptions. This gave the participants a chance to change or elaborate their responses. After I transcribed each interview, the transcription was emailed to each participant for review and for the opportunity for each one to make any additional comments, modifications, or elaborations that they wanted to make. They were asked if they wanted any statement removed from the transcript or disconnected from their teacher code number. Only one of the participants made a small grammatical change in her transcript. The other 14 transcripts were approved as without any revision.

All retained documents and research data are kept in a locked filing cabinet. The files include interview notes, printed papers, audio tapes, and USB sticks. To protect the identity of the participants all of the audio-tapes were erased after each of the participants approved their transcription. The dissertation committee members and I ~~the researcher~~ are the only persons who have access, if needed, to the raw data. All data will be kept for a period of 3 years and then it will be destroyed.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative modes of data analysis provide ways of identifying, examining, comparing and contrasting, and interpreting meaningful patterns or themes. Qualitative data analysis is an interactive and reflexive process that begins as data is being collected during the interviews, rather than after data collection is completed (Stake 1995). In qualitative evaluation, data collection and data analysis overlap and are not necessarily seen as completely separate stages in a study. The analysis began at the time of the interview as I identified different concepts that helped to understand the perceptions of every teacher.

Seidman (2006) advised researchers to carefully organize data as interviews are completed and to avoid any in-depth analyses until all interviews are completed. He stated:

The researcher must come to the transcript with an open attitude, seeking what emerges as important and of interest from the text....The interviewer must come to the transcript prepared to let the interview breathe and speak for itself. (p.117)

### **Preliminary Set of Codes**

A common procedure in the analysis of qualitative data is the identification of key themes, concepts, or categories. Linking the teachers' responses to common themes will help to answer the research questions. Lincoln and Guba (1985) seemed to believe that the analysis phase constitutes the "lessons learned" (p.77) from the case. Richards and Richards (1998) claimed that "theory construction is the main task of qualitative research" (p.170), and Miles and Huberman (1994) maintained that, "just naming and classifying what is out there is usually not enough. We need to understand the patterns, the recurrences, the whys" (p.31). Examining these relationships is important in the analytic process because it allows the researcher to move from simple descriptions of the teachers perceptions to possible explanations of why teacher evaluation using the Danielson framework at the selected school is perceived that way.

Qualitative researchers tend to use inductive analysis with the data, meaning that the critical themes are seen as emerging from the data (Patton, 1990). Records of all interview sessions were in the form of field notes and digital audio recordings. The descriptive analysis of the data came from transcribed interviews, researcher field notes, and published school literature on teacher evaluation practices at Rolling Hills High School. In order to begin the analysis of the qualitative data from the 15 interviews, I transcribed the participant responses, obtained approval as to their accuracy, and then analyzed them for preliminary descriptive thematic codes.

Codes are a way to label, compile, and organize interview data for analysis. Gorbich (2007) defined codifying as a process that permits data to be “segregated, grouped, regrouped and relinked in order to consolidate meaning and explanation” (p.21). Categories and a coding scheme can be derived from three sources: the data, previous related studies, and theories. The process of creating codes can be both pre-set and open. The initial pre-set codes, also called priori codes, were derived from the conceptual framework, the review of the literature, and the research questions (Gibbs, 2009). I used four pre-set codes: feedback, reflective practices, goal-setting, and professional growth. The majority of the other codes were “emergent codes” (Gibbs, 2009, p.12) which are the themes, ideas, concepts, and relationships that came up in the teachers’ responses during the interviews and after the reading the transcripts. The emergent codes were identified during the interviews: I wrote analytic notes to capture my initial thinking and ideas about the data. I came away from the interviews with general themes and trends that were reoccurring in the participants’ responses to the interview questions. I made an effort to transcribe each interview quickly, while the interview was still fresh in my memory. The initial themes and categories that heard during the interviews were confirmed during the transcription process. Following an inductive approach, I made several readings of the textual data to identify the codes.

Thematic analysis, in its simplest form, is a categorizing strategy for qualitative data. Boyatzis (1998) wrote in *Transforming Qualitative Information* that thematic analysis is a process of "encoding qualitative information" (p. vii). After conducting the interviews, transcribing the interviews, re-listening to taped interviews, reviewing the data, making notes, reading transcripts, and re-reading transcripts, I added 37 more data-driven codes. I used these analysis techniques to make connections to answers to the research questions guiding the study.

These data-driven codes helped me to move from a broad reading of the data towards the discovery of patterns and the development of themes from the interview responses. The preliminary set of 41 data-driven codes is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

*Preliminary Set of Data-driven Codes*

Accountability	Framework	Student-centered classroom
Change	Goal-setting (pre-set)	Subjectivity
Clarity in expectations	Objectivity	Teachscape
Collaborative	Pre-observation	Teacher perceptions
Collegial	Post-observation	Time restraints
Common language	Professional development	Time-stamping
Communication	Professional growth (pre-set)	Training-practice
Community involvement	Questioning strategies	Weaknesses/faults
Compliance	Reflective practices (pre-set)	“whole” teacher
Consistency	Respect of supervisors	
Criticism	Rigidity	
Deep reflection	School commitment	
Dialogue	School culture	
Domains	School administrator/evaluator	
Enhanced lessons	Standards	
Feedback (pre-set)	Strengths	

## Themes

Next, I proceeded to synthesize the codes into major themes. Cross-case analysis was the heart of my study because it enabled me to find the commonalities among cases that were diverse with respect to content area, school instructional leaders, and years of experience. Whether studying a health and physical education teacher or an English teacher, I found recurrent themes in their perceptions of the Danielson framework as it was used in the teacher evaluation process. Patton (1990) stated, “Cross-case analysis means grouping together answers from different

people to common questions or analyzing different perspectives on central issues” (p. 425). Cross-case analysis enabled me to identify the combination of factors that contributed to the outcomes of the research, and it helped me to construct explanations as to why there were differences and similarities among the teachers’ perceptions of the evaluation process.

Although comparing and contrasting the different teachers’ responses is important, Ryen (2002) noted that access to the single respondent and the way he or she views his or her world is central to qualitative research. An important point is that analyzing across multiple teacher perspectives and different types of data is not a simple matter of deciding who is right or which data are most accurate. Weighing the evidence is a more subtle and delicate matter of hearing each person’s viewpoint, while still recognizing that any single perspective is partial and relative to that respondent's own personal experiences with the evaluation process (Ryen, 2002).

I used the preliminary codes to organize and examine the data collected so as to identify significant statements, clusters of meaning, and eventually, themes reflecting the teachers’ feelings and perceptions of how the Danielson framework impacted their teaching practice, reflective practices, relationships with their supervisors, and professional growth. The data was grouped and matched based on the themes and patterns that emerged through the analysis process. A total of (21) themes were identified with supporting data and use of the preliminary codes.

By referring back to the five research questions, a framework was developed for the summary of the findings. The findings are reported in the following main parts that reflect the essence of each of the research questions: perceived benefit for professional growth, perceived forum of discussion and feedback that promotes reflective practices, perceived changes in teaching practices, perceived improvement in the working relationships between teachers and



school administrators, and lastly, the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the Danielson framework as implemented by Rolling Hills High School. Table 5 shows the themes that emerged as related to each of the five research questions.

Table 5

*Emerged Themes Related to the Research Questions*

Research Question	Themes
Research Question 1. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson Framework is beneficial to their professional growth as a teacher?	Purpose of the evaluation process Greater focus on student-centered classrooms Higher order questioning skills Guided Professional Growth
Research Question 2. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson Framework creates a forum for discussion about teaching that promotes reflective practices?	Common language Clarity of expectations Non-confrontational open dialogue focused on teaching and learning(feedback) Deliberate reflective practices Goal setting
Research Question 3. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson Framework helps them to change and improve on their classroom practices?	Authenticity of evaluation Non-confrontational open dialogue focused on teaching and learning (feedback) Motivation to change practice
Research Question 4. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson Framework improves the working relationship between teachers and school leaders?	Collaborative professional relationships Trusted and trained evaluators viewed as coaches Non-confrontational open dialogue focused on teaching and learning (feedback) Authenticity of evaluation;
Research Question 5. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses, if any, of the use of the Danielson Model of teacher evaluation as implemented at the regional high school?	<u>Strengths</u> Question 20 responses: Clarity of expectations Structured Framework for discussion Whole Teacher

	<p>Responses during interviews:  Non-confrontational open dialogue focused on teaching and learning (feedback)  Deliberate reflective practices  Trusted and trained evaluators viewed as coaches  Authenticity of evaluation</p> <p><u>Weaknesses</u>  Subjectivity  Collaboration with peers  Time constraints  Distracting Time-stamping  Rigidity  Scoring “4 is a place to visit”  Teachscape</p>
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Finally, after analyzing the data, the reporting stage occurred. It provided an additional opportunity for further thought as the data was reanalyzed, compared to the reviewed literature, and assembled into a written report revealing the key information and findings of the research.

### **Protection of Human Subjects and Ethical Considerations**

Throughout this entire study, research ethics and the protection of human subjects were maintained, namely, respect for participants, beneficence, and justice. I participated in and passed the National Institute of Health's NIH online course, "Protecting Human Research Participants" (see Appendix H). To ensure respect for the participants, participation was voluntary and, to the extent possible, the participants were guaranteed confidentiality and protection of their identity. All participants signed an informed consent form that identified the purpose of the study as well as the risks and benefits of participation. After the interviews were transcribed, each teacher received a copy to read for accuracy. Also, each participant was asked if he or she wanted any statement removed from the transcript or disconnected from their teacher code. One transcript was returned for a grammatical error. The other 14 transcripts were approved as submitted.

### **Validity and Reliability**

Qualitative research design validity, in this study, refers to whether I heard and correctly interpreted the meanings of what was said by the participants during the interviews. The internal validity of qualitative research is the degree to which the interpretations and concepts have mutual meanings between the participants and the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997).

While the credibility of quantitative research depends on instrument construction, in qualitative research, "the researcher is the instrument" (Patton, 2001, p. 14). Patton (1990) noted that since qualitative inquiry depends on the skills, training, insights, and capabilities of the researcher, qualitative analysis ultimately depends on the analytical intellect and style of the

analyst. Patton stated that the human factor is the greatest strength and the fundamental weakness of qualitative inquiry and analysis.

To help attain validity with regard to the interview used in this study, I convened an expert panel to review the interview questions. Members of the panel included a distinguished professor, a practicing school administrator and an expert teacher. The panel helped to determine if there were flaws, limitations, or other weaknesses in the interview design and the actual wording of the questions. For example, one expert on the panel suggested that the question, Do you think that the Danielson framework improves the quality of professional conversations with your instructional leaders?, be changed to, How if at all, has the Danielson framework improved the quality of professional conversations with your school administrators? This revision changed a closed question to an open-ended question that asked for more thought and data from the participants. Another example of a revision made was to the question, How if at all, has the Danielson framework offered you the opportunity to reflect on your teaching practices and set attainable goals?, and to divide it into two separate questions; one for reflection and one for goal setting. This revision helped to gain the most data in each area from the participants. I revised the wording of other questions according to the feedback of the experts. For example, the term *instructional leader* was changed to *school administrator*, as suggested by a member of the panel. I made the necessary revisions prior to actual interviews with the research participants.

To ensure validity in the data, the researcher used member-checking (Creswell, 2003). After the interviews were transcribed, I gave all the participants an opportunity to review the transcripts and verify whether the interview had been accurately transcribed. Discussing findings in a debriefing session after the interview also assisted with developing possible analytic

categories and explanations of the results. Holloway and Wheeler (2009) noted that the researcher can help to ensure the trustworthiness of the data by using member validation.

### **Role of the Researcher and Researcher Bias**

The issue of bias in qualitative research is an important one, and it demands special attention and discussion in any qualitative research study. Critics of qualitative research have charged that the approach is too subjective, in large part because the researcher is the instrument of both data collection and data interpretation (Patton, 1990). Because I was a teacher at Rolling Hills and the primary instrument of retrieval of data and analysis, it was important not only that I understood my role in the study, but also that I identified my biases that may have affected the retrieval and analysis of the data, and thereby influence the research outcomes. The ethical conduct of a researcher conducting qualitative research is what reduces any threats to validity and reliability due to bias (Merriam, 2009).

Qualitative researchers try to acknowledge and take into account their own biases as a method of dealing with them in their research. Qualitative researchers are concerned with the effect their own subjectivity may have on the data. Mears (2009) cautioned researchers about objectivity and bias in conducting interviews. There is the potential for the researcher to lead the participant in certain directions with both questions and follow-up inquiries. In the present study, in order to avoid bias and ensure that the responses from the interview questions were reliable and accurate, I used a pre-determined set of questions that were reviewed and approved by the expert panel. I made sure there were no leading questions and I did not in any way put pressure on the participants to influence their answers. The questions were read at normal speed and in a neutral tone. The conversation was allowed to flow, and at no time did I dominate or dictate the conversation.

The intent of the research was to provide rich descriptions about the realities of teacher evaluations practices as experienced by the 15 teachers interviewed for the study. I assumed that all of the participants were open and honest in their responses to the interview questions, and that the interview questions measured what they were intended to measure. Because I was an insider, I had to ask myself the question: How do I conduct an interview that yields rich and meaningful data while simultaneously helping participants to feel safe enough to explore in depth difficult experiences with their evaluations with another teacher--one who works in the school? The act of reflection enabled me to thoughtfully consider my relationships with the participants and speculate on the ways the interactions during each individual may have been exacerbated by presumptions arising from obvious sources, such as certain demographics (e.g., age, gender, supervisor and content area) and the promise of confidentiality.

Mears (2009) noted that having a background in the subject matter can either increase or diminish the likelihood of bias. In the present study, I had a good background in the Danielson framework, since I had been evaluated by supervisors using this model for 6 years and I had developed background on the subject from my research. Because the research participants saw me as a peer and knew that I had first-hand knowledge about evaluation practices at Rolling Hills, it was possible that the participants did not explain their opinions and experiences as thoroughly as they would have to an outsider. I took this into account during the interviews and allowed each participant to expand on all responses. I also used member checking, which allowed the teachers to review the transcripts for accuracy. Each teacher interviewed was emailed a copy of the recorded transcript and encouraged to provide feedback on accuracy.

Mears (2009) noted that caution needs to be taken when conducting the research in a site that is familiar to the researcher, such as the workplace. "Research from within the setting

becomes more challenging, for it requires overcoming your personal lens in order to understand from other's point of view" (Mears, 2009, p. 83). I believed that my insider role helped to build trusting relationships with the research participants that allowed me to gain a better sense of their perceptions about the Danielson framework. Establishing the connection and rapport that make this possible required, "becoming informed about your setting's social and political structure so that you can shape your conduct with sure-footedness that such knowledge affords . . . it is the knowledge that helps you fit in" (Glesne, 1999, p. 101). Although I was a teacher at Rolling Hills, I was not a supervisor and had not ever evaluated any of the interviewed teachers. I believe that it was my knowledge about the Danielson framework and my familiarity with evaluation practices at Rolling Hills that helped me to accurately interpret the responses.

The value of prior knowledge on a research topic or experience must be weighed against the potential for bias. Finding that balance requires diligence on the part of the researcher, self-reflection, and a commitment to disclosure. It is not possible to guarantee absolute objectivity in research, but after reflection, I realized that he has nothing to gain by being biased in the retrieval and analysis of the data. The researcher wanted to accurately record fifteen interviews, each representing the teachers' true story and take the information and learn what can be done to improve teacher evaluation. My personal goal for the researcher was to learn all I could, positive or negative, about teachers' perceptions of the Danielson framework so that I could take the information forward in my career as an educational leader to improve evaluation practices so that they could be meaningful in the professional growth of the teachers that I evaluate.

### **Summary**

Chapter III provided an explanation of the methodology used in the present study. It described my background and how my interest in the teacher evaluation process was sparked, the

selection of qualitative design of the study, the purposeful sampling technique for selection of research participants, and the interview method used for data collection to answer the five research questions. Examples of some of the interview questions that were used and how they relate to the theoretical framework of the study were included, as well as the research questions. Chapter III continued with the method of qualitative data analysis that was used to produce the findings. Finally, the chapter described the methods used to attain validity and reliability in the study. Chapter IV presents the findings of the study.



## **Chapter IV**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter IV presents the key findings and analysis of this study. The first section provides an overview of the context for the study. The sections that follow present the themes that emerged from the individual interviews as related to the five research questions that guided the study. The final section presents a summary of the most salient research findings.

To improve education in America, school leaders are challenged to support and cultivate effective teachers so that all children have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential. Mielke and Frontier (2012) found that research had found that meaningful teacher evaluation has the potential to meet this challenge, improve instruction, and help teachers grow professionally. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine teachers' perceptions concerning the evaluation practices used at their school; which used the Danielson framework. Specifically, I sought to determine if these teachers believed that it was of value in shaping and improving their instructional practices.

Past research has shown that a teachers' perceptions and their attitudes about the evaluation process influence how they benefit from the evaluation process. Favorable perceptions allow for greater benefits from the evaluation by allowing the teacher to accept the feedback and become aware of their specific strengths and weaknesses. Ideally, teachers will improve their teaching performance as a result of positive perceptions of their evaluation experiences (Donovan & Bransford, 2005; Tuytens & Devos, 2009).

Rolling Hills, the high school at which the study was conducted, was purposefully selected based on its history of using the Danielson framework for teaching to evaluate its

teachers for 14 years prior to this study. The present study was conducted in the winter of the 2014-15 school year, at the onset of the national teacher evaluation reform efforts in New Jersey. The results provide the perceptions of 15 teachers' regarding evaluation practices at the high school where they were employed.

Fifteen teachers at Rolling Hills were asked interview questions that were developed expressly for this study based on a review of the literature and the theoretical framework of the study. Questions were designed to gather the information about the teachers' perceptions of the teacher evaluation practices, and this information was used to answer the five research questions that guided the study. The research questions are:

1. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson framework is beneficial to their professional growth as a teacher?
2. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson framework creates a forum for discussion and feedback about teaching that promotes reflective practices?
3. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson framework helps them to change and improve on their classroom practices?
4. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson framework improves the working relationship between teachers and instructional school leaders?
5. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses, if any, of the use of the Danielson model of teacher evaluation as implemented by Rolling Hills High School?

Examining teachers' beliefs and perceptions about the Danielson framework and teacher evaluation practices could provide school districts with information that can help them to design, implement, and maintain more effective teacher evaluation practices. The teachers' perceptions

that emerged during the interviews are presented in an attempt to answer the five research questions.

### **Themes Research Question 1**

Research Question 1. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson framework is beneficial to their professional growth as a teacher?

Before attempting to discover the relationship between teacher evaluations that use the Danielson framework and its promotion of professional growth, it was important to ask the participating teachers how they perceived the intended purpose of the teacher evaluation process at their high school.

#### **Perceived Purpose of Teacher Evaluation**

The participant responses suggested that compliance, teacher accountability, and fostering professional growth were the three major themes for what teachers perceived as the purpose of teacher evaluation at Rolling Hills. In the literature, the two most cited purposes of teacher evaluation have been found to be accountability and professional development or summative and formative purposes (Isore, 2009; Stronge, 2006). When I asked as to the intended purpose of teacher evaluation at the school, the Superintendent of Rolling Hills wrote,

The new teacher evaluation system provides us with an opportunity to have ongoing training and a tool that promotes teacher growth through the use of a consistent rubric that focuses on student behavior within a class observation. The new system provides teachers with meaningful feedback against a constant set of criteria. It allows for a common language and greater agreement about what a highly effective lesson looks like. The use of SGO's continues the focus on student achievement and growth through the use of data.

Seven of the 15 teachers interviewed mentioned all three themes, compliance, teacher accountability, and fostering growth in their responses. Six participants named compliance first in their response, six mentioned teacher accountability first, and three mentioned fostering teacher growth first in their response.

Teacher 13 included all three themes in the responses and first, “I would say the purpose is first to comply with the state but secondly to have a more concrete way of measuring teachers’ success and student success and to give us that information to hopefully help us improve as teachers.” Teacher 1 agreed and said:

I think it is most of all compliance with the state; they had to adopt a certain model and use it on so many observations per year so I believe this is what’s driving it. There is also a professional development side to it; they want to see teachers improve. I also believe that there is an accountability part of this whole thing as well.

In sorting, comparing, and analyzing the participants’ responses concerning how they perceived the intended purpose of the teacher evaluation process at the school, it was found that compliance was mentioned by 10 of the 15 participants, teacher accountability by 10 of the 15 respondents, and only 7 of the 15 teachers mentioned fostering teacher’s professional growth in their response as an intended purpose.

With regard to compliance, teacher 2 indicated, “I do believe that the high school is trying to comply with the state regulations and to fulfill their legal obligations. I also believe that evaluation is going to be used differently moving forward.” Teacher 15 stressed teacher accountability by saying, “I believe the evaluation process is to make sure that we have effective teachers in the classroom, it is teacher accountability and to make sure the teachers are always conscientious about what they are doing in the classroom and the different elements about being

a successful teacher.” Teacher 9 not only mentioned compliance and accountability but added professional growth, “I believe the intended purpose is to (pause)...I don’t want to say weed out but to have exemplary teachers and show them off to other staff members as well as get help to teachers that need help with their planning and plans. And also because that’s what the state wants.”

Charlotte Danielson (2011) developed her Framework for Teaching so that school leaders could utilize evaluative procedures that yield valid results that not only satisfy the legitimate demands for evaluating teacher competency, but also guide and promote professional learning for all teachers; independent of their current teaching skills and practices and their years teaching. Teacher 14 seemed to agree with Danielson concerning the importance of evaluation as a means to promote professional growth when he shared the following:

We had the Danielson framework long before it was a state mandate. I really believe that the school wants to have the best teachers and the only way that can occur is to have professional conversations between supervisors and teachers so that we can be coached so that our professional practices improve. Danielson helps promote that.

Danielson (2011a) noted that evaluation systems that include both accountability and personal growth dimensions are both desirable and necessary for evaluation to productively serve the growth of individual teachers and the school and community at large. In the past, evaluation was primarily used to judge performance, but if evaluation is to serve the purpose of teacher improvement then teachers will need a new mindset about teacher evaluation. One teacher expressed a concern that “some teachers equate it [Danielson] more with their accountability rather than it being about their teaching practice and improving...this is where things can start to get muddy with the evaluation component.”

Interview questions 2 to 4 dealt with the teachers' perceptions concerning Danielson's effect on their professional growth. In this study, when teachers spoke about how they perceived themselves as growing professionally from the use of the Danielson framework three themes emerged from the data: (a) guided professional growth, (b) greater focus on student-centered classrooms, and (c) improved higher-order questioning skills. The interviews revealed that 12 of the 15 teachers believed that they had grown professionally because of the Danielson framework, two teachers felt indifferent about their growth, and one teacher felt that the Danielson framework had negatively affected his or her growth as a teacher.

### **Guided Professional Growth**

Previous research on the impact of teacher evaluation practices on teacher professional growth has found mixed results. Teacher 5 was the only teacher that had a negative perception of growth from his evaluation using the Danielson framework. He seemed to disagree with the other 14 teachers when he stated the following:

I think unfortunately it's impacted my growth negatively. I feel that I am playing the game now of how to get my boxes checked in Danielson rather than looking at genuine places of my practice where I need to improve and making realistic improvements. I feel like it's a little more looking at what you're doing wrong whereas looking what you are doing right.

The perceptions and experiences of 12 of the teachers were positive, and they expressed that they felt that their experience with the evaluation process using the Danielson Framework for Teaching had supported their professional growth and professional development.

Teacher 9 expressed, "I think it has helped with making sure that I am assessing on a daily basis . . . as opposed to just saying okay I think they got it, we will find out on the quiz. I think that has

helped with my planning and assessing through a lesson and the kids don't even know." Another teacher said, "I can honestly say that it has helped me grow as a teacher. It's possible for an administrator to turn it into a 'gotcha' event, but I personally have not had that happen. Instead, I was able to look at the areas where I did not score the 4 and see how to get there.' Teacher 2 commented as follows about the Danielson model:

It made me look at what I'm doing more because I have been doing this for 30 years and I thought I was a 4, but apparently I'm not. It has made me go back and retool and it's made me realize that there's no such thing as perfect. I'm much more cognizant of the things I'm deficient in.

### **Greater Focus on Student-Centered Classrooms**

There were two specific areas in which many of the teachers felt that they had grown professionally: first in the development of student-centered classrooms and second in improving their higher-level questioning skills. More than half of the 15 teachers mentioned the development of a student-centered classroom as an area of professional growth. Danielson (1996) noted that multiple intelligences, collaborative learning, and authentic engaged learning should be observed in classrooms. The challenge for teachers involves using the research on learning to implement these practices in the classroom to improve student achievement by honoring students' passions and interests. As teachers gain proficiency with student-driven skills, including higher-level questioning skills, teachers become the guides, facilitators, observers, and assessors. Some of the teachers interviewed claimed that it was difficult to give up their absolute control, and it was necessary to make a cultural change in the classroom to the teacher becoming a guide or participant in discussion; asking questions and perhaps correcting misconceptions, but not telling learners what they need to know. Teacher 11 said, "I finally realized that if you want

to get into the four range it has to be a culture change. The students really are controlling the class. I'm fine with the effective label (student-centered), I think it's cool." Teacher 4 also reported, "It has created the opportunity to make my classroom more student driven in my instruction. It has given me the opportunity to get the students more involved in their learning." Teacher 10 revealed, "I try to make my classroom more student-centered." Teacher 14 conveyed his feelings about how Danielson impacted his professional growth when he said, "Danielson has impacted me the most with creating a student-centered classroom. Before Danielson I would do bits and pieces of a student centered class but now I think about every lesson and how I can make it more student driven." Teacher 13 stated,

It has only been a few years so I don't know if the growth has been huge. I think in a more concrete way making things more student centered has helped me change my activities. Because this is what they're looking for in the evaluations so it has changed my behavior for the better. I think the students really enjoy the student center classroom.

In regards to growth regarding the student-centered classroom, Teacher 13 added the following:

One of the things that I've been informed to do is to find out the student's interest prior to the class so you can cater the lesson more towards their interests. I think having those qualities in a rubric that we both been trained on has really helped to create a common language that we all understand.

### **Improved Higher-Level Questioning Skills**

Seven of the 15 teachers made reference to their growth in higher-level questioning skills. Questioning and discussion techniques are the only strategies specifically referred to in the framework for teaching; this reflects their central importance to teachers' practices. Questioning is one of the instructional practices that is closely linked to higher-level thinking. It was evident



in the interviews that Rolling Hills offered professional development to help teachers develop the skills to design and use questions to engage students in higher-level instructional processes.

Teacher 7 said that his growth was, “definitely the questioning part; there was room for improvement especially my first year so I spent a lot of time looking for ways to improve my questioning and also the self-reflecting.” Teacher 12 added,

I would say the questioning part which is something I really struggle with, just because as an artist we don't have that many opportunities for discussion and things like that because a lot is performance-based. I think more about questioning like the depth of the questions which has helped me to get deeper questions.

Even though Teacher 1 had a more measured reaction to how the Danielson model impacted his professional growth, he brought up his improvement in questioning skills when he said,

It has impacted my growth but I don't know if it's just because of the model or maybe it's just my years of experience. If there wasn't a Danielson model maybe I would still be improving. I don't think it has hindered my growth; I think it has made me more cognoscente of certain areas especially the questioning techniques.

Every public school student deserves an effective teacher. And every teacher, when evaluated for effectiveness, deserves an objective process that can transform evaluations into ongoing professional growth. Most of the teachers interviewed saw the framework as the foundation of mentoring, coaching, professional development, and teacher evaluation processes at their school, thus linking these activities together to help teachers grow professionally. Almost all of the educators in this study perceived the use of the Danielson framework to mark the path to continued professional learning and growth.

### **Themes Research Question 2.**

Research Question #2. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson framework creates a forum for discussion about teaching that promotes reflective practices?

Interview questions 5-7 dealt with the teachers' perceptions concerning the use of the Danielson framework in creating a forum for discussion about teaching that promotes reflective practices. John Dewey wrote, "We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience. Danielson stressed that, although her Framework for Teaching can be used in many ways, "its full value is realized as the foundation for professional conversations among practitioners as they seek to enhance their skill in the complex task of teaching" (Danielson Group, 2009, p.14).

The six themes that emerged from the second research question were: (a) common language, (b) clarity of expectations, (c) structured framework for discussion, (d) non-confrontational open dialogue focused on teaching and learning (feedback), (e) deliberate reflective practices, and (f) goal-setting. Common responses within these themes included: genuine conversations, teachers having input, organized focus on the standards, collaboration, accurate evidenced-based feedback, and reflection.

#### **Common Language**

Charlotte Danielson's (2011) Framework for Teaching was designed as an observational instrument that provides a foundation and shared language for professional conversations about a teacher's practice and how he or she can grow. To be meaningful, both evaluator and teacher must find shared meanings and expectations in the evaluation process. The interview responses showed that the teachers believed that when both teachers and supervisors used the Danielson framework, it improved communication because they were using the same set of criteria and

terms to describe the identified teaching attributes. As understanding of teaching expands and deepens, the framework provides a vocabulary that reflects the realities of a classroom where students are engaged in learning. In reference to the responses that noted that the Danielson framework provided a common language for both evaluator and teacher, Teacher 6 said, “It [Danielson Framework] was designed to create a professional dialogue because it creates a common language.” Teacher 10 shared, “I think it establishes a framework of jargon that we can use to work on talking about our lessons.” Teacher 5 added, “It offers consistency across all disciplines and all the administrators that are doing it. They’re all working from the same text and it is a common language.”

### **Clarity of Expectations**

Teachers interviewed perceived that Danielson created clear, common, and high standards for teacher performance that clarify expectations for both teachers and administrators. By providing an agreed-upon framework for excellence, a framework for teaching can structure professional conversations between educators about exemplary practice. A uniform framework allows these conversations to guide novice teachers, as well as to enhance the performance of veterans. Teacher 6 stated, “The strengths are that it’s [Danielson]) well-crafted and it is a good basis for people to think in four domains on how they should be handling different problems and ideas in the classroom. It’s very clear. The strength is in its clarity. It’s a well-constructed and clear framework; that is by far its strongest point.” Teacher 13 agreed and added, “The main strengths is the clarity and a clear language which I think is great for new teachers especially. It does take a few years for the teacher to figure out what is expected so I think having this model helps to clarify things for new teachers.” Teacher 10 also like the clarity in the use of the framework and stated, “It has clear and concise expectations so you know exactly what’s

expected to achieve. Each level like I said it's like giving a student a rubric so everyone knows what is expected up front." Teacher 14 said, "That it is clear and I know exactly what is expected of me in the lesson and what I have to do to improve...it's clarity in expectations." Teacher 8 said, "By looking at the language of the Danielson model you have a clear understanding of what is expected to be highly effective. By following the language of the framework you can understand what process and procedures need to be put in place in order to be effective or highly effective."

### **Structured Framework for Dialogue Focused on Teaching and Learning (Feedback)**

Both the common language and the structure exhibited in the Danielson framework was believed by the participants to lay the groundwork for a professional conversation. There was an overwhelming notion that the new teacher evaluation process, that used the Danielson framework, resulted in effective dialogues between the administrator and teachers. Teachers indicated that the post-observation conference conversations were focused on the standards, and teachers were able to provide input. The teachers believe that Danielson has provided a tool through which supervisors and teachers can participate in purposeful exchanges to support valued learning and professional growth for the teachers. When asked the extent to which they thought that the Danielson framework created a professional dialogue between teachers and educational leaders, 13 of the 15 teachers believed it did. Teacher 14 stated,

I believe that Danielson created a clear and common language that can be used across content areas and for administrators that makes evaluation more user friendly. It's used as a guide for discussion and feedback. The model is set up so that it forces the teacher to reflect on their lesson. What is nice is that during the post-observation you get a chance

to talk about your reflections and it all makes sense because both the supervisor and the teacher are using the same language and following the same guide. It helps.

Almost all of the teachers liked the structure of the framework as a way to help guide the professional discussions between the supervisor and teacher. Danielson's Framework for Teaching identifies aspects of a teacher's responsibilities that empirical studies have shown promote improved student learning. Many of the teachers felt that Danielson's Framework for Teaching offered educators a means of communicating about excellence. There was a general consensus from the teachers that the feedback provided during the post-observation conference was evidence-based. Teacher 11 noted that the Danielson's framework, "helps my supervisor to hone in on specific things. It's an organized way to talk about the chaotic practice of teaching." Teacher 1 stated that the framework, "creates a more consistent dialogue amongst observers." Teacher 3 had similar thoughts and made the following comment:

It provides a lot of talking points with the process. Especially with the post-observation conference if we score each other differently. Sometimes the discussion can be good sometimes it can be bad. You learn more of what the administration expects. How they interpret a specific attribute of the domain.

Teacher 7 found that one of the strengths of the framework was:

The fact that it's a framework, before Danielson, the supervisor would just say this is what we saw...this is what we think you did well...and here's what you didn't. I think it (Danielson Framework) gives a lot more structure. Students need more structure just like teachers need structure as well.

Teachers 13 echoed this thought when she reiterated the following:

I would say having that rubric just like in the classroom has created that language to talk about. My supervisor has mentioned how much easier it is to be specific about where the teacher needs to improve. One of the things that I've been informed to do is to find out the student's interest prior to the class so you can cater the lesson more towards their interests. I think having those qualities in a rubric that we both been trained on has really helped to create a common language that we all understand.

Teacher 2 said, "I do think Danielson has created a lot of dialogue not all of it is good but it has done that. I do believe that was one the main reasons why Danielson was chosen and it has succeeded." Teacher 6 said, "It [Danielson Framework] was designed to do that (create a professional dialogue) and I believe it does create a dialogue because it creates a common language. I think it can be a help if it's implemented correctly."

Not all teachers believed that Danielson created a professional dialogue. Teacher 5 shared his frustration, "Not to be too negative about this but it is very clear to me and others, administrators are overwhelmed with the amount that they have to do. It feels very rushed and there isn't a lot of dialogue. They are just trying to get them done and it seems like compliance."

### **Reflective Practices**

Teacher evaluation practices can be enhanced by combining professional dialogue with reflective practices. The majority of teachers in this study noted that the Danielson framework offered them the opportunity for collaborative, reflective conversations with their supervisors that lead to a heightened awareness of their teaching practices. Teacher 8 shared, "You rate yourself and you compare with the evaluator which allows you to have an open dialogue with the instructional leader. If you rate yourself similar to the administrator than the model is holding true. If there are disparities the teacher can explain as to why they thought differently."

Reflection emerged as a significant theme throughout this study. All 15 of the participating teachers referred to reflection as an essential aspect of their teaching practices. They saw reflection as a value that was the key to their professional growth. The teachers felt that through both professional dialogue with the supervisors and reflective practices they could better evaluate their practice and set goals for improvement.

Twelve of the 15 teachers reported positive perceptions of the Danielson framework as a tool for reflective practice, and the other three noted that the evaluation practices using Danielson created an almost artificial or forced self-reflection. The teachers at Rolling Hills that had a positive perception agree with Charlotte Danielson (1996) that, “ Using a framework to guide such reflection enhances the value of the activity and makes teaching more purposeful, thoughtful, and rewarding” (p. 53). Teacher 4 noted, “I think that it [Danielson Framework] has created a culture of reflective practice. I think that is the biggest strength of it. I think it has created other deficiencies but in regards to reflective practice I think it has been good in that regard.”

Among the teachers who shared that their reflective practices had changed due to the use of the Danielson framework, deliberate and deeper reflective practices was a consistent theme in the individual interviews. The data from these teachers revealed that they were assessing their teaching practices in a more systematic and thoughtful manner. The teachers stated that reflection supported changes in their teaching practices in different ways; such as planning, focusing, and assessing. Teacher 4 said, “I think going to the process [Danielson] has definitely helped me self-reflect what I’m teaching, how I’m teaching, always trying to be more inclusive and less dictating to the kids and getting them more involved.” Teacher 7 added, “I think as a

professional, you are constantly reflecting and assessing on a day-to-day basis. I think the model has definitely helped me self -reflect.” Teacher 6 shared the following:

It has given me some set goals that I can look at it, it’s given me parameters that I can judge how I’m doing. I go through the framework line by line; it gives me information that I can judge myself by. If you don’t have these guidelines it can be very difficult. Danielson gives you a great direction which really can be helpful. This framework is a constant reminder of how to be a good teacher. It’s like one of those motivational stickers on the wall.

In contrast, Teacher 10 shared a less positive perspective on reflective practices because he felt it was forced during the evaluation process. He said,

I don’t think it [Danielson Framework] really has contributed to my reflective practices. I just think it’s a time element. It’s so hard to sit down and reflect. The only time I really reflect is after observations when I’m forced to reflect with the scoring. I think it’s limited the amount of reflection because we have so many other things that are expected of us. We don’t have that much time to reflect. We are so focused on PARCC and other tests that we are almost only teaching to the test.

### **Goal Setting**

Another of the interview questions explored teachers’ perceptions of whether the Danielson framework offered them opportunities to set attainable goals. Julius Irving said, “Goals determine what you are going to be.” Two-thirds of the participants had a positive perception on the Danielson framework as offering them opportunities to set goals. Teacher 12, who was supportive that the Danielson framework had improved both reflective practices and goal-setting stated, “It [Danielson model] breaks down everything into smaller chunks rather



than thinking in terms of I need to improve my lesson, ...so I can really choose specific parts that I want improve on instead of something as a whole.” Teacher 14 added, “Because I know the attributes that are associated with getting a 4, I can set goals to do my best and reach the distinguished levels in different domains. Also knowing the specific parts I can improve on gives me the opportunity to improve and better my practice.”

According to the interviews, goals that developed through utilization of the Danielson framework helped teachers to focus their attention and guide their subsequent efforts to develop into highly effective teachers. The aim of most goal setting is for teachers to, at a minimum, annually reflect on their professional practice with the goal of improving student achievement. Teacher 8 shared similar thoughts,

We do a lot of self-reflection for our PDP and summative evaluation. So using this [Danielson Model] and Teachscape it has really helped to self-reflect and think about areas that you need to improve on for the following years or your next evaluation. You can set goals and then hopefully show how you have met those goals in future observations.

Teacher 3, who was neutral with regard to whether the Danielson framework influenced reflective practices and goal-setting shared, “As far as goal-setting I don’t think it has had much of an impact. In regards to reflection I’m always thinking after the lesson and how it went. Danielson hasn’t changed me much in that regards.” Teacher 13 noted, “I feel like I was okay with that (goal-setting) before Danielson. I’m not sure Danielson specifically has helped me with that but if it has; it only moderately helped. Teacher 1 is also neutral on how the Danielson framework impacts goal-setting when he said, “In terms of setting goals I think it is more of an

individual thing, if there is an area you are strong in and you want to continue to work hard at it or if there is an area you are struggling in maybe it's a place we can look to change some things.”

Contrary to the other teachers' responses, Teacher 5 did not believe that the Danielson Framework offered him the opportunity to set goals. He said,

I don't think it gives me a good opportunity to set goals. The goals are almost static and they are set for you. In another previous model a supervisor would say what do you want me to look for and what do you want to improve on? I liked that. The goals are already pre-established with Danielson.

To best sum up the responses to Research Question 2, I will refer to Schön (1983) who noted that teachers learn more from reflecting on their experiences than from their engagement in the experiences. According to the teachers interviewed in this study, the Danielson framework created the opportunity for teachers and administrators to engage in a two-way professional conversation, reflect on their experiences, and set goals for improved practice.

### **Themes as it Relates to Research Question 3**

Research Question 3. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson framework helps them to change and improve on their classroom practices?

Question 8 through 12 dealt with the teachers' perceptions of the use of the Danielson framework to help them change and improve their classroom practices. The teachers interviewed felt that the use of meaningful professional conversations, reflective practices, and professional development helped them to focus on improving their practices by driving instructional change. Research tells us that teachers improve when they receive regular, specific feedback on their practice, the opportunity to reflect on it, and support to improve areas of weakness (The Aspen Institute, 2011). The themes that emerged from the third research question regarding teachers

perceptions of whether the Danielson framework helped them to change and improve their classroom practices were: (a) authenticity of evaluation, (b) non-confrontational open dialogue focused on teaching and learning (feedback), and (c) motivation to change practice.

### **Authenticity of Evaluation**

Most teacher evaluation systems like the Danielson framework were designed for the purpose of becoming a powerful tool for improving teaching performance and ultimately student outcomes. A sound authentic teacher evaluation system begins with a shared vision by both teachers and supervisors about what good teaching is. According to the Danielson's framework, a teacher evaluation system must answer the fundamental question of what does good teaching look like. Danielson (2011) used her standards to identify research-based essential teaching behaviors that she believed defined effective teaching practice.

Standards-based teacher evaluation systems provide both incentives and guidance for teachers to change their practice toward the model embodied in the standards. Teachers in this study responded very positively to the components of the framework used in the Danielson model, and they seemed to feel that the standards were understandable and credible, reflected good teaching, defined all expectations, and helped improve professional conversations about practice with their supervisors. The theme that emerged from these feelings was called *authenticity of evaluation*.

When asked their opinions of Danielson's standards and the indicators used to identify effective teaching practice, Teacher I2 expressed that the Danielson framework accurately reflected the qualities of a good teacher. Teacher 12 stated, "they're (standards and indicators) pretty accurate. I have looked at the different rubrics and the descriptions. We have been given opportunities to grade video clips and I would say they're pretty accurate. I think it is something

to strive for to become better teachers.” Teacher 14 echoed this thought and said, “I really like how they look at the whole teacher in detail, at everything that could define a good teacher. I think they are very clear and gives the teacher an understanding of what needs to be accomplished so they can be successful.” Teacher 11 commented, “I really like that it puts the entire teaching craft into words. I like that it puts everything into domains and is very clear. It looks at the whole teacher.”

The Danielson framework allows for active and professional learning to take place that is teacher-centered. Professional learning is completed by the learner--in this study the observed teacher--through an active intellectual process that involves three essential features: professional conversation, self-assessment, and reflection on practice.

#### **Open Dialogue Focused on Teaching and Learning (Feedback)**

There was a general consensus among the teachers who participated in this study that when the feedback process in teaching evaluations is successful, it also helps to promote a two-way, collegial conversation about teaching and learning that leads to reflection, change, and professional growth. When asked if they found value in the feedback they received from their instructional leaders in their post-evaluation, all 15 participants agreed that they did find value in the feedback and welcomed it. When questioned, Teacher 12 answered, “Absolutely every time I’ve met with my supervisor she has given me great feedback relating to the Danielson model which is very specific. Because it is so specific she is able to point out things I need to do to get to the next level.” Teacher 4 agrees and expressed, I do find value in the feedback. I also found value in it before Danielson. I’ve been teaching for 18 years have always found value in feedback.” Teacher 6 added the following:

Yes I do [value feedback]. If I didn't, I would have probably left this profession years ago. It's great to have someone on the outside looking in on you and giving you feedback. There are weaknesses that I have that I necessarily don't catch that my supervisor can. I've never had a problem with that. I take feedback really well. I think early on I was threatened by it but that's not the case anymore.

Teacher 1 had similar thoughts, but brought up a new factor that he perceived to influence the value of feedback. He seemed to believe that the value of the feedback can depend upon the observer. He said,

Yes I think I found some valuable feedback, once again I think it depends on the observer. I think they are getting more on the same page using this model and providing you with more details which is appreciated but some other times I feel like they're just pushing through trying to get it (post-evaluation conference) over with.

Teacher 1's comments introduced another perception regarding feedback of some of the other teachers. Some seemed to believe that feedback can be valued differently according to who gives it. This perception was evident in many of the responses. Although all of the teachers had positive remarks about feedback from their supervisors, about half of the respondents expressed a preference for the feedback they received from their content supervisors. Teacher 7 expressed his preference for his content supervisor by saying, "Yes, I definitely value feedback from my supervisor. He absolutely helps me a lot. When I have been observed by other people not so much. I know my immediate supervisor was a great teacher so I really respect the feedback that he gives to me." Teacher 3 also values feedback when the evaluator has content knowledge and divulged, "I had some [evaluators] that are very good and others who really can't provide specific feedback because they haven't had that classroom experience. I think it's

difficult when the administrator doesn't have the content background." Teacher 15 went one step further and suggested that evaluations done by supervisors with content knowledge should be weighted more heavily than evaluation from other supervisors. She stated,

It varies on who evaluated me, for my supervisor I feel like Danielson is used correctly and I do get really great feedback that I can use specifically into my practice but with certain other administrators that have evaluated me, I haven't really gotten anything out of the conversation that could enhance my practice. So I think it is really dependent on who is evaluating you and I think more weight should be put on the supervisors' evaluation than on someone who doesn't have the content background.

Along with being familiar with the content knowledge, teachers interviewed stated that for feedback to be meaningful, they needed to find their evaluators credible. Assessing a teacher's professional practice requires evaluators to constantly use their professional judgment. No observation rubric, however detailed, can meaningfully capture the talents or flaws of a teacher's practice unless the teacher perceives the evaluator as credible and trustworthy.

Regarding the credibility of the evaluator, Teacher 3 commented, "Again, I think it depends on who's giving it to me. If it's someone who I've grown to respect like my current supervisor I will definitely take it into account." Teacher 14 revealed, "When evaluators are trained in evaluation skills and have great teaching experience, like my supervisor, it builds trust and you take their feedback more seriously."

### **Motivation to Change**

The teachers interviewed believe that the satisfaction of teachers with their performance and feedback at their post-conferences plays an important role in the evaluation process because it stimulates the acceptance and use of the evaluation system, as well as promoting change and

improvement in practice. When asked, What do you do with the feedback you received from your instructional leaders at your post-evaluation conference? Teacher 1 said, “I try to apply it [feedback] for the most part, some I agree with more than others, again I think all the time I’m looking for ways to improve. I think some people take feedback as criticism where as I do not. I do try to incorporate feedback into regular practice as much as possible.” Teacher 14 commented, “If it is from my immediate supervisor I will instantly look for ways to implement the feedback, as they are more likely to be in my classroom sooner. I feel if I were to be observed by an administrator again and I didn’t implement the feedback it would look very bad on my part.” Teacher 2 replied, when asked the same question,

I try to change things and I try to make things better. I really make a conscious effort. I don’t know if I’m always successful but I really try to implement it. Actually I really enjoyed being observed. There was a point in time for about 10 years where I was never observed. Now the pendulum has swung in a different direction.

Improving teacher effectiveness is as important as measuring it with meaningful evaluation practices. The interviews with the participating teachers revealed positive perceptions of the feedback they received during the evaluation process, the professional conversations about effective practice, and the opportunities for reflection offered by the Danielson model. Most teachers agreed that the reflective conversations that took place after their evaluation provided an effective vehicle for change and improvement of their instructional practice. Many of the teachers believed that the use of the Danielson framework had a direct and lasting effect on their performance in their classrooms, and it moved teachers to pursue professional development opportunities so as to learn new strategies and methods to change and improve instruction. Teacher 10 sought out professional development to help her change. She stated, “I try to make

the changes if it's something dealing with methodology, the way of teaching, I will do it. One thing was to improve my questioning skills so I took a workshop to try to be more conscious of it and try to make my questions more analytical, so I really have used the feedback.”

In the group that felt that the Danielson framework positively influenced changes in their teaching practices, Teacher 8 expressed it well when she shared her experiences.

You know when coming in they [evaluators] are looking to see students active and collaborating, higher-level thinking, and higher-level questioning so that all has become part of the everyday routine. The expectation will be there and anyone can walk in my classroom and know that the expectations are being met.

As mentioned earlier with regard to professional growth, many of the teachers mentioned that evaluation linked them to change; primarily changes in their practice of higher-level questioning techniques and making their classroom more student-centered. Teacher 15 said, “It has helped me specifically with my questioning techniques and also looking at my weaknesses and find ways to strengthen those weaknesses.” Teacher 1 stated that there has definitely been changes in his practice concerning questioning strategies, he said, I did (make changes). “I think about the questioning strategies which is a place I look to improve. I think I try to make all the changes, especially with that.”

In reference to making changes in practice and creating a student-centered classroom, Teacher 13 shared the following:

I think what I mentioned before about making my classroom more student centered. I would say like in the past if a student corrected another students behavior I would look at that as a bad thing and thinking that is my position but Danielson says students correcting



students is actually a great thing. Something like that has really changed my perspective, as long as it's appropriate, I look at it as a better thing.

In another reference to meaningful feedback causing change in practice, Teacher 7 revealed that, after feedback, "I don't physically go back into the lesson plan and say I'm going to do this the next time I do it a year from now, but subconsciously I do make the change. I think you do that with any lesson that you teach again. I will think about how I can make this better."

Others teachers were not so positive that the Danielson framework contributed to change or improvement in their classroom practices. Teacher 3 shared, "I'm reflecting all the time. I don't need a piece of paper to tell me that I need to change things." Teacher 5 felt that there was a negative impact from the model and changes in his practice. He revealed, "I think I made some changes because I knew specifically this is what I needed to do to get a 4 or something like that. But I think if you get a three and you're in the green it doesn't really matter if you make the changes because all you need to do is meet or beat the number."

It was interesting to me that some of the participating teachers brought up age and years of teaching experience as a perceived factor related to buying-in to the changes occurring at Rolling Hills regarding the teacher evaluation practices. There was a perception of an undercurrent of resistance to change from the older, more experienced teachers. Teachers interviewed felt that the veteran teachers believed that their tried-and-true traditional methods still worked in their classrooms, so change seemed unnecessary and for some even overwhelming. Some teachers believed that the older teachers had seen so many reforms in education and Danielson might be perceived as just the latest wave of change that will eventually pass. These thoughts did not pertain directly to any of the veteran teachers that participated in the

study, but was some of the perceptions of the teachers interviewed concerning other teachers at Rolling Hills.

Although there were no specific questions concerning how age or years of teaching experience affected teachers' perceptions of the Danielson model, some of the interviewed teachers believed that older teacher buy-in was a weak link in the evaluation practices at Rolling Hills. Teacher 4 said, regarding all the changes in teacher evaluation, "I think new teachers would be okay with it [changes]. I think older teachers would find that it doesn't need to be changed." Teacher 8 shared, "I don't think a lot of the older teachers who had been here for a long time like the structure of it. I think for newer teachers they will have an understanding as to what they need to do to succeed. I don't think the older teachers like to change." Teacher 3 went as far as to say, "There are clearly some people to the point, have resigned because of it" [changes in evaluation practices]. Teacher 13 broke it down even further and added her perception regarding age and experience and added the midcareer teacher and said,

I think it depends on the teacher. I think some of the newer teachers don't have a problem because they don't have a background to compare it to. I think some of the midcareer teachers for the most part are getting used to it and then finding ways for it to work for them. I think some of the older teachers are struggling with it more and probably have a less rosy view of it.

Question 12 asked each teacher, "Looking back at this past year's adoption of AchieveNJ, did Rolling Hills make the right decision in selecting the Danielson Framework for their teacher evaluation system?" Fourteen of the 15 teachers believed that Rolling Hills made the right decision in selecting the Danielson framework and one teacher remained neutral. Teacher 7 said, "Yes I do believe they did because we have been using the Danielson model in

the past and I think it was a smooth transition for this district.” Teacher 13 shared, “I think so. I know a little bit about some of the other models like Marzano. Since we were using Danielson before, it seemed like an easy fit. I think Danielson is the best one for us and we have a little experience with it so it made sense.” Teacher 11 agreed, “Yes I do and I’m very happy to see all the preparation and planning with the district and administrators did to implement it effectively.”

Teacher 10 added,

I think they did because the supervisors were already trained with the Danielson model.

We were already using it, we are a top high school. We have the best teaching staff that cares about the students. The school took the time for evaluators to come in teams before it mattered and compared notes to ensure that they were on the same page, which was great.

Although Teacher 2 was the only teacher who remained neutral on the question of the adoption of the Danielson framework at Rolling Hills, she suggested a single common state-mandated evaluation system, “I know there are other models that people are using. I think it would benefit the state and the profession if we were all on the same page with evaluation.”

That thought in itself, could be another area for research.

#### **Themes Research Question 4**

Research Question 4. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson framework improves the working relationship between teachers and school leaders?

One focus of this research study was to evaluate any possible changes in the professional relationships between the supervisors and the teachers, and to determine if the Danielson

framework had any influence on improving, maintaining, or destroying these relationships.

Questions 13 through 18 dealt with these professional relationships.

Most schools in New Jersey rely on the hierarchy of the principal or content supervisor to act as the instructional leader to conduct teacher evaluations. The teachers interviewed believed that a strong relationship built on mutual respect and trust between the teacher and the evaluator is essential to the success of teacher evaluation in any school district to promote change and instructional improvement. Most of the 15 teachers interviewed in this study believed that the use of the Danielson framework improved their working relationship with their supervisor.

The themes that were prevalent in the interview concerning the Danielson framework and improvement in the working relationship between teacher and school administrators were: (a) collaborative professional relationships, (b) trusted and trained administrators viewed as coaches, and (c) authenticity of evaluation.

### **Collaborative Professional Relationships**

Collaboration between teachers and school supervisors requires a positive school climate, a school where teachers feel respected and heard, a place where supervisors are trusted and admired for their knowledge and expertise, and a place where teacher evaluation is seen as a valued collaborative practice that fosters a teachers' professional growth. In collaborative professional relationships, teacher evaluations should be seen as a system for improving and sustaining good teachers, rather than getting rid of bad ones.

Most respondents expressed positive sentiments regarding improvement in the work relationship between teachers and school administrators. For example, Teacher 4 stated, "I think it [relationship between teacher and supervisor] is cooperative, again being a veteran teacher, I have a strong relationship with my supervisor so I can work cooperatively. I see my supervisor

as a coach. I think they are there to develop and help teachers grow.” Teacher 7 had similar thoughts and added the following:

I do. I think it’s made it [teacher evaluation] more collaborative because both parties know what is being assessed and evaluated. I think it opens up a dialogue. Even though it has been forced upon us, I think we [participant and his supervisor] have made the best of the situation and we will do so moving forward.

Many teachers believed that the mutuality of reflective conversation was best displayed in real, genuine, and focused discussions in which both parties were responsible for the conversation. One of the strengths mentioned by several teachers was that both teachers and their evaluators got the opportunity to evaluate the lesson and to compare and discuss their results. At Rolling Hills, once the evaluator finished their time-stamped, detailed, written transcript of the observation, it was given to the teacher for reflection and assessment. Both teacher and evaluator were given the opportunity to assess the quality of the lesson. At the post-evaluation conference the results of the assessment were discussed. The teacher was an active participant in the evaluation process. Teacher 12 stated that she did not believe that she was a passive recipient in her last evaluation. She seemed to feel that she was an active participant in the evaluation process and her opinion was validated. She seemed to believe that her supervisor listened to her and she talked about her recent evaluation experience in the interview as follows:

From what I’ve experienced it’s been cooperative. I just had an observation recently and I went back and scored myself and my supervisor and I didn’t match up on everything but we talked about it and she explained why she chose the number and I explained why I chose the number and we actually changed some things because of those discussions so I think it is very cooperative and it helped to get us on the same page.

Teacher 13 was neutral in her response regarding any possible changes in the working relationships with her supervisor as a result of the evaluation practices at Rolling Hills. She expressed her opinion as follows:

I don't think it [Danielson] has changed it (relationship) that much. At first I believe that it changed it significantly but now that we have been working with it for a few years it feels more comfortable. I think because we are getting used to it, both the teachers and the instructional leaders have gotten better with it. I don't think it has harmed the relationship but I don't think it has helped it.

Teacher 9 was also neutral in her response and said, "I think it depends on the personalities and the relationship between the supervisor and the teacher. I'm hoping that it can be more cooperative but I think it depends on the dynamic of the relationship. I have experienced more cooperative ones." Teacher 1 commented, "I think the instructional leaders that I work with are more on the coaching side.....I think if it were used without the numbers or the scoring it will be much more cooperative." Although Teacher 6 did not think the relationships had changed, he expressed some concerns when he said,

I don't think it's changed over the years. The relationship has stayed the same. What has changed is the methodology. What has changed with me is my feelings towards how the information is being used in the end. I sometimes feel bad for the supervisors because they're being told what to do from the state and teachers saying why are we doing this. I even see teachers leaving the field because of this whole situation.

### **Trusted and Trained Supervisors Viewed as Coaches**

The teachers interviewed felt that when their supervisors acted more like coaches than judges, working relationships improved. The teachers indicated in their responses that in order

for teachers to benefit from the feedback they received from evaluators and change their practice, they needed to trust the evaluators and view them as trained coaches. Teacher 7 voiced his strong opinion when he said, “I absolutely trust my supervisor and see him as a coach because I don’t feel intimidated when my supervisor comes in to observe me. He has trust in me, he has confidence in me, and he gives me flexibility. I feel like he’s there to help me.” Teacher 14 agreed with this statement and said, “I trust my supervisor and the feedback my supervisor gives me, it’s trust that improves the relationship” Teacher 4 referenced the importance of trust and stated, “it’s only when there is trust in your relationship with your supervisor, that you can hear what they say, accept criticism, and learn from their feedback.”

Charlotte Danielson (year?) seemed to believe that her Framework for Teaching could help school districts “empower teachers, not judge them” (p.33). The idea of supervisors as coaches was clearly articulated by a number of teachers who believed that the role of their supervisors had shifted from judges to coaches. This improved the working relationships between the supervisors and the teachers that they evaluated. When asked how they perceived their evaluators, most teachers perceived them as coaches, while a few thought they were more like judges. Teacher 13 responded, “I see my instructional leader as a coach and I think the best version of a leader is a coach obviously. I believe they make some judgment but I think the way we are using Danielson helps to make them more as coaches.” Teacher 1 commented, “I think the instructional leaders that I work with... they are more on the coaching side, I have heard from other colleagues in different departments that it can be more on the judging side. But once again I think it depends on the observer.” Teacher 4 was also very positive when he said, “Definitely a coach. I don’t think their role is to be judgmental at all. I think they are there to

develop and help teachers improve the quality of instruction.” Teacher 14 actually used the analogy of a coaching tool to describe the practical use of the Danielson framework.

Conversely, a few were skeptical about calling their school administrators coaches and remained neutral. Teacher 8 revealed, “I do believe at times they can be a judge but I believe there is always intent to improving my teaching and I believe my teaching has improved drastically with my supervisors help.” Teacher 5 stated,

I don’t really see my school administrators that much to consider them a coach. I don’t think it [Danielson] has improved them [professional conversations] that much. To a degree with my direct supervisor it gives us the opportunities to talk about a lesson but the experiences are very basic, you have them and then they are gone. We do it, let’s fill out the paperwork and I’ll see you next time. There is no continuity.

The validity of a perfectly well designed and rigorously tested instrument like the Framework for Teaching is threatened when placed in the hands of an untrained evaluator. Teacher evaluation can only be meaningful when it is valued and supported by all stakeholders and conducted by trained and trusted school leaders. The teachers of Rolling Hills believed that in order to be able to identify good instructional practices and evaluate teachers accurately, a great deal of commitment on the part of school supervisors for training and professional development was required.

When asked, “Do you feel that the instructional leaders had the necessary training and practice to evaluate you accurately and fairly?” Eleven of the 15 participants believed that the evaluators were well trained, two teachers believed they were improving with experience, and two teachers just did not know. One of the teachers that responded that they did not know said that because they have not been informed about the training, they would have to say that



supervisors did not have enough training. Teacher 6 responded positively and said, “Yes I think they have (had enough training). I think this school district has always provided good leadership for both the supervisors and the teaching staff. I honestly think they like what they’re doing but I believe they know what they’re doing.” Teacher 11 stated, “Yes definitely. Before the adoption of Danielson my supervisor was already doing pop-ins which I think helped the transition to AchieveNJ.” Teacher 10 noted, “Yes I think this school prepared them, like I said those sample walk-throughs really helped and I think this school does a great job preparing people for change.” Teacher 14 was very positive when he commented, “Yes because the school did a trial year and administrators did a lot of dry runs of observing teachers before it meant anything. Also we were informed about the hours our administrators went through.”

Teacher 7 seemed to believe that as time went on and the evaluators got more experience, they seemed better prepared. He stated,

At first No. I think it was kind of a baptism by fire because of how fast the state wanted to move forward with the evaluation model. Supervisors and administrators together were trying to fly the plane while they were trying to build it. The evaluators didn’t know the extent of the framework, the teachers didn’t know how they were going to be evaluated. Now that they’ve had some opportunities to perfect it they have some more opportunities to learn it by doing it.

Teacher 5 had some reservation about the administrators that were required to evaluate teachers out of their content area. He shared, “I think that our school administration has had plenty of practice with Danielson. I don’t feel as though our administrators have enough experience in some of the fields that they are observing. I think it’s challenging to observe someone in a content area you don’t understand and give them feedback.” Teacher 9 said, “I

think at first it was kind of rushed. I think they're getting better as we go but at first I think it was really rushed and no one knew what they were doing." When Teacher 15 responded about adequate training she said, "I am honestly not even sure how they have been trained so the fact that information has not been clearly shared. I would say no because I'm not informed."

### **Authenticity of Evaluation**

Part of the theme for authenticity of evaluation is for teachers to teach as they normally do during the observation. Often referred to in the past as a *dog and pony show*, a term coined by Marshall (2009), observations that were announced allowed the teachers to create special lessons that were unlikely to represent typical behaviors and routines in the classrooms. Teachers used these enhanced lessons in a way that showcased their work strictly for evaluation purposes. The teachers in the present study were asked to describe how they taught during a typical evaluation: do they teach as they normally would or do they do an enhanced version of the lesson. Eight responded that they taught as they normally did, and seven said that they somehow enhanced their lessons.

Teacher 15 said, "I teach how I normally do. I want to get honest feedback so I'm going to behave like I would any other day." Teacher 10 stated, "I teach the way I normally do. I might throw in a little more questioning techniques or be a little more aware of the student's needs and be a little nervous." Teacher 13 said, "I do choose things I want feedback on." Teacher 1 noted, "I do teach as I normally would. If you do try to hit all of the 4s it would almost look artificial. I really do try to teach as I normally would to get honest feedback."

There were some teachers who felt that if teachers presented a realistic view of their teaching, they might be rated as less skilled as compared to others who put on a performance during a scheduled observation. Teacher 14 revealed, "I usually teach an enhanced version

because you really focus on trying to hit the Danielson specifics. I want to make sure I score well so I really cater my lesson to ensure a high score is achieved.” Teacher 2 added, “I definitely do an enhanced lesson when I know they are coming, who doesn’t. If you know someone is coming to observe you, you are going to make sure that everything is tiptop. Every step is going to be right and I think I absolutely teach up.” Teacher 4 shared, “I would say that if it’s announced, I do up my game a little bit.”

### **Themes Research Question 5**

Research Question 5. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses, if any, of the use of the Danielson model of teacher evaluation as implemented at the regional high school?

Questions 19 through 21 dealt with the teachers’ perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the Danielson model as implemented at Rolling Hills. The best way to ensure the efficacy and sustainability of any new teacher evaluation system is to monitor whether the teachers value and understand the Danielson framework, and if it is perceived positively by the teachers to affect their practice.

### **Possible Modifications**

When asked if there was something that the teacher could do to modify the Danielson framework to gain maximum benefit for the teacher, Teacher 5 said, “I would change the drop down menu approach to checking off boxes in favor of a narrative kind of analysis. I think that sometimes you are looking at the critical attributes you sometimes miss the play. I think you might fail to see the big picture.” Teacher 7 responded,

I would make domain four observable and they say you can’t but I think it’s the most observable. They should look for how students act around you. They should also look at going back for your master’s degree. These should impact your evaluations. These are all

very important things that impact the classroom. I also believe that even getting in trouble outside of the school should impact you as well.

Teacher 2 expressed her idea for modification as follows:

I would like to see different ways to conduct the observation to gather the information maybe portfolios. I've heard some teachers in other districts being able to tape their lessons and then sit down and discuss the lesson with the supervisor. I think it puts you in the driver seat of your own observations and evaluations.

### **Weaknesses**

Question 20 asked teachers about the weaknesses they perceived regarding the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The themes that emerged were: (a) subjectivity, (b) lack of collaborative experiences with peers, (c) time- restraining forces, (d) time-stamping, (e) rigidity, (f) scoring ("4 is a place to visit"), and (g) Teachscape. Due to the negative nature of the question, the responses from the participants were overwhelmingly negative.

**Subjectivity.** Some teachers at Rolling Hills believed scores on the observations that used the Danielson framework could be based on personal judgment rather than evidence. These teachers also seemed to believe that the Danielson framework helped teachers to engage in evidence-based conversations with the supervisors who observed them. Somewhat surprising to the researcher me was that, even with the evaluation being based on evidence collected during the observation and the perception that these teachers believed that their supervisors had the proper training, one third (five) of the participants mentioned subjectivity as a drawback to how the Danielson Framework as implemented at Rolling Hills. Teacher 15 put it clearly when she said, "I think Danielson's flaw is how one evaluator looks at something, and another evaluator might look at it completely differently. I still think it's too subjective, it does allow for some

discourse because you could articulate why you got it [specific rating].” Teacher 7 had a similar thought, and stated, “I think subconsciously it (evaluation) can be very subjective especially if you have a personal relationship with your boss....if you have a very good relationship with them they might be more inclined to give you a better score.” Teacher 8 expressed his concern by stating, “I think the first three components are very pertinent. Domain four is very subjective and while it does have some effect on me within the community of teaching it doesn’t affect my teaching in my classroom”. Teacher 4 shared, “I would try to figure out a way to make it more objective and less subjective. I think there has to be a way to make it less subjective.” Teacher 9 seemed a little more positive and said,

I think even though it is less subjective, I think it is impossible to take out all subjectivity. Also I think now that we rank teachers if we have a teacher for 30 years who hasn’t been up to par.... you can’t just rank them poorly now because the state will say well what have you been doing for the past 30 years. I think people are just covering their butt a little bit.

Conversely, Teacher 9 believed that the Danielson model reduced subjectivity and said, “I think it helps take out the subjectivity of the evaluation because now everyone has to look at the same scale and grade everyone on that scale. It is now less opinionated, now it’s based on facts.”

**Collaboration with peers.** Another flaw in the implementation of the Danielson framework identified by some of the teachers interviewed was that the teachers wanted more collaborative experiences with other teachers in the school. Teachers expressed that they would like more time to learn from their peers. They seemed to believe that schools needed to value the importance of professional community building. Many of the teachers seemed to believe that

peer learning is an important mechanism for teachers to increase their skills and knowledge through interaction with talented teachers. Teacher 3 said, “I think one of the resources that they could use more of is the staff itself. There are staff members that excel in regards to organizational skills or background in teaching. If they have a staff member who excels in domain four they should use them as an example.” Teacher 7 explained, “I would like to see more involvement from other administrators and other teachers. I think within the department, it’s a great framework to reflect on how you teach in the classroom and how you contribute to the professional community...” Teacher 10 stated, “...there isn’t enough time to discuss things with colleagues.” Teacher 11 suggested, “I think I would put something in there that would help teachers to collaborate more with each other and sharing of lesson plans, exams, and best practices. This will help to improve achievement. Instead of saying let’s horde this.” Teacher 1 noted, “I would like to see a little more freedom amongst colleagues so you can discuss classroom practices so you can see things from the eyes of the observer not just the observed.” Teacher 15 expressed her support for PLCs and suggested:

What I think would be better for professional growth is having best practices shared and having teachers communicate with each other about different techniques. For example with English if I am having struggles with reading strategies, having teachers sit and talk and focus on that rather than how to do Teachscape would be more beneficial. I think more time spent with PLCs would be valuable.

**Time-restraining forces.** Time restraints placed on the supervisors was one of the significant themes that emerged from this study. The Danielson model, although deemed worthwhile by almost all of the participants, requires a significant increase in the workload of both the evaluator and the teacher being evaluated. Supervisors usually wear two or three other

hats and more than half of the teachers mentioned their concern for the time demands placed on their supervisors.

Teacher 5 summarized this thought regarding the increased time commitment for supervisors and said, “Not to be too negative about this all but it is very clear to me and others, administrators are overwhelmed with the amount that they have to do. It feels very rushed and there really isn’t a lot of dialogue. They are just trying to get them [evaluations] done and it seems more like compliance.” Teacher 4 said, “One thing I don’t like is how busy they are doing the pre-and post-observation ....they are not really free outside of these observations”. Teacher 1 seemed to agree with this statement and added, “...There are instances where I want to talk about practice outside of an observation and I can’t because administrators are so time bound by these observations there is no chance to have a discussion with your supervisor outside of an observation.”

**Time-stamping.** Teacher 4 expressed concern about the time restraints placed on his supervisors, but also brought up another negative perception of some of the teachers concerning the Danielson framework; time-stamping. He said, “One thing I don’t like is how busy they are doing the pre-and post-observation and all the time stamping. They’re not really free outside of these observations.” Teacher 14 expressed his concern and said, “I would take away the time stamping. I feel that the administrator is typing the whole observation and is missing the learning that is taking place. There needs to be a better way to document the lesson and what is taking place in the lesson.” Teacher 12 expressed the same concern and said, “Having the time stamping takes away from actually viewing the lesson so I think that is the biggest weakness... I have noticed when they come into my classroom a lot of times they don’t stop typing and don’t look up and they miss out on a lot of things.” Teacher 4 seemed to have the same perception and

said, “I think the time stamping holds the supervisor back and takes the person away from the actual observation.” Teacher 3 seemed to agree in the following statement:

I’m also sympathetic to them because with the observations they are trying to timestamp and comprehend everything that’s going on. I wouldn’t want to be an administrator right now. It just overwhelming the amount of observations they have to complete. You know some teachers are going to challenge you on every number which puts them in a very tough position.

**Rigidity.** Although most of the teachers interviewed liked the consistency of the standards and believed that they measured valid competencies, there were some teachers who felt that Danielson’s framework was too rigid. Teacher 5 stated, “I would say that its core weakness is its rigidity. Teaching is fluid and dynamic and it has a lot of moving parts. If something is really complex and they are using something that is very static and specific.” Teacher 6 said, “It’s a very rigid framework. It should be set as a thing of motivation and we’ve turned it into a set of rules. Teacher 10 added, “There are certain flaws for instance furniture layout, there are a lot of things we are being evaluated on that I have no control over. There are other things that I believe I have control over which is good. My biggest problem is the things I don’t have control over I am being evaluated on.” Teacher 8 commented as follows:

It’s very rigid as far as a teacher is having some of the components of a four while others hitting some of the components of the three. Do you rate them as a 4 do you rate them as a 3? Is there a 3.5? They are either a 3 or a 4. It also doesn’t take into consideration where in the unit the person is being evaluated is in. If the person comes in on the second day of the unit they are going to see me delivering instruction: where if they came in the end of



the unit they would see a lot more of that student centered work. I think your score could depend on when the evaluator shows up.

Included in the theme of rigidity was the notion that teachers felt pressured to accomplish all of the 22 components that make up the Danielson framework. Teachers interviewed believed that the framework identifies the qualities of a good teacher, but many seemed to believe that all of the qualities could not be identified and evaluated in one observed lesson. Teacher 11 shared, “You should feel some fluidity with your teaching and I feel like sometimes with Danielson we try to hit every single part of it every lesson, which is impossible.” Teacher 3 stated, “I guess my biggest issue is the idea that you have to evaluate the teacher in every specific part. I think administration has to use the not applicable more often because it’s so difficult to hit on everything.” Later in the interview, Teacher 3 offered two solutions and said, “It’s everything and it’s very overwhelming to try to do it all at once which sometimes causes lower scores for teachers. So to be positive, we could spread it out more, not on just one observation.” His other solution was, “Maybe in the pre-conference you select the ones you want to focus on to be evaluated on. If the administrator sees other parts they can comment on that. When we teach for example we only hit on one or two standards so I think it should be the same when you’re observed.”

**Scoring “4 is a place to visit.”** In the Danielson’s framework, an educator’s performance level goal is to “live in the area of Proficient and visit the area of Distinguished” (author, year??). Many of the teachers made reference to this quote, and others had a problem with the idea of scoring the evaluation altogether. Teacher 2 stated, “I think that not being able to get a 4 is a real flaw. If there is a 4 out there you should be able to get to it.” Another teacher added, “I know that a 4 is the A++, but making it unreachable can be at times frustrating especially when you feel

that something is your area of strength. You don't move in and out of being highly competent in higher-order questioning skills. You use that skill every day and you are proud that you do...it takes something away."

In regards to scoring the observations, Teacher 1 said, "...because the evaluator is making a lot of decisions and literally scoring to the decimal. I think if it were used without the numbers or the scoring it will be much more cooperative." Later in the interview he added, "The idea that being so formal and always providing that numeric score has a negative impact on the culture because everybody is so focused on the score." Teacher 12 seemed to agree, "...it's a good evaluation system but I don't think many teachers enjoy the scoring process."

**Teachscope.** To further facilitate the effective adoption of the Framework for Teaching, Rolling Hills added Teachscope for the 2013-2014 school year to enhance the Danielson framework. Developed in partnership with Charlotte Danielson and Educational Testing Services (ETS), Teachscope Focus, a web-based service, was designed to prepare teachers for observations, professional conversations, and reflective practice. Rolling Hills uses Teachscope Reflect to manage evaluations entirely online. Although the teachers were not specifically asked about Teachscope during the interviews, many teachers made reference to the fact that it was not user friendly. Teacher 9 expressed her opinion on Teachscope as follows: "I find Teachscope very confusing, it is not user friendly. I feel like with professional growth, I spend more time finding out how to use it than getting something out of it. I have a hard time using it." Teacher 13 stated, "Teachscope is probably the least favorite thing so maybe I would look to make it more user-friendly which will help the teachers." Teacher 2 expressed her concern and said, "I wish I knew more about Teachscope. I feel I haven't been trained. I do stumble through it when it's needed. I struggle to manipulate things and really don't use it much."

Not all of the comments regarding Teachscape were negative. Teacher 7 was very positive about Teachscape and commented,

I think it's good. I think it makes you reflect on your observations and it makes you think about your lessons before you do it. I don't think any teacher can do that for every lesson but it gets you in the habit to think about what you're doing before you do it and think about what you did after it. Also it gives you good feedback from your supervisor.

Teacher 12 agreed that Teachscape helped in the evaluation process and said the following:

I actually really like Teachscape, I know a lot of people have had their complaints just because it's not something we are used to. I think being a newer teacher online is more natural for me. I really like it because I can go on at any time and access it and typing is a lot quicker than handwriting. I really enjoy it! I think it is helped my teaching because I have to answer all the detailed questions for my pre-and post-observations which helps me to reflect

### **Strengths**

Throughout the interviews, teachers made references to the positive impact that the Danielson framework had on feedback, reflection, and goal-setting aspects of the evaluation process. Those positive perceptions were discussed primarily under the heading, Research Question 2. As evidenced under the heading, Research Question 4, participants also praised the training that Rolling Hills had provided to their supervisors, as they were perceived as competent in the evaluation practices that used the Danielson framework. When teachers were specifically asked to identify the strengths of the Danielson's Framework for Teaching (question 20), the following three themes emerged: (a) clarity in expectations, (b) structure of the framework for discussion, and (c) whole teacher evaluation.

**Clarity in expectations.** Clarity in expectations was given by many teachers as a strength of the Danielson’s Framework. Creating clear, common, and high standards for teacher performance can identify expectations for both teachers and administrators. Teacher 6 stated, “The strengths are that it’s well-crafted and it is a good basis for people to think in four domains on how they should be handling different problems and ideas in the classroom. It’s very clear. The strength is in its clarity. That is by far its strongest point.” Teacher 13 agreed and added, “The main strengths is the clarity and a clear language which I think is great for new teachers especially. It does take a few years for the teacher to figure out what is expected so I think having this model it helps to clarify things for new teachers.” Teacher 10 also liked the clarity in the use of the Framework and expressed, “It has clear and concise expectations so you know exactly what’s expected to achieve. Each level like I said it’s like giving a student a rubric so everyone knows what is expected up front.” Teacher 14 also noted a strength and commented, “That it is clear and I know exactly what is expected of me in the lesson and what I have to do to improve...it’s clarity in expectations.”

Several teachers interviewed mentioned that the clarity in the expectations seen in the Danielson Model helped their supervisors conduct consistent and fair evaluations. Teacher 1 said, “I think that consistency between observers, you know, hopefully that one person to another are looking for the same thing. Before it might have not been that way.” Teacher 5 added, “It offers consistency across all the disciplines and all the administrators that are doing it. They’re all working from the same text and it is a common language.”

**Structure of the framework for discussion.** Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching (2011) was designed as an observation instrument that provides a foundation and shared language for having professional conversations about a teacher practice, and how they can

grow. The framework offers supervisors and the teachers a road map for evaluation, feedback, and goal-setting. Almost half of the teachers in this study mentioned the structured framework for discussion as its strength. Teacher 1 said, “I have a lot of the conversations that revolve around the framework so I think that is good but once again I also believe that it depends on the observer. I do also see them on the same page which I think is what the model was intended for.” Teacher 15 stated, “The strengths of the frameworks are making us more aware of the elements of teaching and also creating conversations towards specific elements that should be had instead of being just conversations of what did you think...no what did you think?” Teacher 7 stated, “I just think the fact that it’s a framework. Before it [Danielson], it was just here is what we saw, here is what we think you did well, here’s what you didn’t do. I think now it gives a lot more structure. Students need more structure just like teachers need structure as well.”

The framework for teaching identifies and describes those critical aspects of teaching practices that have been documented by research to promote student learning. The framework has detailed attributes and allows the supervisor and teacher to discuss each component of the framework. Teacher 12 commented that professional conversation is enhanced by, “having specific sections, like very specific, ways of breaking it (teaching) down and touching on all parts of the lessons from the beginning to the end.” Teacher 4 noted, “It’s very structured in regards to what is expected. The wording and what is expected from you as a teacher.”

**Whole teacher.** Several teachers mentioned that the strength of the Danielson framework was that it considered the *whole teacher*; a reference to both teacher quality and teaching quality, as explained by Darling-Hammond (2014). The teachers in the study liked that the Danielson framework could be used to evaluate not only the quality of teachers’ practices, but also the personal attributes teachers outside of the classroom. Teacher quality might be

thought of as the bundle of personal traits, skills, and understanding that an individual brings to teaching, including dispositions such as collaborating with peers, community involvement, and the willingness to differentiate instruction to help every student succeed. Teacher 3 shared, “It does cover the whole teacher. If you really use it you’re reflecting on the entire practice of being a teacher. I believe that if you can truly be affected in every part of the model you will improve your practice.” Teacher 11 stressed, “I really like that it puts the entire teaching craft into words. I like that it puts everything into domains and it is very clear. It looks at the whole teacher.” Teacher 14 said, “...it’s clarity in the expectations. I also love that it looks at the whole teacher. As educators we look to educate the whole child so I like how we are getting looked at as a whole as well.” Teacher 12 stated, “I’ve actually heard that Danielson wasn’t intended to be an evaluation system but I still think that it is good for evaluation because you are looking at all parts of teaching and all parts of the teacher so I think it is a good thing.”

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the findings of this study were reported in order to answer the overarching research question, What are the teachers’ perceptions of the Danielson Model of Teacher Evaluation concerning its value to shape and improve instructional practice at Rolling Hills High School? The findings of interviews with 15 were presented as they applied to the five research questions. In Chapter V provides a summary of the findings in relation to the research questions, and a discussion that further relates the findings to previous research and the theoretical frameworks used in this study.

## **Chapter V**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents an overview of the present study. It begins with a restatement of the purpose of the study and the research questions, followed by a summary and discussion of the study and implications of the findings relative to the literature reviewed and the theoretical frameworks that guided the study. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future policy, practice, and research.

The purpose of this research study was to examine teachers' perceptions of their school's use of the Danielson framework in its evaluation practices, specifically if these teachers believed it of value in shaping and improving their instructional practices. It has been shown that teachers' perceptions have the power to shape the climate and effectiveness of their classrooms (Donovan & Bransford, 2005; Tobin, Tippins, & Gallard, 1994). Examining teachers' beliefs and perceptions concerning the teacher evaluation process could provide school districts with information that could help them design, implement, and maintain more effective teacher evaluation practices. When evaluation practices improve and become more meaningful to teachers, positive perceptions increase. By understanding and attending to the teachers' perceptions of an evaluation process that used the Danielson Framework, school leaders could build on the features that successful evaluation practices embody and make better use of their greatest assets, their teachers, to improve learning in our schools.

The sample for this qualitative study was 15 high school teachers who had taught in the selected New Jersey high school for a minimum of 2 years. Data from one-on-one interviews with nine male and six female participants from eight different content areas: English,

Mathematics, Social Studies, Foreign Language, Business, Fine Arts, Television and Radio and Health and Physical Education was collected and analyzed. Their years of experience varied. All but one of the teachers was tenured, and all but two of the teachers had their masters degrees. This research was conducted during the winter of the 2014-2015 school year.

### **Research Questions**

The following five questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson framework is beneficial to their professional growth as a teacher?
2. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson framework creates a forum for discussion and feedback about teaching that promotes self-reflection?
3. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson framework helps them to change and improve on their classroom practices?
4. To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson framework improves the working relationship between teachers and school leaders?
5. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses, if any, of the use of the Danielson model of teacher evaluation as implemented at the regional high school?

### **Summary and Discussion of the Findings**

Today, teacher evaluation practices are receiving unprecedented attention as states and districts are challenged to initiate new teacher evaluation systems in order to receive funding under the federal Race to the Top or flexibility waivers under No Child Left Behind. More importantly, as noted by Stronge and Tucker (2003), “without high quality evaluation systems, we cannot know if we have high quality teachers” (p.7). The teachers interviewed for this study perceived that a well-designed and well-implemented evaluation system, like the Danielson



framework, provided teachers with quality assessment, evidence-based feedback, opportunities for reflective practice, and professional development that helped teachers to grow and improve instructional practices. At the same time, this research can assist in the development of the next generation of teacher evaluation.

Many school districts have adopted reform initiatives, like new teacher evaluation practices, with high hopes, only to see them fail. Successful implementation of teacher evaluation practices, such as using the Danielson framework, involves more than providing staff with resources and training. The human factor is often overlooked in the implementation process. Each teacher can respond to new evaluation practices with unique attitudes and perceptions, and each person will use a new program differently. The need to focus on teachers' beliefs has been indicated by Tobin, Tippins, and Gallard (1994), who believed that research should seek to enhance our understanding of the relationships between teacher beliefs and education reform. Understanding the different perceptions and experiences of teachers was a critical step toward understanding any potential effects, positive or negative, of utilizing the Danielson model at Rolling Hills High School to evaluate teachers. A teacher evaluation system supported by the teachers has great potential to improve teacher practices and ultimately improved student learning (Donovan & Bransford, 2005, Mielke & Frontier, 2012).

The roll-out of the new teacher evaluation process in conjunction with the new accountability factors linked to teacher evaluation under programs like AchieveNJ, have altered the original intention of the Danielson (1996) Framework for Teaching. Instead of it being used strictly as a formative tool to improve instruction, the framework has ultimately become an evaluation instrument.

The two most cited purposes of teacher evaluation found in the reviewed literature were accountability and professional development or summative and formative purposes (Isore, 2009;

Stronge, 2006). There was a general consensus from the teachers interviewed for the present study that information gained from meaningful teacher evaluation met the dual needs of schools. It can guide coaching and professional development activities that help teachers grow and, in addition, observation ratings would provide administrators with defensible evidence for making personnel decisions. The teachers in the present study agreed with both Charlotte Danielson (2011) and Stronge (2006) who believed that school leaders need to create evaluative procedures that yield valid results that not only satisfy the legitimate demands for evaluating teacher competency, but also guide and promote professional learning for all teachers independent of their current teaching skills, practices, and years teaching.

For the teachers interviewed in this study, the perceived purpose of teacher evaluation at Rolling Hills included accountability and the fostering of professional growth, but it also included state compliance. In this study, two-thirds of the teachers perceived the purpose of teacher evaluation as accountability and state compliance, whereas, less than half noted the purpose as fostering professional growth. Compliance and accountability were named twice as often as professional development.

I believe that there is some disconnect between what these teachers perceived as the intended purpose of evaluation at the school and how they perceived their supervisors' roles in the evaluation process. The data from the teacher interviews bewildered me because so many of the teachers perceived the feedback they received from their supervisors as beneficial in helping them to improve their practice and grow as teachers, yet less than half of the teachers mentioned professional growth as an intended purpose of evaluation at Rolling Hills. The implications of these conflicting findings reveal the importance of making sure that teachers in the organization understand why the evaluation process is changing and how those changes impact them

personally; otherwise, the misunderstanding of the purpose of teacher evaluation could hinder teacher growth (Popham, 2013).

I believe that John Kotter's *Leading Change* (1996) provides a theoretical perspective that explains this discrepancy in the teachers' perceptions regarding the purpose of teacher evaluation at Rolling Hills and the role of their supervisors. One of Kotter's steps for leading successful change was for the organization to communicate the vision to the teachers for buy-in. Much of Kotter's strategy for success in the buy-in to organizational change relies on communication. As evidenced by the in-service notifications sent out by the school to the teachers in the months prior to the interviews, the most recent training focused primarily on the implementation procedures of Danielson at Rolling Hills, Teachscape, and the defining of the domains of the framework and not professional development. If this pattern continues it could contribute to the teachers' perceiving the Danielson framework as an accountability tool and not as a professional development tool. Districts should not underestimate the value of teaching the underlying assumptions of the framework, in addition to the purpose and procedural aspects of the new observation process. There was a general consensus that the process has merit, but without continuous professional development opportunities for teachers to improve the attributes described in the framework, the teachers will underestimate the potential of the Danielson framework for promoting their professional growth.

### **Research Question 1**

Research Question 1 asked: To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson Framework is beneficial to their professional growth as a teacher? All but one of the teachers interviewed reported that the Danielson framework had a positive impact on his or her professional growth. These positive perceptions were opposed to the findings of research

conducted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Measures of Effective Teaching Project (2010-2013) and The Widget Effect Study, which found that teacher evaluation systems had not assisted in developing a highly skilled teacher workforce.

The results of the present study are consistent with the results of studies from Astor (2005), Colby (2001), and La Masa (2005). All of these studies reported that the majority of teachers they surveyed believed that their experiences with teacher evaluation led to growth, improved practices, and improved student outcomes. The results of the present study are also consistent with the results of studies conducted by Donovan and Bransford (2005) and Tuytens and Devos (2009) that found that teachers grew professionally as a result of positive perceptions of evaluation experiences. More importantly, because of its connection to the Danielson framework, the results also mirrored the results from research conducted by the University of Chicago (2013) concerning the perceptions and experiences of teachers and administrators during the first year of REACH (Recognizing Educators Advancing Chicago) implementation. The study found that school administrators and teachers expressed positive views of the potential of the teacher practice component to support teacher growth and professional development. The evaluation system used in this study was modeled after the Charlotte Danielson's (2011) Framework for Teaching.

In the present study, the teachers' perceptions of the Danielson model as promoting professional growth matched perceptions assessed from evaluations of teachers in Pennsylvania, where it is mandatory that evaluation practices use the Danielson model. Both groups of teachers believed that the Framework for Teaching was an effective instrument to increase student achievement and move teachers toward pursuit of professional development opportunities to help them to learn new strategies and methods of instruction. The results of the present study also

agreed with the results from the New Teacher Project (2010), which found that evaluations provided all teachers with beneficial feedback that helped them to grow as professionals, no matter how many degrees they had earned or how long they had been teaching. The teachers at Rolling Hills ranged in age from the mid-20s to their 60s, and they all agreed that they had grown because of their positive experiences and because of meaningful feedback they had received from teacher evaluations that used the Danielson framework.

### **Research Question 2**

Research Question 2 asked: To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson Framework creates a forum for discussion and feedback about teaching that promotes reflective practices? In the interviews, almost all of the 15 teachers stressed three ways in which they perceived the Danielson framework as supporting teacher learning: clear expectations, feedback based on evidence, and reflection on practice. Charlotte Danielson (2011a, b, or both?) wrote, “if we want teacher evaluation systems that teachers find meaningful and from which they can learn, we must use processes that not only are rigorous, valid, and reliable, but also engage teachers in those activities that promote learning -- namely self-assessment, reflection on practice, and professional conversation” (p. 38).

Several teachers commented that the rubric provides clear guidance about what teachers need to address in order to improve their practice and grow. The interviews revealed that Danielson’s framework offered these teachers a guide for lesson planning, evaluation, feedback, reflection, and goal setting. There was general consensus that teachers and supervisors were able to reflect on good practice, and that teachers were able to revise their practices with clear goals in mind that helped them to grow as teachers.

Second, teachers reported that the Danielson model had the potential to improve instruction because it created opportunities for teachers to discuss the practice of teaching with their supervisors. When asked if they found value in the feedback they received from their instructional leaders in the post-evaluations, all 15 participants agreed that they did find value in feedback and welcomed it. The teachers interviewed all disagreed with the results of the Widget Effect Study (use author names,2009), that found that teachers rarely receive constructive feedback that helped them to improve. Instead, the teachers in the present study agreed with Darling-Hammond (2014), who wrote that teachers crave useful feedback and the challenges and counsels that help them reflect on and improve their practices.

Overall, the teachers' responses suggest that quality feedback is the impetus that leads to change in instructional practice. Results from this study affirm the work of Danielson and McGreal (2000) and Jeralds (2012), who have cited important aspects of feedback as a powerful resource for improving teaching and learning in the literature. The results of the present study were that the teachers perceived feedback as a two-way dialogue that was constructive, based on observable data, related to the standards, and helped to promote improvement and changes in professional practice. These findings are consistent with those of Acheson and Gall (2003), Beers (2006), Blasé and Blasé (2001), and Irvin and colleagues (2007), who found that feedback was perceived as most useful when given in a safe, non-threatening setting and in an atmosphere of collaboration and reflection. In particular, the pre- and post-conferences were ways of getting needed feedback and support. These findings concur with those of Cochran-Smith (2003) who believes that professional dialogue makes possible "the learning of new knowledge, questions and practices and, at the same time, the unlearning of some long-held and often difficult to uproot ideas, beliefs, and practices" (p. 9).

The findings of the present study disagreed with those of Donaldson and Donaldson (2012), who found that many observers were not adequately trained to lead effective coaching sessions, such that post-evaluation conferences came across as one-way summative evaluations, and this tended to make teachers very defensive. The findings of the present study are consistent with those of Mielke and Frontier (2012), who found that Danielson's Framework for Teaching helped school districts "empower teachers, not just judge them" (p.??).

Lastly, reflection emerged as another of the themes that supported teacher learning and growth. All 15 of the participating teachers referred to reflection as an essential aspect of their teaching practices. This finding is consistent with that of Shulman (2004), who noted that the Danielson model allows teachers to be active participants in inquiry concerning their own teaching practices, and that through writing, dialogue, questioning, and reflection authentic learning can occur. Also, the findings of the present study are consistent with the thinking of Tucker, Stronge, and Agrees (2002) who noted that although years of experience can be valuable in the teaching profession, "experience without reflection does not improve instruction or teacher effectiveness. Rather, it is the combination of experience and thoughtful analysis that makes teachers more effective" (p. 79).

According to Osterman and Kottkamp (1993), the term *reflection* is often thought of as a solitary and meditative process. They believe that because our behaviors are so deeply ingrained in our actions it is often difficult to be critical of our own behaviors. They also believe that reflective practice is a "challenging and demanding" process that is most successful as a collaborative effort. According to the results of the present study, the participants believe that the Danielson Framework of Teaching offers the teacher an opportunity for both analysis and reflection to occur in a collaborative and cooperative environment.

In past research, both Beers (2006) and Brinko (1993) found that teachers believed that effective feedback should lead to goal setting for the teachers. Bandura (2001) believed that people have an ability to influence their own behavior and the environment in a purposeful, goal-directed fashion. He also believed that effective teacher evaluation practices could empower teachers and offer them the opportunity to self-reflect and set attainable goals (Bandura, 2001). There was a general consensus among most of the teachers in the present study that evaluation that used the Danielson framework helped them to set attainable goals to improve practice.

### **Research Question 3**

Research Question 3 asked: To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson Framework helps them to change and improve on their classroom practices? Papay (2012) advocated for the use of professional conversations in the context of professional development to help teachers focus on improving student learning by “driving instructional change” (p. 133). This study supports the research by The Aspen Institute (2012) that found that teachers improve when they receive regular, specific feedback on their practice, are provided with the opportunity to reflect on it, and are supported to improve areas of weakness.

The teachers' perceptions concerning the impact of the Danielson framework on changes to instructional practices and professional growth was mostly positive. Tobin, Toppins, and Gallard (1994) found that teachers' beliefs had a powerful impact on their willingness to change or adopt new teaching strategies. A favorable attitude allows for greater benefits from the evaluation because it allows the teacher to become aware of specific strengths and weaknesses and to act on any feedback (Tuytens & Devos, 2009).

The areas perceived to have a positive effect on improvement in instructional practices and professional growth by the teachers included: setting short-and long-term goals, authentic



evaluations by supervisors who were well trained in evaluation practices, maintenance of a school climate of high expectations for teachers, and respect and rapport between supervisors conducting the evaluation and teachers being evaluated.

Teachers in the present study responded very positively to the components of the framework used in the Danielson model, and they seemed to feel that the standards were understandable and credible, that they reflected good teaching, that they defined all expectations, and that they helped improve professional conversations about practice with their supervisors. The teachers saw the framework as a means to not only identify what changes were necessary, but also to give them a guide to change and improve their practice.

When teachers are active participants in their own evaluations, the quality and sometimes the quantity of the professional dialogue increases, and the majority of the teachers interviewed perceived that their ratings became more accurate and valid as a result. When supervisors included teachers in the evaluation process, it helped to generate higher levels of teacher cooperation; it encouraged the development of coaching relationships, and increased the amount of positive teacher perceptions of the Danielson framework and the evaluation practices at Rolling Hills. Any teacher evaluation system, even the Danielson framework will not thrive without teacher support: Teacher buy-in is crucial for the success of any model. Buy-in is necessary for teachers to invest in the feedback and make actual changes and improvement in their practices.

The findings of the present study are consistent with those of Acheson and Gall (2003) and Beers (2006) who found that teachers believed that when feedback was successful, it helped to promote a two-way, collegial conversation about teaching and learning that lead to reflection, change, and professional growth. In the present study, the findings are consistent with Sweeley

(2004) who determined that teachers in the state of Pennsylvania, where the Danielson model is mandatory, believed that the framework for teaching was an effective instrument of change that could move teachers to pursue professional development opportunity to learn new strategies and methods of instruction. As mentioned earlier in regards to professional growth, many of the teachers in the present study mentioned that evaluations that used the Danielson framework linked them to change, primarily changes in their practice regarding higher order questioning techniques and making their classroom more student-centered.

After interviewing all the teachers, I believe that if educators reflect deeply on their practice using a common framework and vocabulary, like what is presented in the Danielson framework, then teachers will be able to identify both their strengths and weaknesses and set attainable goals. Through active involvement in the evaluation process and professional discussions between teachers and their supervisors, meaningful teacher evaluation practices can help both the school and the teacher to determine the focus of his or her professional development based on what is actually occurring or not occurring in the classroom. The vast amounts of money, energy, and dedication currently being expended by Rolling Hills to reform their teacher evaluation system will only ensure the continuous improvement of teaching and learning if teacher learning is part of the evaluation. If a culture of meaningful evaluation, continuous feedback, and differentiated support does not already exist, then school leaders must provide teachers with information and demonstrate actions so as to win over the trust of teachers so that they all believe that professional growth is the main purpose of teacher evaluation at their school. Clear and consistent communication builds trust among the stakeholders (Bryk & Schneider, 2003).

#### **Research Question 4**

Research Question 4 asks: To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson Framework improves the working relationship between teachers and instructional school leaders? Twenty-five years ago, Barth (1990) expressed his concerns that conventional teacher evaluation resembled a meaningless ritual that often heighten teacher anxiety and placed a wedge between teacher and administrator. Five years ago, Horng and Loen (2010) found that teacher evaluation minimized dialogue, reinforced institutional hierarchies, and risked poisoning otherwise productive working relationships among school professionals. Most of the 15 teachers interviewed for this study disagreed with Barth (1990) and Horng, and Loen (2010), and seemed to believe that the use of the Danielson framework improved their working relationship with their supervisors.

The Rolling Hill teachers seemed to agree with Castetter (1996) and Stronge (1997) who maintained that the quality of the relationship between the evaluator and the person being evaluated played a central role in the effectiveness of the evaluation system due to the fact that evaluation is personal and emotional. Stronge (1991) wrote that although teacher evaluation can generate suspicion and sometimes even relational conflict, having trust between the evaluator and the person being evaluated can prevail in an effective personnel evaluation system.

Responses from the teachers at Rolling Hills mirrored the teacher perceptions found in research conducted by the University of Chicago regarding REACH, which was modeled after Charlotte Danielson's (2011) Framework for Teaching. The teachers believe that successful implementation of the Danielson model depended heavily on the level of trust between their supervisors and the teachers they evaluate. Some of the responses mirrored what Donaldson and Donaldson (2012) wrote, "For teachers to find these conjectures credible and respond to them

with efforts to build on their strengths and address their weaknesses, they must trust the observer and have access to subsequent learning opportunities” (p. 80). The results of this study are consistent with those of Wang and Day (2002), who stated that “respect, safety, trust, and collaboration ... are considered key ingredients of effective teacher development, and hence need to be at the core of any teacher observation model” (p. 14).

The results of the present study contrasted with those of Danielson and McGreal (2000) who found that often teachers see themselves as targets or victims in the evaluation system, and that principals are viewed as trying to catch the teachers in a negative light. The teachers interviewed for the present study seemed to agree in theory with Charlotte Danielson (2011) who believes that her Framework for Teaching can help school districts “empower teacher, not judge them”(p.21). The idea of coaching was clearly articulated by a number of teachers who believed that the administrator-teacher relationship had shifted from a judge to a coach. American schools and the success of their students depend upon the ability of school districts to improve their teachers. The abilities of school districts to do this successfully will depend upon their willingness to invest in supervision that nurtures professional development and insures high performance for every teacher. Coaching motivates all teachers to grow beyond those agreed-upon minimums to fully realize their potential as great teachers and better serve their students. Authentic coaching puts teachers at the center of their own professional learning and helps facilitates growth.

The teachers interviewed seemed to agree with Milanowski and Heneman (2001) who wrote that a credible evaluator should (a) have the required competency to evaluate teachers, (b) have considerable experience in teaching, and (c) have enough opportunities to observe and follow-up with the teacher. Not only did the majority of teachers interviewed perceive their

supervisors as coaches, 11 of the 15 participants believed that the evaluators were well-trained, 2 believed they were improving with experience, and 2 just did not know. None of the teachers responded that their supervisors were not adequately trained to utilize the Danielson framework effectively. This is important for the teachers because, according to Little and colleagues (2009), Milanowski and Heneman (2001), and Strong and Tucker (1999), teacher evaluation can only be meaningful when it is valued and supported by the district and conducted by trained and trusted school leaders.

The teachers interviewed believed that, because the school had implemented the Danielson framework before it was required by AchieveNJ, the supervisors at Rolling Hills had ample opportunity to train and practice with the Danielson model. The respondents also believe that Rolling Hills made the commitment to train their supervisors in evaluation practices that used the Danielson framework, and they concurred with Donaldson and Donaldson (2012) that supervisors need opportunities to develop vital skills in how to assess instruction and communicate effectively regarding instructional quality (Donaldson & Donaldson, 2012).

### **Research Question 5**

Research Question 5 asked: What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses, if any, of the use of the Danielson model of teacher evaluation as implemented by Rolling Hills High School? Negative perceptions about teacher evaluations may have detrimental effects on how a teacher benefits from the process of evaluation (Donaldson & Donaldson, 2012). In regards to the ineffectiveness of teacher evaluation, the teachers did not agree with the results found by Donaldson and Donaldson, (2012), Donaldson (2009), Horng and Loeb (2010), and Toch and Rothman (2008). Donaldson (2009) blamed external constraints like vague district standards, poor evaluation instruments, and lack of time for effective evaluation systems. Donaldson also

blamed internal constraints, such as the absence of high-quality professional development for evaluators, and a school culture that discouraged critical feedback and negative evaluation ratings. Horng and Loeb (2010) found that teachers felt that their evaluations were obligatory, one-way, top-down communications that often felt punitive and were not related to improvements in teaching practices and student outcomes. Toch and Rothman (2008) found that many district evaluation systems did not function well because, in the judgment of classroom teachers, they did not address valid performance competencies (Toch & Rothman, 2008). Donaldson and Donaldson (2012) believe that evaluation systems that use overly rigid, narrow criteria for room arrangements, lesson-execution frameworks, and student behaviors often ignore the realities of the teacher who seeks to differentiate instruction and use creative pedagogy. The teachers in the present study did not duplicate the weaknesses found by other researchers, except for the time constraints placed on supervisors and the rigidity of the framework.

When the teachers in this study were asked what were the perceivable weaknesses of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, the themes that emerged were: (a) still some subjectivity, (b) lack of collaborative experiences with peers, (c) time- restraining forces for supervisors, (d) time-stamping, (e) rigidity in the framework, (f) scoring, and (g) Teachscape. The only teacher criticisms of the Danielson framework that agreed with the findings of Donaldson (2009) and Horng and Loeb (2010) were the time restraints placed on their supervisor and the rigidity of the framework as described by Donaldson and Donaldson (2012). This criticism of time restraints placed on supervisors as being a disadvantage of the Danielson framework was in direct alignment with the findings of Donaldson (2011) and Ruffini and colleagues (2014).

According to some of the research participants, teacher evaluation that utilizes the Danielson framework remains subjective and vulnerable to the possibility of inter-rater

unreliability and possible favoritism. Goe, Biggers and Croft (2012) noted that to reduce the perceptions concerning subjectivity, both teachers and evaluators need to understand and agree on what the standards mean and look like in practice. Stumbo and McWalters (2011) wrote that the lack of intensive and consistent training of evaluators threatens the objectivity and reliability of any teacher evaluation system. The teachers in this study believed that their supervisors were trained properly to understand and identify the Danielson standards and to conduct meaningful evaluations. The interviewed teachers who believed that the framework was subjective believe that sometimes the relationships between teacher and supervisors add to the subjectivity of evaluations, and they also believe that supervisors can and will interpret every single point in this rubric in their own way.

The teachers interviewed perceived that the accuracy of their evaluation suffered because of the rigidity of the framework. They believed that the Danielson model included too many dimensions for an observer to consider during a single classroom observation and suggested that an evaluation should be based on only a few of the attributes or that the non-applicable rating should be used more often. Teachers also complained that they felt that the time-stamping during the observations was disruptive and kept the evaluator from being present in the observation. Some teachers did not like the scoring at all, and some specifically did not like that a 4 was a place that they should only visit. In regards to scoring, these teachers were in agreement with Darling-Hammond (2014), who noted that the goal of teacher evaluation is not to rank teachers on a single scale but to support high-quality instruction for all students. Almost half of the teacher expressed displeasure with the not so user-friendly Teachscape.

Three of the criticisms perceived by the teachers deserve a second mention. The first is the time restraints that the Danielson model puts on the evaluators; the second is the lack of

opportunities for teacher collaboration with peers, and the third, although not a true criticism is a preference that evaluations be conducted by their content supervisors. The Danielson Framework of Teaching requires principals and other supervisors to conduct multiple observations and pre- and post-conferences with teachers each year. Guidelines under AchieveNJ ask school leaders to spend more time on instructional leadership. Even the most highly trained and rigorously certified school evaluators can fail to conduct meaningful observations if they do not have enough time. The present study found that teachers perceived that the school leaders often felt stressed and rushed as a result of the additional time that the evaluation process consumed, especially with the pre- and post-evaluation conferences. Some even expressed that they felt sorry for them. The results concerning the added stress and time restraints placed on supervisors found in this study resonates with the findings of Range and colleagues (2011) and the MetLife Survey of the American Teacher (2013).

A February 2013 survey of National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Elementary School Principals members found that a substantive teacher evaluation requires 11 to 15 hours per teacher over the course of a school year. Furthermore, the increased demands and possible frustration level could impede or even undermine the implementation fidelity of the new process. Equally important is that the teachers interviewed in this study perceived that adequate time was needed to conduct substantive, meaningful, teacher evaluations and instructional coaching that leads to improved teacher performance. Research by Doherty (2009) suggests that administrators who are asked to conduct more observations than are reasonable given their other responsibilities, often cut corners in ways that undermine the accuracy and usefulness of the feedback they give to the teachers they observe. Research conducted by the University of Chicago (2003) on the implementation of REACH, a new teacher



evaluation program, found that successful implementation of REACH depended primarily on the ability of school administrators to make room in their already full workloads to conduct multiple observations and hold meaningful conversations with teachers about instruction.

As discussed in the section on findings for Research Question 3, teachers reported that they preferred and thought they would benefit more when observations were conducted by their content supervisors. They also felt that they would benefit from more collaboration with their peers. These perceptions go along with research by Milanowski and Heneman (2001), who found that if teachers did not consider their evaluator competent, they would fear receiving an undeserved assessment. The opposite holds true when teachers believe that content knowledge and teaching skills are evident in their supervisors.

These two concerns were highlighted during the interviews: (a) a preference for observations by evaluators with content knowledge, and (b) the time demands placed on school supervisors to do evaluations could both be addressed by a suggestion offered by one of the teachers in this study. To accomplish this, districts might want to consider the addition of expert teachers into the pool of trained evaluators

The goal of any well-structured evaluation system is to improve professional practice, not simply to punish teachers in its absence. Consequently, an evaluation system is only useful to the extent that it can produce actionable, evidence-based suggestions for professional learning. In regards to how the school could address areas of challenge in teaching, almost all of the teachers interviewed made references to their professional growth in areas related to both student-centered classrooms and higher order question techniques. Based on these interview responses concerning professional growth, the question emerged as to whether or not Rolling Hills had the foresight to incorporate valued instructional strategies that coincided with the teaching standards

within the Danielson's framework as a means to improve teachers' practices and to increase student outcomes. I believe they did. When districts offer professional development on attributes within Danielson's framework and teachers see them as valued at their school, those attributes can become embedded into the school culture and guide teachers to improve their instructional practices.

### **Strengths**

Throughout the interviews, teachers made references to the positive impact that they perceived the Danielson framework to have had on feedback, reflection, and goal-setting during their evaluation process. In the interviews, almost all of the 15 teachers stressed three ways in which they perceived that Danielson framework to support teacher learning: clear expectations, feedback based on evidence, and reflection on practice. Results from this study affirm the work of Danielson and McGreal (2000) and Jeralds (2012), who cited important aspects of feedback as powerful resources for improving teaching and learning. The teachers interviewed gave credit to Rolling Hills as to its commitment to training the supervisors so that they were perceived by the teachers as credible and trusted evaluators. The Rolling Hills teachers were in agreement with Donaldson (2009), who found that in order to be able to identify good instructional practices and evaluate teachers accurately, a great deal of commitment on the part of school leaders was required for training and professional development. The findings of the present study are in contrast to those of Stumbo and McWalters (2010), who found that unfortunately districts rarely require that evaluators are trained.

The three themes that emerged specifically from the responses to question 20 in (strengths of the Danielson framework) were: (a) clarity in expectations, (b) structure of framework for discussion, and (c) whole teacher evaluation. First, the teachers interviewed

remarked that the framework itself set clear expectations about quality instruction. Charlotte Danielson's (year?) Framework for Teaching was designed as an observation instrument that provides a foundation and shared language for having professional conversations about a teacher practice and how they can grow. When professional standards form the basis of an evaluation system, like is the case for the Danielson framework, the teachers interviewed perceived that the framework helps administrators to identify what to measure and also informs teachers what is needed to demonstrate good classroom practices. Creating clear, common, and high standards for teacher performance can identify expectations for both teachers and administrators to assist in setting goals for improvement. The teachers all seemed to be in agreement with Milanowski and Kimball (2003), who found that standards-based, teacher evaluation systems promoted a common conception of good teaching and acted as a performance competency measure useful for reflective practices. Because the Danielson framework creates explicit and shared expectations of quality instruction, teachers commented that the rubric also provided clear guidance about what teachers needed to address in order to improve their practice.

Professional discussions have been discussed at length in this paper. The teachers at Rolling Hill believe that the framework becomes the map or guide to lead meaningful conversations between the supervisor and the teacher. , The responses of the teachers suggest that they agree with Kane and his colleagues (2010) and Taylor and Tyler (2011) that schools ensure a consistent process for evaluating teacher effectiveness that is based on a solid foundation of research and demonstrated to be strongly correlated to student growth by implementing the framework. The teachers interviewed seemed to be in agreement with Charlotte Danielson (year?) when she wrote the following:

A framework for professional practice can be used for a wide range of purposes, from meeting novices' needs to enhancing veterans' skills. Because teaching is complex, it is helpful to have a road map through the territory, structured around a shared understanding of teaching. Novice teachers, of necessity, are concerned with day-to-day survival; experienced teachers want to improve their effectiveness and help their colleagues do so as well; highly accomplished teachers want to move toward advanced certification and serve as a resource to less-experienced colleagues. (p. 2)

The teachers in this study also seemed to agree with Linda Darling-Hammond who wrote that a productive evaluation system should consider teachers' practice in the context of curriculum goals and students' needs, as well as multifaceted evidence of teachers' contributions and commitment to student learning and to the school as a whole. The teachers in the study liked that the Danielson framework evaluated not only the quality of the teacher practice, but also the personal attributes of the teacher outside of the classroom a “whole teacher” (p.??) concept talked about by Darling-Hammond (2014).

What teachers at Rolling Hills like about evaluating the whole teacher is that teachers who care about their students' academic achievements, those who are willing to exert the extra effort needed to ensure the classroom is a productive learning environment, and those who have characteristics that may not be measured as possession of pedagogical knowledge and skills, will be recognized. Through their actions, teachers can demonstrate effective teaching dispositions like strong values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence their daily behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities that can affect student motivation to learn. Several of the interviewed teachers liked that through Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities, teachers could be evaluated on a wide range of responsibilities outside the

classroom. Some of these responsibilities include: communicating with families, contributing to the school and district, growing and developing professionally, and showing professionalism. Teachers who demonstrate these competencies should be highly valued by their colleagues and supervisors.

### **Kotter's *Leading Change***

John Kotter's *Leading Change* (1996) provided a theoretical perspective about the process of adopting change in an organization, in this case a high school, and what effect school leaders can have on promoting successful change initiatives with their teachers. Kotter found that fundamental change was often resisted by the people it most affected: those who work in the trenches; in this case the teachers. In regards to the implementation of the Danielson framework, the interviews provided little evidence of resistance from the teachers who were interviewed at Rolling Hills. When school administrators follow the steps in Kotter's 8-Step Change Model they can alter or impact a teacher's perceptions concerning the changes in teacher evaluation practices. According to Kotter, to successfully implement change school administrators must (a) create a vision of the organization's future; (b) communicate that vision widely, repeatedly, and consistently in actions and behaviors; (c) empower people in the organization to act on the vision; and (d) anchor the changes into the organizational culture.

According to Kotter, for change to be successful it has to be anchored in the organizational culture. Much of Kotter's strategy for success in adopting organizational change relies on communication and actions concerning the vision created, in this case, communication with the teachers so that they perceive teacher evaluation using the Danielson framework as a positive process that can help them to improve their practices. The teachers believes the process

includes objective observations, meaningful professional discussions, reflection, goal-setting and individualized professional development.

### **The Roger's Theory of Perceived Attributes**

Past, research has shown that a teacher's attitude about the evaluation process influences how the teacher benefits from the evaluation process (Donovan & Bransford, 2005; Tuytens & Devos, 2009). The Roger's Theory of Perceived Attributes (1995) postulates that individuals become more likely to adopt an innovation when they perceive it as a positive change. A central tenant of Roger's theory is not concerned with the inherent qualities of an object or idea, but how those qualities are perceived. Rogers' (2003) theory of perceived attributes takes into account the notion of relative advantage, which he defined as, "the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being better than the idea that it supersedes" (p. 212). The teachers interviewed in the present study believe that the Danielson model is an improvement over past systems and ~~there~~ I did not identify resistance to the Danielson framework or its implementation from the teachers at Rolling Hills. The teachers did not feel threatened by evaluation; they actually welcomed it.

### **Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory**

According to Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, perceptions can develop as a function of feedback from the broader school social environment that is comprised of other teachers and school leaders. Bandura, as well as the teachers interviewed for this study, believe that humans are capable of self-reflective thought, and through this self-reflection they evaluate their capabilities, surrounding environments, behavior, and future actions. The teachers interviewed believed that they effected change in themselves through their own efforts toward self-reflection and self-regulatory processes. Change is dependent on one's perceived belief about his or her ability to exercise control and make these changes (Bandura, 2001). The teachers interviewed

believed that the Danielson's framework has the capability to empower teachers and offer them the opportunity to self-reflect, set goals, and make changes.

Bandura (year?) noted that learners, in this case the teachers, make an intentional decision to invest in learning and enact behavior change. The teachers seem to agree with Bandura, who puts the ability and motivation to improve squarely in the hands of the teacher through the use of concepts like self-efficacy and self-regulation. Bandura places an emphasis on the learner's beliefs in their own capacity for learning, as well as on the teacher's ability to focus on self-determined goals, evaluate themselves, and to make changes in their practices. The teachers believe that the Danielson framework is a vehicle that helped them to change and improve on their practices.

### **Dewey's View of Inquiry**

Dewey's view of inquiry (1938) and Schon's (1983) perspective of the reflective practitioner added to the theoretical foundation of this dissertation regarding reflective practice. The teacher questioned believed that reflective thinking or inquiry is essential for teacher learning and growth. The teachers in the study seemed to agree with Dewey who considered reflective practice as intentional, systematic inquiry that is disciplined and that will ultimately lead to change and professional growth. Dewey maintained that when teachers combined these systematic reflections with their actual teaching experiences, they could become more aware and this would lead to professional development and growth as a teacher. The teachers believe that the Danielson framework helps teachers look at their experiences, review and examine them in light of the evidence they collect from their practice and from feedback from their supervisors, and then plan what action they want to take as a result of their reflective practices.

### **Schon's Perspective of the Reflective Practitioner**

In the case of Schon's (1983) reflection-on-action, the teachers interviewed seemed to agree with Schon, who believed that professionals learned to review, describe, analyze, and evaluate their classroom practices with the intent to set goals and gain insight into improving future practice. All 15 teachers seemed to agree with Dewey (year?), Schon, and Osterman (year?), and Kottkamp (2004), who all believe that reflective practice is a means by which teachers can develop a greater level of self-awareness about the quality and impact of their performance that can offer the teachers an opportunity for professional growth and improved practice. The act of reflecting-on-action, through the use of the Danielson framework allowed the teachers to spend time exploring why they acted as they did, what was happening in the class and what they could do to improve the lesson and student learning.

Information about the perceived benefits, effectiveness and pitfalls of the implementation of the Danielson's framework at Rolling Hills High School has the potential to generate valuable knowledge regarding the use of this evaluation system, not only at Rolling Hills, but for any district looking to improve their teacher evaluation practices. This study is significant to current practices and existing research in the field of education leadership as it relates to the proposed educational reforms concerning teacher evaluation. This research is relevant for school leaders contemplating how best to support, design, develop, and implement an effective teacher evaluation system. This research can help districts transform teacher evaluation systems like the Danielson framework from merely an exercise in state compliance into an effective tool that can link effective teacher evaluation to improved teacher practices.



### **Recommendations for Policy**

There is no area of education that has more potential impact on improved instructional practices and student growth than a meaningful teacher evaluation program (McGreal, 1983). A combination of research and federal and state interest in measuring teacher effectiveness has galvanized support for reform of teacher evaluation systems. As nationwide awareness of the importance of meaningful teacher evaluation continues to grow, policies that reflect good evaluation practices must be further developed at the federal, state, and local levels as part of a supportive administrative infrastructure. The development and implementation of federal policy and funding can enable states and local school districts to build a meaningful system of teacher evaluation. Meaningful evaluation systems, such as the Danielson framework, supported in mandated policy, indicates both a national and state commitment to evaluation practices as a means to improve teachers in the schools. Recommendations for school policy include

1. For the benefit of the vast majority of states still in the process of designing, improving, or selecting teacher evaluation systems, research on specific evaluation systems, like the Danielson framework, would be beneficial. Results of the research can offer policy and practice recommendations for states and districts to help in their efforts to select the best research-based model to offer a valid and comprehensive evaluation system. Research can also provide information about options for states to explore, as well as factors to consider, for making data-based decisions on adopting new, or revising current, policies.
2. Now that states are moving further along in their implementation plans for new teacher evaluation practices, they need to address an assortment of emerging challenges that are inevitable with change and school reform. Just as ongoing communication and feedback are essential to the success of any reform efforts at the district level, all states must

establish robust monitoring systems and feedback mechanisms for school districts so that the education leaders of the state can clearly identify the strengths and weaknesses of the new teacher evaluation policies and make informed decisions about ways to improve ineffectiveness and increase low-fidelity implementation. States can learn much from one another about how to successfully navigate and improve these reforms. Research such as the present study, which is specific as to feedback concerning the Danielson model, can be used and reviewed by policymakers.

3. Although many states and districts are still in the early stages when it comes to developing or retooling teacher evaluation systems and policies, it is not too early for states to be building the policy framework for how they will use evaluation data in future policies. Currently, New Jersey is using teacher evaluation for the purpose of tenure, dismissal, professional development, and improvement plans. After the states' assessment of the effectiveness and reliability of current teacher evaluation policies found in AchieveNJ, New Jersey can use teacher evaluation data to expand policy and practice in ways that will further the quality of teaching and learning in the state. New Jersey may consider joining other states that already use teacher evaluation for compensation, layoffs, licensure advancement, licensure reciprocity, student teacher placements, and the public reporting of aggregate teacher ratings (Doherty & Jacobs/National Council on Teacher Quality, 2013).
4. The policy implications of using effective evaluation to identify poor teaching practices are profound. If executed well, and if school administrations act on the results, targeted policies can be developed for what to do with struggling teachers and for the development of fair but rigorous policies for replacing persistently ineffective teachers.

5. Since this study revealed concern for the amount of time that school administrators must spend on teacher evaluation responsibilities, seeking policies that bring greater quality and efficiency to evaluation systems must be considered. States can begin to adapt their original evaluation practices and replace the one-size-fits-all approach with one that evaluates teachers differently based on their prior performance results. Using data from previous evaluations, districts can make informed decisions about which teachers require more or less attention in subsequent evaluation cycles. If expert teachers require less time from evaluators, time could better be used in improving the struggling teachers.
6. In as much as states have already adopted standards for student learning and the professional practices of both teachers and administrators, making policies that support significant efforts to adopt and enforce standards for professional development will further the quality of teaching and learning in the state.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

1. As states develop and implement teacher evaluation systems in response to both federal and state mandates, school districts should examine their educational goals, management styles, conceptions of teaching, community values, and adopt teacher evaluation systems compatible to their districts' missions. If schools are given the choice in selecting an evaluation system, care must be taken to not adopt an evaluation system simply because that system works in other districts or states.
2. Time constraints placed on the supervisors was a concern voiced by many of the research participants. Teacher evaluation should not be perfunctory. School districts should grant supervisors sufficient time, unburdened by other administrative demands, for evaluation. To accomplish this, districts might want to consider the addition of expert teachers into

the pool of trained evaluators. Given the demands on administrators' time and the fact that some teachers possess a deep knowledge of instruction and content knowledge, broadening the term *evaluator* to include expert teachers makes sense. Fewer teachers to be evaluated by each supervisor will allow more time to be set aside for more meaningful evaluations. It would require the allocation of additional funds to provide a substitute teacher to give release time to the expert teacher on a regular basis for both training and for the actual evaluation of their peers.

3. The use of expert teachers would also help alleviate another concern expressed by the teachers in this study in that feedback was valued more when it came from someone who had the same content knowledge in the subject taught in the lesson. To make the evaluation more meaningful to the teacher and to judge excellence, it might be beneficial for the evaluator to know the subject matter. Using expert teachers in supervision, evaluation, and remediation of peers would help the evaluated teacher receive informed suggestions that involved content knowledge. Schools need to value the importance of professional community building.
4. Principals need to create a culture in their schools that enables stakeholders to view meaningful teacher evaluation as a fundamental part of the school system's mission to improve teachers.
5. Districts can share costs by collaborating on common training and certification, assessments, and professional development opportunities, especially when they have similar observation instruments.
6. School districts should be encouraged to conduct ongoing training for evaluators in observation and evaluation techniques. Inaccurate classroom observations can lead to

mistrust and poor decisions. The MET project (2013) has recommended that it may be necessary to ask supervisors to re-demonstrate periodically their ability to score teacher observation accurately to improve the quality of the evaluations and maintain inter-rater reliability.

7. Communication to teachers through in-service or emails should be provided so that they are cognizant of the purpose(s) and practices of teacher evaluation, as well as to the extent of the training that their supervisors are getting.
8. A great deal of criticism has been aimed at teacher professional development, as research suggests that much of professional development has lacked clear focus and purpose, failed to address the challenges that were identified during a classroom observation and is disconnected from the specific needs of individual teachers. Teacher evaluation needs to be coupled with individualized, rigorous, and focused professional development to provide opportunities to foster growth. The idea of single-session, whole-district workshops should be avoided and professional development should be individualized through the use of technology and other resources. Non-traditional methods of professional development, such as Danielson's Teachscape, wikis and/or blogs, online district courses, action research, and study groups should be considered.
9. Schools must make an effort to sustain the professional learning community model until it becomes deeply embedded in the culture of the school. Professional learning communities (PLC) shift the focus of school reform from restructuring to reculturing (Louis, 2006). Several teachers in this study expressed the desire to have more time to work with their peers on improving their teaching practice. Schools must offer time for such collaboration between teachers.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The mere process of discussing or doing research on any evaluation system helps to focus attention on the practice of good teaching and helps to create a culture in schools where teaching is highly valued and teacher evaluation practices are seen as a way to improve teaching practices and student outcomes.

There are specific areas from this study that warrant further study.

1. Given the small number of participating teachers from which data were collected, this research study collected limited data. Efforts should be made to expand the pool of teachers to other schools and other districts.
2. Research has shown that administrators collectively rated survey questions in quantitative studies higher than teachers. This could indicate that administrators might be more likely to view the Danielson framework as having had a greater impact on professional practices than do the teachers. To assess this, conduct a comparative study of the evaluating administrators at Rolling Hills could be conducted to understand their perceptions about their roles in the teacher evaluation process, and how the evaluations impact teacher practice and professional growth
3. Since this study was conducted in the early phase of a new state mandate, there may not have been enough time, with respect to teachers' exposure and experience with the new evaluation system, to get variations in how people felt about it. It is plausible that it was too early to determine the genuine impact of the new evaluation system. More time may be needed before emergent research shows definitive evidence of the impact (positive or negative) of the new teacher evaluation system based on the teachers' exposure and

experience with the new process. Since this was the first year that teacher evaluation practices changed in New Jersey, some of the negative perceptions found in this research could be attributed to the newness of the changes involved in AchieveNJ. Do the trends associated with this study change over time as both educators and supervisors gain more experience with the new evaluation process? Repeating the study in a few years could find that more familiarity bred less skepticism and more positive perceptions of the new evaluation process.

4. As noted by some teachers in the study, teacher age and years of experience might have had some effect on the perceptions of the changes to teacher evaluation practices at Rolling Hills. An examination of the relationship of the responses to years of teaching experience could add to the knowledge base of the relationship between teacher evaluation practices and teacher perceptions.
5. An examination of the relationship of the responses to gender and teaching assignment grade level could also add to the knowledge base about the relationship between teacher evaluation practices and teacher perceptions.
6. As school organizations move toward standards-based evaluation systems like the Danielson framework, they should be interested in the reliability and validity of the evaluation scores produced from the classroom observations. Although student achievement data was intentionally excluded from this study, future researchers may want to repeat the study and include an effort to compare teacher effectiveness with student performance data. The question to answer would be whether students of teachers whose performance has been rated higher actually learn more. Research on the teaching-learning connection is important.

7. Although the majority of teachers in the present study felt that their evaluators were properly trained in the use of the Danielson framework, an exploration of the effect of training evaluators and persons being evaluated on the success of teacher evaluation would shed light on the importance of such an initiative.
8. Although this study did not ask questions specifically about Teachscape, many of the teachers mentioned it as a source for professional development. It had mixed reviews, as many believed it was not user-friendly. Teachscape, a software developed in partnership with Charlotte Danielson and ETS, empowers educators to systematically improve teaching practice and to accelerate their professional growth. Conducting a study of online professional development programs, like Teachscape, for their effectiveness in improving teacher practice and promoting professional growth could be beneficial for individualized professional development.
9. Much of the past research on teacher evaluation has found that teacher evaluations neither differentiate among teachers and the quality of their instruction nor emphasize teachers' influence on student achievement (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2010; Weisberg et al., 2009). Differentiation between effective and ineffective teachers and student achievement were not part of this study, but both certainly warrant future study.
10. Lastly, since one of the primary purposes of teacher evaluation with the Danielson Framework of Teaching is to help link teacher evaluation with individualized professional development, studies focusing on the relationship that exists between staff development activities and teacher evaluation results would enhance both practices.



### **Closing Statements**

Meaningful teacher evaluation is essential for improving the individual performance of teachers and the collective performance of school districts. New systems of teacher evaluation have the potential to provide teachers, school leaders, state policy-makers, and the public with better and more detailed information on teachers' classroom practices and their impact on student outcomes. Teacher evaluation is undergoing a change from perfunctory to more robust systems that attempt to accurately assess performance and provide evidence-based feedback to support teacher growth.

It was evident in the responses of the 15 high school teachers interviewed in this study that for evaluation to be meaningful to teachers, trained school evaluators need to be able to evaluate teachers objectively and accurately, provide high fidelity feedback, and engage teachers in productive conversations about practice that will lead to the ultimate goal of improved instructional practices, professional growth, and increased student learning. The methods used by schools to determine the effectiveness of their teachers must be robust, research tested, evidenced-based, objective, and perceived as meaningful to the teachers evaluated. If teachers understand that the key role of the evaluation system is to improve their teaching practices and student learning, they are more likely to take an active role in professional conversations about learning and teaching that help to promote goal-setting, change, and professional growth.

The teacher interviews in this study highlighted how successful implementation of teacher evaluation using the Danielson framework relied heavily on a level of trust between supervisors and teachers. This trust not only helps minimize the stress associated with the evaluation process, but helps teachers perceive the feedback they receive as credible, and therefore makes it more likely that the teacher makes the changes in their practice. This study

showed that the teachers generally believed that their supervisors were fair and accurate, with some reservations. Those reservations were generally grounded in teachers' the lack of trust teachers had that administrators would be objective, be able to set aside personal biases, or that a supervisor lacked the content knowledge to give meaningful feedback.

I found it interesting that the results found in this study mirrored the results of research conducted by Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin, and Bernstein (1984) three decades ago. Both studies found that four variables needed to be evident in an effective teacher evaluation system. First, the goal of the evaluation should match the goals of the district, as well as its values and mission. Second, teacher evaluation must be a top priority in the district and backed with the proper resources and available time. Next, principals and other educational leaders must be well trained in the evaluation process and lastly, it was recommended that master teachers be assistants in the evaluation process and they have the content knowledge that the educational leaders may lack.

Meaningful teacher evaluation alone is not the magic button to transform the quality of teaching. Teachers must feel supported by a school culture that creates and sustains an organizational commitment to prioritize the development of teacher excellence, maintains a strong differentiated professional development system aligned with teacher evaluation, offers a well-designed curriculum and provides the working conditions that allow both students and teachers to grow. Schools must be able to enlist teacher cooperation and trust, and guide and motivate each teacher to grow from utilizing jointly agreed-on standards.

In the past too much attention was focused on compliance. A major reason for the new teacher evaluation systems was that old evaluation practices rated over 90 % of teachers very highly. The problem was that most systems did nothing to remove ineffective teachers or help

struggling teachers to improve. What school districts really need to do with the new reforms to teacher evaluation is to transform teacher evaluation into a process of teacher learning that supports continuous improvement. A system like the Danielson Framework for Teaching should enhance teacher learning and practices, while at the same time ensuring that teachers who are retained and tenured can grow and effectively support student learning throughout their entire teaching careers.

School districts must be committed to develop a school culture that supports teachers by recognizing the need for improvement as an asset, rather than a liability. Schools need to transcend the idea that only teachers who are struggling in the classroom need an improvement plan (Mielke & Frontier, 2012). Teacher evaluation has to promote teacher improvement during every stage of a teacher's career so that there are provisions for continuous and career-long learning. When this can be achieved, teachers will be given the opportunity to acquire the set of skills that can help their students master the 21st century skills needed to succeed.

I offered several recommendations to policymakers who oversee the implementation of new evaluation systems at the state and national level. The development and implementation of federal policy and funding can enable states and local school districts to build a meaningful system of teacher evaluation. Such evaluation systems, supported in mandated policy, indicate both a national and state commitment to evaluation practices as a means to improve teachers in the schools.

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APPENDIX A

Danielson's Framework for Teaching

**Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching**  
(Danielson, 2011)

<p><b>Domain 1</b> <b>Planning and Preparation</b></p>	<p><b>Domain 2</b> <b>The Classroom Environment</b></p>
<p><i>Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy</i> <i>Demonstrating knowledge of students</i> <i>Setting instructional outcomes</i> <i>Demonstrating knowledge of resources</i> <i>Designing coherent instruction</i> <i>Designing student assessment</i></p>	<p><i>Creating an environment of respect and rapport</i> <i>Establishing a culture for learning</i> <i>Managing classroom procedures</i> <i>Managing student behavior</i> <i>Organizing physical space</i></p>
<p><b>Domain 3</b> <b>Instruction</b></p>	<p><b>Domain 4</b> <b>Professional Responsibilities</b></p>
<p><i>Communicating with students</i> <i>Using questioning and discussion techniques</i> <i>Engaging student in learning</i> <i>Using assessment in instruction</i> <i>Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness</i></p>	<p><i>Reflecting on teaching</i> <i>Maintaining accurate records</i> <i>Communicating with families</i> <i>Participating in a professional community</i> <i>Growing and developing professionally</i> <i>Showing professionalism</i></p>

**APPENDIX B**  
**LETTER OF SOLICITATION**

## Fellow Educators at HCRHS

I am inviting you to take part in a research study. My name is Jonathan Moss and in addition to being a Physical Education and Health Teacher for the junior class at Central, I am also a doctoral candidate at Seton Hall University, College of Education and Human Services. I am conducting research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. Upon successful completion of my dissertation I will be receiving my doctorate in K-12 Educational Leadership, Management and Policy.

I have received permission from Superintendent Christina Steffner to conduct my research here at Central. The purpose of this research study is to examine teachers' perception concerning Central's evaluation practices utilizing the Danielson Framework, specifically if teachers believe that it is of value in shaping and improving their instructional practices. Examining teacher's perceptions concerning the evaluation process could provide districts with information that can help them design, implement, and maintain more effective teacher evaluation practices. By understanding these perceptions through the help of research, school leaders can build on the features that successful evaluation practices embody and make use of their greatest assets, their teachers, to improve learning in our schools.

I am asking for approximately 15 volunteers, a mix of both male and female teachers, to participate in my research. After I have a list of volunteers, I will send out a Demographic Profile Questionnaire to be completed by each volunteer. From the teachers' profiles, I will select 15 teachers from a variety of disciplines with different years of teaching experience to participate in my research. All participants must have taught at Central for at least two years.

If you are selected from the pool of volunteers to participate in this study, you will be required to sign an informed consent form. I'll ask you to meet with me for an approximate half-hour-long interview to talk about your personal perceptions concerning your experiences with the Danielson Framework at Central. You will be asked the same questions as all the other participants that were reviewed by a panel of experts. The interview will be recorded and then transcribed. After your interview is transcribed, you will have an opportunity to review your transcription for accuracy. The interview will be conducted in the school library or in an open classroom at Central or at a public location, mutually agreeable to you and myself.

To participate in this research, it is estimated that each participant must be available for a total of approximately one (1) hour for the interview and review of your transcription. The interviews and review of the transcriptions will occur during the next two (2) months.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the research at any time and/or request that your transcript of your interview not be used. You have the right to refuse to answer any question if it makes you feel uncomfortable. There is no penalty for withdrawing from the study. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relationships with HCRHS or with me. You will receive no compensation for participating in the research study.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed. All data collected from you will be coded with a number that is only known by me. Your real name will not be used. The identity of all participants will be carefully protected in both the research and reportage phases of this study.



All of the research data will be securely stored on a USB memory drive and on audio tapes stored in a locked cabinet in my home. Once the audio-tapes are transcribed and put on a USB flash drives, the audio-tapes will be erased. I will keep the research data for a period of three years and then it will be destroyed.

I thank you for any consideration for your possible participation. If you are interested in participating in my research study or want to discuss it with me in more detail, please contact me by my school email, phone or in person. My phone number is 908-782-5727 ext. 8371. My email is Jmoss@hcrhs.org. If you prefer, you may contact my Dissertation Advisor, Dr. Barbara Strobert, at her office at Seton Hall University (973) 275-2324 or Mary F. Ruzicka, Ph.D., Director, Institutional Review Board at (973) 313-6314.

Jonathan Moss

**APPENDIX C**

**Demographic Profile Questionnaire**

## Demographic Profile Questionnaire

Date:

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Years of teaching experience:	Years teaching at HCRHS	Current Age
_____ 2-5 years	_____ 2-5 years	_____ 20-29
_____ 6-10 years	_____ 6-10 years	_____ 30-39
_____ 11-15 years	_____ 11-15 years	_____ 40-49
_____ 16-20 years	_____ 16-20 years	_____ 50-59
_____ 21+ years	_____ 21+ years	_____ 60 +

Sex:

\_\_\_\_\_ female                      \_\_\_\_\_ male

Highest Degree Attained:

\_\_\_\_\_ Bachelors                      \_\_\_\_\_ Masters                      \_\_\_\_\_ Doctorate

What content area do you teach? \_\_\_\_\_

Optional: What was your last evaluation score from your last evaluation?

\_\_\_\_\_ mostly 1's                      \_\_\_\_\_ mostly 3's  
 \_\_\_\_\_ mostly 2's                      \_\_\_\_\_ mostly 4's

To calculate some statistics for the final report I am asking each participant for some exact demographics. These demographics will be used to calculate the average age of the participants, average years of teaching for the participants and the total combined years of teaching for all participants. These will not be used in any way in the final report to identify you as a participant. Thank You.

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Total Years of Teaching \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX D**  
**Informed Consent Form**

ATTACHMENT 4.

Seton Hall University  
Institutional Review Board

FEB 11 2015

Approval Date

**Informed Consent Form**

Dissertation: The Danielson Model of Teacher Evaluation: Exploring Teacher Perceptions Concerning Its Value in Shaping and Improving Instructional Practice

**The Researchers Affiliation**

The researcher for this study is Jonathan Moss. Jonathan Moss is doctoral student at Seton Hall University, College of Education and Human Services.

**Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this research is to examine teachers' perception concerning their school's evaluation practices utilizing the Danielson Framework and explore whether these teachers feel that the evaluations have a positive effect on their teaching practices, professional growth, and relationships with their educational leaders. The participants for this research study were asked to participate in this study because they are a practicing teacher in a New Jersey school district that has used the *Danielson Framework for Teaching* evaluation model. Participation in this research will require approximately 1 (one) hour of the participants' time over the next few months to participate in an interview and to review the transcription of their interview.

**Description of the Procedure**

If the participant decides to take part in this study, the researcher will be looking for each participant to be involved in a half-hour long face-to-face interview with the researcher. All of the conversation will be audio recorded and then transcribed. Approximately fifteen teachers will be interviewed and asked the same questions that were reviewed by a panel of experts. Different probing questions may be asked depending on the participant's responses. The following are samples of questions that will be asked in the interview:

- To what extent, if at all, has the Danielson Framework impacted your growth as a teacher?
- How if at all, has the Danielson Framework offered you the opportunity to set attainable goals?

The interview will take place after school in the school library or in a classroom with an open door or at a mutually agreed upon public place and time. Each participant will be given their transcription to read and verify if any modifications or clarifications are needed.

**Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary; any teacher may decline to participate without penalty. Any participant may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If the participant feels uncomfortable during the interview session, the participant has the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview without penalty.

**Anonymity and Confidentiality**

Participants' identities will be kept completely confidential: only the researcher will know the identity of the participants. All participants will be given a code number and only the researcher can identify the actual participants' responses to the interview questions. The researcher will not disclose who participated in the study or who made individual responses at any time. The participant can't remain anonymous as the research participant and their responses to the interview questions is known by the researcher.

**Storage of Confidential Data**

To keep the participants' information and data safe, the audiotape of your interview will be placed in a locked file cabinet at the researcher's home until a written word-for-word transcript of the discussion has been created. As soon as this process is complete, the tapes will be erased. Data will be stored securely in a locked cabinet in the

**Seton Hall University**  
Institutional Review Board

FEB 11 2015

Department of Education Leadership, Management and Policy

Jubilee Hall • 400 So. Orange Avenue • South Orange, NJ 07079 • Tel: 973.761.9397 • Fax: 973.275.2847 • [www.shu.edu](http://www.shu.edu)

Approval Date

Expiration Date  
FEB 11 2016

A HOME FOR THE MIND, THE HEART AND THE SPIRIT



Seton Hall University  
Institutional Review Board

FEB 11 2015

Approval Date

Expiration Date  
FEB 11 2016

Researchers' home on a USB drive. The transcript will only be identified by your code number and not your name. The code key identifying the participant's name will be stored separately from the data to protect the participants' privacy. The researcher plans to keep this data for a period of three years and it will then be destroyed.

**Access to Confidential records**

Only the researcher and members of the dissertation committee will have access to your data. The dissertation committee is obligated to protect the data from disclosure outside of the research.

**Risk or Discomfort**

There are no foreseeable risks involved in taking part in this study. Answering questions and talking with the researcher about your experiences with evaluations could cause some stress. You have the right to refuse to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable.

**Direct Benefit from This Research**

There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in the study. However, the information learned from this study will be added to the research on teacher evaluation. The research could influence school districts contemplating how best to support, design, develop and implement an effective teacher evaluation system.

**Remuneration**

There is no monetary compensation for participation in this study.

**Contact Information**

Please contact Jonathan Moss, the principal researcher, at 908-782-5727 ext. 8371 for any questions or problems. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher, you may contact the Dissertation Advisor, Dr. Barbara Strobert, at her office at Seton Hall University (973) 275-2324 or Mary F. Ruzicka, Ph.D., at the Seton Hall University Office of the Institutional Review Board (973) 313-6314.

**Audio-tapes**

All interviews will be audiotaped and only identified with the participants selected code number. The researcher will personally transcribe the tapes and they will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home. Once transcribed, the tapes will be erased. Only the researcher will have access to the tapes and transcriptions. The transcriptions will be kept for three years beyond the end of the study and then destroyed.

Participant will be given a copy of this document for their records and one copy will be kept with the study records.

**I have read, understood and had the opportunity to ask questions regarding this consent form. I fully understand the nature and character of my involvement in this research program as a participant. In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview tape-recorded.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Department of Education Leadership, Management and Policy  
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**APPENDIX E**  
**Interview Questions**

## Interview Questions

### Research Question #1

**To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson Framework is beneficial to their professional growth as a teacher?**

1. What do you believe is your districts intended purpose of the teacher evaluation process at Rolling Hills High School?
2. To what extent, if at all, has the Danielson Framework impacted your growth as a teacher?
3. What specific part of the Danielson Framework, if any, has helped you the most to grow as a teacher?
4. What specific part of the Danielson Framework, if any, has hindered your growth as a teacher?

### Research Question #2

**To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson Framework creates a forum for discussion about teaching that promotes reflective practices?**

5. To what extent do you think that the Danielson Framework creates a professional dialogue between you and your school administrators?
6. How if at all, has the Danielson Framework offered you the opportunity to reflect on your teaching practices?
7. How if at all, has the Danielson Framework offered you the opportunity to set attainable goals?

### Research Question #3

**To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson Framework helps them to change and improve on their classroom practices?**

8. What is your opinion of Danielson's indicators used to identify effective teaching practices?
9. Do you find value in the feedback you received from your school administrators in your post-evaluation conferences? Why or why not?
10. What do you do with the feedback you received from your school administrators at your post-observation conference?
11. When you teach a lesson that was previously evaluated using the Danielson Framework, did you make the changes in your lesson that were recommended or agreed upon at your post-observation?
12. Looking back at this past year's adoption of AchieveNJ, did Rolling Hills make the right decision in selecting the Danielson Framework for their teacher evaluation system?



**Research Question #4**

**To what extent do teachers perceive that the use of the Danielson Framework improves the working relationship between teachers and instructional school leaders?**

13. How do you see the role of your school administrator: coach or judge?
14. How if at all, has the Danielson Framework improved the quality of professional conversations with your school administrators?
15. How would you describe how you teach during a class session that is being observed by a school administrator: do you teach as you normally do or do you perform an “enhanced version” to impress the school administrator?
16. How is the teacher-school administrator relationship impacted by the way feedback is presented to you after a classroom observation?
17. How, if at all, has the Danielson Framework helped to define the expectations of your school administrators regarding your teaching practices?
18. Do you feel that your school administrators have had the necessary training and practice to evaluate you accurately and fairly? Why or why not?

**Research Question #5**

**What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses, if any, of the use of the Danielson Model of teacher evaluation as implemented by Rolling Hills High School?**

19. If you had the capability to modify any part of the *Danielson Framework for Teaching* to gain the maximum benefit for you as a teacher, what would you modify?
20. What do you see as the strengths of the *Danielson Framework for Teaching* evaluation model as implemented by Rolling Hills?
21. What do you see as the weaknesses of the *Danielson Framework for Teaching* evaluation model as implemented by Rolling Hills?

**Miscellaneous Questions**

22. Is there anything about the Danielson Framework that has not been discussed with you that you would like to add to this interview?
23. Is there anything else that you would want to add to this interview if it could be made and not be connected to your code name?

**APPENDIX F**

**School's Permission Granted**

# Hunterdon Central Regional High School

*"Performance Excellence for Everyone"*

NJ's FIRST  
STAR SCHOOL\*  
**HMIS**

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84 Route 31, Flemington, New Jersey 08822-1239  
(908) 782-5727 FAX (908) 284-7138

Christina Steffner, Superintendent  
Ray Krov, Business Administrator / Board Secretary

November 3, 2014

This letter serves to confirm approval for Jonathan Moss to conduct research at Hunterdon Central Regional High School for his dissertation-The Danielson Model of Teacher Evaluation: Exploring Teacher Perceptions Concerning Its Value in Shaping and Improving Instructional Practice.

Chris Steffner, Superintendent

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**APPENDIX G**

**IRB Approval**



OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL  
REVIEW BOARD

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

February 11, 2015

Dear Mr. Moss,

The Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board has reviewed the information you have submitted addressing the concerns for your proposal entitled "The Danielson Model of Teacher Evaluation: Exploring Teacher Perception Concerning Its Value in Shaping and Improving Instructional Practice." Your research protocol is hereby approved as revised through expedited review. The IRB reserves the right to recall the proposal at any time for full review.

Enclosed for your records are the signed Request for Approval form and the stamped original Consent Form. Make copies only of this stamped form.

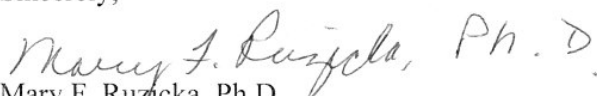
The Institutional Review Board approval of your research is valid for a one-year period from the date of this letter. During this time, any changes to the research protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

According to federal regulations, continuing review of already approved research is mandated to take place at least 12 months after this initial approval. You will receive communication from the IRB Office for this several months before the anniversary date of your initial approval.

Thank you for your cooperation.

*In harmony with federal regulations, none of the investigators or research staff involved in the study took part in the final decision.*

Sincerely,

  
Mary F. Ruzicka, Ph.D.

Professor  
Director, Institutional Review Board

cc: Dr. Barbara Strobert

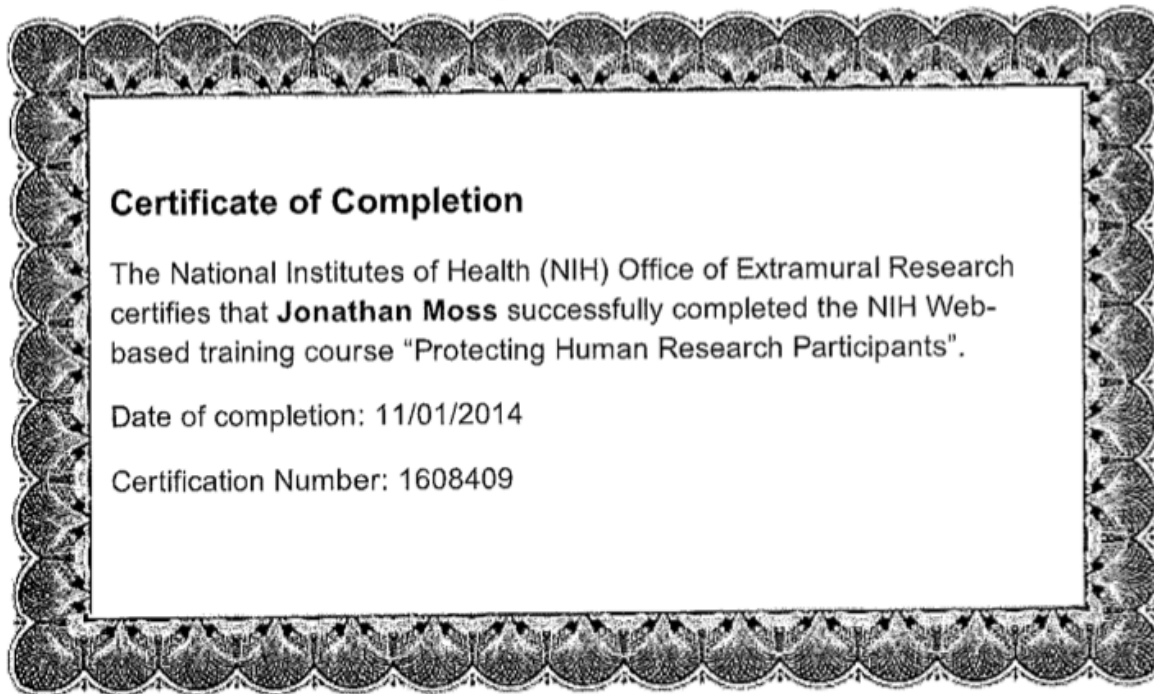
Presidents Hall • 400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, New Jersey 07079-2641 • Tel: 973.313.6314 • Fax: 973.275.2361

**APPENDIX H**

**Certificate of Completion NIH “Protecting Human Research Participants”**

11/3/2014

Protecting Human Subject Research Participants



**APPENDIX I**

**Approval for Dissertation Proposal**





COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Promoting Professional Practice

# SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

## APPROVAL FOR DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

Candidate, Jonathan Moss, has successfully completed all requisite requirements. This candidate's proposal has been reviewed and the candidate may proceed to collect data according to the approved proposal for dissertation under the direction of the mentor and the candidate's dissertation committee.

If there are substantive differences between what has been approved and the actual study, the final dissertation should indicate, on separate pages in the Appendix, the approval of the committee for those changes.

**Title of Proposed Dissertation:**

The Danielson Model of Teacher Evaluation: Exploring Teacher Perceptions Concerning Its Value in Shaping and Improving Instructional Practice

**Dissertation Committee:**

BARBARA STROBERT  
Mentor (Print Name)

Barbara Strobert  
Signature/Date

Conrad Babo  
Committee Member (Print Name)

[Signature] 11/18/14  
Signature/Date

LUKE J. STEDRAK  
Committee Member (Print Name)

Luke J. Stedrak 11/18/14  
Signature/Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Member (Print Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature/Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Member (Print Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature/Date

Approved by Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board on: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Department Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature/Date

Waived by IRB by: \_\_\_\_\_ on this date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX J****Approval for Successful Defense**

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES  
OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

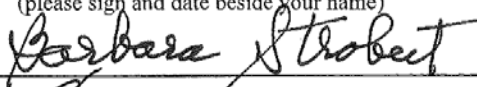
Doctoral Candidate, **Jonathan Tyler Moss**, has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the **Ed.D.** during this **Summer Semester 2015**.

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

(please sign and date beside your name)

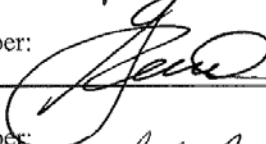
Mentor:

Dr. Barbara Strobert



Committee Member:

Dr. Gerard Babo



Committee Member:

Dr. Luke Stedrak



The mentor and any other committee members who wish to review revisions will sign and date this document only when revisions have been completed. Please return this form to the Office of Graduate Studies, where it will be placed in the candidate's file and submit a copy with your final dissertation to be bound as page number two.