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The Post-observation Conference: An Exploration of Feedback Strategies

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The Post-observation Conference: An Exploration of Feedback Strategies

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Abstract

The post-observation conference is valuable, dedicated time for a teacher to focus their discussion on their own instruction and instructional delivery. This experience serves as an opportunity for the teacher to review the details of a lesson with their observer, while also reflecting on teaching practices. Not only does the post-observation provide the teacher with accolades regarding their teaching performance, but it is also an exchange where the teacher can reflect and is provided with critical feedback to improve instructional execution moving forward. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore those strategies and conditions that prompt teachers to incidentally use this feedback and to review those qualities of the post-observation conference that keep teachers from putting this feedback into practice.

The findings of this study suggest that teachers seek feedback in a post-observation conference that is specific to them, their classrooms, their students, and the lesson observed. The role of observer impacts the perceived efficacy of the post-observation conference, too, as teachers recognize the importance of this relationship to be optimally one of a coach. Based on the study findings, perceived follow-up on feedback in teachers' classrooms and overt support strategies used by the observer during the actual observation can potentially impact the way in which teachers approach their post-observation conference significantly.

Acknowledgements and Dedication

I would like to acknowledge those who have supported this work along the way, including my professors and mentors who have been only an e-mail away in completing this both arduous and exciting task.

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Chapter One

Introduction and Background

An employee appraisal system is a potentially powerful mechanism that can shape workplace practices, in a range of ways. Teacher evaluation, appraisal, and, ultimately, its feedback are critical to the improvement of performance of individual employees, team, and organization, especially as it pertains to the educational setting. "One thing's clear from data collected from interviews with New Jersey teachers in regard to [AchieveNJ]: Teachers want meaningful instructional feedback that goes beyond merely 'checking the boxes' of their district's locally adopted evaluation instrument" (Scavette & Johnson, 2016, p. 44). The evaluation process is focused on individualized guidance, based on the specific teacher observed, to assist in improving that teacher's instructional execution.

While Weingarten (1966) introduced employee appraisal systems, generally, teacher evaluation systems have developed over time, as "most [organizations] still rely on three age-old criteria: his work methods, the results he obtains, and the kind of individual he seems to be. But as cut-and-dried as that may seem, actually, measuring any worker's contribution by these criteria is far from simple" (pp. 41-42). Zabriskie's (2018) contemporary viewpoint – over five decades later – echoes similar sentiments with regards to the remaining complexities of the evaluation instrument, sharing, "But, norms evolve and times change. The practice of a once-a-year feedback is quickly becoming an anachronism and out of place in the modern office as the fashions people wore when holding those annual reviews" (p. 28). For the purposes of this study, it is important to note that opportunities for PreK-12 teachers to discuss their own instructional delivery exclusively, amongst all other items that take place over the course of a typical school year, are rare. "Performance appraisal encroaches upon 'one of the most emotionally charged

activities in business life – the assessment of a man's contribution and ability" (Narcisse & Harcourt, 2008, p. 1152). Thus, the emotionality – amongst all other parts of a teacher's responsibility – connected to this feedback-giving and feedback-receiving process, must be considered in approaching, particularly, the post-observation conference, where discussion related to the evaluation of performance actually takes place between the observer and the teacher.

The evaluation process for certificated educational staff members, in the state of New Jersey, is comprised of various steps that must remain consistent across a school district, regardless of teacher, placement, building, or the observer, as dictated by AchieveNJ and the TeachNJ Act (New Jersey Department of Education, 2017). Observations are distinguished as "announced" or "unannounced," where teachers have prior knowledge of observations by the administrator (announced) or where teachers do not have prior knowledge about when the observation will occur (unannounced). Regardless of the type of observation or the teacher's grade level or content area, teachers are required to participate in a post-observation conference predicated by the completion of a post-observation conference form (Appendix A). This conference occurs after the lesson is formally observed.

Administrators serve as evaluators in this process and lead each post-observation conference. For all New Jersey public school districts, all certificated staff members, inclusive of teachers, are required to be observed and evaluated in accordance with New Jersey Administrative Code, 6A-10-4.4 (N.J. Admin. Code § 6A:10-4.4, 2020), where a district-selected evaluation system is implemented throughout the duration of the school year. In a 2015 state report published for the Consortium for Policy Research in Education, Schulman, a state

representative, noted the requirement of the post-observation conference, regardless of the evaluation system selected by a school district (McGuinn, 2015, p. 22).

The post-observation conference serves as a critical part of the evaluation process, where dialogue occurs between the observer and the teacher, specifically based on the lesson that has been formally observed. "The purpose of the post-observation conference is to review and reflect upon data collected during the extended observation and plan future professional development opportunities. Because providing feedback to teachers about their classroom performance is a primary purpose of the post-observation conference, feedback dispensed by principals should focus on qualitative and quantitative data collected during the scripted observation" (Mette et al., 2015, p. 18).

The Danielson Framework for Teaching remains as the most prevalently-used evaluation tool, as school districts across the state were to adopt an employee appraisal instrument for the 2013-2014 school year (Danielson, 2009). This particular framework consists of four domains, each made up of several components (Appendix B):

- Domain 1: Planning and Preparation
- Domain 2: The Classroom Environment
- Domain 3: Instruction
- Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities

Other common evaluation instruments include: Marzano, Stronge, Marshall, and McRel. Attached is a New Jersey Department of Education "Approved Teacher Practice Evaluation Instruments" list, as of May 1, 2015 (Appendix C). Regardless of the evaluation instrument selected by a school district, though, the above categories serve – in some variation – as the commonly-rooted categories (e.g., planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction,

professional responsibilities), and a post-observation conference remains as the one point of the evaluation process where direct dialogue takes place between observer and educator regarding a teacher's instructional delivery.

Problem Statement

Research exists that delves into how the use of teacher evaluation strengthens schools (Murphy, Hallinger, & Heck, 2013). Additionally, a great deal of research supports how teachers' willingness to receive feedback aligns with teachers' ability to improve their practice (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Research even exists related to teachers' perceptions of the post-observation experience, specifically (Mette et al., 2015). However, if an observer is not aware of the specific strategies that promote putting this feedback into practice, from the perspective of the receiver (the teacher), the post-observation conference is moot.

Feedback is given during the post-observation conference, from the observer to the teacher. This feedback pertains to a specific, observed lesson. Some of this post-observation experience prompts a teacher to put this feedback into practice while some of this post-observation conference experience may keep the teacher from putting this feedback into practice. To optimize the post-observation experience for teachers, it requires a closer look at specific instances where the manner with which feedback was provided was either successfully or unsuccessfully delivered, and subsequently, either successfully or unsuccessfully received. The post-observation conference is designated to assist teachers in improving their practice, and if this experience is not a worthwhile one or providing feedback is not well-received, then improvement of instructional practices cannot ultimately take place. If this feedback is not utilized by the teacher, the post-observation conference, essentially, does not impact any shift in

the teacher's instruction or subsequent improvement of student outcomes, rendering the post-observation experience feckless.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine how teachers respond to post-observation conference feedback (Reddy et al., 2018), and explores those feedback-giving practices, conditions, and strategies that ultimately prompt a teacher to utilize that feedback in their own classrooms. In investigating this research topic further, a qualitative study will provide a more in-depth look at the teacher's viewpoint of their post-observation conference experience and those features of the post-observation conference experience that either encourage or discourage the teacher to use the feedback given. This study will allow for best practices in feedback-giving and setting up an optimal post-observation conference for teachers to surface, which will ultimately promote such strategies that could subsequently encourage teachers to utilize this feedback in their classrooms and improve their instructional delivery. This qualitative study was conducted where a series of interviews with teachers who have undergone the post-observation experience provided information to tell this story.

Research Questions

This study will address the following central research questions:

1. How do teachers perceive the efficacy of the post-observation conference of the teacher evaluation process in improving teacher practice?

2. What strategies and conditions employed by the observer in the post-observation conference prompt a teacher to use the feedback in their instructional delivery moving forward?

3. What strategies and conditions employed in the post-observation conference by the observer keeps a teacher or detracts a teacher from using this feedback in their instructional delivery moving forward?

Significance of Study

This study has implications for research as it pertains to the implementation of teacher evaluation, the manner with which feedback is provided to teachers, as well as state and local policies and practices associated with the execution of AchieveNJ and Educator Effectiveness, the state of New Jersey's educator evaluation system and its ongoing revised guidance based on practice and execution.

This study reviewed those strategies and conditions used in the post-observation conference that teachers who participated in this post-observation conference experience deemed useful and subsequently utilized this feedback in their classrooms. In Gratton's 2004 school study, "Teachers gave several indications of a low level of commitment. Some believed they did not require an appraisal and saw it as wasting time, not important and a box-ticking exercise" (p. 295). Likewise, Rehman & Al-Bargi (2014) examine perspectives of teachers on post-observation conferences, positing "The importance of understanding the beliefs and expectations of teachers regarding the post-observation conference could not be overstated because any modification in the post-observation conference by trainer/observer without bringing into consideration the beliefs and expectations of the teachers would be like taking action without evidence" (p. 1558). This study culminated in a best practices blueprint for the observer with regards to the post-observation conference and all evaluative pieces connected to this conference. As a result, an observer will be able to more skillfully approach and implement the post-observation conference by using this study's designed blueprint as guidance.

In a school system, the ways in which teachers learn through professional development, implement curriculum, and respond to new initiatives and specific feedback are all key parts of organizational outcomes – all involving student progress and teacher instructional improvement. This study resulted in a targeted guide or blueprint specific to post-observation best practices, moving beyond *generalized* notes on feedback, which currently exists in the presented research. PreK-12 public school administrators, who serve in the role as observer in the teacher evaluation system, can review this blueprint's strategies and ultimately determine how to adjust the way in which post-observation conferences are constructed and the way in which feedback is provided during these meetings. By making such adjustments, an evaluator may be able to integrate specific strategies and conditions in the post-observation conference experience that more likely prompts a teacher to use the feedback in their own classroom instruction moving forward.

Theoretical Framework

The Danielson Framework for Teaching (2009) contains four domains that include features of a teacher's professional practice. These domains are: planning and preparation, the classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities (Appendix B). Delineated in each of these domains are further components that define expectations of a teacher's behaviors inside the classroom and beyond the classroom walls, with each component of each domain, based on evidence collected, to be rated by the evaluator as unsatisfactory, partially proficient, proficient, or highly proficient.

According to Danielson (2009), "An effective system of teacher evaluation accomplishes two things: it ensures quality teaching and it promotes professional learning. The quality of teaching is the single most important determinant of student learning; a school district's system of teacher evaluation is the method by which it ensures that teaching is of high quality." This

framework serves as a basis to foster collaborative conversations about professional development, between evaluators/administrators and teachers, that formally occur during the post-observation conference experience.

Additionally, this framework allows for common language to be used in constructing meaning related to teaching practices and the improvement and adjustment of instructional delivery. The use of this framework in this study, too, promoted common language and understanding as interviews took place related to the post-observation conference and feedback received during this conference.

Summary

Although the workplace of education is unique in that teachers' work inside the classroom is specialized, so is the need for feedback. Essentially, the evaluation process hinges on the face-to-face dialogue that occurs in the post-observation conference, where the actual instructional conversation takes place. Identifying those feedback strategies that are effective in providing meaningful professional learning specific to the teacher's observed lesson may assist building and district leadership promote a post-observation conference that is received as relevant, useful, and applicable to the teacher.

Definition of Terms

AchieveNJ: The improved educator evaluation and support system proposed to the New Jersey State Board of Education on March 6, 2013 for implementation throughout New Jersey in the 2013-2014 school year (New Jersey Department of Education, 2014).

Classroom observation: The assessment of the execution of a lesson as it is taking place in a classroom or other learning environment, which is either "announced" or "unannounced" (New Jersey Department of Education, 2014).

Danielson Framework for Teaching: A widely-used evaluation instrument in the state of New Jersey, made up of domains and components to be individually scored (New Jersey Department of Education, 2014).

Post-observation conference: The meeting that is scheduled, between the teacher being observed and the observer, after the observation takes place. This conference is used to discuss the observed lesson (New Jersey Department of Education, 2014).

TeachNJ Act: The statutory law connected to employee evaluation standards as it relates to implementation of certificated staff members, mandating a teacher-evaluation system (New Jersey Administrative Code, 2014).

Tenure: The granted status for certificated employees (e.g., teachers) after four years and one day of service, which serves as a probationary period, upon which a protected contract is then offered to the employee (New Jersey Administrative Code, 2014).

Chapter Two

As this qualitative study planned to explore the reasons why teachers do or do not

implement feedback given by their observer during the post-observation conference, chapter two

contains a review of literature that focuses on feedback strategies, conditions, and practices

employed in the post-observation conference experience.

Essentially, this chapter seeks to define the role of the observer and teacher in the post-

observation conference experience. Evaluative feedback methodologies will also be explored.

Both themes serve as a foundation for the need to seek out specific feedback strategies that, from

a teacher's perspective, promote the use of this feedback in practice. In recognizing which

feedback-giving strategies are impactful in the post-observation conference, specifically, school

leaders and observers can employ similar strategies in an effort to improve the post-observation

conference in their own school building or school district evaluation process. The bulk of related

research can be analyzed through the following three categories: the post-observation

conference, the power of feedback, and the relationship between teacher and observer.

The Post-observation Conference

The very purpose of the post-observation conference is for the observer to provide a

teacher with opportunity to reflect on the observed lesson, to highlight which instructional

practices are working well for the specific teacher, and to ultimately improve and adjust

instructional practices as a result of that conversation. Optimally, Mette et al. (2015) views the

role of the observer, in the post-observation conference, "as instructional coaches by connecting

the cycle of supervision, professional development, and evaluation to drive improvement efforts

that build capacity within their teachers to impact student achievement" (p. 26). At the core of

the post-observation conference, Reece (2014, p. 9), speaks to her own reflections on the post-

observation conference, "When the post-observation conference is completed, no teacher should walk away feeling overwhelmed, demoralized, or unappreciated. Teachers should feel empowered, knowing they have specific strengths. They should feel better prepared, having been given specific ideas and strategies on how to improve the areas that need further development." While this shared notion is found in the literature, specific feedback strategies – in a post-observation conference experience – still remain undefined.

Kim and Silver (2016) review how the post-observation conference can promote reflection in reviewing who initiated feedback episodes and the question types used throughout the conference. In their analysis, "Attempts to provoke reflective thinking occasionally led to moments of tension in post-observation feedback sessions can result from multiple causes" (p. 204). What Kim and Silver refer to as "conversation analysis" is a review of the interactional structures of the post-observation conversation (p. 204), where "the minutia of interaction can influence the way in which space for reflection is created and reflective thinking emerges in interaction" (p. 214). In conducting this study, Kim and Silver ultimately found: "Specifically, teachers were not only more embracing of recipient-centered comments, but of what might be seen as 'recipient orientation' – an orientation to the needs, interests, concerns, thoughts, and expertise of the recipient" (p. 215). While this study does begin to offer specific suggestions for best practices in the post-observation conference, it does remain as a micro-analysis that "supports the view that post-observation professional conversations built up through a dialogic approach can be fertile settings for reflective thinking. [The observer] can facilitate reflection; however, we suggest that they need to be mindful that these conversations are not a straightforward information-seeking and -providing activity, but interactional events" (p. 216).

From this micro-analysis, Kim and Silver (2020) extend this research by discussing feedback-oriented and reflection-oriented episodes, along with the idea of role-set. Although both analyses were based in the interaction during the post-observation conference, subsequent implementation of feedback or change in the classroom was not examined. "When consciously taking on the role of a reflection-facilitator, mentors need to work consistently toward letting the teacher's voice be the primary one. As the teacher might expect feedback as the default position of a post-observation conference, the mentor needs to attend more to the teacher and less to any specific point the mentor wishes to raise" (Kim & Silver, 2020, p. 32). As determined through this study, it is important in this interaction process to position the role of teacher in such a way that they are able to actively engage in this evaluative conversation.

Hozebin (2018) identifies the post-observation conference experience as a critical part of the teacher evaluation process. "When school leaders conduct conversations with teachers around a common understanding of good teaching and around evidence of that teaching, such conversations offer a rich opportunity for professional dialogue and growth. The lack of consistent, meaningful conversations and the reluctance to have difficult conversations have been ingrained into school culture and have gone on for too long" (Hozebin, 2018, p. 46). The solution posed is a strategy that is typically used by medical physicians for patient care where traditional post-observation conference methods were improved in the following ways: feedback was effective, the conversation was immediate, and the conversation was positive.

The Power of Feedback

The literature suggests that "individual differences in performance, as captured in an appraisal, can and do make a difference for both the individual and the organization" (Thomas, 1999, p. 93). Further, the literature also suggests that the evaluation process serves as a key piece

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that allows the teacher to self-assess and adjust practice accordingly. In general, "the desire by employees themselves to receive meaningful feedback from their organization" remains ever-present (p. 92).

During the feedback phase of the teacher evaluation process, specifically, "When an evaluator can directly quote a teacher or provide evidence that an action they took—be it as little as an expression or gesture—directly impacts a student at either an emotional or intellectual level, the teacher feels as if their authentic practices are acknowledged" (Scavette & Johnson, 2016, pp. 44-45). Based on the research, employee satisfaction with feedback serves as a key determinant in a teacher's actual use of this feedback in their respective classrooms.

> For feedback to make an impact, it may require the recipient's satisfaction. In other
> words, satisfaction with feedback could affect employee performance; and indeed, future
> performance can be predicted more accurately on the basis of satisfaction with feedback
> than on the basis of the feedback itself. (Rasheed, Khan, Rasheed, & Munir, 2015, p. 35)

But, what exactly does this satisfaction look like, and how can it specifically be achieved?

Sherman (2019) provides generalized guidance on giving feedback, and particularly, managing challenging feedback situations. "Before you begin a crucial feedback situation, ask yourself what you want to see as an outcome and what is at stake. This allows you to begin with the right motives" (p. 67). Essentially, "Performance-feedback conversations are not 'one and done.' To successfully conclude the discussion, you need to come to a consensus about what will happen next" (p. 67). It is this difficulty in providing feedback that certainly may impact the efficacy of a post-observation conference, with Emory (2019) cautioning evaluators not to rely "on the compliment sandwich" and to give specific guidance that is rooted in "actionable feedback" (p. 35).

The power of feedback, though, must be observed through various lenses of both the observer *and* the teacher, not just the observer's. "However, numerous complications dealing with individual differences have been identified in the feedback process, which is a major concern" (Rasheed, Khan, Rasheed, & Munir, 2015, p. 32). In working closely with different teachers, it behooves the organization to remain cognizant of the idiosyncrasies that make up their employee base to begin deciphering trends that may exist between the feedback-loop and its subsequent response. "Feedback orientation has included components like behavioral propensity toward feedback seeking, belief in the value of feedback, liking feedback, sensitivity to others' views about oneself, cognitive tendency to deal with feedback, and feeling of accountability" (p. 32). Each play a vital role when examining how the impact of supervision in the post-observation conference can be more meaningful as both the receiver of feedback, as well as the one giving the feedback to the teacher.

A great deal of this relationship, then, comes from the teacher's perception of the observer themselves. "Evidence from studies on feedback seeking showed that benefits of feedback as perceived by trainees depended on the trainer. Trainers who combined a supportive and instrumental supervisory style were more successful in convincing residents of the value of directly asking for feedback" (Pelgrim, Kramer, Mokkink, & van der Vleuten, 2014, p. 2). Copland (2010) also noted that tension in post-observation conferences can result from a variety of causes, inclusive of feedback processes (e.g., participatory structures and discourse practices) (p. 471).

Feedback: The Relationship Between Observer and Teacher

A large piece of the teacher evaluation post-observation dialogue that must be reconciled is a perceived sense of relationship between teacher and observer. "There are three proposed

ways in which accountability can help resolve the dilemma of how internal control and external control can effectively coexist. Success depends on (1) how well expectations are structured, (2) the significance of the task or decision, and (3) the quality of the relationship between the individual being held accountable and the person to whom he or she is accountable" (Thoms, Dose, & Scott, 2002, p. 310). So, in fact, not only must the power of the feedback itself be reviewed, but the manner in which feedback is both given and received in this relationship between observer and teacher may also play a critical role in shaping and honing teacher performance and professional development.

According to reviewed research, an established feedback-loop helps to shift the receptivity of an employee to either embrace or reject suggested feedback. "Although performance appraisal involves giving and receiving feedback, the perspective of the 'receiver' is less widely discussed. Receivers are likely to use performance feedback to improve their performance to the degree of their feedback orientation and level; such feedback influences their perception of satisfaction with feedback. In fact, if receivers are less oriented toward feedback and perceive the feedback to be useless and are dissatisfied with it, they will probably ignore the feedback" (Rasheed et al., p. 32). Response to feedback is rooted in an individual's ability to accept "feedback utility, accountability with regard to participation in feedback, social awareness, and self-efficacy toward feedback" (p. 31). This openness to supervision not only encourages a sense of feedback orientation, but also aids in supporting future opportunities for professional learning that are authentic.

The teacher evaluation system, in and of itself, is high stakes. With this understanding, a gravity is attached to the teacher evaluation process. "Many researchers believe that criticizing employees, as is often done in evaluations, fosters defensiveness and rationalization, which

usually results in nonconstructive responses. Evaluation is a sensitive matter, often eliciting negative psychological responses such as resistance, denial, aggression, or discouragement, particularly if the assessment is negative" (Boswell & Boudreau, 2000, p. 285). Donaghue (2020) speaks specifically to the recognition of identities of experience and power in feedback talk, particularly in the post-observation conference. "The analysis of post-observation feedback supports the theory that identity is achieved in social interaction. Identities are shown to be fluid and co-jointly constituted, moment by moment, by both participants" (p. 414). Here, linguistic adjustments in post-observation interactions play a role in moving forward through this relationship, between teacher and observer. Donaghue furthers this research in a subsequent study related to post-observation conference interaction where teacher identity is co-constructed with their observer, leaving the following recommendation for future study: "The first is for those responsible for teacher education and development to look at post-observation feedback with a critical eye to examine the influence of institutional power and expectations on teacher identity. Feedback is often construed as having the dual purpose of evaluation and development. More research is needed to establish if conformity is also a common function, as the analysis in this article suggests it might be" (Donaghue, 2020, p. 409).

The post-observation conference, the feedback-giving and -receiving experience, often hinge on the relationship between observer and teacher. "Given the importance of the role of emotion in creativity generally and evidence that shows that feedback on creative work is highly emotional, one potentially fertile starting point for examining pliability is to examine the emotional content of feedback, especially feedback that is emotionally ambivalent, as opposed to feedback that is emotionally positive or negative" (Dossinger, 2017, p. 2056). The social dynamics and teachers' perceptions that are involved in the post-observation conference, too, are

worthy of note and cannot be ignored when reviewing the efficacy of this exchange (Byford, 2018).

It benefits both the individual teacher, as well as the organization, when the performance appraisal system has an interconnected purpose. When the feedback is linked to a personalized professional development plan and a consequential learning mode that is differentiated to the employee's learning needs, only then can workplace learning be as beneficial as the research projects. A school district's purposeful review of teacher evaluation, as it connects to individualized and differentiated feedback, remains as paramount as the differentiation of instruction that is evaluated in those very teachers' classrooms to students.

Contributions of the Literature

The literature collected provided information related to the purpose and importance of the post-observation conference, as well as information on how a feedback-loop impacts teachers in the formal teacher evaluation process. Additionally, generalized feedback methodologies are introduced in the existing literature to improve the post-observation conference experience for the teacher. Recognizing the power found in the post-observation conference will aid in looking closer at this part of the teacher evaluation process, and ultimately addressing ways in which the process can become a meaningful experience on the part of the teacher who is receiving the feedback.

Deficiencies of the Literature

As abovementioned, the research is rife with information related to evaluation and appraisal systems, in general. In particular, feedback and the various purposes of the appraisal system, along with its impact on the organization play a heavy role in much of this research. For the most part, it looks as though an increase in research related to teacher evaluation in public

education began as school reform across the country impacted changes to the formal teacher evaluation process, when policy dictated changes in teacher evaluation instruments. Most recently, the bulk of this research focuses its efforts on the appraiser and the way in which the appraisal system is implemented for the purposes of administrative and evaluative means. Research on the post-observation conference experience remains emerging. The research, however, is lacking on the side of the teacher, or "receiver" of this feedback, and primarily, there is a gap in the research with regards to what happens *after* the post-observation feedback is given. In order to fully examine the potential improvements to the post-observation conference experience, it is critical to gain knowledge from the perspective of the teacher as a "ratee" in the teacher evaluation process in terms of what from this experience prompts or keeps a teacher from using this feedback. Such feedback-guidance found in the literature is, on the whole, generalized. This study culminates with a synthesized template that provides post-observation conference best practices to observers with more specificity and exactness.

Culmination of New Knowledge

While the research examined employees' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their respective performance appraisal systems, the results are broad or general at best. The post-observation conference is identified as a critical point of the teacher evaluation process to probe, but specific strategies related to the improvement of feedback-giving methods has yet to be clearly articulated. To critically look at and analyze a teacher's experience in the post-observation conference and identify that experience as worthwhile and valuable to the evaluation process, it remains most important to focus on the receiver and their experience in the evaluative dialogue, studying how, when, and if the teacher uses this feedback in their classrooms after the post-observation conference. This remains a logical next step for research focus.

Summary

This literature review defines the post-observation, its importance in creating an opportunity for instructional conversation, and the power of feedback in the teacher evaluation process. In Wells et al.'s (2007) study of performance monitoring, it identifies "properly framed feedback" as an opportunity to cultivate an authentic openness to supervision. "Properly framed feedback leads to approach behavior on the part of recipients where they come away accepting responsibility for their low performance rather than avoidance behavior. Accurate and consistent communication of appraisal purpose may be helpful in managing employees' reactions, helping to produce the desired ownership response" (p. 133). This study seeks to further understand what "properly framed feedback" is in the post-observation conference, from the perspective of the recipient of this feedback.

Zimmerer and Stroh (1974) emphasize the effectiveness of an appraisal system is rooted in the preparation of the managers who will ultimately lead the implementation of the evaluation process itself. "No performance appraisal system can be any better than the soundness of its basic concepts and the realism and workability of their application in procedures. But even assuming a well-conceived, realistic, and workable approach, no appraisal system can be any better than the understanding, knowledge, and skill of the managers using it" (p. 36). This study seeks to further understand what the observer's "well-conceived, realistic, and workable approach" looks like.

Chapter Three

Method

Chapter three describes the methodology and procedures used in this study. Specifically, this chapter reviews the rationale for research methodology and procedures, along with rationale of the study, selection of research participants, consideration of ethical concerns, as well as the role and potential influence of researcher outlined.

The purpose of this study was to examine the teacher's post-observation conference experience and to review those feedback-giving practices, conditions, and strategies that ultimately prompt a teacher to utilize that feedback in their own classrooms. In exploring this research topic further, a qualitative study provided a more in-depth look at the teacher's viewpoint of their post-observation conference and those features of the post-observation conference that either encourage or discourage the teacher to use the feedback given in subsequent classroom instruction, as described through answering the following research questions:

1. How do teachers perceive the efficacy of the post-observation conference of the teacher evaluation process in improving teacher practice?

2. What strategies and conditions employed by the observer in the post-observation conference prompt a teacher to use the feedback in their instructional delivery moving forward?

3. What strategies and conditions employed in the post-observation conference by the observer keeps a teacher or detracts a teacher from using this feedback in their instructional delivery moving forward?

Research Design

This qualitative study emerged from the interpretivist research paradigm, which views the nature of knowing where it assumes that reality as we know it is constructed intersubjectively through the meanings and understandings developed socially and experientially, and that this construction is a fluid process (Garfinkel, 1967). As a result, a great deal of this meaning-building is reciprocal in nature. "Reciprocity as a characteristic of high-quality, rigorous qualitative interpretive inquiry is argued to be essential because of the person-centered nature of interpretive work. Rowan (1981), drawing on the work of Aaron Esterson, argues for this science of reciprocities because, 'persons are always in relation and therefore one cannot study persons without studying the relations they make with others'" (Lincoln, 1995, p. 283).

The interpretive paradigm used in this study is established through relativist ontology – which assumes that reality is constructed as the investigation takes place – and through subjectivist epistemology, recognizes that the investigator and the object of investigation are linked (Angen, 2000). Further, Angen asserts that knowledge claims are created as an investigation proceeds, highlighting that "what we require is an interpretive approach to social inquiry that will enlarge and deepen our understanding of what it means to be human in this more-than-human realm. To do this is to risk certainty, but this loss is mitigated by what we stand to gain in moral and practical relevance" (p. 380). The use of interviews in this study allowed for practical relevance to come to the surface, as "truth is negotiated through dialogue" (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008), as the experiences and perceptions of teachers from the post-observation conference were shared and subsequently examined.

Specifically, this qualitative research design is a case study that takes an in-depth examination of a particular situation or event, the post-observation conference experience for the

teacher. "In qualitative research, the goal is to understand the situation under investigation primarily from the participants' not the researcher's, perspective" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017, p. 8). This study serves to review various different perspectives from teachers, all to more closely understand the phenomenon of the post-observation conference experience.

Rationale for a Qualitative Study

Although Maxwell (2012) argues that causal explanation is an important goal for qualitative research, his main point is actually different, in that "educational research desperately needs qualitative approaches and methods if it is to make valid and useful claims about what works" (p. 655). Maxwell continues, "We have the methods that allow us to both develop and test causal explanations in education. However, we could be better at it. Drawing causal conclusions is challenging even in the best of conditions, and attempting to *generalize* such conclusions is even more difficult" (p. 658). The focus of this study centered on strategies, conditions, and practices used by the observer in the post-observation conference, and a qualitative study remains appropriate here as nuanced human behaviors found throughout the post-observation conference experience that either encourage or discourage a teacher from using this feedback will be explored. The information found during the literature review in preparation for this study connected to research related to feedback, to teacher response and perceptions to their evaluation process and to the post-observation conference generally, and more specifically, the information collected regarding post-observation conference feedback strategies for the purpose of this study were gathered in an effort to fill a gap in the research that exists. While general information exists regarding feedback strategies, the study was designed to ultimately provide a blueprint or guide of specific best practices to observers and administrative teams who conduct observations.

"Qualitative data describe. They take us, as readers, into the time and place of the observation so that we know what it was like to have been there. They capture and communicate someone else's experience of the world in his or her own words. Qualitative data tell a story" (Patton, 1990, p. 47). The following study's interviews were constructed to tell the post-observation conference story, from the perspective of the teacher in their role as receiver of feedback.

<div align="center">**Rationale for Interview Method**</div>

The use of interview methods allowed for the researcher to work towards achieving the larger picture, as it pertains to the research subject. In developing an interview that asks questions that probe purposefully, the researcher was able to focus data collection in a meaningful manner in an attempt to identify trends in responses. "Interviewing provides access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior. A basic assumption in in-depth interviewing research is that the meaning people make of their experience affects the way they carry out that experience" (Seidman, 2006, p. 10). Interviewing also allowed for the subjects' behavior to be further analyzed by allowing interviewees' stories to be heard. "Interviewing allows us to put behavior in context and provides access to understanding their action" (p. 10).

This study used interviews to collect data because this methodology helped to delve into the "how" and the "why" of teacher response in relation to their post-observation conference experiences. Interview responses allowed for the examination of teachers' stories, feelings, and reactions to the post-observation conference and how feedback is used or not used following this experience. Questions were designed to be open-ended and were randomized, where applicable, to help ensure that (1) people quitting mid-way through the interview do not affect the overall

balance of data being collected, and (2) the question or section-ordering does not bias participants' responses. Additionally, these interview questions received Institutional Review Board approval before its release (See Appendix D) to participants.

Participants

In obtaining participants for this research study, a cognizant effort was made in garnering educator input from a range of school districts in the state of New Jersey. In doing so, purposeful sampling was utilized in order to access participants currently in the field. According to Patton (1990), purposeful sampling can lead to thorough understanding of a research topic in that "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry... Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding" (Patton, 1990, p. 169). The participant pool was accessed by reaching out and requesting permission to secure 20 teachers across the state to interview, with the understanding that several may ultimately decline to interview, and ultimately solidifying 18 participants for this study. This heterogenous participant group allowed for the researcher to interview teachers from a range of school districts, of varying student and community demographics and administrative structures.

Fieldwork Site and Access and Entry

The fieldwork site took place remotely, through Zoom videoconferencing, that is secured by passcode. The researcher gained access to this videoconference room and communicated information to teacher participants related to this digital location via e-mail. At this location, teachers were interviewed and information was gathered related to the teacher's post-observation conference experience.

In order to gain entry, I explained the purposes of this study to teachers from various grade levels and buildings across the state of New Jersey.

Interview Questions

The goal for interviewing teacher participants focused on a standardized open-ended interview format that was semi-structured, but began with demographic and role-related questions. Since this study focused on employees' experience, interview questions were primarily experience and behavior, opinion and values, and feeling questions, and were supplemented with probing questions, depending on the interviewee's initial responses. The researcher consulted with the *Encyclopedia of Positive Questions* (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, Cooperrider, & Kaplin, 2013) to employ additional techniques in the use of follow-up questioning with participants.

- From your perspective, what do you think is the role of the observer in the post-observation conference? [RQ1]

- From your experience, what is your role, as teacher, in the post-observation conference? [RQ1]

- From your perspective, what is the purpose and overall effectiveness of the post-observation conference to you, as the teacher? [RQ1]

- Tell me about the components of the post-observation conference. [RQ2, RQ3]

- In your experience in the post-observation conference, how do you feel about your evaluator's expertise about instruction related to your classroom? [RQ1]

- In your experience in the post-observation conference, what strategies does the observer employ that prompts or provokes you to actually use their feedback? [RQ2]

- From the post-observation conference experience, what makes you actually use the feedback in your classroom? [RQ2]

  - Do you use the feedback given in the post-observation conference? Why? [RQ2]

  - If you haven't used the feedback given in the post-observation conference, why not? [RQ3]

- In your experience in the post-observation conference, what strategies does the observer employ that keeps you from or detracts you from actually using their feedback in your own classroom? [RQ3]

  - From the post-observation conference experience, what keeps you or discourages you from actually using the feedback in your classroom? [RQ3]

- What about the post-observation conference experience motivates you to improve your practices? [RQ2]

- What about the post-observation conference do you feel is most important or least important in your development and growth as a teacher? [RQ1]

Ethical Concerns

While no anticipated risk existed for those participating in this study, a protocol form and informed consent form (Appendix F) were both submitted to the Institutional Review Board of the University of Arkansas before the data collection process to ensure absolute protection for all participants in this study, as communicated in any recruitment materials (Appendix E). All participants involved in the interview of this study were free to remove themselves at any time. Names of participants, their titles or position in their school district, and any persons or their ascribed positions or titles mentioned during conversations or observations will not be disclosed.

This information was changed for the purpose of participant confidentiality. Original recordings will remain on a hard drive, and will be digitally password-protected. Interview transcripts and field notes will also be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office. After a seven-year period, these documents will consequently be destroyed.

Data Collection

Eighteen interviews, in total, were conducted. "While all interviews are used to get to know the interviewee better, the purpose of that knowing varies according to the research question and the disciplinary perspective of the researcher" (DiCacco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 314). Each interview took approximately 30 minutes to one-hour in length, with a semi-structured protocol in place, based on a list of questions to work towards answering the research questions. "Semi-structured interviews are often the sole data source for a qualitative research project and are usually scheduled in advance at a designated time and location outside of everyday events. They are generally organised around a set of predetermined open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee/s." (p. 315). The power of the semi-structured interview protocol is also emphasized by Qu and Dumay (2011), "The semi-structured interview enjoys its popularity because it is flexible, accessible and intelligible and, more important, capable of disclosing important and often hidden facets of human and organizational behavior. Often it is the most effective and convenient means of gathering information. Because it has its basis in human conversation, it allows the skillful interviewer to modify the style, pace and ordering of questions to evoke the fullest responses from the interviewee. Most importantly, it enables interviewees to provide responses in their own terms and in the way that they think and use language. It proves to be especially valuable if the researchers are to understand the way the interviewees perceive the

social world under study" (p. 246). An audio recorder was also utilized to collect this data, along with transcription software and note-taking throughout the interview process, as well. When necessary, a follow-up phone call took place after the interview for the purposes of clarification regarding a participant's response. Interview notes, interview transcriptions, and audio recordings are stored and will continue to be kept on file.

Throughout the interview process, the following principles, as suggested by Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte (2011), informed all interview practices:

(a) maintain the flow of the interviewee's story;

(b) maintain a positive relationship with the interviewee; and

(c) avoid interviewer bias.

What remained key during this data analysis, too, was the use of this study's theoretical framework, the Danielson Framework for Teaching (2009), as it created shared meaning related to instruction between the teacher (as interviewee) and researcher (as interviewer). This assisted in interview-question development and the interview process, as a whole, to collect data. Using this framework promoted common language and deeper opportunity for the interviewer to ask follow-up questioning where the teacher was able to seamlessly respond by identifying domains and rubric components with ease.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher was to serve as the interviewer and primary data collector for this qualitative study. As a result, the researcher gathered all information related to interviewing. Because the researcher is so intimately a part of this process in his own school district, it behooves the researcher to also disclose any potential biases and assumptions, as to communicate trustworthiness and credibility in reporting. "Qualitative inquiry is especially powerful as a

source of grounded theory, theory that is inductively generated from fieldwork, that is, theory that emerges from the researcher's observations and interviews out in the real world rather than in the laboratory or the academy" (Patton, 1990, p. 11). This required the researcher, then, to be engaged in his study. This engagement, however, while instilled in empathy and insight, the researcher was cognizant to be balanced appropriately when working through the study. Patton (1990) posits the importance of an understanding "that focuses on the meaning of human behavior, the context of social interaction, an empathic understanding based on personal experience, and the connections between mental state and behavior" (p. 52). Further, Patton delineates that "the *Verstehen* premise asserts that human beings can and must be understood in a manner different from other objects of study because humans have purposes and emotions" (p. 52).

In exhibiting empathic neutrality, although the researcher has introduced himself to preface the in-person interview, the participants were not overtly aware of the researcher's own involvement in teacher evaluation, in his current administrative role. While the researcher's first-hand knowledge and work with the teacher evaluation process assisted throughout this study, it required that the researcher be aware of his own potential bias as it pertains to teacher evaluation and its implementation. This awareness helped in the thoughtful crafting of those open-ended interview questions used to further explore the presented research topics.

Trustworthiness

Shenton (2004) cites a variety of social scientists that reference the distinction between quantitative and qualitative methods. "The trustworthiness of qualitative research generally is often questioned by positivists, perhaps because their concepts of validity and reliability cannot be addressed in the same way in naturalistic work. Nevertheless, several writers on research

methods, notably Silverman, have demonstrated how qualitative researchers can incorporate

measures that deal with these issues, and investigators such as Pitts have attempted to respond

directly to the issues of validity and reliability in their own qualitative studies" (Shenton, 2004,

p. 63). In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary data collector, as opposed to

quantitative research studies that rely on readily-assessed instruments to gather data. In searching

for the deeper meaning of a phenomenon, the trustworthiness of the researcher in the qualitative

study remains paramount, as this trustworthiness helps to protect the quality of the study. In

identifying trustworthiness, Shenton (2004) references four strategies that parallel

trustworthiness as it relates to both qualitative and quantitative research studies: "By addressing

similar issues, Guba's constructs correspond to the criteria employed by the positivist

investigator: a) credibility (in preference to internal validity); b) transferability (in preference to

external validity/generalisability); c) dependability (in preference to reliability); d) confirmability

(in preference to objectivity)" (p. 64). Validity, reliability, and objectivity are found through the

strategies delineated here by Shenton (2004).

Credibility

Credibility of a study is its believability, and is paralleled to quantitative research's

notion of internal validity. "According to Merriam, the qualitative investigator's equivalent

concept, i.e. credibility, deals with the question, 'How congruent are the findings with reality?'

Lincoln and Guba argue that ensuring credibility is one of most important factors in establishing

trustworthiness" (Shenton, p. 69). Further, Shenton (2004) explains how this ongoing interaction

with data collection will ultimately evolve. "As Borgman and Pitts have acknowledged,

understanding of a phenomenon is gained gradually, through several studies, rather than one

major project conducted in isolation" (p. 71).

As discussed above, in using an interpretive research paradigm, meaning-making is co-created, and as such, it is important to increase validity through ongoing member checking – where applicable and when appropriate – throughout the study. Member checking, as defined by Liao and Hitchcock (2018), is "A systematic procedure to share with participants one's data, analysis, interpretations and sometimes conclusions and to obtain their feedback" (p. 159). With this study, in order to increase credibility in this way, interview participants will be provided with typed interview transcripts; in providing this information to interview participants, each interviewee will have the opportunity to either provide additional information or to rectify any miscommunication or error identified by the participant.

Transferability

Transferability of a study is the ability for findings to be applied to another study, the equivalent of quantitative research's external validity. "Merriam writes that external validity 'is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations.' In positivist work, the concern often lies in demonstrating that the results of the work at hand can be applied to a wider population" (Shenton, p. 69). To increase transferability of a study, in gathering from a variety of scholars' work, Slevin and Sines (2000, p. 91) identify the following five criteria:

1. Providing rich and dense data.

2. Focusing the study on the typical.

3. Multisite investigation.

4. Studying the leading edge of change.

5. Use of a systematic approach.

To satisfy the above criteria, in an effort to increase transferability, this study will provide thorough description about the location and setting of the study, data collection procedures, sampling methods would be purposeful in studying "the typical," teachers from various school districts across the state of New Jersey were used in this investigation, the most updated information regarding AchieveNJ and TeachNJ Act teacher evaluation information was utilized in this study, and a systematic approach has been utilized in a deliberate attempt "to build, merge, and, ground saturated data to enhance the chances that the findings would be transferable" (p. 94).

Dependability

Dependability speaks to the ability of the results of one study to garner similar results in a similar context. **"**In addressing the issue of reliability, the positivist employs techniques to show that, if the work were repeated, in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants, similar results would be obtained." (Shenton, p. 71.) Shenton further explains how dependability can be achieved within a study. "In order to address the dependability issue more directly, the processes within the study should be reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results. Thus, the research design may be viewed as a 'prototype model.' Such in-depth coverage also allows the reader to assess the extent to which proper research practices have been followed" (p. 71).

Here, in this study, in order to increase dependability of this research, data collection methodologies, rich description of data collection, and decisions made during and after data collection to analyze and interpret research will take place.

Confirmability

Confirmability of a qualitative study, like that of objectivity in quantitative research, focuses on researcher bias. "The concept of confirmability is the qualitative investigator's comparable concern to objectivity. Here steps must be taken to help ensure as far as possible that the work's findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher. The role of triangulation in promoting such confirmability must again be emphasized, in this context to reduce the effect of investigator bias" (Shenton, p. 72). In looking at information from the conducted interviews, overarching themes will emerge that will provide opportunity to cross-validate data.

Data Analysis

Though qualitative research studies do not collect data through a neat, linear formula, as abovementioned, the qualitative data analysis process has no formulaic manner with which to cleanly gather and analyze this collected data. As is understood about qualitative research, "It is essential for the researcher to 'immerse' themselves in data, to explore all the possible nuances and relationships, to view data from a variety of perspectives, and to move from micro- to macro-view, in order to support the analytic imagination necessary for understanding and theory generation;" (Maher et al., 2018); in fact, Thorne (2000) goes so far as to characterize data analysis as "unquestionably, the most complex and mysterious of all the phases of the qualitative project" (p. 68). Maher et al. (2018) further iterates, "This form of analysis is augmented by multimodality forms of interaction with the data. It takes time with periods of intense work followed by quiet reflection" (p.12).

Interview responses were audio-recorded, subsequently transcribed using transcription software (Trint), member checks took place, and voluminous and relevant notes were also taken

and referenced by the researcher. Emerging patterns of themes and meaning were identified, categorized, and organized from this data-collection process, and coding took place throughout this process in an iterative manner. Interview transcriptions were shared with participants after each interview to allow for the teachers to review their responses, ensure accuracy of responses, and subsequently share any additional information that the teacher felt may have been missed or not originally communicated in the interview.

Coding

This study followed the two cycles of coding, as outlined by Saldaña (2013). The first cycle of coding, initial coding, aided in the analysis of interview transcriptions so that smaller sections could be examined amongst and against one another, so that patterns could emerge to further review, and to inform additional codes to further explore (Saldaña, 2013). The goal here, throughout the initial coding process, is to "harmonize with [the] study's conceptual framework, paradigm, or research goals. But emergent, data-driven (inductive) coding choices are also legitimate" (Saldaña, p. 65).

From here, the second cycle of coding for this research study, focused coding, assisted in thematically identifying categories of thinking found through interview responses. "Focused Coding searches for the most frequent or significant codes to develop 'the most salient categories' in the data corpus and 'requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense'" (Saldaña, p. 213). This process assisted in organizing responses from multiple respondents, requiring the researcher to print out all transcription documents and field notes, thoroughly reading and re-reviewing through those documents, and highlighting themes and categories that emerged through color-coding.

Review of interview notes and interviewees' responses followed the two-cycle process, as described above.

Assumptions

This study has the following assumptions associated with it:

1. All teachers provided honest and candid responses to interview questions.

2. Teacher participants had initial training and any subsequent training, as deemed necessary by regulations of AchieveNJ and the TeachNJ Act.

3. The qualitative research model served to be as the most appropriate data-collection method in examining the post-observation experience for teachers.

Limitations

The study was presented with the following limitations:

1. Due to the time commitment needed to interview each participant, the sample size was limited for interviewing.

2. The interview, which was administered through videoconferencing means, may have either prevented or dissuaded those potential participants who are not comfortable with the use of technology, limiting participant involvement.

3. Self-reported data may be less exact than other forms of data collection.

4. The data do not reflect additional work culture layers connected to teachers' answers that may impact their responses to posed questions within this study.

5. Although the researcher does not oversee any teacher participants as direct employees in this study, some participants may have been hesitant in remaining candid in their responses solely due to the researcher's position as school administrator.

Delimitations

The factors associated with this study that may perhaps prohibit a study from being replicated in the future:

1. Teacher evaluation instrument discussed, as per AchieveNJ and TeachNJ Act guidelines, at the current time this study took place.

Declaration of Potential Bias

The researcher has worked in the field of education for the past 16 years, as both a teacher, one who is evaluated by a teacher evaluation instrument, and in a supervisory capacity, one who completes the evaluation of teachers, using a teacher evaluation process. Of those 16 years, the majority of that time has been spent conducting teacher evaluation using a teacher evaluation instrument. The researcher, in his current professional role, currently leads the teacher evaluation system for a public school district in the state of New Jersey. While no participants of this study are known to be from the researcher's current school district, the researcher's intimate work with teacher evaluation may create potential for bias in that the researcher has been both a recipient of feedback and a provider of feedback in the teacher evaluation process. Having this understanding required the researcher to take purposeful steps back from the study at times through the interview and data analysis process to reorient to responses provided by interview participants, and to consciously remove any anecdotal experiences he has had, personally, with regards to his own involvement in the teacher evaluation process.

Chapter Four

Findings

The primary purpose of this study was to examine how teachers respond to the post-observation conference feedback, and reviews those feedback-giving practices, conditions, and strategies that ultimately prompt a teacher to utilize that feedback in their own classrooms. Subsequently, a more in-depth look at the teacher's viewpoint of their post-observation conference experience and those features of the post-observation conference experience that either encourage or discourage the teacher to use the feedback given serves as an additional purpose of this study.

Participants' experiences and feedback through these interviews provided insight to the research questions posed in this study. By listening, note-taking, analyzing, and coding participants' responses, key information was obtained about the post-observation conference experience from the perspective of the teacher who is the receiver of feedback during this meeting. Particularly, strategies and instances that were perceived by teacher-participants as being optimal or worthwhile, and those strategies and instances that discouraged teachers to implement feedback received. In this chapter, all research questions are addressed with supporting evidence, inclusive of quotations and feedback from the participants in this study.

Demographics of Participants

The results of this qualitative study are based on interviews of 18 certificated teachers who are currently employed in school districts in the state of New Jersey. All teachers voluntarily participated in this study. School leaders were initially solicited through e-mail communication, who then provided potential contact information for teachers who then subsequently agreed to be a part of this study.

The 18 participants in this study taught at various grade levels, various content areas, from 15 different school districts in the state of New Jersey. Each participant experienced a formal post-observation conference as part of an evaluation process in their respective school districts, with a range of teaching experience, from one year to 36 years of service to the profession. Of the 18 participants, 13 taught at the secondary level (grades 6-12) and five taught at the primary level (grades PreK-5). The demographic information for teacher-participants can be found in Appendix G, labeled "Participant List."

In consideration of the COVID-19 health-related pandemic, face-to-face meetings were substituted with digital Zoom videoconferencing. This ensured the protection of both research personnel and study participants, allowing for those teachers interviewed to remain at ease. Informed consent was obtained by each participant through electronic means, rather than in-person. Recording and transcription of interviews were completed through the use of Trint transcription service, which was completed immediately after the interview took place. Field notes also accompanied each interview to assist the researcher in organizing response trends. Interview times varied and were scheduled at times that were most convenient for participants. All interviews took place during the months of February and March 2021.

Revisions of Interview Protocol

All participants received initial interview protocol (Appendix F), which consisted of a thorough introduction related to the purpose of the study, along with the participants' rights and the logistics of the interview process for the participant. While this script was read verbatim to all participants, over the course of the interview experience, the researcher orally improvised after the statement was read by also paraphrasing this verbal informed consent script at its conclusion. This allowed for a more seamless transition and introduction into the interview. Prior

to the interview, all 18 participants received the initial interview protocol via electronic mail, to which they signed, serving as a precursor to expectations related to the interview process for the participant. All participants also had the opportunity to ask any questions prior to the start of the interview, as well as at the conclusion of the interview.

Most interview questions were asked as they were listed; however, the researcher did employ follow-up inquiry to the semi-structured questions with relevant open-ended questions, dependent on participants' initial responses. These follow-up questions allowed for the researcher to probe deeper for meaning from the participant's initial responses. By the second interview, the researcher added the following question: "Tell me about your best post-observation conference and worst post-observation conference." This question served as a direct opportunity for the participant to speak to their own experiences at the close of each interview, and provided further feedback to the researcher as an attempt to elicit exact strategies and conditions to either encouraging or discouraging experiences from the teacher's perspective. All 18 participants were asked this question at the end of the interview, with the first participant being asked this question through follow-up phone call.

Research Questions

Three primary research questions guided this study:

1. How do teachers perceive the efficacy of the post-observation conference of the teacher evaluation process in improving teacher practice?

2. What strategies and conditions employed by the observer in the post-observation conference prompt a teacher to use the feedback in their instructional delivery moving forward?

3. What strategies and conditions employed in the post-observation conference by the observer keeps a teacher or detracts a teacher from using this feedback in their instructional delivery moving forward?

Research Results

All transcripts were read, in conjunction with a thorough review of notes taken during each interview. Interview recordings were referenced to correct transcription or to re-play when context was needed. Iterative color-coding took place on each printed transcript as themes were identified. Themes and sub-themes were subsequently identified and coded by separate colors. As color-coding took place, the researcher was able to abstract themes from participants' feedback found in all 18 transcripts. Even in the interview process, the researcher listened for key words over time from participants' responses. Key words from these interview notes were underlined and highlighted immediately after each interview was completed. Ultimately, four distinct overarching themes emerged from the research data collected, and the major themes identified from the results of this study included a series of subthemes that assisted in defining each theme:

Theme One: Specific and Tailored Feedback

Teachers seek feedback in a post-observation conference that is **specific and tailored** to them, their own classrooms, and the actual lesson observed.

        a. Providing usable feedback

        b. Teacher response to lack of specific feedback

        c. Use of rubric and scores during post-observation conference

Theme Two: Post-observation Conference as Coaching

Perceived efficacy of the post-observation conference experience was increased when the feedback process was **used more as coaching**, in the form of a conversation, as opposed to solely a formal evaluation or interview.

      d. Post-observation conference, in comparison

      e. Purposeful use of praise

      f. Agenda attached to post-observation conference

      g. Post-observation conference form as script

      h. Post-observation conference as conversation

Theme Three: The Importance of Follow-up

The **expectation of follow-up** by the observer promotes teachers' use of post-observation feedback in their respective classrooms.

Theme Four: Strategies used during the Observed Lesson

Overt strategies used in the actual observation by the observer make significant impact on teachers' approach to their post-observation conference.

Theme 2 directly answered the first research question **("**How do teachers perceive the efficacy of the post-observation conference of the teacher evaluation process in improving teacher practice?"), while themes 1, 3, and 4 addressed the second and third research questions ("What strategies and conditions employed in the post-observation conference, by the observer, prompt a teacher to use the feedback in their instructional delivery moving forward?" and "What strategies and conditions employed in the post-observation conference, by the observer, keep a teacher or detracts a teacher from using this feedback in their instructional delivery moving forward?" Each theme is discussed in further detail below.

Theme One: Specific and Tailored Feedback

Of the 18 participants, each participant cited, to some degree, the importance of feedback specific to them as teachers and to the lessons that they delivered during the observation. When referencing their post-observation conference experience, Participant 2 reported, "I would prefer the observer asking a specific question to the lesson that I gave, meaning like if I had, like, students in a group working on something, and the observer referenced a suggestion around engagement in that grouping or something, something just tailored or unique to what they saw in my lesson. That would add value. That would mean something." The teacher, Participant 2, further explained how the post-observation conference feels templatized. Participant 2 shared, "I will say in the majority of times, the suggestion is something that is not really useful. And again, I would say it often feels as if it's like cookie-cutter. Like this recommendation could be said to any teacher, like nothing happened in my lesson, particularly. I feel that like, you know, it isn't when you did this, I think if you tried that. It was more like, have you ever tried like this tool, like a Web tool or something generic."

Participant 16 spoke of the feedback structure of the post-observation conference as lacking specificity, "They'll talk about maybe something that stood out to them, maybe something that I did well, and then maybe something that I have to improve upon. But again, it's all pretty kind of glazed over. I also notice in my write-up, it seems like the same thing is just copied and pasted multiple times throughout the observation."

Providing usable feedback

Participant 16 referenced a post-observation conference that they perceived to be particularly impactful. "The observer gave some like, I'm going to use the word 'small' here, but I don't mean to disparage it. It's almost like the grease in the wheels that is absolutely necessary.

But like, it seems small, but it really, really helps things going in the classroom. And so the observer said, you know, I noticed in the first minute or so, like you were trying to get settled in and it was a class of kids that tended to be a little needier. And she was like, why don't you consider having, like, a folder ready to go that, the day before, you put a set of problems and then when you walk in, have one of the students pass it up to everybody so that first minute or two isn't kind of lost to the ages. So, things like that are enormously helpful because, you know, that's like an actual useful thing that gets everybody settled in. It promotes learning. It helps me as a teacher."

Participant 12, after reflecting on their post-observation conference experiences, cited a positive meeting that they had because of the specificity of the instructional dialogue, "There was a certain math term that I was doing where I'm taking abstract ideas and making them concrete for the students, using hula hoops that I had in the classroom. But as a teacher, I'm not noticing that. Like, I just, you know, I'm trying to think like a six-year-old and how they would see the three digits. So, it was nice to have the play-by-play from my observer because, through them, you're seeing and you're realizing everything that you did. And then once you get into the suggestions, you're kind of more open to all the information."

Participant 7 enthusiastically shared a reflection of tailored feedback, "You know, like one time, the observer said, you know, [name], you favor your left hand, your left side of the room so much. And that was right, you know, and I was very self-conscious of it. Or, [name], you know, you don't leave enough space for the kid to answer the question."

Participant 1 provided a suggestion for specific feedback, "I think if it was personalized to me, if it seemed like the observer actually kind of looked at my lesson plans or looked at my materials or looked at the artifacts that I'm submitting, if they are aware of my class, my

students' abilities, and can see that what I'm doing is appropriate and is at an appropriate level for those students, it would be nice for the observer to have that understanding. I just feel like, to say again, same thing when you're a teacher and you have your students, if you show them that you care and that you want to help them and you want to make a difference, they're going to be likely to respond to that. And it's the same thing with observing and evaluating teachers. If I feel like I have your full support and that you truly want to spend the time and energy on making me a better employee, or into a better teacher, I'm going to feel that. And I'm going to want to reciprocate that and act on your suggestions."

Participant 5 applauded an observer's use of specific feedback, "And she's able to give me, like, concrete evidence and examples, and then it's easy. I actually know what I have to improve, instead of having to guess."

Participant 4 expressed it simply, "I just want an observer to care enough, to look closely enough, to pinpoint with exactness an issue, and provide a concrete way to address what I'm lacking as a teacher. Not just to diagnose the problem, but to give me a specific solution; that would be a big deal to me as a teacher."

Participant 11 shared that identifying students by name and specific instances from the observed lesson in the post-observation conference is key, "Know where my kids sit. Know their names. Reference them in that way like you, as the observer, know them. Show to me, even though I live with these students, that you are able to know them even in observing a lesson. That makes all the difference when reflecting on what happened in the lesson." Six other participants made a similar reference.

Teacher response to lack of specific feedback

Several participants excused their observers' lack of specific attention given to their post-observation conferences, with mixed responses. Participant 1 cited administrators' workloads or perceived workloads in referencing the generality of their post-observation conference experience, "I also think in my school district that they have so many people that they have to observe. I think our administrators are kind of stretched really thin, or at least that's been the perception that I've gotten. So, I think that because they have so many people to observe, it's kind of like just rushed through. So, I don't know necessarily if it's laziness or if it's just like having too much on their plate."

Participant 5 referenced administrators' lack of care related to the post-observation conference in one district and compared it to their experience in a new school district, "That's how I felt like, you know, the observations were a joke. You know, I could care less at points what certain observers would tell me because they just couldn't be bothered to even show up sometimes. They would say how overworked they were. But now, it's like, in this school, they care, so I want to care. I really admire the administration there, because they bother to care and to show up."

Participant 18 cited their own lack of feedback in the post-observation conference, "I know that they're coming in just trying to do their job. It's the same way, like, if I have a not-so-great day teaching. I would want my students to be like, they didn't teach that lesson all that great, but sounds like they're having a bad day, and most of the time, they try really hard, so I'm going to let her off the hook. And, so, I have to do the same thing with my observers."

Other participants were less forgiving, with five participants overtly sharing how discouraged they were just by the observers' own expression of their own burdensome workload.

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Participant 3 expressed adamantly, "I do not need to know how many observations you have to do. At this point, in this post-observation conference, you should be here for me. Do not tell me how tired you are, or how over-worked you are. I'm not given that same courtesy."

Participant 14 reflected on a recent post-observation conference of their own, "They started by telling me how much they had to do, then rushed through our meeting. I found it to be rather disrespectful of me and my time. I think we all get it; there is a lot to be done, for all of us. Starting that way simply makes the whole post-observation conference a useless one at that point."

Use of rubric and scores during post-observation conference

Participant 7 ascribed the lack of valuable feedback to be influenced by discussion of the rubric and its scores in the post-observation conference. "So, for those post-conferences I had difficulty with, it was because it was so about a rubric that you couldn't get into, like a discourse with your supervisor about it. You know, it was all about just check, check, check, check. And, you know, I thought it was a little bit stilted, that it took away from what we should be talking about." In referencing the use of the rubric and scores in the post-observation conference,

Participant 17 indicated how educational jargon can be a distraction to the post-observation conference experience, particularly when the rubric acts as the driver of the evaluation-talk, "I hate all of those little words, 'scaffolding' and 'differentiation' and all those things; I'm sorry. I like things with firm objective definitions that, you know, are actually usable. I want it to be a time to talk about me and my instruction."

Participant 3 reported how discussion of the rubric is perceived as wasted talk, "The post-observation conference is spent and wasted discussing the rubric in an attempt to kind of explain what you would need to do to get a certain score and the observers are just kind of justifying the

scores by reading and elaborating on the rubric. So, yeah, and actually that's a good word for it. I feel like the conference is just used as a justification for the scores by using the language in the scoring criteria in the rubric."

Theme Two: Post-observation Conference as Coaching

Beyond the use of specific, tailored feedback, 13 participants also reflected on the manner or style with which the observer presents feedback impacts the perceived efficacy of the post-observation conference from the perspective of the teacher. Through this reflection, participants made use of comparisons to describe the post-observation conference experience for them, and ultimately, the theme of approaching the post-observation conference as a coaching session emerged. This stylistic approach is described below in several parts: a) post-observation conference in comparison, b) purposeful use of praise, c) agenda attached to the post-observation conference, d) post-observation conference form as script, and e) post-observation conference as conversation.

Post-observation conference, in comparison

In speaking with teachers, these 13 participants made specific reference to the *way* in which feedback is shared or delivered in the post-observation conference. Participant 2 specifically referenced ideal post-observation conference dialogue as coaching, likening feedback-giving to the diagnosis by a physician, "I enjoy personally receiving feedback where it feels like coaching, like the observer wants to help you improve. I don't want to evaluate you; I want to help you. I feel like this could be an opportunity to make the diagnosis; it's almost like a doctor's office. Like, does the doctor just run through the checklist? Like, do you engage learners? Okay. Did you change the physical classroom? All right. No. The doctor gets down to the why."

Participant 12 highlighted the manner with which an observer delivered feedback, "For this one lesson, she focused more on who I am as a teacher, what's my character, how I have a good rapport with the students, and I think she looked outside the box of the rubric almost. I felt like she knows my lesson, but she looked more at the moving parts, the dynamic of my classroom."

Participant 14 even made the comparison between the post-observation conference and therapy, sharing a need for the observer to utilize questioning techniques to assist the teacher in the reflection, "So, perhaps if the post-observation conference were to utilize some sort of leading questions or discussion techniques where, you know, and I feel like this is something that would happen maybe in therapy, where they would ask leading questions or pointed questions to direct the person who you're asking the questions to discover, you know, these revelations or these understandings on their own. And I think in order to do that, you would have to have some understanding of the person who you are working with, or in this case, observing. The observer would need to have some understanding of the personality and how their mind works and what they might be thinking, but you also need to have an understanding of what they do and how you can lead them to that point."

Purposeful use of praise

Participant 10 compared the style of her different observers, "Usually, one is with my principal and then one is with somebody else, and she's like, amazing, and she always builds you up. You know, like a coach would. So, you always feel great after, like, meeting with her because she's so positive. And so that is definitely important because that, you know, it allows you to really reflect that I'm doing a good job, like I am doing what I'm supposed to be doing and I'm reaching the kids."

Participant 11 expressed, "I don't expect to be told I'm perfect. What we do is not perfect. But the way, I guess, she delivers the news is just much more positive and, you know, just makes you feel like you're a rock star. We all need to feel like that sometimes."

Agenda attached to post-observation conference

Approximately half of participants identified their own hesitation in approaching the post-observation conference because of a perceived agenda of some observers. Participant 8 shared, "Whenever there's like a top-down pushing thing, it's like, here's how you can do this thing that we want everyone to do. I just feel like it should be more like an understanding that, hey, I'm the teacher in the trenches. And here's what I'm trying to accomplish here, and this is what we can do to support you."

Participant 10 expressed a similar instance in their post-observation conference, "I have, I have heard some things that are helpful to me, but there's also, like, here's this thing that we want everybody in the school to do. Here's something you could do to achieve that agenda. And I feel like that's a little bit putting the horse before the cart."

Participant 10 identified one observer's agenda, "She says this one educational strategy matters. That's why she's pushing it on. And I think, you know, she's kind of backed off of our grade level, realizing we're a beast of our own, like there is no purpose to it. But she definitely pushes it because I think someone above her wants her to do so."

Participant 8 also emphasized that if there is a building or district goal, the leader or observer needs to believe in it, "I knew she was just trying to do what she had been told to do. And as soon as I am going to use the word challenge here, again, I'm not a fight-picker. But as soon as I said, well, I don't understand how that's going to help the students. Can you explain?

And she backed right off of it. So, I don't even think her heart was really in it. And that's a real problem."

Post-observation conference form as script

Participant 18 shared that they enter the post-observation conference, as if the conference itself is time where they are being evaluated in that moment, as well, "But I do as a teacher, I do feel evaluated during the actual conference, even though I know that's not where the focus should be. But I do feel like there was a test, that the post-conference is a test, and I prepare for it. It's not like something I go in expecting a very fluid conversation. I come in prepared with things I know I want to say because I feel like I'm being evaluated even in that process. So, I'll come with, like, answers already to questions."

Participant 6 shared their own approach "I always feel that when I come in for the conference, I'm prepared to defend myself."

Participant 17 explained their work on the post-observation conference form as one that lacks value, "Not since coming to teach in New Jersey, and it's not the fault of the observers, it's that ridiculous form and it never leaves your mind that, oh, I have to walk all my honest and direct thoughts into those ridiculous questions. It can't be a free-flowing, honest, real response. It has to all be, oh, now I have more questions to type out this word salad of paragraphs that have to hit specific buzz words from the rubric. It creates an inauthentic overlay as an introduction for the entire post-observation conference to come, unfortunately."

Participants 11 and 13 identified the need to move beyond the script. Participant 13 asserted, "That's part of the thing about these observations, is that they are snapshots. They're not the whole film. It would be nice if the people in the classroom observing really understood that." Participant 11 shared, "I think something else that's important is having that understanding that

it's okay if things don't go according to plan when you're trying a new initiative out and having

that understanding and that level of comfort to take those risks. So, when someone says, you

know, I'm happy to come in and help with that or see how it goes or give feedback and being in a

non-evaluative fashion, just giving that sense of security to take those risks, I think that that

would make the whole experience more worthwhile."

Post-observation conference as conversation

Throughout the interviews with teachers, participants expressed their most optimal

conferences to be those with a back-and-forth exchange, often reflecting on one-sided talk by the

part of the observer as off-putting. Participant 13 spoke particularly about a common place to

start for both the observer and the teacher in having this instructional conversation, "If an

observer could start from a place of 'I know you care about your job and I know you care about

these kids,' then that's a jumping-off point for this feedback conversation. If we're working from

the same place of, you know, we're in this to help the students, we're in this to help you become a

better teacher. I still do not get why that mutual understanding does not happen every single

time."

Participant 3 reflected, "I feel like instructional strategies are things that, you know, are

best discovered then taught, but I would love to have a conversation about maybe what a certain

category on the rubric would look like in my actual classroom. One of the things that I was very

aware of in many of my post-observation conferences, and this is not anything that's necessarily

a bad thing because not everyone has the same background, but that the administrator didn't

necessarily seem like he or she knew what, for example, a four would look like for that lesson in

my classroom. And I would love maybe to have a conversation where we both brainstorm

together. That has yet to happen. Instead, I have very much felt like the subservient employee in those situations."

Participant 7 stated, "So, I think the most important thing is, is a dialogue, a collaborative conversation where both participants are on the same wavelength. They're both working together, collaborating collaboratively to think of ways to, you know, improve. And again, I feel like it should also be framed as something that would maybe engage students more instead of saying this is how you're going to be a better teacher. We should feel side-by-side with the observer."

Participant 4 shared their yearn for deeper conversation in the post-observation conference, "I literally will forever ruminate over these lessons that I know are going to be observed or where they have been observed. Having that space to reflect on a lesson is really important. And you think you put together this really well-thought-out lesson and it's going to go seamlessly, and then it doesn't. I need to talk that through."

Participant 1 spoke of coaching as a need to have an instructional conversation, "I mean, I guess the right answer would be that I should ask questions and I should kind of like be comfortable doing that, but whenever I'm in a post-observation, I just kind of am on the receiving end. As long as I don't feel like they're after me, then, I'm like, okay, I'm happy. I just want it over with. I don't really ask questions. I really don't have a conversation because I just want it to be done with because I think it's just an awkward situation." Participant 1 further explained, "But I think that probably I should have more of a conversation and I probably should ask questions about how I can specifically improve and when I think that the observer just made up, made up reasonings for areas to improve, I should probably push it further, but I don't

because I think they're uncomfortable and I just want to be done with it and sign it and move along."

Seven participants referenced how the post-observation conference, as conversation, ultimately leads to more direct communication related to areas in need of improvement by the teacher. Participant 17 pointedly expressed, "I feel like, if we are in this conversation together, and there truly is a back-and-forth kind of exchange between the two of us, you can just tell me what you want me to work on and what you think I need to work on. Be direct. Don't talk around it. Just say it. If we are actually in it together, I think I'd actually listen in response."

Through this conversation, more direct feedback can be shared. Participant 2 posited, "Please don't ask questions around what you want me to improve on. Tell me directly. Do it thoughtfully, but really, please just tell me. I'll leave there knowing what I need to work on, instead of guessing. The worst thing you can do is to tip-toe around it. If you care, and when you know I care, through that conversation, we can actually get somewhere."

Theme Three: The Importance of Follow-up

A third theme that emerged from study participants' responses pertained to the importance of follow-up and follow-through by the observer to those teachers who have been observed. Specifically, participants cited instances where observers assisted and guided teachers even after the feedback was given to teachers in the post-observation conference.

Participant 2 explained, "For me, it was everything they did outside of the post-observation conference that was important. It was everything they did outside of that conference that built trust and that showed and displayed to me that they were there for that purpose, that made me think that maybe like you actually follow through on feedback, so again, put in some context, I might be in a unique district, but I don't necessarily know the people who evaluate me,

many of them are district admin that I do not I interact with, only when they evaluate me like I don't see them outside of that. When an observer follows up on me after the post-observation conference, sans laptop, I know that they're here for that reason, to help me."

Participant 7 cited those instances where observers came back to his classroom after the post-observation conference, "That's where I really think observers build up a good reputation, you know. It is best when they come back right away next to see, okay, did this guy take my suggestion. Or they would come back a couple of days later to see how they could help me further."

Through the interview, Participant 11 shared that follow-up can promote a feeling of being supported, "I know how things can get inundated and things like that, but when someone takes the time to then follow up or even just walk through the classroom again after and just interact with the students and, you know, I'm feeling like, oh, he or she's checking in on me and checking in on the kids and making that presence. It's not just there for I'm here to observe you. I'm here to talk to you about it after to see how it's going. It makes a teacher feel, at least, like the observer or administrator is available."

Participant 5 also identified the importance of revisiting the classroom, but for the purposes of accountability and oversight, "But and I think the closing of it, though, is really important where the recommendation is not just like feedback is given, but also like a commitment to circling back. Because once the feedback is given, like that one example I provided you with, like, hey, try this backchat on the screen once that said and I'm kind of like, I'm probably not going to do that in my head. I know I can get away with saying, like, I'm not going to do that because I know there's going to be like two weeks, it's going to be gone. He's going to forget about it. I'm going to forget about it. But a commitment of like, hey, in two

weeks, I want to check in and want to see if you're trying it out would be important to ensure that the feedback is being done in practice."

Participant 13 referred to the follow-up as a more informal check-in with the teacher by the observer, "My supervisor went above and beyond in terms of sitting with me. She sent me a follow-up e-mail, and we ended up connecting again after the post-observation conference for like forty-five minutes. We talked about ways to improve my upcoming lessons using information we previously discussed in the post-observation conference, which was really handy."

Theme Four: Strategies During the Observed Lesson

In this final section, participants' responses regarding specific strategies used in the actual observed lesson by the observer impacted the way in which the teacher approached the post-observation conference that followed.

Participant 6 noted the difference a few gestures can make amidst the observation, by the observer, "Even a thumbs-up on the way out of the classroom, or a smile can go a long way. I find myself entering the post-observation conference differently when I don't think they're out to get me."

Participant 7 mentioned the use of strategies, and also reflected on the way in which the way the observer enters or exits the room has potential impact, "I mean, just before they go, you know, they smile and they say, thank you, [name], for letting me in your classroom. I really enjoyed it. You know, when the kids look at them, you know, then kids talk to you when [the observer's] left, and they joke about how they behaved for the day or something like that. It certainly wasn't you who did the lesson. It was us that made it work."

Participant 15 reflected on the evidence-collection process can impact the overall experience in the observation, "All right. So, a good observer to me is, you know, he or she is not just in the back room typing, clacking away on the laptop. He or she is walking around. Okay, your eyes are up above the laptop, and looking around, you know, looking around, making sure the kids are on task and they are smiling at kids. All right. And smiling at the teacher, you know. You know, the non-verbal is really important getting around. Several times, I've had the observer in the lesson involved in the lesson, as a student, and that made a world of difference to me."

Participant 9 made mention of the importance of some sort of immediate feedback, "A conversation maybe beforehand or something brief in between might have maybe made me feel more at ease because I did go into the post-observation conference sort of like, all right, like, I, I know it wasn't great for me. There was wow. I really loved how this little group here. I love what happened there. That was great to see. Thank you, [name]. And then there was a quick goodbye. So that quick immediate feedback, I think was really important."

Participant 6 and 14 also reflected fondly on strategies used in the observation, that made each feel encouraged. Participant 14 shared, "Something I noticed that my principal does is she leaves a little note for the class that the kids see as this little secret, because she hides the note in the classroom. So, when she leaves, the kids look for it. It's always on pink paper. They look for the pink note to see what she said about the observation. And they seem to really like that. And I think, you know, maybe a high school teacher could really benefit from finding little notes left by their observer like that. I actually have one of them hanging up." Participant 6 reflected, "She left me a note on a post-it as she left. She even followed up with an e-mail. It made my month honestly."

Participant 3 expressed, "Just nod. Just do what an active listener or participant does. Let me know that you care enough to be with me throughout the lesson, because even though I've been doing this for a long time, I still lose sleep the night before an announced observation, and if it's announced, I'm still in a panic, even if I have everything planned beforehand. Don't forget what it's like when you were in the classroom yourself. Be practical in your expectations of the classroom, too. Don't be easier on me; just be okay with it not being perfect. Because teaching is never perfect."

This research study provided insight into best practices related to the post-observation conference, as perceived by those teachers who undergo such a process. Based on responses from these participants, it is clear that participants in this study seemed to agree that specific feedback tailored to the participants' teaching remained optimal as a best practice, a coaching style on the part of the observer assisted with teachers feeling encouraged, follow-up in the classroom and with the teacher not only made the teacher feel supported but also that the feedback is important enough to return for, and there are specific practices during the observation that promote the teacher into entering the post-observation conference more at ease and open to supervision.

Summary

This chapter presented the results from interviews of 18 current certificated teachers who experienced a post-observation conference as part of their formal evaluation process. Findings were presented in four sections that corresponded with the primary themes that emerged from the results. Categories within each theme helped to support and provide insight into the overarching themes.

Teachers, as receivers or "ratees" in the post-observation conference, are the only people to provide authentic insight into how the observation and evaluation process is received, particularly as it relates to their post-observation conference experience. Primarily, participants in this study believed that specific feedback on the lesson observed and the teacher's individual style and delivery of instruction remained paramount in leading a discussion about the evaluation of an observed lesson. These participants also found that use of language related to the rubric and the scores themselves often created barriers in open dialogue and distracted the post-observation conference from being an instructional conversation.

Participants likened the post-observation conference to a physician making a diagnosis or a therapist giving therapy, but 14 out of the 18 participants likened their yearn for this experience to be that of coaching. Through such coaching, the praise should be just as specific as that of any other feedback so that it is received as authentic accolades. Coaching should avoid being perceived as an agenda that is not necessarily connected to the teacher, their classroom, and their practices. In building an opportunity for instructional dialogue, the post-observation conference form should be used as a reference tool and not necessarily as a script; this will allow for more back-and-forth exchange instead of a staccato-like interview that leaves the teacher more guarded than open to sharing and receiving feedback.

The importance of follow-up served as an important part of the post-observation process to participants, also. Participants cited how follow-up in teachers' classrooms made them feel an additional layer of support and care with regards to the evaluation process and a perceived belief in teachers' progress, while other participants referenced how this follow-up promotes that this additional supervision could encourage the actual use of discussed instructional strategies in practice.

Finally, participants in this study also addressed specific strategies used by observers during the observation. Teachers reported that the dialogue upon entrance and exit of the classroom by the observer helped to ease the evaluative experience for the teacher. The use of nodding as engagement, observers' participation in the lesson, and interaction with the class's students during the lesson also increased the comfort of the teacher with the evaluation process. Even the leaving of a note in a classroom served as a reminder to the teacher of the importance of their work. Overall, participants believed that observers who truly understood and recognized the work of teachers, even in their role as administrators, are important.

The following strategies, as emerged from shared participant feedback as best practices, are listed below in a table, categorized as "before post-observation conference," "during post-observation conference," and "after post-observation conference:"

Table 1
Observation and Evaluation Best Practices

Before Post-observation Conference	During Post-observation Conference	After Post-observation Conference
Before lesson: 1. Find ways to engage with those teachers who the observer will eventually be observing. 2. Review lesson plans. During lesson: 3. Acknowledge the teacher upon entering the classroom. 4. Actively nod throughout the lesson; smile. 5. Serve in the role of student; interact with other students. 6. Provide immediate feedback before exiting the classroom. 7. Acknowledge the teacher upon exiting the classroom. After lesson: 8. Leave a short note of some sort.	Best practices: 1. Provide suggestions that are specific. Suggestions, even small, should be useful. 2. Feedback should be supportive, yet direct. 3. Feedback should identify patterns in a teacher's delivery of instruction. 4. In the post-observation conference discussion, students should be identified by the observer by name, referencing specific examples from the lesson that involved the students, inclusive of where those students sat in the lesson. 5. Create a supportive conversation that feels like coaching.	1. Suggestions in write-up should be thoughtful and specific to the teacher and their lesson. 2. To showcase a commitment to a teacher's success, visit the teacher's classroom within two weeks of the post-observation conference. 3. Provide thoughtful follow-up resources for the teacher that would be beneficial to the teacher's improvement based on the post-observation conference conversation.

Table 1 (Cont.)

Before Post-observation Conference (Cont.)	During Post-observation Conference (Cont.)	After Post-observation Conference (Cont.)
9. Read through post-observation reflection form.	6. Provide praise that is directly connected to examples from the observed lesson. 7. Be direct and specific in what the teacher needs to improve upon. To avoid: 8. Avoid talking about one's own workload. 9. Avoid dialogue centered solely on the scoring rubric. 10. Avoid relying on post-observation reflection form as script for post-observation conference conversation. 11. Avoid using building-level or district-level goals and initiatives unless they are specifically relevant to the lesson at hand.	

This table acts as a blueprint of best practices for observers, serving as a guide in preparing and

facilitating post-observation conference conversations and experiences for their teachers.

Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the results and gives recommendations for future research. Implications for stakeholder groups, including teachers, observers, and school leaders, also are presented. The chapter concludes with recommendations to observers and administrators for best practices and strategies related to setting up the post-observation conference for the teachers with whom they observe.

Chapter Five

Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations for Future Research

Feedback given to teachers from observers is a common part of teacher evaluation towards improving teacher practice. Mann and Walsh (2013) have suggested that reflection should be collaborative and make greater use of oral forms, rather than relying solely on the written evaluative document. The formal post-observation conference serves as the singular unique opportunity to have academic oral dialogue that is directly related to the teacher as both an individual and as a professional. Beyond all of the administrivia that exists in public education, the time to have isolated time to talk directly about a teacher's specific instructional delivery is precious, limited, and important.

This chapter provides a summary of the findings, discussion of the findings, and comparison of the findings to previous literature. This chapter also includes the discussion of the conclusions based on the findings, the interpretation of those findings, limitations, and implications for practice. This chapter also describes recommendations for future research and a conclusion of the study.

Summary of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine how teachers respond to the post-observation conference feedback, and to review those feedback-giving practices, conditions, and strategies that ultimately prompt a teacher to utilize that feedback in their own classrooms.

While review of the post-observation conference experience is not a novel idea or concept, this process has certainly evolved over time. Sweeney (1983) asserted, even early on, that the post-observation conference is one of importance that has yet to be mastered. "The lack of success of the supervisory conference is hardly surprising: There is no articulated process to

guide practitioners nor is there salient preparatory or in-service training. Supervisory

conferences, however, can make a difference if they are conducted in a systematic manner by

supervisors able to exhibit behaviors consistent with sound human relations and management

principles" (p. 135). Years later, the failure of administrators to create a post-observation

conference where feedback provided is integrated into teacher practice with fidelity still remains

at issue, as a systematic approach has yet to be developed or shared from the findings of this

study. This study supports the continued need to take a closer look at the post-observation

conference and its impact on teacher practice.

Although this study focused on teacher perceptions of the post-observation conference, it

is just as important to review administrator-focused perceptions of teacher evaluation in previous

research, which shed light on those areas of teacher evaluation that served as barriers for

observers. "In regards to their greatest frustration concerning the supervision and evaluation of

teachers, principals reported three common themes, namely time, the evaluation instrument, and

teachers' willingness to change. These three themes have been previously identified as barriers to

effective supervision and evaluation" (Range, Scherz, Holt, & Young, 2011, p. 245). What has

emerged from this study is that it seems as if teachers are indeed willing to change, based on

open feedback from teacher-participants, but it is the way in which the post-observation is

constructed and executed that makes all the difference in provoking a willingness to change on

the part of the teacher.

Research Question 1

1. How do teachers perceive the efficacy of the post-observation conference of the teacher

    evaluation process in improving teacher practice?

The findings revealed that teachers had varying experiences with receiving feedback from observers in the post-observation conference, often comparing one observer to another, and the post-observation conference experiences associated with each. Perceived efficacy of the post-observation conference often hinged, according to interview participants, on the *way* that feedback was provided to teachers and the perceived relationship that the teacher had with the observer. What is clear is that a delicate balance needs to be refined by the evaluator in the post-observation conference, cultivating a dialogue of support that also directly hones in on areas for improvement to teachers that is communicated with exactness.

Essentially, what this study revealed is that if the teacher does not believe that the observer cares about the teacher's progress, feedback may not be subsequently executed into practice and the receptivity of the teacher in the post-observation conference itself may be diminished severely. In this study, this "care" did not necessarily need to come from a collegial or familiar relationship, as teacher-participants expressed that this was not required to exist with the observer in order to create a post-observation conference experience that would be optimal. This care can be demonstrated through fostering a post-observation conference conversation that is supportive, as well as through follow-up that signifies a shared vested interest on the part of the observer, as detailed further in Research Question Two.

Teachers indicated a yearning for an observer that understands the teacher's instruction or "gets it" in the sense of a nuanced understanding of the conditions of teachers' current classrooms. Frequently, throughout this study, teachers would make comparisons between observers who made them feel terrible to those who made them feel at ease. When asked directly about what the difference was between both types of observers, teachers often referenced the positive experiences to be those when the post-observation conference felt more like coaching as

opposed to evaluation. Primarily, teachers generally expressed comfort in receiving feedback, but it is the manner with which feedback is introduced and ultimately conveyed to the recipient that requires deeper discussion. The remainder of this summary will tease through the nuances of the post-observation conference that make a difference to the teacher, who is the receiver of this feedback.

Research Question 2

1. What strategies and conditions employed by the observer in the post-observation conference prompt a teacher to use the feedback in their instructional delivery moving forward?

Participants shared instances that predicated their post-observation conference, with strategies and behaviors instituted in the actual observation that provided teachers with some ease in entering the subsequent post-observation conference. The initial preconceived notion of the observer being "out to get" the teacher was one that remained pervasive throughout this study's interviews, with three participants referencing how the evaluation system can ultimately lead to one "being fired." Strategies such as the observer nodding throughout the lesson, the observer participating as a student, and the observer interacting with other students throughout the lesson assisted in making the teacher feel more at ease during the observation. This ease then transitioned into how the teacher entered their post-observation conference.

Eleven of the 18 participants highlighted the importance of the observer connecting with the teacher upon entering or exiting the classroom. This brief connection personalized the experience for the teacher. Several participants noted observations where they were never greeted, where they did not believe the observer knew their name, and subsequently, de-personalized the observation experience for those teachers.

In the actual post-observation conference, participants overwhelmingly expressed a recommendation that the experience should feel like coaching from the observer and an interactional conversation should exist between observer and teacher. Through such an exchange, meaning-making related to feedback can be co-constructed, which supports Sweeney's (1983) early claim that "unless teachers perceive a gap between their desired and actual performance, there is little likelihood of change" (p. 136). Without the teacher being actively present in the dialogue, there can be no recognition of a gap existing in the first place. This belief supports Schon's (1988) foundational recommendation for "reflective supervision" or "reflective coaching" in which "a coach helps, provokes, encourages a teacher to reflect on her own practice. A coach supports her reflection on her own reflection-in-action; that is her effort to make explicit to herself what she is seeing, how she interprets it, and how she might test and act on her interpretations" (p. 22). This study, though, suggests that this post-observation reflection should go a step further in that a coach cannot be a coach unless they truly understand, from a teacher's perspective, the teacher themselves, their classroom, and their students. This builds credibility, legitimacy, and essentially encourages the teacher to more actively participate in the post-observation conference. Therefore, feedback to teachers must draw from commentary that is rooted in specificity.

Through this co-constructing, eight teachers cited examples of how their observers used specific students' names in the post-observation conference when referencing the observed lesson. This reminded the teacher that the observer cared enough about the lesson to remember the kids and where they sat. Those details bolstered the credibility of the observer to the teacher in their post-observation conference, and fostered a sense of collaboration between both parties. Specific instances from the lesson identified by the observer in the post-observation conference

also made these teachers feel as if the observer was not as much of an outsider as they originally perceived.

Specifically, initiating post-observation conference conversation by normalizing common classroom issues made teachers feel supported and less alone. In those instances where the observer could reference work with their own students from their teaching experiences, teachers found their feedback to be that much more relevant. This understanding of the classroom in practicality, by the observer, too, promoted a post-observation conference that was more likely able to be rooted in candor where common, everyday classroom issues that arise are unpacked and openly understood by the observer.

Kim and Silver (2016) made particular note of post-observation conference best practices through conversational analysis, which "shows that the minutiae of interaction can influence the way in which space for reflection is created and reflective thinking emerges in interaction" (p. 214). While this study did not include the direct observation of a conference, through teachers' own reflections of their post-observation conference experiences, the provoking of reflection on the part of the teacher occurred more regularly when the dialogue was rooted in recipient orientation, in that "these conversations are not a straightforward information-seeking and -providing activity, but interactional events that take place within the constraints of sequential organization" (p. 216).

Research Question 3

1. What strategies and conditions employed in the post-observation conference by the observer keeps a teacher or detracts a teacher from using this feedback in their instructional delivery moving forward?

Participants referenced their own plights related to the post-observation conference, and in doing so, shared their own experiences with feedback that was perceived to be general, cookie-cutter, or simply offered to satisfy a building or district-level mandate that may be tangential or even unrelated to the observed lesson. Feedback that was not specific to the teacher and their classroom detracted teachers from either actively participating in the post-observation conference or subsequently using the feedback given in their classrooms. Feedback perceived to be part of "a larger agenda" made the teacher feel as if the specific observation was not the observer's focus and often was received by the teacher as irrelevant information in that moment of time.

References of observers who emphasized their own workload and their expressed number of observations minimized the post-observation conference for the teacher. Teachers cited examples where their observers communicated in an exasperated manner regarding their own work, which made those teachers feel as if focus was not tended to their own post-observation conference experience. In these cases, teachers simply felt as if they, too, were just part of a to-do list for the observer. In some instances, in this study's interviews, teachers expressed their own irritation when enduring the observer's need to vent about their own work-related stress. Beginning in this way made those teachers feel as if the post-observation conference was pointless and not about them or their instructional growth.

While teachers highlighted a critical part of the post-observation conference to be an interactional conversation, what also diminished the conference for teachers was the use of the post-observation conference form as script (Appendix A). In these instances, the observer moves through the litany of questions, instead of taking the time to organically promote conversation and provoke unique reflection for the specific teacher in the post-observation conference. By doing so, the observer creates an interview dynamic rather than a mutual dialogue. In this

interview, the teacher does not necessarily want to actively participate, but rather, feels as if the post-observation conference is a continuation of evaluation and observation that is then just as scrutinized as the observed lesson itself.

Limitations of Study

One limitation of this study was the number of questions. The interview structure had a limited number of questions to answer. A longer interview with more specific questions in each area might provide more insight into the initial themes that emerged. Although this interview had a semi-structure where follow-up questions could occur, these follow-up questions were only based on the participants' initial answers.

Additionally, this study does not specifically address the potential instances in a post-observation conference where the feedback from the evaluator is not necessarily of quality.

Implications for Practice

Teacher evaluation in the state of New Jersey has followed the national trend in being revised with the consistent use of a rubric that ultimately attempts to quantify teacher practice with a numerical score. The reality, as demonstrated through this study, is that the post-observation conference is anything but consistent for teachers who are recipients of this feedback through the teacher evaluation system. In fact, teachers' response to their post-observation conference experience directly correlates to *who* conducts the conference. Perhaps the consistency in delivery of feedback to teachers by administrators is just as rooted in stylistic approach as the execution of instructional delivery to students by their teachers. Commonalities of best practices exist with regards to shaping those perceptions of teachers as it pertains to their post-observation conference experience. As such, implications for pre-service administrator

programs, for Central Office teams who train their administrative teams, and observers who execute post-observation conferences throughout the school year exist.

Implications for pre-service administrator programs

School administrators who conduct teacher evaluations are required to earn their certifications through accredited administrator programs where teaching experience is a prerequisite. Because teaching experience is required, McDonald (2017) raises the notion that it is almost as if there is an assumption that pre-service administrators do not need training with a focus on teacher perception. "Many arrive in the graduate classroom and think the whole program will be a cinch. They believe that administrators need to take care of paperwork, manage student discipline, and meet with parents. The graduate students often want to work directly with teachers and believe that their own knowledge of curriculum will be sufficient to improve student academic achievement. Some of these thoughts, of course, are true. However, what they tend not to think about is what it feels like to be in charge of a school and that actually influencing, transforming, and changing the school on behalf of all students takes courage and persistence" (McDonald, 2017, p. 250). McDonald identified the importance of using storytelling in this graduate coursework to train pre-service administrators to utilize courage to move through difficult circumstances as a school leader. Moving beyond examples, it is important for pre-service administrators to review those post-observation conferences that either inspired or discouraged teachers from improving. Reflecting on and telling these stories will assist pre-service administrators in adjusting how they initiate difficult conversations as administrators themselves.

The post-observation conference requires the observer to provoke reflection and to provide feedback. In order for this conference to spark change in teacher practice, it requires the

observer to pinpoint issues clearly with the teacher. To do so, having such conversations requires a courage to be honest and forthright to teachers about the lessons observed. Although this dialogue should be coupled with a sentiment of support, only direct discussion regarding areas in need of improvement will need to take place in order for those instructional areas to subsequently be addressed by the teacher and observer, together. Courage to have such conversations cannot be assumed simply because the teacher has transitioned into a leadership role.

Implications for central office teams

Across a school district's administrative team, inter-rater reliability needs to take place. "Classroom observation inter-rater reliability matters because it is about trust. In particular, we need to measure the extent of agreement among independent replications in order to estimate whether we can trust the generated data in subsequent analyses" (Wilhelm, Rouse, & Jones, 2018, p. 10). Although the quantitative implications of inter-rater scoring are important, so is the qualitative notion of building trust in the way in which the evaluation instrument is implemented in action, through the post-observation conference experience.

The post-observation conference is the singular opportunity for face-to-face human interaction regarding a teacher's direct performance. This idea of storytelling and sharing best practices with regards to the sharing of feedback is crucial at the district-level so that the unique opportunity of a post-observation conference is an optimal one for teachers. To build consistency across observers, it would be helpful in providing a systematic framework for sharing feedback as a starting point for observers. Unique stories from teachers about those post-observation conferences that were worthwhile would be helpful in building best practice strategies and context from the teacher's perspective for the administrative team, as well. Using this feedback

related to the implementation of the evaluation instrument, and particularly connected to the post-observation conference, will provide the administrative team with those stories that actually make a difference for teachers.

Implications for observers

This study emphasizes to observers that the post-observation conference is a key opportunity for provoking reflection amongst teachers. In Mette's study (2015) regarding teachers' perceptions of evaluation effectiveness, its results "suggested teachers attributed one item as the most important predictor of principals' supervisory effectiveness in helping improve teacher instruction, which included discussions surrounding capacity building to cause teachers to self-reflect during the post-observation conference" (p. 24). To do so, though, as this study indicates, the observer must be conscious of the relationship that is built with the observed teacher.

While this study demonstrated that it does not require a close, familiar relationship between teacher and their observer, a relationship should be cultivated to increase the opportunity for a coaching conversation within the post-observation conference experience. Cultivating this relationship will require the observer to be thoughtful in terms of how to build their own instructional credibility and how to promote workplace trust amongst teachers, both features of the observer than can be achieved over time by being active in the observation, by being thoughtful in the post-observation conference, and by conducting follow-up visits to showcase the observer's investment in the teacher's growth or success.

Best practices and a more systematic framework to conduct post-observation conferences is only the beginning. As demonstrated throughout this study, since teacher-participants highlight the importance of feedback that is specific to them and their teaching, this framework of best

practices must be utilized in conjunction with differentiated supervision (Rorrer, Skrla, & Scheurich, 2008). Each post-observation conference experience must be unique to the teacher who is being coached, with the observer being just as active of a participant in this experience as the teacher themselves.

Recommendations for Future Study

Existing research looks closely at teacher evaluation, as well as the perceptions of teachers and administrators of evaluation systems over time. Teachers must find value in their evaluation system in order for it to provide motivation and meaningful data to inform their practices (Xu, Grant, & Ward, 2016). What surfaced from this study is a distinction between responses from elementary teachers (those who teach pre-kindergarten through fifth grade) to secondary teachers (those who teach grades 6-12). A deeper understanding of both perspectives, unique to their own study, would be important in reviewing more granularly those pieces of the post-observation conference that impact either cohort of teacher. Particularly, conversational analysis of elementary-level and secondary-level post-observation conferences would be beneficial in recognizing if a distinction exists regarding embracing and non-embracing teacher responses during these meetings.

An additional qualitative study would be beneficial where teachers and building leadership are all interviewed from the same school building regarding the post-observation conference. Using participants from the same school building would allow for a micro-study where school norms are shared. Such a study would allow for themes and concerns to emerge that are specific to that school building, allowing for specific suggestions to the school building and the way in which the post-observation conference is employed in that school building. Training practices and post-observation implementation strategies can then be reviewed, specific

to the building. Subsequent solutions that are immediate may be implemented in an attempt to remedy building-level issues that arise from the study.

Future research related specifically to teacher/observer relationship can also take place, examining those post-observation conferences between teachers and observers, both as internal employees of the same school district, and comparing those experiences with those post-observation conferences between teachers and external observers. This would allow for a study to more closely review and compare the quality of feedback and feedback-giving strategies between internal and external observers to determine teacher-observer relationships and the impact those relationships may potentially have on the post-observation conference experience.

Conclusions

The post-observation conference is an opportunity. It is an opportunity to talk through instructional delivery on the part of the teacher, to provide supports, and to serve as a reminder that the teacher is not in it alone. It is this partnership, between teacher and observer, that can make an enormous impact on teachers' instructing, subsequent students' learning, and ultimately, meeting a building's or school district's vision. One could not and should not, either on the part of the teacher or on the part of the observer, do it without the other. What is clear, though, is that this dialogue requires teacher-specific commentary by the observer, delicately and intentionally leading, maneuvering, and meaningfully diagnosing throughout this conversation so that the teacher leaves supported in this side-by-side work towards purposeful growth.

Such dialogue cannot rest in isolation, though, because if it is done well, if it is done right, and if the feedback is thoughtful and personalized, it can ignite reflection and a partnership that allows the post-observation conference to springboard into something more. This dialogue could potentially transform into widespread instructional refinement or even department-wide or

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building-level trust. Understanding the post-observation conference as an important and

reflective transactional experience makes the purposeful words and actions during this

designated time that much more critical to the observer, and perhaps just as inspiring to the

teacher in that feedback chair.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Post-observation Conference Sample Form

Please complete this form after your observation.

1. In general, how successful was the lesson? Did the students learn what you intended for them to learn? How do you know?

2. What was effective and/or ineffective with the instructional delivery/activities?

3. Did you depart from your plan? If so, how, and why?

4. If you had a chance to teach this lesson again to the same group of students, what would you do differently?

5. What are some student work samples that you can supply?

Charlotte Danielson's FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING

DOMAIN 1: Planning and Preparation

1a Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy
• Content knowledge • Prerequisite relationships • Content pedagogy

1b Demonstrating Knowledge of Students
• Child development • Learning process • Special needs
• Student skills, knowledge, and proficiency
• Interests and cultural heritage

1c Setting Instructional Outcomes
• Value, sequence, and alignment • Clarity • Balance
• Suitability for diverse learners

1d Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources
• For classroom • To extend content knowledge • For students

1e Designing Coherent Instruction
• Learning activities • Instructional materials and resources
• Instructional groups • Lesson and unit structure

1f Designing Student Assessments
• Congruence with outcomes • Criteria and standards
• Formative assessments • Use for planning

DOMAIN 2: The Classroom Environment

2a Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport
• Teacher interaction with students • Student interaction with students

2b Establishing a Culture for Learning
• Importance of content • Expectations for learning and achievement
• Student pride in work

2c Managing Classroom Procedures
• Instructional groups • Transitions
• Materials and supplies • Non-instructional duties
• Supervision of volunteers and paraprofessionals

2d Managing Student Behavior
• Expectations • Monitoring behavior • Response to misbehavior

2e Organizing Physical Space
• Safety and accessibility • Arrangement of furniture and resources

DOMAIN 4: Professional Responsibilities

4a Reflecting on Teaching
• Accuracy • Use in future teaching

4b Maintaining Accurate Records
• Student completion of assignments
• Student progress in learning • Non-instructional records

4c Communicating with Families
• About instructional program • About individual students
• Engagement of families in instructional program

4d Participating in a Professional Community
• Relationships with colleagues • Participation in school projects
• Involvement in culture of professional inquiry • Service to school

4e Growing and Developing Professionally
• Enhancement of content knowledge and pedagogical skill
• Receptivity to feedback from colleagues • Service to the profession

4f Showing Professionalism
• Integrity/ethical conduct • Service to students • Advocacy
• Decision-making • Compliance with school/district regulations

DOMAIN 3: Instruction

3a Communicating With Students
• Expectations for learning • Directions and procedures
• Explanations of content • Use of oral and written language

3b Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques
• Quality of questions • Discussion techniques • Student participation

3c Engaging Students in Learning
• Activities and assignments • Student groups
• Instructional materials and resources • Structure and pacing

3d Using Assessment in Instruction
• Assessment criteria • Monitoring of student learning
• Feedback to students • Student self-assessment and monitoring

3e Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness
• Lesson adjustment • Response to students • Persistence

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Appendix C: Approved Teacher Practice Evaluation Instruments (New Jersey Department of Education)

New Jersey Department of Education
Approved Teacher Practice Evaluation Instruments* as of May 1, 2015*

Teacher Practice Evaluation Instruments:

- 5D+ Teacher Evaluation Rubric
- Charlotte Danielson: The Framework for Teaching Learning Sciences International (2007 Edition)
- Charlotte Danielson: The Framework for Teaching (2011 Edition)
- Charlotte Danielson: The Framework for Teaching (2013 Edition)
- Charlotte Danielson: The Framework for Teaching Instructionally Focused Edition (2013)
- Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)
- Classroom Strategies Scale Model
- Focal Point Teaching Practice Model
- IMPACT: The DCPS Effectiveness Assessment System For School-Based Personnel
- H.E.A.T./Danielson Teacher Evaluation Instrument
- Insight Core Framework
- Kenilworth Teacher Evaluation Instrument
- Lenape Regional Teacher Evaluation Instrument
- Marzano's Causal Teacher Evaluation Model
- Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) Teacher Evaluation Standards
- North Star Academy Teacher Evaluation Rubric
- Pearson Framework for the Observation of Effective Teaching
- Rhode Island Model: Teacher Evaluation & Support System (Edition II)
- Stronge Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Performance System
- Teacher Evaluation and Improvement Instrument
- The College-Ready Promise Teaching Framework (CRPTF)
- The Marshall Rubrics
- The Newark Public Schools
- The New Jersey LoTi Teacher Evaluation
- The Smart Start Teach Elite Evaluation System
- The Thoughtful Classroom Teacher Effectiveness Framework

Appendix D: Institutional Review Board Approval

UNIVERSITY OF
ARKANSAS.

To:	Dennis Marc Fare
From:	Douglas J Adams, Chair IRB Expedited Review
Date:	02/22/2021
Action:	**Exemption Granted**
Action Date:	02/22/2021
Protocol #:	2101308475
Study Title:	The Post-observation Conference: An Exploration of Feedback Strategies

The above-referenced protocol has been determined to be exempt.

If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol that may affect the level of risk to your participants, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have any questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact the IRB Coordinator at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

cc: James F Maddox, Investigator

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

Dear School Leader,

My name is Dennis M. Fare, and I am a doctoral student from the Department of Rehabilitation, Human Resources, and Communication Disorders at the University of Arkansas, currently working towards a doctoral degree in Human Resources and Workforce Development.

I reach out in an effort to recruit certificated teachers who would participate in this research study regarding the perceptions of staff member observation and the evaluation process, specifically in a school district setting. Participants would be eligible to be in this study if they are currently a certificated staff member who has undergone an evaluation system, and a post-observation conference as part of that process. Any certificated teacher who meets this broad criteria would be eligible to participate in this study.

Teacher-participants will answer a series of questions related to the observation and evaluation process, specifically related to the post-observation conference experience, through an interview with me. This interview will take place through videoconferencing means. Although there is no compensation for participating in this research study, one's participation will serve as a valuable addition to our research collection and subsequent findings could lead to a greater understanding of employee evaluation in the educational setting.

This is a voluntary study. If you should have any teachers in your school district who may be interested in sharing their perspectives, please provide their contact information to me directly, or forward this e-mail their way.

Respectfully,

Dennis M. Fare
(redacted)

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Dennis M. Fare, and I am a doctoral student from the Department of Rehabilitation, Human Resources, and Communication Disorders at the University of Arkansas, currently working towards a doctoral degree in Human Resources and Workforce Development.

I invite you to participate in this research study regarding the perceptions of staff member observations and the evaluation process, specifically in a school district setting. You are eligible to be in this study if you are currently a certificated staff member who has undergone an evaluation process, and a post-observation conference as part of that process.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will answer a series of questions related to the observation and evaluation process, specifically related to the post-observation conference experience, through an interview with me. This interview will take place through videoconferencing means. Although there is no compensation for participating in this research study, your participation will serve as a valuable addition to our research collection and subsequent findings could lead to a greater understanding of employee evaluation in the educational setting.

This is a voluntary study. You can choose to be in this study or not. Your identity, position, and school district will all be kept confidential, both in the note-taking process and through the publishing of research findings. You may withdraw from this study at any time. If you should have any questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to e-mail me directly.

I thank you very much in advance for sharing your insight.

Respectfully,

Dennis M. Fare
(redacted)

The Post-observation Conference: An Exploration of Feedback Strategies

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Principal Researcher: Dennis M. Fare
Faculty Advisor: Dr. James Maddox

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

You are invited to participate in a research study about the post-observation conference experience as part of the teacher evaluation process. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a teacher who has undergone the observation/evaluation system, and a post-observation conference experience as part of that process.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE RESEARCH STUDY

Who is the Principal Researcher?

Dennis M. Fare
(redacted)
(redacted)

Who is the Faculty Advisor?

Dr. James Maddox
jfmaddox@uark.edu

What is the purpose of this research study?

The purpose of this study is to examine how teachers respond to the post-observation conference feedback (Reddy et al., 2018), and reviews those feedback-giving practices, conditions, and strategies that ultimately prompt a teacher to utilize that feedback in their own classrooms. In exploring this research topic further, a qualitative study will provide a more in-depth look at the teacher's viewpoint of their post-observation conference and those features of the post-observation conference that either encourage or discourage the teacher to use the feedback given. This qualitative study will be conducted through a series of interviews of teachers who have undergone the post-observation experience, which will provide information to tell this story.

Who will participate in this study?

- 15-20 teachers, from a range of teaching experiences

What am I being asked to do?

Your participation will require the following:

Each interview is voluntary, and will take approximately 30 minutes to one-hour in length, with a semi-structured protocol in place, based on a list of interview questions to work towards answering the research questions, with follow-up questions taking place in response to the interviewee's initial answers to the posed interview questions. An audio recorder will be utilized to collect this data, along with transcription software and note-taking throughout the interview process, as well. When necessary, a follow-up phone call may take place for the purposes of clarification regarding a participant's response.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

There are no anticipated risks to participating.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

There are no anticipated benefits to the participant in being a part of this study.

How long will the study last?

Each interview will take approximately 30 minutes to one-hour in length, with a semi-structured protocol in place, based on a list of questions to work towards answering the research questions.

Will I receive compensation for my time and inconvenience if I choose to participate in this study?

No. You will receive no compensation for your participation in this study.

Will I have to pay for anything?

No. There will be no cost associated with your participation.

What are the options if I do not want to be in the study?

If you do not want to be in this study, you may refuse to participate. Also, you may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time during the study. Your teaching position will not be affected in any way if you refuse to participate, and you will be given sufficient time (a few days) to consider whether or not you would like to participate in this study.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

All information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable State and Federal law, and interview notes, interview transcriptions, and audio recordings will be kept on file, and confidentially stored.

Will I know the results of the study?

At the conclusion of the study, you will have the right to request feedback about the results. You may contact the faculty advisor, Dr. James Maddox (jpmaddox@uark.edu), or Principal Researcher, Dennis M. Fare (dmfare@uark.edu). You will receive a copy of this form for your files.

What do I do if I have questions about the research study?

You have the right to contact the Principal Researcher or Faculty Advisor as listed below for any concerns that you may have.

Principal Researcher: Dennis M. Fare
(redacted)
(redacted)

Faculty Advisor: Dr. James Maddox
jpmaddox@uark.edu

You may also contact the University of Arkansas Research Compliance office listed below if you have questions about your rights as a participant, or to discuss any concerns about, or problems with the research.

Ro Windwalker, CIP
Institutional Review Board Coordinator
Research Compliance
University of Arkansas
109 MLKG Building
Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201
479-575-2208
irb@uark.edu

I have read the above statement and have been able to ask questions and express concerns, which have been satisfactorily responded to by the investigator. I understand the purpose of the study as well as the potential benefits and risks that are involved. I understand that participation is voluntary. I understand that significant new findings developed during this research will be shared with the participant. I understand that no rights have been waived by signing the consent form. I have been given a copy of the consent form.

_____
Signature of Participant

Verbal Consent – Script

The following verbal consent will be read to preface each interview with each participant. This verbal consent script will include the following:

1. Description of the research and investigators conducting the research;
2. Explanation of the procedures (e.g., audio recording);
3. Duration of the subject's participation;
4. Subject protections (e.g., extent to which confidentiality will be maintained);
5. Permission to begin the research;
6. The participant will be given contact information for the investigator.

Verbal Consent Script:

> I am conducting research about the post-observation experience connected to the teacher observation/evaluation process, and I am interested in your experiences as a teacher in that process. The purpose of the research is to gain an understanding from your perspective on your own post-observation conference experiences. Your participation will involve one informal interview that will last between thirty minutes and an hour. This research has no known risks. This research will benefit the academic community because it helps us to understand the post-observation conference experience.
>
> Please know that I will do everything I can to protect your privacy. Your identity or personal information will not be disclosed in any publication that may result from the study. Notes that are taken during the interview will be stored in a secure location.
>
> Would it be all right if I audiotaped our interview? Saying no to audio recording will have no effect on the interview.

Appendix G: Participant List

Participant	Sex	Years of Service	Suburban/Urban School District	Elementary/Secondary
Participant 1	F	8	Urban	Secondary
Participant 2	M	6	Suburban	Secondary
Participant 3	F	23	Urban	Secondary
Participant 4	F	5	Suburban/Urban	Secondary
Participant 5	F	12	Suburban	Elementary
Participant 6	F	14	Suburban	Secondary
Participant 7	M	36	Urban/Suburban	Secondary
Participant 8	F	17	Suburban	Secondary
Participant 9	F	4	Suburban	Elementary
Participant 10	F	17	Suburban	Elementary
Participant 11	F	7	Suburban	Elementary
Participant 12	F	4	Suburban	Secondary
Participant 13	M	10	Urban	Secondary
Participant 14	F	1	Suburban	Elementary
Participant 15	F	6	Suburban	Secondary
Participant 16	M	14	Urban	Secondary
Participant 17	M	12	Urban	Secondary
Participant 18	M	10	Suburban	Secondary

Appendix H: Sample Transcription

Researcher OK, so first, why don't you share with me your position and how long you've been in that position and just explain what your position is before we begin this interview.

Participant 2 OK, I am a [content area] teacher and I've been that for five years where I teach [class title] this year, the [class title] honors, but I've taught many other courses.

Researcher But you have participated in the observation process in a post observation conference. Correct?

Participant 2 Yes, oh, yeah, many times.

Researcher All right, so let me start with that. So based on your perspective, what do you think the role of the observer is in the post-observation conference?

Participant 2 I think the role of the observer and the post-observation conference is kind of twofold. One, to get more evidence around the lesson that they had observed through the teachers' responses and explanations of whatever questions they ask. But I also think it's a little bit evaluative as well in terms of what the teacher says during that. So, I guess it's mainly the evidence collection for their evaluation. I've know I should mention that I've never had a post observation conference that hasn't been tied to an evaluation. Like, there's been no coaching where, like, somebody comes in informally.

Researcher All right, so it's always been focused on, like, the formal observation, right? OK, so you just said something about 'they're evaluating you during the process of observation conference.' What does that mean?

Participant 2 Yeah, I think that's more of a yes and that's not expressed. But I do as a teacher, I do feel like I am being evaluated during the actual conference, even though I know that's not where the focus should be. But I do feel like there was a test and I prepare for it in the post-observation conference. It's not like something I go in. Kind of like a very fluid conversation. I come in prepared with things I know I want to say because I feel like I'm being evaluated even in that process. So I'll come with, like, answers already to questions.

Researcher OK. So then what do you feel your role as a teacher is in the post-observation conference?

Participant 2 Well, I do think, again, I do think it's giving context around the lesson because obviously values don't come in. I mean, for my school, the observers don't come in often. So, they don't know the context around the lesson I give. So, I think, again, there's like that official venue of like I'm providing context and answering questions around the lesson that they saw. But I also do think there's an unofficial kind of strand where I'm coming into that space trying to prove like I know what I'm doing, like just in the actual interaction, not even the lesson, but I want to come prepared. So, I don't know if that answers the question.

Researcher OK, so what makes you feel that way then?

Participant 2 I suppose it would be like culture related, like this district's culture. Like, there's nothing that happens during the actual post-observation conference that I feel like takes it, like, I'm on guard or something. But given I think the culture that surrounds my district, I come into those spaces like I need to prepare if I don't have something good. It could hurt me, like if I don't come in, if I come into the space saying like, oh, I don't know, like if I get asked a question and I don't have a solid response, I could see that hurting me in some way.

Researcher That's really interesting. OK. All right. So let me ask you, from your perspective, how do you view the purpose and effectiveness of just the conference? So I say the long-term purpose and effectiveness, the purpose and the effectiveness from your perspective in the post-observation conference.

Participant 2 Yeah. Do you want me to speak personally about my own experience? Like, OK, so in terms of the purpose. Again, I think I've kind of answered that where it's like, you know, gathering evidence from the teacher around that lesson to see maybe the evaluators missed something and wants to get the side of the teacher. So, I think that's the main purpose. Again, I think there's that unofficial strand of, like, it's kind of it's almost like an interview. I think the effectiveness can only be tied to the cultural norms around a district. So, in a district like for my experience, when it's an evaluation or – sorry - when a post-observation only happens out of an evaluation, I think it's fairly ineffective because I know that that post-observation conference is so like I have skin in the game where I only care about my evaluation, like I care about my evaluation, I know that's going to be on my you know, that's gonna be a consideration, but I think it would be different if I was being observed often for the purposes of coaching practices. And then I had like a post-observation conference that was not tied to a formal evaluation. So, I don't think it's super effective for me in my case because I'm coming kind of, again, geared up and prepared.

Researcher OK. All right, so you're basing this on what? Your response to the culture? Or just the culture, or both, or how are they different?

Participant 2 Oh. I don't know. I don't know. I guess, yeah, I mean, I guess it's more of a philosophical question; I guess it could be partly how I view the culture, which I think is based in some reality, but it also could just be my personality that that's how I view situations, and that's why I come into that space that way, but to me, it's a bit of both.

Researcher So when you've had post-observation conversations, you've had it with multiple observers, correct?

Participant 2 Yeah.

Researcher So, everyone may come with a different style, so, for you, is there a structure that the post-observation conference generally has in your experience?

Participant 2 Yes. So, I think that's a really important part. And I think it explains why I come into these conferences so prepared because our district has the same structure for every post-observation. I can actually pull it up, but I think it's like six or seven questions that are asked. It's posted on our website somewhere. So, I'm able to prepare because I know exactly what they're going to ask. So, despite who is doing that post-observation, the structure is identical. There is some nuance where some folks will, after those questions, continue the conversation in some other way, but all of them follow that same structure.

Researcher So are you referring to the post-observation reflection form?

Participant 2 Yep.

Researcher OK, do you like that?

Participant 2 No, not really.

Researcher Can you tell me why?

Participant 2 Well, I don't like that it's based on the form because it feels like totally un-tailored to my lesson. The lesson that I gave, meaning, like, I know it's like a uniform thing. And the majority of those questions, while I can apply to any lesson, it's almost as if they didn't watch my lesson. Because they're not saying anything specific to what I did, they're just saying like, oh, how did you engage learners? How did you get to all learners? I know they're going to say that because it says it on the form so that I don't know, I think a more tailored approach would give me better feedback and, I don't know, I guess make it feel more like, again, personal where it feels like coaching, like I want to help you improve. I don't want to evaluate you. I want to help you. I feel like the diagnosis, it's almost like a doctor's office. Like, do you run through the checklist? Like, do you engage learners, OK. Did you change the physical classroom?

Researcher All right. So, all right. So, tell me what a tailored approach would look like.

Participant 2 So I would think that you can have those particular topics that you want to touch on, perhaps like student engagement or something, but I would prefer the observer asking a specific question to the lesson that I gave, meaning like if I had, like, students in a group working on something, and the observer referenced a suggestion around engagement in that grouping or something, something just tailored or unique to what they saw in my lesson. That would add value. That would mean something.

Researcher And you feel like you're not getting that or you haven't gotten that?

Participant 2 I would say that, in a post-observation conference, I have not gotten that in a formal post-observation. I've gotten feedback from other folks who watch my lessons, but it's not a formal process or whatever.

Researcher So, just how do you feel about the evaluators that you've had? How do you feel about their expertise on instruction related to your classroom?

Participant 2 Good question. That's a good question. I mean, it depends, but I actually do feel pretty good with that, that they are, I mean, again, I've had a lot of different evaluators, but I do think they're pretty good, their experts, content experts for sure.

Researcher All right, so if you can reflect on all the post observation conferences you've had, are there any strategies that have prompted you to actually use the feedback? What has the observer done in the post-observation conference that got you, as [name], to do what they said instead of just nodding your head?

Participant 2 For me, it was everything they did not do in the post-observation conference. For me, it was everything they did outside of the post-observation conference that was important. It was everything they did outside of that conference that built trust and that showed and displayed to me that they were there for that purpose, that made me think that maybe like you actually follow through on feedback, so again, put in some context, I might be in a unique district, but I don't necessarily know the people who evaluate me, many of them are district admin that I do not I interact with, only when they evaluate me like I don't see them outside of that. When an observer follows up on me after the post-observation conference, sans laptop, I know that they're here for that reason, to help me. It's like a built trust over the years. And I know that you're here for that reason.