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### Administrative evaluations of teachers in tested and non-tested subjects.

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ADMINISTRATIVE EVALUATION OF TEACHERS IN TESTED AND NON-  
TESTED SUBJECTS

By

Natasha D. Lanham  
B.M.E., Morehead State University, 2005  
M.M., Eastern Kentucky University, 2006  
M.Ed., University of the Cumberlands, 2009

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Submitted to the Faculty of the  
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for the Degree of

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Organizational Development

Department of Educational Leadership, Evaluation, and Organizational Development  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, Kentucky

May, 2023

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A Dissertation Approved on

April 21, 2023

By the following Dissertation Committee:

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Dr. William Kyle Ingle, Ph.D., Chair

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Dr. Mary Brydon-Miller, Ph.D.

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Dr. Rachel Yarbrough, Ed.D.

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Dr. Ashley Forrest, Ed.D.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Reid and Finn. Part of the beauty of life is knowing there's always something else out there to discover. Although you were too young to remember most of this journey, I hope I can be an inspiration to never stop learning. I love you both more than you will ever know.

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To all the educators I have worked with in any capacity over my career, thank you. Your passion, willingness, and love for your craft and students are an inspiration.

To my parents, thank you for instilling the importance of education, the drive to persist, and thank you for being willing to support me through it all.

## ABSTRACT

### ADMINISTRATIVE EVALUATION OF TEACHERS IN TESTED AND NON-TESTED SUBJECTS

Natasha D. Lanham

April 21, 2023

The teacher evaluation process seeks to help teachers grow and thrive, and as a result, affect student achievement. Administrators evaluate teachers from different subjects, grade levels, and experience levels. This qualitative study examined the perception of feedback given through the cooperating school district's evaluation system from both the teacher and the principal viewpoint in order to explore their perceptions of the quality and quantity of feedback given during the evaluation process. Participants were arts teachers, tested subject teachers, and their evaluating administrators from a suburban school district in Kentucky. The analysis revealed that generic evaluations do not differentiate for teachers in separate subjects, grade levels, or experience levels, and this lack of differentiation does not contribute to the overall effectiveness of teacher growth. These findings suggest administrator training and district and state policy revisions to address this could improve the experience of the evaluation system for all teachers.



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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Arts education in the United States has a turbulent history. What began as a pastime of the wealthy eventually grew into an expected component of education in public schools, but then it became sidelined by tested subjects. For decades lawmakers, the public, and arts advocacy groups have argued for or against the necessity of arts education in public education (Branscome, 2012; DeVereaux, 2005). While most Americans agree that arts are a fundamental component of education, arts advocate groups such as Americans for the Arts, the National Art Education Association, and the National Association for Music Education work continuously to emphasize the importance of including the arts in public education curricula in the United States.

Arts education in the United States dates back to the Colonial Era. Dissatisfied with the quality of hymns during service, ministers and laypersons spearheaded the first reform for arts education in the 1720s (Abeles et al., 1994). The first music educators traveled across the colonies, teaching students to sing at sight, or without preparation. While emphasized more or less throughout the years, the reform of education and arts education remains ongoing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016; Hancock, 2009).

Federal oversight of public education in the United States began in 1867 when President Andrew Johnson created the United States Department of Education. The fear of federal control however, resulted in the demotion of the department to the Office of Education the following year (United States Department of Education, 2010). From then

until 1958, the United States federal government largely decentralized public education, leaving states to make decisions. In response to the Soviet Union launch of Sputnik, The United States Congress created the National Defense Education Act, and the initial federal education reform began (Jolly, 2009; McGuinn, 2015). In 1979, Congress passed the Department of Education Organization Act, reinstating the demoted department. By 2010, the United States Department of Education employed approximately 4,300 employees and had a budget of approximately \$60 billion, establishing policy for education and overseeing federal assistance to U.S. states for education (United States Department of Education, 2010).

Each legislative decision regarding education prompted a wave of reform, which, in turn, influenced arts education throughout the nation (Branscome, 2012; Stallings, 2002). With the origin of a return to math and science in the 1960s, arts education became less important. From then on, legislative decisions in the United States have a long history of varied importance of arts education over time and school districts (Branscome, 2012; Heilig, Cole, & Aguilar, 2010; National Endowment for the Arts, 1988). Administrators in public schools use these federal mandates as a guideline for funding and course offerings, and without a focus on the required areas in federal mandates, schools can risk losing federal dollars from the Department of Education (Abril & Gault, 2008; Gordon, 2004).

As the administrative perspective of education changed over the decades, the systems used for evaluating educators also changed. Teacher evaluation was traditionally a local responsibility, but by the 1980s, it shifted to state control (Hazi & Rucinski, 2016). Teacher evaluation systems focused on instructional improvement and student

achievement throughout the 21st Century. Despite a focus on these components and the continuous evolution of the process, Donaldson (2009) indicated there was no evidence to show any improvement in these areas.

While teacher evaluation systems focused on administrators being instructional leaders, the foundation of evaluation systems focused on the classroom observation as a data tool. Administrators became responsible for observing instruction, using a rubric, and evaluating the teacher based on the observed lesson (Hazi & Rucinski, 2016). What the instructional leaders in education have left static is a uniform process for all teachers. The differentiation administrators expect each teacher to provide for students is missing from their own evaluations. This approach does not aid every teacher in the same way. Teachers in the beginning of their career have different needs than those at the end of their career. Teachers in Title I schools have different needs than those in non-Title I schools. Teachers' needs also vary by the subject they teach.

Helping teachers improve their instructional effectiveness, and as a result, further student learning, is the desired outcome of teacher evaluation systems (Bridich, 2016). Using a universal approach cannot support each teacher in the same way (Bergee, 1992; Darling-Hammond et al., 1983; Duke & Blackman, 1991; Morgan et al., 2014). In this study, I explored the teacher evaluation experience from the perspectives of arts teachers, tested subjects teachers, and their evaluating administrators in order to determine if they perceive differences in the quality and quantity of feedback offered. Recent research suggests that teacher perceptions of performance evaluation systems (PESs) are interrelated and linked to perceptions of changes in teaching practices and to the potential impact on student learning; further recommending that future research may seek to use

“focus groups or other qualitative data collection to understand why teachers’ perceptions differ within schools” (Finster & Milanowski, 2018, p. 35). Derrington and Martinez suggest that, “future studies might examine the specific reasons why some teachers believe the evaluation system provides perfunctory evaluation rather than opportunities for learning and growth” (2019, p. 16). Robinson (2019) explored the perspectives of music teachers working within high stakes teacher evaluation systems through a policy lens, identifying the major challenges these systems pose for music educators. However, the study was limited to the perceptions of music teachers. As will be shown below, my study answered these calls for future research and looked beyond the narrow scope of music teachers by interviewing tested and non-tested subject teachers. With regard to the latter, these teachers were teachers specializing in music, art, dance, drama, or a combination of the four arts areas.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of my study was to explore the perceptions of the provision and substance of evaluative feedback among evaluating administrators and teachers in both tested and non-tested subjects. In this study, I answered the following questions: How do teachers in tested subject and teachers in non-tested subjects perceive the quality and quantity of principal feedback? How do administrators perceive the quality and quantity of their feedback given to teachers in tested subject and teachers in non-tested subjects? If informants (teachers and administrators) perceive differences in the quality and quantity of feedback, how do they rationalize these differences?

### **Scope of the Study**

Marshall, et al. (2013) recommends that a single case study should contain between 15 to 30 interviews. In this study, I utilized data from seven schools that included an evaluating administrator, an arts educator, and a core area teacher, yielding 18 total participants from across a suburban school district in Kentucky. This allowed for data saturation that included teachers from schools with different student populations and contextual situations. Data collection took place throughout the 2022-2023 school year.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are several limitations of the proposed study. One is the limited generalizability of a qualitative case study. Although not generalizable beyond the 18 participants and the context of their single suburban school district, my study offers important insights and perspectives on the district's teacher evaluations system. Furthermore, the purpose of a case study is "not to represent the world, but to represent the case" (Stake, 2005, p. 460). Kentucky lawmakers recently returned the control of teacher evaluation systems to the local level through Senate Bill 1 (also known as the School Safety and Resiliency Act), which was signed into law in 2019. Although local districts in Kentucky may have autonomy to develop an evaluation system that is specific to the contextual needs of their district and teachers, other states may not have the opportunity to have input on the teacher evaluation process at all if controlled at the state level.

Another limitation of the study was the self-reporting of feedback and time allocation. The administrators and teachers estimated the time spent with each other when



post-conferencing and self-reported the feedback given. This may be a limitation when examining any predispositions towards the evaluative feedback progress for the teachers.

In addition, a limitation of the study is that principals provided contact information for all but two of the teacher informants. I had an established relationship with two teachers in the district that qualified for the study and were willing to participate. The other ten teachers were selected by the principals. This could lead to a bias in reporting as administrators may not choose teachers that had negative thoughts about them or the evaluation process.

The final limitation of the study is the volume of teacher evaluations released for analysis. Although I sent follow-up emails to all of the participants and gave teachers the option of redacting identifying information on the forms along with postage and envelopes for those evaluations only three teachers released evaluations for examination. This limitation did not allow for full analysis across all of the participating teachers.

### **Definition of Terms**

I used the following terms in the context of this study:

**Arts specialist** – a teacher who specializes in music, art, dance, drama, or a combination of the four arts areas.

**Evaluating administrator** – a school principal or assistant principal that observes, evaluates, and makes instructional recommendations for a specific teacher.

**Evaluative feedback** – feedback given to teachers after an observation by their evaluating administrator. It is used as a data source for the summative teacher performance evaluation.

**Experienced educator** – a teacher with more than 10 years of experience in this study

**Instructional leader** – a person in a school, frequently an administrator, who leads a learning community to further teacher and student growth and student achievement.

**Kentucky Framework for Teaching** – guidelines for using the four performance measures (planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities) for teacher evaluations in Kentucky.

**Non-tenured teacher** – a teacher with less than five years of experience in this study

**Non-tested subject teacher** – a teacher that does not specialize in English, math, science, or social studies, specifically an arts specialist in this study.

**Peer observer** – a teacher that observes in another teacher’s classroom and offers feedback after observing the lesson.

**Self-Reflection and Personal Growth Plan** – a form adjusted yearly after self-reflection to rate teachers on the four performance measures used in the Kentucky Framework for teaching. The Personal Growth Plan uses a self-identified area of growth from the Self-Reflection portion of the form to create a goal within the framework.

**Student Learning Focus** – a yearly goal set by teachers that includes incorporation of deeper learning strategies and used as data for the summative evaluation.

**Teacher Performance Evaluation** – document used to rate teachers based on the four performance measures in the Kentucky Framework for Teaching.

**Tenured teacher** – a teacher with at least four years and one day of experience in the same school district for this study.

**Tested subject teacher** – a teacher who specializes in English, math, science, or social studies.

## **Organization of the Study**

Chapter II serves as review of the literature. It is organized into four sections: historical context, administrative influence in the arts, teacher evaluation systems, and social constructivism. Chapter III will explain the research methodology utilized in this study, including participants, data collection, and procedures. Chapter IV will present the collected data and analysis procedures of the study, and Chapter V will summarize the major findings of the study and include recommendations for future research and implications for policy and practice.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The intrinsic value of the arts has long influenced policy and arts advocacy of the public (DeVereaux, 2005). Over time, state and federal policymakers in the United States mandated public education reforms, including standards, assessment, and accountability policies, while those in the education community call the validity of accountability and well-being into question (Eisner, 2004; Goldhaber & Özek, 2019). Between intrinsic value, reforms, and mandates, an individual constructs a perspective of arts education.

Despite most Americans agreeing that arts education is a vital component to the curriculum and advancement of United States schooling (Ruppert, 2006), school districts continue to place less importance on the arts, making cuts in arts education, partly in response to the lax requirements from federal and state governments for accountability (Pederson, 2007). Researchers have repeatedly shown the value of arts education to bolster achievement in other subjects and to create deeper thinking, community, and decrease aggression (Rawlings, 2015; Southgate & Roscigno, 2009). These practices of cognitively driven and culturally relevant teaching in arts areas show that arts programs can align with contemporary views of education (Heaton & Hickman, 2020). Research shows how educational leaders make decisions to keep or cut arts programs (Major, 2013). However, absent from the current literature is an exploration of administrators' perceptions of evaluating arts specialists in schools.

In this qualitative study, I investigated the influences shaping evaluations of non-tested subject teachers by their supervising administrators. While research has explored

evaluative techniques based on tested subject areas, it is noted that, “further research is needed in this area to fully examine how leadership practices may differ across content areas” (Lochmiller, 2015, p. 99). The first goal of teacher evaluations is documenting teacher performance and afterwards, functioning to help improve teacher practice and skill (Dudley et al., 2019; Stronge, 2006). I sought to understand how background and experiences with the arts shape the evaluating principals’ perceptions. In this study, I answered the following questions: How do teachers in tested subject and teachers in non-tested subjects perceive the quality and quantity of principal feedback? How do administrators perceive the quality and quantity of their feedback given to teachers in tested subject and teachers in non-tested subjects? If informants (teachers and administrators) perceive differences in the quality and quantity of feedback, how do they rationalize these differences? I sought to contribute to the field by addressing calls for future research and looking beyond the narrow scope of music teachers by interviewing tested and non-tested subject teachers (i.e., music, art, dance, and drama teachers).

In this literature review, I organized studies into three categories: how historical events and legislation have influenced arts education, the factors that influence administrators when making decisions about arts education, and how arts teachers and administrators use and view the evaluation process. Through this review, I highlight how these factors contribute to the current views and values of arts education in schools, the trends found in the existing literature, and how my research will add to the existing literature.

## **Historical Context of Arts Education in the United States**

The evolution of arts education in the United States is one that has many influences. From 1919 and the era of Dewey, arts education was a pastime of the wealthy, but as a new middle class materialized as a result of economic growth in the 1920s, this new social class took interest in the arts. Leisure time became a norm for this group, and as a result of this newfound interest, by the end of the 1920s, the arts became a curricular component (Heilig et al., 2010; Saunders, 1971). Visual art education emerged in most schools, and due to the lack of requirements of equipment, vocal music became the primary means of music education in schools (Eaklor, 1985; Saunders, 1971). The Great Depression led to school closures while enrollments continued to rise. This resulted in cuts to the arts as a means of cost savings, and the practice of eliminating arts courses to provide additional revenue was a repeated occurrence throughout the next three decades (Efland, 1983; Heilig et al., 2010).

By the 1950s, the post-war economic upturn brought back many arts specialists into schools. Shortly thereafter, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, and lawmakers once again pushed the arts to the background to make way for math and science. The United States Congress passed The National Defense Education Act in 1958, which sought to bolster studies in science, technology, engineering, and math (Jolly, 2009). In the 1960s, the response was swift to the lack of arts emphasis, and soon federal government organizations began advocating for arts education (Heilig et al., 2010). The United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (1963) created publications highlighting the importance of arts education for all students, and the National Endowment for the Arts formed in 1965. To further the movement, federal government began giving local

and state education departments more autonomy just as arts education policymaking and public funding from major arts foundations became more prevalent, and the state of arts education was a direct reflection of educational legislation from the 1980s on (Heilig et al., 2010).

By the 1980s, the U.S. economy was on a downturn with homelessness and unemployment at a high. Students' standardized test scores were at a low, and to address the deficiencies, the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) authored *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. *A Nation at Risk* led to the proliferation of standards, assessments, and accountability policies, including standardized test scores. *A Nation at Risk* detailed how the U.S. educational system was failing to meet the national need for a competitive workforce, questioned the quality of teaching and learning in U.S. schools, and called for comparisons of schools in the U.S. with those of other nations. As a result, *A Nation at Risk* de-emphasized the arts, as government shaped policy by increasing educational accountability in core subjects. Computer science, English, social studies, and math became the cornerstone for education, and arts programs began to diminish (Branscome, 2012). Eliminating electives was a quick remedy to increasing rigor, along with longer school days and more required courses (Guthrie & Springer, 2004).

From *A Nation at Risk*, the United States Congress mandated that the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) work in coalition with the United States Department of Education to research the condition of arts education in United States schools (National Endowment for the Arts, 2002). The NEA rebutted *A Nation at Risk* with a report on the dire outlook of arts education titled, *Toward Civilization: A Report on Arts Education*

(1988). *Toward Civilization* found three central components of deficiencies in arts education. Administrators considered arts non-essential subjects, schools did not offer arts appreciation within courses, and educational leaders did not have established standards or curriculum for arts courses (National Endowment for the Arts, 1988). Because of *Toward Civilization*, the public and Congress became concerned for the future of arts education and began the process of placing more emphasis on support for the arts (National Endowment for the Arts, 2002).

Although the federal government was integral to education policy in the United States, lawmakers largely avoided curriculum decisions until the early 1990s (Superfine, 2005). Encouraging systemic reform, the legislature created the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* (1994). With this, Congress finally heard the voices of the public and arts advocacy groups. With the bipartisan passage of this bill, the arts were validated as a core content area (Superfine, 2005).

*Goals 2000* established the National Education Standards and Improvement Council and tasked the council with finding appropriate groups to develop standards (Mulcahy, 1994). A group of stakeholders put forth the National Standards for Arts Education the same year, which established standards for students in 4th, 8th, and 12th grade (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2016). For the first time ever this included all four art forms: music, visual art, dance, and drama, and required students graduating high school to be proficient in at least one art form (Kirkland, 1999). However, by 1999 in the run-up to a Presidential election cycle, the United States Congress refused to reauthorize Goals 2000.



When George W. Bush took office as President of the United States in 2001, one of his priorities was reforming education in the United States. *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) was a sweeping education reform with four cornerstones: increased accountability measures, federal funding spent on researched based initiatives, flexibility provided at the local level, and more school choice for families (*No Child Left Behind Act*, 2001). The newfound focus on high-stakes testing was passed in a bipartisan measure in January 2002 and was an update to the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) of 1965 (Grey, 2009; Heilig et al., 2010). States implemented the policy beginning in the 2002 – 2003 school year (Dee & Jacob, 2011).

As in *Goals 2000*, NCLB continued naming arts as a core subject along with foreign languages, but the students were not tested in these areas (Gara et al., 2020; Grey, 2009). Consequently, schools were first placed on a probationary status and using funds of their own, developed strategies to address the deficiencies. If students in the school still did not make yearly adequate progress, the United States Department of Education cut federal dollars (Beveridge, 2010). Because of needing corrective action, these schools faced the potential consequences of complete closure or four restructuring options: opening as a charter, replacing teachers that did not produce required results, management by a for-profit company, or a state takeover (Chapman, 2004). This created another unintended consequence for arts programs across the nation. Some schools greatly cut time for the arts, while others eliminated arts programs entirely when forced to focus on tested subjects, and the number of arts teachers employed across the nation plummeted (Grey, 2009). Another approach principals used was offering arts as an enrichment class that students reaching proficiency earned. Others attended remedial

classes in tested core subject classes (Beveridge, 2010; Chapman, 2004). NCLB set forth the requirement of all students reaching proficiency in reading and math by 2014, and the pressure to perform was on administrators (Dee & Jacob, 2011).

The law also categorized students into multiple subpopulations based on race, English language learners, special education, and socioeconomic status. When subpopulations did not meet adequate yearly progress, the school was penalized as well. Schools serving the neediest students began losing funding, which made the job of reaching 100% proficiency that much more difficult for teachers and administrators (Darling-Hammond, 2007).

Minority students are less likely to be involved in the arts, and minorities are more likely to face adverse situations at home including poverty, juvenile delinquency, substance abuse exposure, and mental health disorders (Jacob & Ryan, 2018). In addition, schools with the highest percentages of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch have a lower probability of offering arts courses (Elpus, 2020). In many communities not offering school arts programs, this resulted in a movement to privatize the arts, but with a fee that contributes to the gap in access (Hourigan, 2022). Consequently, the arts social-emotional benefits may be most beneficial to students growing up in difficult environments, giving these students an outlet for their experiences (Chappell & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2013). In addition, these groups of students are already less likely to graduate from high school within four years, and the school connectedness arts courses can provide can be beneficial (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Rawlings, 2015).

In 2003, the Bush Administration cut funding overall to educational programs described as having minimal impact. This included the arts, and schools were encouraged

to use arts integration as a means of teaching arts (Chapman, 2004). This did not go unnoticed, however. Arts advocacy groups such as the Arts Education Working Group and a subcommittee on arts education of the National Education Task Force began examining arts education and lobbied to reauthorize arts funding in NCLB (Grey, 2009).

ESEA was due for reauthorization in 2007, but due to dissatisfaction with NCLB, the reauthorization did not occur (Darrow, 2016). President Barack Obama signed *The Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) into law in 2015, and returned accountability responsibility to the states (Mathis & Trujillo, 2016a). Education organizations were pleased accountability was returned to state responsibility, and Adequate Yearly Progress was no longer required as it was in NCLB. However, critics of the act were not pleased with the continued focus on assessment and identifying the schools in the lowest five percent as in need of improvement (Darrow, 2016; Mathis & Trujillo, 2016b).

ESSA (2015) articulates that each student should receive an education that is well-rounded, and this should include the arts (Darrow, 2016). In addition, ESSA discourages pull out programs that remove students from arts programs to focus on reading and math (NAfME, 2016). The loosening of federal accountability creates an atmosphere more favorable for arts education, however ESSA (2015) requires evidence from education programs that request funding for arts education (Kisida et al., 2020). Beyond this requirement, it is up to the state legislatures and departments of education to work towards creating an authentic educational experience.

Both federal and state mandates influence educational opportunity in public schools. Research details the effects of these decisions at the local and state level. While each case is contextual, there are specific instances of how these mandates influence arts

education in schools. Heilig et al. (2010) examined the effects of legislative decisions and public perception of arts education in Texas. By 2007, remediation efforts pulled out students in music ensembles if they failed the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills test. Within two years, scores improved and lobbying began to address the importance of arts education, as students were not receiving ensemble instruction. Touting the creative thinking skills needed in today's job market, the Texas legislature passed House Bill 3 and included arts education as a requirement. Consistently over the course of the last century, support and requirements for the arts have varied based on the social, political, and economic context in the country at the time.

Another change was how school systems handled responses to NCLB and arts education. Spohn (2008) examined this in rural Ohio in a Title I district using individual interviews with teachers. Spohn found that, in 2002, the district began to adjust arts instruction as the state standards changed to meet NCLB requirements. Subject areas that were tested began to have more emphasis placed upon them with assessments to prepare for the end of year assessment. As NCLB does not evaluate higher order thinking skills or creativity, the amount of time allocated for the arts decreased when schools did not meet accountability goals. Administrators responsible for curriculum and instruction spent time obtaining grants for core subject areas, but the administrators expected arts specialists to write their own grants to fund their classrooms (Spohn, 2008). What researchers are not exploring is how the current systematic mandates influence the administrators' decisions within their school, specifically the arts classrooms.

Repeatedly, as legislation placed greater emphasis on tested subjects, schools include arts in other subjects by integration. In North Carolina, changes occurred to

schools based on a new accountability model created in response to a statewide comprehensive plan introduced by the governor (Gordon, 2002). One elementary school piloted a school-wide arts integration program, but the accountability system changed. When the school did not meet its reading goals, the arts integration system also changed in response. Arts specialists were suddenly reading one-on-one with students instead of helping integrate art into reading. The visual art teacher and the dance teacher left the school, and there was no mention from the principal of replacing them. The administration did put two new intervention programs in place for reading (Gordon, 2002). This action adds weight to the argument that as legislative decisions place pressure on administration to perform well, administrators are likely to allocate more funding to tested subject areas.

Using interviews, surveys, and observations, Gordon found the students in the school moved from experiencing the arts in every subject the first two years of the program, to experiencing the arts in very few instances beyond the art classrooms. The administration was not sure how to incorporate the arts into a school that was not meeting its reading goal. The principal also did not acknowledge the value the arts could have on reading itself. The teachers of the school embraced change, and the researcher believed they had a valuable experience to initiate discussions of the importance of the arts. Teachers felt they had experienced response to accountability models and gave them the expertise to begin analyzing how it affected their instruction within arts integration (Gordon, 2002).

While there is some debate about what arts integration is exactly, whether it is co-equal arts instruction within subject areas, using arts to teach other subject areas, or full

arts integration in all subject areas, arts activists also lobby for arts in their purist form - art for art's sake. Mishook and Kornhaber (2006) studied accountability and arts integration through administrator interviews. For the purpose of the study, the teachers carrying out the arts integration activities planned with equal weight between the arts and other subjects, they provided rubrics and scoring guides, and they planned the lesson using state curriculum standards. Mishook and Kornhaber collected data in Virginia, where the Standards of Learning (SOL) test measured English, math, science, and social studies. Mishook and Kornhaber selected schools with both strong and weak arts focuses to create as much variant as possible in the sample. In total, 15 of 18 administrators interviewed mentioned arts integration. According to Mishook and Kornhaber, the data collected shows little decrease in arts instruction because of high-stakes testing, but this may be deceptive. Administrators described schools as having arts integration when it was merely an afterthought to meet requirements. Their research guides policy by highlighting how administrators are reinterpreting what arts instruction is to coincide with other priorities. Two of the three schools in the study that identified high levels of arts integration also identified high socio-economic status (SES) of students. This led Mishook and Kornhaber to report that students in the low-SES schools experienced arts integration as a way of preparation for state exams, and students were less likely to be experiencing high-quality arts instruction.

Despite pressure from the federal government to place emphasis on tested subjects (Spohn, 2008), many administrators see value in the arts. Graham et al. (2002) described the effect of testing and accountability on elementary visual art, music, and physical education classes. In Virginia, the state department of education developed a

plan to revoke accreditation if 70% of students did not pass appropriate SOL tests within five years (Graham et al., 2002). Graham et al. explored whether principals in Virginia were considering eliminating or reducing time for visual art, music, and physical education (AMPE) using a survey and whether there was a relationship between the amount of time allocated to AMPE and scores on SOL tests in third and fifth grades.

Graham et al. found wide variation in the amount of time allocated for AMPE. More than 88% of the principals planned no change in allocated time, which was a surprise to researchers. One principal reported that he recognized the importance of these areas in a well-rounded education as well as enhancing other academic areas. There was no relation between AMPE time allocation and success or failure on the Virginia SOL tests. Principals who decided to decrease time or eliminate programs in AMPE with the expectation that scores would improve had no basis for their decision (Graham et al., 2002). Graham et al. provide evidence that eliminating AMPE time in school does not help improve standardized test scores.

While NCLB set out to repair the direst situations in education, many of the reforms became superficial instead (McGuinn, 2012). After President Barack Obama took office in 2009, his administration worked to develop more substantial changes in education reform. In February of the same year, Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), which included a component of \$4.35 billion for a competitive grant program in education (United States Department of Education, 2009). This program titled, Race to the Top Fund (RTTT), based reform on monetary rewards for states that innovatively created conditions for reform that would boost achievement, graduation rates, and college and career readiness. While there was

little impact on arts education, part of the requirements of RTTT included reforming teacher evaluation systems, and in 2010 and 2011, 19 states received RTTT funds, one of which was Kentucky (United States Department of Education, 2015; Wieczorek et al., 2018).

While the last 20 years placed an emphasis on the return to subjects tested, another response to low performance on standardized testing was a push for more education in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Policymakers, businesses, and educators recognize the need for 21st century skills in graduates, but like arts education, technology education has a tenuous past in public schools (Daugherty, 2013). Since recognizing the need, federal lawmakers focused more on investing in programs to promote STEM education. The federal budget for STEM education is over 2 billion dollars annually (Gonzalez & Kuenzi, 2012). This shift towards improving STEM education further contributed to the decline in support for arts education. STEM provides many opportunities for students, but one deficiency of STEM is creativity. Arts education advocates also recognize the arts' importance in STEM, which fosters creativity as well and now support classes that are labeled as science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) instead of STEM (Daugherty, 2013).

### **Factors Influencing Administrative Decisions in Non-Tested Subjects**

Pressures from legislation and accountability models is not the only reported influence on administrators that make decisions in education. School-level influences can be important for arts education (Miksza 2013). Both administrative support, community support, and parental support are influential. Using survey data, Miksza (2013) found that school arts programs are likely to thrive when surrounded by



community and parental organizations that advocate for the arts. This finding related to student interest and demand for the arts. Miksza also found that lack of administrative attendance at concerts had a small negative effect on the music ensemble programs. Encouraging administration to attend arts events could remedy the problem, and administrators that are not aware of the inadequacy of resources could be educated by being present. Educating the administrator on the status of the arts education programs in the school is vital to helping the programs thrive (Miksza, 2013). The literature does not identify the prior arts experiences of evaluating administrators and how their participation and presence shapes their perspective.

As administrators form perceptions about arts specialists, curriculum, and the importance of arts courses, they begin to make decisions about funding arts programs or using the money for subjects with more accountability. According to Major (2013), school districts that place a strong emphasis on whole-child education are likely to fund arts programs. This drives the decision-making process from the top down. Administrative and community and parental expectations lead districts to find many creative ways to supplement funding for the arts, including partnerships with outside organizations (Major, 2013).

Administrative perceptions of the principals in the building also create a narrative of the arts programs in the building. Utilizing a survey research design, Abril and Gault (2006) examined the elementary principals' perception of music curriculum. A random sample of 350 principals yielded a 61% response rate. Abril and Gault asked what the perceptions of learning outcomes were, what goals resulted, what an ideal description was, and identified any difference between perception and ideal description. Principals

were aware of students listening in music but were less aware they were creating and composing. Principals understood students were performing, but the ideal situation response focused on understanding music in relation to other subjects. Principals' broad educational responses indicated that cultural awareness and creativity were expected, but fostering critical thinking was not. The findings indicated that not every administrator is aware of the instructional practices and pedagogy occurring in the music classroom (Abril & Gault, 2006). A gap in the literature is how misconceptions of pedagogy occur and how the principals form pedagogical perceptions in arts courses.

Two years later, Abril and Gault (2008) examined the secondary school principal perspective of music education. The researchers asked the same questions with minor revisions for the secondary school setting. They used a random sample of 1,000 secondary school principals across the nation with regional representation, and 54% of the sample responded. They found that secondary administrators seldom mentioned arts integration. Principals did not expect creating and composing, but performance was expected. Abril and Gault explained this could be a result of the course offerings, as music ensemble classes have been a common course offering at the secondary level for decades. Principals indicated that NCLB and standardized tests had the most negative impact on music programs. Scheduling also had a negative impact according to principals, and some indicated that reduced funding due to NCLB affected what they offered in the schedule. Parents, music educators, other teachers, and the school board had a positive effect. Principals did not expect students to learn some of the more rigorous aspects of musicianship, such as composing. This suggests that there is a misconception between what is happening in the classroom and what is known to be

happening in the classroom by the administrators in the building. Misconceptions between administration and non-tested subject teachers' curriculum can lead to barriers during the teacher evaluation process led by supervising administrators.

### **Teacher Evaluation Systems**

Teachers and administrators view evaluations as a tool to inform practice and positively affect student learning (Bridich, 2016). When used effectively, teacher evaluation systems have the potential to advance the educational experience of students and teachers (Wakamatsu, 2016). Recently in the United States, many school districts made the decision to adopt a more rigorous system to evaluate teachers. This widespread adoption completely changed the role of the administrator to include being a strong instructional leader (Neumerski et al., 2018). Much of this reform was based on states competing for federal RTTT funds, but the ESSA accountability measures contribute to the reform as well (Wieczorek et al., 2018).

However, teacher evaluation systems are often criticized for lacking differentiation for teacher needs (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). While administrators view the evaluation process as a satisfactory method for measuring teacher effectiveness, teachers rate evaluations based on who the evaluator is and whether the administrator has the expertise to provide valuable feedback (Bridich, 2016). According to Bridich (2016), administrators should address the schism and find approaches to understand the teachers' perceptions.

Administrators have the opportunity to shape school climate and culture and create an atmosphere where conversations can occur about the perception of observational tool data. Positive rapport between the administration and teachers has the

ability to affect student achievement and teacher pedagogy positively (Zimmerman, 2003). This is an important detail to explore, as this rapport is vital to having effective conversation with transparent teacher and principal input (Reddy et al., 2018). According to Hallinger et al. (2014), positive rapport between teachers and administrators is imperative to the success of teacher evaluations. The very structure of teacher evaluation systems, and the formal, highly structured design can lead to poor rapport with teachers as administrators perceive their constant time constraints prevent relationship building (Neumerski et al., 2018).

Teachers have autonomy to choose their delivery method, materials, and sometimes curriculum in their classrooms. If policies intensify teacher evaluation systems, and as a result limits the amount of autonomy teachers have in the classroom, the balance of the normal relationship and positive rapport between teacher and administrator are threatened (Hallinger et al., 2014). The literature does not indicate how the specific rapport of the administrator and content-specific teacher influences the administrative intrinsic value of the subject, specifically the arts. The literature also does not indicate how the teachers' perspectives align or differ from the principals. Wiczorek et al. (2018) suggested a limitation of their study was the absence of teacher interviews regarding instructional adjustments after evaluation changes from RTTT, and in a 2018 study on teacher evaluation, Neumerski et al. states, "Future studies would also benefit from including the perspective of teachers..." (p. 292). Derrington and Martinez (2019) suggest examining the reasons teachers do not see the evaluation system as an opportunity to grow.

## **Perceptions of Teacher Evaluation Systems**

Despite the controversial methods of collecting data for teachers for the purpose of teacher evaluation, principals are comfortable with the evaluation systems that are in place. Lavigne and Chamberlain (2017) tell us that overall, administrators feel competent to evaluate teachers in the classroom. However, it is not always where the confidence in their evaluation abilities comes from. Although there are specific trainings and professional development opportunities to help administrators understand and deliver accurate feedback, administrators indicate these do not always aid in their work. The research has not indicated where the confidence in their work comes from, and there is indication that there is not a uniform perception of evaluations from administrators (Kimball & Milanowski, 2009; Lavigne & Chamberlain, 2017). Examining the variables that contribute to this will guide my research.

Teacher evaluation systems are often tied to policies, while the evaluation systems attempt to measure competency and effectiveness (Darling-Hammond et al., 1983). Administrators without a knowledge base of the subject area they are observing have the potential to add to the discrepancies in the evaluation of arts specialists. Wakamatsu (2016), describes an evaluator that knew nothing of dance pedagogy, was dissatisfied with aspects of the lesson, but did not have any instructional or pedagogical feedback to offer the teacher. Research indicates there is a gap in the research when examining sufficient preparation for administrators for content-specific evaluation (Charalambos et al., 2014; Wakamatsu, 2016).

Teachers that consider principals mentors value principals as evaluators. Teachers view evaluators with extensive teaching backgrounds and strong pedagogy

knowledge as more effective evaluators (Zimmerman & Deckert-Pelton, 2003). Each principal is not equal as an evaluator however. Zimmerman and Deckert-Pelton (2003) also detail the opposite effect in their research, "Conversely when principals are perceived to have little teaching or pedagogical experience, or reduced content knowledge, teachers' belief in their principals' abilities to be competent judges of teaching abilities is greatly reduced" (p. 34). Teachers rely on instructional leaders to accurately assess their teaching abilities, and few teachers change instructional practices because of the evaluation system when paired with an administrator without a strong pedagogical background (Halverson et al., 2004). The context of each administrator and teacher is unique, and administration should assign themselves teachers that will most likely view them as effective instructional leaders. Preparing to be an instructional leader is an ongoing task that principals and those that guide principal training must make a priority (Range et al., 2012).

However, most teachers feel that their evaluating administrator is competent to provide valuable feedback. Only a small percentage of teachers that feel they are not getting quality feedback from their evaluator, and it is oftentimes the result of an extreme contrast in pedagogical background (Halverson et al., 2004). As noted in research, administrators report the hours required to evaluate teachers as inadequate (Range et al., 2011). Exploring how to utilize this time to inform practice of all teachers, regardless of content area, is important, and what the research does not explore thoroughly is the evaluation practices of arts specialists specifically (Maranzano, 2000).

Teachers in all subjects that are more advanced and specialized also report a disconnect between administrators' evaluations and subject-matter growth as instructors.

Derrington and Martinez (2019) used a survey instrument to examine perceptions of the evaluation process in Tennessee. The researchers contacted every teacher in 14 schools, and 148 responded, yielding a 26.8% return rate. Teachers reported a concern that focused and narrowed subjects at the secondary level do not necessarily fit into the provided rubric. Teachers also reported not being able to use administrator feedback to improve instructionally in their specific subject area.

Arts specialists have varied experiences and perceptions based on their contextual position when examining teacher evaluation systems. As a result, administrators have varied expectations for arts specialists, and in some cases the expectations are unreasonable for the skillset the arts specialist has (Conway, 2002; Gates et al., 2015). When teachers in arts disciplines are expected to integrate assessed subjects, the environment and inauthentic delivery of instruction can obstruct learning as opposed to aid to it (Pederson, 2007). Research in Colorado suggests their change in evaluation in 2013 created a system driven by assessment where all teachers were expected to deliver literacy and math instruction (Gates et al., 2015).

Other states are returning to an arts-based focus for arts specialists' evaluations, using student work that shows growth in specific arts-based disciplines. Evaluations in Delaware in arts classes expect teachers to provide evidence of creating, performing, and responding to the arts (Gates et al., 2015). Arizona took a completely different route to support arts specialists and identified some subjects such as English and math as a group easily assessed by standardized tests, and other subjects, such as the arts, as the opposite. The state board of education recognized the inability to provide support to teachers and offers support for content specific professional developments, performance-based

assessments, and university partnerships to enhance learning for teachers in this group (Gates et al., 2015).

Beginning teachers also give insight to what arts specialists need to meet state and administrator expectations in the classroom. Using focus groups, interviews, and surveys Conway (2002) explores perceptions of beginning music teachers when examining their pre-service preparation. The teachers indicated that often there were aspects of teaching music that universities did not cover thoroughly in their undergraduate work. Music education degrees are sometimes awarded as an instrumental and choral K-12 certification, yet students major in a specific area (Fant, 1996). The literature does not indicate how the evaluating administrators can be of assistance to the teachers to hone deficient areas further.

Ten years later, Conway (2012) followed up with participants from the first study. Teachers indicated there was a lack of practical preparation such as instrument repair and balancing budgets, a skill that other teachers may not need to possess. The teachers developed many of the skills from experience on the job. Without qualified guidance from those with expertise to help them, this task could be much more difficult, and informing practice by developing lifelong learners in the music classroom is essential to aiding music specialists in their growth (Conway, 2012).

### **Arts Specialist Evaluations**

As teacher evaluation evolves, it is important to recognize how the intrinsic value of the arts of principals translates to the evaluation and data collection for the teacher. Robinson (2015) suggests there is a disconnect between the data teachers are asked to collect in arts classes and how useful it is to both the students and the teacher. Robinson



(2015) notes that music teachers specifically, have accountability unlike any other subject, where the teacher invites stakeholders to a public performance. However, many times administrators overlook this type of non-value-added accountability where there is not quantitative data collected for each student, though the public performance is more transparent to the public than other data reporting. Robinson (2019) also describes the evolution of teacher evaluation systems to using Value-Added Measures (VAM) scores, which directly connects students' standardized test scores to teacher evaluation. Teachers' evaluative scores can even be influenced by scores in subjects other than those taught by the teacher. While current evaluation policies intend to be a motivator to improve teaching practice, the majority of educators enter the profession out of intrinsic motivation (Robinson, 2019).

Hunter-Doniger (2013) details the vast difference in visual arts teachers' experiences and explains an art portfolio of high-quality student work and assessment samples is a more appropriate tool than the current systems in place for visual arts education while Gaines et al. (2015) explain how student assessments based on performance have aided to arts specialist evaluations in Arizona. Arts instructors should fully investigate the flexibility of data collection for evaluative purposes and use the data that best suits their craft (Shaw, 2016).

Many of the teacher evaluation systems in place use direct observation as the cornerstone of the evaluation. Although a structured, clearly defined rubric is used in many teacher evaluation systems currently, in many cases, administrators use the same observational tool for evaluation for each teacher in the school (Neumerski et al., 2018). Darling-Hammond et al. (1983) tout school districts that use evolving evaluations for

different stages in a teacher's career, while Duke and Blackman (1991) recommend a system of specifically addressing content area in evaluations. Robinson (2019) notes the approach of a standardized assessment tool fails to differentiate for teachers, and the system fails are more pronounced in music than any other context. Subject specific evaluations forms may eliminate some contextual differences in content areas (Bergee, 1992; Morgan et al., 2014). Potter's 2023 study suggests giving experienced teachers choice in how they are evaluated using both portfolios of evidence and alternative evaluation systems. Potter also suggests prioritizing feedback over scores for differentiation, as no matter the score, it does not improve retention or morale. Specialized feedback helps each teacher improve their craft while scoring does not offer suggestions for improvement.

While the movement to a standardized definition of high-quality instruction create data that is less objectionable, the context of each teacher is unique, and those developing evaluations should make efforts to include a component that is malleable based on specific contexts (Berry & Ginsberg, 1990; Neumerski et al., 2018). The needs of teachers vary as their career progresses, and multiple observation forms for subject areas could directly address subject-specific pedagogical practices. Specifically, relating to arts instructors, the traditional procedures for evaluating teachers does not have the same applicability, and cannot inform practice nor help with personnel decisions for administration (Maranzano, 2000).

Direct observation has the benefits of seeing the teacher in their own context, but often evaluations rely on a single, prescheduled observation. Teachers bring forth their best, even if it is not a daily occurrence, and teachers have reported the "dog and pony

show” (Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998, p. 77) method as a detriment to the evaluation system for decades. Teachers understand the required rubric, adapt lessons to align with the checklists, and plan for their administrator to observe. Marshall (2012) suggests eliminating this by altering observations in three ways: make them unannounced, make them frequent, and make them short. This gives the administrator a better grasp of what is happening daily. This process could help meet the instructional needs of teachers more than a traditional observation for evaluation. In addition, even evaluators trained in specific arts methods have difficulty remaining reliable at all times during observations. Research shows that evaluators without training in specific arts are more likely to rate arts specialists higher during observation than those with training (Duke & Blackman, 1991). The research does not detail how administrators are prepared to evaluate arts specialists.

### **Summary**

The standards, assessment, and accountability systems that developed in the way of the publication of *A Nation at Risk* and the enactment of NCLB legislation resulted in an emphasis on basic literacy and numeracy skills at the expense of the arts, humanities, and social studies. This trend was exacerbated by the policy efforts to stimulate STEM education. While many administrators in education agree that the arts are an important part of curriculum and instruction in schools, their leadership decisions do not always reflect their stated opinion. Parents and community are also a driving force in arts course offerings and funding decisions. Administrators are sometimes unaware of the exact instructional practices taking place inside arts classrooms, and administrators evaluating arts instructors are not always capable of teaching the subject area observed. Most

educators have a basic working knowledge of core subjects, but that is not always the case in arts education. Absent from the research is the study of how administrators' perceptions are developed and how the administrators and arts specialists perceive their ability to provide useful feedback during teacher evaluations.

The research literature examines how the changing political and economic climate of the United States shapes the perception of arts education. While arts education is widely expected and viewed as important, the current condition of mandated testing with a focus on specific subjects does not support a comprehensive arts education in schools. Arts education advocacy groups are constantly reevaluating legislative requirements both at the national and state level to ensure students are provided the most well-rounded education that can be provided.

Most of the studies focusing on perceptions of administrators or teachers use a survey method of collecting data (Abril & Gault, 2006, 2008; Aguilar & Richerme, 2014; Lochmiller, 2015; Potter, 2023). One benefit to this method is gathering data quickly. However, while this does begin to create a picture of the perception of teachers and administrators, it does not explore the perceptions in depth.

In conclusion, arts classes should be subject to the same high expectations other content areas are (McKean, 2001), and discovering the purposes and thoughts behind the choices of administrative evaluations can help shape policy to assist teachers of the arts in the classroom just as the core subjects are. Understanding the principal and arts specialist's perceptions of ability to provide valuable feedback is the first step to guiding future research. Majors' (2013) implications question what influences cause alterations in support for the arts from administrators. Abril and Gault (2006, 2008) identify a

deficiency in the research and state that understanding administrators' goals can help the continued advocacy for arts education by teachers and the educational community. Potter (2023) detects an absence in literature that examines observation feedback. Lochmiller (2015) identifies specific content-related evaluation practices that should be contextualized for educators in specific subjects. Providing administrators the insight, tools, and preparation needed to help teachers of non-tested subjects grow as instructors will continue the growth and advocacy needed for those subjects. This could include providing training for administrators when coaching and evaluating teachers in content areas that differ from their own (Lochmiller, 2015).

### CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study was to examine the perceptions of feedback principals give to teachers that teach in tested subjects and those that teach in non-tested subjects and compare these perceptions among principals and teachers. In this study, I sought to answer the following questions: How do teachers in tested subjects and teachers in non-tested subjects perceive the quality and quantity of principal feedback? How do administrators perceive the quality and quantity of their feedback given to teachers in tested subjects and teachers in non-tested subjects? If informants (teachers and administrators) perceive differences in the quality and quantity of feedback, how do they rationalize these differences?

As my research questions indicate, I anticipated a large discrepancy between the tested subject teachers and the non-tested subject teachers' experiences using the evaluation system. However, the data revealed that although there is a difference in the experience in the two groups, overall the teachers evaluated experience many of the same successes and challenges no matter the subject area. Specifics of these will be addressed in Chapter IV.

In this chapter, I outline the methodology and rationalize its selection; specifically, a qualitative collective case study. I discuss the context of the study, strategy for sampling, data collection, and data analysis. Furthermore, I discuss the procedures for ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I foreshadow the means by which I will report findings in Chapter IV. I explore my own positionality as a

researcher, exploring the potential biases that I may have as a scholar-practitioner concerning the topic of my study. I conclude Chapter III with a brief chapter summary.

### **Research Design**

I selected a qualitative methodology to answer the research questions because I wanted to explore the experiences of teachers and administrators while gathering a deeper understanding of these experiences. I wanted to understand the reasoning and beliefs of each participant, and qualitative was the best choice for collecting this data. To complete this, I collected data in natural school settings, and I was the key instrument of data collection in the study. I also used multiple sources of data to create an in-depth understanding based on participants' intended meanings (Creswell, 2014), specifically collecting and analyzing both documents and interview data. Among the various qualitative research designs (e.g., narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study research), case study research is the most appropriate for the study. Yin (2018) defines a case study as “an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context” (p. 15). In this study, I undertook what Yin would classify as a multiple case embedded design (See Figure 1). While my case study focuses on a single suburban school district, I examine multiple schools within the district, drawing upon multiple units of analysis within each school context—teachers in non-tested subjects, teachers in tested subjects, evaluating administrators, and documents. This multiple case study design is appropriate to both show different perspectives on the evaluation process and to build stronger results (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2018).

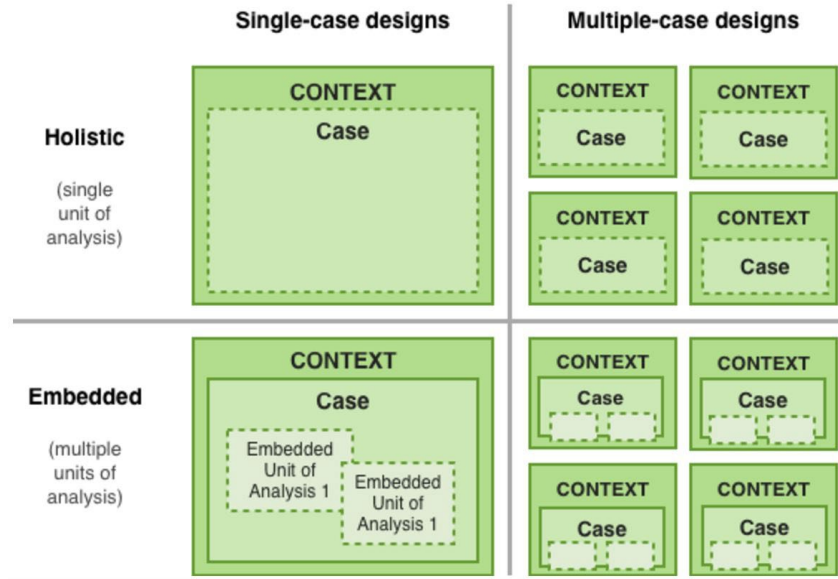


Figure 1. Yin's (2018) Typology of Case Study Designs

While there are many data sources identified as appropriate for qualitative case study designs (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 2018), I collected both interview data and archival records in this study. This research design required individual semi-structured interviews to collect initial data. The interviews explored principal and teacher perceptions of feedback during the teacher evaluation process.

### Context of the Study

There are 14 schools across Adams County<sup>1</sup>, a suburban district, in Kentucky. Of those, two are classified as high schools, two are middle schools, one is a kindergarten through eighth grade center, and seven are elementary schools. In addition, Adams County Schools also support an area technology center and a virtual academy. In this study, I examined both high schools, one middle school, the kindergarten through eighth center, and two elementary schools in Adams County. I based this decision on varied student levels being more likely to offer a varied arts curriculum (National Center for

<sup>1</sup> A pseudonym was used to protect the identity of the cooperating district.



Education Statistics, 2012). Furthermore, Derrington and Martinez (2019) called for studies that examine the reasons why some teachers believe the evaluation system provides perfunctory evaluation rather than opportunities for learning and growth and that “examine the supervisory relationship in secondary settings and if it is affected by evaluation” (p. 16).

Adams County works to provide equitable learning opportunities for the students in the county. The district offers arts education to every student throughout the district in middle and high school. Elementary schools have a varied arts education program, and an arts specialist does not always teach these classes. This systemic structure and opportunity are tools that shape both the community and the experiences of every child that attends an Adams County school (Milner, 2007).

### **Data Collection**

I interviewed three groups of participants: one teacher of a non-tested subject in the school, a teacher in a tested subject in the school, and the supervising administrators of the teachers. I chose the three separate groups as a means of triangulating data to develop “converging lines of inquiry” (Yin, 2018, p.127). Prior to all interviews, participants reviewed and signed an informed consent document (See Appendix A). I contacted administrators, first by email, to begin identifying participants (See Appendix B). I informed the administrators as to the purpose of the study, and I requested an interview. I then used snowball sampling in order to identify participants with the most information to share that contributed to the research (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1988). I asked administrators to identify teachers in tested and non-tested subjects that may be interested in participating in the study. I also reached out to any teachers I had a pre-

established relationship with that would qualify for participation. When possible, interviews took place on the same day within the same school. In addition, I asked teachers to release teacher performance evaluations if willing, to analyze as archival records.

The interview protocol for administrators (see Appendix C) was modeled after a similar protocol developed by Robinson (2019) in a study of music teachers in high stakes evaluations. Teachers in tested and non-tested subjects that agreed to participate answered a specific and shared set of questions (See Appendix D), also modeled after Robinson (2019). All interviews were one-on-one and audio-recorded for accuracy. I used member checking during the interview to ensure credibility and validity (Saldaña, 2016). I obtained three interviews at each site.

In addition to interviews, and to add further triangulation within the study, I asked teachers to provide recent copies of their teacher performance evaluations if they were comfortable with doing so. While these documents are specific to the teacher evaluation process, the disadvantage of using an archival record is encountering accessibility problems due to confidentiality reasons (Yin, 2018). This data is not accessible without teacher permission, and many teachers are hesitant to provide such a personal document. Lochmiller (2015) explains that the addition of this data source adds another perspective to the research to “enhance our understanding of the ways in which administrators provide feedback and formulate suggestions for improvement that may or may not reflect a detailed understanding of the content areas” (p. 99). In this study, 3 of the twelve teachers provided a copy of their evaluation for review.

## **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis includes the preparation of the data and the organization of the data followed by identifying themes through coding (Creswell, 2013). In this study, I used a third-party transcription service to transcribe interviews. After reading the completed transcripts, I identified initial themes identified in Robinson's 2019 study on teacher evaluation perceptions. Robinson identified four themes: fake teaching, subject-matter inequity, hoop jumping, and lack of support. After looking for these initial themes, I began creating themes using my notes. I reviewed the transcriptions to identify additional themes as described by White et al. (2012). After identifying similar themes, I coded the information and analyzed the themes found throughout the transcription as described by Saldaña (2013), as First Cycle and Second Cycle coding. To further my understanding of the transcripts, I also conducted a cross-case analysis of the dyads using a variable-oriented strategy and the themes identified previously (Miles et al., 2014). As I identified the themes, I made notes as to which themes matched the themes found by Robinson (2019). Using these, I analyzed how they applied to each group administrator to tested subject teacher and administrator to non-tested subject teacher. Then as I reflected on the process of the identification, and I found a set of generalizations that apply to the data. According to Miles et al. (2014), the analysis concluded by "comparing those generalizations with a formalized body of knowledge in the form of constructs or theories" (p. 10). I finished data analysis by examining what I learned from the data, and I presented an in-depth account of the cases as described by Creswell (2013).

## **Researcher Positionality**

Milner (2007) provides a methodological framework that a researcher may utilize for examining one's own positionality. Milner's framework consists of four components—researching the self, researching the self in relation to others, engaging in reflection, and shifting from self to system. Researching the self requires that the researcher examine their own experiences and their own perspectives critically. Researching the self in relation to others requires the researcher explore their own experiences and perspectives with those of others, specifically those that serve as the informants or participants in the context(s) of their own study. Reflection requires that the researcher think critically about how the diversity of life experiences may inform how various actors interpret a variety of situations. Finally, shifting from self to system requires that the researcher examine the larger societal contexts. In so doing, the research seeks to avoid what Milner calls the dangers—seen, unseen, and unforeseen—in their research.

My study centered on arts educators and tested subject teachers and how to support educators from the administrative perspective. As an arts educator of 14 years, I first focused on researching the self. I believe in the power of arts education. I believe it can be a creative outlet; it can provide an escape; and it can create connections where there are none. I examined how I chose to be an arts educator and researcher. I came from a musical family that played various instruments for recreational purposes. I showed an interest in pursuing lessons for piano as an elementary student, then saxophone as I joined band in middle school. My music instructors were expert relationship builders, and their influence led me to pursue music education as a career.

While studying music education at both undergraduate and graduate levels, my professors had a wealth of information on instructional resources in music education. There was discussion of what principals were looking for in the evaluation system used at the time and how to use learned instructional practices to meet requirements, along with how to educate others on the desired effects of the instructional practices in the music room. As I began as a teacher, I relied on the Kentucky Teachers' Internship Program (KTIP) to coordinate my observations in the classroom. Three people observed me—a local university supervisor that was a former professor of music education, an experienced teacher in my school that was a third-grade science teacher, and my principal.

Continuing Milner's (2007) process of researching the self in relation to others, I examined how these relationships affected my experience. I quickly learned what each observer preferred in a KTIP lesson. My music education mentor wanted a music lesson rich in proven music education methods and materials, my science teacher mentor was looking for an orderly lesson, and my principal wanted cross-curricular connections to help aid student achievement in the regular classroom. Each cycle began the show of performing to my audience with only one of those being what I was trained to do. Of course, order and cross-curricular connections fit naturally into many music lessons. However, many times making music is messy, and many times, we make music for music's sake. The three-cycle evaluation system used during my first year teaching was the last time an expert in my specialty area evaluated me.

My reflection continued relating to my colleagues. As an arts educator in a non-tested subject area, I am frequently asked to use data from tested subjects to create

meaning for instructional strategies and conversations around those instructional strategies. I am provided data from reading or math and asked to use that data to inform my own instruction. I understand tested subject area teachers have a different pressure from administration than I have, and I understand administrators frequently attempt a one-size-fits-all approach to subject areas in order to create equal requirements for every teacher. Just as teachers are spread thin with too many tasks and not enough time, I have witnessed administration being pulled in all directions. Examining my own positionality, I was able to understand the decisions administrators made and how personnel evaluation system could evoke so many different and even opposite perceptions.

I also examined how my positionality related to my participants. I realize there are differences in experience and in subject areas between myself and my participants. I am completing my 18th year of teaching. My participants ranged from a second-year teacher to a teacher retiring at the end of the year. While I realize I experienced similarities with all of these teachers, I certainly cannot expect to have the same experiences as a teacher on the brink of retirement, and a new teacher is certainly experiencing the work differently than I did 18 years ago. My expertise in the arts gives me a positionality of understanding how my participants feel about subject areas. Being an arts teacher lends itself to creating your own curriculum. Tested subjects do not often have that option. Arts educators understand the value of their craft, but we also witness others not understanding that value, both at the public and collegial level. Understanding what my participants experience as arts educators helps me understand their experiences.

The third component of Milner's (2007) framework is engaging in reflection. Reflecting on my own experiences I realize observations in the last 18 years of my career

have changed many times. For a while, the learning target was the focus and most important component. Depth of knowledge of standards was on the forefront for a bit. I have been told higher level questioning will be on the observer's agenda and limiting direct instruction has been a desire of evaluators. In addition to these and many other foci of the teacher evaluation systems I participated in through the years, scores on parental engagement, rules and structures, student relationship building, professional development, and using available resources were required. The list continues each year, and I am still waiting for help to grow as a musician within my school. Any musical pedagogy concepts I learn or explore are completely self-driven.

Last, Milner describes shifting from self to system. I understand I am but a tiny component of the system of education at many levels. Whether it is at the district level, state, or even national, my contributions, viewpoints, and experiences are minute compared to the overall structure of the entire unit. While I am but one component, I can take every opportunity to shape and advance the system in the best interest of students. Utilizing those opportunities is an important task that I will work towards both in completing this study and in the future.

### **Theoretical Framework**

My study is grounded in the epistemological theory of Social Constructivism (Creswell, 2013). Social Constructivism focuses on the researcher seeking understanding of subjective experiences and developing meanings within these experiences. Researchers examine participants' viewpoints individually to understand the context, and the researcher creates meaning and theory from the experiences of the subjects. The researcher then uses these multiple viewpoints to find complexities within the meanings.

Crotty (1998) says that Social Constructivists “understand that *all* meaningful reality, precisely as meaningful reality, is socially constructed” (p. 55). Researchers of Social Constructivism also recognize their own beliefs and experiences shape the interpretation of the research. This ontological approach embraces the idea that multiple perceptions create multiple realities of the same events in research.

According to Stetsenko and Arieviditch (2010), Social Constructivism involves participating in shaping an individual course by interacting with the world. I recognize that my own experiences and world interactions lead to a predisposed opinion on the usefulness of the required annual arts specialists’ evaluations, especially when a non-arts trained administrator is the evaluator. St. Pierre Hirtle (1996) states that Social Constructivism is never neutral, and the path taken to acquire the knowledge is just as important as the knowledge itself. Through this study, I will examine those paths of acquisition of knowledge of both the administrator and the teachers of non-tested and tested subjects. Exploring their realities through a Social Constructivist lens will begin to uncover some of the truths of evaluative feedback for teachers of non-tested subjects. I examined how teachers interpret their own meaning through their prior experiences and how their interaction with their evaluating principal shapes their own learning. I also established how evaluating principals create beliefs that guide their action when evaluating teachers of both tested and non-tested subjects. To aid in this, I structured interviews with open-ended questions as described by Creswell (2013) to allow participants to construct meaning of the interactions and beliefs.



## **Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the data collection methods and data analysis methods I selected to examine the perceptions of the teacher evaluation process from the viewpoint of teachers of non-tested subjects, tested subjects, and evaluating administrators. The chapter included research questions and specifics of the participants I included in the study. I explained my data analysis and coding processes. I also included information about validity and reliability in this chapter. I present my findings in Chapter IV.

## CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In this qualitative case study, I examined and compared the perceptions of feedback from the teacher evaluation system in Adams County Schools among principals and teachers. Three research questions guided the study. The first two examined perceptions of each group, and the last looked to create rationalization for the perceptions provided in questions one and two. The questions are as follows:

RQ1: How do teachers in tested subjects and teachers in non-tested subjects perceive the quality and quantity of principal feedback?

RQ2: How do administrators perceive the quality and quantity of their feedback given to teachers in tested subjects and teachers in non-tested subjects?

RQ3: If informants (teachers and administrators) perceive differences in the quality and quantity of feedback, how do they rationalize these differences?

This chapter begins with exploring my positionality as a teacher and researcher. Using Milner's framework (2007), I use my own narrative to establish a positionality within my experiences. I then provide an overview of my two primary data sources— one-on-one interviews (with teachers and administrators) and documents. I provide profiles of my informants. I organized my findings around these three research questions. I conclude this chapter with a summary of the findings from my study.

## **Data Sources and Analytical Strategies Overview**

I collected data from two sources: one-on-one semi-structured interviews with teachers in non-tested subjects, teachers in tested subjects, and their evaluating administrators. I also undertook document analyses. Documents included state and district policies on teacher evaluations as well as analysis of teacher evaluations that 3 out of twelve of my teacher informants provided. I began with document analysis by examining state policies regarding teacher evaluation, district policies regarding teacher evaluation, and finally, the template for the Teacher Personnel Evaluation System in Adams County Schools, noting differentiation for years of experience, alternative certification, mentoring, non-tenured, and tenured teachers. I reviewed the Adams County Certified Evaluation Plan that is valid from 2022-2024. This document provides a detailed look at each evaluation step from 12 hours of administrator training to evaluating teachers to the appeals process if a teacher does not agree with an evaluation along with district-adopted policies regarding each step.

Once I was familiar with the state's teacher evaluation policies (beyond my own personal experiences within it) and the district's teacher evaluation form, I began contacting principals in the district via email (See Appendix B for email correspondence). Principals that evaluated non-tested subject in the arts were asked to schedule a semi-structured interview. I used an interview protocol specifically for administrators (See Appendix C for administrator interview protocol), and used snowball sampling (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1988) to gather contact information for both a tested and a non-tested subject teacher that the administrator evaluated. From there, teachers were contacted to schedule a semi-structured interview using the teacher interview protocol (See Appendix

D). All of the interviews were audio and video recorded. Following the interviews, I used a third-party transcription service and checked for accuracy using my own original recordings.

After the teacher interviews, I returned to document analysis. I asked each teacher participant to share their most recent evaluation if they felt comfortable in providing them. I began with emails to each teacher participant asking for a copy of the document. This yielded 1 evaluation. I followed up with another email and a text message to each participant that I had a personal phone number for, and I received 1 more evaluation. I asked a third time by email, and offered an addressed stamped envelope to put a redacted copy of the evaluation in. I received 1 additional evaluation, and 1 teacher that asked for a mailed envelope. The mailed envelope was never returned. I finalized the requests leaving messages at their schools by phone. While I only received 3 evaluations from the 12 teachers I interviewed, I examined the data for characteristics I found throughout the transcripts and was able to strengthen the internal validity of the study (Yin, 2018).

In terms of analytical strategies, I used Saldaña's (2015) method of first cycle coding, specifically utilizing elaborative coding, which builds on codes of a previous study to identify themes. I used Robinson's 2019 study on teacher evaluation perceptions, and I began with his four themes: fake teaching, subject-matter inequity, hoop jumping, and lack of support.

After looking for these initial themes in both the transcripts and evaluation forms, I began creating themes using in vivo coding, analyzing the words and phrases used by participants. This inductive process continued by reviewing the transcriptions to identify additional themes as described by White et al. (2012). I created lists and charts to assist in

analyzing patterns, codes, and categories found throughout the evaluation forms and transcripts. To further my understanding of the transcripts and documents, I conducted a cross-case analysis of the trios using a variable-oriented strategy and the themes identified previously (Miles et al., 2014). The first cycle analysis concluded according to Miles et al. (2014) by “finding specific, concrete, historically grounded patterns common to small sets of cases” (p. 102). I finished data analysis by examining what I learned from the data and presented an in-depth account of the cases as described by Creswell (2103). I began second cycle coding and utilizing axial coding, I identified other themes in addition to Robinson’s (2019) four themes in the transcripts and documents and streamlined the initial codes into categories and subcategories (Saldaña, 2015). Lastly, I narrowed the themes down to eight. These themes presented in both document analysis and interview transcripts.

### **Profile of Participants**

Adams County Public Schools has 553 certified employees, meaning those that hold professional certifications for teaching and administration in Kentucky. This includes superintendents, principals, instructional coaches, and teachers. Table 1 shows the breakdown of representation by gender and race, although district personnel noted that not all staff members in the district report race (Moore, 2022). Moore (2022) also comments that the representation of race reported is very close to the daily workforce in the district. Of the 553 certified employees, 442 certified teachers are evaluated using the Teacher Personnel Evaluation System. In addition to the district totals, the participants in the study are included in the breakdown.

*Table 1. Adams County Certified Staff Members & Study Participants*

	Gender		Race	
	Male (%)	Female (%)	White (%)	Minority (%)
Certified Employees	152 (27.5)	401 (73.5)	502 (90.9)	51 (9.1)
Participants In Study	4 (22.2)	14 (77.7)	16 (88.9)	2 (11.1)

This study involved 18 participants total, with 6 administrators and 12 teachers.

All 18 participated in semi-structured interviews and three provided archival documents for examination. Using purposeful sampling, I involved teachers and administrators from various grade levels: two from elementary school, one from middle school, one from a kindergarten through eighth grade center, and two from high schools. At each school, I also purposively spoke with both a tested subject teacher and a non-tested subject teacher. Table 2 provides a breakdown of teacher participants, their tenure status, whether they teach a tested subject (or not), and the grade level in which they taught.

*Table 2. Teacher Participants*

Pseudonym	Tenured	Tested/Non-Tested Subject	Grade Level
Allen	X	N	E
Centers	X	N	M
Anderson	X	N	M/H
Davis	X	N	E
Wilson		N	E/M
Moore	X	N	H
Miller		T	E
Williams	X	T	M
Johnson		T	H
Garcia	X	T	E
Thomas	X	T	M
Jackson		T	H

Notes: E = Elementary, M = Middle, H= High, N = Non-Tested Subject; T = Tested

Subject

Table 3 shows the administrators who participated as well as their grade levels along and subject areas taught before becoming a principal.

*Table 3. Administrator Participants*

Pseudonym	Administrative Grade Level	Subject Area
Hunt	E/M	Social Studies
Taylor	E	K-5
Clark	H	English
Young	M	K-5
Scott	H	Health & Physical Education
Wright	E	K-5

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

This section reveals their perspectives through deductive coding, and how each code aligns to the research questions. The first coding cycle began with reading transcripts and using elaborative coding. This built on codes found in Robinson's 2019 study on teacher evaluations. Robinson (2019) found four themes throughout his work: fake teaching, subject-matter inequity, hoop jumping, and lack of support. Once I identified any instances of these codes, I began highlighting the words and phrases of participants to grasp significant meaning of the responses. The codes and categories revealed the experiences and feelings in response to the seven interview questions. Each in vivo code was then assembled on a single page, creating a collection of the codes in addition to the four initial codes from Robinson's (2019) study. I began second cycle coding using axial coding, sorting then condensing the codes into conceptual categories while creating memos of my own thoughts and ideas (Saldaña, 2015). The data revealed 32 centralized themes among the in vivo codes. Table 5 shows deductive codes from teachers while table 6 shows deductive codes from administrators, both aligned with Robinson's 2019 study.

Table 4. Deductive Coding Table - Teachers

Theoretical Foundations	Code	Teachers in Non-Tested Subjects						Teachers in Tested Subjects					
		Allen	Centers	Anderson	Davis	Wilson	Moore	Miller	Williams	Johnson	Garcia	Thomas	Jackson
Robinson (2019)	Fake teaching								X	X			
	Subject-matter Inequity	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	
	Hoop-jumping	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	
	Lack of Support							X	X	X	X	X	

Notes: X = Code present in interview transcript.

Table 5. Deductive Coding - Administrators

Theoretical Foundations	Code	Hunt	Taylor	Clark	Young	Scott	Wright
Robinson (2019)	Fake teaching					X	
	Subject-matter Inequity	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Hoop-jumping				X	X	X
	Lack of Support	X		X		X	X

Notes: X = Code present in interview transcript.



I determined a third cycle of coding was necessary to narrow the focus of the data. I again used axial coding to condense the data further into core values related to research in the literature review. Table 6 illustrates the final nine codes that emerged during this process. The frequency of the codes is also indicated along with the total number of administrators, non-tested subject teachers, and tested subject teachers that brought forth the codes in the transcript.

*Table 6. Selective Coding Alignment to Participants*

Selective Codes	Frequency	Number of Administrators	Number of Non-Tested Subject Teachers	Number of Tested Subject Teachers
Subject-Matter Inequity	148	6	6	2
Trust and Support	113	6	3	1
Experience Inequities	90	6	6	4
Pandemic Repercussions and Social Emotional Learning	77	4	6	6
Time Management	72	6	2	6
Reflecting and Creating Meaning	67	6	4	6
Hoop Jumping	59	3	3	5
Lack of Support	45	6	2	6
Fake Teaching	3	1	2	1

Tables 7 and 8 provide a list of the inductive coding that emerged from the teachers and administrators, respectively.

Table 7. Inductive Coding - Teachers

Themes	<i>Teachers in Non-Tested Subjects</i>						<i>Teachers in Tested Subjects</i>					
	Allen	Centers	Anderson	Davis	Wilson	Moore	Miller	Williams	Johnson	Garcia	Thomas	Jackson
Second Career										X		
Experience Inequities	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Pandemic Repercussions		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Reflecting								X				X
Social-Emotional Learning	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Trust	X		X	X	X							
Support			X					X	X			
PLCs	X			X	X		X				X	
Career & Technical Education												
Arts Experience		X	X	X	X	X						
Time Management				X	X			X	X	X	X	X
Professional Development	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Climate & Culture												
Creating Meaning		X		X	X	X					X	X
Reflecting					X		X	X		X		X
Mentoring			X		X							
Autonomy	X			X					X			
Networking	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X		X
Involved in School			X				X	X	X	X	X	X
Community												
Instructional Coaching					X		X					X
Athletic Experience								X		X		
Parental Support								X				
Research & Graduate Work								X			X	
Peer Observing					X							

Notes: X = Code present in interview transcript; PLCs = Professional Learning Communities

Table 8. Inductive Coding – Administrators

Code	Hunt	Taylor	Clark	Young	Scott	Wright
Second Career	X			X		
Experience Inequities	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pandemic Repercussions	X	X	X	X		
Reflecting	X					
Admin. vs. Instructional Leadership	X			X		
Social-Emotional Learning	X	X	X	X		
Trust	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support	X	X		X		
PLCs	X	X				
Career & Technical Education	X					
Arts Experience	X		X			
Time Management	X	X	X	X	X	X
Professional Development	X				X	
Climate & Culture	X				X	
Creating Meaning	X	X	X	X	X	X
Reflecting	X	X	X			
Mentoring	X	X	X		X	X
Autonomy					X	
Networking						
Involved in School Community				X		
Instructional Coaching						
Athletic Experience				X	X	X
Parental Support						
Research & Graduate Work						
Peer Observing						
Staffing				X		
Evaluation as Dismissal Tool				X		
Buy In					X	
Grey Areas						X
Quantitative Data						X

Notes: X = Code present in interview transcript; PLCs = Professional Learning Communities

### Administrative Perception of Feedback during Evaluation

Questions 2-7 of the administrator interview protocol align with the first and third research question. The semi-structured interviews of administrators also provided understanding

of the overall duties and requirements of being an instructional leader in a school. Trust, experience inequities, subject matter-inequity, time management, and hoop jumping were the selective codes that appeared in the responses of administrative participants. Throughout this section, all direct quotes represent data collected from the semi-structured interviews of administrators.

## **Trust**

Trust is fundamental to establishing an environment where teachers can grow collaboratively (Talebizadeh et al., 2021). However, trust is a complicated element of any teacher evaluation system. Principals are there to guide, to grow, and to be instructional leaders of the school building. The job of assisting teachers in being the very best deliverer of instruction is one that is multifaceted. The teacher evaluation system seeks to help teachers hone their craft, but sometimes, they simply do not. At that point, principals have the opportunity to use the teacher evaluation system to begin the process of disciplining or dismissing the teacher. The punitive nature of the evaluation system makes trust and building relationships a delicate situation. Because of this, the principal simply being present in the classroom can be intimidating to teachers. Clark says, “An administrator tries to be in teachers’ rooms, but it can be very scary and overwhelming. Even a seasoned teacher can feel intimidated.” To lessen the pressure of the formal observation, Young, describes another strategy allowing teachers to set up the observation on their own saying, “I let them schedule it. I let them pick the class. There’s a lot of voice and choice.” This extra layer of preparation gives teachers the opportunity to plan an outstanding lesson, which could be classified as a form of fake teaching as mentioned in Robinson’s (2019) study as it might not be their normal level of preparation and execution. Robinson (2019) defined fake teaching as teaching what the administrator expected to see rather than what the music

specialist believed was sound music pedagogy. This could be the case in any classroom where the administration is not as familiar with content.

Principals build trust by always offering support in any area of growth as building trust happens during every interaction, not just during evaluations. Clark speaks to guiding teachers having difficulties saying, “If a teacher wants me to come in and just observe, if they’re struggling, I don’t consider that part of their evaluation. They’re seeking some help to improve.” Providing teachers with learning opportunities is another way principals build trust. Hunt describes providing professional development and collaboration time for teachers stating, “I’m making sure that my teachers get the learning they need, and I try to make sure with the master schedule we provide them with as much time as possible, so they have time to collaborate.” Learning opportunities also come in the form of instructional coaching. Taylor speaks to supporting teachers on a team level, sharing that, “My instructional coach and I are constantly thinking about ways that we can coach and support some of our teams. I find myself focusing through my own reflection on supporting.” Providing support can also be difficult to navigate. Support generally means making changes and sometimes adding to the workload. Taylor shares this struggle as a principal stating, “We spend a lot of time with some teachers, but also try to find a healthy balance of not constantly asking more of them than empowering them.” Taylor adds, “It’s this fine line of creating a healthy environment, but at the same time learning to grow.”

Giving teachers autonomy is another strategy administrators use to build relationships and trust. Scott describes another strategy saying, “I guess coaching is the best word to use. I try to suggest what to do, but I want teachers to feel like they still have autonomy to teach the way they want.” Scott goes on later stating, “I’ve always given my teachers freedom to try to think

outside of the box.” Wright describes allowing teachers to rank themselves explaining, “Sometimes they’re too hard on themselves. I think that during that post conversation is when you can really dig in and have some great conversations.” Statements of how to help and support were similar in nearly every administrative participant.

Trust is essential to a productive school environment, and principals in this study understand this importance. Every administrator voiced a concern for trust. This code was the most frequent found in administrator interviews, but there were several others voiced as well.

### **Experience Inequities**

Every teacher in Adams County must be evaluated either formatively or summatively every school year. As teachers have more experience, more instructional tools to use, and learn how to manage students and their classrooms, they need less support in the classroom. Many suggested strategies during professional development or by instructional coaches are easily implemented and students immediately benefit.

However, beginning teachers often need many more supports than experienced teachers. Teachers are tenured on the first day of their fifth year in the same Kentucky school district, and the system seeks to give ample time for growth, instruction, revisions to methods, and feedback. Principals do try to differentiate for teachers with different levels of experience, but the evaluation system can be a challenge for less experienced teachers. Clark says:

It’s been really challenging. They don’t know the methods, and they don’t know the behavior or discipline. Most people who get into teaching were good students, and they’re expecting all students are going to be like them, and so that’s just not the case this day and age.

Clark goes on to discuss teachers from alternative certification programs saying, “Someone who has not had any educational classes, they don’t know the terminology, and you may have to focus on the content and the behavior.” Young describes the paperwork aspect of evaluations for new teachers stating, “Some of my non-tenured people get really nervous, and I just don’t even show them the forms.”

While the inexperienced teacher usually needs more supports, the experienced teacher is often not growing from the evaluation system once at a certain level. Hunt states, “It’s ineffective when I’ve stopped growing a person. I want to grow people.” Clark speaks about one of the recognized great teachers at their school:

He makes the evaluation easy. He is a fantastic teacher, and he’s seasoned. I think sometimes when you have a seasoned teacher, it’s hard to give feedback. Everybody wants feedback. Everybody can get better. It’s hard to find something for them to encourage them.

Other principals voiced the same concern. Wright states, “I’m probably the least helpful on my strongest teachers. They’re good. I know they’re good. Their data says their good, and I probably do not do a great job of really stretching them and growing them.” Teachers with more experience also get less out of the teacher evaluation process. Clark describes evaluations with experienced teachers saying, “The more seasoned teacher, they’re already doing all those parts of each of the subdomains within the domains.”

Inequities in the principal experience occur as well. There are many paths that lead to being a school administrator. One of the requirements is having three years of successful teaching experience. The experience of a third-year elementary physical education teacher is very different from the experience of a third-year high school special education teacher. Hunt

describes the advantage of having as much experience as possible across grade levels when being an administrator. He states, “So I’ve had experience on all three levels, elementary, middle and high, which is very unique. I think it’s fared me well to have exposure in all three levels.” Wright explains their experience before being in a principal position as well:

I learned a lot as a teacher. I thought I knew a lot. Then I became an instructional coach, which gives a more instructionally global lens. Then I went to administration. There’s a lot to be learned in that process.

Experience inequities come in many forms. The two forms principals voiced in this study included one regarding the teachers they lead and one regarding themselves. While inequities exist in experience, inequities can be found in other areas as well.

### **Subject-Matter Inequities**

Principals can be assigned to evaluate teachers from an immense number of subjects. Given the opportunity, principals are comfortable evaluating teachers in their own area of expertise. Clark explains being in charge of the department they are certified in, stating, “Well I’m very familiar with it. All aspects of it, all grade levels, all standards within those grade levels,” Clark says. Clark goes on to describe the evaluation process with arts teachers sharing, “Say, for an art teacher. I never really had an art class. I wouldn’t know if they were teaching some misinformation.”

On the other hand, when principals do not recognize the need to be familiar with the content, it can create another set of problems. Taylor uses the evaluation process without considering the differences and nuanced instructional tools of each subject. He states, “Honestly, I look at them through the lens of a general teacher. Are your kids engaged? Is your curriculum regular?” Taylor goes on to describe the reasoning for this, stating, “As far as music resources,



and should we get ukuleles or other instruments? The teacher has to bring information to me because music knowledge, I have not.” Young describes a need for training in this area, sharing, “Could there be a ‘how to lead math instruction’ in your requirements? Like what are the evidence-based practices? What does research say about great math instruction? Because leading a math department is totally different than leading the English department.”

Tested and non-tested subjects do not always have the same focus for the administration as funding, job security, staffing allocations, and community and parental support can be affected by results of standardized tests students take each year. Hunt explains the reasoning for more English and math support. She says, “English and math get a lot more of our time. There’s more struggles there.” Hunt also recognizes the effect of literacy in every subject sharing, “When I taught, if my kids couldn’t read, I was struggling with them in my subject, so I do think English and math get our attention because they’re so foundational.”

The autonomy non-tested subjects and teachers get is another subject-matter inequity. Scott shares, “The ones that aren’t tested, it seems like there’s no stress level. They have the freedom to do things that most kids want to do. It’s student voice driven as opposed to tested areas. They’re more stifled by curriculum.” The inequities in autonomy have a beneficial side though. Hunt describes the results of participating in a class that is enjoyable to students in the arts. She says, “Those classes really matter. Why do I need to learn math? Well, when I went to music, I learned why I needed to learn quarters. I needed to know that to do what I love, so I made a connection that way.”

Subject matter inequities are seen in several different ways by administration. Some administrators recognize their own deficiencies and how and why their time is allocated to specific subjects. Principals also recognize the inequities between curriculum requirements and

autonomy in the classroom between tested and non-tested subject teachers. However, the inequities discussed, both subject and experience related are sometimes exacerbated by the struggle with managing all the tasks each administrator has each day.

### **Time Management**

Time management is an issue that every administrator encounters (Grissom, et al., 2015). The responsibilities of running a school building are an ongoing, never-ending list of tasks. Every administrator I spoke with saw time as a challenge of their job. Wright explains the duties of principal. “I am the instructional leader. Everything is my responsibility. So even if it’s delegated, all of that still falls back to me.” Young has a similar perspective stating, “Most of it is like CEO duty. Finance, human resources. Duties and athletic events. Lots of work with families with attendance and grades. Then of course, instructional leadership.”

The time constraints of the evaluation system also receive criticism from administrators. Hunt describes the challenge “It’s really hard to be successful on so many indicators in one 50-minute visit.” Wright has the same problem with the evaluation system and explains how to fill in gaps in the indicators. He says, “If I didn’t see an assessment, I might ask what was the assessment for this lesson. In the post-observation conversation you get a lot of information.” Scott explains how difficult it is to add the evaluation piece onto the other responsibilities saying, “I’ve got 25 people to evaluate on top of everything else. You want to be in there once a week....I’m least effective when it comes to just being visible.” Taylor describes how to keep the focus on instruction sharing, “I feel like this job has lots of components. The thing I always try to remind myself is we’re here for instruction, and making sure that our kids are growing and learning.”

Administrators face an immense number of responsibilities each day. Every administrative interview voiced a concern about time management. Many of the tasks are vital to the school environment, but some others fall into the category of hoop jumping.

### **Hoop Jumping**

Hoop jumping is the final code identified in the principals' semi-structured interviews. The process of teacher evaluation can be a compliance driven task. Some principals do not even see benefits for some teachers. Wright describes other tactics to hold teachers accountable, "I hold people to high accountability, but I don't use the evaluation system to do it. I don't think it's user friendly for that. It's just a bunch of check boxes." The design of the evaluation does not allow for every teacher to benefit either. "I pop in one or two times a year. I don't get to see all the nuts and bolts there, so I definitely feel ineffective in that area," says Scott. Young voices the same opinion of the teacher evaluation system. "I think it's perceived generally as compliance. I do it. I check my boxes."

The vast requirements of being an administrator cover tasks from student attendance to developing strategies to reduce the number of students performing at the lowest levels. Principal meetings with administrators higher up sometimes have a focus of compliance driven tasks. Young speaks of principal meetings with the district sharing, "We talk about business and compliance, and calendar, but just where are we talking about building instructional tool kits?" Young shares more stating:

All we do is sit around and talk about how to enter referrals in Infinite Campus. I know how to do that. I don't know what to tell my teachers about a student that's reading five grade levels below. I don't think we focus enough on instructional practices.

This section detailed the most frequent codes found in principal interviews regarding the evaluation process. These codes represent the experiences of the principals in this study. Below continues with the teacher perception of the evaluation process.

### **Teacher Perception of Feedback during Evaluation**

Questions 2-7 of the teacher interview protocol align with the second and third research question. The semi-structured interviews of teachers also provided insight to challenges, successes, and their lived experiences as teachers. Subject-matter inequities, pandemic repercussions and social-emotional learning, time management, lack of support, and reflecting and creating meaning were the selective codes that appeared in the responses of teacher participants. Throughout this section, all direct quotes represent data collected from the semi-structured interviews of teachers.

#### **Subject-Matter Inequities**

The possibility of having an administrator that is an expert in your subject area as an arts teacher is much smaller than core subject teachers. The inability to accurately assess teachers within their content area contributes to teachers not being able to learn and grow in their content area. Wilson, an arts specialist, describes feedback from administrators when teaching. He states, “I feel like I don’t get a lot of feedback in my teaching being an essential art, and I actually enjoy getting feedback. I’m driven. I always want to get better.” Centers, another arts specialist, shares the feedback received from an administrator sharing, “They have no idea what I’m doing. I hear, ‘I don’t know what’s going on, but they’re engaged.’” Even Jackson, a tested subject teacher, echoes a similar experience explaining, “I really like him, but I don’t think he knows my content well. So the feedback is not specific. Oftentimes it’s more like management and engagement

verses content that could help me.” Moore, a non-tested subject teacher, sums up the experience of teaching a subject all their administrators know little about:

I’ve never had an administrator that had a clue what we did and wanted to take the time to figure it out and offer feedback. I’m kind of under the impression that unless the National Anthem sounds bad, I won’t hear a thing from anyone.

However, when the administration does have experience with the content area of the teacher, the evaluation process has a different narrative. Miller, a tested-subject teacher, describes the evaluation system and how feedback specific to the subject makes them a better teacher saying, “I get feedback on specific things that I need to do better.” Jackson, another tested-subject teacher, echoes, “I have had somebody that was a specialist in my area before they became an administrator, and their feedback was most helpful. It was the best feedback I’ve ever gotten.” Two of the administrators had previous experience in the arts, and both non-tested subject teachers reported an overall positive experience with the evaluation system.

The autonomy that comes with a subject that administration is not familiar with can be a challenge and a freedom for teachers. Johnson, a tested subject teacher that has taught non-tested subjects, describes this effect sharing, “It’s nice to have some choice and be able to cater it to what your students need, but it’s also more pressure. You have full responsibility. It is completely up to you to decide what you will be teaching.” Davis, an arts teacher, states, “I feel like I’m the only one responsible for doing a good job. Nobody is really monitoring me.” The autonomy to use student voice to create curriculum creates an environment where students want to be and want to learn. Thomas, another tested subject teacher, describes their own experience in arts classes saying, “I remember taking some of the classes that had projects and not necessarily have a big test at the end. Those were my favorites.” Student voice in scheduling

affects the ability to be autonomous as well. Moore, an arts specialist, also describes a student voice survey result in an arts class that surprised the administrator sharing, “My assistant principal was like, ‘I’ve never seen numbers so high.’ I said ‘My kids sign up for my class.’” Centers, a non-tested subject teacher, shares how some students value arts classes above others. “There are some kids in my building that come to school for the electives.”

Having an administrator well-versed in the subject area is a positive experience for teachers. However, teachers that realize that their specialized subject is difficult for someone with no experience recognize the positive aspects of their autonomy and their ability to shape their classes into what they want it to be. While this was the most frequent code voiced by teachers, other codes emerged as well.

### **Pandemic Repercussions and Social-Emotional Learning**

In March of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic put a pause on in-person learning. Students and teachers went home and learned to navigate the difficult task of learning everything online. An expected two-week break in school turned into a near year and a half isolation from the rest of the world, and following there were months of social distancing, masked in-person learning, and sometimes not even attending school at full capacity. The school year of 2022-2023 finally began with normal expectations. The repercussions from this are vast, and teachers see many differences in students. While this theme does not address perceptions of feedback, it ties into observations and the feedback from those observations in the classroom.

Johnson describes the students that came back to school after the pandemic as high school freshmen saying, “They went straight from fifth grade to high school. It is very, very apparent that they missed those normal middle school years. And so the maturity factor has been very difficult.” Jackson has a similar experience sharing, “They’re socially not equipped like

they used to be, so I'm having to reteach some of those things." Miller explains, "More kids need the extra support than I had in previous years. Behavior has been a struggle." Davis has a similar experience saying, "Their social skills are not as great as they were since Covid. Behaviors are more of a challenge than they used to be." Allen explains their experience with student behaviors stating, "We have some behavior concerns at our school this year, and we're just trying to work through that and figure out how to service those kids." Williams shares a hypothesis of why students need more support:

I think that there were a lot of kids that didn't have to do things at home. Parents wanted to make sure that they're coming to online class, but if they don't do the work [parents thought] it's really not that important. Kids just don't seem to care. Some parents don't either.

Another pandemic-related repercussion is the extreme shortage of teachers, including substitutes, across the nation. This leads to teachers not having time to collaborate and have embedded professional development, which is essential to teacher growth (Lipscombe et al., 2020). Centers describes covering another teacher's class instead of collaborating with colleagues in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) as scheduled. "I was supposed to have a PLC during planning, but we had a teacher out, so they said 'Hey, you're covering' and I missed that meeting."

The COVID-19 pandemic was life altering for both students and teachers in education. Behaviors, mental health, and overall learning loss has been a challenge for teachers coming back into the school building. These additional needs that must be met by schools contribute to issue of the next theme, time management.

## **Time Management**

While there were no specific differences between the two groups of teachers, time management at the administrative level was a recurring theme in nearly every teacher interview. Teachers are stretched thin and realize administrators are too. Jackson, an experienced teacher states, “They’re only here for a short amount of time, and I know why, because they have so much to do.” Directives from the district, state, and even national level affect educators at every stage. Davis, another experienced teacher, describes a recent observation when the administrator had to leave mid-class:

Then the principal gets pulled to solve a crisis, and that happens a lot. So I’ve put a lot of work into it. And then is she going to see the whole lesson? I would like my observation to be from the beginning of a lesson to the end. Not just a pop in and pop out.

Thomas, yet another experienced teacher, had a similar scenario last school year:

They have struggled to find the time to give us everything we need and to effectively evaluate. Last year I was in the middle of an observation and the principal got called out.

And then she said, ‘Oh, can you just shoot me that reflection?’

Thomas’ principal did not see another lesson and assigned a rating. Even if the principal is there for the entire lesson, the time constraints of the CEP makes authenticity difficult. Williams, an experienced teacher explains, “They’re only seeing the aspect of one class period. They’re not going to see all aspects of the things that they’re evaluating.” Garcia, an experienced teacher, attempts to script lessons to arrange for the principal to see specific aspects saying, “It’s like, okay, she’s coming at 10:30, so I really need to start at 10:00 so she can see this part.” Johnson, a non-tenured teacher, describes frustration with time constraints of the CEP sharing, “The



principal only gets to observe maybe one time a semester. Their judgement is based on of one hour in one class period. So they might have come in in my hardest class.”

The solution to time management at the administrative level is not simple, but teachers have ideas. Thomas offers, “The district [could] maybe take some things off their plate.” Jackson offers the solution of additional role-based jobs sharing, “I think maybe defining roles of a separate person who might be responsible for behavior minus the admin.” Georges’ solution involves more staff as well explaining, “I think it would be nice if the district would provide like a substitute principal so the principal could get into the building and into the classrooms.” However, despite suggestions, teachers are not hopeful for reform. Jackson, an experienced teacher, says, “So the problems with time and managing all of that, those aren’t going to change.”

Teachers feel the pressure of many tasks to complete at their level as well. Williams explains, “They want us to do a lot of documentations too, and having the time to do it for ourselves can be an issue.” Jackson shares the difficulties of keeping up with excessive paperwork sharing, “Some of the challenges I face are struggling to keep up with my workload that’s not directly student facing.” Thomas shares the challenge of teaching the curriculum in a limited time frame saying, “Time is a challenge. My class is 42 minutes. I’m a pretty hands-on kind of teacher, so it’s hard some days to get something done before it’s time to go.”

Teachers recognize the time constraints on both their position and the administrative positions. They realize it does contribute in a negative way to their own evaluation experience. This can sometimes lead to teachers feeling a lack of support.

## **Lack of Support**

Teacher participants also voiced a lack of support to resolving some of the experience and subject disproportions and inequities. Teachers seek out other educators and resources to supplement their own learning when school-based support and feedback are not enough. Anderson, a non-tested subject teacher, describes the networking that is necessary for growing as a teacher sharing, “The go to is colleagues. If it’s something musical, ‘Hey, how would you deal with this situation?’” Allen, another arts specialist, details professional development after another colleague helped him seek out more content support explaining, “When I started as our art teacher, a more experienced art teacher invited me to go to the state art teacher conference. I networked with people across the state.” Davis, another arts specialist, uses an online conference each year to supplement learning sharing, “There’s an online conference that happens that I go to, and then I can watch it in pieces and watch it again.” Wilson, a non-tested subject area teacher, describes using social media to continue learning through networking saying, “There’s a lot of music teachers that I follow on social media.... I get a lot of ideas and motivation from people that I can follow and look up to.” Moore, an arts specialist, discusses the Kentucky Music Educators Conference (KMEA) and the Midwest Band Clinic they attend each year and the effect on their own social emotional stability:

So I go to KMEA and I get to go to clinics and hear concerts. I get a chance to touch base with teachers and be like ‘Hey, can you give me some feedback on how you’re doing bucket drumming?’....Going to Midwest Clinic in Chicago, not only have I gotten concrete things that I’ve used in my class immediately, but it, it is food for my soul... I come home and I have so many ideas. I feel so much better and more prepared.

Thomas, a tested subject teacher, describes seeking out online resources sharing, “Of course, the internet. It’s crazy what’s out there. I got to participate in an [online] national STEM program and obtained just a ton of resources.” Jackson, another tested subject teacher, researchs to find additional learning opportunities stating, “A lot of research.... I constantly, I’m finding ideas from other people. I do workshops with global writing projects and things like that.”

Teachers also experience lack of support during feedback from their school administrator. Less experienced teachers are sometimes unsure what exactly administrators are looking for.

Johnson, a non-tenured teacher, says:

In past observations I’ve been asked, ‘How do you think it went?’ and so I don’t feel like that’s helpful for me just because I want to hear what you thought. I want to be able to ask you those questions.... If I knew how it went I wouldn’t need to be asking these questions.

Thomas, a tenured teacher, describes a different experience as an experienced teacher sharing, “If you come to do my evaluation and we talk for five minutes about it, is it effective? No. Because I’ve worked enough years to know.” Jackson, another experienced teacher echoes this saying, “I think sometimes they’re just like, ‘Oh, she is awesome. We’ll just be in there for just a few minutes and give her a good evaluation.’” Williams as a tenured teacher, expresses concern for less experienced teachers during the evaluation process without support sharing, “I think new teachers don’t know what to add [to the evaluation form] a lot of times. There’s a lot of repetitiveness that a lot of teachers don’t understand.”

The shift in technology usage left some older principals in the dark. Teachers voice the concern that all feedback is not necessarily relevant to the classroom of 2023. Johnson, a non-tenured teacher, shares, “Administrators give feedback based on what they experienced in the

classroom. And yeah, that might have been perfect when you were teaching, but it's not really how things are anymore." Thomas, an experienced educator, offers a solution saying, "But let's plan together. Let's do this [lesson] together. Even once a quarter. I think it would be powerful too." Jackson agrees with coming back into the classroom as an administrator saying, "It should be embedded in a position that you should cycle back into a class.... We all feel like they don't understand what it's like anymore. That big disconnect."

Lack of support is seen in a myriad of ways by teachers throughout the study. Teachers gave examples that pointed to other themes including subject-matter inequities and experience inequities, both at the teacher level and administrative level. Feeling a lack of support can make it difficult to collaboratively work with administration to effectively reflect and make meaning, the last theme found.

### **Reflecting and Making Meaning**

The last theme of reflecting and making meaning emerged as teachers began to speak to their experience with the CEP. Teachers want to grow. Teachers want to be better. Oftentimes, teachers are so focused on the instruction they do not even realize all the small decisions they make that help students. Williams, an experienced teacher, explains how the principal helps during reflection saying, "He would be like, 'Well, you've done this, this, this, this. This counts as classroom instruction or management.' You know, there are little things that I do that I don't think are important. But that is important." The reflection piece of CEP was mentioned by Garcia, a tenured teacher, stating, "Just that time to sit down after your evaluation [is important]. I think that part's missed a lot.... This is what I'm doing well and collaborate together. Here's what I can do next." Jackson describes the actual CEP document as cumbersome but has positive feedback on the reflection component. They say, "If I do it with fidelity, it's reflective and

meaningful, and I can notice things in myself and goal set and adjust...I create meaningful feedback.” Miller describes the reflection as being forced to reflect, but it is helpful. Miller shares, “We kind of do a little self-assessment. I feel like that for me is helpful.” Wilson echoes saying, “The reflection part is like the most helpful...It motivates me.”

The semi-structured interviews of teachers revealed some similarities between themes and experiences. However, other experiences not mentioned by principals emerged as well. These themes connect together and tie directly into the second piece of data, teacher evaluations used for document analysis.

### **Document Analysis**

In addition to the interviews, and to add to triangulation of the study, I analyzed documents from evaluations. I asked teachers to provide recent copies of their teacher performance evaluations if they were comfortable with doing so. Although the documents are specific to the process that I studied using interviews, accessibility was a barrier due to confidentiality reasons. Of the 12 teachers interviewed and asked for performance data in document form, only three teachers provided documents for analysis.

The purpose of an evaluation system for teachers is improving the effectiveness of classroom instruction (Looney, 2011). The Kentucky Framework for Teaching, adapted from the Danielson Group’s Framework for Teaching, is designed to provide a clear understanding of what effective teaching is. The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) allows for each district to develop their own evaluation system based on the Kentucky Framework for Teaching (Danielson, 2014). District plans are required to support every student taught by an effective teacher that is continually growing. KDE designed the system in order to create a fair and equitable method to promote and measure teacher growth and effectiveness. In order to achieve

this, KDE suggests four components for each district’s evaluation system: self-reflection and professional growth planning, observation by administrators, peer-to-peer feedback cycles, and student surveys.

KDE designed the self-reflection and professional growth-planning component to be a collaborative process between the teacher and the evaluating administrator. This shared task is essential, as teachers often need guidance to self-reflect properly on their craft (Gün, 2010). Through transparency, educators and administrators can differentiate the evaluation plan to address specific and individual needs and areas for growth. These areas of growth connect directly to student learning with student achievement at the forefront of teacher evaluations. Teachers use documented evidence to isolate successful and unsuccessful instructional practices and self-reflect on how to make the delivery of instruction more successful and impactful. Professional growth planning is a process wherein teachers put self-reflection observations and goals into action. The Professional Growth Plan (PGP) outlines intentional undertakings each teacher uses to improve their effectiveness in the classroom. These practices are evidence based, targeted, and measurable. Interim markers indicate progress throughout each school year. Teachers that exhibit high levels of efficacy during this process are likely to persist, achieve goals, and strive to repeat the success (Ross & Bruce, 2005) with the expectation of affecting student learning and achievement in a positive manner.

During the observation cycle, trained administrators collect evidence during classroom observations. The element of observation is a powerful tool when used to make “intentional changes to instructional and professional practices” (Kentucky Department of Education, 2022b, para. 1). Again, each district is responsible for creating its own Certified Evaluation Plan (CEP) using the Kentucky Framework for Teaching, which uses observable indicators from within the

classroom during instruction. The observation requirements include performance measures of pedagogical practices, instructional outcomes, and designing instruction and assessments. Moreover, the observation tool asks observers to rate the organization of the physical space, managing procedures and student behavior, and instructional practices such as engagement and questioning techniques. In addition, each district is responsible for training administrators on the district-adopted tool used for the observation.

KDE suggests an additional component, peer-to-peer feedback as a supplement in CEPs. As peers cannot formally evaluate other peers, KDE recommends embedding peer-to-peer observations as professional development during the school day. Authentic engagement in peer-to-peer feedback encourages collaboration to identify improvement practices that can address learning needs, and the peer observation is designed to be less obtrusive than the administrative observation. While the peer observation can never be punitive and is designed to be less intimidating being completed by a peer, research shows teachers are less tolerant of poor performance in the classroom than the formal evaluators are (Adams et al., 2015). Peers that observe and reflect in other teachers' rooms also have the added benefit of expanding their own knowledge and instructional practices. Teachers have the opportunity to further a growth mindset in a trusted, safe, non-evaluative space. In order to ensure quality peer-to-peer feedback when observing, KDE developed peer-to-peer learning sessions to train educators on engagement in research-based practices. While the evaluations I examined did have mentions of peer-to-peer observation, it was not a formal and required process of Adams County's CEP, and formal training was not mentioned in the evaluations nor the CEP policies. It is not a required component at the state nor district level.

The last component KDE suggests for teacher growth in CEPs is student surveys. The CEP is not required to use student surveys just as peer-to-peer feedback is not required. Districts may require student voice as a contributor to the CEP, and each district has access to the standardized voice survey created by KDE. It is at the discretion of the district whether to use or to what degree the student voice surveys are used as an evaluation tool. KDE suggests the district use the tool for teacher self-reflection or as part of the ongoing formative assessment for a teacher (Kentucky Department of Education, 2022). Student voice has the opportunity to be heard and then acted on and can narrow the gap in the instructional practice to student achievement schism if used with fidelity (Bourke & MacDonald, 2018). Adams County uses student voice survey. However, the Teacher Personnel Evaluation System of Adams County does not reference student surveys.

The tool Adams County Public Schools uses for teacher evaluation is the Teacher Personnel Evaluation System (PES). The system operates on an annual cycle if the teacher is not tenured, meaning not on a continuing contract. Teachers on a continuing contract, or tenured teachers, operate on a three-year cycle. The first and second years function as formative assessments and only include a one-time mini observation that lasts between 20 and 30 minutes. The third and final year of the cycle functions as a summative assessment year with two mini observations and one full observation of an entire class period. This varies in length based on the school and grade level schedule.

The PES contains an evidence section that teachers are expected to provide. Each evidence domain is based on the Danielson (2014) adaptation of teacher framework for teaching created for the Kentucky Department of Education. The four domains include: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities. Each



domain has between five and six subdomains, and teachers must provide evidence for each subdomain. Evidence can fit into more than one category. After the teacher names evidence, explains the evidence, and submits documents to support the evidence, the evaluating administrator assigns a rating to each subdomain. Those ratings include ineffective, developing, accomplished, exemplary, or not applicable. Of the evaluations I analyzed, only one subdomain in one evaluation was rated lower than accomplished. This evaluation included a developing rating in the demonstrating professionalism category. As this was optional, teachers without satisfactory ratings probably did not opt to share their evaluations with me. At the end of each evidence domain, the teacher completes an overall comments section, a reflection section, and a professional growth needs identified section. The evaluations I analyzed limited this to one to two sentences.

Following the evidence category, the PES concludes with a performance rating section that displays professional practice rating charts for each teacher. The administrator evaluates evidence and observes in the classroom, then assigns an overall performance rating for each domain. Following the overall rating for each domain, there is a summative rating for the teacher if it is a summative evaluation year. The teacher has an opportunity to disagree with the evaluation if desired, although the documents I received did not contain any disagreements within the evaluations. The PES concludes with a chart for aiding in the assignment of summative decisions; a rules category assigns summative ratings based on each domain and subdomain rating provided by the administrator.

### **Document Analysis Coding**

I used a similar coding strategy for the document analysis. I began with elaborative coding, again searching for the codes found in Robinson's 2019 study. The first cycle of in vivo

coding captured both principal and teacher perceptions on the evaluation documents. As this was a much smaller data set than the interview transcripts, only 12 initial themes presented. Table 7 shows the most frequently occurring themes within each evaluation provided.

This round of in vivo coding revealed voice from both the teachers and the administrators as one of the evaluations was written completely by the administrator performing the evaluation with reflective comments from the teacher, and two evaluations were completed in its entirety by the teacher being evaluated. The first- and third-person voices of the evaluations allowed analyzation of the role of the person completing the evaluation.

*Table 9. Highest Frequency Themes Found Within Performance Documents*

	Themes	Frequency (Highest to Lowest)
Performance Document #1	Knowledge of Resources	7
	Assessment	5
	Expectations	4
	Interventions	3
	Communication	3
Performance Document #2	Expectations	6
	Knowledge of Resources	4
	Assessment	3
	Communication	2
Performance Document #3	Knowledge of Resources	4
	Knowledge of Students	3
	Flexibility	2
	Organization	2

The overview provided in this section details the demographics of Adams County Schools, a suburban school district in Kentucky. In addition, the overview provides demographic information regarding the study participants and how data were collected for the study. The outline also provides clarity on the data coding and how it aligns to each research question. The data collection incorporated two forms: document analysis and semi-structured interviews. The document analysis provided an outline of the Teacher Personnel Evaluation System used for formative and summative assessment of teachers by evaluating administrators. The semi-structured interviews provided data for coding cycles. The document analysis, while small, provided data for coding cycles as well. The outline of interviews also discussed how I generated themes as well as how each theme related to the three research questions. While the chapter is structured largely around the primary three research questions, findings also indicated important issues teachers and administrators face both during evaluations and in the classroom in general.

This qualitative case study examined the perceptions of principal and teacher feedback during the teacher evaluation process. However, the participants did not focus solely on the evaluation process, but the challenges and successes of the classroom both in general and as a result of the evaluation process. Additionally, this study addressed concerns with subject-matter inequity, not just during evaluations but also within growing as an instructor in their expertise. Teachers described the successes and challenges of using the current CEP model in Adams County Schools.

### **Chapter Summary**

The 18 participants of Adams County Schools who agreed to contribute to the study in the 2022-2023 school year participated in a semi-structured interview that consisted of seven questions. These questions were differentiated based on the participant's role, administrator or

teacher. The questions determined how the teacher evaluation system is perceived by the participant as useful or not. The data was collected along with three teachers' evaluation documents I received.

By undertaking a qualitative case study, it is possible to learn about the teachers and administrators' perspectives and experience with the CEP used in Adams County. I developed codes throughout the review of the interviews and documents and could identify the impacts the CEP had on teachers. It was a wide array of impact from absolutely none to hugely impactful. The statements surrounding subject-matter inequity were found mostly in arts teachers interviews, those that are non-tested subject teachers. The statements from experienced teachers saw a compliance driven process. New teachers and teachers being assessed by evaluators familiar with the content area had the most positive outlook on the CEP.

There was a myriad of opinions of the TES used throughout the district. Experienced teachers had a much different view of the system. Several found it as a compliance measure that did not help them grow. Beginning teachers found parts of it very useful. One principal said that the TES was just box checking and didn't help him with specific subject instructional leadership, while another said it was so useful because it was vague and broad enough to apply to any subject. Understanding that each participant has a different background before becoming and educator and experienced the evaluation system differently was key to recognizing the differentiations of the reasons they believed their opinion was the reality of the TES.

I found that teacher evaluation plans are rarely differentiated for teachers. Teachers are expected to differentiate for the individual needs of each student, but the same does not hold true for the growth and learning of the teacher themselves. Using a differentiated plan for subject and experience would be beneficial and help every teacher grow.

Given my chosen research questions it was a surprise there was not a vast difference in teachers' experiences between tested and non-tested subject teachers. There were a few to note, however. Every non-tested subject teacher recognized subject-matter inequities in their evaluative experience, which was not the case with all tested subject teachers. Tested subject teachers, on the other hand, described the experiences of hoop jumping, lack of support, and time management more frequently. Most of the codes found throughout the study, however, were similar across the two teacher groups. A summary of conclusions drawn from the findings appear in Chapter V along with implications for practice, policy, and future research, and a discussion of limitations of the study.

## CHAPTER V: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this study I sought to answer three research questions:

RQ1: How do teachers in tested subjects and teachers in non-tested subjects perceive the quality and quantity of principal feedback?

RQ2: How do administrators perceive the quality and quantity of their feedback given to teachers in tested subjects and teachers in non-tested subjects?

RQ3: If informants (teachers and administrators) perceive differences in the quality and quantity of feedback, how do they rationalize these differences?

In this chapter, I present a summary of findings for each research question, and then I discuss implications for policy, practice, and future research. I also outline the similar codes found in Robinson's study and how it compares to this study. The semi-structured interviews of teachers and evaluating administrators examined their unique perspectives on the process of teacher evaluation in Adams County Schools. Specifically, teacher participants shared their successes and their struggles with the teacher evaluation system. They also shared how it influences their growth instructionally within their classrooms. Administrative participants shared their perception of their ability to help teachers grow instructionally. Both administrators and teachers described their overall thoughts on the current system in place.

### **RQ1: Teachers' Perception of Principal Feedback**

The first research question in my qualitative study examined the teacher perceptions of principal feedback. Intentionally, I asked an equal number of tested and

non-tested subject teachers across all grade levels to participate. The preliminary view of the responses in the teacher interview indicated a wide array of perception based on several variables.

In the 12 teacher semi-structured interviews along with the teacher evaluations provided, subject-matter inequity appeared as the most frequent selective code. Every teacher in the arts interviewed identified the most issues with subject-matter inequity, but the teachers of tested subjects have this issue as well. This is relevant as the evaluation process designed by KDE is intended to “promote professional growth and to be equitable systems” (Kentucky Department of Education, 2022a, para. 1). Teachers with administrators familiar with their content have a clear advantage when examining instructional growth. This is significant as research shows that most principals do not have a clear understanding of all pedagogical content, and teachers rate their evaluation effectiveness on the administrator’s ability to provide valuable feedback (Abril & Gault, 2006; Abril & Gault, 2008; Bridich, 2016; Miksza, 2013; Zimmerman & Deckert-Pelton, 2003). This is especially evident when examining teachers in areas that are highly specialized or advanced, such as arts specialists (Ross & Bruce, 2005). This echoes Robinson’s (2019) findings that indicated teachers were frustrated with not having an observer fluent in their subject area and teaching practices, as well as recognizing that every non-tested subject teacher in the study voiced this same frustration.

Experience inequities emerged as another code. Teachers with the most experience described the evaluation system as compliance-based, and often without meaningful feedback. Teachers with little experience either wanted to be led to the answers principals expected or said the evaluation system was overall a useful feedback

tool. This description supports research that teacher evaluation tools should be differentiated to support teachers' needs, and experience differentiation is a useful tool (Danielson & McGreal, 2001; Darling-Hammond et al., 1983). Both teachers and administrators view the evaluation tool as valuable for student learning and achievement when used effectively (Bridich, 2016; Wakamatsu, 2016). This code was found in all but one teacher interview.

Both subject inequities and experience inequities tied to another code—lack of support. While Robinson (2019) found a lack of support regarding teaching to the end of year tests, the lack of support found in this study emerged in different areas. Teachers experiencing inequities from feedback did not always feel supported. All teachers that felt unsupported from feedback sought out professional learning opportunities on their own, outside the district, which was reflected in the semi-structured interviews. The teachers that expressed the most instances of lack of support were also the teachers that felt least helped by feedback. These teachers exhibited the initiative to learn, grow, and be effective in the classroom despite not always feeling supported. Research shows efficacy in the classroom leads to the cycle of more curiosity, seeking out growth again, and more student achievement (Ross & Bruce, 2005). Those that did not feel supported by administrators used the challenge as an opportunity to develop skills. This code was reported more frequently by the tested subject teachers than the non-tested subject teachers.

Inequities and lack of support closely aligned with time management, an additional code. Teachers feel stress when constantly being asked to do more, and when feeling like there is not enough time to get everything done. The paperwork that



coincides with the CEP used in Adams County contributes to the workload of teachers, and as it is not student-facing work, is found to be unnecessary by some teachers, and tested subject teachers in this study reported this more often than non-tested subjects. Unreasonable paperwork requirements and time demands are also recognized by teachers in Robinson's (2019) study.

Teachers also understand that district, state, and federal mandates add to not only their workload, but the workload of administrators that have too many tasks and not enough time. Two teachers shared a nearly identical experience of the principal being called away during their formal observation of the year, even as studies show that principals that prioritize instructional related tasks have more positive student outcomes (Grissom et al., 2015). Despite research showing this, the principal's day continues to be hectic and filled with interruptions and issues that require immediate attention (Blendinger & Snipes, 1996; Hallinger & Murphy, 2013). These events tend to consume a larger portion of the principal's day, leaving little time to student achievement efforts. This directly ties back to teachers not feeling supported, especially when faced with inequities based on their position and years of experience. It is nearly impossible to support every teachers' needs when administrators are charged with so many tasks.

### **RQ2: Principals' Perception of Feedback Given to Teachers**

While the first research question gathered information on perceptions of those evaluated, the second research question gathered perception of the evaluator.

Administrators from all grade levels participated in the study, and they all varied in their prior teaching experiences and administrative experiences. Initial review of the six

administrators' semi-structured interviews revealed numerous variations in leadership styles and personalities.

Every administrator expressed a desire to be trusted by their teachers. This climate and culture piece is essential to not only operating a school effectively, but to the evaluation, feedback, and growth systems within the school. Positive rapport and trust are linked to positive teacher and student outcomes, and without trust, principals cannot have the transparency and candid conversations that are essential to the growth of teachers (Reddy et al., 2018; Zimmerman, 2003). Adams County Schools also designed their CEP to be a shared process between principals and teachers. This builds trust as it assures that teachers reflect and agree on their evaluation, and two of three documents I analyzed did just that. Robinson (2019) mentions teacher buy in being affected because of lack of support, and this ties directly back to trust. Teachers that do not trust administration will not be on board with new initiatives and will have difficulty seeing the principal as an instructional leader. Furthermore, principals that are trusted are found to be more effective instructional leaders. Trust between principals and teachers tie directly into student achievement in other ways as trust fosters collective efficacy, which again, leads to higher student achievement (Ross & Bruce, 2005; Tschannen-Moran & Goddard, 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). The school leader sets the tone for the climate and culture of the school, and relationships based on trust make a significant contribution to academic achievement in schools (Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

Subject-matter and experience inequities were two other codes that emerged from the principal interviews and document analysis. Participants described subject matter inequities in various forms. Some participants did not see any differences, some

participants used a general education lens to fit all subjects together, and one participant acknowledged their expertise in their own subject, their support but lack of knowledge in other subjects, and the inability to recognize misinformation because of the deficit. The latter principal's teachers reported high levels of support and trust. This principal recognized an area of growth for themselves just as teachers in Robinson's (2019) study recognized this as a problem in their district. As few teachers change their pedagogical methods without guidance from a strong instructional leader, these teachers are fortunate to have a principal so in tune with the varied subjects they observe (Halverson et al., 2004). These results however, made it difficult to specifically address the research question. Most of the principals saw no differences, either by choice or by circumstance.

Principals reported experience inequities at a much higher rate than teachers. Experienced teachers were aware of experience inequities, but in short, unexperienced teachers did not know what they did not know. Beginning teachers recognize that teacher preparation programs do not cover every aspect of teaching, but these teachers were unaware more time was spent with them than experienced teachers (Conway, 2002). Principals recognized that the experienced teacher does not benefit tremendously from the teacher evaluation system, as the feedback the principals give is often limited and sparse, and the majority of time spent on coaching and evaluating is spent with teachers that are less experienced and need more supports. This was a code that was not affected by the teacher group being discussed.

Time management was a code found throughout the principal interviews. This code is directly linked to the inequity codes found as the extensive duties of the principal can cause inequity in teachers that are supported. The principal duties detailed were

discipline, social emotional learning, interventions, supervision, parental communication, operations, finance, human resources, district relations, climate and culture, and of course, instructional leader. Managing this extensive list of tasks can be difficult, even for principals with the strongest time management skills. Having strong time management skills benefits not only the principal, but the entire school community, regardless of the subject area of the teacher. Research shows principal time management skills are tied to lower stress and more productive work, which may improve overall job performance (Claessens et al., 2007; Grissom et al., 2015). Grissom et al. (2015) found when principals allocate time to specific tasks related to student achievement, more positive student outcomes are the result. Research also shows those principals who are more effective leaders spend more time in the classroom than those that do not, making time management even more vital to success as a building administrator (Grissom et al., 2015). In addition, principals that dedicate time to climate and culture gain trust. These codes are directly linked together as climate and culture have a direct connection to trust.

### **RQ3: Rationalizing Differences in Feedback**

The third research question rationalized the differences between the quality and quantity of feedback from both the principal and teacher perspective. Teacher participants answered questions three through five during the interview that tied directly to the third research question. Likewise, principals answered administrative questions three through six that tied directly to the third research question.

Teachers of subjects that aligned with the expertise of their principal attributed their valuable feedback to this parallel. Conversely, teachers who did not have expertise alignment with their principal sometimes saw differences in evaluative feedback, mostly

in the specialized areas of non-tested subjects. This supports prior research that teachers have confidence in principals who understand their subject (Derrington & Martinez, 2019). This also supports the data found by Robinson (2019) when examining music teachers' experience with teacher evaluations.

Experienced teachers were also aware their feedback was sparse in comparison to teachers that are new. While teachers understand there is a finite number of time principals can do their job each day, it still does not help seasoned teachers continue to grow. Principals reiterated this, detailing all duties they are responsible for on a daily basis and how much they want to be in classrooms observing and giving feedback instead of attending to management duties. Some principals expressed being able to fulfill this more easily than others, and there is importance in how principals manage their time (Martin & Willower, 1981).

All administrators in the study expressed a desire for trust in their building, but not all teachers expressed a trusting, supportive relationship with their administrators. Teachers that did report trust viewed the evaluative feedback they received as more useful and valuable. Teachers without confidence and trust viewed the feedback and the process of evaluation as compliance. This aligns with Robinson's (2019) study that indicated teacher buy in is affected when teachers do not feel supported.

Administrators recognized the vast number of compliance-based tasks they are asked to complete as the school leader, and some even saw portions of the evaluation process as compliance. This hoop jumping also supports Robinson's (2019) prior research. The principals expressed a desire to spend more time in student-facing

instructional roles and have reached out to the district for help with this, as it ties directly to the ability to eliminate inequities and build trust.

All of the codes from teachers and principals had a direct link to time management. If principals had more time, they could work on building climate and culture in their school. They could spend more time researching and doing their own professional development in subjects they are not as familiar with. Principals could work with the experienced teachers to collaborate and help them grow. In order for this to happen, principals would need less hoop jumping and more time to influence teachers and students.

### **Implications**

From the results and perceptions of teachers and administrators in this qualitative case study, there are implications for policy and practice for administrators at the school level, the district level, and the state level. Now more than ever it is important that teachers feel supported and empowered in their job as the teacher shortage across the nation is dire. Having valuable feedback that is adequate for the needs of the teacher is essential to support the continuous growth, efficacy, and retention of teachers in the classroom.

Because many of the codes found across the interviews were similar in both tested and non-tested subject teachers' experiences, this points to a larger systemic problem in the evaluation process and even in education itself. The following address the policies and practices that could improve these experiences for teachers.

## **Policy**

The legislature in Kentucky has a special interest in public school education and has for decades. Lawmakers control school district funding, curriculum, and mandates to an extent. Many of these requirements are handed down through the Kentucky Board of Education, which represents KDE. Kentucky Revised Statute (KRS) 156.557 creates the requirement for a personnel evaluation system by each district. Among the many requirements and material of this statute, is the information, “At the request of a teacher, observations by other teachers trained in the teacher’s content area or curriculum content specialists may be incorporated into the formative process for evaluating teachers.” This policy exists to prevent subject matter inequities, but this is not mentioned in any part of Adams County School’s Certified Evaluation Plan, nor had I, a teacher of 18 years in Kentucky, heard of this inclusion. Including this specification into the plan, or just making teachers aware that it is an option, could begin to eliminate some of the feedback from evaluations viewed as unhelpful. Creating an evaluation plan that builds in differentiation demonstrates to everyone involved that individualized learning has value and compliance is not an acceptable reason to complete an evaluation. If teachers are being evaluated by a specialist in their content, they receive specialized feedback that can work towards helping students grow and thrive. When teachers are able to receive meaningful feedback, teacher retention and efficacy are improved, and based on the findings of this study, it would be beneficial to examine CEPs at the district level to explore differentiated strategies within the KDE and KRS requirement. In addition to state policy, district policies could provide differentiated professional development policies as throughout the interviews with teachers they described the subject-specific

professional developments they seek out. Providing a protected opportunity via policy for subject-specific professional development could provide an additional support to every subject area.

Experienced teachers sometimes do not get the same quality and quantity of feedback as those new to the classroom. In 2018, Kentucky stopped funding for the Kentucky Teacher Internship Program. (KTIP). This program afforded teachers an experienced mentor teacher, usually in their building and a university supervisor in their field as an evaluator. Mentor programs improve teacher confidence on all levels. Even the experienced teacher grows from observing new ideas, solutions, and techniques exhibited by the mentee. With a funded high-quality mentorship program, experience inequities and content inequities could be fewer. Reinstating this policy at the state level could also help teacher attrition in addition to teachers feeling more supported. Every teacher deserves and needs a strong mentor that can guide them through the terminology, standards, heavy workload, and professional learning of their first year.

The results of my study also revealed implications for principal preparation programs. Principals voiced concerns that preparation programs and the district do not spend enough time focusing on being an instructional leader, and there is too much focus on managing tasks. Research shows that while most principal preparation programs rely on contextual experience, there is really no way to prepare principals for every experience. Training for developing students to understand all skills is an impossibility in preparation programs as well (Pijanowski & Lasater, 2020). Creating requirements for principal prep programs that has a more specific instructional-based focus would allow newly certified principals to be more prepared to be strong instructional leaders.



My research participants shared narratives of not being supported, not having enough time to complete the duties of their positions, and completing tasks for compliance on top of the issues being exacerbated by the trauma and loss of learning from the 2020 pandemic. Educators at all levels voiced frustrations over being stretched too thin and students not getting their best. In order for changes to happen in Kentucky school districts, funding education and valuing education must be at the forefront of focus for our policymakers. Before teachers can have mentors, before there can be additional positions added to lessen the principal or teacher workload, and before we can support teachers with more coaching, there must be funding and prioritization of education. When we prioritize our students' education, we are prioritizing our future.

### **Practice**

During semi-structured interviews, teachers described the networking and pedagogical methods they gained after participating in content-specific professional development. Among the professional development mentioned was the state art teachers' conference, the Kentucky Music Educators Conference, a science, technology, engineering, math conference, and a global writing group. Teachers are seeking out their own professional development to grow instructionally in their content and have expressed how valuable that is. In terms of practice, the implications for providing at least some content-based professional development are clear. While it may not solve the discrepancies of evaluations and feedback, teachers would have the chance to learn from an expert in their field.

Teachers in different stages of their career could also benefit from differentiation. New teachers may need basic professional development that is an introduction to the

classroom, standards, and instruction, while experienced teachers could use professional development that explores more advanced instructional techniques or addresses leadership when encouraged to seek leadership positions within their school. There are many ways to examine differentiation for teachers and get away from the one-size-fits-all approach.

Shifting to differentiated professional development and evaluations have barriers that could prevent teachers and schools from seeking out these tools. Teachers would need time away from their classroom, and there is also a substitute shortage. If there is no substitute, colleagues in the building have to lose planning time to cover a class, further reducing the amount of time teachers have. Even as one teacher benefits, the burden of more time management now lies with the person asked to be the substitute, and this does not even consider the repercussions for students when the teacher of record is out of the classroom. All of these things may be discouraging to teachers that want these opportunities as teaching is such a personal profession. Teachers know how much students need education after the pandemic, how much their colleagues need more time, and how hardly anyone in the business is getting everything that they need.

Another need expressed by teacher and principal participants was support and visibility from the principal. Teachers need more support, and principals want to give more support. However, much of their days are spent on operational or compliance-driven tasks, leaving little time to be instructional leaders. At the district level, this requires taking away unnecessary tasks for principals. This solution creates fewer time management issues for the principal and helps them be present in the classroom more. As

a result, teachers would feel more supported, trust would be boosted, and there would be more time to collaborate reflectively with the instructional leader.

In terms of practice, principals voiced a concern about their own professional development. Principals that sought out professional development in collaborative coaching praised the practice and their personal growth. However, principals that spent a significant amount of time in district meetings attending to managerial-based tasks expressed a need for more instructional-based resources. As a solution, district officials could help outline specific instructional strategies required of principals to know and decrease the number of meetings dedicated to operations and management. This would both relieve a portion of time management problems and refocus that time into a proven achievement booster.

The strategies outlined above help address every selective code identified in the study. Helping teachers feel supported and helping teachers grow is the sole purpose for the evaluation process. These strategies can drive student achievement on many levels. Differentiation for teachers, valuable instructional coaching, and collaboration are essential to providing the very best for teachers and students (Kraft et al., 2018; Simms & Fletcher-Wood, 2020).

### **Future Research**

Creating a continuous system of growth and development for teachers is essential to student learning. This is important when examining subject and experience-based differentiation for teachers. Further research should focus on components beyond the evaluation and feedback that can be tailored to each teacher's needs. Furthermore, the result of this differentiation on student achievement could be examined focusing on

specific factors for analysis. Comparisons could be made between teachers receiving feedback from a specialist in their area and those that are not. Future research could extend this to the professional development each teacher receives based on both their subject area and experience.

Another implication for further research could be the requirements of principals from the federal, state, and district level. Finding solutions to lessen compliance-based tasks could have an impact on time management, which could affect how teachers feel supported and the culture and climate of the school. These components are also directly linked to teacher efficacy and can have implications for student learning as well.

This study focused on the feedback teachers receive during the evaluation process. To understand principals' decisions for the feedback better, an examination of the principal evaluation and measures of success would be necessary. An understanding of the vision of success of Adams County Schools' administration at the central office level for principals would give further insight into the rationalization for the decisions that principals make at the school level.

This study included a document analysis of teacher evaluation forms. Only three teachers out of 12 teacher participants elected to provide an evaluation form for examination. Teacher evaluations are personal, and teachers see these documents as private. Future research could focus on collecting teacher evaluation forms for analysis without identifying information.

My study included one suburban district and a small sample of teachers and principals across all grade levels. Future research could expand this pool to an urban or rural area. Comparing the resources and solutions between the communities could

generate creative solutions to feedback, support, and instructional strategies for educators, which could help meet the needs of every teacher.

This final chapter examined the three research questions specifically and the implications for future research and policy and practice. While four codes emerged in specific teacher groups and addressed the research questions specifically, many codes were similar across both teacher groups. This points the research in a different direction than initially anticipated and creates many more avenues for future research. This can be attributed to many smaller causes, each of which play a role in the overall larger picture. Future research, policy, and practice adjustments can influence the experiences of teachers, both during the evaluation process and as an educator overall. These improved experiences would also improve the student experience.

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## APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title:

### **ADMINISTRATIVE EVALUATION OF TEACHERS IN TESTED AND NON-TESTED SUBJECTS**

#### **Investigator(s) name & address:**

Co-Advisor and Principal Investigator:  
W. Kyle Ingle, Ph.D.  
College of Education and Human Development  
University of Louisville  
1905 South 1st Street  
Louisville, KY 40292  
william.ingle@louisville.edu

Natasha D. Lanham  
University of Louisville  
4832 South 5<sup>th</sup> St.  
Louisville, KY 40214  
natasha.allen@louisville.edu

Site(s) where study is to be conducted: University of Louisville, Adams County Public Schools.

Phone number for subjects to call for questions: W. Kyle Ingle (502) 852-6097

#### Introduction and Background Information

You are invited to participate in a research study. The study is being conducted by Natasha Lanham. The study is sponsored by the University of Louisville, Department of Education Leadership, Evaluation, and Organizational Development. The study will take place at the University of Louisville and Adams County Public Schools. Approximately 21 subjects will be invited to participate.

#### Purpose

The purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions of the provision and substance of evaluative feedback among evaluating administrators and teachers in both tested and non-tested subjects.



### Procedures

In this study, you will be asked to provide information about your experiences about the process of your yearly evaluation. You will also be asked to provide responses to several questions about your experiences working with an evaluating administrator. Your participation will include a 45-minute individual interview to collect information. The interview will be audio recorded. I am highly flexible and am willing to meet with at your convenience. You may decline to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

### Potential Risks

There are no foreseeable risks other than possible discomfort in answering personal questions.

### Benefits

The possible benefits of this study to the participants include the opportunity for a deeper understanding of how to help instructional leaders when making decisions about teacher evaluation systems. It could also influence relationships between evaluating administrators and evaluated teachers.

### Compensation

You will not be compensated for your time, inconvenience, or expenses while you are in this study.

### Confidentiality

Total privacy cannot be guaranteed. Your privacy will be protected to the extent permitted by law. If the results from this study are published, your name will not be made public. While unlikely, the following may look at the study records:

The University of Louisville Institutional Review Board, and the Human Subjects Protection Program Office. People who are responsible for research and HIPAA oversight at the institutions where the study is conducted. Government agencies, such as Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP)

### Conflict of Interest

This study involves no foreseeable conflict of interest.

### Security

All data will be stored on a password-protected computer and will be destroyed after the study is complete.

### Voluntary Participation

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to be in this study, you may stop taking part at any time. If you decide not to be in this study or if you stop taking part at any time, you will not lose any benefits for which you may qualify.

You will be told about any changes that may affect your decision to continue in the study.

### **U.S. Department of Education (DOE) Funded Studies**

Because school system receives funding from the DOE, we are required to tell you the following information.

The information we collect from the study may only be used to meet the purposes of the study as stated in this consent. We will conduct this study in a manner that does not allow identification of you by anyone other than study team members or others who may have a legitimate reason to know. All instructional materials or survey instruments used for the research are available for you to see before the study begins if you ask to see it. If you want to see any of this information, please contact Devon Roberts, (502) 819-1083 and she will give you a date and time where it will be available for you to review. Once the study is completed, we are required by the U.S. Department of Education to destroy or return to the school system all personally identifiable information when no longer needed for the purposes of the study. We expect this study to last for five months and when the study is finished, we will delete any identifying information. All digital recordings will be destroyed by 2024 and all digital transcriptions will be destroyed by 2026.

### Contact Persons, Research Subject's Rights, Questions, Concerns, and Complaints

If you have any concerns or complaints about the study or the study staff, you have three options.

You may contact the principal investigator at (502) 852-6097 or [william.ingle@louisville.edu](mailto:william.ingle@louisville.edu)

If you have any questions about your rights as a study subject, questions, concerns or complaints, you may call the Human Subjects Protection Program Office (HSPPPO) (502) 852-5188. You may discuss any questions about your rights as a subject, in secret, with a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or the

HSPPO staff. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, staff of the institutions, as well as lay members of the community not connected with these institutions. The IRB has reviewed this study.

If you want to speak to a person outside the University, you may call 1-877-852-1167. You will be given the chance to talk about any questions, concerns or complaints in secret. This is a 24-hour hot line answered by people who do not work at the University of Louisville.

### Acknowledgment and Signatures

This informed consent document is not a contract. This document tells you what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. Your signature indicates that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in the study. You are not giving up any legal rights to which you are entitled by signing this informed consent document. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Subject Name (Please Print)	Signature of Subject	Date Signed
Printed Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)	Signature of Legal Representative	Date Signed
Relationship of Legal Representative to Subject		
Printed Name of Person Explaining Consent Form	Signature of Person Explaining Consent Form (if other than the Investigator)	Date Signed
Printed Name of Investigator	Signature of Investigator	Date Signed

List of Investigators

Phone Numbers

W. Kyle Ingle  
Natasha Lanham

(502) 852-6097  
(859) 409-2844

## APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT CORRESPONDENCE

Hello \_\_\_\_\_,

I hope this e-mail finds you well. My name is Natasha Lanham, and I am a Doctoral Candidate at the University of Louisville. I am writing as I am conducting a study on the evaluation of tested and non-tested subject teachers and believe you would be able to provide critical insight.

The primary goal of my study is to explore the perceptions of the provision and substance of evaluative feedback among evaluating administrators and teachers in both tested and non-tested subjects. Thus, I am seeking to interview evaluating administrators and teachers evaluated by them to explore their experience. Your voice is of considerable importance to the study. My hope is that I might speak with you in person to gain a better understanding about your own personal experiences with the evaluation process.

I am asking that you participate in a 45-minute interview. My schedule to conduct an interview with you is flexible and can be scheduled at a time, date, and location of your convenience. If you have additional questions, please contact me via e-mail at [natasha.allen@louisville.edu](mailto:natasha.allen@louisville.edu) or call (859)409-2844.

Thank you in advance and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Natasha D. Lanham

Doctoral Candidate, Educational Leadership & Organizational Development

University of Louisville

## APPENDIX C: ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Tell me about yourself. Please describe your background in education including experience, degrees earned, and grade levels taught, your current responsibilities, and your experience with non-tested subjects.
2. How has the school year going for you? What do you consider your successes and challenges this year?
3. How do you perceive the teacher evaluation system used in the district right now? What works well, and what needs adjusting?
4. What specific components create a challenge when observing teachers of tested subjects verses teachers of non-tested subjects?
5. Can you give an example of when you feel you are helping teachers the most during the evaluation process? Can you give an example of when you feel you are the least helpful during the evaluation process?
6. During the evaluation process have you ever found yourself spending more time coaching instructionally during the evaluation process with specific teachers? Is that intentional?
7. What could administrative preparation programs and the district do to better prepare future administrators to be strong instructional leaders for every teacher?

#### APPENDIX D: TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Tell me about yourself. Please describe your background in education including experience, degrees earned, and grade levels taught, your current responsibilities, and your experience with non-tested subjects.
2. How has the school year going for you? What do you consider your successes and challenges this year?
3. How do you perceive the teacher evaluation system used in the district right now? What works well, and what needs adjusting?
4. What specific components create a challenge when being observed by your administrator?
5. Can you give an example of when you feel you are helped the most during the evaluation process? Can you give an example of when you feel you are helped the least during the evaluation process?
6. Where do you find your resources to grow as a teacher instructionally?
7. What could administrative preparation programs and the district do to better prepare future administrators to be strong instructional leaders for every teacher?

## CURRICULUM VITA

NAME: Natasha D. Lanham

ADDRESS: 146 N Hite Ave.  
Louisville, KY 40206

DOB: Richmond, Kentucky – August 18, 1983

EDUCATION  
& TRAINING: B.M.E., Music Education  
Morehead State University  
2001-2005

M.M., Music  
Eastern Kentucky University  
2005-2006

M.A., Education  
University of the Cumberlands  
2007-2009

Ed.D. Educational Leadership and Organizational  
Development  
University of Louisville  
2016-2023

AWARDS:

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES:

PUBLICATIONS:

NATIONAL MEETING PRESENTATIONS:

REFEREED JOURNALS:

BOOKS AND SYMPOSIA:

INVITED PRESENTATIONS: