IMPACT OF ACTION RESEARCH TEAMS ON ADMINISTRATORS' IMPLEMENTATION

AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF THE TEACHER KEYS EFFECTIVENESS SYSTEM

by

KEVIN PAUL CARPENTER

(Under the Direction of Sheneka Williams)

ABSTRACT

This action research (AR) case study addresses the effectiveness of the feedback administrators provide to teachers under the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES). AR teams explored techniques to improve feedback to help teachers improve their instructional practices within teacher and leader efficacy and professional school structures lenses. To evaluate the AR process, the following questions drove the study:

1. How effective is the action research process in empowering the team's ability to find a solution to an evaluation system problem?

2. How can teachers influence the feedback process, and in what ways does feedback inform teachers' practices?

3. How do administrators increase their capacity to give actionable feedback?

Under the guidance of action research, two teams examined administrator feedback in the TKES platform and the professional learning resources leaders used to improve their evaluation practices. Findings included the following: teachers desire to see consistency in feedback that includes commendations and recommendations, administrators should change an evaluation score if the teacher provides evidence, teachers change their instruction if the feedback is

purposeful, relevant, and convincing, and action research teams should include teachers from different grade levels and content areas to be effective as they address practical school change.

Keywords: action research case study, Teacher Keys Effectiveness System, feedback improvement practices

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KEVIN P. CARPENTER

B.S.ED., The University of Georgia, 2009

M.ED., The University of Georgia, 2012

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KEVIN P. CARPENTER

Major Professor: Sheneka Williams
Committee: April Peters-Hawkins
    John Dayton

DEDICATION

To

Allison Tara Carpenter

My wife and supporter

Thank you for encouraging me and helping me see the light at the end of the tunnel. Your love,

enthusiasm, and caring approach motivated me to do my best work.

and

Theodora Noelle Carpenter

My beautiful daughter

You inspire me to achieve my goals. Seeing the miracle of your life as you grow and develop

your wonderful personality motivates me to be the best man I can be for you.

and

Stanley Paul Carpenter and Gail Elizabeth Carpenter

My father and mother

Your love, care, direction, and guidance throughout the years encouraged me to set high

standards and strive for excellence in graduate school and in my career.

and

Dr. Shannon A. McGill

My mentor and friend

For your support, wisdom, and expertise in helping me become a compassionate school leader

who always prioritizes students' needs.

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Furthermore, I want to thank the teachers and staff members at my school who devoted their time, energy, and intellectual brain power to this project. Without your commitment to improving school policy and representing your fellow educators, this project would not have been a success.

Within the Educational Leadership program at UGA, I want to thank Ryan Vamplew. We began this journey more than five years ago in the Master's program. Thank you for reflecting on the development of the case study and providing quality feedback that influenced the direction of the project.

Finally, I want to acknowledge Dr. Karen Watkins whose insight and perspective in the field of action research made the practical application of this study possible.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

After completing my first three years of teaching in a public school setting, I began the

doctoral program focusing on developing and improving my skills as an educational leader. As

an assistant principal in an elementary school, I have the opportunity to work closely with

teachers as they reflect on their teaching practices and work to improve their instructional

strategies. With the implementation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System as my school

district's evaluation protocol during the 2014-2015 school year, I have seen both the positive and

negative impacts an evaluation system has on educators' senses of self-efficacy and instructional

effectiveness. Importantly, teachers desire to communicate with their evaluators to understand

how they can better meet the needs of the students.

Context of the Case

"Each case to be studied is a complex entity located in its own situation. It has its special

contexts or backgrounds. Historical context is almost always of interest, but so are cultural and

physical contexts. Others that often are of interest are the social, economic, political, ethical, and

aesthetic contexts" (Stake, 2006, p. 12). To ensure that this study employs high quality

qualitative research, the context will be discussed in order to contribute to the sincerity,

resonance, and coherence of the case to provide the reader with a rich description of the project's

location. Without these details, those seeking to duplicate the process will lack valuable

information.

As the focus of the action research case study, State Elementary is a part of the North County School District[1] located in the southeastern portion of the United States. The system has more than 100 schools and 100,000 students. Demographically, the district contains 40 percent white students, 32 percent black students, 19 percent Hispanic students, 5 percent Asian students, 3 percent multi-racial students, and less than one percent American Indian and Pacific Islander students. 45 percent of the population qualifies for free and reduced lunches.

"The first and obvious use of biographical detail in case study research is locating the background and significant features of key personnel for the reader to see how these may have influenced the case" (Simons, 2009, p. 71). One of 67 elementary schools, State Elementary is a high-performing school located in a suburban area. Although the school has been open for 18 years, the building is immaculate. 80 staff members work at State, including 35 teachers (with an average of over 14 years teaching experience), 44 staff members, and one assistant principal. The principal is in her fourth year at the school, and the assistant principal is in his second year. Teachers at State worked with the principal to create the school's mission and vision statements. In summary, both the vision and mission focus on the importance of professional collaboration between the teachers and the leaders to ensure all practices within the building are purposeful and meaningful. This includes improving communication and providing growth opportunities for educators.

The physical characteristics of the building are impressive. Approaching the school from the state highway, there are several neighborhoods and trees surrounding the campus, giving the school a secluded feel with the sounds of pool water pumps buzzing and barking dogs ringing in

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[1] The names of the school and district are pseudonyms.

the background. Upon entering the school parking area, there are several entrances to the campus providing access to a beautiful multi-acre lot.

At the entrance of the building, a large mural of houses, plants, and animals greets visitors as they walk to the front office. The building itself has an "H" shape with the office located in the connecting hallway and grade level classrooms located along the long halls. The custodial team works tirelessly to keep the building clean. Visitors comment on the shining floors, freshly-painted light blue walls, and neat and organized classrooms. Parents in the community volunteer several times each month to maintain a pollinator garden in the back of the campus. There are several different herbs and spices growing behind the art room with various species of flowers and plants adding to the vibrant colors of the outside gazebo. Additionally, the school has two large playgrounds that border a neighborhood on the backside of the school building. These playgrounds have bright red and blue benches where the teachers socialize as the students play games and sports.

When I began my action research project at this school during the fall of 2014, the location of the building and experience of the teachers gave me confidence that I would have support and resources moving forward in the case study. "Given sufficient detail and rich description, a reader can discern which aspects of the case they can generalize to their own context and which they cannot" (Simons, 2009, p. 165). Therefore, this description of the context allows the readers to apply the findings to their schools. However, for a Title I school located in an urban area, this study may not be generalizable to that context.

Regarding the evaluation system, the principal and assistant principal finished their second year of implementation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES). The State Department of Education provided trainings, support, and resources to increase administrators'

knowledge and practices regarding the TKES. However, district leaders have offered few

additional professional learning opportunities for those conducting evaluations, and with the

demand of feedback requirements and observations, the school leaders desire to participate in

programs to increase their consistency and reliability.

The Problem

The problem this study addresses is the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of the feedback

administrators provide to teachers under the umbrella of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System.

Furthermore, I focus on teachers' pedagogical reflections and instructional changes in response

to the feedback they receive from administrators. At State, there is a need for improvement in

the evaluation process regarding the actionable nature of evaluator feedback. Specifically,

educators do not currently find the system to be purposeful or meaningful to their practices. The

lack of effectiveness in the evaluation process results in fewer teachers with expertise and skills

to contribute to the goals of the school. From an initial poll of teachers at the onset of the study

in 2014, 10 of 35 teachers stated that they used feedback from administrators to change their

daily instruction.

Within the initial literature review, the Teacher and Leader Efficacy theoretical

perspective impacted the analysis and evaluation of the examined studies. According to

Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000), teacher and leader efficacy are the "beliefs in one's capabilities

to organize and execute a course of action required to produce a given attainment" (p. 480). This

theory suggests that teachers and administrators have the ability and skills to set goals, evaluate

programs, and implement policies to meet the learning needs of students. Therefore, schools

employing teachers and leaders with strong senses of self-efficacy will face challenges and

collectively implement strategies to solve relevant organizational issues.

Embedded in the efficacy lens, the Professional Structure of Leadership theory was developed by Hoy and Miskel (2013), and researchers used it to study the importance of creating a participatory staff at schools to ensure that teachers and leaders are informed to make effective decisions regarding curriculum, instructional practices, and operational procedures. Hoy and Miskel (2013) asserted under the structure of schools theory that professional structure "is one in which substantial decision making is delegated to the professional staff. Members of the staff are viewed as professionals who have the expertise and competence to make important organizational decisions" (p. 111). Principals who desire to develop professional structures within their schools must utilize effective accountability systems to provide teachers with the needed resources to make significant school improvements.

In order for a school to have a professional structure with efficacious educators, evaluators must provide quality commentary that the teachers can reflect and act upon to improve their practices (Stronge, 2007). However, no intervention is in place to measure the changes teachers make to their instruction once they review the feedback they receive from classroom observations. Consequently, this study allows action research teams of teachers and administrators to reflect on the effectiveness of the feedback, create strategies for leaders to improve the feedback, and provide insight into the instructional changes educators at State Elementary make in their classrooms after reading the feedback.

The gap in the literature this study addresses includes different areas. Specifically, the literature fails to acknowledge the impact training has on how school leaders evaluate teachers under TKES. Additionally, there is a gap in measuring the changes teachers implement in their classrooms in response to the feedback they receive and the effectiveness of teachers analyzing and improving existing feedback. Therefore, my action research study examines the

instructional changes teachers employ after they have the opportunity to review, reflect, and provide input on the value of the commentary their administrators produce throughout the process.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this action research case study is to explore techniques to improve feedback for teachers to equip them with the skills and tools to become more involved in school decision-making. The North District superintendent and members of the Leadership Development Department desire to measure the instructional changes teachers make in response to the feedback they receive from their administrators. If TKES will be an effective accountability policy, then the system must demonstrate that it impacts the practices of teachers (Ehren & Hatch, 2013).

The research seeks to answer the following questions:

- How effective is the action research process in empowering the team's ability to find a solution to an evaluation system problem?
- How can teachers influence the feedback process, and in what ways does feedback inform teachers' practices?
- How do administrators increase their capacity to give actionable feedback to teachers?

Conceptual Framework

In order for educators to improve their practices and increase their capacity to contribute to the success of schools, they must have the abilities, tools, skills, and experiences to influence policies and practices. Therefore, the conceptual framework that will guide the action research case study focuses on teacher and leader efficacy. At State Elementary School, the teachers and administrators have produced anecdotal and qualitative data showing a lack of growth and

reflection resulting from the evaluation system. Consequently, the educators have few opportunities to improve their practices and evaluate their own teaching. Because the principal and assistant principal have limited time to observe teachers, the educators themselves must evaluate their instruction, reflect on their performances, and make necessary changes. At State, the leaders and teachers desire to create a professional school structure, but this will not occur if the teachers cannot increase the effectiveness of their instructional performance.

I will use the Teacher and Leader Efficacy lens to examine my research. As stated previously, Hoy and Miskel (2013) developed this theory to assert the importance of creating a participatory staff at schools to ensure that teachers and leaders are informed to make effective decisions regarding school operations and goals. Action research creates an environment where democratic ideals are central to the values and actions of the leaders and the teachers. In this case, the teachers work collectively to improve the quality of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. Consequently, these actions allow staff members to develop school policies and goals. The interactions between the team members and the school leaders open communication and require mutual planning and goal development in the implementation of the evaluation system. Importantly, these steps increase the democratic practices of the staff while also improving the method with which educators address a problem they face in the school and district (Dewey, 1937). The findings of this study benefit the literature because the data show improvements that leaders can make to their practices to increase the participatory and efficacious nature of their staffs.

The conceptual framework for the study informs both the research process and the data collection methods. Importantly, I used qualitative methodology to generate data on the research problem and analyze the work of the AR team. Because I focused on the democratic nature of

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the study, the collaboration and effectiveness of the team determined the success of the project. Consequently, the project prepared the members to solve similar problems in the future with the skills and tools they gained. Creating a professional school culture and structure was the result of this process (Hoy & Miskel, 2013).

      Other teacher and leader efficacy frameworks. To ensure that the action research case study addresses the importance of increasing teacher competency in curriculum and organizational decision-making, this study adheres to the model of Teacher and Leader Efficacy offered by Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) because of the emphasis on participatory decision-making and collaborative operational structures. Importantly, this model offers a distinct pathway in which teachers and leaders can work collectively to solve problems that exist in and out of the classroom environment. Within the State Elementary School project, both the methodology (action research) and theoretical framework include conceptualizations of democratic participation within a school staff. Therefore, Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) provided a link to establishing an entire professional staff that can approach shared goals in an evaluative and reflective manner. Action research provides the avenue with which the team can increase the competencies of teachers and leaders regarding the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System.

      Another model of Teacher and Leader Efficacy offered by Friedman and Kass (2002) defined teacher efficacy "as the extent to which a teacher believes that she or he can influence students' behavior and their academic achievement, especially of pupils with difficulties or those with particularly low learning motivation" (p. 675). Specifically, this theory suggested that teacher efficacy ends with the roles and abilities of the teacher. The researchers failed to examine the extent to which both leaders and teachers can impact the learning of the entire

school by examining policies and practices at both the building and system levels. Thus, this action research case study focuses on the impact teachers and leaders can collectively have on improving an identified issue.

Furthermore, Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) asserted that school leader efficacy impacts student learning and the conditions of schools. The research found that leaders develop a link between district supervision and building leadership. However, the study failed to acknowledge the impact teacher efficacy has on leaders' connections to district policy. In the case at State Elementary, teachers provide input on the feedback and practices associated with the TKES. Therefore, this model failed to address the collective efficacy of a staff that Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) found to effectively address organizational problems.

Finally, Ashton (1984) identified the need for teacher self-efficacy to develop during instructional preparation programs. During their initial acquisition of confidence and motivation to successfully educate children, teachers gain access to tools and resources that improve their classroom performance. However, there is a lack of focus on the larger school context and the impact educators have on the development of school goals. Consequently, action research within this model would fail to acknowledge the power teachers have when they collaborate with other educators and leaders to impact political and practical change.

Based on the other models and theories that address Teacher and Leader Efficacy, Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) impacted the design of the conceptual framework and development of this action research case study because of the inclusion of collective problem-solving, participatory decision-making, and transparent policy development and implementation from school leaders. Because the action research team addressed an issue that directly affects the work of school leaders, both teacher and leader efficacy needed to emphasize the value of

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educators working together to make positive change. Without this framework driving the action

of the AR team, the problem associated with the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System would

continue to reduce the impact evaluators have on instructional practices.

Project Design

The figure below outlines the conceptual framework of the action research case study at

State Elementary School. Based on the theoretical framework and related studies, the teams

began by examining professional development activities and resources for administrators to

increase their capacity to implement the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System at the school level.

Next, the teachers participating on the action research team reflected on feedback they received

from evaluators. By communicating their needs to the school leaders, the teachers will facilitate

the improvement of the feedback given in classrooms. The result will be an efficacious staff

with educators who change their classroom practices based on the commentary they receive from

walkthroughs and observations.

Figure 1
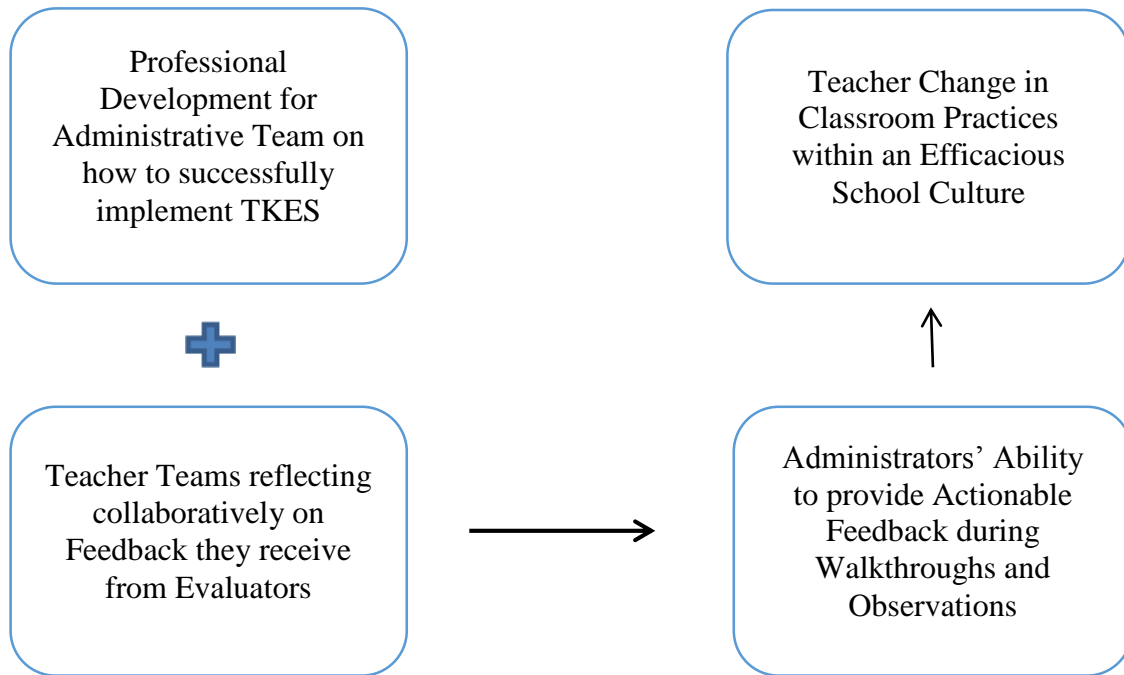
Conceptual Framework for Improving Feedback within an Efficacious School Culture

Explanation for Model

  The two variables in the study are the professional development activities for the

administrators implementing the TKES and the data from teachers who reflect upon the

effectiveness of the feedback they receive from the school leaders. The action research team

measures how these influence teacher instructional practices within the professional and

efficacious school structure at State Elementary. Importantly, the leadership team increased the

amount of professional collaboration to encourage teachers to make decisions regarding school

operations and policies while the administrators increase their capacity to provide actionable

feedback. When the action research case study ended, the initial intended outcomes were

teachers employing improved classroom practices and administrators developing meaningful and

relevant feedback in a continuous cycle. Teacher and leader efficacy provides the overall

framework examining "how much effort people expend, how long they will persist in the face of

difficulties, their resilience in dealing with failures, and the stress they experience in coping with demanding situations" (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000, p. 481).

Methodology

"Case study has an overarching research intent and methodological (and practical) purpose, which affects what methods are chosen to gather data" (Simons, 2009, p. 3). Therefore, this action research (AR) case study sought to find techniques and practices that improve the feedback process. Two action research teams addressed the purpose and questions of the study. A team of administrators created and participated in professional development programs that increase the effectiveness with which they implement the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. The evaluators collaborated on providing useful feedback and offering meaningful resources to help teachers increase their proficiency in instruction.

Moreover, a team of teachers reflected on the sample feedback they received from evaluators. As a group, they determined if the feedback was useful and provided insight and strategies to improve the process as part of an efficacious staff. Teachers then generated data from interviews regarding changes in their classroom practices in response to the feedback they received. At the conclusion of the study, I examined data collected from meeting transcripts, AR team documents, critical incident interviews, and meeting logs to determine if the group successfully utilized action research and qualitative methodology to answer the research questions.

Significance

This study has a direct impact on the educational leaders both at State Elementary and the North County School District. Because the TKES was in its second year of implementation, the data from this study will benefit administrators evaluating teachers and educators who participate

in this evaluation system in future years. If school leaders want their staff members to become more involved in decision-making and contribute to the success of the students, then the teachers must have the opportunity and ability to reflect on their own practices and make measureable improvements in their teaching (He & Tymms, 2013). This study shows a direct relationship between the purpose of the accountability policy in place (theory) and the impact it has on teachers (practice). Action research equips the members with the tools to solve similar problems in the future.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the literature to develop the theoretical framework for this action research case study. Preparation of the literature review required searches of empirical studies, journals, articles, and books related to evaluation systems, effective feedback, teacher reflection, teacher and leader efficacy models, and professional school structures. The University of Georgia Libraries provided several databases to search the literature pertaining to the topic. Furthermore, the phrases used for searching on Google Scholar, ProQuest Dissertations, EBSCO, and ERIC were "School leader professional development, evaluation systems, effective feedback" and "Teacher evaluation systems, effective feedback, instructional impact." Research focusing on action research projects and democratic institutional practices were a priority in the final search fields.

Problem Framing in the Literature Review - Model for Theoretical Framework

The figure below outlines the themes used during the review of the literature. Because the Teacher and Leader Efficacy lens drove the development of this case study, research related to professional efficacy for school leaders implementing new evaluation systems at the building level and effective forms of feedback with teachers' perspective on school leaders' commentary overlapped during the research process.

Figure 2

Professional Efficacy Research for School Leaders Implementing Evaluation Systems

Research on Effective Forms of Feedback and Teachers' Reflection on the Feedback
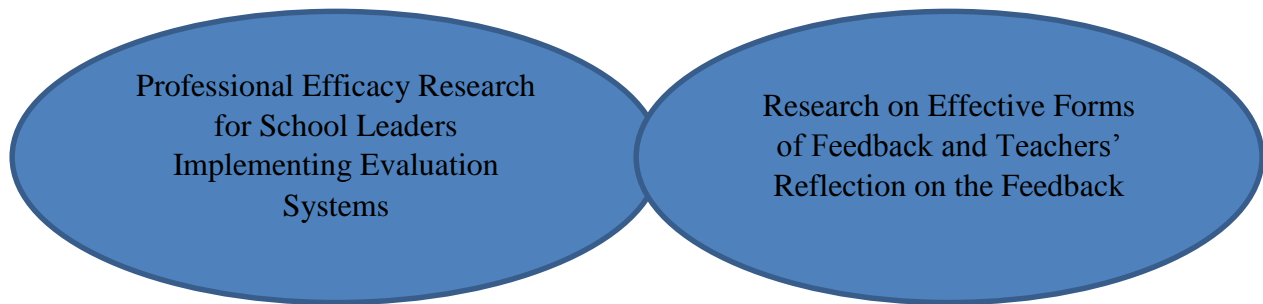
Theoretical Framework for Literature Review

Outline for Review

This literature review includes scholarly work from the past 20 years related to professional practices for leaders involved with implementing a new evaluation system and establishing efficacious school structures. Also, case studies and journals highlighting the steps to providing effective feedback within an evaluation system are present with a focus on teacher responses to feedback and their work to improve the feedback. However, the literature review does not analyze scholarly work from older studies or research related to the implementation of No Child Left Behind. Because there is a gap in the research on the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System regarding teacher reflection and input into the feedback process and their resulting instructional changes, this review addresses school leaders and teachers involved with the implementation of a new evaluation system.

To better examine the needs of school leaders and teachers working under the umbrella of the TKES, this review analyzes theoretical perspectives related to democracy in education and teacher and leader efficacy. These lenses provide insight into the significance of principals creating school cultures with participatory decision-making that lead to organizational goal achievement. This is important to this study because the feedback evaluators provide will create

a culture of collaboration, reflection, improvement, and transparency. As a result, educators will have the skills necessary to make informed decisions regarding curriculum, operations, and instructional practices through the action research process.

Teacher and Leader Efficacy Lens

Within the literature review, the Teacher and Leader Efficacy theoretical perspective impacted the analysis and evaluation of the examined materials. According to Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000), teacher and leader efficacy are the "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute a course of action required to produce a given attainment" (p. 480). This theory suggests that teachers and administrators have the ability and skills to set goals, evaluate programs, and implement policies to meet the learning needs of students. Therefore, schools employing teachers and leaders with strong senses of self-efficacy will face challenges and collectively implement strategies to solve relevant organizational issues. Within this case study, the members of the action research team collaborated to make the evaluation system in place at State Elementary more meaningful to the teachers' instructional practices.

Model of teacher and leader collective efficacy. Teachers are members of school organizations. Their shared beliefs influence the social milieu of schools. "Within an organization, perceived collective efficacy represents the shared perceptions of group members concerning the performance capability of a social system as a whole. Analogous to self-efficacy, collective efficacy is associated with the tasks, level of effort, persistence, shared thoughts, stress levels, and achievement of groups" (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000, p. 482).

Below is a figure created by Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) to illustrate collective efficacy between leaders and teachers:

Figure 3
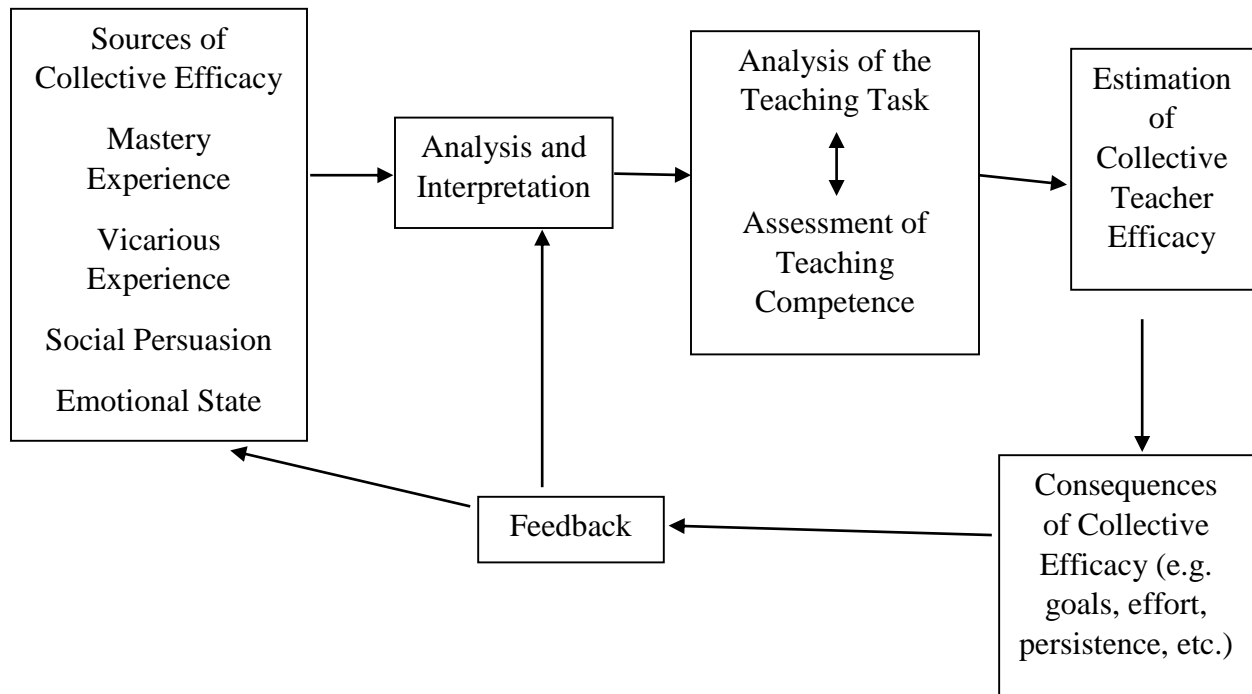
Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) Collective Efficacy Model

Within action research, this figure illuminates the steps school staffs can take to solve an organizational problem or address a mutually-agreed upon issue. If teachers and leaders collectively follow the model provided above, the result will be beneficial to the overall goals of the school. "In these processes, the organization focuses its attention on two related domains. Both domains are assessed in terms of whether the organization has the capacities to succeed in teaching students. The interactions of these assessments lead to the shaping of collective teacher [and leader] efficacy in a school" (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000, p. 486). Importantly, the case study at State Elementary School followed this model. The collective efficacy of the staff increased as the educators analyzed the TKES, interpreted the literature, assessed the competence of the administrators' abilities to develop and communicate feedback, reflected on the progress

of the AR process, and re-examined the commentary produced after the action research team implemented the interventions.

Embedded in the efficacy lens, the Professional Structure of Leadership theory was developed by Hoy and Miskel (2013), and researchers used it to study the importance of creating a participatory staff at schools to ensure that teachers and leaders are informed to make effective decisions regarding curriculum, instructional practices, and operational procedures. Consequently, school leaders with shared decision-making policies encourage professional reflection and teacher involvement in developing policies and accountability systems. Hoy and Miskel (2013), as stated in earlier parts of this document, described professional school structures as organizations built upon democratic principles of shared planning, implementation, and evaluation of policies and learning goals for students. Therefore, school leaders who desire to develop professional structures within their schools must utilize effective evaluation systems to provide teachers with the needed tools to make significant school improvements. In essence, action research creates a cycle of problem-seeking, collaboration, and evaluation under the context of teacher and leader efficacy. The model below articulates the process the staff follows when examining a problem in the context of action research and teacher and leader efficacy:

Figure 4

Professional Staff seeks out Problems in the School Structure

AR Teams evaluate the Solutions and determine if further Problems arise

Teachers and School Leaders work collaboratively in Action Research Teams to find Solutions to Problems
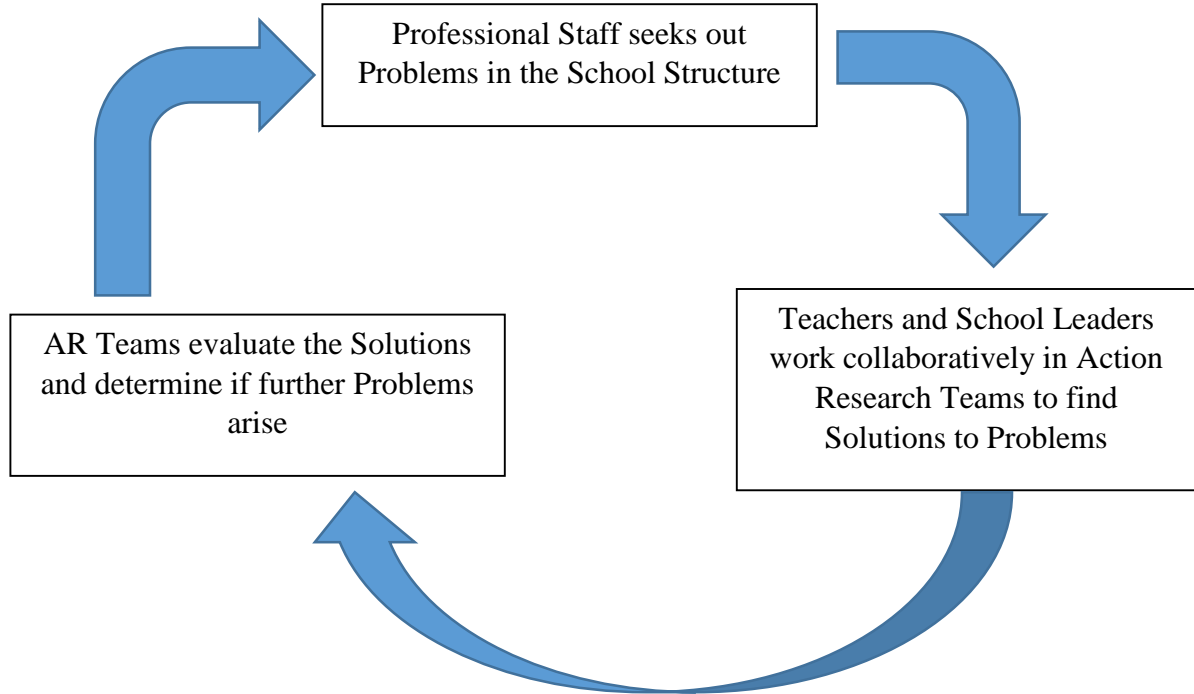
Model for Action Research at State Elementary

Dewey (1937) first stated the importance of involving teachers in the functions of a school:

> Hence, if the general tenor of what I have said about the democratic ideal and method is anywhere near the truth, it must be said that the democratic principle requires that every teacher should have some regular and organic way in which he can, directly or through representatives democratically chosen, participate in the formation of the controlling aims, methods and materials of the school in which he [or she] is part. (p. 222).

Professional School Structure Theory applies to evaluation models used in school districts. To create a culture of educational professionals who have the skills, knowledge, and experience to facilitate the planning, implementation, and evaluation of school policies, the leadership team must employ an effective accountability system. Importantly, the principal and

assistant principal need the skills and knowledge to ensure that they understand the evaluation system in order to provide meaningful feedback that teachers can use to improve their instruction.

Additionally, to address the professional development aspect of the study, I examined the literature focusing on professional coaching grounded in reflective practices to enhance both administrator and teacher leadership proficiency (Patti, Holzer, Stern, & Brackett, 2012). This theoretical perspective asserts that professional development for everyone in a school should involve reflection and coaching to ensure that both teachers and administrators become high quality leaders. Evaluators learn the effective methods for administering evaluation systems through a series of trial and error. However, professional coaching provides training and reflection to make the evaluation system effective and relevant to instructional practices administrators observe both in and out of the classrooms (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2003).

These theories indicate that schools with effective accountability policies will create collaborative, professional staffs with the ability to make informed decisions regarding student learning and instructional practices (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). As applied to my study, these theories inform the action research team's efforts to improve the professional learning of the administrative team regarding the implementation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System and the collaboration of the teachers reflecting on and improving the feedback they receive to influence or explain teacher classroom improvement (Creswell, 2014). This study assumes that if there is professional learning in place for the leaders at State Elementary to help them understand how to provide commentary to teachers regarding the TKES professional standards and teachers provide input regarding methods to increase the effectiveness of the feedback, then the educators will improve their instruction.

Within educational leadership, professional school structures do not fit in every school or educational organization. Depending on the principal's vision, the needs of the community, and the abilities of the staff, a school may require another type of structure to increase educators' proficiency while meeting the learning needs of students (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). However, leaders at State Elementary desire to promote collaboration among the staff, because the principal can distribute leadership responsibilities to teacher leaders. Consequently, a professional structure will work best within the context of State's needs and current plans for improvement. It is a "participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory window" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 5). Thus, action research provides the methodology to make the staff at State Elementary more efficacious in its efforts to solve problems that arise at the building level.

Professional Practices for School Leaders Implementing Evaluation Systems and Creating Efficacious Staffs

To address the importance of increasing collaboration between administrators to ensure effective implementation of evaluation systems, this review identified and examined studies that addressed professional development and best practices for administrators. Collaboration and shared decision-making with other leaders and teachers led to success in several cases, and professional coaching techniques helped leaders acquire the needed tools for successful evaluative practices.

Hill and Charalambous (2012) identified important measures of teacher quality that administrators must critique when observing instruction. By examining observational systems and analyzing the tools school leaders use to evaluate teachers, the researchers identified areas of

need to address teacher professional reflection and classroom instructional improvement. When multiple evaluators observe several lessons, their assessment of instructional effectiveness is more reliable. Using a common rubric, most of the evaluators reached 90 percent inter-rater reliability when working together in multiple observations. Therefore, the increase in collaboration and training for evaluators at the beginning of implementation increased the effectiveness of the system and encouraged shared decision-making. However, there was a lack of focus on the impact the feedback from administrators had on teachers' classroom practices.

Expanding on the need for administrator training, Herlihy (2012) examined the reliability of teacher evaluation scores on newly implemented evaluation systems. Most training for administrators focuses on learning the evaluation tools. There is little evidence to suggest that significant amounts of time are available for developing quality feedback and implementing professional coaching. However, the study did not address the teachers' perception of feedback quality. Although there is a need for administrators to communicate with teachers regarding their performance, these conversations must be value-added and based on evidence from their instruction.

Moreover, Liang and Akiba (2013) asserted that principals should increase their understanding of evaluation models to be more effective or require other administrators to increase their roles in the evaluation process. Studies in school districts generated findings showing that leaders with more teaching experience and less operational responsibilities are more effective in their evaluation of teacher proficiency (Herlihy, 2012). Consequently, training for principals must be rigorous and include the necessary tools to build relationships with teachers and provide opportunities for collaboration and professional reflection.

Other researchers assessed the importance of creating professional learning for administrators in order to write feedback that directly related to teacher performance. To create a professional school culture with high amounts of collaboration, administrators must address teachers' own strengths and weaknesses to ensure that everyone is informed and skilled to support the learning and development of students. Christophersen, Elstad, and Turmo (2012), Chen, Moffitt, and Goldin (2007), and Cunningham and Cordeiro (2003) all asserted that school leaders involved in evaluations must provide consistency and inter-rater reliability for teachers to find the experience useful. There must be open communication between administrators as they observe and evaluate teachers to ensure that expectations, commentary, and suggestions for improvement are consistent, reliable, and informative (Stronge, 2007). Consequently, there must be measures in place to facilitate evaluators' creation of actionable feedback, and teachers should have a role in the creation of the tool that guides the leaders' actions.

Ehren and Hatch (2013), He and Tymms (2014), and Lashway (2001) presented data that supported training for everyone in a school building on evaluation systems. If teachers have a strong understanding of the specific aspects of an evaluation process, then administrators will be more direct in their feedback. Further, the feedback must relate to standards of professional practices that teachers find meaningful, useful, and important to their instructional goals. Without specifically addressing a rubric or professional standards, the teachers fail to recognize the aspects of their instruction they need to change and improve (Tymms, 2014).

Finally, Linn, Baker, and Bettebenner (2002), Patti, Holzer, Stern, and Brackett (2012), and Stronge (2007) claimed that principals need to have clear visions for evaluation implementation. This process must involve the input of teachers and provide arenas for administrators to interact with their staffs. Hence, evaluations are ineffective if they fail to

increase collaboration between and among teachers and leaders. In response to this need for

school leaders, this study will enhance the literature's inclusion of administrator development to

ensure that educators in the school grow and reflect during the evaluation process while creating

a professional school structure within the context of action research (Hoy and Miskel, 2013).

Democratic Practices in Action Research

Importantly, action research literature emphasized the importance of creating an equitable

arena for teachers and leaders within an organization to examine problems and find collective

solutions. Because the action research process encourages professionals from various levels of a

school to analyze an issue, there must be mutual respect and value placed on shared perspectives

and practices. Specifically, participatory forms of research require leaders to relinquish their

control of information and data to provide teachers with the resources to find solutions to

problems. Action research teams should then discuss the findings in a manner that values all

participants as equal contributors (Selener, 1997).

Furthermore, action research can lead to organizations implementing forms of social

change that result in democratic practices within the institution. When teams of professionals

work together, they promote social change through organizational learning and emergent

processes that lead to increases in participation (Greenwood, Whyte, & Harkavy, 1993). For

example, the action research team at State Elementary School changed the way the staff viewed

the evaluation system. Instead of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System being a policy that

applied only to administrators, the team redefined the policy and practices so teachers had

influence in the implementation and evaluation of classroom walkthroughs and evaluations.

Additionally, the team encouraged teachers to increase their discussions with school leaders

about their individual professional goals. Consequently, individual educators communicated

with school leaders in an equitable manner because of the social chance initiated by the action research team. The result was a more democratic staff that had the resources, experiences, and tools to solve school problems (Stringer, 2014).

Increasing a School's Internal Capacity

When examining a school's accountability system, researchers have focused on promoting steps leaders can take to increase the school's capacity to respond to policy and implement practices that positively impact instruction and student learning. Elmore and Fuhrman (2001) asserted the importance of schools making changes when facing a new evaluation policy that affects the interactions between teachers and leaders:

> Virtually all schools, no matter what their demographic characteristics or prior performance must do different things, not just do the same things differently. And these new things require new knowledge and skills, part of which are related to internal accountability. But a larger part of the new knowledge must be organized around instructional practice. New expectations will be raised regarding what content different types of students can learn and at what rate, what new instructional materials are required, what pedagogy is necessary to reach students not previously expected to master complex content, how instructional time is used, and how the school day is organized. (p. 70)

Teachers' Impact on Feedback and Changes to Instruction

Based on the literature examined, teachers must reflect collaboratively on the value of the feedback they receive within an evaluation system. If the commentary their evaluators provide has no use or meaning, then the evaluation system will be ineffective (Stronge, 2007). Therefore, teachers need an arena in the school to examine evaluation feedback to ensure that

they can improve in response to standardized evaluations. Action research teams can create interventions that improve the feedback process and guide administrators in their development of commentary.

Kimball (2002) analyzed the impact feedback had on teacher practices in school districts with standards-based accountability systems. The findings suggested that increasing the frequency of observations will improve the quality of feedback given to teachers. Specific rubrics and collaboration between administrators and teachers allowed for common understanding of the evaluation system. Importantly, these standards-based practices led to increased teacher reflection on their teaching philosophies but had no impact on their instructional practices.

Winters and Cowen (2013) examined the impact evaluation systems had on teachers who needed to adjust their instruction due to ineffective performance. Evaluation systems with strict standards reduce teacher reflection and remove opportunities for teachers to analyze their feedback while having a role in developing the evaluation system. "No system of evaluation will eliminate flaws from the process by which administrators measure teacher ability" (Winters & Cowen, 2013, p. 336). Therefore, there must be mutually-agreed upon standards in place, but individual teacher needs must be a part of the growth process for educators as they set goals and work to improve their instruction (Stronge, 2007).

Additionally, Elmore (2004), Fullan (2007), and Harris and Sass (2009) asserted that teachers must reflect on the usefulness of the feedback they receive during the evaluation process. School leaders need to keep communication open to allow teachers to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the commentary they receive while providing opportunities to make suggestions for improvement. If this transparency occurs, teachers will understand what

steps they need to take to become more proficient in the classroom. Also, administrators will have data from teachers to help them improve the feedback they provide.

Jennings and Sohn (2014), Kane, Staiger, Grissmer, and Ladd (2002), and McLaughlin (1993) presented data that emphasized the impact of effective feedback on teachers' instructional philosophies. Because teachers have few resources that allow them to examine the theories behind their pedagogical strategies, administrators can provide feedback that will encourage educator reflection on certain classroom practices. However, there are few studies that address or measure the impact these discussions have on teachers' instruction. If educators plan to improve, they must have another expert's perspective to provide resources and tools for successful change.

Finally, Stronge (2007) and Valli, Croninger, and Walters (2007) provided details about the necessary requirements for teachers to change their practices. They must have an understanding of different teaching methods and work in schools with high levels of support and collaboration with leaders. The school culture must encourage teachers to take risks while increasing their responsibilities in the curricular decision-making of the school. Schools need empowering leaders who allow reflection on evaluations while ensuring that teachers provide insight into the effectiveness of the feedback from observations and classroom walkthroughs. This can be in the form of rubrics or open-ended interviews (Valli, Croninger, & Walters, 2007).

Examination of the Literature Review

The literature review of the impact professional cultures and teacher improvement of feedback have on administrators' implementation of evaluation systems is immense and thorough. Authors asserted that effective evaluation models empowered school leaders to discuss goals with teachers and develop plans for professional and school improvement. While

this theory of accountability is important, there must be an expansion on the evaluation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. Because federal policymakers desire to decrease local control of education, researchers who report on the ineffectiveness of universal supervision systems struggle to change the practices of educational decision-makers (Stronge, 2007).

Importantly, the research on accountability systems contains descriptions of the shortcomings of universal evaluation models. However, only a few case studies offer solutions or alternative programs to increase the usefulness of these models. Researchers analyzed evaluation policies already in place, but the data did not provide educators or school leaders with resources or tools to improve the accountability process. Therefore, Stronge (2007) facilitated the development of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System with his research regarding the essential skills teachers need to be successful in their instruction. School leaders must be cautious when studying these suggestions. Few authors have addressed this topic, and further research is required.

Examination of Empirical Studies

In the following table, empirical studies relating to teacher evaluation systems and feedback effectiveness provide the context of the literature review regarding other cases that closely relate to the action research project. Importantly, these studies include both quantitative and qualitative research with findings that provide perspective on the importance of proper implementation of evaluation systems. The studies encompass the last 15 years of research and include implications for the project at State Elementary.

Table 1

Empirical Findings Table

Author(s), Date	Title	Purpose	Method(s)	Sample	Result(s)	Conclusion(s)	Implication(s)
Hill, H. C., Charalambous, C. Y., & Kraft, M. A. (2012)	When rater reliability is not enough: Teacher observation systems and a case for the generalizability study	To identify important measures of teacher quality. The researchers addressed the needs of observational systems in schools with highly trained evaluators, effective observational tools, and effective scoring rubrics.	G- and D-Studies using the MQI instrument to generate data regarding mathematics instruction. The tool measures the richness of instruction, teacher errors, and student participation in math reasoning.	Eight middle school teachers from a sample of 24 educators with varying levels of mathematics instructional proficiency participated in the study. Researchers and graduate students viewed six lessons that were 7.5 minutes in length and rated low, medium, and high.	When multiple evaluators observe several lessons, their assessment of the instructional effectiveness is more reliable. In the three rating areas, most of the evaluators reached 90 percent accuracy when working together in multiple observations.	Effective accountability systems require school leaders to work collaboratively within the system and provide various perspectives on multiple lessons for each teacher.	Study suggests that evaluation systems must include tools and resources to ensure that all administrators work collaboratively. Gap in the impact of feedback from administrators on teacher quality and performance.
Kimball, S. M. (2002)	Analysis of feedback, enabling conditions and fairness perceptions of teachers in three school districts with standards-based evaluation systems	To examine teachers' response to feedback and perceptions of evaluation systems in their initial stages of implementation. "How did evaluation feedback, enabling conditions, and	A quantitative multiple case study design using the *Framework for Teaching* standards for evaluation drove the study. The researchers collected data about evaluation models and teacher	Three school districts with two elementary and two high schools participated in the study. Principals suggested the involvement of 37 teachers from the four schools who were on different levels	The increased number of observations made the feedback more relevant to teachers. Evaluators with more teaching experience had more credible feedback.	The more specific the rubric and feedback are for evaluation, the better the teachers can apply the information and suggestions to their teaching practices. Clear expectations and understanding of	Teachers use the feedback to increase reflection but not their instructional practices. Professional development has more of an impact on teachers completing higher education

		"perceptions of fairness impact teacher use of feedback?" (p. 244)	perceptions through interviews.	of the evaluation system.		the system are crucial for growth.	degrees. Gap in the training of leaders for effectiveness.
Herlihy, C. (2012)	State and local efforts to investigate validity and reliability of scores from teacher evaluation systems	To examine the reliability of teacher evaluation scores on newly implemented accountability systems.	Researchers collected documents regarding evaluation systems and evidence that districts applied for NCLB and Race to the Top waivers. 25-question interviews occurred for 13 DOE staff members in 12 states.	States that received NCLB or Race to the Top waiver prior to July 1, 2012 with new teacher evaluation systems participated in the study.	17 states responded to the larger survey distributed by the researchers. Georgia and Delaware are the only two states with statewide evaluation systems. Georgia also requires two observations per year.	Most training for administrators focuses on learning the evaluation tools. There is little evidence to suggest that significant amounts of time are allocated to providing effective feedback.	Evaluators need training on effective feedback and on providing consistent observations. Gap in data regarding teacher use of the feedback.
Liang, G, & Akiba, M. (2013)	Teacher evaluation, performance-related pay, and constructivist instruction	To determine if results from performance evaluations and resulting Pay for Performance systems encouraged teachers to improve their instructional practices.	Researchers generated data from teacher evaluation results and Teachers' Opportunity to Learn surveys. They used ordinary least squares regression to create a value-added model.	633 of 912 middle school teachers in Missouri responded to the surveys. This was a response rate of 69.4 percent for the 2008-2009 school year.	10.9 percent of teachers received performance based payments.	Because principals are less accurate in their evaluations of teachers, performance based pay was unlikely for most teachers. Consequently, schools with teacher mentors and assistant principals conducting evaluations had increased levels	Teachers evaluated by principals are less likely to receive effective feedback regarding the specifics of their instruction. Most of the information focuses on student test scores. Gap in the training of administrators in the evaluation system.

						of performance-based payments.	
Winters, M. A., & Cowen, J. M. (2013)	Who would stay, who would be dismissed? An empirical consideration of value-added teacher retention policies	To address the impact evaluation systems have on removing teachers under value-added dismissal policies.	The researchers estimated a value-added measure of teacher effectiveness on student reading test scores using a series of regression analyses.	15,152 fourth and fifth grade teachers in Florida public schools in 2006 provided the data for the study. Over 227,014 student test scores were involved in the analysis.	The results indicated that evaluation systems with more strict standards removed teachers with higher teaching quality. Further, teachers who are removed for consecutive years of poor performance are generally more effective than teachers with multiple years of poor performance.	Evaluation policy design can affect whether teachers are removed from schools before negatively impacting student performance for multiple years.	"No system of evaluation will eliminate flaws from the process by which administrators measure teacher ability" (p. 336). Gap in the preparation of evaluators to ensure that feedback and participation in accountability procedures are effective and value-added.
Milanowski, A. T., & Heneman, H. G. (2001)	Assessment of teacher reactions to a standards-based teacher evaluation system: A pilot study	The purpose of the study was to assess teachers' reactions to a pilot implementation of a new teacher evaluation system that was jointly developed and implemented by management and the teacher's union.	Researchers used an interview protocol that lasted 40 minutes to gain insight from both teachers and administrators. Additionally, teachers completed surveys regarding their perception of the new evaluation system and the evaluators'	10 schools in a medium-sized Midwestern district participated in the study. 255 teachers volunteered for the project.	Teachers who favored the new evaluation system had principals who effectively managed and used the evaluation tools. Schools who changed the practices or teaching standards during the evaluation process had lower levels of	The participating school district changed the rubrics and standards to make the evaluation system more consistent and easier to apply. Additionally, administrators received more training on creating feedback and coaching	This study shows that teachers' perceptions of an evaluation system impact the effectiveness of the process itself. If administrators fail to communicate and successfully implement all components of a system, teachers will not gain the resources and

			practices during observations.		success with the system.	struggling teachers.	support they need to be successful.
Gallagher, H. A. (2004)	Vaughn elementary's innovative teacher evaluation system: Are teacher evaluation scores related to growth in student achievement?	The purpose of this study was to examine the validity of performance-based, subject-specific teacher evaluation systems by analyzing the relationship between teacher evaluation scores and evaluator competency.	The researcher used a quantitative method to measure the statistical relationship between TES and classroom effects and a qualitative method to triangulate the results with an understanding of teachers' an evaluators' pedagogical content knowledge and the influence of mediating factors.	The sample for the quantitative part was 34 second, third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers at Vaughn Elementary in the Greater Los Angeles school district. Additionally, 584 students participated in the study.	Specifically, the Vaughn teacher evaluation system had a statistically significant relationship to classroom effects – value-added learning growth. Certification and experience of teachers did not impact the overall quality of their teaching and subsequent scores on the evaluation protocol.	Conclusions from the study show that subject-specific evaluations conducted by evaluators who have expertise in content areas can increase the effectiveness of the evaluation system in place.	For my action research case study, this study proves that evaluators can have an impact on the overall quality of the evaluation process while influencing classroom instruction and student learning through the development and communication of feedback.

This Empirical Findings Table includes seven different case studies that help situate the action research project at State Elementary School within the literature. Importantly, the theoretical framework provided the lens for the analysis of these cases, and each of the researchers drew conclusions that impacted the development and direction of the study.

Additional Case Studies

Other case studies addressing the professional development of administrators focused on the importance of principals and assistant principals receiving appropriate and extensive training regarding the implementation of evaluation systems to meet the needs of teachers. Blase and Blase (1999) found that principals' everyday practices and learning influenced teachers' instruction. Their case study generated data that stressed the significance of leaders participating in professional development programs that help them provide feedback that is specific and includes steps for teachers to improve their instruction.

Also, Guskey (2002) expanded on these findings in his study. He found that leader professional development produces specific changes in teachers' attitudes and perceptions about their professional reflection and growth. Blase and Blase (2000) added to the assertion that teachers' perceive principals' leadership capabilities based on the training the leaders have within the evaluation systems. Educators find feedback more effective if the principals have extensive training in the process. Finally, Peterson (2002) emphasized the value of professional development being job-embedded for school administrators. In-services held outside the school will not be as meaningful or relevant because they take the leader away from the context of the local school.

In an empirical study about the implementation of a new teacher evaluation system based on professional standards, Milanowski and Heneman (2001) found that teachers favored increased amounts of feedback from their administrators. By using both interviews and surveys, the researchers discovered that teachers who favored the evaluation system had a positive perception of the entire evaluation process. Specifically, the evaluation process was effective if the educators did not endure increased workloads and receive general feedback lacking clear

directions for improvement. Several of the teachers who participated in the study expressed

concerns that the principal and assistant principals lacked significant conceptual knowledge

regarding the subjects and contents they taught. Additionally, feedback that was not timely or

consistent with other evaluator's commentary within the building did not positively impact

teachers' instructional practices.

Finally, in a study aiming to find the relationship between the validity of teacher

evaluation systems and teacher performance, Gallagher (2004) stated that there existed a strong

correlation between high rates of teacher satisfaction with evaluation practices and teachers'

scores on observation rubrics. Therefore, evaluators can expect their educators to find more

value in their feedback and commentary during classroom observations if the score on the rubric

is high. This represents a fundamental problem with evaluation systems because perception is

tied to scores. Thus, the action research case study will explore methods to transcend individual

performance to increase the quality and objectivity of an evaluation system.

Importantly, the action research study at State Elementary School expanded upon these

findings from the case studies and added new information to the literature. The professional

development process for school leaders involved with the implementation of the Teacher Keys

Effectiveness System enhanced teachers' perception of the administrators' evaluative

capabilities. Additionally, the principal and assistant principal measured changes made to

teachers' practices in response to the feedback they provided. Furthermore, the study expanded

upon these findings by combining the importance of the professional development for leaders

and its impact on teachers' practices. None of the other studies provided data regarding teachers'

perceptions of the feedback itself. The principal and assistant principal used the information

they gathered from the teachers to change their feedback to make it more impactful.

Consequently, teachers used the improved commentary to make needed changes in their classroom practices.

Practical Research on Evaluations

Practitioner research includes specific needs educators have communicated regarding the steps and actions their evaluating administrators should take when observing lessons and activities in the classroom setting. Findings from Tomlinson (2012) influenced the examination of the literature and the purpose of this action research case study. Because the teachers at State Elementary School have communicated similar needs in the feedback they receive from the principal and assistant principal, the findings from this article are relevant to this study. According to the teachers interviewed for the journal, they stated that their "dream evaluator" would give helpful feedback. This ideal leader would:

- Communicate clearly and respectfully. When feedback is framed as a compliment to teachers' capacities to grow in professional practice, and when they understand the feedback clearly, they are positioned to move ahead.

- Call teachers' strengths to their attention and help them improve. They are often less aware of their strengths than of their weaknesses—and researchers suspect many teachers are the same. Capitalizing on their assets helps teachers compensate for liabilities.

- Point out opportunities for teachers to continue to develop in their work. Showing them just what they might improve.

- Be descriptive and specific, so that teachers are aware of what this observer is seeing and thinking—and what they can do to improve. Precision in language helps a supervisor and a teacher share an understanding of goals. It helps teachers focus their efforts.

- Provide feedback that's personalized to teachers and is delivered while there is still time to act on the suggestions. Good feedback gives them information that they can both understand and act on.

- Deliver formative feedback and support for growth *before* any summative evaluation. Formative assessment reduces teachers' anxiety, diminishes the sense of threat, and increases the likelihood of success when it's time to move to a more judgmental stage of evaluation.

- Acknowledge teachers' progress when it is merited, even while pointing out their next developmental step. People typically need honest affirmation of both effort and progress to remain persistent. (Tomlinson, 2012, pp. 88-89)

Although these suggestions come from research outside of empirical studies, the summary of the findings applies to the needs of the teachers who participated in this study. By ensuring that the aforementioned principles influence the development of feedback during observations, the researcher can take constructive steps to improving the implementation of the TKES.

Gap in the Literature

This literature review examined several areas of professional development for administrators who are involved in a new evaluation system. To increase the democratic nature of schools, the professional school structure and efficacy lenses provided insight into the effectiveness of collaboration and increased transparency in the actions of both principals and assistant principals. Furthermore, teachers' perception of feedback and their instructional responses to the commentary provided by administrators impacted the scope of this review. In

order to create an environment with shared decision-making, there must be communication about the effectiveness of feedback and the impact it has in the classroom.

Importantly, this action research study will address some common elements presented in the literature. Because there are different evaluation systems in place throughout the country, researchers have addressed the need for administrator training to ensure consistency in the development of feedback. However, this study will examine the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System specifically while also measuring the changes teachers make in their classrooms. Other studies have not measured teacher classroom changes in regard to administrator training.

The gap this study will address includes different areas. Specifically, the literature fails to acknowledge the impact training has on school leaders evaluating teachers under TKES. Additionally, there is a gap in measuring the changes teachers implement in their classrooms in response to the feedback they receive and the effectiveness of teachers examining, analyzing, and improving existing feedback. Therefore, my action research study examines the importance of training evaluators to implement TKES while measuring the instructional changes teachers employ after they have the opportunity to review, reflect, and provide input on the value of the commentary their administrators produce throughout the process.

Chapter Summary

After reviewing the literature regarding teacher evaluation systems, feedback effectiveness, and administrators' influence on classroom practices using a teacher and leader efficacy lens, several themes and findings that relate to the action research case study are evident. Importantly, when implementing a new evaluation system, there must be transparency and understanding before evaluators start providing feedback to teachers. Based on the empirical

studies present in this literature review, there are several themes that arose consistent with the direction of this study:

1. Evaluation systems must include tools and resources to ensure that all administrators work collaboratively.

2. Teachers use the feedback to increase reflection. However, they do not change their instructional practices if the commentary is not subject-specific.

3. Evaluators need training on creating value-added feedback based on professional rubrics.

4. Teachers evaluated by administrators are less likely to receive effective feedback regarding the specifics of their instruction if the administrators do not increase time spent in classrooms.

5. "No system of evaluation will eliminate flaws from the process by which administrators measure teacher ability" (Winters & Cowen, 2013, p. 336).

6. Teachers' perceptions of an evaluation system impact the effectiveness of the process itself. If administrators fail to communicate and successfully implement all components of a system, teachers will not gain the resources and support they need to be successful.

7. Evaluators can have an impact on the overall quality of the evaluation process while influencing classroom instruction and student learning through the development and communication of feedback.

Furthermore, Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) provided the overall framework for the literature review in their analysis of teacher and leader efficacy. Because action research requires professional staffs at schools to collectively analyze an issue while seeking new solutions, the teachers and administrators must have the tools and skills to address operational procedures and curriculum development throughout a given year.

In conclusion, the literature review provides a context for the action research study at State Elementary. Although there are several studies that address teacher evaluation systems, feedback effectiveness, and administrators' competency while implementing a new policy, there is a gap in the role teachers have in influencing the evaluation process. This study gave teachers the opportunity and arena to share their values and needs regarding instructional feedback. Staff members at State Elementary provided their own opinions of the effectiveness of the commentary given during classroom walkthroughs and observations to ensure that the evaluators' practices were relevant to the teachers' needs in the classroom. Furthermore, this study measured the changes teachers made in their instructional practices once the feedback improved.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

As stated previously, the purpose of this action research case study is to explore techniques to improve feedback for teachers to equip them with the skills and tools to become more involved in school decision-making. The research questions this study answers are (1) how effective is the action research process in empowering the team's ability to find a solution to an evaluation system problem?, (2) how can teachers influence the feedback process, and in what ways does feedback inform teachers' practices?, and (3) how do administrators increase their capacity to give actionable feedback to teachers?

Case Study Design – Action Research

The methodology for the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System project at State Elementary School is action research. Two teams examined the problem and purpose of the study and generated data regarding the usefulness of the feedback provided by administrators during classroom walkthroughs and observations. During the initial phase of compiling evidence for the problem and analyzing the literature from similar case studies, several team members asserted that schools with efficacious teachers and leaders utilizing professional structures with shared decision-making and democratic practices had informed educators who facilitated the management and operations of the school. Consequently, the principals and assistant principals in these organizations worked within evaluation models that allowed them to give meaningful feedback to teachers to increase professional reflection and growth. Classroom practices

improved in response to this system, and the teachers developed the skills and experience needed to make decisions regarding curriculum and pedagogy (Hoy & Miskel, 2013).

Therefore, the action research team at State Elementary understood that working collaboratively to solve the research problem was ideal. Because the data showed that less than 30 percent of teachers use the feedback they receive from principals and assistant principals to change their instructional and classroom practices, team members desired to create interventions to improve the feedback process. This included professional development programs for the administrators and advice from teachers as they examined feedback and provided suggestions for how to improve the commentary (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

Action Research Methodology

"Action research is a systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront in their everyday lives" (Stringer, 2014, p. 1). Researchers working on these types of projects are located within their subject organizations. Throughout the study, action research teams regularly investigate problems and collaboratively develop solutions to increase the effectiveness with which the organization operates. In schools, this research is systematic while generating data through processes of inquiry and explanations about issues that increase understanding (Stringer, 2014).

The Differences between Action Research and other Case Studies

"Unlike experimental or quantitative research that looks for generalizable explanations related to a small number of variables, action research seeks to engage the complex dynamics involved in any social context" (Stringer, 2014, p. 1). Case studies conducted by researchers outside the school system tend to generalize findings to a broader topic. Action research addresses specific issues that school leaders desire to solve in their own context. It is a

"participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory window" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 5). Importantly, teachers and leaders within a school generate data for action research studies as opposed to other agencies remotely collecting data.

Action research is a collaborative process that requires the researcher and the members of the action research team to investigate a problem and find solutions that benefit the organization. The facilitator of the action research process acts as a catalyst who inspires people to change and analyze an issue while examining the possible courses of action in response to a problem as part of a group. Importantly, the team developed a collaborative relationship to communicate effectively and participate throughout the project. Stringer (2014) noted:

> Including more people in the process may seem to increase the possibilities for complexity and conflict, but it also enables practitioners to broaden their focus from one that seeks the immediate resolution of specific problems to more encompassing perspectives that have the potential to alleviate many interconnected problems. (p. 33)

"The primary purpose of action research is to provide the means for people to engage in systematic inquiry and investigation to design an appropriate way of accomplishing a desired goal and to evaluate its effectiveness" (Stringer, 2014, p. 6). Essentially, the action research model benefits everyone involved because of the "Look, Think, Act routine" (Stringer, 2014, p. 9) detailing the process of observing an issue, thinking about solutions in groups, and acting on a solution. Furthermore, the solution will be relevant to the organization because the study existed within the school and focused on the district's needs.

The Action Research Process

"In the field of education, the term action research connotes 'insider' research done by practitioners using their own site (classroom, institution, school district, community) as the focus of their study" (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007, p. 2). The purpose of action research is to address an issue present in an organization through a cycle of action, analysis, and reflection by a team of people who have a vested interest in finding a solution to the problem. "Like all forms of inquiry, action research is value-laden. Although most practitioners hope that action research will improve their practice, what constitutes 'improvement' is not self-evident" (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007, p. 3). In a school setting, teachers and leaders work collaboratively to determine areas of need. Importantly, the action research process generally equips the team members with skills and experience solving organizational problems with research-based methods and trustworthy techniques.

Creswell (2014) asserted that action research can incorporate forms of both quantitative and qualitative case studies. The methodology the team utilizes to address the research questions includes practices that are prevalent in mixed methods research. Specifically, the studies exist in the setting of the problem with a team of researchers led by a facilitator who drives the process and examines the effectiveness of the team.

Intervention and Implementation Plans for the AR Study at State Elementary

Action research provides the best methodological framework for the study at State Elementary School regarding the need to improve the feedback generated under the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. Based on the theoretical framework presented in response to the research problem, the action research team examined and evaluated interventions that addressed the purpose of the study. The theoretical framework for the case focuses on the relationship

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between teacher and leader efficacy and meaningful evaluation systems, and the interventions provided data on the research questions.

Administrative Team Intervention

The action research team comprised of school administrators examined different professional development programs in response to the need for effective implementation of an evaluation system. Because the teachers at State Elementary School generated data suggesting the need for improved feedback during walkthroughs and observations, the principal and assistant principal attended Teacher Keys Effectiveness System training offered by the North County School District and the State Department of Education. At these trainings, the leaders worked with principals, assistant principals, and school leadership interns at the elementary, middle, and high school levels to view classroom lessons and create meaningful feedback. This 16 hour training provided numerous tools, strategies, and resources to increase the effectiveness of the commentary the administrators provide to teachers.

Based on research from Stronge (2007), the feedback must adhere to the TKES performance rubrics and standards. If the feedback focuses specifically on the standards, then the teachers can examine practices and skills they need to improve. Therefore, the first intervention the administrative team created with the teacher team is the Administrative Checklist. Importantly, the level of communication and consistency in practice between the evaluators were critical in the beginning stages of this process. "It's important that we teachers and facilitators do our part in assuring that the group is a safe place for learning, working with the group and the participants' own sense of self-responsibility" (Lakey, 2010, p. 164).

The action research team looked collectively at the creation of an intervention that addressed the need for consistency in validity and reliability of feedback created from both

administrators. Thus, the members created the Administrator Checklist that included a series of

steps that evaluators must follow before, during, and after classroom observations to ensure

teachers receive feedback that is relevant to their practices, professional goals, and targeted areas

of growth. Importantly, the teachers and administrators worked together to create this document.

Although the two action research teams began this case study as two separate entities, the work

overlapped and caused the groups to merge. Included in the Appendix of this document, the

Administrator Checklist provides clarity on actions administrators can take to improve their

practices with the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. Teachers received a copy of this

document to hold the participating administrator accountable to each step.

The principal and assistant principal must be cautious in their approach to different

programs. According to Spaulding and Falco (2013):

> In many cases, not much data can be gathered about professional development, and
>
> therefore there is no real assurance about whether the professional development sessions
>
> were effective and made an impact or…delivered the key ingredient that the action
>
> research team deemed necessary in order to begin to address the school's identified issue
>
> or problem. (p. 106)

Teacher Team Intervention

Furthermore, the teacher action research team focused on the research for feedback

effectiveness and its impact on classroom instruction. Because the administrators used rubrics

and standards provided by the State Department of Education, the educators desired to have a

more personalized intervention that met their needs in the classroom. Therefore, the teachers

decided that a Teacher Feedback Rubric would address the purpose of the project.

Consequently, the action research team's first task was the creation of an intervention for the

evaluators to use during classroom walkthroughs and observations. The rubric provided data

regarding both the effectiveness of the feedback and the changes teachers make in their

instructional practices in response to the feedback according to each TKES standard. Based on

the research regarding group dynamics and effectiveness when resolving a data-driven problem,

the teacher self-organizing group will be a relevant solution to meeting the needs of the teachers.

"A self-organizing group can, given some time, operate with this degree of complexity! It can

create a system in which an amazing number of needs can be met" (Lakey, 2010, p. 43). The

action research team addressed the needs of both the teachers and the administrators with this

type of intervention and approach to solving the research problem. All interventions are located

in the appendices of this report.

Importantly, the action research team decided not to make the Teacher Feedback Rubrics

anonymous. Although certain members expressed concerns that teachers would not be honest

and critical of the participating administrator's feedback if their names were present on the

forms, the team understood that too many factors prevented the rubrics from being completely

anonymous even if the teachers did not put their names on them. For example, the rubrics

included the standards that the evaluator rated for a walkthrough along with the feedback that he

wrote. Importantly, the administrator would rate different teachers on different standards.

Additionally, the purpose of the project was to increase the effectiveness of the feedback for

individual teachers. Consequently, the administrator would need to know what each teacher

desired to change in his or her feedback to make the process more effective and impactful on that

person's classroom practices. Making the forms anonymous would decrease the knowledge of

the administrator regarding teachers' individual professional needs. Previous studies

acknowledge the importance of anonymity in research practices, but this action research case

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study sought to improve collaboration and communication. Without increasing transparency of the teachers' and leaders' practices, the project would not be as meaningful within the context (Creswell, 2014).

Interviews to Collect and Analyze Data

To evaluate the effectiveness of both the Teacher Feedback Rubric and the Administrative Checklist, the action research teams created an interview protocol to gather baseline data to determine the teachers' response to feedback prior to the implementation of the interventions. The interview focused on the impact of feedback given during walkthroughs and observations from the 2014-2015 school year as well as provided a measurement for the changes teachers make in their instruction in response to the feedback. Members used this information to assess the impact the rubric and strategies had on the effectiveness of the feedback and teacher classroom practices during the school year.

At the conclusion of the action research process, the team conducted another interview to analyze the teachers' perception of feedback effectiveness after the interventions had been in place. This data showed that the project had successfully increased the relevance and purpose of administrator feedback with respect to instructional practices. Importantly, "the evolution of the research process often takes them beyond the bounds of their own classrooms and into broader realms of educational issues. Typically, this broader involvement comes out of the spiral of action and intervention that flows from the researchers' data gathering and meaning-making" (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007, p. 93). The initial interview results showed that 13 of 35 teachers found value in the feedback from the first round of the TKES. 20 of 35 teachers stated that they only viewed the scores from the observations and did not review the commentary.

Criteria of Selected Interventions

The interventions discussed for the purposes of this action research project met certain criteria that the action research team members created. First, the interventions resulted from the collaboration of the team. "It is important for school administrators and leaders to have a solid understanding of how action research has traditionally been used by teachers to improve their own practice" (Spaulding & Falco, 2013, p. 26). For the teacher action research team, the rubric emphasized their personal and professional needs as educators. Action research is most effective and impactful when teachers have control over the improvement process, and this intervention provided the time and tools they needed (McNiff, 2013).

Next, the interventions had to generate data in response to the feedback problem. If teachers desired the ability to improve their instructional practices in response to the commentary the administrator provided during walkthroughs and observations, the interventions must involve strategies that focus on improving feedback both from the administrator's and teachers' perspectives. This was difficult for the evaluators in the action research process because "casting aside old ineffective practices and taking on new ones is a challenging endeavor for even the most seasoned administrator" (Spaulding & Falco, 2013, p. 17). However, the purpose of the study is to improve the feedback the leaders have provided, so positive change needed to occur.

Finally, the interventions needed to be timely and reasonable in the school environment. Because State Elementary is in the second year of implementation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System, the interventions must relate to the evaluation practices (Symon & Cassell, 1998). Since the feedback is posted through the State Department of Education online database, the Teacher Rubric and the Administrative Checklist had to be accessible and editable. Therefore, the interventions were available through the shared drive on the school's network.

This includes the interviews used to examine the problem and evidence regarding the success of the interventions because "the purpose of…research is to gather the perceptions of stakeholders about issues" (Spaulding & Falco, 2013, p. 69).

Support from the Literature

The literature review provides support for these interventions. Below are excerpts from the review that specifically address the interventions used in the study:

Hill and Charalambous (2012) identified important measures of teacher quality that educators would like to reflect on to improve their practices in the classroom. By examining observational systems and analyzing the tools school leaders use to evaluate teachers, the researchers identified areas of need to address reflection and classroom improvement. When multiple evaluators observe several lessons, their assessment of instructional effectiveness is more reliable. Using a common rubric, such as a Teacher Feedback Rubric, most of the evaluators reached 90 percent accuracy when working together in multiple observations. Therefore, the increase in collaboration and training for evaluators at the beginning of implementation increased the effectiveness of the system and encouraged shared decision-making.

Additionally, Elmore (2004), Fullan (2007), and Harris and Sass (2009) asserted that teachers must reflect on the usefulness of the feedback they receive during the evaluation process. School leaders need to keep communication open to allow teachers to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the commentary they receive from evaluators. If this transparency occurs, teachers will understand what steps they need to take to become more proficient in the classroom. Administrators keeping "office hours" to discuss performance will increase communication, reflection, and consistency. Furthermore, teachers willingly read and

reflect upon the observation feedback when they can discuss the specifics with their evaluators. Without this type of communication, teachers reported that they merely looked at the scores without reading the commentary.

Managing of Group Dynamics

Several researchers provided insight into the group dynamics and practices that occurred with each of the interventions. Specifically, the phrase "intention to do good is not good enough" (Lakey, 2010, p. 197) drove the work of the facilitator. The entire action research team was purposeful in its pursuit of a solution to the research problem. If we found that the interventions were not working, we discussed the issues as a group and changed our practices to obtain the desired results.

Conclusion of the Intervention Plan

The action research process required the participation and insight of the entire team to ensure that the interventions were meaningful to the teachers and relevant to the literature and the theoretical framework. Consequently, those involved with the study had the opportunity to modify parts of the interventions if needed. The intervention plan in Table 2 provides an examination of the project and the avenues the team took to collect data and find solutions to the evaluation system problem. The strategies suggested are based on empirical and practical research.

Table 2

Intervention Plan

Proposed Intervention	Action Research Team Activities (what the team did)	Anticipated Outcomes/Connection to Problem, Theoretical Framework	Proposed Timeline	What data will be collected to evaluate the intervention?
Teacher Needs Feedback Rubric	The action research team of teachers examined the sample feedback provided by the principal and assistant principal during TKES walkthroughs and observations. The AR team analyzed the feedback, made suggestions for improvement, and created a rubric that the administrator followed when providing feedback. At subsequent meetings, the team analyzed feedback given with respect to the rubric.	The literature review on the importance of teachers reflecting on feedback drove the work of the action research team. Importantly, the anticipated outcome will be more effective feedback that meets the needs of the teachers. Because the AR team had input into the creation of the feedback rubric, the evaluation and observation process was more meaningful to them.	In January of 2015, the AR team analyzed feedback and created the rubric that we implemented in August of 2015. The North County School District required all observations and evaluations to finish for the study by the first week of December 2015.	Once the intervention was in place, two forms of data showed the effectiveness of the rubric. First, the team evaluated feedback based on the rubric after the administrator began to provide feedback to teachers using the rubric. The AR team graded the feedback with respect to the rubric. The scores the feedback received provided the first part of the data. Next, the team measured the changes teachers made in their classroom and instructional practices in response to the feedback. By interviewing teachers, the team examined the relationship between effective feedback and classroom instruction.
Administrator Feedback Checklist	The action research team of administrators gathered and analyzed strategies provided from	The theoretical framework regarding the professional development for administrators providing	In January of 2015, the team worked collaboratively to create the checklist	The administrative action research team members used the checklist they created to evaluate the effectiveness of the feedback

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	professional development programs regarding successful feedback strategies for walkthroughs and observations. The assistant principal created a checklist guiding the feedback process. After each classroom observation, the team worked together using the checklist to ensure that the feedback met the criteria of the checklist.	feedback drove this action of the AR team. Because there was a clear problem in the effectiveness of the feedback and the lack of instructional improvement that results from the feedback, this intervention improved the evaluation process. The anticipated outcome will be feedback that is more meaningful to teachers that will facilitate instructional improvement.	for feedback based on the strategies provided by professional learning programs. At the end of the evaluation period in December of 2015, the administrators examined all of the feedback they gave to teachers throughout the process.	they provided. Two data sources provided insight into the effectiveness of the intervention: the results of the checklist analysis and data showing teachers' instructional changes in response to the feedback they received.
Critical Incident Interview Measuring Instructional Change	The teacher AR team interviewed individual educators to generate data to determine if the feedback the administrators provided was effective and led to instructional change.	Based on the data collected from the interviews, the anticipated results are that teachers will show improvement and growth in their planning and teaching practices in response to the effective feedback they receive under the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System.	The timeline for the interviews began in October of 2015 and ended in December of 2015.	The data from the interviews showed the success of the interventions used by the action research teams.

Inquiry

The process of inquiring into the problem at State Elementary School in the North County School District required multiple steps and questions to consider. Importantly, the action research process included addressing issues related to feedback and evaluating the effectiveness of the AR teams. Utilizing qualitative analysis of meeting transcripts and interviews with team members benefitted the entire organization as we determined if this approach facilitated the problem solving process.

Research Plan

As stated previously, I answered the following research questions:

- How effective is the action research process in empowering the team's ability to find a solution to an evaluation system problem?
- How can teachers influence the feedback process and in what ways does feedback inform teachers' practices?
- How do administrators increase their capacity to give actionable feedback to teachers?

The following table describes the data collected for each research question in addition to the sample and analysis for the action research process.

Table 3

Action Research Plan for State Elementary

Research Questions	Anticipated Data to be Collected	Sample	Analysis Approach	Proposed Timeline
How can teachers influence the feedback process?	The action research team of teachers provided the data for this research question. Based on the interventions the team developed for improving feedback, the teachers can determine through interviews whether the process has improved the actionable nature of feedback at State.	Every teacher at State evaluated under the TKES is included in the sample for this research question. All teachers on the action research team signed consent forms prior to the beginning of the project.	Several data analysis methods provided information in response to this research question. I organized and coded the transcriptions from AR meetings to sort commonly used words and phrases from the meetings. Additionally, the Teacher Feedback Rubric generated relevant data.	This part of the AR project occurred during the fall semester of the 2015-2016 school year.
In what ways does feedback inform teachers' practices?	Teachers evaluated under the TKES generated data regarding the impact the feedback they received from administrators had on their teaching practices.	All teachers evaluated under the TKES participated in this part of the case study.	The AR team decided the most appropriate method for data collection regarding this research question. The team used interviews to determine the impact of the feedback.	Data generated from January to December of 2015 informed this research question.

How do administrators increase their capacity to give actionable feedback to teachers?	Based on the results from the action research process, the participating administrator involved in the study produced data through checklists and interviews to determine how he increased his capacity to give purposeful feedback.	The principal and assistant principal at State comprise the sample for this research question.	Importantly, the administrator AR team determined the method to collect data on this research question. Specifically, they used interviews with teachers and data from the Administrator Checklist to determine which factors increase the effectiveness of the feedback.	Data generated from January to December of the 2015 school year provided insight into this research question.
How effective is the action research process in empowering the team's ability to find a solution to an evaluation system problem?	The AR team itself provided input into the analysis of this research question. As the facilitator of the group, I transcribed the meetings to ensure that all appropriate data was available.	The members of the AR team were the sample for this question. Both the teachers and administrators participating in the study provided insight.	The qualitative critical incident technique was an effective method to determine the answer to this research question. Additionally, analysis of meeting transcripts, interview notes, documents, and meeting logs provided numerous data to reduce and analyze.	From the beginning of the AR process, I recorded the sessions and ensured that all necessary components were available to analyze over the course of the project.

Data on the Action Research Process

The primary research question addressed the effectiveness of the action research process in finding a solution to an issue at a school. Throughout the project, I recorded and transcribed the meetings to ensure accuracy in reporting while analyzing the interactions of the team members. By using qualitative data analysis methods, including coding transcriptions, creating themes in findings, and developing word charts for frequencies of phrases and statements, I determined if the team focused on the purpose of the project and utilized its resources to improve the feedback at State Elementary. Spaulding and Falco (2013) described the value of conducting an action research study with fidelity:

> It is important for researchers…to make certain that what they are studying is being implemented correctly. If the researchers do not determine the fidelity, and the results of the study reveal that the treatment made no difference than another treatment, one is not sure whether it was because the treatment had no ability to create the desired change or because it was never really implemented correctly…Therefore, fidelity is an important component in cause-effect research. (p. 103)

Additional Data for Research Questions

Each research question will provide data on the effectiveness of feedback at State Elementary. The AR team determined the best methods to collect this data, and teachers provided their input from previous evaluation systems prior to the start of the project.

Research Sample

During the project, those who participated in the study met one of the following requirements:

- Employed as an administrator at State Elementary School.

- Volunteered as a teacher for the AR team.

- Employed as a classroom teacher evaluated under the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System.

To ensure informed consent throughout the study, the members of the AR team signed consent forms that detailed their participation, expectations, requirements, and use of data and transcripts for reporting and analyzing the findings. Additionally, other teachers who participated in interviews for the study signed consent forms to have their information included in the report. According to Anderson, Herr, and Nihlen (2007), "Carefully thinking through one's positionality within an organization is important in understanding how it may impact the trustworthiness of the findings and the ethics of the research process" (p. 9). Therefore, the teachers included and the positions they took during the research process were significant to the success of the study because they had a clear stake in the results of the project. As a school leader, I was cognizant of their relationships to me and others as we addressed evaluation procedures to ensure that the methodology was effective (Mills, 2000). Because I am in a position of authority, my presence in the study impacted the opinions and viewpoints the teachers expressed, so my reflexivity and awareness of my role were critical to the findings of this case.

To recruit the members of the study, I sent correspondence through the district's email system to my entire staff to determine if there was interest in the project. The message I sent through the school district's email on August 24, 2014 is located in the appendix of this paper.

Data Collection Methods

Each of the research questions required different data collection methods. As the AR facilitator, I scheduled 30 minute meetings every other Monday from January to May of 2015. I

observed and transcribed the meetings to ensure proper data collection and analysis. All participants allowed me to audio record the meetings, and I continuously listened to the tapes and examined the transcripts to find trends and themes in the data (Creswell, 2014). I created agendas for each team meeting with the research purpose and questions at the top as well as recorded a meeting log with detailed notes.

Furthermore, the action research process required qualitative methods to improve the measurement of the team's progress. "Qualitative researchers need to document the procedures of their case studies and to document as many of the steps of the procedures as possible" (Creswell, 2014, p. 203). Consequently, as the facilitator of the project, I recorded and transcribed all the meetings to analyze the conversations and decisions the team made. This addressed the research question regarding the effectiveness of the AR team in solving an evaluation issue in a school.

To accurately reflect on the work of the AR team, each member examined the interventions and outputs to ensure that he or she completed each part with fidelity. Based on the model for reflection provided by Spaulding and Falco (2013), the team followed these steps in this figure:

Figure 5
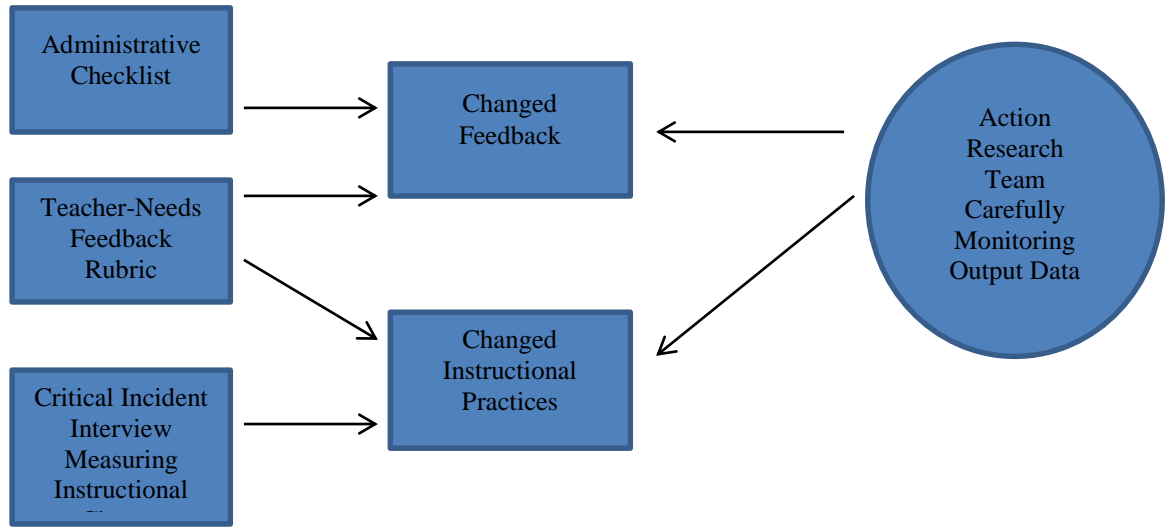
Reflection Process of AR Team

For each of the data collection methods, I ensured validity and reliability to enhance the

ethical nature of the study. Each member checked the transcripts to ensure accuracy of the

recordings. Because the team utilizes qualitative methodology, transcriptions and notes from

meetings provided a narrative of the process. Therefore, data drove the project and informed the

final write-up of the study (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007).

Critical Incident Interviews

During the action research process, I conducted two separate critical incident interview

protocols to collect data on the effectiveness of the AR team and to measure the changes teachers

made to their instructional practices after participating in TKES with the interventions in place.

Flanagan (1954) developed the Critical Incident Technique to find social and behavioral trends

that related to specific research topics and trends. Specifically, teachers who participated in the

AR study as team members and those who received feedback influenced by the interventions

communicated with the action research facilitator for 30 minutes about their experience in the process. The protocol for the interviews is located in the Appendix of this paper.

To inquire into the effectiveness of the AR process, the Critical Incident Technique produced qualitative data in a narrative format that included characters, conflicts, plots, and settings for the project. During the interview, each person told a story about their experience with the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System and the changes they made to their instruction in response to the feedback they received. One administrator and nine teachers signed consent forms to participate in this process, and the data produced led to significant findings for the study.

Data Analysis Procedures

To continue my role as the research facilitator, I analyzed the transcriptions from the 12 action research meetings to identify themes and patterns in the interactions of the team members. Importantly, I arranged the data in chronological order to create a narrative of the entire project. At the conclusion of the AR meetings, I interviewed the team members to identify critical incidents while examining innovative interventions and ideas the team suggested. Consequently, interview transcriptions, recordings of meetings, member checks, and notes from field logs ensured trustworthiness of the data and proper analysis of the findings. All of these methods helped the team answer the research questions (Creswell, 2014).

"Data-based decision making…is a process that is used to determine what area or issue needs to be addressed in the school. In some cases…the analysis can also shine some light on the matter and give way to support some possible solutions that the action research team may want to implement to correct the situation" (Spaulding & Falco, 2013, p. 38). As the team reviewed relevant data, we established a baseline while disaggregating the data to determine the

gap that existed in the use of feedback. We worked carefully to uncover trends without coming

to conclusions that were not accurate or trustworthy. "In some situations, it is impossible

through the disaggregation of the data to determine a cause-effect relationship. In many cases, it

eventually boils down to an educated guess on the part of the action research team" (Spaulding &

Falco, 2013, p. 43).

Finally, the majority of data analysis consisted of sorting through transcriptions and

meeting data to create codes and themes. In order to reduce to data to meaningful findings and

information related to the study, I disaggregated the information and created categories based on

the relevance to each research question. For example, coding can be based on the setting of the

research, description of the situation, perspectives held by the participants, and process and

activity of the team (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007).

To properly code the data, I took the transcripts from the meetings and created a word

chart that increases or decreases the size of the words based on the prevalence in the recordings.

For example, "evaluation, oversight, feedback, and administrator" were words commonly used in

the AR meetings. These were larger on the page of words to show the increased usage of the

terms. Additionally, I created a chart of words not used in the meetings to analyze the themes

and concepts the teachers failed to mention when speaking to their evaluators about the

effectiveness of the feedback. Specifically, the words "supervision, punitive, and bureaucratic"

were not present in the transcripts even though they related to the themes discussed by the

teachers. These data analysis methods provided findings on the work of the team during the

project. Importantly, the AR team influenced the data analysis process as we worked on the

case.

Additionally, these are the specific steps I followed to analyze the transcriptions from the action research team meetings and critical incident interviews based on suggestions from Bryman (2008):

1. I read the text as a whole.

2. I found common themes that related to the research questions.

3. I grouped text with common themes.

4. I labeled the text with codes based on the research questions.

5. I grouped paragraphs and sentences with similar codes.

6. I interpreted and connected codes.

Validity of Research and Trustworthiness of Data

"Validity is one of the strengths of qualitative research and is based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of the account" (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). Although this is an action research case study, the qualitative elements of the project helped ensure that team members addressed the research questions in multiple ways. Creswell (2014) and Stake (2006) suggested triangulating the data, employing multiple members to check the data, using descriptive words to report the findings, identifying the bias present in the study, presenting information that counters the theme, working in the field of study, using peer review of the findings, and allowing an external auditor to examine the study. Importantly, this action research case study utilized these strategies in the follow ways:

1. The team used different forms of qualitative data in the study.

2. Throughout the project, all members had access to the data to examine and analyze the information.

3. At the onset, I articulated my bias in finding errors with feedback while encouraging others to express their opinions and perspectives on the topic.

4. Importantly, members of the team presented data that showed several teachers in the school act on the feedback they receive from administrators.

5. Because this is action research, all of the team members spend every day in the school we studied.

6. We debriefed during meetings on the progress of our work and reflected on the accuracy of the findings.

7. Leaders in the district's research department reviewed the project and analyzed the findings at the conclusion of the study.

The team followed these steps to ensure trustworthiness of the data and validity of the action research process.

Member Checks

Throughout the AR process, the team members provided numerous member checks to ensure that the data we collected was both reliable and accurate. Creswell (2014) stated that AR teams must collaborate and review the processes and findings from a study to eliminate bias and encourage objectivity. Therefore, the team at State Elementary checked the data for accuracy throughout the case study.

First, as the research facilitator, I recorded all meetings and transcribed the audio files through an online transcription service. When the transcription papers returned, I reviewed the text with the team to ensure that the dialogue matched the notes taken during the meetings.

Next, each team member reviewed the Critical Incident Technique protocol prior to conducting the interviews. This ensured that the questions and prompts did not encourage the participants to answer inaccurately or to respond based on the prompting of the facilitator.

Finally, the AR team reviewed the findings collectively. Consequently, this step increased the validity of the data analysis because all members reviewed the data and discussed the accuracy of the findings.

Timing

The team began working on this case in November of 2014. Because the research questions are interrelated and impacted various parts of the case study, the members of the team addressed multiple aspects of the questions throughout the project by utilizing direct approaches to the problems (Lakey, 2010). In May of 2015, the AR portion of the study ended with the finalization of teacher evaluations. The research question that analyzes the effectiveness of the action research process was the focus during the fall of 2015. Importantly, leaders in the North County School District as well as The University of Georgia reviewed the results of the findings to the research questions (Creswell, 2014).

Limitations of Action Research

Action Research methodology provides onsite collaboration for team members to address a problem or issue that an organization needs to resolve. At State Elementary, the AR team faced limitations in its approach to improving the evaluation system. Importantly, the position of the research facilitator influenced the conversations during team meetings and the feedback given on the Teacher Feedback Rubric. Because the teachers report to the assistant principal as one of their evaluators, they struggled to provide objective criticism of the TKES feedback. Although the consent forms ensured that participation in the study was voluntary and had no

influence on the administrator's perception of the members, the participants refrained from directly stating how the administrator could improve. Most of the feedback was positive and praised the specific commentary given during walkthroughs and observations.

Additionally, both time and participation were limitations of this study. Although 11 teachers agreed to participate, teaching commitments, family priorities, and student needs prevented AR team members from devoting more time to the project. Consequently, the study increased in duration to generate needed data. Because summer vacation occurred during the middle of the study, two teachers on the AR team retired before the project was finished.

Furthermore, the AR meetings became complaining sessions about the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. Because this North County School District is still in the first years of implementation, the participating teachers used the meeting times as a platform to criticize the evaluation program. However, after the first three meetings, the teachers turned their focus to improving the evaluation process, which aligned with the purpose of this study.

Subjectivity Statement

To ensure that the action research project focused on the problem the team studied with a degree of objectivity, I utilized different methodologies to decrease the impact of my involvement in the process. "Researchers, in continuously interacting with those being researched, inevitably influence and structure research processes and their outcomes – through their personal and professional characteristics, by leaning on theories and methods available" (Mruck & Breuer, 2003, p. 23). Importantly, the action research team addressed an issue within the context of the school to create meaningful solutions that examined the problems they experience with the evaluation system. Therefore, the subjective nature of the project yielded results that fit within the context and frameworks at State Elementary because the teachers

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needed a solution that related to their experiences. Furthermore, the conceptual framework,

research questions, and purpose statement drove the data generation and collection throughout

the period of study to help the members create useful interventions. Consequently, transcriptions

of the meetings and the interviews with the team members documented and clarified the

subjective parts of the study to increase understanding through reflexivity (Mruck & Breuer,

2003).

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY – STORY OF THE ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

The story of the action research project began when I acquired a position at State Elementary School in the North County School District as an assistant principal. Because my principal and I worked with the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System for the first time during the 2014-2015 school year, we both desired to explore the methods and practices we could put in place to ensure that the evaluation system had a positive impact on teachers' instructional practices. However, the consensus of the staff during that time was that the various evaluation policies district leaders employed were ineffective while increasing the workload and stress levels for educators. Therefore, I began inquiring into actions interested teachers and I could take to make the TKES more meaningful and impactful on instruction in the classroom.

Description of the Context

As mentioned previously, State Elementary School is located in a suburban area of the North County School District. Being a high performing school, teachers from all areas of the district apply to join a successful teaching team led by a positive and innovative principal. Demographically, in the 2015-2016 school year, there are 73 percent white students, 18 percent black students, 5 percent Latino students, 3 percent Asian students, and 1 percent students who identify as multi-racial.

Located in a residential area, State occupies a beautiful campus with large pine trees flanking the property on all sides. The surrounding community members boast about the immaculate landscaping and freshly-painted exterior of the building. As parents, students, and

visitors enter the campus, they encounter three different entrances to the building. The physical

layout of the school, as described in earlier parts of this paper, is conducive to collaboration

between and among grade level staff. Specifically, fourth grade teachers can easily access fifth

grade classrooms and share ideas and resources to increase vertical collaboration.

Within the staff, there are teachers with varying levels of expertise and experience.

Specifically, 12 of 35 classroom teachers have 10 or more years of teaching experience within

the district. Although the principal hired two teachers with less than three years of experience at

the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year, most of the staff members are veterans who are

confident in their instructional abilities.

When the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System became the evaluation policy in the 2014-

2015 school year, the veteran teachers at State expressed mixed feelings regarding the intricacies

and requirements of the system. Because the TKES requires all evaluators to complete four 10

minute walkthroughs and two 30 minute formative observations, teachers lamented the increase

in pressure regarding accountability for student achievement and success. Consequently, State

Elementary School's veteran staff voiced their aggravations with the State Department of

Education's increase in oversight. When I first began conducting observations, teachers

expressed their dissatisfaction with my presence in their classroom. Several educators stated that

they had to spend more time stressing about an evaluation score that did not reflect their

pedagogical knowledge or instructional capabilities. Therefore, the AR team members worked

together to design a study using the action research framework that would make the TKES more

effective while also empowering the teachers with tools and experiences to make them better

leaders and decision-makers in the school.

Action Research Team Members

To begin the action research process, I evaluated the needs of the teachers with respect to the requirements set forth within the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. Because action research is "research in action, rather than research about action; a collaborative democratic partnership; and a sequence of events and an approach to problem-solving," (Creswell, 2014, p. 6) my principal and I desired to use this methodology to increase the competency of myself and the staff while making the evaluation practices more relevant and meaningful to actions taken in the classroom. Therefore, teachers who were interested in joining the action research team to solve the problem in our context came to an initial meeting on September 8, 2014 at 2:45 pm in State Elementary School's media center.

Recruiting Interested Participants

In chapter three, there is a detailed description of the recruiting process I used to both inform the teachers at State Elementary School of the action research project and gauge interest in the case study. To ensure that the team had the opportunity to be highly effective in answering the research questions, I desired that educators from each grade level and department represented the school throughout the process. Importantly, the enthusiastic response I received from the staff ensured that the action research team would contain teachers with a variety of experiences, skill levels, perspectives, and professional ambitions. Specifically, eleven people attended the first meeting on September 8, 2014. After I presented information regarding action research, the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System, the research purpose, problem, and questions, and the overall goal of the team, all eleven teachers signed consent to participate and agreed to attend meetings held twice a month for the remainder of the school year.

Background of Team Members

Although eleven teachers signed consent to participate on the action research team, only eight teachers worked on the project through its completion due to family circumstances, job placement change, or increase in work responsibilities. Below is a brief description of the eight AR team members who participated throughout the process:

Peter Bryant[2]

Peter is an eighth year special education teacher, serving second grade students, who holds a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction. As a new teacher to State Elementary, Peter desired to both impact change through the action research process as well as voice his concerns with the evaluation systems he worked with in St. Louis, Missouri to ensure that the same problems did not occur with the TKES.

Throughout the AR project, Peter consistently provided an invaluable perspective at meetings. To ensure that other members refrained from generalizing or criticizing the TKES in an unproductive manner, he offered a "devil's advocate" argument in response to those who stated that no evaluation system could be effective. Specifically, Peter gave personal accounts of meetings and conversations he had with his current and previous principals that positively impacted his instructional practices in spite of the relative ineffectiveness of the evaluation system in place. Peter argued that the specifics of the TKES would only be successful if the administrators communicated about individual strengths and weaknesses with each teacher. Accountability relied on transparent expectations and clear communication.

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[2] The names used in this study are pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Marion Stevens

At the beginning of the AR project, Marion showed the most enthusiasm for participating on the team. As a ninth year teacher who has served in curriculum leadership roles at various schools in the North County School District, Marion desired to obtain a position in school leadership to further impact teachers' understanding of curriculum and execution of instruction. Currently, she serves as an Early Intervention Program (EIP) teacher who supports students in kindergarten, first, second, and third grade who struggle to master learning standards and objectives for their grade levels. Importantly, Marion holds a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction and a Specialist Degree in Educational Leadership. Her willingness to lead AR meetings and push others to examine the evaluation process through an instructional effectiveness lens resulted in high levels of productivity and reflection among the team members.

During three of the meetings, Marion helped the other teachers on the team understand the importance of the feedback given during classroom walkthroughs and observations. When other members desired to criticize the scores they received, Marion willingly pushed the group to value the significance of the commentary over the obsession with the scores. Consequently, she became an integral part of the team's success, ensuring that we all addressed the research questions despite the temptation to focus on other pressing issues.

Allison Freeman

The most experienced of all the teachers on the team, Allison is a 23rd year special education teacher who works with both fourth and fifth grade students. As an aspiring building level leader, Allison used the action research team to gain experience leading school change. During most meetings, she confidently expressed her opinions regarding both the TKES and the effectiveness of feedback given during walkthroughs and observations.

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Importantly, Allison was the first member to communicate the importance of administrators meeting with teachers after classroom observations to discuss scores and the possibility of changing a score if proper evidence justified the decision. Because of her negative experiences with evaluators giving low scores without examining all the relevant evidence, Allison also suggested that the Administrative Checklist include a guarantee that principals and assistant principals would read lesson and unit plans prior to entering a classroom. She argued that administrators begin observations lacking an understanding of the context, pacing, and sequencing of a unit. Consequently, the evaluator observes merely a small portion of the instruction that occurs in the classroom.

Natalie Brown

Natalie is a 15th year fourth grade teacher who also desires to obtain a position in school leadership. As an integral member of the action research team, Natalie consistently ensured that the group remained focused on the research questions. Because the meeting agendas contained the purpose statement and questions, Natalie would re-direct the members to this information if the team lost its focus.

Furthermore, Natalie helped the team understand the value of qualitative research regarding teachers' perceptions of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. Specifically, certain members of the team desired to increase the quantitative focus of the project by having the teachers score the feedback they received during walkthroughs and observations on a scale of one to 10. However, Natalie urged the other members to move beyond the concept of scoring to ensure that qualitative interviews would reveal deeper themes and teachers' desires regarding the feedback and evaluation process.

Michael Carter

As the most celebrated member of the AR team, Michael began his first year teaching at State Elementary after 19 years at another school in the district. Being an innovative fifth grade teacher, leaders and curriculum supervisors across the North County School District have videotaped Michael's lessons to share with educators who seek to better integrate technology in their daily teaching practices. Because of his expertise in formative assessment data and professional learning, Michael was an integral part of the team who often offered challenging perspectives to the group to help certain members move past pre-conceived notions regarding the purpose of evaluation systems.

Michael continually emphasized the importance of evaluators being experts in the content areas to be effective evaluators. He shared that his experience with evaluation systems was negative in past years because the principal and assistant principal rarely offered value-added criticism of his teaching. Consequently, Michael had to find his own teaching resources without the direction or support of the school leaders. Thus, his motivation for the team was to ensure that the TKES required principals and assistant principals to provide suggestions for resources or content-related material that could make lessons better. Michael did not believe that administrators needed to have teaching experience in a grade level to successfully evaluate teachers, but he did believe they needed a strong understanding of the standards and instructional strategies that best meet the needs of those particular students.

Susan Morgan

Susan Morgan is the principal at State Elementary School. She is currently in her fourth year at the school, and she spent the majority of her teaching experience at high performing schools as a gifted educator. Susan completed her Specialist and Doctorate degrees in the field

of Educational Leadership, and her dissertation focused on the importance of principals completing classroom walkthroughs. Importantly, Susan's vision for the school includes increasing the development of future leaders and equipping those within the building with resources to solve problems and lead the school toward success in student achievement and community engagement.

During the action research process, Susan held an integral role as an evaluator within the TKES. Because she and I both worked collaboratively to evaluate the staff, we communicated daily regarding teachers' performance and the effectiveness of our feedback. Importantly, Susan consistently produced high quality commentary in walkthroughs and observations which influenced the direction of the case study. Specifically, members of the team desired the entire evaluation process to reflect the practices and ideals the principal took while working with teachers. Although the research showed that principals' lack of presence in classrooms negatively impacts their ability to rate teachers, the team found that the opposite was true with Susan. She provided clear and specific feedback to teachers, and the team used her practices to create the Administrator Checklist.

Janice Campbell

As the lone third grade teacher on the team, Janice Campbell brought enthusiasm and energy to the action research process. Currently in her 20th year of teaching, Janice has a passion for increasing her teaching and professional competency and relished the opportunity to voice her opinions regarding the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. Janice completed a Specialist degree in Curriculum and Instruction, and she has served as the grade level team leader multiple times while working at State Elementary.

Importantly, Janice continually expressed her desire to improve the face-to-face communication within evaluation systems. Based on her experience with other evaluation policies in the North County School District, Janice believes that principals and assistant principals help teachers when they have individual conversations about the instructional strategies they observe in the classroom. Too often, the evaluation systems reduce the requirement for administrators to meet with teachers before and after observations. Therefore, Janice pushed for the inclusion of an open-door office hours policy for the evaluators at State Elementary. If an educator desires to talk to his or her evaluator after a walkthrough or observation, he or she can come to the office during office hours in the afternoon to discuss specifics from the lesson, ask questions about the feedback, or provide evidence to change a score.

Candice Chapman

The art teacher at State Elementary School, Candice Chapman, provided the most unique perspective for the AR team throughout the process. Although she challenged the purpose of the project and questioned the theoretical foundation of evaluation systems, Candice's participation brought great rewards to the group.

Candice has completed 24 years of teaching, 16 of which have been at State Elementary. As a member of the team, Candice argued that the TKES was not an appropriate evaluation tool for specialist teachers. She asserted that expert educators from her department should observe her in the classroom because the principal and assistant principal had no experience teaching elementary school art students. Importantly, the team appreciated her viewpoints and worked rigorously to find workable solutions to this problem.

Action Research Cycles

The action research team met every other Monday beginning on January 26, 2015 after the team members signed the consent forms to participate. According to Coghlan and Brannick (2014):

> The action research cycle comprises a pre-step and three core activities: planning, action, and fact-finding. The pre-step involves naming the general objective. Planning comprises having an overall plan and a decision regarding what is the first step to take. Action involves taking that first step, and fact-finding involves evaluating the first step, seeing what was learned and creating the basis for correcting the next steps. So there is a continuing 'spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the results of an action.' (p. 9)

After I created the action research team for this study, the members examined the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System at State Elementary and found a problem with the purpose and direction of the evaluation practices within the framework of teacher and leader efficacy through the use of interviews. As mentioned in previous chapters, 10 of 35 staff members stated that they did not use the information they received from evaluator feedback to influence their instructional practices. Therefore, the team members identified an issue with the evaluation system: a practice that required a significant investment of time, resources, energy, and emotion from teachers and administrators had little to no impact on teacher practices and student learning. Consequently, the action research process was necessary to solve an organizational issue (Creswell, 2014).

Context and Purpose

  To begin describing the steps of the action research cycle at State Elementary, providing the context of the organization is vital to the story of the project. Although previous parts of this chapter include physical descriptions of the building, this section explains the economic, political, and social forces in the North County School District as well as the response of the system's leaders to changes made through the TKES. Furthermore, I discuss the desired future state of the school and district in addition to the members of the organization who have ownership of the action research project (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014).

Economic, Political, and Social Forces in the North County School District

  After the conclusion of the No Child Left Behind policy, the US Federal Government continued to assert its authority in education despite a long history of local and state control. With the implementation of Race to the Top and other programs to increase student achievement scores on standardized exams, the US Department of Education began requiring that all states adopt a universal evaluation system. Hence, the North County School District implemented the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System to comply with the federal regulations to increase teacher accountability in relation to student achievement scores.

  Within the North County School District itself, the superintendent and the Leadership Development Department created an Evaluation Systems Department to oversee the implementation of the TKES and to train administrators on the online platform for creating feedback and scoring teachers objectively.

  At State Elementary School, the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System is the fifth evaluation system in place since the school's opening in 1996. Teachers have experienced a variety of requirements for the number and duration of observations, and the TKES placed the

largest burden on educators of all the systems. Specifically, educators must complete a Self-Assessment at the beginning of each school year to rate themselves on the 10 professional standards: instructional knowledge, instructional planning, instructional strategies, differentiated instruction, assessment uses, assessments strategies, positive learning environment, academically challenging environment, professionalism, and communication. Additionally, administrators meet with teachers individually or in groups for pre-conferences to orient them to specific school requirements. During the school year, the evaluators complete four 10-minute walkthroughs, rating two to four of the 10 professional TKES standards while providing clear and direct feedback. Moreover, the administrators conduct two 30-minute formative observations to rate and provide feedback on all 10 professional TKES standards. Finally, the teacher and evaluator meet for a mid-year conference and a summative conference at the end of the year to discuss progress, areas of improvement, and commendations.

Teachers at State initially presented a vehement opposition to the increase in workload and demands from the TKES. After working under the previous evaluation system that required one observation per year, the change to six observations per year appeared daunting. One veteran teacher at State complained:

"I have been at this school since it opened. There have been four principals and several more assistant principals. Each person has attempted to explain how I can teach my class more effectively, but none of them had the experience and skill level that I do when I instruct my students. This new evaluation system is just like all the others. We will jump through hoops to satisfy the requirements, but in the end, I will teach the way I teach. The district will probably have a new system in place in a few years anyway."

Importantly, this sentiment resounded with the staff and presented an interesting challenge for administrators as we began to examine the need for the action research process. Once we talked with several teachers and gave an informal survey asking who valued the feedback they received in the evaluation system, I knew that the TKES would only be effective if the teachers increased their stake in the process and influenced the implementation at State Elementary School. Therefore, I began the action research process.

Response of District Leaders to the TKES

In the Evaluation System Department, the district leaders provided trainings and seminars to principals and assistant principals who desired to improve their evaluation practices while also increasing the inter-rater reliability within the school buildings. Several months into the 2014-2015 school year, the district leaders realized that the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System would only be successful if building leaders made the system unique to their staffs. For example, principals could control which standards to rate in walkthroughs and the process for holding pre-conference and mid-year conferences. This flexibility helped administrators communicate with their teachers and provide the specific services that made the evaluation process more relevant to educator needs and student learning.

Desired Outcomes of the Project

After obtaining approval from the North County School District Research and Accountability Department, I realized that district leaders desired to understand the steps principals could take to make the TKES meaningful to teachers' instructional practices. Because data from previous evaluation systems showed that teachers rarely changed their pedagogy based on feedback from evaluation commentary, the superintendent pushed for improved practices that

encouraged teachers to reflect on their teaching and seek innovative ways to change their instruction.

At State Elementary School, the desire of the staff and the administrators was to increase the efficacy of the teachers in solving an organizational problem while also making the TKES process meaningful to educators and students. If the action research team could create interventions that improve the feedback in walkthroughs and observations to include commentary to benefit the teachers, then the instruction and engagement at the school would improve as teachers had more control over practices and policies at the building level.

Ownership of the Team Members

Because all certified teachers participate in the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System, all educators and leaders at State Elementary School took ownership of the action research project. The team members had the largest role in evaluating the problem and creating interventions, but the entire staff wanted the project to be a success because the implementation and practices under the TKES affected their daily practices.

Constructing: September 2014 – January 2015

"The first step of the action research cycle is a dialogue activity in which the stakeholders of the project engage in *constructing* what the issues are, however provisionally, as a working theme, on the basis of which action will be planned and taken" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 10). As mentioned in previous chapters, the members of the action research team worked collaboratively to create the research purpose, problem, and questions to drive the focus and direction of the study.

During the entirety of the constructing phase, the action research team reviewed literature, discussed evaluation system issues with other staff members, and began discussing

plans to solve problems with the TKES. AR members participated in dialogue about the resources and tools they needed to take constructive steps in the project. Furthermore, the principal and I reflected on our walkthrough and observation feedback we gave during the first semester in the school year. Because the team had not created interventions yet, the feedback the administrators gave became the baseline data for the TKES commentary. At AR meetings, I rewrote the feedback in a confidential manner so each member could analyze the commentary and determine what action we could take to improve the process.

As the team completed the constructing phase, I kept detailed minutes of meetings, collected and saved the articles, books, journals, and video clips the members suggested to further the group's knowledge of the topic, and began discussing the possibility of creating interventions that were specific to State Elementary and the needs of the teachers. Consequently, the team created the frameworks for both the Teacher Feedback Rubric and the Administrator Checklist during this first step of the action research cycle.

Planning Action: January 2015 – March 2015

"Planning action follows from exploration of the context and purpose of the project, and construction of the issue, and is consistent with them" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 10). During this step of the action research project, the team met over the course of two months to explore the purpose of the project and contemplate various solutions that would benefit the teachers at State Elementary. At each meeting, I provided detailed agendas to keep the group focused on the task. Each agenda included the research purpose and questions at the top of the page to ensure all conversations centered on the problem with the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System.

For the first month of the Planning Action phase, the group struggled to productively address the needs of the teachers. Unfortunately, the members argued about their personal preferences within the evaluation system during those four meetings. Instead of engaging in collaboration, the meetings quickly turned into criticism sessions of the TKES and the increase workload on teachers. However, by the fourth meeting, I showed the group the notes from the last several meetings and we listened to audio files of the team. Once we addressed the problem and agreed to make the meetings more productive, the team began to analyze the intervention ideas and create documents that would help the administrators create better feedback that teachers could use to improve their instruction.

As we debated various teacher needs in regard to walkthrough and observation feedback, several members suggested that administrators needed accountability tools to guide their practices both in and out of the classroom to make their commentary effective and relevant to the instruction of the individual teachers they observed. Therefore, the team created the Administrator Feedback Checklist. Included in the appendix of this document, this checklist, as stated previously, provides directions the leaders must follow before, during, and after entering a classroom for any part of the TKES process. The team reviewed the literature, including other empirical studies, and determined that the items included in the checklist would maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the leader as he or she observed educators in the building. All members of the team provided input and perspective in the creation of this intervention.

Moreover, the team designed the Teacher Feedback Rubric during this stage of the AR cycle. Because the teachers desired to increase their roles in school decision-making, they needed to have a role in improving the quality of the feedback they received during observations. In order to improve their instruction, the feedback must meet certain requirements and include

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needed elements related to each teacher's instructional strengths and goals. Importantly, the team created the rubric to be specific for each teacher. As opposed to a universal rating system, the categories are broad, and the teachers have space to include thoughts about how the feedback can better meet their needs. The team wanted the participating administrator to use the data from these rubrics to improve his feedback for each individual teacher.

The final part of the Planning Action phase occurred after the team developed the interventions in March of 2015. Because the school year was concluding, the members agreed that the participating administrator could not use the interventions until the start of the 2015-2016 school year. Therefore, I created a brief orientation for the staff to participate in during pre-planning of the next school year and met individually with teachers to explain the two interventions that would facilitate the TKES process.

Taking Action: March 2015 – November 2015

"At this stage, the plans are implemented and interventions made collaboratively" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 11). As the team ended the planning phase of the AR process, we reviewed the two interventions and planned for the evaluation of the entire case study. To understand and measure the changes teachers made to their instructional practices after the Teacher Feedback Rubric and Administrator Checklist were in place, the team created the Critical Incident Interview Protocol to generate data on the effectiveness of the feedback, changes made to classroom instruction, and the successes and failures of the AR team.

When the 2015-2016 school year began, 12 teachers who were not members of the action research team agreed to participate in the data collection of the project. These teachers were on my evaluation caseload, and we met during each person's pre-evaluation conference time to discuss the specifics of the interventions. I promised to follow all the steps listed on the

Administrator Checklist before, during, and after classroom walkthroughs and observations to improve my evaluation practices and make the feedback effective and responsive to their goals for the year. Those 12 teachers agreed to complete a Teacher Feedback Rubric for each walkthrough or observation I completed. When I entered their classrooms for observations, I left copies of the rubric on their desks so they could rate and comment on my feedback. Importantly, this generated significant amounts of data that the action research team analyzed to determine if their actions and the interventions helped improve the TKES during this case study.

Evaluating Action: November 2015 – January 2016

"The outcomes of the action, both intended and unintended, are examined with a view to seeing: if the original constructing fitted; if the action taken matched the constructing; if the action was taken in an appropriate manner; and what feeds into the next cycle of constructing, planning and action" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 10). After the AR team completed the action research cycle, we analyzed the findings to determine if the original purpose statement and research questions matched the outcomes of the study. Importantly, we examined the conceptual framework using the teacher and leader efficacy lenses.

Specifically, we found during the Evaluating Action stage that the action research process was appropriate for the construction of the study and the evaluation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. Because the goal of the project was to increase the capacity of teachers to utilize tools and resources to construct positive change in the school, the team determined that the TKES was helping educators at State increase their effectiveness in the classroom in response to the improved practices of the evaluators.

The method the team used to evaluate the action included the conduction of critical incident interviews and general interviews with teachers who received the interventions during

the TKES process. Importantly, as the research facilitator, I found that the team meetings were highly successful in equipping the participants with confidence to solve similar school issues in the future. At the beginning of the study, the teachers were unsure of their roles and abilities to enact positive change at State Elementary. However, as we reflected on the team's work, several of the members asserted that they could address other problems in the school in the same format. Therefore, this reflecting stage ended the AR cycles for this particular project.

Convergence of the Teacher and Administrator Teams

At the beginning of the action research case study, the research facilitator intended for the administrator AR team and the teacher AR team to operate independently. Importantly, the principal's schedule prevented her from participating in scheduled meetings before or after school. Therefore, the assistant principal met with her in an informal manner and recorded the sessions to gather and generate data on professional learning resources and create an arena to reflect on the feedback they created within the TKES platform. However, as the teacher AR team began to address sample feedback and create the interventions, the participating administrator began to sit in on those AR meetings. Consequently, the two teams eventually merged, and the teachers and leaders benefitted from the shared platform. The team found that this convergence of the two teams resulted in more democratic practices where the teachers had the full attention of the administrators in a reflective environment. As discussed in the findings section, the result of the two teams working together was an increase in the efficacy and competence of the school's action research team.

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Managing Group Dynamics

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Because action research was an unknown process to me as the research facilitator and to the team members at State Elementary, we had to work through our initial meetings to set

guidelines and standards for effective, transparent communication and productive work. Although the team benefitted from including teachers and leaders from all grade levels and departments, there were moments of tension and struggle that resulted from lack of previous communication and poor team building skills. Therefore, the group analyzed the meeting notes and interactions recorded on audio files by using both action learning and action science.

Action Learning

To ensure that the group found meaning in the action research process and learned strategies to successfully improve the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System, I examined an initial problem the team faced and found a solution that improved the productivity of the members. Below is a synopsis of the action learning problem:

The most pressing challenge that the team faced in the early stages of the AR project was their lack of devotion and commitment to the project and the outcomes of the case study. To address this need, I stated the problem in the form of a question to present to the group: How can I as the action research facilitator ensure that the team members devote themselves to the project and provide their best insight into the process?

After discussing the project with the team members, several of the participants stated that they needed my leadership and input to keep the project focused, directed, and productive. However, because the team needed to generate data and create interventions as a group, we needed a solution that involved all stakeholders. Therefore, the members suggested that each meeting contain an agenda with the purpose statement and research questions at the top of the page while the research facilitator redirected the group if the members digressed on various topics.

In order to implement the solution the team desired, we had to consider the constraints offered by the initial problem. Because the teachers had other commitments and demanding instructional schedules, they would struggle to invest their free time into the team. Additionally, the diversity of perspectives and personalities of the members prevented the team from reaching consensus on certain issues.

At the conclusion of the action learning process, the team found success in keeping the research purpose and questions present during meetings. If the members struggled to remain focused, I, as the research facilitator, would remind the team of our objectives, and we would re-direct the conversation to productive topics. Furthermore, if members found that their schedules were too demanding to participate in a meeting, I sent them summaries of the team's actions and provided time for those members to ask questions at the beginning of subsequent meetings.

Action Science

During the AR project, there were moments of hesitation, embarrassment, and counter-productive dialogue that prevented the team from accomplishing its goals. According to Coghlan and Brannick (2004):

> In action science, you focus on how your actions tend to produce defensiveness and undesired outcomes: the opposite of what you intend…Accordingly, the core of action science is learning how to identify the assumptions which govern behavior and to develop skills at testing assumptions and inferences, while at the same time exposing your own privately held theories to public testing. (p. 31)

During my first conversation with the action research team for the project, I called a short meeting to introduce the topic to the group and gauge interest in the topic. Specifically, we met in the afternoon in the school's media center. After we discussed a few items, one of the

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teachers raised her hand to question the purpose of the study. We engaged in a conversation about feedback effectiveness and the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. However, the teacher made a comment that polarized the group and caused some tension to develop. Below is a synopsis of what she said and my thoughts and feelings about the conversation. My thoughts appear on the left side of the page, mirroring the spoken words on the right side of the page.

Table 4

Action Science within the Action Research Team

Thoughts & Feelings	What Was Said
AR Facilitator: Why doesn't this project focus on what I want it to? I already know I am the only male administrator here.	Candice Chapman: Explain to me why this project does not specifically address the disparity between female teachers and male supervisors.
AR Facilitator: I understand that I am a new member of the school, but cut me some slack. I have to complete the logistics of this project before we can begin. Also, I promised everyone we would be finished in 30 minutes, and you are extending our time together.	AR Facilitator: Well, the project design will focus on the impact feedback has on all teachers and their instructional practices. Because this school has one male administrator and one female administrator, we decided that all teachers, regardless of their gender, can have a role in this study.
AR Facilitator: You must really dislike any of the evaluation systems we have had in place in the district, but this project will not be a waste of time.	Candice Chapman: I thought we would engage with the sexist nature of the evaluation system and the stratification between male leaders and female subordinates. What good will our project lead to if our work does not address this issue?
AR Facilitator: Please stop causing problems just to take a stand on an issue. If you feel this strongly about the ineffectiveness of the TKES, then don't participate.	AR Facilitator: I understand your concern with the sexist nature of the evaluation system. However, the action research process will equip us all with the skills and tools to solve related problems in the future. Because the district has a focus on the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System, we need to examine whether the principal and I are positively impacting your instruction with our commentary.
AR Facilitator: She doesn't care what my opinion is on this topic. I am outnumbered here because I am a male, and I am twenty years younger than the average teacher.	Candice Chapman: Doesn't everyone understand that men tend to prefer to work alone and lack skills to collaborate with others? The females in this room are more effective when working together, but we lack the authority to have any real power in the decision-making in this school.

AR Facilitator: The principal gave me her full support. Why are you causing such a large disturbance over this issue?	AR Facilitator: I understand your concern. However, the principal at this school is a female, and she fully supports the purpose of the evaluation system and the study we plan to conduct.
AR Facilitator: I'm sure you will keep this up throughout the project.	Candice Chapman: Well, there may be more to this project than we initially examine.

Reflections on Action Learning and Action Science

To ensure that the AR team remained focused on the goals of the study while also productively engaging in the action research cycles, the strategies offered from both action learning and action science were critical to the success of the project. Because State Elementary School has a variety of educators with various years of experience and professional abilities, the team contained members with divergent personalities and perspectives on the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. Therefore, the group needed strategies and resources available to combat digression, inefficiency, and miscommunication. Importantly, the case presented involving the art teacher, Candice Chapman, illustrates the need for action research team members to be transparent regarding their values and opinions at the beginning of the research process. For this project, the conversation, debate, and dialogue that occurred between Candice Chapman, the art teacher, and me, the research facilitator, contained emotion-filled assumptions that could have reduced the quality of the findings and the effectiveness of action research. However, because the team addressed the issue while providing time at the beginning and ending of each meeting to reflect on the purpose of the project, those involved willingly communicated their biases and opinions to improve the effectiveness of the study.

Furthermore, the principles of action learning influenced the direction of the study and the methodology we used to generate data and analyze the findings. Specifically, the team

understood that our actions to improve the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System were not only improving the evaluation process at State Elementary School, but we also gained tools and experience examining a problem that impacted student learning while collaboratively finding solutions that were both relevant and meaningful to our organization. Consequently, the members of the team realized that the action research cycle could apply to other problems in the school.

Action Research Outcomes

The purpose of this chapter was to provide detailed insight into the action research process at State Elementary School in response to the need to increase the effectiveness and quality of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System practices. Because the primary research question from the study addresses the impact the AR team had on addressing an organizational issue, data and findings are located in the following chapter. However, evidence and information from this section show that action research was effective in improving the democratic nature of the staff at State Elementary. Teachers and leaders gained experience and skills to become more efficacious as they learned to discover, address, and evaluate problems within the building. The collaboration of the team produced needed outcomes that eventually improved practices at the school. Importantly, action research contributed to the conceptual framework of this study and the literature pertaining to evaluation systems, feedback improvement, and instructional change.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

The purpose of this action research case study is to explore techniques to improve

feedback for teachers to equip them with the skills and tools to become more involved in school

decision-making. The research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How effective is the action research process in empowering the team's ability to find a

   solution to an evaluation system problem?

2. How can teachers influence the feedback process, and in what ways does feedback

   inform teachers' practices?

3. How do administrators increase their capacity to give actionable feedback to teachers?

   In this chapter, each question includes findings from the action research case study. Data

from AR team meetings, transcripts, and interviews of participants and teachers at State

Elementary School produced the findings for this project.

Table 5

Research Findings

Research Question	Findings
1. How effective is the action research process in empowering the team's ability to find a solution to an evaluation system problem?	a. Action Research teams must include teachers from every grade level and content area to address a school-wide concern. b. Action Research teams increased the staff's awareness of the need for improvement in the school's implementation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. c. Action Research teams can instill change in perspectives but struggle to impact policy change. d. Action Research teams can improve the feedback given by administrators to individual teachers during walkthroughs and observations.
2. How can teachers influence the feedback process, and in what ways does feedback inform teachers' practices?	a. Teachers can influence the feedback process by providing feedback on evaluators' effectiveness. b. Teachers can influence feedback by communicating their needs to administrators before and after classroom observations. c. Feedback influences teachers' practices if the teachers have communicated specific goals to evaluators during initial pre-conferences. d. Feedback influences teachers' practices in regard to resources, materials, and technology used in instruction.
3. How do administrators increase their capacity to give actionable feedback to teachers?	a. Administrators must give consistent and defendable feedback to teachers. b. Administrators must include commendations and recommendations in feedback. c. Administrators must be willing to change an evaluation score if the teacher provides convincing evidence. d. Administrators must communicate with other evaluators and the teachers they observe to create actionable and reliable feedback.

Research Question 1: Effectiveness of Action Research in Solving an Evaluation System

Problem

Because this was an action research case study, the primary intervention the team used to solve the problem associated with the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System at State Elementary School was action research. Importantly, as the conceptual framework indicates, the desire of both the research facilitator and the AR team members was to increase the competency of the staff in making organizational decisions and improving pre-existing policies and practices to make them more effective to daily instructional practices. Therefore, in order to determine if the action research team successfully solved the evaluation system problem, two different data collection and analysis procedures occurred. First, the research facilitator took notes during AR meetings and audio recorded the sessions. Also, each AR member participated in a critical incident interview. During the interview process, each teacher discussed his or her experiences with the Teacher Feedback Rubric and the Administrator Checklist. Within these conversations, the educators commented on the effectiveness of the AR team and communicated their opinions regarding the entire process. For this research question, the data presented four themes related to the action research experience:

1. Action Research teams must include teachers from every grade level and content area to address a school-wide concern.

2. Action Research teams increased the staff's awareness of the need for improvement in the school's implementation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System.

3. Action Research teams can instill change in perspectives but struggle to impact policy change.

4. Action Research teams can improve the feedback given by administrators to individual teachers during walkthroughs and observations.

Action Research Teams must include Teachers from every Grade Level and Content Area to address a School-wide Concern

After working with the action research team for several months and analyzing the case study we designed at State Elementary School, the data the team generated support this initial finding. Importantly, the team's members concluded that the action research process worked because the people who comprised the team represented the majority of the positions in the school. For example, our team included grade level teachers from kindergarten through fifth grade, special education teachers, and art and music teachers. Based on the data we gathered from meeting minutes and interview transcripts, all the volunteers agreed that the variety of participants in the study gave us a better understanding of the issues associated with the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. Although some of the solutions the team presented were unobtainable, the group still found that the wide range of perspectives gave the project a broader impact on the school. Consequently, the findings may be generalizable to a larger range of schools using this evaluation system because of the perspectives of the AR team.

When the members of the AR team began the project, they reflected on the inclusion of teachers from every grade level and content area. Because participation in the project was optional, the research facilitator had to recruit interested teachers knowing that other priorities at the school would influence their commitment and participation. However, each grade level team agreed to have a representative participate in the process because the topic was relevant to the new evaluation system and teachers' instructional practices.

During interviews and within meeting transcripts, those who participated in the study asserted that the AR team needed to include the experiences and perspectives of all teachers so it could address the school's overall needs within the TKES. Marion Stevens stated in her critical incident interview the importance of having representatives from all grade levels on the AR team:

"When the team first met, I looked around and realized that teachers from kindergarten, first, second, third, fourth, and fifth grade were present in addition to special education and specialist teachers. Although I was initially apprehensive of the diversity of grade levels and perspectives, I understood that the team needed to hear the needs of those they did not work with on a daily basis. We work with our teammates every day, so we know what they are going to say about the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. However, I have never worked with the art and music teachers, and they brought up some valid points about the changes they would like to make to the whole evaluation process. Once everyone on the team had the time to talk about their opinions of the TKES, we all gained a greater perspective of the challenges we faced in making interventions that would personalize the system for each of us."

Importantly, every team member did not share this same viewpoint at the onset of the study. At the second meeting, Michael Carter spoke with trepidation when talking about the impact the presence of special education teachers would have on the AR process:

"Is there not another system the district uses to evaluate special education teachers? I appreciate the work you do with our students, but I do not believe the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System relates to what you do in and out of the classroom. When do the administrators observe you writing IEPs or collecting data on student goal progress?

Instead of working with this team, you should begin your own project to push the district

and state leaders to adopt a more relevant system that truly encapsulates the work you do

with your students."

However, as the action research team continued its work to improve the effectiveness of

the TKES, Michael Carter changed his perspective on the inclusion of special education teachers

on the team:

"Although they need additional observations from evaluators to paint a picture of the

work they do, I think the special education teachers have offered a comprehensive

viewpoint on the TKES that other teachers have not understood or appreciated before this

project began. I will admit that I thought those teachers needed a different system, but

the team has worked together so well that we could find solutions to make feedback

better for anyone regardless of his or her position."

Therefore, the action research process proved to be successful because of the inclusion of

educators from various grade levels and content areas rather than in spite of the diverse needs of

the team. Specifically, the specialist teachers provided clear insight into the deficits within the

Teacher Keys Effectiveness System that other members of the team failed to realize. Candice

Chapman epitomized her integral and invaluable presence in the project when she stated the

following during her critical incident interview:

"Art teachers in the district do not find value in the evaluation process because we

usually get feedback from a person who never taught in an art classroom. In effect, we

completed the necessary steps for whatever evaluation system was in place and spoke

non-sense with the principal to satisfy some requirement to meet at the end of an

evaluation period. However, as other members of the team began to understand, our

work was important because we made this evaluation system personalized for our needs here at State. For example, as the art teacher, I wanted to see the impact incorporating technology would have on my instruction. Although you (the assistant principal) do not know the best methods for teaching clay modeling, you could observe a lesson and give me feedback on the effectiveness of the video clip and iPad application I used in the lesson. When I brought this experience to the rest of the team, they realized that the changes we needed to make through the interventions must be unique to each teacher. The teacher should decide what the evaluator looks at in the classroom. Not the other way around."

Importantly, this finding about the action research process showed that the collaboration of the team led to the creation of interventions that the teachers found useful. Without the inclusion of the art teacher in this case study, the classroom teachers from each of the grade levels would have focused on their general needs for the TKES rather than the specific needs of the teachers based on the department or content area.

Finally, data from the action research team meeting transcripts showed the impact the diversity of experience levels and variety of content perspectives had on the outcomes of the project. When the team first began analyzing the problem with the feedback at State Elementary, the teachers expressed concerns that each department and grade level had different needs regarding evaluation practices from classroom walkthroughs and observations. The statement from Susan Morgan typified this common theme:

"Teachers need to understand that each grade has different needs instructionally. Although evaluators desire to give individual feedback based on the needs of a grade level team, the system itself forces us to rate people based on common measures. For

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example, the physical education teacher receives a score on Assessment Uses. Even though he uses a variety of tests to determine the physical development of the children in addition to their mastery of the learning objectives, it is difficult to find an objective method to rate him in this standard. So, there should be multiple action research teams that create interventions for their particular grade level or department."

As the AR team began to work through the research and literature, the members discovered that the interventions could be relevant to all teachers regardless of grade level or department if they created open-ended procedures for rating feedback. Consequently, the team improved the TKES by providing a platform for all teachers who chose to participate in the study to make the practices of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System more specific to their needs. Additionally, the team found a way to increase the voice teachers had in the implementation of the evaluation system. In essence, they affected school policy and decision-making both within the AR cycles and in their communication through the interventions. Peter Bryant summarized the impact this had on the case study:

"The action research team included people from all over the school. I had conversations with teachers I never talked to before, and we developed close relationships. Because of this, I know what other teachers need in their feedback that influenced the way I look at the evaluation system. In the meetings, I would have never asked for an opportunity to rate my administrator's feedback, but the fifth grade teacher made it clear that we needed more say in the practices of the evaluators. Also, the art teacher showed me that there were certain areas of my teaching that I had never reflected on before. Because I feel comfortable in my special education position, I assumed that there were practices in my planning and instruction that did not need to improve. However, she explained that there

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are always other teaching methods available, and the administrators have the opportunity

and ability to show me where to look for support and resources. Without the other

members of the team, I would not realize the changes I can make to my teaching and the

power we have in this school because of this project."

Therefore, this first finding resulted from various data analysis methods involving the

action research meetings and the interviews that occurred throughout the case study. Within the

transcripts, teachers stated explicitly that the diversity of the team regarding experience and

content area improved both the AR process and the impact of the interventions.

Action Research Teams increased the Staff's Awareness of the Need for Improvement in

the School's Implementation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System

At the beginning of the action research project, the teachers at State Elementary School

expressed their feeling of disillusionment with the evaluation process in the North County

School District. Because several other evaluation systems matriculated within the district over

the course of 10 to 15 years, the teachers assumed that the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System

was simply another policy that would require additional work in its limited tenure as the

evaluation system. Therefore, initial meetings with the AR members showed that the teachers at

State did not care to improve the evaluation process because they thought the policy itself made

the practice effective or ineffective. After several months of analyzing the literature and

discussing the needs of teachers, those involved with the case study determined that the progress

the team made toward improving the evaluation system resulted from the action research process

itself. Several teachers asserted that they did not foresee issues with the TKES before the team

analyzed the needs of the staff and the improvements the evaluators could make in their

evaluation practices. Janice Campbell summarized this point in her final interview at the conclusion of the project:

"When we first met as a team, I did not understand the purpose of the action research project. You (the AR facilitator) stated that there was a problem with the evaluation practices at our school that needed improving. When I first thought about this, I knew that other teachers would scoff at the idea of a team looking to make feedback in walkthroughs and observations better because the TKES would probably change in a few years, and all the requirements would be different. However, as we looked at the needs of the teachers from all over the school, I realized that it was not the TKES that needed to change. We, as a school, needed to change our practices within the evaluation system. Regardless of the policy in place, the practices of the administrators and teachers are what determines if educators are going to grow and improve in their practices. I never would have come to this realization without the help of the team. In fact, the action research team has increased my reflection in teaching, and I cannot wait to work with these same colleagues in the future."

Additionally, the team presented data to the staff throughout the action research project that illuminated the problems associated with the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. When the evaluators began using the Teacher Feedback Rubrics and the Administrator Checklist, teachers who did not participate in the case study spoke about their lack of understanding regarding their need for better feedback during observations. Without the action research team, teachers stated that they lacked the ability to reflect on aspects of their instruction. Once they began encouraging the administrators to increase the effectiveness of the feedback, the teachers realized that there were several areas of the evaluation system they wanted to change. Derek Sanders, a

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teacher who did not participate on the AR team, asserted the following regarding the impact the team had on the school's perception of the TKES:

"When you started coming into my classroom with the Feedback Rubrics, I did not know what to think. I had not cared to look deeper at the TKES, and I certainly did not want to work harder with the evaluation system. However, after you left the rubric on my desk, I realized there were a few places on the evaluation standards that I wanted different feedback on in future visits. In the past, when an administrator marked me down for a certain standard, I wrote it off as that person not knowing what he or she was talking about. But your feedback included specific directives for how I could improve to the next highest score. With this information, I found that there were several resources and materials I could use to improve my teaching practices. As a result, I desired more opportunities to communicate with you about the feedback so I could hear more about my teaching and see ways to make it better."

Furthermore, the team analyzed the interventions they created and found that the action research process increased the collaboration between the teachers and the administrators. At the onset of the study, the participants understood that the project was meaningful, but they did not think action research would lead to real change. Allison Freeman reflected on the AR team's impact in her final interview at the conclusion of the study:

"When we needed to create something to affect change at the school, I had no idea that the leaders would be willing to do something different in their evaluation practices. The Administrator Checklist is the best strategy the team came up with because it shows that the evaluator is willing to take certain steps during classroom visits. It is strange to me that the team could make a document without any formal guidelines that would impact

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the way we complete work for the TKES. However, once the checklist was in place, it was clear that the tasks on the sheet had a positive impact when we did not know there was a problem in the first place. Teachers appreciated the things the administrator did without understanding that this had been a problem for several years in the old evaluation system. Now, teachers know that people who come in their classrooms know about things like individual behavior contracts or unit plans that end with a summative assessment."

Prior to the action research project, the teachers at State Elementary stated that they were ignorant of the requirements placed on school leaders regarding evaluation practices. Members of the team thought there was no training in place for administrators. Also, the teachers assumed that school leaders did not want to know the larger context of a lesson within their units. By the end of the study, the action research team revealed that the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System lacked certain elements that made evaluators accountable to teachers in their classroom observations. Therefore, the team made their own requirements that met the needs of the teachers with respect to their grade levels and departments. Natalie Brown summarized this finding in an action research meeting at the conclusion of the 2014-2015 school year:

"Whenever you come into our classrooms, you do not know how the assessment or data from the previous day influenced our current lessons. In fact, the evaluation system does not include a requirement for evaluators to read lesson plans or ask a teacher where he or she is relative to an entire unit. Because of this, I looked over the TKES standards and realized that there is no existing standard that encourages administrators to read lesson plans. Other teachers I have spoken with are shocked by this. This team has to tell

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everyone what the minimum requirements are for leaders so we know how to build on

that as we put our interventions into place."

Importantly, this finding revealed that the teachers at State Elementary School needed the

action research team to communicate with them regarding the intricacies and specific details

associated with the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. Without the work of the team and the

discussion that occurred between the members, the staff would have failed to understand that the

system lacked requirements for administrators. Therefore, the team developed the Administrator

Checklist, and findings from that intervention are discussed in later parts of this study.

Action Research Teams can instill Change in Perspectives but struggle to impact Policy Change

As the action research case study commenced, the members of the team did not

comprehend the impact their work would or could have on the North County School District

regarding the policies associated with the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. After analyzing

the meeting minutes, reviewing the transcripts, and examining the data generated from the

Teacher Feedback Rubric and the Administrator Checklist, the AR team found that its work

influenced the behavior and perceptions of the State Elementary School staff members but failed

to result in policy change for the TKES. Teachers who participated in the interviews at the

conclusion of the study stated that they believed the feedback was more effective in classroom

walkthroughs and observations because the administrators responded to the commentary on the

Teacher Feedback Rubrics. Also, the teachers perceived the leaders to be more effective in their

TKES practices because they read lesson plans in advance, they opened their office doors for

conversation after classroom observations, and they included specific actions for improvement in

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the feedback if a teacher failed to receive the highest score on a standard. Janice Campbell reiterated this point in her final interview:

"Teachers at this school have never appreciated the work of the administrators during evaluations. All anyone cares about is scoring the highest rating and signing a piece of paper at the end of the year that shows we had an observation. However, this team has changed the way the staff looks at evaluations. There will always be teachers who refuse to reflect on their practices and get angry if they do not have the highest score, but I think the team has changed the opinions of the majority of the people here. Because we took the time to talk to each other and ask what could be improved, I think other teachers realize that their thoughts matter. Also, when you started going into classrooms and leaving the rubric for teachers to comment on, it provided the first time that teachers could tell administrators about how they could improve. This really changed the school, and I think the teachers are happier because of our work."

Importantly, the team members learned that their work would not translate into policy change at the district or state level. Because the TKES is a standardized, mandated system that the State Department of Education implements, individual schools cannot change the specifics of the policy. However, teachers and leaders can work together to create interventions that improve the practical application at each building to ensure the walkthroughs and observations provide meaningful experiences that the teachers use to improve their classroom practices or change their approach to planning and pedagogy. Consequently, the members of the AR team contemplated the effectiveness of their work while knowing that the interventions and progress made at State might not have an impact on the evaluation policy in place at the district and state levels. Susan Morgan summarized this finding while reflecting on the work of the case study:

"There have been several evaluation systems in place in this district. Although the team may have found specific ways to improve the TKES, our work here at the school will stop here. We cannot assume that the changes the team makes will influence the direction of district policy. Some of the teachers from our school can work with the superintendent on his council, but the Department of Education controls what we can and cannot do with evaluations. That is why our work is important at State. We have to come up with ways to make the TKES work for us, so we can make changes to other systems in the future."

As the team members realized they would have a limited impact on policy, they asserted that the purpose of the project was to make the feedback effective for the educators at State Elementary. The action research process created an arena for teachers to communicate directly with the administration about their needs, which made the evaluation practices relevant to the instructional needs of each educator. Sam Washington, a third grade teacher, expressed his satisfaction with the change in the overall perspective the school took regarding the TKES:

"After receiving feedback that focused on my personal needs, I knew the team made good progress toward changing the way we look at evaluation systems. Everyone obsesses with their scores, but I have changed the way I think about observations. Because I am at a point in my career where I have confidence that I will not lose my job, I can use the improvements the team has made to change the way I think about receiving feedback. I used to just look at the score on an observation and ignore the words the leader wrote. Now, I appreciate the notes you write and want to make changes based on what you see…or at least talk about changes that can be made."

This finding from the action research process aligns with the theoretical framework used to examine the problem with the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. By increasing the democratic nature of the staff and empowering teachers to have a voice in the practices associated with the evaluation process, the staff at State Elementary became more efficacious in their instructional and leadership practices. More teacher-leaders emerged, and the team communicated that their work impacted the practices in the building regardless of the effect they had on the larger political context.

Action Research Teams can improve the Feedback given by Administrators to Individual Teachers during Walkthroughs and Observations

The final finding for the first research question regarding the impact of the action research team on solving the evaluation system problem related directly to the feedback. Based on the work of the action research team and the data generated from critical incident interviews with teachers at the end of the case study, the AR process was able to improve the feedback that evaluators gave to teachers during classroom walkthroughs and observations. Prior to the beginning of the study, the teachers at State expressed dissatisfaction with the commentary they received on previous evaluation systems. Joan Smith described these problems:

"Under the old system, we just got a piece of paper with checks in boxes based on what the administrator saw in a brief thirty minute time period. The written commentary on these evaluations was so general and vague that I usually ignored what my evaluator said. Like we talked about before, all I cared about was getting the piece of paper signed and receiving the highest score possible. The feedback on the paper usually had little to do with what actually went on in my classroom. In fact, the best feedback I got came from

other teachers in my grade level who knew what I was teaching and could make useful
suggestions."

The action research team addressed this problem at the beginning of the study. Because
the TKES increased the number of walkthroughs and observations, the teachers needed the
experience to be helpful instead of a meaningless practice that induced stress and created more
work. Therefore, when the team designed and implemented the Teacher Feedback Rubric and
the Administrator Checklist, the perceptions of the evaluation system, as mentioned in the
previous section, and the feedback improved. Jane Jackson explained how the team made the
feedback better throughout the first semester of the 2015-2016 school year:

"I did not know the purpose of the action research team until I had the opportunity to

write a response on the Teacher Feedback Rubric. When you came into my classroom

for the first time after promising to follow the steps of the Administrator Checklist, I

knew that you understood where I was in my unit plan for the lesson I taught that day.

Instead of giving me feedback on what you saw during the 10 minute walkthrough

period, you were able to give a nice perspective of the lesson in context of the larger unit.

Because of this, you saw that several students were struggling to understand the

geography portion of the writing genre. After you gave me feedback on my instructional

practices, I revisited the lesson on continental locations to help the students master that

particular learning objective. However, you did not include the effectiveness of my

individual behavior charts for the students with special needs in my class, so I wrote on

the Feedback Rubric about how I have individual behavior plans for each child. After we

talked about this in your office, you had a better understanding of my classroom

environment. I think the action research team has really improved this whole process"

Feedback was more personalized because the AR team implemented interventions that required evaluators to examine instruction closely and reflect on the overall practices of the educator. This finding influenced the direction of the TKES at State Elementary, and the assistant principal will continue these practices as he observes more educators.

Research Question 2: Teachers' Influence on the Feedback Process and the Feedback's Impact on Teachers' Practices

The action research team at State Elementary School identified that the major issue with the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System was the minimal impact evaluator feedback had on classroom instruction. Specifically, participants in the action research case study asserted that the commentary they received in previous evaluation systems was generally irrelevant and too broad to directly influence pedagogical practices. Therefore, the Teacher Feedback Rubric and the Critical Incident Interviews at the conclusion of the study provided the data and results for this finding. Trends and themes present in meeting and interview transcripts showed that teachers can influence the feedback process by opening communication with administrators while agreeing about the expectations and performance levels for each TKES standard. Furthermore, once the feedback began meeting the needs of teachers, there was a measureable change in instructional and planning practices that occurred in the classrooms. Below are the findings for this second research question:

1. Teachers can influence the feedback process by providing feedback on evaluators' effectiveness.

2. Teachers can influence feedback by communicating their needs to administrators before and after classroom observations.

3. Feedback influences teachers' practices if the teachers have communicated specific goals to evaluators during initial pre-conferences.

4. Feedback influences teachers' practices in regard to resources, materials, and technology used in instruction.

Teachers can influence the Feedback Process by providing Feedback on Evaluators' Effectiveness

The action research team created the Teacher Feedback Rubric in response for the need to increase the transparency of the feedback process and to improve communication regarding teachers' instructional needs. At the beginning of the case study, the team members stated that they lacked the time and opportunities to speak with the school leaders about the specific aspects of their instruction they desired to improve. Consequently, administrators entered classrooms with their own agendas and rated a teacher's practices based on the requirements of the evaluation tool in place. Once the AR team implemented the Teacher Feedback Rubrics, the teachers could communicate directly with their evaluator regarding their needs for the feedback on the 10 TKES standards. After the teachers began completing rubrics and sharing their thoughts with the evaluators, two results emerged. First, the administrators began to receive completed rubrics from teachers with "Feedback effectively addresses the standard" checked on the form. Teachers were apprehensive to be critical of the evaluators. Second, teachers shared in interviews that their commentary on the evaluator's feedback changed the feedback they received in subsequent walkthroughs and observations. Michal Carter commented on the changes the he suggested the assistant principal make to the feedback he received during his walkthroughs and observations:

"During the first walkthrough, you focused on the differentiation I used with my students. However, I really wanted to see how my classroom management system worked since this is the first year I have not had a co-teacher in the room while teaching at State Elementary. So, I wrote on the Teacher Feedback Rubric that you did a good job commenting on my different work stations, but I wanted to hear more about how the students transitioned from one activity to the next. At the next walkthrough, you focused on the students' behavior and gave me some important advice that helped me find ways to motivate some of my more distracted learners when they work on independent centers. Had we not communicated through the rubric, I would have tried to figure out my problem on my own. Instead, I influenced your focus as you wrote feedback on my instruction."

Additionally, teachers continued to influence feedback throughout the case study by increasing their face-to-face conversations with administrators. The action research process sought to increase the efficacy of teachers in their instructional practices, professional reflection, and operational decision-making. Therefore, by providing a platform and arena for teachers and school leaders to discuss individual needs regarding the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System, the teachers gained confidence in approaching their evaluators and discussing feedback. Allison Freeman stated in her final interview that she was hesitant to talk with principals and assistant principals about her evaluation. However, once she began participating in the action research project, she realized that a barrier that once existed between teachers and leaders broke down at State Elementary, and she could now tell her administrators what she desired to hear in her observation feedback.

"I have worked with several different leaders during my career. Not one previous principal has asked me what my needs are when he or she came into my classroom and observed my teaching. I always had to restrain my frustration when I would read that person's analysis of my teaching, because he or she would miss major parts of my planning process or fail to observe the individual strategy I used to help one student master an IEP goal. Now, you actually know what I need you to look for when you come into my classroom. Because I can write to you about the feedback you give, I know that we can communicate about all the different ins and outs of my lesson."

This finding about teachers' influence on evaluator feedback shows that communication and transparent expectations can increase the effectiveness of the implementation of an evaluation system. Importantly, this finding did not only apply to the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. If school leaders use interventions that increase communication regarding teachers' instructional needs, the teachers can influence the feedback process by discussing their concerns directly with administrators in any system. This practice makes the evaluation process relevant to the needs of teachers while also providing teachers with the opportunity to reflect on their instruction and share their goals with the school leaders. Additionally, principals and assistant principals can continue to provide feedback on other areas of the teachers' professional practices to ensure that they are supporting teachers' needs.

Teachers can influence Feedback by communicating their Needs to Administrators before and after Classroom Observations

The action research team found that teachers who met with administrators before and after classroom walkthroughs and observations had an influence on the development and effectiveness of the feedback they received. Specifically, the Administrator Checklist required

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evaluators to read lesson plans and review pre-conference goals and conversations before they

enter a classroom and provide feedback on the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System standards.

Furthermore, teachers who took advantage of the "open door" policy the evaluators had after

walkthroughs and observations stated that they felt more confident in their impact on the

feedback. Importantly, the TKES does not mandate post-observation conferences after

walkthroughs or formative observations, so the AR team required that administrators welcome

teachers to talk about their feedback and TKES scores in their offices. Based on the themes and

common responses in the Critical Incident Interviews at the conclusion of the study, teachers

who talked with their evaluators before and after observations had a larger impact on the

feedback process. Casey Gary, a fourth grade teacher, helped lead to this finding with this

statement during her interview.

> "I had the ability to talk with you about what specific things I had planned for the lesson
>
> you were going to observe during your second walkthrough. Because the students were
>
> designing and writing about solar system models, I wanted you to celebrate the work they
>
> had done and focus on my integration of literacy skills into the activity. Because we
>
> talked about the things going on in the classroom before you came in, the feedback you
>
> gave me was right in line with what I wanted to improve. You saw that the children
>
> needed more direction in their development of introductions for informational writing.
>
> Without this guidance, the students may have missed out on extra help for this skill."

Interviews with teachers revealed that those who scheduled pre and post observation

conferences influenced the feedback they received from administrators. Specifically, these

teachers expressed that they effectively communicated their needs to their evaluators.

Consequently, the classroom walkthroughs and observations focused on the needs the teachers

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presented to the participating administrator. In the conversations that occurred after the

classroom visits, the teachers provided insights and opinions about the feedback and gave

suggestions for areas of instruction the administrators could focus on in future visits. According

to Kayla Millwood, her experience influencing feedback resulting in improved instruction:

"I got some good feedback on the implementation of my guided reading groups. I

wanted to have multiple novel studies occurring at the same time, but I was unsure if the

students would read the books while I worked with small groups. If we had not talked

about this goal after my first walkthrough, you would probably have focused on

something else during the observation."

Although the teachers asserted that they influenced the type of feedback they received,

there was still consistency in the ratings provided by the administrators. Even if a teacher felt as

though he or she impacted the feedback and focus of the classroom visits, the participants in the

study recognized that the administrators would give feedback on other parts of instruction and

professional practices. Therefore, teachers who required additional support or guidance to

improve aspects of their teaching that they did not communicate to the evaluators continued to

receive feedback that helped them improve their pedagogical practices. Thus, the integrity of the

evaluation process remained intact throughout the case study.

**Feedback influences Teachers' Practices if the Teachers have communicated Specific Goals
to Evaluators during Initial Pre-conferences**

The State Department of Education does not require the evaluators at a school to conduct

individual pre-conferences with teachers at the beginning of a school year. Instead, the principal

can choose to hold conferences in large groups or in grade level teams. The action research team

at State Elementary School found that teachers who scheduled pre-conferences with their

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administrator at the beginning of the school year received what they perceived as effective feedback throughout the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System process that resulted in changed instructional practices. Specifically, the results from the interviews revealed that teachers who shared their professional goals with their evaluator received feedback that influenced their instructional planning and classroom practices because the commentary addressed the specific needs they articulated to their administrator at the beginning of the school year. Nina Godfrey, a first grade teacher, expressed this sentiment in her interview at the conclusion of the study:

"I am so glad we met at the beginning of the year. Because I am teaching first grade for the first time, I wanted you to know that I need to improve my knowledge of the first grade standards. When we started the school year, I had no clue about the content and teaching strategies that would meet the needs of my children. Since we talked about this early in the year, you gave me good suggestions in your feedback about resources and games that I could play with my children that would help them learn math facts or improve their reading fluency. In fact, I changed the way I designed my classroom management system because of your advice about classroom compliments. I was so stressed that my students did not behave well in the hallway, but after you told me to start documenting compliments, the students worked really hard to earn treasure box visits."

Importantly, this teacher's experience working with the administrator to set personal goals at the beginning of the school year impacted her classroom instruction and behavior management. Based on the interview, the teacher stated that other administrators in previous years lacked the knowledge, perspective, and communication skills to tell her how she could change her teaching to positively impact student achievement. Instead, according to Nina, the

administrators commented on what they found important in the classroom regardless if the teacher had communicated specific needs or target growth areas.

Furthermore, the action research team found that teachers willingly made long-term changes to their instructional practices based on the feedback they received once they established measureable goals with the evaluator. Specifically, teachers who participated in pre-conferences generally expressed their desire to improve a significant aspect of their teaching. Because the administrator had knowledge of the teachers' individual goals, they would give feedback that addressed the progress a teacher made with respect to his or her personal growth target. Ken Yancy, a fifth grade teacher at State, stated in his pre-conference that he wanted to increase his students' comfort level when asking questions in class. Because Ken has a stern demeanor and a reputation of being strict, the students hesitate to ask questions when they struggle with a topic or learning standards. Therefore, Ken set a goal at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year to make students more comfortable asking questions. The changes that resulted in his classroom practices are evident in his interview response:

"When we talked about my personal goals for the year, I thought about the TKES survey from last year and my low score on students' comfort asking questions in class. I think the Positive Learning Environment standard in TKES focuses on this particular skill, so I really wanted to improve my practices. When you came into my room and left feedback on my interactions with my students after we met at the beginning of the year, you told me that several students in the class appeared apprehensive during the math lesson. You stated that they looked like they wanted to ask a question, but chose not to. So, I asked them what was going on and found out that they needed help with the adding mixed numbers problems we were working on. They were scared to ask me for help because

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they thought I might have been disappointed that they didn't get the answer by themselves. Since you pointed this out, I make sure to reiterate to my students that making errors is okay and asking me for help is the right thing to do. The feedback you gave showed me that some students needed to ask me questions without ever showing a sign in class."

For this specific teacher, the goals set during the pre-conference influenced the feedback he received and also impacted his instructional practices. Without the open communication and honest goal setting, the administrator would have failed to recognize an ongoing problem in his classroom. Although the TKES standards cover the relationships teachers develop with students, the evaluator needs more information about the teachers' personal goals to know what indicators and specific details to look for during walkthroughs and observations. The Teacher Keys Effectiveness System provides the platform for conversations and discussions to occur between teachers and leaders, but there must be transparent practices in place to ensure that those involved understand how to address specific goals.

Feedback influences Teachers' Practices in regard to Resources, Materials, and Technology used in Instruction

The AR team developed the Administrator Checklist to guide evaluators in their practices before, during, and after classroom observations. Importantly, teachers at State Elementary desired to improve the TKES by requiring school leaders to suggest resources and instructional materials to teachers in their feedback. Because the North County School District leaders do not require specific elements to be included in the commentary, the teachers at State wanted to ensure that administrators provide suggested resources that could improve their instruction. Similar to the previous finding, the action research members found that administrators needed to

meet individually with teachers at the beginning of the school year to discuss specific needs and

goals for the year. Through these discussions, the school leaders gained perspective regarding

the specific instructional resources teachers would benefit from while in the classroom. Natalie

Brown summarized this finding at the action research team meeting on May 11, 2015:

> "The teachers I have talked to at this point say the biggest change they need involves help
>
> and direction from the administrators when they write in the feedback that the teachers
>
> need to improve. Instead of just giving a low score and writing that the teacher could do
>
> better, you should give examples of what needs to improve and provide resources or
>
> sample activities that can help them in their instruction."

Because the team determined that the evaluators needed to include an area in the

feedback regarding ways to improve performance, the administrators at State emphasized the

importance of including suggestions for resources in their walkthroughs and observations during

the 2015-2016 school year. Barbara George stated in her final interview the impact this had on

her instruction:

> "In the past, I always received the highest score on the evaluation. I never really looked
>
> at what the principal or assistant principal wrote unless there was something I disagreed
>
> with. However, when you showed us the checklist you planned to follow, I started
>
> reading my feedback closer to see if there were ways I could make my teaching better.
>
> On one particular walkthrough, you gave me the idea to use the Open Court phonics
>
> materials to present different blends to the students. I had not heard of this program
>
> before, so I borrowed the kindergarten team's kit. I was surprised to find out that it really
>
> helped my students, and I have been using the materials since then."

Importantly, the action research process revealed that teachers who did not change their instructional practices in response to the feedback generally did not receive suggestions for improvement from the evaluator. Educators who earned a Level IV in a category, the highest score, stated that they assumed all of their classroom practices were effective and, consequently, failed to consider changing the way they taught. Additionally, those teachers who disagreed with the suggestions for their classroom practices ignored the administrators' advice and continued to use the same pedagogy. Specifically, Teresa Smith expressed dissatisfaction with her TKES walkthrough and observation scores and feedback. As a result, she did not change her practices in the classroom by following the suggestions of her evaluator:

> "I did not agree with the score you gave me on differentiation. I always have different activities for the different learning levels of my students. You failed to see this in your observation because we moved into groups after you left. I saw that you wrote about ways I could collect data on my students' reading levels and use this to make centers, games, and activities, but all of your advice was irrelevant because I already do that in my classroom."

Hence, this study revealed that teachers must find the feedback to be accurate in order for them to follow the advice from the evaluator. Although the Administrative Checklist required the principal and assistant principal to leave suggestions for resources and materials, this only changed teachers' practices if they agreed with the score and needed to make improvements to their lessons. Therefore, the action research team realized that the Administrative Checklist needed to contain modified versions based on the ability and performance levels of the teachers. Different teachers needed various suggestions based on the context of their lessons and the score they received in the TKES platform.

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Research Question 3: Administrators Creation of Actionable Feedback

This action research case study found that administrators can create actionable feedback that influences teachers' classroom practices. Based on the data and findings from the Teacher Feedback Rubric, the Critical Incident Interviews, and the Administrator Checklist, there are steps evaluators should take when implementing the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System to ensure that teachers receive feedback that meets their instructional and professional needs. Importantly, the conceptual framework for this study outlined the pathway to creating an efficacious professional school culture and structure. Thus, the administrators have the knowledge and resources to improve the democratic practices and participatory nature of the staff. Below are the four themes that emerged in response to this final research question:

1. Administrators must give consistent and defendable feedback to teachers.

2. Administrators must include commendations and recommendations in feedback.

3. Administrators must be willing to change an evaluation score if the teacher provides convincing evidence.

4. Administrators must communicate with other evaluators and the teachers they observe to create actionable and reliable feedback.

Administrators must give Consistent and Defendable Feedback to Teachers

To ensure that the feedback given during classroom walkthroughs and observations is consistent and actionable, administrators must have a strong understanding of the evaluation system in place and the tools and resources the system provides. Within the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System, there are several online tools and resources provided from the district accountability office to help principals and assistant principals give effective and timely feedback. Thus, the AR team found that within the TKES platform administrators must give

feedback to teachers that is consistent with the practices they observe in the classroom. If their commentary does not match the instructional strategies and assessment uses they directly observe, the teachers do not gain value from the feedback or change their instructional practices in response. Katlyn Donner, a kindergarten teacher, asserted the importance of feedback matching the practices in her classroom:

"During my first observation, you wrote about the literacy program I was using with my children at the back table. Even though the children have worked with this program for years, I never thought that they could use phonics strategies to teach each other. Because of this, I began to use a different reading program in my classroom. The old material was out of date, and the students were not getting as much out of it."

During this interview, the teacher reiterated the importance of feedback relating to specific instructional practices that occur during the observed lesson. The AR team found that teachers do not appreciate feedback that references instruction outside of the observation window.

Additionally, the action research team found that feedback responding to certain standards within the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System was more impactful on instruction than feedback in other areas. Specifically, teachers stated that commentary in Instructional Strategies, Differentiated Instruction, Positive Learning Environment, and Academically Challenging Environment was more relevant to their daily teaching practices than feedback for Instructional Knowledge, Instructional Planning, Assessment Uses, Assessment Strategies, Professionalism, and Communication. Importantly, the leadership team at State responded to this finding by focusing their walkthrough feedback on the four standards that the teachers found meaningful.

Natalie Brown, one of the fourth grade teachers on the AR team, made the following statement as she reflected on the action research case study:

"I don't read the feedback you guys give on professionalism and communication. I usually just look at the score because we have conversations throughout the year that tell me what my performance level is. However, what you write about Instructional Strategies and Differentiation causes me to think about how I might change my lesson for the better. This is why the principal made a good choice when she decided to focus all walkthroughs on standards three [Instructional Strategies], four [Differentiated Instruction], seven [Positive Learning Environment], and eight [Academically Challenging Environment]. These standards usually pertain to what I teach on a daily basis. What you write actually influences the way I teach, so I want my feedback to be in response to those standards."

Administrators must include Commendations and Recommendations in Feedback

Because the goal of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System is to provide instructional supervision to support teachers' reflection and development of their pedagogical practices, the educators at State Elementary School desired to receive more value-added commentary rather than critical statements of their teaching practices in the feedback. Specifically, the AR team found that administrator feedback that included praise in addition to constructive criticism influenced teaching practices more than commentary that only sought to critique instructional practices. Throughout the teacher interviews and the action research team meetings, the participants described their emotional reactions when reading what they perceived to be negative feedback from their evaluator. Importantly, if the feedback contains specific commendations on aspects of the lesson, the teacher will read the critical comments and seek ways to improve

practice. A Teacher Feedback Rubric with comments from Carol Green, a gifted teacher, illuminated the perspective on this issue:

> "I really like how you told me that my outside lesson effectively engaged the students in the naturalistic setting of the novel we were studying. Because you saw the students get excited and share their creative ideas for the survival project, I knew that my planning and preparation paid off. Also, thank you for suggesting a change in the graphic organizer I used. Because the novel was a certain reading level, I did not think to support the students by making sure they understood the text on the sheet. I will go back and change the graphic organizer so they do not ask so many questions about word meaning and divergent thinking."

This response on the rubric represented an overall finding that teachers were more satisfied with their administrator's feedback if there was a specific commendation included in the writing. Two other teachers shared in their interviews that past evaluators consistently criticized their teaching throughout the year. In response, the teachers were fearful of making mistakes, so they struggled to reflect and improve certain parts of their teaching. Therefore, effective evaluators must recognize teachers' emotional barriers to ensure that the educators objectively read the commentary and respond with appropriate action to improve their practices.

Administrators must be willing to change an Evaluation Score if the Teacher provides Convincing Evidence

Regardless of the evaluation system in place, teachers at State Elementary expressed concerns throughout the action research process that the finality of a score on an observation prevented them from reflecting and engaging in conversation with their evaluating administrator. Because the teachers place value in their overall score, a lower performance level created an

emotional state of resentment. Therefore, the action research team found in this case study that

the administrators who provide opportunities to change an evaluation score are perceived to be

more effective in their implementation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System by the

teachers. Importantly, this process requires teachers to share evidence and converse in dialogue

with the administrator after a walkthrough or observation. Teachers felt empowered by knowing

there was an avenue to improve to a higher score if they brought sufficient evidence that

convinced the administrator that a score on the evaluation should change. In previous evaluation

policies, the North County School District did not require evaluators to change scores if teachers

appealed. Instead, the administrator had to observe the teacher again to collect further data.

During interviews, teachers stated that the old process hindered communication and prevented

constructive communication with their school leaders. Allison Foster, a special education

teacher, summarized this finding in an action research team meeting:

> "During one of my first walkthroughs, you came into my classroom and gave me a score
>
> and feedback on the Positive Learning Environment standard. The classroom teacher
>
> was leading instruction during that time, and I was working with my students who had
>
> IEPs on their behavior goals. When I got a III in that standard, I was really frustrated
>
> because you did not even comment on the individual behavior plans I had for each child.
>
> I work really hard to find ways to keep these kids on task, but you did not see what I was
>
> doing with each child. So, after school that day, I came to your office and showed you
>
> the data tracker I used to record the number of times each child was on or off-task. After
>
> we talked, you changed my score to a IV because I proved that I went above and beyond
>
> the level of expectation. We need to give all of our teachers that same opportunity. I
>
> don't think they know they can do that."

This conversation prompted the team to include the step on the Administrator Checklist that required evaluators to meet with teachers after a walkthrough or observation to discuss a score change if the teacher brought evidence to justify the change. By empowering the staff and increasing transparent communication, the team found that teachers were more reflective of the feedback and increased their communication regarding their instructional practices and goals. Importantly, this led to more democratic practices among the staff because everyone had a voice in the implementation of the evaluation system. The power no longer remained with the school leaders. All teachers and leaders communicated about expectations, and the teachers were satisfied with the feedback they received because of these practices. Additionally, the team realized that instruction changed in classrooms when teachers had the opportunity to change an evaluation score. Because the finality of the evaluation system no longer existed, the teachers felt more comfortable changing their instruction based on the suggestions from their evaluators.

Administrators must communicate with Other Evaluators and the Teachers They observe to create Actionable and Reliable Feedback

Throughout the action research process, the team members expressed a desire to increase the time for communication to occur between teachers and evaluating administrators. Although the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System provides an online platform for teachers to record their goals and objectives for the school year, the staff at State Elementary needed personalized communication with their evaluator to be open, consistent, and regularly scheduled. The AR team found that actionable feedback could exist only if the evaluators knew each teacher's goals for the school year. Without this information, there was a disconnect between what the administrators observed and what the teachers desired them to focus on during walkthroughs and observations. If administrators recorded and tracked each teacher's goals for the year, then he or

she could give feedback that was relevant to those goals. Teachers reported that this knowledge increased the actionable nature of the feedback they received and increased the instructional change they implemented in their classroom practices. Marion Stevens, an EIP teacher, reported in her final interview the importance of opening communication between teachers and leaders regarding instructional goals:

"At the beginning of the school year, I met with you for my pre-conference. Before I came to your office, I thought about the things I wanted to accomplish in my teaching this year. Because I have never really talked to my administrators about my goals before meeting my class, I really did not know what to say. When we finally met, you helped me articulate a plan for the year that included increasing my individual conferences with students. Even though the classroom teachers get a lot of time with the children, I needed to understand where they stood in regard to their writing abilities. So, we agreed that you would observe my work in writing conferences. Throughout the year, you saw several of my meetings with students and commented on the feedback I was giving them. I really feel more successful in my teaching this year, and this is the first time the evaluation system had anything to do with it."

Within this quote from Marion, several implications for the action research team and the TKES arose. First, the teacher communicated that her past experiences with evaluation systems hindered her ability to clearly reflect on her teaching to create goals for a school year. Also, she stated that the increase in communication with her administrator helped her to influence the feedback she received so she could focus on what she needed to improve in her instruction. Finally, the professional relationship that development between the teacher and her evaluator created more accountability for the teacher to achieve her individual goals. Importantly, the AR

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team discovered that this finding was present in action research meeting minutes and teacher interviews. This study revealed that mutual goal setting is critical to the development of quality feedback that impacts the instructional effectiveness and professional growth of the teachers at State Elementary.

Summary of Findings Relative to the Research Purpose

The action research team worked collectively to examine the data generated from this case study to determine if the interventions the members created influenced the feedback and instructional practices within the implementation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. Information from meeting notes, transcripts, Teacher Feedback Rubrics, Administrator Checklists, and Critical Incident Interviews provided the necessary data to answer the research questions. When teachers participated in the interview process, they had the opportunity to respond directly to the research questions which allowed the action research team to generate relevant findings. For the school itself, the team proved through this process that a group of teachers and leaders can work collaboratively to solve an organizational issue within the framework of teacher and leader efficacy.

Because the purpose of the study was to increase the feedback effectiveness and positively impact classroom instructional practices, the team agreed that the findings regarding both teacher and administrator practices led to a more successful implementation of the TKES. Additionally, both the teachers and administrators at State Elementary found that developing informative professional relationships within and among the staff helps to open communication and reduce fear and anxiety associated with instructional supervision.

Finally, the findings have implications in the North County School District because the practices of the individual school building leaders can influence the direction of district policy

while also equipping the administrators with knowledge, information, skills, and tools to improve the evaluation process at other schools. The action research process translates from one location to another seamlessly if information and documentation are transparent and accessible to leaders at every school. Therefore, sharing this information and the case study's findings with district leadership was an important step to ensure the team's work impacted teachers at other schools.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

As stated previously, the purpose of this action research case study is to explore

techniques to improve feedback for teachers to equip them with the skills and tools to become

more involved in school decision-making. The research seeks to answer the following questions:

(1) how effective is the action research process in empowering the team's ability to find a

solution to an evaluation system problem?, (2) how can teachers influence the feedback process,

and in what ways does feedback inform teachers' practices?, and (3) how do administrators

increase their capacity to give actionable feedback to teachers? This chapter provides

implications drawn from the action research case study at State Elementary School.

Furthermore, a summary of the findings and conclusions from the project accompany

suggestions for further research.

Summary of Findings

The research questions drove the methodology of the case study and provided the

pathways for the action research team to reach findings regarding the Teacher Keys

Effectiveness System. Because the primary intervention for this project was action research, the

meeting transcripts and Critical Incident Interview protocol provided data on the team's success

improving the practices associated with the evaluation process at State Elementary. As the focus

of the study, State Elementary is located in a large district that implemented the TKES beginning

in the 2014-2015 school year. The teachers at the school identified a problem with the

evaluation system in response to the lack of instructional change that resulted from the feedback

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administrators gave during classroom walkthroughs and observations. Within the framework of teacher and leader efficacy, the school leaders desired to increase the democratic practices of the staff by encouraging teachers to examine the evaluation practices and provide tools to improve the implementation of the TKES. Consequently, those who participated on the action research team created three separate interventions to improve and evaluate the feedback within the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. The three interventions included a Teacher Feedback Rubric, an Administrator Checklist, and Critical Incident Interview protocols. Importantly, data generated from these interventions provided direction and insight into the steps administrators could take to improve feedback they gave to individual teachers.

The action research process was successful in empowering the team's ability to find a solution to an evaluation system problem. Specifically, action research teams must include teachers from every grade level and content area to address a school-wide concern. For improvement to occur in response to a school or district policy, teachers from all areas of the school must engage in communication and collaboration to find a solution that equitably benefits grade levels teams and departments within a building. Importantly, this increased the democratic practices and values within the staff. Additionally, action research teams increased the staff's awareness of the need for improvement in the school's implementation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. Because the teachers at State Elementary were unaware of the potential for improved feedback, the AR team communicated the problems regarding the TKES to the staff so teachers could identify their needs and seek improvement in the instructional process.

Moreover, action research teams can instill change in perspectives but struggle to impact policy change. Although the teachers who participated on the AR team desired to make changes

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beyond the building level, the team had little to no effect on the district or state policy that controlled evaluation systems.

Finally, action research teams can improve the feedback given by administrators to individual teachers during walkthroughs and observations. Because the team successfully identified the issues with the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System, the members created tools and strategies to make the feedback responsive to the individual needs of the teachers.

This case study also found that teachers can influence the feedback process in multiple ways, and feedback can impact teachers' classroom practices. First, the action research team found that teachers can influence the feedback process by providing feedback on evaluators' effectiveness. Through the use of the Teacher Feedback Rubric, teachers at State Elementary School changed the type and effectiveness of the feedback they received by providing commentary and advice to evaluators after classroom walkthroughs and observations.

Second, the team concluded that teachers can influence feedback by communicating their needs to administrators before and after classroom observations. By allowing teachers to communicate about the feedback and their thoughts on the evaluation process as a whole, administrators' feedback changed with respect to the goals of the individual teachers.

Third, the case study found that feedback influences teachers' practices if the teachers have communicated specific goals to evaluators during initial pre-conferences. Because the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System does not mandate pre-conferences at the beginning of the school year for individual educators, school leaders who schedule these conferences with teachers understand what to look for during observations and can provide actionable feedback that influences classroom instructional practices.

Finally, the study found that feedback influences teachers' practices in regard to resources, materials, and technology used in instruction. When an evaluator completes a walkthrough or observation, he or she can help teachers find useful resources or instructional materials that will directly impact instruction. Instead of giving general feedback that does not provide specific guidance, school leaders can help teachers acquire tools and resources to improve their instructional content and practices.

Lastly, the final research question generated findings relative to the actions evaluators can take to improve their implementation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. The action research team at State Elementary found four themes relative to this research question. First, administrators must give consistent and defendable feedback to teachers. Specifically, the feedback must provide a detailed explanation of the lesson the evaluator observed in the classroom. General statements about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of instruction will not improve the process or influence teachers' classroom practices. Furthermore, the feedback must relate to evidence in the classroom, and evaluators need to defend their commentary with specific examples.

Second, administrators must include commendations and recommendations in feedback. The action research team found that teachers are more perceptive to reading the feedback and reflecting on their instructional practices if the school leaders take time to celebrate the high quality components of their lessons in addition to giving recommendations for improvement. Without commendations, the teachers respond with emotion and generally refuse to make changes in their instructional practices.

Third, administrators must be willing to change an evaluation score if the teacher provides convincing evidence. Because the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System has a large

impact on the perception of a teacher's instructional effectiveness, teachers need assurance that they can present evidence to their evaluators to change a low score if they can justify the change.

Finally, administrators must communicate with other evaluators and the teachers they observe to create actionable and reliable feedback. The entire school district emphasized the importance of reliability between and among evaluators in the TKES. If teachers perceive that different administrators give different scores for the same instructional practices, they lose confidence in the feedback and fail to make instructional improvements. Additionally, evaluators must also consistently communicate their expectations to teachers regarding the standards within the TKES to ensure that all staff members understand the requirements for attaining certain score levels. Without fairness and consistency, the teachers lose faith in the integrity of the evaluation system and disregard the feedback.

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Conclusions

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The action research team drew several conclusions as they addressed the research purpose and questions at State Elementary School. Importantly, as the research facilitator, I had the opportunity to examine the work of the team in addition to the impact my role had on the teachers who participated in the project.

Conclusion 1: Action Research Teams can impact School Level Policy and Decision Making Regarding Evaluation Systems and Practices

At the beginning of the AR project, the team members discussed the implications of their work regarding the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. In order to properly address the research questions, the AR team had to influence the direction of the evaluation policy at State Elementary School in addition to the practices of the teachers and administrators. Therefore, after examining the meeting transcripts and interviewing those who participated in the project,

this research concluded that the action research team impacted the school policy and decision making with respect to the TKES.

Specifically, the administrators used the feedback they received throughout the project to modify their implementation of the evaluation system in response to the needs the teachers communicated. First, teachers on the AR team expressed a desire to increase the clarity about the different score levels given during walkthroughs and observations. Teresa Smith summarized this assertion in her Critical Incident Interview:

"The team gave the school's teachers the opportunity to talk with the leaders about their needs with the TKES. I think we were all worried when the criteria changed with the new system, so we needed an explanation about what we needed to do to receive a certain score. The team did a really good job of talking with the grade levels and telling everyone what a one, two, three, or four looked like. Also, it was clear that the administrators met with the team to talk about what they believed the scores looked like."

Second, the team influenced the type of feedback the leaders gave in their walkthroughs and observations. By using the Administrator Checklist and the Teacher Feedback Rubric, the teachers could communicate their needs to the evaluators regarding the commentary they found effective or ineffective. Consequently, the assistant principal changed the feedback he gave based on the responses received from the teachers. Below is commentary provided on a Teacher Feedback Rubric that influenced the evaluator:

"I thought your comments were very detailed and reflected careful observation. The comments were effective because they were specific and indicated what needed to be done to reach a high level of performance. I appreciate the fact that you recognized that more time is needed to collect data before I will have the evidence I need to move

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forward. Since this is only the third time I have seen these students, I am still learning

what works best with them and what methods are most effective. Can you come back

next week and observe my differentiated instruction? I want to see if I am meeting their

individual needs since they are new to the gifted program."

Finally, the team addressed the need to make the TKES responsive to the individual

needs of the teachers. Because the State Department of Education and the North County School

District leaders do not require pre-conferences and mid-year conferences to occur with individual

teachers, the principals at each school can choose to conduct these meetings in whole groups.

Importantly, the AR team informed the assistant principal that certain teachers would benefit

from individual conferences to ensure that the evaluators understood each person's professional

goals for the year. Therefore, the teachers had the option of meeting with their administrator

individually throughout the year and before and after walkthroughs and observations.

Conclusion 2: Teachers will change their Instructional Practices in response to Feedback

they perceive is Effective, Reliable, and Relevant to their Individual Professional Goals

The research facilitator desired to change the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System at the

building level to make the practices of the administrators beneficial to classroom instruction.

Thus, the action research team created the Administrative Checklist and the Teacher Feedback

Rubric to increase communication and provide an avenue for teachers to improve their

instructional practices in response to the feedback they received in walkthroughs and

observations. Data from the Teacher Feedback Rubric showed that teachers changed their

teaching practices if they perceived the feedback to be effective, reliable, and relevant to their

professional goals. Importantly, creation of this type of feedback required the evaluators to have

a strong understanding of teachers' target growth areas in addition to their lesson plans, student

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data, and needed resources. If teachers received this improved feedback, they reported in their

interviews and on the Teacher Feedback Rubric that they made necessary changes to their

planning and instructional practices. Natalie Brown spoke through her experience with the

TKES feedback and its impact on her teaching:

> "I appreciate your willingness to listen to my needs in the classroom. Before this new
>
> system came into place, we usually did not receive formal feedback until the end of the
>
> year. By then, we couldn't use the information to change our instruction. Now that you
>
> give it in real time, we can use the suggestions to make improvements especially since
>
> you are so in tuned with our goals and professional strengths."

Conclusion 3: The Role of the Research Facilitator can impact the Work of the Action

Research Members and the Perception of the Teachers who rate the Feedback within the

Teacher Keys Effectiveness System

Because the AR team designed an intervention that allowed teachers at State Elementary

School to provide commentary on the feedback they received from administrators during

classroom walkthroughs and observations, my position as the assistant principal influenced the

work of the team members and the feedback I received on the Teacher Feedback Rubrics.

Specifically, the rubric requested that teachers provide additional commentary on the feedback

they received. Throughout the data generation process in the case study, I found that teachers

were reluctant to make critical remarks about my feedback. Consequently, most of the rubrics I

received from teachers rated my feedback as effective. This influenced the findings of the study

because teachers appeared to hesitate to express their true opinions. Although those who

participated in interviews and the action research team signed consent forms that specifically

addressed their role in the project and the lack of impact it would have on their job performance,

the teachers struggled to provide commentary they felt was critical of my work. Importantly, this conclusion surfaced during many of the final interviews. Marion Stevens summarized this conclusion in her Critical Incident Interview:

> "I have talked to a lot of teachers who filled out the rubric after you came into their classrooms for a lesson. They definitely struggled to tell you if there was something else they wanted to see in feedback. For example, one fourth grade teacher mentioned that you did not include the specific ways she could improve her Academically Challenging Environment score. However, she did not put this on the rubric because she did not want you to think she was unhappy with your work."

In response to this issue, the action research team, with the guidance of the professors on my committee, sought methods to make the rubrics anonymous to encourage the teachers to be more critical of the feedback to improve the TKES process. However, the members found no effective solution that truly made the rubrics anonymous. For example, we attempted to make the form digital so the teachers could write their comments in an open document. However, it was clear who wrote the comments because the feedback was specific to a certain lesson. Therefore, the team decided that labeling the rubrics increased the overall effectiveness of the evaluation process because it opened communication and informed administrators of the specific needs teachers had, even if the teachers failed to include criticism.

Furthermore, the action research team continually looked to the research facilitator throughout the case study for direction and suggestions for next steps. Although the team drove the process, members sought my approval if they created an intervention. For example, the creation of the Teacher Feedback Rubric depended on the consistent encouragement of the research facilitator to create a document that allowed teachers to express their needs and thoughts

on the feedback process. Once again, the positionality of the researcher as the assistant principal prevented the teachers from making suggestions they thought would negatively influence the leaders' perception of their instructional and professional performance. During one of the AR team meetings, the following statement by Natalie Brown showed this need of the individual team members:

> "During our first few meetings, the team did not know what to say or what not to say. Eventually, the group began to simply complain about the TKES process. That's when we needed you the most. I think people were unsure as to how we should address the problem. I mean, there was a problem with the way we looked at feedback. I don't think any of us had the opportunity to make a change to something involving evaluation systems before, so we all took to complaining. We really needed you there to redirect the conversation to finding constructive solutions. Once we focused on finding answers, we knew what the goal was, but we had no real ideas. That's where the literature came in. However, we still needed your help to find good articles and talk about ways to help our school."

Conclusion 4: Teachers find Meaning in the Feedback They receive if the Standard that it relates to is Relevant to their Instructional Practices

During the action research team's evaluation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System at State Elementary School, the members concluded that teachers will read and reflect on feedback that they think relates to their instructional practices. The standards the teachers reported as the most significant to their instruction were Instructional Strategies, Differentiated Instruction, Positive Learning Environment, and Academically Challenging Environment. Therefore, the school leaders made these standards the focus of classroom walkthroughs. When

an evaluator completed a formative assessment that required feedback in all ten standards, he or she would use the strategies learned from the action research process to make the feedback effective in the Instructional Knowledge, Instructional Planning, Assessment Strategies, Assessment Uses, Professionalism, and Communication standards, but focused more of his or her efforts on the other four standards to ensure the teachers acquired the needed information to improve their instruction.

Additionally, interviews with teachers revealed that feedback in the aforementioned six standards did not have the potential to impact their instruction because the standards focused on areas that they did not need an outsider to observe. For example, a gifted teacher stated in her interview that she volunteered at the district office to share resources with teachers at other schools, she presented at conferences about gifted instructional strategies, and she received multiple awards recognizing her outstanding teaching from independent organizations. Because of this, she communicated to the school leaders at State Elementary that their perception of her Professionalism was insignificant because she recognized her exemplary efforts without receiving feedback from the principal and assistant principal. However, she did expect that the score she received in the standard matched the work she did outside the school. Therefore, the team members considered this when they concluded that teachers only found meaning in the feedback for certain standards. In response, the administrators changed their practices and communicated to teachers that the four meaningful standards would continue to be the focus of the walkthroughs throughout the school year. This was an important change the action research team made to school policy.

Conclusion 5: Action Research Teams have the Ability to make Positive Change in Schools if the Staff understands the Potential for Practical and Policy Change

At State Elementary School, the teachers expressed disillusionment associated with research and policies regarding evaluation systems. When the action research team first began to address the issue with the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System, the staff members showed little interest because they had experienced several different systems throughout their careers. In fact, most of the members joined the team initially because the assistant principal was new to the school, and they felt obligated to support his work. Because the participants felt the initial pressure to join the AR team, the assistant principal, who also was the research facilitator, had to communicate clearly that participation in the case study had no influence on the leaders' perception of the teachers. Once the team understood this point, the members realized that they could initiate positive change. Consequently, teachers in the school knew there were processes in place that could affect the implementation of the TKES. A third grade teacher, Janice Chapman, summarized in her interview the impact the action research team had on the staff's perception of the evaluation system:

> "As a team, we were able to put things in place that helped the teachers appreciate and value the feedback they received during walkthroughs and observations. The team told the teachers that they could change the practices of the principal and assistant principal to make the TKES responsive to what we needed."

Conclusion 6: Teachers must understand the Specifics of the Evaluation System in Place to buy-in to the Feedback and reflect on their Practices

The action research team concluded that teachers at State Elementary School needed extensive training on the domains, standards, and elements within the Teacher Keys

Effectiveness System to find meaning in the feedback. Because the TKES has four performance levels, the teachers need experience examining sample lessons and feedback to help administrators write commentary that meets their needs and includes information that applies to the teaching and learning occurring in the classroom. For example, teachers who had the opportunity to write sample feedback after viewing lessons or write feedback that fit into Level I, II, III, and IV categories understood how to attain each score. Marion Stevens discussed the importance of transparency with the TKES policy during the AR meetings:

> "This new system is so confusing that teachers ignored the feedback and only focused on the scores. Once we all sat down and worked through the platform, the teachers understood where to find the feedback. Additionally, when you and the principal clarified what we needed to do to get a three or four, I think the teachers really took that to heart and incorporated those elements into their teaching."

Conclusion 7: Administrators must acquire Specific Feedback Production Skills in Collaboration with District and State Leadership

The State Department of Education provided resources to school leaders to improve their analysis of instruction in addition to their creation of actionable feedback. According to Strong (2007), feedback is defined as a description of performance that communicates objectively the teaching and learning behaviors that were observed, should be maintained, and need further development. Additionally, the State Superintendent released documentation that encouraged school leaders to include simple data to cite classroom observation experiences, create a protocol to follow when writing feedback to prevent leaving out valuable information and insight, and reference the language used within the evaluation system's standards (Wiggins, 2012). Importantly, the action research team used these findings to conclude that leaders at the building

level need support and direction from leaders at the district and state office to effectively evaluate and rate the staff. The evaluators at State Elementary School responded to this finding by participating in trainings and seminars that focused on improving inter-rater reliability, developing quality feedback, and reflecting with teachers on their instruction. For example, the assistant principal attended a two-day training offered by the State Department of Education to increase inter-rater reliability. Consequently, the teachers at State found the feedback to be more actionable if the leaders acquired the essential skills, tools, and resources offered at these trainings.

Conclusion 8: Improved Feedback can lead to Democratic Practices within a Participatory Staff

The purpose of this action research case study was to explore ways to improve feedback under the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System policy. Because teachers at State Elementary did not have experience working directly with school leaders to discuss and examine evaluation systems in the past, the action research team had to analyze literature that addressed the democratic practices that occurred during the project. Specifically, the AR team increased interactions between teachers and administrators in the evaluation and implementation of the TKES. After the team created interventions and interviewed teachers about their perspectives of the case study, the result was a more democratic staff that had the respect of the school leaders to change the practices of the TKES policy. For example, the teachers created the Administrator Checklist that required evaluators to follow specific steps before, during, and after classroom visits to ensure they included specific components in the feedback. By ensuring that the teachers had a voice in this process, the staff gained equal status with this school leadership. Importantly, those who did not participate in the study stated that teachers who did interact with the school

leaders influenced the evaluation practices at the school. Susan Morgan, the principal at State, asserted the following when reflecting on value of democratic principles:

> "Several teachers have come to my office to talk about the scores and feedback I gave them during walkthroughs. I have always encouraged the staff to come talk to me about their goals and reflections on their evaluations. Because we had the opportunity to look at the specific lesson I observed, the teacher brought me her behavior sheet that she used to record data about the behaviors of specific students. As a result, I changed her score in Positive Classroom Environment to a IV. Teachers can help shape the way we implement this system. They just need the confidence to talk to us about the way we practice."

Summary of Conceptual Framework

Figure 6

Project Design
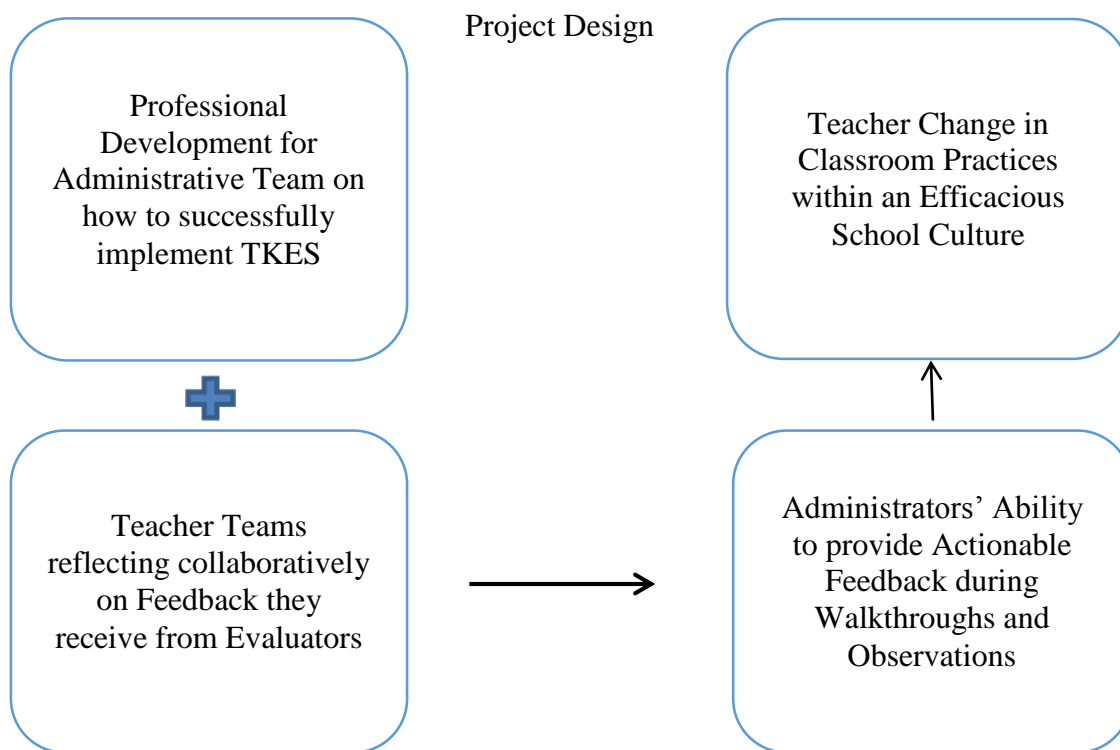
Conceptual Framework at State Elementary

At the beginning of the action research case study at State Elementary, the AR team

worked with the research facilitator to develop and implement the conceptual framework for the

direction of the project. Importantly, the purpose statement drove the conceptualization of the

process to ensure that the team worked to find meaningful solutions to the Teacher Keys

Effectiveness System problem. Based on the steps outlined in the conceptual framework above,

the team successfully followed the pathway to teacher change in classroom and instructional

practices within an efficacious and democratic school culture. Specifically, the team worked

with the administrators to explore the professional development resources available to aid in the

introduction and implementation of the TKES process to State Elementary. With trainings

offered at the district and state levels, the principal and assistant principal gained access to experts and materials that facilitated their execution of effective walkthroughs and observations. The AR team reflected on these training opportunities and provided suggestions and interventions with the Teacher Feedback Rubric and the Administrator Checklist to ensure that the teachers at the local school received feedback that was relevant and useful to their planning and instruction practices.

Furthermore, teachers who participated in the action research process and teachers who completed Teacher Feedback Rubrics reflected on the effectiveness of the feedback the assistant principal gave during walkthroughs and observations. The commentary on the rubrics and the feedback communicated in AR meetings and Critical Incident Interviews provided a pathway for the administrator to improve his feedback development and distribution.

Consequently, the feedback given during the evaluation process was actionable to teachers' planning and instructional practices because of the focus on each individual's professional goals. Data generated from the study showed that the feedback changed teachers' planning and instruction if the evaluators followed the other steps outlined by the AR team.

Finally, staff participation in the action research case study and administrators increasing communication regarding teachers' desires for the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System resulted in the leadership team and staff members developing higher senses of self-efficacy while embracing democratic practices. Because the principal valued the input of teacher-leaders and facilitated the growth and development of future administrators, those who participated were motivated to share their thoughts and ideas about school's policies and practices in the forum created by the AR team.

Implications

Because this is an action research case study that addressed a problem with the evaluation system at a specific school, the implications for future research are limited. However, the work of the action research team has had an impact on the practices and future building-level policies at State Elementary School.

For Individuals

Those who participated in the action research process have the experiences and skills to analyze future evaluation systems to make the practices of their evaluators more meaningful. During the project, members of team communicated that their work on the Teachers Keys Effectiveness System would become meaningless in the next few years if the State Department of Education created a new evaluation system that schools would implement. However, through the examination of research and the development of the interventions, teachers at State understood that the project equipped them with the tools to address any evaluation system in place. The findings of this study asserted that the specific policy in place is not significant if the teachers and administrators communicate their needs to each other. By increasing the level of transparency, principals and assistant principals can provide feedback to teachers that is specific to their practices and leads to positive instructional change regardless of the individual requirements of the evaluation system. In fact, the interventions the team created will work with any evaluation system as long as teachers set goals and reflect on their practices with their evaluators. Importantly, supervision of instruction requires this type of practice from staff members at any school.

For Leaders

At State Elementary, this action research case study has implications for the school leaders' practices. Specifically, the Teacher Feedback Rubric and the Administrator Checklist revealed that teachers have specific needs regarding the feedback they receive during classroom observations. First, administrators need to meet individually with educators at the beginning of each school year to discuss professional and personal goals. With this information, the evaluators can relate their feedback to the goals teachers shared at the beginning of the year.

Next, the principal and assistant principal must provide teachers with time to discuss their performance in both formal and informal settings. Because the action research team found that educators at State needed to present evidence to justify possible changes in scores, the administrators opened their doors to teachers before and after school to talk through specific standards in the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. Through the interviews and discussions in AR meetings, the team members realized that teachers were more perceptive to feedback they received if they knew they could change the score if the evaluator missed important components of the lesson during the observation.

Finally, school leaders throughout the district must embrace democratic practices in their buildings to increase the competency and efficacy of their staffs. The action research team found that the process of providing feedback and prompting teachers to reflect and improve their instructional practices worked successfully. In fact, creating an arena where teachers and leaders worked together to discuss the specifics of the evaluation system allowed the principal and assistant principal to distribute their authority to the teachers to make the TKES more effective.

For Schools

　　Schools within the North County School District should use the interventions created at State Elementary to improve practices associated with any evaluation system in place. Specifically, the AR team found that teachers will change their instructional practices if the feedback they receive during walkthroughs and observations includes suggestions for using specific instructional resources and materials that will supplement the instruction. Therefore, schools need to provide their evaluators with training and materials to have concrete items they can suggest for teachers to use. If the feedback does not have specific resources included, then the teachers will not change their instructional practices.

　　Additionally, schools need to create environments where teachers and leaders can meet regularly to discuss new policies and practices. To increase the democratic nature of a staff, principals must be open to advice from teachers regarding best practices and steps the leaders can take to improve the implementation of a new policy. Importantly, this finding applies to more than evaluation systems. Any new practice or policy that impacts teachers' classroom instruction requires the administrators to meet with the teachers to discuss the school's implementation and evaluation of the program.

For Districts

　　As the federal and state governments expand their influence over educational policies within school districts, system leaders must remain flexible in their implementation of district-wide policies. Although there are specific aspects of a policy that prevent flexibility, principals should assert their authority to make changes that benefit their staffs. Regarding the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System, district leaders must ensure that schools can implement changes to their practices that allow teachers and administrators to work together to modify the TKES. This

flexibility allows teachers to determine which lessons their leaders observe so they can focus on improving their individual planning and instructional practices.

Additionally, district leaders must understand that veteran teachers have experienced numerous evaluation policies throughout their careers. Consequently, veteran teachers at State Elementary struggled to buy-in to the TKES because of the increased workload and the historical instability of evaluation policy.

For Educational Policy

With the implementation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System in addition to the new standardized assessment system than incorporates student achievement scores into teachers' evaluation scores, policymakers at the state and federal level must understand that teachers make changes in their instructional practices if the evaluation system focuses on their individual professional goals. Although the national trend in educational policy encourages standardization from district to district and state to state, the action research team found that the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System impacts classroom practices if the teachers have power in shaping and evaluating the policy. Unfortunately, because the TKES is a statewide mandate, teachers at local schools have less control over the local implementation of the system. Hence, policymakers must reevaluate their stances on regulating the practices at local schools.

My Role as the Researcher

At the conclusion of the action research case study, I reflected on my role as the primary researcher and the assistant principal at State Elementary. As mentioned in previous sections, my positionality impacted the data collected and the findings from this study. Specifically, the Teacher Feedback Rubric presented the largest challenge in improving the feedback while also ensuring that teachers remained objective and critical of my walkthrough and observation

commentary. Although the AR team discussed various options regarding methods to make the rubrics anonymous, the members decided that teachers and evaluators needed to keep their communication open and transparent to increase the administrators' knowledge of the professional goals and progress of the educators. Consequently, there were few rubrics that contained critical commentary of the evaluator's feedback, but the conversations held during the Critical Incident Interviews and the open forums at the AR meetings increased the comfort level of those who participated, allowing them to state their opinions and thoughts on the process. When the final data collection ended, the team members were confident that the findings were accurate and reliable because of the qualitative design of the case study. Teachers had multiple arenas to express their perspectives and opinions, and the results and conclusions showed that teachers' classroom practices changed from our feedback. Importantly, my role as the evaluator and primary researcher increased the collaboration between teachers and leaders and resulted in improved evaluation practices at State Elementary.

Knowledge Created from the Action Research Case Study

Based on the findings and conclusions from this study, there are key themes related to evaluation and feedback practices that contribute to the research and related literature. Action research teams at local schools have the power and ability to accomplish goals based on the flexibility and vision of the principal. Because State Elementary has school leaders who value democratic practices while empowering teachers to make decisions and influence practices, the action research case study resulted in positive change that improved the implementation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System.

Moreover, teachers who have the experiences and skills to examine school policies can continue to make an impact on other areas of the school. In the future, members of the AR team

have the perspectives and knowledge to improve practices that influence both teachers and administrators.

Impact on Future Research

In addition to implications for professional practice, this action research case study will impact the literature related to evaluation systems, administrators' development of feedback, and teachers' roles in democratic school environments. Because this study focused on the importance of creating teacher and leader efficacy, the findings will also influence the direction of literature related to best practices from school administrators who desire to create democratic school cultures with professional educators who make informed decisions that address shared school goals.

As stated previously, Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) described teacher and leader efficacy as the "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute a course of action required to produce a given attainment" (p. 480). For this action research project, teachers and leaders at State Elementary used this lens to solve a problems associated with the evaluation system in place. At the beginning of the study, teachers and leaders developed, addressed, and eventually changed their beliefs about their abilities and competencies to change the practices involved with the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. After spending several months analyzing the problem and discussing methods to improve feedback, the team created interventions and a plan to improve administrators' impact on teachers' classroom practices. Additionally, this project expanded on this research by concluding that efficacious staffs that work collaboratively will also value and reflect the ideals of democratic organizations. Because the teachers and leaders worked together to examine the TKES, the barriers that separated the administrators and educators disappeared.

Furthermore, the literature explored the impact school leaders can have on teachers' classroom practices through evaluations. Because principals and assistant principals spend their time observing educators and providing feedback, researchers have discussed the implications of evaluators' practices. Importantly, this action research case study found that teachers can impact administrators' implementation and work within an evaluation system. Based on the findings and conclusions from the project at State Elementary School, leaders can empower teachers by creating professional school structures based on democratic practices where administrators and teachers can reflect together to improve the evaluation system in place. Specifically, the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System allowed teachers to make adjustments to their evaluators' efforts to observe and improve the instruction in the school building.

As stated previously, Hill and Charalambous (2012) identified important measures of teacher quality that administrators must identify and critique when observing instruction. In classroom observations, evaluators must address the TKES standards and give feedback that will support teachers in their instructional planning and practices. This study added to the literature on classroom observations by proving that specific measures must be in place when critiquing a teachers' performance.

First, the evaluator must address the standards associated with instructional strategies, differentiation, and learning environments. If the principal or assistant principal spend too much time and effort providing feedback in the other standards, the teachers will resent the commentary and ignore the direction from their leaders.

Next, administrators must consider the experience level of the teachers when completing a walkthrough or observation. The action research team found that quality observers needed to address the different curriculums and evaluation systems a teacher has experienced throughout

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his or her career. Specifically, if an administrator gives the same type of feedback to a veteran teacher that he or she gave to a first year teacher, the professional relationship will break down, and the veteran teachers will likely devalue the entire process. Thus, leaders have to re-word their suggestions and provide room for celebrating past accomplishments and expertise in the field. Importantly, this strategy does not apply if the teacher performs inadequately. This measure is for skilled veteran teachers who desire to improve their pedagogy.

Finally, evaluators must physically position themselves in classrooms to meet the individual needs of the teachers they observe. Because the action research team at State Elementary focused their efforts on making the TKES more personalized for the staff, they found that each teacher has different views regarding how the administrator should conduct an observation. For example, in pre-conferences at the beginning of the year, several teachers stated that they preferred the principal or assistant principal move around the classrooms and interact with the students during the lessons. However, other teachers suggested that the administrators sit at a desk out of the students' work area to ensure that the leader witnessed and observed all activities and interactions. Consequently, the principal and assistant principal balanced their own personal practices to complete effective evaluations that produced actionable feedback. Although the literature focused on the practices of school leaders, this study found that teachers' need to have input into the physical practices of evaluators in the classroom.

Additionally, the literature stated that principals needed to be knowledgeable of classroom content and learning standards to create valuable feedback. Specifically, evaluators who observed teachers in different grade levels and content areas had to have experience teaching that particular subject area for the educators to value their feedback and perspectives. During the action research case study, the art and music teachers asserted that they generally did

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not value the evaluation system because the principal or assistant principal who observed them in the past had little to no knowledge of their instructional standards and the best practices for helping students grow and achieve. However, after the team implemented the interventions and worked to increase the individual attention administrators gave to educators at State Elementary, the members found that evaluators needed to have knowledge of the teachers' goals and ability levels to successfully evaluate them in the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. Thus, the administrators still needed a basic understanding of the content and standards taught in each classroom, but the most significant factor in determining the effectiveness of the feedback depended on the leaders' knowledge of the professional goals and areas for growth for each educator. With this knowledge, the evaluators could focus their concentration on the specific goals for each teacher and find resources and materials that related to them.

Consequently, future research should focus on replicating the action research case study at different schools within the scope of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. By empowering teachers to create and implement interventions similar to the Teacher Feedback Rubric and the Administrator Checklist, future researchers can determine if the steps taken in this project help to instill democratic values in the staff and improve the feedback given during walkthroughs and observations.

Summary of the Action Research Case Study

At the conclusion of the action research process, the team evaluated the impact they had on the staff and culture at State Elementary School. This case study was important to the daily practices regarding the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System because teachers and administrators worked together to examine the evaluation policy and put interventions in place that would improve the creation of feedback while promoting democratic principles and practices.

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Importantly, this study created a more cohesive staff that was confident discussing possible changes to the TKES that could make the system more responsive to individual teacher needs. Additionally, the members of the action research team gained power and experience in influencing the implementation of a schoolwide policy.

The action research process itself changed the methods in which administrators and classroom teachers communicated regarding the TKES. Before the study began, teachers rarely talked with the principal and assistant principal about the components of the evaluation policy within the North County School District. Although there was relative unhappiness associated with the system, teachers did not have the time or an arena to express their feelings and make positive change. However, the work of the AR team changed the practices at State Elementary. Marion Stevens, a member of the AR team, summarized this point in her interview after the project concluded:

> "Both you and the principal have so many policies to follow while leaders from the district office pull you in several directions. I think you both wanted to open the conversation with teachers about better meeting their needs in classroom observations, but their fear to approach you and your stress levels associated with other tasks and school operations prevented anyone from saying what really needed to be said. However, the action research team changed the way we talked about evaluations. There was definitely some hesitation at the beginning of the project because people did not know what was okay to talk about, but once those barriers broke down, we really dove in and made some good changes. I think the people at this school appreciate that you focused on bringing us together more than improving the TKES. The teachers could care less

about the particulars of the evaluation process. They just want to know that you care about them personally."

Additionally, the AR team empowered the teachers to express their opinions and values regarding the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System and the feedback evaluators gave in classroom observations. Natalie Brown explained how her participation on the team gave her the opportunity to share with other future leaders in the district:

"This past week, I met with my advisor for the future leaders cohort I am in for the district. During our conversation, my mentor asked me about what steps I have taken to increase my role as a leader in the school. I told him all about the action research team and the work we did to address and improve the evaluation system. He said he never heard of teachers and administrators working together to talk about ways to make the TKES better. I am excited because I think this experience will help me become a leader in the district. I think other school principals value the experiences we have had in making the feedback and evaluation practices more meaningful to our school. Hopefully, we can spread our team's influence and see this project happen at other schools in our area."

Both of these reflections from action research team members show that the project helped the teachers gain skills and tools to evaluate a problem with the evaluation system at the local school. Because we desired this to be a consequence of the project, those who participated viewed the project as a success. The team effectively put practices into place that helped teachers improve their practices from the feedback school leaders give in the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. Moreover, the staff developed an appreciation for democratic practices

that help the leaders and teachers work together to solve problems and improve policies in the future.

As the research facilitator for this project, I had the opportunity to reflect on my role in the process and the findings from the study. Importantly, my position as the assistant principal and an evaluator at State Elementary School influenced the direction and conclusions made from this study but also helped me connect with teachers and reflect with them on their professional goals and instructional practices. Thus, when I become a principal, I plan to implement the interventions and findings from this study to ensure that the staff members at my school have the resources and support to make the evaluation system in place meaningful to their practices in the classroom.

Based on the results of this action research case study, I believe the team successfully answered the research questions and fulfilled the purpose of exploring techniques to improve feedback for teachers to equip them with the skills and tools to become more involved in school decision-making. Specifically, the action research process empowered teachers to make decisions and implement changes that influenced the practices associated with the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. The team answered the research questions and created a platform for teachers at State Elementary to solve similar issues in a cooperative manner in the future. Importantly, the conclusion of the study led the team to ask one final question of the staff to ensure that the practices we put into place continued: Will the interventions continue to be effective as we add new teachers to the staff and continue to evaluate those who participated in the original study? Regardless of the impact of this research in the future, both the teachers and leaders understand that they must continue to reflect on their instruction and work together to set goals and evaluate school policies and practices.

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Impact of Action Research Teams on Administrators' Implementation and Teachers' Perception

of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System

Researcher's Statement

You are being asked to participate in this research study because you are an employee in

a school system that is mandating implementation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System.

Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the

research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the

information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the

time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything

that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered,

you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent."

A copy of this form will be given to you.

Principal Investigator: *Dr. Sheneka Williams*

The University of Georgia

kevbo@uga.edu 678-739-9443

Purpose of the Study

In my study, I will address the importance of administrator professional development for

implementing the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. Furthermore, I will focus on teacher

reflection and modification of feedback and subsequent instructional change and improvement in

response to the feedback they receive from administrators. Your participation in this study is

critical because of your outstanding achievements in teaching and your invaluable experiences

and perspectives on the evaluation system.

Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to …

- Participate in an action research process to investigate and examine the effectiveness of

    feedback provided by the administrators at your school. With other teachers on the team,

    you will determine the usefulness of observation commentary and suggest improvements to

    the evaluation process. This procedure is for research and is voluntary.

- During the study, you will participate in bi-weekly action research team meetings that will

    last approximately 30 minutes. This project will continue for six months, resulting in 10 total

    hours of participation. This is also a research procedure that is voluntary.

- I will attempt to answer the following questions:

    - How effective is the action research process in empowering the team's ability to find

        a solution to an evaluation system problem?

    - How can teachers influence the feedback process?

    - In what ways does feedback inform teachers' practices?

    - How do administrators increase their capacity to give actionable feedback?

- Two action research teams will address the purpose and questions of the study. A team of

    administrators will create and participate in professional development programs that increase

    the effectiveness with which they implement an evaluation system. The leaders will

    collaborate on providing useful feedback and offering meaningful resources to help teachers

    increase their proficiency. Moreover, a team of teachers will reflect on the feedback they

receive from evaluators. As a group, they will determine if the feedback is useful and

provide suggested changes to the feedback with the creation of rubrics and administrator

checklists. Finally, teachers will provide data regarding changes in their classroom practices

they make in response to the feedback they receive. Because these procedures will generate

data for research, they are voluntary.

Risks and Discomforts

The primary risk is a breach of confidentiality. However, to ensure that the participants,

the school, and the district are not identified during data collection and reporting, there will be

pseudonyms in place for all participants as well as the school and the system. Additionally, all

paper files and consent forms will remain in a locked cabinet that only I will have access to as

the research facilitator. All paper files, electronic files, and audio recordings will be deleted or

destroyed upon completion of the study. Any information that could possible identify study

participants will be indirect and coded to ensure that no one can infer from the report the real

identity of those involved.

Because I have a position of power over the study participants, there will be safeguards in

place to ensure that the volunteers do not experience coercion or undue influence. First,

participation in the action research process is voluntary and unrelated to job performance. When

the members make the decision to join the team, they agree to sign the consent form with the

knowledge that I do not require their participation for the entire study. Consequently, members

will understand that they can leave for any reason at any time.

Second, the members will be examining sample feedback that both the principal and

assistant principal will create throughout the study. This will be fictional feedback that does not

identify any specific person.

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Third, the team members will have pseudonyms in the study. This will prevent their identity from being revealed at any point in the data collection and reporting process.

Finally, my position as the assistant principal reduces the impact I have in authority over the team members. Because the principal is involved in another part of the study, she will ensure that participation in the project has no impact on perception of job performance.

Benefits

Because this is action research, the project will directly benefit both the teachers and administrators. The team will increase the effectiveness of the evaluation process, and the participants will be equipped with skills and experiences to solve school problems in the future. Furthermore, the research will help the district address its focus on accountability and professional development.

Audio/Video Recording

Audio recording of the meetings will occur to ensure proper documentation and collection of data generated throughout the process. After the action research project ends, I will maintain the audio recordings until my dissertation is complete.

Please provide initials below if you agree to have the interviews audio recorded or not. You may still participate in this study even if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

       I do not want to have this interview recorded.

       I am willing to have this interview recorded.

Privacy/Confidentiality

The project's research records may be reviewed by the Cobb County School District and by departments at the University of Georgia responsible for regulatory and research oversight.

Researchers will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent unless required by law.

Taking Part is Voluntary

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. While the TKES program activities are mandatory as part of your employment, the decision to take part or not take part in the research study will have no effect on your employment status.

If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

If You have Questions

The main researcher conducting this study is Dr. Sheneka Williams, a professor at the University of Georgia. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Dr. Sheneka Williams at smwill@uga.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, and have had all of your questions answered.

_____   _____   _____
Name of Researcher   Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Signature   Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

APPENDIX B

ADMINISTRATOR FEEDBACK CHECKLIST

Administrator Feedback Checklist

Before and after classroom walkthroughs and observations, the principal and assistant principal

will use the following checklist for each teacher to ensure that feedback and communication are

effective and actionable within the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System. Upon completion of the

following tasks, the evaluator should provide a copy of the checklist to the teacher.

- o Reviewed pre-conference goals and communication about specific areas of growth and

    focus.

- o Read lesson plans and unit plans (if provided by teacher).

- o Feedback provided is objective and specific to the lesson.

- o Feedback contains suggestions for resources and materials.

- o Feedback includes directions for improving to the next score level (if applicable).

- o Feedback contains commendations on specific aspects of the lesson.

- o Met with teacher after walkthrough/observation to discuss specifics of lesson and

    evaluation rating (if applicable).

- o Changed evaluation score if conversation/evidence justified that decision (if applicable).

APPENDIX C

TEACHER FEEDBACK RUBRIC

Teacher Feedback Rubric

The following components should be included in feedback given by evaluators during classroom

walkthroughs and observations. For each category, please rate the effectiveness of the feedback

based on the three scoring explanations by checking one of the boxes. Also, to improve the

process moving forward, please provide any commentary on the feedback for the administrator.

Teacher Keys Effectiveness Standard	Feedback lacks needed elements (Please check box)	Feedback satisfactorily meets needs (Please check box)	Feedback effectively addresses the standard (Please check the box)	Additional commentary
Professional Knowledge				
Instructional Planning				
Instructional Strategies				
Differentiated Instruction				
Assessment Strategies				

Assessment Uses				
Positive Learning Environment				
Academically Challenging Environment				
Professionalism				
Communication				

*Please return to your evaluating administrator within 3 days of the walkthrough/observation.

APPENDIX D

CRITICAL INCIDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 1

"Through the use of the critical incident technique one may collect specific and significant behavioral facts, providing '…a sound basis for making inferences as to requirements…' for measures of typical performance" (Flanagan, 1954, p. 327).

All participants signed the consent form included as Appendix A prior to beginning the Critical Incident Interview. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes with small variations in length depending on the responses from the interviewee.

Introductory Statement

"Thank you for participating in the Action Research Case Study. Before we begin the interview process, think about your responses as a narrative or story. Include characters, setting, and a plot. I will do my best to avoid prompting or gesturing to ensure that you have the opportunity to tell your exact thoughts while providing perspective on the topic."

Interview Prompt

"After participating in the Action Research process and creating the Teacher Feedback Rubric and Administrative Feedback Checklist, think of a time when I (the assistant principal) came into your room for a walkthrough or observation. Tell me about the lesson, your thoughts about the feedback, and any changes you may have made to your instruction based on the commentary you received. This can be a positive or negative experience, and please attempt to tell your experience in the form of a story."

Statements to Encourage Further Thought

"What were you doing at the time?"

"Where were the students?"

"How did the feedback make you feel?"

"Did you think about your role in the AR team?"

"Was the process better or worse?"

"What impact did it have on your instruction?"

"Were there changes in feedback after this particular observation?"

"What did you learn from the incident?"

"Were the interventions effective?"

"What did you tell your team members?"

"Did other AR members have the same or different experiences?"

CRITICAL INCIDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 2

"Through the use of the critical incident technique one may collect specific and significant behavioral facts, providing '…a sound basis for making inferences as to requirements…' for measures of typical performance" (Flanagan, 1954, p. 327).

All participants signed the consent form included as Appendix A prior to beginning the Critical Incident Interview. Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes with small variations in length depending on the responses from the interviewee.

Introductory Statement

"Thank you for participating in the Action Research Team. Before we begin the interview process, think about your responses as a narrative or story. Include characters, setting, and a plot. I will do my best to avoid prompting or gesturing to ensure that you have the opportunity to tell your exact thoughts while providing perspective on the topic."

Interview Prompt

"After participating in the Action Research team, think about a time when the group addressed the research purpose and questions in a productive manner. Tell me about the topic of conversation and the different specifics the team debated. If necessary, include your description of the other members' ideas that you felt influenced the direction of the case study. Did this particular part of the Action Research process help the team find and implement a solution to the evaluation system problem at State Elementary? Also, please respond to the research questions:

- How effective is the action research process in empowering the team's ability to find a solution to an evaluation system problem?

- How can teachers influence the feedback process?

- In what ways does feedback inform teachers' practices?

- How do administrators increase their capacity to give actionable feedback?

Statements to Encourage Further Thought

"What were you doing at the time?"

"Where were the other team members?"

"How did the conversation start?"

"Did you think about your role in the AR team?"

"Was the process better or worse?"

"What impact did it have on the work of the team?"

"What did you learn from the conversation?"

"What did you tell your team members?"

"Did other AR members have the same or different perspectives and ideas?"

APPENDIX F

ACTION RESEARCH RECRUITING LETTER

Hey Everyone!

I hope you are all having a wonderful weekend. As some of you already know, I am currently working on my doctorate in Educational Leadership at The University of Georgia. As I near the end of my coursework, I am in the process of beginning my dissertation. Fortunately, I will complete an action research project right here at State! This will allow me to focus on a project that will benefit the school and our work with the students.

Action research works best when teams work collaboratively to find solutions to real school-level issues. Therefore, I am requesting between five and 10 teachers to volunteer to participate in this project. I promise not to take more than 30 minutes every other week. We can work out the specific details after we get everyone in place.

The focus of the project will be improving the feedback administrators give during classroom observations. If you join the team, you will have an integral role in developing strategies for providing effective feedback to teachers. Furthermore, you will facilitate the process of completing an action research project and improving our staff's instruction. Finally, you will gain experience and perspective to help you complete a dissertation in the future (if that is a goal for you).

Once again, your participation is completely voluntary. I will transcribe the meetings and interview each participant at the end of the process to analyze the effectiveness of the team. Your participation will generate data that I will use for my research. Although you participate in

the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System as a part of your job responsibilities, this project will generate data for the research project that is separate from what you are required to do as a teacher. Please understand that your consent to participate is not binding, and you can choose to leave the project whenever you desire.

If you are interested, please email me. Once I hear back from those who want to participate, I will set up a time to meet so we can begin the project.

Thank you again for being such an amazing staff. I have learned so much from you all already, and I look forward to the opportunity to work more closely with you to help improve our school.