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The Effects of Principal Feedback on Instruction and Student Achievement

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by

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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree.

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Abstract

Legislative and educational reform through the first 20 years of this century has focused largely on the impact of the teacher and principal on student achievement (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Marshall, 2017). Principals' influence upon achievement is second only to that of classroom teachers; however, principal impact is indirect and difficult to quantify (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstorm, 2004). This mixed-methods study involved the analysis of secondary data and elicitation of teachers' and principals' perceptions in order to determine the impact of principals on student achievement. The quantitative portion of the study involved an analysis of secondary data including the composite ACT scores of Missouri high school juniors and the Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE) teacher survey data. The qualitative portion of the study involved an analysis of the perceptions of teachers and principals. Following the analysis of two years of NEE teacher survey data and ACT composite data, the secondary data revealed there was not a significant positive correlation between teachers' perceptions of principals' abilities to promote effective instruction and student achievement. The qualitative data revealed four themes regarding the promotion of effective instruction within an observation system: frequency and duration of observations needed for professional growth, qualities of instructional leaders desired in principals, feedback on instructional practices, and barriers to improved instruction. Central to nearly all modern evaluation and observation models is the theory that when instructional practices are improved, student achievement will be improved as well (Golden, 2019; Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d.).

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Chapter One: Introduction

Almost all teacher evaluation systems focus on the feedback principals provide teachers to improve instruction and student performance (Goe, Wylie, Bosso, & Olson, 2017). Since *A Nation at Risk* was presented in 1983, and continuing through the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a common theme is that American students are falling behind and the federal government needs to intervene (DuFour, Reeves, & DuFour, 2018). Most of the evaluation systems developed by researchers, state policymakers, and local districts reflect a shift in the role of the principal from building manager to instructional leader; however, research designed to measure the principal's ability to promote effective instruction via the observation of teaching practices and feedback is lacking (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016).

Provided in Chapter One are the background of the study, the conceptual framework, and the statement of the problem. Also included in this chapter are the purpose of the study and the research questions. The significance of the study, definition of key terms, and the delimitations, limitations, and assumptions conclude the chapter.

Background of the Study

The modern method of teacher evaluation, utilized for much of the last half of the 20th century, was developed by Goldhammer in the late 1960s as part of Harvard's Master of Arts in Teaching program (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). Goldhammer's work provided the foundation for an observation system consisting of a pre-observation conference, observation, analysis, documentation of the observation, and a post-observation conference (Marzano et al., 2011). During the 1970s and 1980s, Madeline Hunter's seven-step framework for lesson plans became the accepted standard

for effective classroom instruction, and many of today's modern evaluation instruments still retain aspects of her work (Golden, 2019; Marzano et al., 2011; White, 2017). During the 1990s, Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching became widely accepted for teacher evaluation; it was far more complex than prior methods of evaluation with its 22 steps (Golden, 2019; Marzano et al., 2011). During this era, in which teacher evaluation ratings ranged from unsatisfactory to distinguished, teachers were provided with little in the way of feedback, and the primary aim of evaluations was to help principals make determinations about retention of teaching staff (Chandler, 2016; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Mead, Rotherham, & Brown, 2012).

Modern observation methods have shifted from the binary checklists of past systems in favor of rating scales to differentiate levels of instruction in the classroom (Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016). Student achievement data components have also been developed in many teacher evaluation models aiming to evaluate teacher effectiveness, a measure which has been met with resistance from teacher groups and districts alike (Marshall, 2016; Measures of Effective Teaching Project, 2010). These changes in observation methods have developed due to both legislative reforms and the recognition of observation systems as a way to monitor and improve teaching practices in the classroom (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Marshall, 2017).

Recent reforms to evaluation systems have shifted the principal's role from that of an evaluator to an instructional leader tasked with working individually with teachers to improve classroom practice (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Various legislative efforts and large-scale research projects over the past two decades have included calls for increased rigor in teacher evaluation, pointed out flaws in observation systems, and focused on

inflation of teacher effectiveness ratings due to evaluator bias (Marshall, 2016; Mead et al., 2012). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and subsequent amendments, left many of the decisions that impact classroom-level instruction and evaluation up to states and local school boards; however, following the end of the Reagan administration, the level of input from the federal government began to shift (Chandler, 2016; DuFour et al., 2018; Johnson, 2016).

The NCLB Act was the first significant piece of legislation that increased federal oversight of education nationwide, championing the term *highly qualified teacher* in an effort to ensure students had access to effective teachers in every classroom in the United States (Chandler, 2016; DuFour et al., 2018; Johnson, 2016). In 2009, Race to the Top ushered in an era of increased funding for education, provided that states and districts submitted to sophisticated data systems aimed at identifying and addressing underperforming classroom instruction (Chandler, 2016; DuFour et al., 2018; Johnson, 2016). In 2015, the ESSA was passed, effectively eliminating many of the provisions of NCLB and returning much of the decision-making to the states with the hope innovation would flourish at the local level with a view to improve instruction nationwide (Bonner, 2018; Golden, 2019; Klein, 2016).

In the post-reform era, the focus of principal observations is to improve the quality of classroom instruction to increase student achievement (Kraft & Gilmour, 2017). Much of the research points to feedback and the support of teachers within observation systems as the key levers for principals to drive instructional improvement of teaching staff (Chandler, 2019; Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016; DuFour et al., 2018; Marshall, 2017; Mathus, 2017). The focus on feedback for improving instructional quality has

placed pressure on principals and their ability to provide both accurate and actionable feedback, which has highlighted the need for training and professional development for principals focused on feedback and observations (Bergin, Wind, Grajeda, & Tsai, 2017; Brownie, 2015; Chandler, 2016).

Many states have instituted observation models that include frequent observation, analysis of student performance data, and measurement of instructional quality across multiple categories (Kraft & Gilmour, 2017). Missouri's model evaluation system was developed in response to a waiver of NCLB requirements received by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MODESE) in 2012 (Golden, 2019; MODESE, 2013). The model identified seven steps designed to be formative in nature and to assist teachers in growing professionally (Golden, 2019). Systems that met these criteria were open to districts as well as private entities to create (Golden, 2019).

In an effort to meet the criteria outlined in the Missouri model, the Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE) was created and housed at the University of Missouri-Columbia, the combined effort of current and former educators and university research staff (Bergin et al., 2017; University of Missouri, 2019f). Over 272 districts in Missouri utilize the NEE for teacher evaluation, principal evaluation, or both (University of Missouri, 2019g, para. 3). The NEE necessitates a system of frequent observations combined with relevant and timely feedback to improve instruction (University of Missouri, 2019c).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the Marshall (2017) method of teacher evaluation. The Marshall (2017) method is based on a system of frequent, short-

in-duration, unscheduled classroom visits followed by in-person debriefs with little in the way of formal documentation until the summative evaluation. The Marshall (2017) model's focus on feedback, the impact feedback has on teacher effectiveness, and the manner in which feedback is provided to teachers formed a basis for this framework.

Warring (2015) theorized that by improving the quality of instruction through continuous professional development embedded within the evaluation process, student achievement will increase. Hattie (2017) discovered the teaching domain encompasses 14 of the top-20 effect sizes in his synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses, which emphasizes the importance of continual improvement of teacher quality and the teacher's ability to deliver effective instruction (para. 4). In terms of student achievement, many researchers have agreed the impact of the school leader is second only to classroom instruction (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Kraft and Gilmour (2016) attributed the transition of the role of principal from manager to instructional leader to the reforms of evaluation systems that abandoned once-yearly observations in favor of rubrics, mini-observations, and coaching sessions to convey feedback to teachers. Many recent reform efforts of American education, including NCLB and Race to the Top, were designed to stimulate drastic improvements to the quality of instruction students receive (Mette, Range, Anderson, Hvidston, Nieuwenhuizen, & Doty, 2017). Marshall (2017) asserted the traditional method of observation "is inaccurate, ineffective, and dishonest to parents and stakeholders" (p. 76). Specifically, Marshall (2017) suggested shorter 10–15-minute observations on a more frequent basis, combined with a short list of look-fors, followed by in-person coaching, all leading to increased student achievement. Because the NEE model is based in large

part on Marshall's (2017) method, the research questions for this study were designed to determine if principals, adept at providing feedback to teachers, can improve instruction and increase student achievement.

Statement of the Problem

This study was conducted to examine principal scores on the teacher survey portion of the NEE in the areas of instruction, curriculum, and assessment, and students' scores on the ACT. The overarching question is: Are principals fulfilling their responsibilities to inform teachers of their ability to assist students in a way to improve achievement? Traditional methods of classroom observation can be traced back to the 1950s and were usually binary in nature, labeling teachers in a vast number of categories as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory (Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016). When combined with student achievement measures, these traditional methods of evaluation led policymakers and educators alike to the conclusion they were simply trying to improve the teaching force by eliminating bad teachers (Toch, 2016). Kraft and Gilmour (2016) declared many educational reformists view teacher evaluation as a method to improve teacher effectiveness by focusing on professional growth, emphasizing common methods and language for assessing instructional quality, and providing teachers with opportunities for growth via feedback.

At the end of the 20th century, the perceived failure of educational reform efforts to ensure American students were learning led the federal government to address student learning during the first 15 years of this century (DuFour et al., 2018). In 2001, NCLB stressed the need for statewide standards, assessments, and reporting mechanisms combined with the need for highly qualified teachers, a term left up to the states to define

(Remer, 2017). Under President Obama's Race to the Top in 2009, the priorities shifted from teacher qualifications to the effectiveness of teachers and how to measure their ability to impact learning and achievement (Remer, 2017). While NCLB held districts accountable for student learning, Race to the Top provided the means for holding individual principals and teachers accountable (DuFour et al., 2018). The passage of the ESSA of 2015 gave states back much of the decision-making on how to determine teacher and principal effectiveness, reducing a trend of federal control spanning nearly three decades (DuFour et al., 2018; Remer, 2017).

To respond to legislation as well as the changing goals of evaluation, systems have undergone massive changes to increase rigor and reliability, to aid in staffing decisions, and to provide teachers with feedback that impacts teaching and learning (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). DuFour et al. (2018) determined evaluators should provide teachers with two things: a system that provides systemic feedback of their teaching and a support system to make it happen. While researchers agree feedback is crucial to teacher improvement, there is little research on the impact of feedback on teaching and student achievement within an observation system (Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016; Marshall, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

Leithwood et al. (2004) suggested a principal's influence on student learning is second only to that of the classroom teacher. Mette, Range, Anderson, Hvidston, Nieuwenhuizen, and Doty (2017) stated there is a continued need to study teacher supervision and evaluation practices of principals within highly effective schools as well as the perceptions of teachers regarding evaluation practices and how supervision increases student achievement. The responsibility of improving student achievement is

that of the building administrator and is dependent upon the principal's ability to improve teachers' practice (Danielson, 2016). At the high school level in Missouri, one of the measures utilized to monitor student achievement is the American College Testing (ACT) exam (MODESE, 2018).

Much of the research to date has focused on teacher effectiveness more so than the effectiveness of principals (Dhuey & Smith, 2018). The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a correlation between principal scores on the teacher survey portion of the NEE, specifically NEE Leader Standard 2: Instruction, Curriculum, and Assessment, and students' scores on the ACT.

Research questions and hypotheses. The following research questions and hypotheses guided the study:

1. What is the correlation between teachers' perceptions of their high school principal's ability to promote effective instruction and the ACT composite scores of Missouri juniors?

$H1_0$: There is no correlation between teachers' perceptions of their high school principal's ability to promote effective instruction and the ACT composite scores of Missouri juniors.

$H1_a$: There is a correlation between teachers' perceptions of their high school principal's ability to promote effective instruction and the ACT composite scores of Missouri juniors.

2. What are the perceptions of high school teachers regarding principals providing feedback on effective instruction?

3. What are the perceptions of high school principals regarding their ability to provide feedback on effective instruction?

Significance of the Study

Even though states and districts require observations of teaching practices to make informed decisions about staffing, the data demonstrating the accuracy of principals within these systems are scarce (Bergin et al., 2017). Chandler (2016) asserted that for instruction to improve, more must be known about how much feedback principals provide teachers surrounding instructional practices, how much of that feedback is face-to-face, and to what level principals provide teachers with objective feedback on improving performance versus just providing them with advice. In a study of Danielson-based evaluation models, Winslow (2015) suggested further research on the correlation between evaluative practices and student achievement. Mathus (2017) suggested a need for research on leadership models in which the role of the principal is focused on instructional leadership within systems that emphasize frequent observations followed by post-observation conferences including feedback from the lesson.

With the need for more research surrounding this topic (Bergin et al., 2017; Chandler, 2016; Mathus, 2017; Winslow, 2015), this study will be of interest to school district administrators seeking to improve student achievement by empowering principals to be instructional leaders in their buildings. By obtaining the teachers' views of their principals' knowledge of effective instruction, principals may gain insight into how teachers perceive feedback. Is the feedback helpful or without merit?

In further support of the significance of this study, Chandler (2016) recommended research be conducted longitudinally over multiple years to determine how feedback in a

specific observation system impacts instruction. This study addressed this recommendation by analyzing data from the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years. Chandler (2016) also recognized the need for qualitative studies to examine perceptions of both the type and content of feedback teachers receive. As one phase of data collection, qualitative methods were used in this study. Through the responses of teachers and principals, descriptive narratives were reported to provide further insight into the effectiveness of the feedback. Overall, this study provides a comprehensive view of the evaluation system, from the perceptions of practicing teachers and principals who were utilizing the NEE to determine if teachers are providing students appropriate learning tasks which lead to increased achievement.

Definition of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE). The NEE is an educator evaluation tool developed and maintained by the University of Missouri's College of Education (University of Missouri, 2019b).

Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions

The scope of the study was bounded by the following delimitations:

Time frame. Quantitative ACT data were utilized for the correlation coefficient calculation. Data were available for both the ACT and the teacher survey component of the NEE data tool during the designated time period. During the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years, the ACT was required for all high school juniors in Missouri (ACT, Inc., 2016; Sitter, 2018). Qualitative data were collected during the fall semester of the 2019–2020 school year.

Location of the study. Qualitative data were collected from a random sample of teachers and principals from three school districts in southwest Missouri. Personnel from the University of Missouri College of Education Department for the NEE provided a list of all high schools in Missouri that implement the teacher survey, organized by the number of principals who conduct observations.

Sample. The census sample for the quantitative portion of the study was approximately 2,537 high school teachers for the 2016–2017 school year and approximately 2,549 high school teachers for the 2017–2018 school year. The qualitative portion of the study included a purposive sample of three high school principals who conducted NEE observations and a random sample of three high school teachers from each of the three participating districts. This provided a sample of 12 interview participants.

Criteria. For the quantitative portion of the study, participants were Missouri high school teachers who participated in the teacher survey component of the NEE data tool during the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years. There were no age or gender requirements for the interview participants for the qualitative portion of the study. Interview participants in each building included one principal and three randomly selected teachers with at least five years of teaching experience and three or more years in their current buildings.

The following limitations were identified in this study:

Instrument. Quantitative data were limited to archival data of high school principal scores from the teacher survey component of the NEE data tool for the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years. The ACT data were collected from the MODESE

comprehensive data systems for the same years. Interview questions were created by the researcher.

Sample demographics. Data were gathered from high schools in Missouri that use the teacher survey component of the NEE data to

The following assumptions were accepted:

1. The respondents to the teacher survey component of the NEE data tool responded objectively. Those who responded are representative of the total population of teachers in Missouri.

2. The ACT was administered, and the data were reported by schools according to MODESE regulations for the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 census test years.

3. The respondents to the qualitative portion of the study fully understood the questions asked and responded honestly.

Summary

In Missouri, the NEE is one of the most widely used tools for educator evaluation (University of Missouri, 2019g). Frequent observations and feedback for improving instruction are the foundation of the NEE system of evaluation (University of Missouri, 2019a). This study was designed to explore the relationship between feedback provided to teachers by principals within the NEE and student achievement.

Presented in Chapter One was the background of the study, including an introduction to the evolution of teacher evaluation, the influence of the federal government on teacher evaluation, feedback from observation of teaching practice, and the most widely used teacher evaluation instrument in Missouri, the NEE. Next, the conceptual framework of Marshall's (2017) method of evaluation was presented. The

statement of the problem for this study was described, along with the purpose of the study and the research questions. Finally, the significance of the study was detailed; the key terms were defined; and the delimitations, limitations, and assumptions were discussed.

Presented in Chapter Two are the following general topics: the contemporary history of legislation and teacher evaluation, teacher evaluation methods, and the role of the principal and factors that impact evaluation. Described in the section on the history of legislation and teacher evaluation are the impacts of political policies and the limitations of traditional evaluation models. The research related to classroom observation models and responses to legislation is described in the teacher evaluation methods and responses section. Finally, provided in Chapter Two is a section regarding the role of the principal and feedback. This section includes how the role of the principal is transitioning and the factors that influence observations

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Legislation over the past two decades has changed the structure of teacher evaluation in the United States (DuFour et al., 2018; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). The role of establishing criteria for teacher evaluation systems has shifted back and forth from the federal government to the states, with whom the role currently lies (Klein, 2016). The purpose of this study was to examine the principal's influence on student achievement as measured by the teacher survey component of the NEE data tool for principals and high school juniors' ACT composite scores. Teachers have the largest impact on student achievement, and a principal's influence on student achievement, while indirect, is second to that of teachers but hard to recognize and difficult to measure (Balyer & Özcan, 2020; Leithwood et al., 2004).

The literature review includes recent legislative reforms aimed at improving teaching and student achievement, beginning with NCLB through the current ESSA. Attention was also given to the evolution of teacher evaluation, beginning with traditional supervision models and how models were created in response to various legislation and research. Finally, included in the literature review is the role of the principal as an instructional leader, the importance of feedback for improving instruction, and barriers and factors that impact improving instruction.

Conceptual Framework

One of the most foundational elements of teacher improvement within schools is feedback on instruction and the idea that when given appropriate feedback, teachers' instruction should improve (Balyer & Özcan, 2020). The conceptual framework that guided this study was the Marshall (2017) method of teacher evaluation. The Marshall

(2017) method includes mini-observations, occurring more frequently throughout the school year, in lieu of the less-frequent, more-formal performance-based observations that require pre- and post-lesson conferencing (Marshall & Marshall, 2017). This system of classroom observation has a foundation of visits that are frequent, short-in-duration, unscheduled, and followed by in-person de-briefs, which lead to more informal two-way conversations focused on teaching and learning (Marshall, 2017; Marshall & Marshall, 2017). It is not only the Marshall (2017) method's focus on feedback but also the manner in which feedback is provided to teachers to impact teacher effectiveness that creates the foundation for this framework.

Warring (2015) suggested increasing student achievement continues to be the focus of observation systems; most are grounded in the theory that by continuously embedding professional development within the evaluation process, instructional quality will improve along with student achievement. Further emphasizing the need to continue to focus on improving the quality of teachers and classroom instruction, Hattie (2017) emphasized the importance of the teacher and the teaching domain in his synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses on factors that impact student learning (para. 4). Leithwood et al. (2004) insisted school leadership's impact on student achievement is second only to that of the classroom teacher. Herman et al. (2017) asserted school leaders have the ability to positively impact instruction by improving teacher motivation and the work environment through collaboration and shared decision-making.

The role of the principal continues to evolve from that of manager to instructional leader, due in large part to the reforms of evaluation systems spurred by federal legislative mandates (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Klein (2016) indicated improving the

quality of instruction students receive lies at the core of modern reform efforts such as NCLB, Race to the Top, and the more-recent ESSA. Common among these policies are key ideas such as highly qualified teachers, increased effectiveness of teachers and school leaders, and educational equity for all students (Johnson, 2016).

Feedback is an essential component of improving educators' practice and informing them of their personal growth and professional development needs (MODESE, 2013). Goe et al. (2017) realized feedback can improve teaching practices if it is specific, timely, evidence-based, and constructive while focused on instructional strategies and engagement. Brownie (2015) summarized, "The primary purpose of evaluation should be to layout clear performance standards and provide fair, accurate feedback on performance against those standards that help teachers improve" (p. 2). Feedback to students has long been an established practice of effective teachers to promote student involvement in their own learning; similarly, feedback from principals that involves two-way communication can support growth for teachers (Southern Regional Education Board, 2017).

Marshall (2017) characterized many traditional observation models using terms such as inaccurate, ineffective, and dishonest, due in large part to a formal and scheduled process. Marshall (2017) proposed a system of mini-observations 10–15 minutes in duration occurring on a more frequent basis, based on a short list of approximately five look-fors and followed by face-to-face feedback. Numerous researchers have suggested in-person coaching, in a low-stakes setting, promotes two-way conversation surrounding teaching and learning and provides teachers with specific strategies for improving their teaching, which ultimately leads to increased student achievement (Donaldson, 2016;

DuFour et al., 2018; Goe et al., 2017; Marshall, 2017). White (2018) reported teachers are receptive to support that is both collaborative and non-punitive in nature.

Chandler (2016) suggested when used to analyze many factors including both teacher and student factors, walkthrough observations offer principals a fairly accurate portrayal of what typically occurs in a given classroom, in relatively short amount of time. The NEE evaluation model is similar in design to Marshall's (2017) method, based upon shorter-duration observations paired with face-to-face feedback (University of Missouri, 2019b). Several factors must be taken into consideration including how to provide the feedback, how to present it effectively that one may impact instruction, and how to balance the existing relationship between principal and teacher (Chandler, 2016).

Legislation and Teacher Evaluation

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 was amended four times between 1965 and 1980, and for much of that time, the focus was on educating students from low-income families (Johnson, 2016). The law, however, left curriculum, standards, and personnel decisions to state and local school boards (DuFour et al., 2018). Public education first came onto the radar of the federal government through the publishing of a *Nation at Risk*, and while the report itself did not contain any specific legislation, many believe it was the catalyst for much of the federal oversight seen today (Golden, 2019). While calls for education reform were frequent during the Reagan administration, Reagan's vision continued to be that of making state governments responsible for improving student achievement (Johnson, 2016). The report focused for the first time on many components of current legislative reforms, including content standards and the qualifications of classroom teachers (Golden, 2019).

Near the beginning of the 21st century, the United States government, through a series of legislative actions, took a more significant role in public education, in part due to the inability of most states and school districts to demonstrate evidence of student learning (DuFour et al., 2018). Due in large part to this negative view of public education by the federal government, much of the focus for the past 20 years has been on teachers, instructional methods, and their abilities to improve student instruction (Golden, 2019). When President Bush signed the NCLB Act in 2002, it became the most significant update to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to date; NCLB expanded the federal role in education as the nation became concerned its students were no longer receiving a globally competitive education (Klein, 2016).

In 2009, President Obama championed his four-billion-dollar Race to the Top competitive grant program as part of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (Johnson, 2016). While not a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, this program drove many district-level interventions surrounding student achievement and teacher and leader effectiveness (Johnson, 2016). The passage of the ESSA of 2015 continued many of the accountability requirements of NCLB; however, the ESSA left much of the decision-making up to individual states about what to do with results of accountability measures (Gill & Lerner, 2017).

No Child Left Behind. In early 2002, NCLB signaled a new era of American education with its overwhelming bipartisan support in both houses of Congress and a dramatic increase of the federal government's role in an area that had largely been left to states (DuFour et al., 2018). No Child Left Behind brought with it the term *highly qualified teacher* and required states and local governments to ensure all teachers in core

content areas were highly qualified and equally distributed across Title I schools (Johnson, 2016). Using the term highly qualified teachers communicated the goal of legislating better teachers into America's classrooms (Chandler, 2016).

Due to the nature of the definition of highly qualified teachers within NCLB, states were left to determine this status; provisions for a highly qualified teacher included a bachelor's degree in the subject area or passage of a certification exam, state teaching licensure, or meeting the requirements of a state-defined evaluation system (Chandler, 2016; Mead et al., 2012). Mead et al. (2012) contended the focus was on content knowledge alone and provided no guarantee these teachers were actually effective at improving student achievement. This legislation marked, for the first time, significant control of education seized by the federal government via accountability measures and recognition of the need for research-based practices, the use of data to inform instruction, and increased teacher qualification standards (Golden, 2019). Terms such as highly qualified received significant push-back due to perceptions and research that demonstrated effective educators cannot be identified by qualifications alone, but rather by evidence of practice and student achievement data (Opper, 2019).

Race to the Top. In 2009, as the country struggled to recover from a recession, President Obama utilized funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and rolled out the Race to the Top competitive grant program (Johnson, 2016). This increase of federal influence in education was triggered in large part due to the perceived failures of the educational system and the belief that American students were neither college- nor career-ready (Golden, 2019). Race to the Top was designed to drive change in the United States educational system aiming to better prepare students for college and careers

(Golden, 2019). Under NCLB, states struggled to demonstrate adequate yearly progress and requested waivers to explore other options for school improvement (DuFour et al., 2018). Race to the Top allowed for waivers if states agreed to implement the administration's education initiatives (DuFour et al., 2018).

While NCLB was aimed at intervening with failing schools, Race to the Top faced opposition due in part to its sophisticated data systems and use of student data as part of evaluations; individual teachers and principals now felt they were the target of reform efforts and punitive measures (DuFour et al., 2018; Golden, 2019). In part, this pressure resulted from a shift on relying on the judgment of evaluators to one focused on evidence within evaluation systems (Golden, 2019). In general, these federal initiatives, while providing necessary funds to low-performing schools, also exerted extra pressure and focus on administrators to improve the quality of teaching to continue as the beneficiary of federal funds (Chandler, 2016). Teacher evaluation was brought to the forefront as the mechanism for improving teacher performance for the first time via Race to the Top (Golden, 2019). Race to the Top also required principals who observe and evaluate teachers to receive training, but the program left that process up to local school boards (Golden, 2019).

Every Student Succeeds Act. In 2012, after hearing the concerns of constituents over NCLB's excessive testing mandates, seemingly impossible targets, and overall ineffectiveness, President Obama's administration began assessing NCLB's effectiveness and exploring alternatives (Bonner, 2018). In late 2015, the ESSA was signed into law, effectively scaling back federal mandates and oversight, including standards, testing requirements, and school improvement (Klein, 2016). Under NCLB, if states were

granted waivers for portions of the law, they had to include student performance on standardized tests as part of the teacher evaluation process (Klein, 2016). As Klein (2016) noted, student performance is not required for teacher evaluation under the ESSA.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2016), the major provisions of the ESSA include the following:

- Advances equity by upholding critical protections for America's disadvantaged and high-need students.
- Requires for the first time that all students in America be taught to high academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in college and careers.
- Ensures that vital information is provided to educators, families, students, and communities through annual statewide assessments that measure students' progress toward those high standards.
- Helps to support and grow local innovations – including evidence-based and place-based interventions developed by local leaders and educators consistent with our Investing in Innovation and Promise Neighborhoods.
- Sustains and expands this administration's historic investments in increasing access to high-quality preschool.
- Maintains an expectation that there will be accountability and action to effect positive change in our lowest-performing schools, where groups of students are not making progress, and where graduation rates are low over extended periods of time. (p. 1)

The law also stressed the importance and need for high-quality school leadership by allowing districts to channel federal funds into programs and activities designed to aid in

the growth of quality leaders (Herman et al., 2017). The ESSA (2015) defined school leaders as employees of individual schools or the local education agency tasked with managerial or instructional leadership roles. Within the Title I portion of the ESSA, schools are allowed funding for improving school leadership (Herman et al., 2017).

Teacher Evaluation Models and Responses to Legislation

Before publishing *A Nation at Risk*, teacher observation most closely resembled the clinical supervision model found in the teaching used in the medical field in hospitals (Marzano et al., 2011). As the 20th century ended, the focus began to shift from the qualities teachers possess to student achievement outcomes as the primary measure of teacher effectiveness (Marshall, 2016; Mead et al., 2012). This focus on student achievement at the legislative level spurred the development of Missouri's model evaluation system and the University of Missouri to develop the NEE model (Golden, 2019; Mathus, 2017; University of Missouri, 2019f).

Historical teacher evaluation. The modern method of teacher evaluation implemented over the latter portions of the 20th century can be attributed to Goldhammer's developments in the late 1960s (Marzano et al., 2011). Goldhammer's clinical supervision model consisted of a five-stage process beginning with the pre-observation conference and concluding with the post-observation conference (Marzano et al., 2011). During the pre-observation conference, the teacher identifies the areas of focus for the observation (Mosley, 2018). The primary aim of many traditional systems of observation was to simply evaluate each teacher's classroom performance and aid in decisions for staffing (Chandler, 2016).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Hunter's seven-step framework of an effective lesson became the structure for most evaluation systems, and many current evaluation models still expect alignment to various aspects of Hunter's model today (Golden, 2019; Marzano et al., 2011; White, 2017). In describing summative teacher evaluation, Hunter (1988) stated, "Evaluation should reflect the situational appropriateness and artistry of the teacher's behaviors that have been observed" (p. 35). Hunter (1988) identified the following two purposes of supervision of teachers: to promote growth in providing effective instruction and to evaluate and place teachers along the continuum of unsatisfactory to outstanding.

Framework for teaching. In 1996, Danielson developed the Framework for Teaching, this 22-component model with its system of rating teachers as unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, or distinguished was readily adopted by educational leaders, policymakers, and universities as the model for identifying quality teaching practice (RethinkEd, 2017). Danielson's model was designed to identify a teacher's competence in the classroom by evaluating preparation and ability to plan lessons, development of an effective learning environment, instructional ability, and other professional duties (Golden, 2019; Marzano et al., 2011). This framework became the foundation of the most-thorough approach to evaluating the complex art of teaching to date (Marzano et al., 2011). As Danielson's model gained popularity in the early 2000s, NCLB placed an emphasis on highly qualified teachers (Steinberg & Quinn, 2017).

The widget effect. Up until the current era of American education, teacher evaluation practices were not directly related to evidence of effective instruction; instead, the goal of evaluation was more about decisions about staffing than staff development

(Chandler, 2016; Mead et al., 2012). In the three years immediately following the adoption of Race to the Top, 20 states passed legislation mandating teacher evaluation systems include student achievement measures (Mead et al., 2012). While speaking about teacher effectiveness around the time Race to the Top was implemented, President Obama stated:

> If a teacher is given a chance or two chances or three chances but still does not improve, there is no excuse for that person to continue teaching, I reject a system that rewards failure and protects a person from consequences. The stakes are too high. (as cited in Weisberg et al., 2009, p. 2)

It became clear, first through NCLB and then through President Obama's words regarding Race to the Top, that improvement was not optional; it was mandatory to remain in the teaching profession (DuFour et al., 2018).

One month prior to President Obama announcing the Race to the Top initiative, the New Teacher Project (2010) released one of the most critical reports on the ineffectiveness of teacher evaluation to date. Titled the *Widget Effect*, this report drew national attention to a fundamental problem of traditional evaluation systems: the failure to identify ineffective teaching and the inability of principals and districts to respond to those issues (Weisberg et al., 2009). The report provided recommendations including the creation of a comprehensive evaluation model; training for teachers and principals; integration of components such as professional development, compensation, retention, and termination; and addressing ineffective instruction when identified (The New Teacher Project, 2010). During this time period, researchers began to come to grip with

the fact teachers, much like the students they teach, need to be developed in their understanding of the evolution of instruction (Chandler, 2016).

Measures of effective teaching project. Several months after the announcement of Race to the Top, the Gates Foundation began the Measures of Effective Teaching Project (2010) with the goal to improve the ability to identify effective teachers and to provide a framework for observation systems aimed at providing teachers with feedback. The Measures of Effective Teaching Project (2010) was based on three premises: including student achievement gains as part of the evaluation, additional components related to those gains, and a system of feedback to support the professional development of teachers. These measures were implemented due in part to the idea that much of what policymakers had traditionally focused on when measuring teacher quality did not actually identify teacher effectiveness (Mead et al., 2012). The Measures of Effective Teaching Project's (2010) system of sophisticated student achievement measures faced resistance out of concern that districts, in an effort to save money, would simply rely on a single state assessment for teacher evaluation, not the multiple measures proposed (Marshall, 2016).

The first decade of the 21st century signaled a new direction in U.S. education and policymaking; Race to the Top called for states to design new and rigorous evaluation systems for teachers, and NCLB waivers brought a new focus to teacher effectiveness after decades of inattention (Mead et al., 2012). During the peak of the legislation and policy push, the Measure of Effective Teaching Project pointed out flaws in the system of traditional observations, including failure to accurately assess and provide principals with a clear picture of teachers' instructional ability (Marshall, 2016).

At nearly the same time, the *Widget Effect* study in 2009 pointed to the system's flaw of artificially inflating measures of teacher effectiveness (Marshall, 2016).

Teacher evaluation in Missouri. Missouri first introduced legislation surrounding teacher evaluation with the implementation of state statute 168.125 RSMo (Golden, 2019). The statue placed the requirement on local school boards that every teacher in the district receive a yearly performance-based evaluation (MODESE, 2018). The original purpose of teacher evaluation in Missouri was intended in large part to address educator quality across the state and to ensure equity in both rural and urban areas (Golden, 2019). The statute also required the MODESE (2018) to provide districts with a set of procedures districts could employ for evaluations; the model procedures became available to districts in 1984. According to Golden (2019), this early version of teacher evaluation's purpose was to "ensure that teachers have academic ability and can provide the required standards of competency" (p. 29). This first version of teacher evaluation was named the Missouri Performance-Based Teacher Evaluation Model; it was updated in 1999 and is still one of two models currently available in Missouri (Golden, 2019).

The push from government entities required states and districts to overhaul many of their existing teacher evaluation systems with the objective to assess the instructional impact on students (Mathus, 2017). In June of 2012, Missouri was granted a waiver for NCLB; as part of the waiver, the state had to create a model evaluation system focused on supporting effective leadership and instruction (MODESE, 2013). The waiver included seven principles of the new evaluation system, such as meaningful and

descriptive feedback, evaluator training, and use of the results to make staffing decisions (MODESE, 2013).

Missouri's model evaluation system is founded on the belief that by growing the abilities of teachers, student achievement will improve (MODESE, n.d.). This system is designed to be formative and allow teachers to work in a system that promotes continuous improvement (Golden, 2019). The model is designed to follow a sequence of seven steps (MODESE, n.d.). The steps include the following: a) identification of indicators to be addressed; b) determine a baseline score for the indicators identified for each teacher; c) educator growth plan development; d) monitor and assess student growth data regularly and provide feedback; e) determine the follow up score for each indicator; f) complete the summative evaluation; and g) reflect and plan (MODESE, n.d., p. 4).

With guidance from the seven principles outlined by the MODESE (2013), the process was left up to individual districts to create evaluation systems. Due to requirements set forth in the ESSA and the manner in which the MODESE developed Missouri's Model Evaluation System, both local districts and private entities were entitled to develop models aligned to protocols (Golden, 2019). The College of Education at the University of Missouri, the Heart of Missouri Regional Professional Development Center, and the Assessment Resource Center collaborated to create the NEE to meet the NCLB waiver requirements (University of Missouri, 2019f).

Network for Educator Effectiveness model. The NEE teacher observation model was based on research from several sources including Hattie, Marzano, Danielson, and Marshall, among others (University of Missouri, n.d.). The NEE was developed and maintained by staff and researchers at the University of Missouri-Columbia, and it

provides member districts with a web-based teacher evaluation tool and online professional development (Chandler, 2016). The NEE evaluation tool was designed to align with the Missouri model for teacher evaluations (Chandler, 2016).

The primary purpose of the NEE evaluation system is to provide principals and districts with data on the professional development needs of individual teachers as well as the needs schoolwide (Bergin et al., 2017). Chandler (2016) contended walkthrough observations are only valuable to teachers when teachers believe the purpose is to promote their professional development. The NEE model is aligned with Missouri evaluation standards, and its focus is to provide teachers with feedback for improving instruction by identifying where teachers are currently performing and assisting them with a plan for development (Chandler, 2016).

It is critical for the success of any observation system based upon principal feedback to include an aspect of training and support to develop the principal's ability to provide quality feedback (Balyer & Özcan, 2020; Chandler, 2016). If instruction is to improve via the observation process, the ability of principals to provide effective feedback must continue to be developed (Chandler, 2016). Mathus (2017) speculated that when new observation systems face negative perceptions, it could be due to a lack of training for administrators, especially if principals lack the time the new system requires due to being consumed with the day to day operations of the building.

To use the NEE observation system, principals must be trained annually during the summer; these onsite trainings generally occur in groups of 20 to 30 practicing principals (Bergin et al., 2017). The NEE utilizes an eight-point scale for scoring observations (Bergin et al., 2017). Raters are trained to use the full scale, recognize

various rater errors, and use evidence collected during the observation to increase or decrease the observation rating after beginning at a rating of three (Bergin et al., 2017). Mathus (2017) stated an objective rubric is a non-negotiable for any observation instrument aimed at improving student performance.

As evaluators are trained by NEE staff on look-fors for the various indicators, discussion occurs based on a review of literature about best teaching practices aligned with each indicator to ensure raters are able to perform accurately in the field (Bergin et al., 2017). Using classroom videos during training, evaluators are given an opportunity to practice both the rating of an observation and the providing of feedback, first independently, then as a training group, and finally, the trainer provides the group with feedback on the scoring of the training videos (Bergin et al., 2017). Collaboration with leaders from other buildings allows principals to gain experience and skills necessary to promote innovative and effective instruction (Golden, 2019). All trainees must take a video exam following their training to be qualified to utilize the NEE system (Bergin et al., 2017).

In their study of principals' accuracy of rating observations, Bergin et al. (2017) discovered that during the NEE 2015 summer training, principals demonstrated an overall high accuracy immediately following the training. The researchers attributed this accuracy to the NEE design, which requires all principals to receive an initial three-day training, followed by one-day annual recertification trainings, the eight-point scale with specific look-fors on the rubric, and the lack of a specific score that identifies a teacher as proficient (Bergin et al., 2017). Bergin et al. (2017) found that following face-to-face

training in combination with a high-quality rubric, principals were found to be mostly accurate in their ratings of observations immediately following the training.

Marshall method. Marshall's (2017) method of teacher observation was based on the key practice of principals making short, unscheduled observations followed by face-to-face feedback. Marshall (2017) asserted observation is one of the strongest levers for improving teacher effectiveness because it can reveal effective practices occurring daily in classrooms, unlike traditional teacher evaluation models that make it difficult to address ineffective practices. Chandler (2016) maintained that when the goal is consistently effective teaching, a principal should be able to observe at any point during a lesson, day, or year, not just on the day a formative observation is scheduled.

Marshall (2017) explained traditional methods of evaluation are too time-consuming for principals, the amount of detailed feedback provided to teachers can be overwhelming, and scheduled observations only provide principals with a teacher's optimal performance. Kraft and Gilmour (2016) suggested high-quality observation systems combined with feedback can improve instruction. A non-negotiable trait of the Marshall (2017) method is face-to-face feedback within 24 hours of the observation.

Marshall (2017) suggested his method offers districts the ability to improve instruction, provide teachers with feedback, motivate teachers to perform at their best on a daily basis, and use the results to make informed personnel decisions. The basis for the Marshall method is the mini-observation, because mini-observations allow principals to observe teachers as many as 10 times in a year enabling them to develop an honest appraisal of each teacher's instructional abilities (Marshall & Marshall, 2017). The Marshall (2017) method also includes a short list of look-fors focused on student learning

targets, teaching methods, and formative assessment. Marshall (2017) believed the rubrics and checklists from other observation systems were a hindrance and a distraction for the evaluator. Finally, face-to-face feedback provides for two-way communication so that both the evaluator and teacher can focus on and have a better understanding of the instruction occurring in the classroom (Marshall, 2017).

Leadership Role in Evaluation

According to Kraft and Gilmour (2016), some contend teacher evaluation is aimed at teacher effort that increases via a system of monitoring and accountability, while others view evaluation as a growth mechanism based on a system of feedback, reflection, and analysis of instruction. Donaldson (2016) stated there is significant potential for teacher evaluation to improve teaching and learning. For instruction to improve via the observation of teaching practices, Golden (2019) asserted observation and evaluation must be viewed as two independent practices, requiring great skill by the principal not to confuse the two. Warring (2015) specified teacher evaluation is a key component of increasing teacher quality through continuous professional development. A growing number of researchers believe one key leverage point to improved teacher performance can be realized through the use of effective evaluation of teaching practices (Donaldson, 2016; Golden, 2019).

The transition from management to instructional leadership. Neumerski (2013) found the term *instructional leadership* originated in the 1970s when researchers began to compare effective and ineffective schools to identify schools that successfully educated all students across varied socioeconomic characteristics. Day and Sammons (2016) defined instructional leadership as "establishing clear educational goals, planning

the curriculum, and evaluating teachers and teaching" (p. 20). Boyce and Bowers (2018) found instructional leadership includes principal influence on staff development and impact on school climate.

Beginning in the 1980s, the instructional leadership role began to merge with existing managerial roles and eventually emerged as the centerpiece of the practice of principals (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). During the first 20 years of this century, the notion for the principal to not only manage a building but also be a leader by combining the qualities of transformational leadership and instructional leadership has become the predominant expectation (Day & Sammons, 2016). Day and Sammons (2016) proposed that instructional leadership has a stronger effect than transformational leadership due to its focus on improving teaching and learning in lieu of a focus on relationships with staff. For schools to improve in the current climate, principals must possess the expertise to be instructional leaders (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Kraft and Gilmour (2016) attributed the transition of the role of the principal from manager to instructional leader to evaluation system reforms that abandoned once-yearly observations in favor of systems based upon rubrics, mini-observations, and coaching sessions to convey feedback to teachers. Day and Sammons (2016) identified the difference in concerns for those school leaders who focus on leadership versus management; instructional leaders focus on vision, strategic issues, transformation, ends, people, and doing the right thing. Conversely, leaders with a management focus employ more of a management approach to implementation, operational issues, transactions, means, and systems (Day & Sammons, 2016).

Neumerski (2013) found a common theme among various researchers who identified effective principals as instructional leaders "focused on building school culture, academic press, and high expectations for student achievement" (pp. 9–10). In discussing the evolution of instructional leadership during the early 2000s, Hitt and Tucker (2016) implied:

> Instructional leadership, marked by the reservation of decision making and other power structures for the principal role, came to be regarded as outdated once schools moved away from strict bureaucratic organizational models and school districts began to adopt local control policies. Shared instructional leadership calls for the leader to act as less of an inspector and more of a facilitator of continual teacher growth. (p. 534)

This research signified a shift from focusing on the personal characteristics of school leaders to looking at the behaviors exhibited by quality leaders (Neumerski, 2013).

Feedback. The recent trend in teacher evaluation has moved the principal away from a traditional human resource management and documentation role to one which is more collaborative between teacher and evaluator, focused on coaching for increased performance in terms of classroom instruction (Golden, 2019). DuFour et al. (2018) suggested evaluators should provide teachers with two things: systemic feedback and a support system. Golden (2019) proposed the reason for feedback within an observation system is "to improve the effectiveness of teaching and promote professional growth" (p. 19). Marzano et al. (2011) recognized that one of the most effective avenues for instructional improvement is a system that combines both feedback based on observation and practice in the areas focused on within the feedback.

While researchers have agreed feedback is crucial to teacher improvement, there is limited research on the impact of feedback on teaching and student achievement within an observation system; however, the body of evidence that feedback may lead to improved teaching is slowly growing (Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016; Marshall, 2017; Mathus, 2017). Donaldson (2016) discovered teachers feel the most beneficial aspect of many new observation systems is the opportunity for conversations surrounding feedback and evidence. Cohen and Goldhaber (2016) proposed that to maximize the effectiveness of most formative observation systems, principals must possess the ability to provide accurate feedback.

For principals to address the instructional quality of their buildings, they must observe teachers and provide actionable feedback on instruction (Chandler, 2016). Brownie (2015) maintained, "Meaningful feedback, that should be the goal of any evaluation system worth its salt" (p. 2). Feedback for improving the quality of instruction should be focused, include examples of what quality instruction looks like, require active reflection on the part of the teacher receiving the feedback, and focus on steps necessary to improve student achievement (Chandler, 2016). When teachers are provided feedback within an observation system aimed at improving teacher quality, they must have sufficient time to process and reflect upon the feedback enabling them to develop strategies to improve performance (Mathus, 2017).

In a quality instructional feedback cycle, discussion should include curriculum feedback back and touch on student-teacher relationships and interactions as well as the instructional practices employed in the lesson (Balyer & Özcan, 2020). Regarding the ability of principals to provide adequate feedback to teachers in earlier and more formal

systems, Brownie (2015) speculated, “There’s no way principals who, in most places have only had to do one or two cursory classroom observations per teacher per year, will have the capacity to provide quality feedback to all their teachers every year” (p. 3). Balyer and Özcan (2020) believed administrators conducting observations should not only have a knowledge of the content area they are observing, but also how students learn best in that content area.

Barriers to improving instruction. During the first decade and a half of the 21st century, education policymakers from around the globe began to hold schools more publicly accountable for reforms aimed at improving student achievement (Day & Sammons, 2016). This rise of legislatively driven educational policy reform has added many new responsibilities to the role of the principal (Golden, 2019). Following reports such as the *Widget Effect*, implementation of new evaluation systems in many states revealed various issues including lack of evaluator training, rating inflation, and the inability of principals to provide high-quality feedback (Brownie, 2015). Improving student achievement has become one of the primary forces of educational reform efforts and the primary focus at the district level due to pressure from legislative and executive actions (Chandler, 2016). Inadequate teaching can have a lasting effect on students even once they leave the classroom; students with consistently poor-performing teachers have been shown to earn less over the course of their lifetimes than students with high-performing teachers (Chandler, 2016). Day and Sammons (2016) emphasized school leaders during the 21st century are under increased pressure to prove their efforts impact student achievement.

Cohen and Goldhaber (2016) suggested several barriers to accurate scoring in observation systems, including the relationships principals have with staff and multiple demands on administrator time. Providing teachers with negative feedback following an observation can be a daunting task for administrators (Chandler, 2016). One factor that may minimize the impact of evaluator bias, therefore increasing the reliability of observations, is using multiple evaluators to conduct observations (Brownie, 2015). A failure of principals to master the ability to provide critical feedback will leave teachers trying to decipher the steps necessary for improvement (Chandler, 2016).

Teacher stress has also been found to increase when student achievement measures and high-stakes evaluations are implemented (Donaldson, 2016). White (2018), in a study of a peer support system aimed at improving instruction, found a majority of participants cited planning for instruction as an area of concern and reported finding it difficult to identify resources for curriculum and instruction as their workloads become overloaded. As teacher evaluation models transition to more complex systems, the shift represents a significant change for principals and teachers alike (Brownie, 2015). When a principal provides a teacher with critical feedback, a professional learning culture must be cultivated that allows that teacher the opportunity to improve deficiencies without the fear of the improvement process reflecting negatively during follow-up observations (Chandler, 2016).

In discussing the importance of implementing new evaluation systems and the expectations that come with them, Brownie (2015) argued, “Too often, districts downplay the magnitude of change, and don’t clearly articulate the positive results they hope to garner from teachers and students. They should be transparent about both” (p. 2).

Research involving a new teacher evaluation system suggested participants were dissatisfied with the introduction to and implementation of the system, while having a satisfactory opinion of various components, including professional and student achievement growth measures (Mathus, 2017). Mathus (2017) emphasized that administrators' perceptions differed from the teachers in that they felt very positive in both the implementation and the system's ability to improve instruction and student achievement. In a similar study, Goe et al. (2017) found principal perceptions of a new evaluation system paralleled the concerns of teachers in terms of balancing current workloads with successful implementation of the system.

One barrier to teaching staff having a positive perception of a new evaluation system is a lack of understanding of the system (Mathus, 2017). Goe et al. (2017) found teachers reported perceiving principals as lacking sufficient knowledge about both the evaluation system in place, thereby limiting its effectiveness. For teachers to understand a new evaluation system, communication and consistent implementation among evaluators are essential (Mathus, 2017). Kraft and Gilmour (2016) acknowledged successful implementation of new evaluation systems were dependent teachers taking an active role in the evaluation process Mathus (2017) suggested districts must continuously monitor, evaluate, and adjust observation systems even after the initial implementation phase.

Kraft and Gilmour (2016) suggested inaccurate observations can be a function of lack of training, lack of time, bias on the part of the principal, or inaccurate measures within the instrument. For evaluation to effectively impact instruction, Golden (2019) stated the instrument must be both reliable and valid, and improvement efforts must be

focused on providing teachers meaningful feedback. Bergin et al. (2017) asserted accurate classroom observations do in fact, represent a teacher's true effectiveness, whereas less accurate ones reflect several factors, including inadequate observer training and bias. Inaccurate teacher observations fall short of fulfilling their dual purpose and are also harmful to teachers when they fail to accurately identify both strengths and areas for improvement (Bergin et al., 2017). Furthermore, these issues can have detrimental effects on trust between the staff and principal, can lead to misguided staffing decisions, and can result in inefficient teacher efforts based on inaccurate assessments (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016).

Principal preparation programs provide little in the way of training for the observation of teaching practices and even less on the skills necessary to provide teachers with the clear and actionable feedback necessary to improve instruction; this lack of preparation puts a large burden on the district to ensure principals are equipped for such high-stakes coaching opportunities (Golden, 2019). In a study involving 23 public school teachers from a purposive sample of school districts, Balyer and Özcan (2020) found nearly all participants felt their principal provided less than satisfactory feedback following an observation, with many participants stating that during the follow-up the principal provided them with no new information regarding their instruction or methods for improvement. Changes within evaluation models have revealed the challenge of providing principals with appropriate training, skills, and resources to impact student achievement through improved teaching (Golden, 2019). When post-observation feedback is general in nature, teachers see no benefit in the process (Balyer & Özcan, 2020).

Factors that lead to improved instruction. Chandler (2016) contended when the instructional capacity of the staff members within a building is addressed, one can assume student achievement will improve. Many factors both inside and outside of the school impact student achievement; however, when it comes to school-related factors, the classroom teacher has the greatest impact on student achievement, at a rate nearly two-fold other school factors (Opper, 2019). In schools with teachers skilled at providing instruction, Marzano et al. (2011) found student achievement correlated to the abilities of the teacher, stressing the importance and impact of the abilities of the classroom instructor. The need for improving instruction at low-performing schools is critical, and one of the key levers for improving instruction is the ability of the administrator to provide relevant feedback (Chandler, 2016). Opper (2019) estimated that a highly effective teacher's impact is not limited to the course in which specific students are taught, but the impacts can also be seen in other metrics such as graduation rates and lifetime earnings.

Herman et al. (2017) argued that when states and districts implement evidence-based leadership initiatives, the specific behaviors of principals are changed and can impact various aspects of the school, including improved climate, increased levels of instruction, and increased student achievement. Hitt and Tucker (2016) identified the following five domains within effective leaders: a) establishing and conveying the vision; b) facilitating a high-quality learning experience for students; c) building professional capacity; d) creating a supportive organization for learning; and e) connecting with external partners (p. 542). In a review of quantitative studies from North American, Day and Sammons (2016) concluded effective leadership has a greater influence on student

achievement than all other factors other than the quality of the teacher in the classroom and various socioeconomic factors.

Herman et al. (2017) determined that when activities are focused on improving the leadership capacity of principals, outcomes for both teachers and students improve. Regarding the impact of principals on student learning, Herman et al. (2017) discovered, "There is qualitative and quantitative empirical evidence linking specific actions, competencies, or leadership styles of principals to student outcomes" (p. 26). During the early part of the 21st century, some researchers suggested effective principals blended the ideals of transformational leadership with shared leadership models focused on collaboration, curriculum work, and improving assessment and instruction (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). When leaders are focused on instruction, they are nearly four times more effective in terms of student achievement than those who rely primarily on transformational leadership (Herman et al., 2017).

Day and Sammons (2016) attributed a school leader's influence on student learning to factors that are both direct and indirect. School leaders directly affect student learning by how they establish a school's focus on instruction and how they work with staff (Day & Sammons, 2016). White (2018) pointed out that the formal induction process for most teachers lasts fewer than five years, and once completed there is little in the way of support for teachers, especially in classrooms that require significant amounts of differentiation. Principals have had to take a more active role in developing the teaching staff; this direct work with teachers indirectly impacts students in the areas of motivation, discipline, level of engagement, and focus on learning and academic achievement (Day & Sammons, 2016).

Day and Sammons (2016) found that of the five key leadership dimensions which impact student learning, promoting and participating in teacher learning and development had the highest effect size (0.84). It is via this active role on the part of the principal that teacher observation and evaluation continue to be one of the key levers of improving instruction, especially when incorporating professional development (Golden, 2019). In a shared instructional leadership model, collaboration allows teachers to feel their input is valued, which makes them more willing to become innovative in their instructional practices (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Chandler (2016) proposed that when teachers feel an observation is low-stakes and non-evaluative in nature, they are more likely to expand their instructional practices and attempt new strategies that impact student learning. Mathus (2017) added one factor that must be present to improve student achievement is that teachers should be supported at both the site and district levels when developing innovative instructional strategies.

Summary

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 remained largely unrevised until the NCLB Act of 2001 began an unprecedented era of federal government oversight of public education (DuFour et al., 2018). During the time from 2001 to the present, the federal government intervened in the areas of assessments, standards, and accountability only to have states struggle to meet stringent mandates (Bonner, 2018; Klein, 2016). The federal government reversed course and returned much of the decision-making in these areas back to states and local districts (Bonner, 2018; Klein, 2016). The role of the principal in teacher evaluation rose to the forefront of school improvement (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Neumerski, 2013).

The use of more-frequent observations and the ability of principals to provide feedback for improving instruction have become cornerstones of many current observation models (Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016; Donaldson, 2016; DuFour et al., 2018; Marshall, 2017). Many of these models were created in response to federal government oversight of public education (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). The focus on the principal as an instructional leader has created a challenge for principals to ensure they accurately assess classroom instruction and possess the ability to communicate feedback for the purpose of improving classroom instruction (Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016).

Reform efforts at both the state and federal government levels have in large part led to the changing of evaluation models to improve instruction (Mathus, 2017). Waivers of requirements within these reforms have led states to create new evaluation models (MODESE, 2013). Due to this process, the NEE system was developed in Missouri (Chandler, 2016).

Presented in the review of literature was the role of various pieces of legislation and presidential initiatives during the beginning of the 21st century related to teacher evaluation. Also presented was the evolution of evaluation as a tool to improve instruction. Finally, the role of the principal as an instructional leader and the role of feedback in evaluation were presented.

A thorough description of the methodology of this study is included in Chapter Three. The problem and purpose, the research questions, research design, and population and sample are detailed. The instrumentation, validity and reliability, data collection, and data analysis are described. Finally, ethical considerations are provided.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The intent of this research was to examine the correlation between principals' ability to promote effective instruction and student achievement and to elicit the perceptions of both teachers and principals of the principal's ability to promote effective instruction. Presented in Chapter Three are the problem and purpose as well as the research questions. Additionally, the research design, population and sample, and instrumentation are presented. The data collection and data analysis methods for both quantitative and qualitative data are also included in this chapter. Chapter Three concludes with the ethical considerations and safeguards in place for participants.

Problem and Purpose Overview

A principal's influence on student learning is second only to the influence of the classroom teacher (Leithwood et al., 2004). Mette et al. (2017) contended there is a continued need to study supervision and evaluation practices of principals within highly effective schools as well as the perception of those practices by teachers about how supervision increases student achievement. The task of improving student achievement is based upon the building principal's ability to improve teacher practice (Danielson, 2016).

The purpose of this research was to examine the correlation between the teacher survey component of the NEE data tool as part of the principal's NEE evaluation model data and archival ACT data of high school juniors in Missouri during the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years. Data from the teacher survey component of the NEE data tool were compared to composite ACT data of each high school's juniors to determine if a relationship exists between the two metrics for discerning principal effectiveness. The

NEE indicator analyzed for this study was indicator 2.1, which addresses how the principal promotes effective instruction (University of Missouri, 2019d).

The NEE evaluation model includes many features common in evaluation systems, including short, frequent visits; the opportunity for principals to provide feedback for growth and coaching; and recognition of effective teaching (University of Missouri, 2019d). Kraft and Gilmour (2016) recognized many of today's evaluation reform efforts focus on providing teachers with actionable feedback; however, researchers have not yet distinguished the ability of evaluation systems to both develop teachers and dismiss low-performing ones. The Marshall (2017) method of evaluation shares characteristics with the NEE model. Using short, frequent observations to provide feedback, Marshall (2017) recognized there is not yet evidence that evaluation systems alone improve teacher effectiveness. The purpose of this study was to determine if principals impact student achievement by promoting effective instruction among teachers they observe.

Research questions and hypotheses. The following research questions and hypotheses guided the study:

1. What is the correlation between teachers' perceptions of their high school principal's ability to promote effective instruction and the ACT composite scores of Missouri juniors?

   $H1_0$: There is no correlation between teachers' perceptions of their high school principal's ability to promote effective instruction and the ACT composite scores of Missouri juniors.

$H1_a$: There is a correlation between teachers' perceptions of their high school principal's ability to promote effective instruction and the ACT composite scores of Missouri juniors.

2. What are the perceptions of high school teachers regarding principals providing feedback on effective instruction?

3. What are the perceptions of high school principals regarding their ability to provide feedback on effective instruction?

Research Design

A mixed-methods design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection was used in this study. Employing a mixed-methods design should provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between the two variables (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The first phase of the study was quantitative to examine the relationship between the following two variables: teacher perceptions of the principal's ability to promote effective instruction and student achievement. For the qualitative phase, off-site interviews were conducted to obtain teachers' and principals' perceptions of the principals' ability to promote effective instruction.

The quantitative data included Missouri juniors' composite scores on the ACT collected from the MODESE comprehensive data system website. Additionally, quantitative data included high school principal scores from the teacher survey component of the NEE data tool provided by personnel. The quantitative data were analyzed to answer research question one.

The qualitative portion of this study included interviews with high school teachers and high school principals. An interview process was chosen as the method to collect

qualitative data to ensure responses, clarify questions, and engage in follow-up if needed (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). The responses of the interview participants provided data on the perceptions of teachers and principals relating to the principals' ability to promote effective instruction. The qualitative data were gathered to address research questions two and three.

Population and Sample

The quantitative population for this study included Missouri high school teachers who participated in the teacher survey component of the NEE data tool for their principals. A total of 190 districts in Missouri utilized the teacher survey for principal evaluation during the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years (T. W. Hairston, personal communication, January 23, 2019). The population included approximately 2,537 high school teachers for the 2016–2017 school year and approximately 2,549 high school teachers for the 2017–2018 school year (T. W. Hairston, personal communication, April 10, 2019).

The data from the entire population were available; therefore, a census was utilized as the sampling method (Fraenkel et al., 2019). The data from the teacher survey component of the NEE data tool were combined by building to form a grand mean for each indicator for each building. The sample was then divided into three groups: buildings with one principal conducting teacher observations, buildings with two principals conducting teacher observations, and buildings with three or more principals conducting teacher observations.

All Missouri juniors were required to take the ACT beginning with the class of 2016 and ending with the class of 2018 (ACT, Inc., 2016; Sitter, 2018). The personnel

provided data from the teacher survey component of the NEE data tool for the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years. The years chosen for the study were the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years because both sets of data were available.

The qualitative portion of the research involved a random sample. According to Dobson, Woller-Skar, and Green (2017), "Random sampling reduces bias by ensuring that all individuals or areas under investigation have an equal chance of being sampled" (p. 77). Potential districts were identified based upon their location in the southwest Missouri region listing on the NEE website (University of Missouri, 2019e). Districts were separated into three categories based on the number of principals who conducted observations of teachers. The three categories included the following: (a) small with one principal conducting observations; (b) medium with two principals conducting observations; and (c) large with three or more principals conducting observations. One district from each category was selected.

Once the sample districts are selected and permission was granted by each of the district's superintendents, a list of potential participants was obtained from the high school principal from each district. A random sample of three teachers from each of the participating high schools with at least five years of teaching experience and three or more years in their current buildings was selected. The head principal of each participating high school was selected to be part of the purposive sample for the principal interviews.

Instrumentation

The quantitative portion of this study included data collected from the following two instruments: the teacher survey component of the NEE data tool and the ACT.

Network for Educator Effectiveness teacher survey. The NEE teacher survey is a component of the NEE data tool that allows teachers to provide confidential input on principal performance (University of Missouri, 2019h). It was designed by experts in the area of professional development at the University of Missouri College of Education to provide training and resources to support the growth of teachers and principals (University of Missouri, 2019e). The principal evaluation includes the teacher survey through which teachers rate their principals based on five leader standards (University of Missouri, 2019b). The principal scores are collected by the NEE for the purpose of informing districts and principals of teacher perceptions on the given indicators (University of Missouri, 2019b).

Validity and reliability. Both face validity and content validity are present within the teacher survey component of the NEE data tool (T. W. Hairston, personal communication, April 10, 2019). Face validity is defined as a subjective measure that determines the degree to which a test measures what it is intended to measure (Williams, 2016). The survey questions possess face validity because the questions were written to the NEE leader standards and indicators; responses should accurately measure each specific indicator (T. W. Hairston, personal communication, April 10, 2019).

When creating the teacher survey instrument, the personnel sought feedback on survey questions from educators (T. W. Hairston, personal communication, April 10, 2019). The feedback the personnel received revealed educators reported the survey questions would accurately measure principal effectiveness (T. W. Hairston, personal communication, April 10, 2019). This form of validity is referred to as content-related validity (Fraenkel et al., 2019).

The teacher survey component of the NEE data tool is used exclusively by NEE member districts; however, the University of Missouri has not conducted much research in terms of reliability of the teacher survey (T. W. Hairston, personal communication, April 10, 2019). Several external researchers are currently assessing the teacher survey component of the NEE data tool for reliability, and their work is still ongoing and unpublished (T. W. Hairston, personal communication, April 10, 2019). For purposes of this study, it will be assumed the teacher survey component of the NEE data tool instrument is reliable.

American College Testing exam. The ACT was designed to assess student preparation for college-level work by directly measuring those skills utilized in general instructional programs of high schools and colleges (ACT, Inc., 2017). The ACT battery consists of four achievement tests in the content areas of English, science, reading, and mathematics (ACT, Inc., 2017). The ACT questions are not designed to focus on isolated skills, but rather on complex problem-solving tasks (ACT, Inc., 2017). Scores from the ACT are designed to be interpreted by students, parents, and educators, and the content of these tests is based on areas of core instruction in high schools and colleges (ACT, Inc., 2017).

***Validity and reliability*.** The current form of the ACT was tested for reliability using the alpha coefficient based on five test forms used during the 2015–2016 academic year (ACT, Inc., 2017). The reliability measurements for the scale scores were all relatively high, as the composite, English, and mathematics portions resulted in values over 0.9, and the reading and science portions resulted in values over 0.8 (ACT, Inc., 2017, p. 10.2).

The ACT has several intended purposes including measuring a student's educational achievement (ACT, Inc., 2017). In a 2012 study, the ACT utilized a block-wise regression model to examine the five ACT score categories using high school coursework and grades, non-cognitive factors, and school characteristic information (ACT, Inc., 2017). The 2012 study revealed high school grade point average and coursework accounted for the most variance in scores across all five test categories (ACT, Inc., 2017).

Interviews. For the qualitative portion of this research, interviews were conducted with nine high school teachers and three high school principals from three southwest Missouri high schools. Interviews were conducted in-person with a set of predetermined interview questions. Interview questions were developed using the Marshall (2017) model after reviewing current literature regarding teacher evaluation systems. Marshall's (2017) model was developed to elicit the perceptions of teachers and principals regarding the principal's abilities to promote effective instruction.

***Validity and reliability*.** Interview questions were field-tested by teachers and principals at a local high school not participating in this study and were further developed prior to commencing with interviews. Dikko (2016) stated field testing research instruments within a pilot study can ensure validity is achieved. Field testing the survey questions confirmed the questions were appropriate for collecting accurate and reliable data (Fraenkel et al., 2019).

Data Collection

This study included analysis of archival school data in the form of ACT composite averages, building principals' average scores on the teacher survey component

of the NEE data tool, and interview responses from high school teachers and high school principals. After permission was received from the three superintendents of participating districts (see Appendix A) and approval to conduct research was granted by the Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix B), research commenced.

The ACT data were collected by the MODESE for the purpose of school accountability (MODESE, 2018). An email request (see Appendix C) was made to personnel to provide a list of high schools in Missouri who utilized the teacher survey component of the NEE data tool during the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years. Personnel confirmed they were able to provide the teacher survey scores for the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years (T. W. Hairston, personal communication, November 15, 2018). The data were collected for the ACT from the MODESE public website for each participating district and supplied to the personnel who provided the teacher survey data and then de-identified and paired the two sources of data. The personnel then returned the data for analysis.

For the qualitative portion of the study, interviews were conducted with selected high school teachers and high school principals from participating high schools that use the teacher survey component of the NEE data tool. Interviews were chosen as the appropriate method to collect qualitative data in the form of perceptions of interview participants, as those perceptions are not observable (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Once permission was granted, the high school principals were contacted via email (see Appendix D) to request their participation in the principal interviews. If the high school had more than one principal, the head principal was selected to participate in the

interviews. The email also included a copy of the Research Information Sheet (see Appendix E) and the principal interview questions (see Appendix F). The email included a request for a list of email addresses of all high school teachers who taught in the building at least three years and had at least five years of teaching experience.

Once a list of potential teacher participants was received from each principal, the list was placed in Microsoft Excel. The random number function was used to assign each a number, and the participants were selected in numerical order until three participants from each building were selected. Selected teachers were sent a participation letter (see Appendix G) via email, which included a copy of the Research Information Sheet and the interview questions (see Appendix H). If any of the selected participants were not interested, another participant was randomly selected from the list.

Once 12 interview participants were verified, the interviews were scheduled and conducted either in-person, in a closed office, or by phone with only the researcher and participant present. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Audio and transcription data acquired from this study will be secured for three years. After the three-year time frame, all hard copies, electronic copies, and audio recordings will be destroyed.

Data Analysis

Creswell and Gutterman (2019) stated, "When you have both quantitative and qualitative data, these types of data, together, provide a better understanding of your research problem than either type by itself" (p. 537). Data analysis involved quantitative data, including scores from the teacher survey component of the NEE data tool and archival ACT data of Missouri juniors. A Pearson product-moment correlation (PPMC)

was utilized to indicate the strength of the relationship that exists between the variables. Qualitative measures were also used, including interviews of both teachers and principals and their perceptions of principals promoting effective instruction.

Quantitative analysis. The two variables were evaluated to identify possible relationships using the PPMC. A correlation model was implemented to address the research questions and to identify the strength of the relationship between the two variables—scores from the teacher survey component of the NEE data tool and composite ACT data of Missouri juniors. Bluman (2018) stated, "Statisticians use a measure called the correlation coefficient to determine the strength of the linear relationship between two variables" (p. 533); therefore, a PPMC coefficient was calculated.

***Dependent variable*.** The dependent variable for this study was student achievement. For purposes of this study, student achievement was defined by the mean composite ACT score for Missouri juniors for the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years.

***Independent variable*.** The independent variable for this study was teacher ratings of building principals on the teacher survey component of the NEE data tool. A mean score for all high school principals in a building on each indicator item was utilized. There are seven total mean scores for each high school principal on the NEE Indicator 2.1 – Promoting Effective Instruction.

Qualitative analysis. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Responses were analyzed using coding methods to identify prevalent themes. Creswell and Gutterman (2019) defined coding as "the process of segmenting and labeling text to form

descriptions and broad themes in the data" (p. 242). Open coding was first used to categorize the data from the transcripts (Bergin, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Next, axial coding was used to narrow those categories into prevalent themes (Bergin, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Member-checking by interview respondents was utilized to check for accuracy (Fraenkel et al., 2019).

According to Boudah (2020), triangulation is "using more than one source of information to confirm a concept or idea" (p. 70). This research included both quantitative and qualitative data to answer the research questions. Johnson and Christensen (2020) stated triangulation "builds into your study and research process systematic cross-checking of information and conclusions through the use of multiple procedures or sources" (p. 284). The review of current literature provided in Chapter Two, results from the quantitative data analysis, and the interview data collected provided sufficient sources of information for the triangulation of data.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to conducting the quantitative data collection portion of the study, written permission was received from personnel to utilize the scores of the teacher survey component of the NEE data tool. The personnel provided the teacher survey scores with schools de-identified for the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years (T. W. Hairston, personal communication, November 15, 2018). The ACT data for each district are available to the public on the MODESE comprehensive data system website (MODESE, 2018).

Prior to conducting interviews, all potential participants were provided with a Research Information Sheet, which detailed the purpose of the study, potential risks, and

the option to opt out of the study at any time. All files and audio recordings associated with the interviews will be kept on a secured, password-protected drive for a period of three years and will then be destroyed. Following the transcription of interviews, member-checking was utilized for participants to review the transcripts to ensure accuracy prior to completing transcription.

The names of the schools and participants were not included in the study. Pseudonyms were assigned. Participants were informed that due to the size of the sample, they may be recognized based on their comments even with safeguards in place.

Summary

This mixed-methods study was designed to identify the strength of the relationship between teacher survey scores of principals and student achievement using correlational research. Chapter Three included the problem and purpose overview and a restatement of the research questions. The research design was described. A description of the population and each sample was detailed. The instruments used in this study were described, including the validity and reliability of each. Procedures for data collection and analysis were detailed. Finally, ethical considerations, including safeguards for participants, were presented.

Chapter Four includes a presentation of the data collected. The quantitative data used to answer research question one are provided. The qualitative data related to research questions two and three conclude the chapter.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to determine if principals who are adept at promoting effective instruction as building leaders impact student achievement, as measured by the ACT, as well as to elicit the perceptions of teachers and principals about the principal's ability to utilize the feedback process to improve instruction in the classroom. Researchers have established that the classroom teacher has the biggest impact on student achievement, followed by the principal having the second-largest effect (Leithwood et al., 2004). Recent educational reformists have pointed to teacher evaluation, including growth influenced by evaluation feedback, as a means of improving instructional quality (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Ensuring students are taught by effective teachers continues to be at the forefront of educational policy and legislation (Finnegan, 2016).

This research was completed through a mixed-methodology study. Molina-Azorin (2016), in describing the benefits of employing a mixed-methodology study, stated, "better understanding can be obtained by triangulating one set of results with another and thereby enhancing the validity of inferences" (p. 37). This mixed-method approach included archival data from the MODESE website and the NEE for the quantitative phase and interview data for the qualitative phase.

The qualitative data were collected through interviews of three teachers and the lead principals from each of three high schools in the southwest region of the NEE. Participants were interviewed, and responses were recorded on a digital recorder. After the interviews were completed, recordings from the interviews were transcribed. Open coding was used multiple times to label similar words and phrases found in the transcripts

so that it was possible to organize them into broad thematic domains (Williams & Moser, 2019). Once the open coding was complete, the data were sorted using axial coding to organize data from the transcripts into distinct themes (Williams & Moser, 2019). The data collected are presented in Chapter Four.

Research Question One

What is the correlation between teachers' perceptions of their high school principal's ability to promote effective instruction and the ACT composite scores for Missouri juniors?

To answer research question one, a correlational coefficient was calculated using the PPMC to determine the strength of the linear relationship between the independent variable of teachers' perceptions of the principal's ability to promote effective instruction and the dependent variable of student achievement. A PPMC was chosen as the method to measure the relationship between the two variables as it measures both the strength and direction of that relationship (Bluman, 2018). The PPMCs were applied to each of the seven indicators, for each of the two study years, and the data are presented based on the following categories: (a) small with one principal conducting observations; (b) medium with two principals conducting observations; and (c) large with three or more principals conducting observations.

NEE indicator 2.1.a. This principal demonstrates a deep understanding of effective instruction.

A PPMC (Pearson *r*) was calculated to assess the relationship between the mean of teachers' perceptions of principals on the NEE teacher survey instrument item 2.1.a for buildings with one principal conducting observations and student achievement as

measured by the composite ACT scores for the junior class for the 2016–2017 school year. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(8) = .25$, $p = .486$ (r-critical = .632, $\alpha = .05$). A second PPMC was calculated for buildings with two principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(14) = .27$, $p = .310$ (r-critical = .497, $\alpha = .05$). A third PPMC was calculated for buildings with three or more principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(37) = .20$, $p = .233$ (r-critical = .325, $\alpha = .05$) (see Table 1).

Table 1

NEE Teacher Survey Item 2.1.a 2016–2017 School Year

Number of Administrators Conducting Observations	Mean of Teacher Perceptions	ACT Composite				
	M	*M*	*n*	*r*	*df*	*p*
1	2.28	18.49	10	0.25	8	0.486
2	2.40	19.34	16	0.27	14	0.310
≥ 3	2.42	19.77	39	0.20	37	0.233

Note. Statistical significance is noted at $p < .05$.

NEE indicator 2.1.b. This principal expects me to provide effective instruction for student achievement.

A PPMC (Pearson *r*) was calculated to assess the relationship between the mean of teachers' perceptions of principals on the NEE teacher survey instrument item 2.1.b for buildings with one principal conducting observations and student achievement as measured by the composite ACT scores for the junior class for the 2016–2017 school year. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(8) = .11$, $p = .762$ (r-critical = .632, $\alpha = .05$). A second PPMC was calculated for buildings with two principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(14) = .17$, $p = .529$ (r-critical = .497, $\alpha = .05$). A third PPMC was calculated for buildings with three or more principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(37) = .48$, $p = .002$ (r-critical = .325, $\alpha = .05$) (see Table 2).

Table 2

NEE Teacher Survey Item 2.1.b 2016–2017 School Year

Number of Administrators Conducting Observations	Mean of Teacher Perceptions	ACT Composite				
	M	*M*	*n*	*r*	*df*	*p*
1	2.60	18.49	10	0.11	8	0.762
2	2.67	19.34	16	0.17	14	0.529
≥ 3	2.68	19.77	39	0.48	37	0.002

Note. Statistical significance is noted at $p < .05$.

NEE indicator 2.1.c. This principal provides specific feedback to me regarding ways my teaching can improve (i.e., focused, detailed, concrete).

A PPMC (Pearson *r*) was calculated to assess the relationship between the mean of teachers' perceptions of principals on the NEE teacher survey instrument item 2.1.c for buildings with one principal conducting observations and student achievement as measured by the composite ACT scores for the junior class for the 2016–2017 school year. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(8) = .35$, $p = .328$ (r-critical = .632, $\alpha = .05$). A second PPMC was calculated for buildings with two principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(14) = .27$, $p = .321$ (r-critical = .497, $\alpha = .05$). A third PPMC was calculated for buildings with three or more principals conducting

observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(37) = .32$, $p = .047$(r–critical = .325, $\alpha = .05$) (see Table 3).

Table 3

NEE Teacher Survey Item 2.1.c 2016–2017 School Year

Number of Administrators Conducting Observations	Mean of Teacher Perceptions	ACT Composite				
	M	*M*	*n*	*r*	*df*	*p*
1	2.25	18.49	10	0.35	8	0.328
2	2.34	19.34	16	0.27	14	0.321
≥ 3	2.35	19.77	39	0.32	37	0.047

Note. Statistical significance is noted at $p < .05$.

NEE teacher indicator 2.1.d. This principal provides specific feedback to me regarding areas of strength in my teaching (i.e., focused, detailed, concrete).

A PPMC (Pearson *r*) was calculated to assess the relationship between the mean of teachers' perceptions of principals on the NEE teacher survey instrument item 2.1.d for buildings with one principal conducting observations and student achievement as measured by the composite ACT scores for the junior class for the 2016–2017 school year. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(8) = .21$, $p = .565$ (r-critical = .632, $\alpha = .05$). A second PPMC was calculated for buildings

with two principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(14) = .14$, $p = .595$ (r-critical = .497, $\alpha = .05$). A third PPMC was calculated for buildings with three or more principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(37) = .23$, $p = .166$(r-critical = .325, $\alpha = .05$) (see Table 4).

Table 4

NEE Teacher Survey Item 2.1.d 2016–2017 School Year

Number of Administrators Conducting Observations	Mean of Teacher Perceptions	ACT Composite				
	M	*M*	*n*	*r*	*df*	*p*
1	2.28	18.49	10	0.21	8	0.565
2	2.39	19.34	16	0.14	14	0.595
≥ 3	2.45	19.77	39	0.23	37	0.116

Note. Statistical significance is noted at $p < .05$.

NEE indicator 2.1.e. This principal provides useful and relevant feedback to me regarding areas of strength in my teaching.

A PPMC (Pearson *r*) was calculated to assess the relationship between the mean of teachers' perceptions of principals on the NEE teacher survey instrument item 2.1.e for buildings with one principal conducting observations and student achievement as

measured by the composite ACT scores for the junior class for the 2016–2017 school year. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(8) = .26$, $p = .475$ (r-critical = .632, $\alpha = .05$). A second PPMC was calculated for buildings with two principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(14) = .24$, $p = .378$ (r-critical = .497, $\alpha = .05$). A third PPMC was calculated for buildings with three or more principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(37) = .25$, $p = .122$ (r-critical = .325, $\alpha = .05$) (see Table 5).

Table 5

NEE Teacher Survey Item 2.1.e 2016–2017 School Year

Number of Administrators Conducting Observations	Mean of Teacher Perceptions	ACT Composite				
	M	*M*	*n*	*r*	*df*	*p*
1	2.20	18.49	10	0.26	8	0.475
2	2.36	19.34	16	0.24	14	0.378
≥ 3	2.42	19.77	39	0.25	37	0.122

Note. Statistical significance is noted at $p < .05$.

NEE indicator 2.1.f. This principal provides useful and relevant feedback to me regarding ways my teaching can improve.

A PPMC (Pearson *r*) was calculated to assess the relationship between the mean of teachers' perceptions of principals on the NEE teacher survey instrument item 2.1.f for buildings with one principal conducting observations and student achievement as measured by the composite ACT scores for the junior class for the 2016–2017 school year. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(8) = .28$, $p = .427$ (r-critical = .632, $\alpha = .05$). A second PPMC was calculated for buildings with two principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(14) = .19$, $p = .475$ (r-critical = .497, $\alpha = .05$). A third PPMC was calculated for buildings with three or more principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(37) = .24$, $p = .140$ (r-critical = .325, $\alpha = .05$) (see Table 6).

Table 6

NEE Teacher Survey Item 2.1.f 2016–2017 School Year

Number of Administrators Conducting Observations	Mean of Teacher Perceptions	ACT Composite				
	M	*M*	*n*	*r*	*df*	*p*
1	2.22	18.49	10	0.28	8	0.427
2	2.00	19.34	16	0.19	14	0.475
≥ 3	2.35	19.77	39	0.24	37	0.140

Note. Statistical significance is noted at $p < .05$.

NEE indicator 2.1.g. This principal provides useful and relevant feedback to me regarding ways my teaching can improve.

A PPMC (Pearson *r*) was calculated to assess the relationship between the mean of teachers' perceptions of principals on the NEE teacher survey instrument item 2.1.g for buildings with one principal conducting observations and student achievement as measured by the composite ACT scores for the junior class for the 2016–2017 school year. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(8) = .50$, $p = .137$ (r-critical = .632, $\alpha = .05$). A second PPMC was calculated for buildings with two principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(14) = .11$, $p = .687$ (r-critical = .497, $\alpha = .05$). A third PPMC was calculated for buildings with three or more principals conducting

observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(37) = .36$, $p = .022$ (r-critical = .325, $\alpha = .05$) (see Table 7).

Table 7

NEE Teacher Survey Item 2.1.g 2016–2017 School Year

Number of Administrators Conducting Observations	Mean of Teacher Perceptions	ACT Composite				
	M	*M*	*n*	*r*	*df*	*p*
1	2.22	18.49	10	0.50	8	0.137
2	2.36	19.34	16	0.11	14	0.687
≥ 3	2.37	19.77	39	0.36	37	0.022

Note. Statistical significance is noted at $p < .05$.

NEE indicator 2.1.a. This principal demonstrates a deep understanding of effective instruction.

A PPMC (Pearson *r*) was calculated to assess the relationship between the mean of teachers' perceptions of principals on the NEE teacher survey instrument item 2.1.a for buildings with one principal conducting observations and student achievement as measured by the composite ACT scores for the junior class for the 2017–2018 school year. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(8) = .73$, $p = .018$ (r-critical = .632, $\alpha = .05$). A second PPMC was calculated for buildings

with two principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(14) = .30$, $p = .267$ (r-critical = .497, $\alpha = .05$). A third PPMC was calculated for buildings with three or more principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(37) = .04$, $p = .797$ (r-critical = .325, $\alpha = .05$) (see Table 8).

Table 8

NEE Teacher Survey Item 2.1.a 2017–2018 School Year

Number of Administrators Conducting Observations	Mean of Teacher Perceptions	ACT Composite				
	M	*M*	*n*	*r*	*df*	*p*
1	2.38	18.27	10	0.73	8	0.018
2	2.44	19.13	16	0.30	14	0.267
≥ 3	2.42	19.23	39	0.04	37	0.797

Note. Statistical significance is noted at $p < .05$.

NEE indicator 2.1.b. This principal expects me to provide effective instruction for student achievement.

A PPMC (Pearson *r*) was calculated to assess the relationship between the mean of teachers' perceptions of principals on the NEE teacher survey instrument item 2.1.b for buildings with one principal conducting observations and student achievement as

measured by the composite ACT scores for the junior class for the 2017–2018 school year. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(8) = .68$, $p = .030$ (r-critical = .632, $\alpha = .05$). A second PPMC was calculated for buildings with two principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(14) = .54$, $p = .032$ (r-critical = .497, $\alpha = .05$). A third PPMC was calculated for buildings with three or more principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(37) = .31$, $p = .051$ (r-critical = .325, $\alpha = .05$) (see Table 9).

Table 9

NEE Teacher Survey Item 2.1.b 2017–2018 School Year

Number of Administrators Conducting Observations	Mean of Teacher Perceptions	ACT Composite				
	M	*M*	*n*	*r*	*df*	*P*
1	2.38	18.27	10	0.68	8	0.030
2	2.44	19.13	16	0.54	14	0.032
≥ 3	2.42	19.23	39	0.31	37	0.051

Note. Statistical significance is noted at $p < .05$.

NEE indicator 2.1.c. This principal provides specific feedback to me regarding ways my teaching can improve (i.e., focused, detailed, concrete).

A PPMC (Pearson *r*) was calculated to assess the relationship between the mean of teachers' perceptions of principals on the NEE teacher survey instrument item 2.1.c for buildings with one principal conducting observations and student achievement as measured by the composite ACT scores for the junior class for the 2017–2018 school year. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(8) = .61$, $p = .062$ (r-critical = .632, $\alpha = .05$). A second PPMC was calculated for buildings with two principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(14) = .52$, $p = .041$ (r-critical = .497, $\alpha = .05$). A third PPMC was calculated for buildings with three or more principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(37) = .17$, $p = .309$ (r-critical = .325, $\alpha = .05$) (see Table 10).

Table 10

NEE Teacher Survey Item 2.1.c 2017–2018 School Year

Number of Administrators Conducting Observations	Mean of Teacher Perceptions	ACT Composite				
	M	*M*	*n*	*r*	*df*	*p*
1	2.38	18.27	10	0.61	8	0.062
2	2.44	19.13	16	0.52	14	0.041
≥ 3	2.42	19.23	39	0.17	37	0.309

Note. Statistical significance is noted at $p < .05$.

NEE indicator 2.1.d. This principal provides specific feedback to me regarding areas of strength in my teaching (i.e., focused, detailed, concrete).

A PPMC (Pearson *r*) was calculated to assess the relationship between the mean of teachers' perceptions of principals on the NEE teacher survey instrument item 2.1.d for buildings with one principal conducting observations and student achievement as measured by the composite ACT scores for the junior class for the 2017–2018 school year. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(8) = .69$, $p = .027$ (r-critical = .632, $\alpha = .05$). A second PPMC was calculated for buildings with two principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(14) = .40$, $p = .120$ (r-critical = .497, $\alpha = .05$). A third PPMC was calculated for buildings with three or more principals conducting

observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(37) = .15$, $p = .360$ (r-critical = .325, $\alpha = .05$) (see Table 11).

Table 11

NEE Teacher Survey Item 2.1.d 2017–2018 School Year

Number of Administrators Conducting Observations	Mean of Teacher Perceptions	ACT Composite				
	M	*M*	*n*	*r*	*df*	*p*
1	2.38	18.27	10	0.69	8	0.027
2	2.44	19.13	16	0.40	14	0.120
≥ 3	2.42	19.23	39	0.15	37	0.360

Note. Statistical significance is noted at $p < .05$.

NEE indicator 2.1.e. This principal provides useful and relevant feedback to me regarding areas of strength in my teaching.

A PPMC (Pearson *r*) was calculated to assess the relationship between the mean of teachers' perceptions of principals on the NEE teacher survey instrument item 2.1.e for buildings with one principal conducting observations and student achievement as measured by the composite ACT scores for the junior class for the 2017–2018 school year. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(8) = .35$, $p = .319$ (r-critical = .632, $\alpha = .05$). A second PPMC was calculated for buildings

with two principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(14) = .32$, $p = .232$ (r-critical = .497, $\alpha = .05$). A third PPMC was calculated for buildings with three or more principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(37) = .13$, $p = .422$ (r-critical = .325, $\alpha = .05$) (see Table 12).

Table 12

NEE Teacher Survey Item 2.1.e 2017–2018 School Year

Number of Administrators Conducting Observations	Mean of Teacher Perceptions	ACT Composite				
	M	*M*	*n*	*r*	*df*	*p*
1	2.38	18.27	10	0.35	8	0.319
2	2.44	19.13	16	0.32	14	0.232
≥ 3	2.42	19.23	39	0.13	37	0.422

Note. Statistical significance is noted at $p < .05$.

NEE indicator 2.1.f. This principal provides useful and relevant feedback to me regarding ways my teaching can improve.

A PPMC (Pearson *r*) was calculated to assess the relationship between the mean of teachers' perceptions of principals on the NEE teacher survey instrument item 2.1.f for buildings with one principal conducting observations and student achievement as

measured by the composite ACT scores for the junior class for the 2017–2018 school year. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(8) = .63$, $p = .051$ (r-critical = .632, $\alpha = .05$). A second PPMC was calculated for buildings with two principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(14) = .49$, $p = .056$ (r-critical = .497, $\alpha = .05$). A third PPMC was calculated for buildings with three or more principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(37) = .14$, $p = .401$ (r-critical = .325, $\alpha = .05$) (see Table 13).

Table 13

NEE Teacher Survey Item 2.1.f 2017–2018 School Year

Number of Administrators Conducting Observations	Mean of Teacher Perceptions	ACT Composite				
	M	*M*	*n*	*r*	*df*	*p*
1	2.38	18.27	10	0.63	8	0.051
2	2.44	19.13	16	0.49	14	0.056
≥ 3	2.42	19.23	39	0.14	37	0.401

Note. Statistical significance is noted at $p < .05$.

NEE indicator 2.1.g. This principal typically provides me with face-to-face feedback within two working days of observing my classroom.

A PPMC (Pearson *r*) was calculated to assess the relationship between the mean of teachers' perceptions of principals on the NEE teacher survey instrument item 2.1.g for buildings with one principal conducting observations and student achievement as measured by the composite ACT scores for the junior class for the 2017–2018 school year. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(8) = -.09$, $p = .809$ (r-critical = .632, $\alpha = .05$). A second PPMC was calculated for buildings with two principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(14) = .39$, $p = .173$ (r-critical = .497, $\alpha = .05$). A third PPMC was calculated for buildings with three or more principals conducting observations. The resulting correlational coefficient revealed there was not a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals and student achievement, $r(37) = .10$, $p = .561$ (r-critical = .325, $\alpha = .05$) (see Table 14).

Table 14

NEE Teacher Survey Item 2.1.g 2017–2018 School Year

Number of Administrators Conducting Observations	Mean of Teacher Perceptions	ACT Composite				
	M	*M*	*n*	*r*	*df*	*p*
1	2.38	18.27	10	-0.09	8	0.809
2	2.44	19.13	16	0.39	14	0.173
≥ 3	2.42	19.23	39	0.10	37	0.561

Note. Statistical significance is noted at $p < .05$.

Research Questions Two and Three

To investigate the perceptions of teachers and principals regarding the principal's ability to provide feedback to promote effective instruction, interviews were conducted to address the second and third research questions of the study:

What are the perceptions of high school teachers regarding principals providing feedback on effective instruction?

What are the perceptions of high school principals regarding their ability to provide feedback on effective instruction?

The interview participants included three randomly selected teachers from three randomly selected school districts in the southwest region of the NEE. The lead building principal of each high school was selected as the purposive sample for the principal interview. Teacher participants were asked seven questions, and principal participants were asked 10 questions regarding perceptions of methods of observation, principals

promoting effective instruction, feedback from observations, and principals as instructional leaders. Interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. Teacher participants were assigned alphanumeric codes to ensure anonymity for the district and personnel. For example, participants from District 1 were referred to as Participant 1A, Participant 1B, and Participant 1C. Principal participants were assigned a number code corresponding with their district. For example, the principal of District 1 was referred to as Principal 1.

Teacher interview question one. How long have you been a high school teacher, and of those years, how many were spent in your current building?

Teacher participants reported having varied years of teaching experience. All met the criteria of having at least five years of teaching experience. All teacher participants also reported having three or more years of experience in their current buildings.

Principal interview question one. How long have you been a high school principal, and of those years, how many were spent in your current building?

Principal participants reported varied years of administrative experience. All reported having met the criteria of having at least five years of experience as the lead principal in their current buildings. Principal participants also reported on their total number of years in administration (see Table 15).

Table 15

Participants' Years of Experience

Participant	Years in Current Building	Overall Years of Teaching Experience
Participant 1A	5	5
Participant 1B	6	10
Participant 1C	9	9
Participant 2A	13	13
Participant 2B	11	14
Participant 2C	17	24
Participant 3A	20	29
Participant 3B	7	7
Participant 3C	16	20
Principal 1	7	7
Principal 2	5	16
Principal 3	8	8

Teacher interview question two. What types of observations (formal, scheduled, and of longer duration; or unscheduled, shorter, and more frequent) do you feel are most valuable, and how many of each type are necessary for instructional improvement? Why?

A majority of teacher participants responded they prefer shorter, unscheduled observations, while also expressing the merit of longer observations. Participant 1C described the benefit of the shorter observation as being "less stressful." Participant 1C continued:

> I think it is most valuable because they are popping in on whatever kind of day, but they are getting data you have not prepared for, so I feel it is a little better snippet of what I teach like.

Participant 2A explained how shorter, unscheduled observations provide more of a realistic depiction of the classroom on a daily basis:

> I prefer unscheduled, mainly because I feel like if it was scheduled I would try to prepare my kids. I would try to prepared myself more for the principal coming in, and I would want him to see exactly everything he was looking for. I think it is more genuine, and the kids are not prepared for it.

Similarly, Participant 2B preferred shorter, unscheduled observations, because longer observations "don't give the evaluator a true vision of what goes on, on a daily basis in that particular classroom."

Participant 1A discussed the impact of the principal on the classroom during an observation:

> I feel the most valuable would be the shorter, frequent ones. I would say that because I think as the principal is a consistent presence in the classrooms and in the building tends to make a large impact on student behavior, effort, and achievement. I think that consistency in those shorter visits is a benefit.

According to Participant 3B, during shorter, unscheduled observations, "you get more of a genuine test of the classroom climate." Participant 3B also recognized the value in longer observations; during longer periods of time in the classroom, principals could more accurately assess the question, "Does that teacher possess the capacity to have really nice, fully constructed lesson?"

Participants 3A and 3C stated they see value in and would prefer both types of observation. They responded that shorter observations are more valuable for newer teachers, but veteran teachers need fewer shorter, unscheduled observations and can

benefit from longer, more formal visits. In discussing the merits of a longer, scheduled observation, Participant 3A stated, "I find value for myself in them getting to see the transitions from one thing to the next within the lesson."

Responses regarding the number of observations ranged among participants. Participant 2C responded with a minimum number of observations valuable for instructional improvement of at least four per year. Participants 2A and 3A responded six would be appropriate, and Participant 1B responded with the highest number from teacher participants with eight.

Teacher interview question three. In what ways might a principal support a teacher in providing effective instruction for student achievement?

Multiple participants from all three districts agreed principals should be able to identify and locate resources, including professional development, webinars, books, and instructional strategies for teachers. Participants 2B and 3A both identified the ability in principals to build upon teachers' strengths as a skill that helps principals support teachers. Participant 2B noted, "I think encouraging teachers to attend professional development either in their specific content area, or offering professional development in areas where the principal sees the teacher may be needing some improvement." Participant 3C responded similarly and also recognized the importance of making building funds available to support professional development activities.

Participants 1A and 2C both stated the importance of the principal's interactions with students. According to Participant 1A, principals "set that tone for the climate of the school." Participant 2C set forth that principals support teachers by "being interested in

what is going on in your class and finding out what the kids are doing and how they are doing." Participant 2C further explained:

> The principal can support teachers by finding out what is going on in class, asking questions, meeting with them, talking to them, and by checking in and seeing what is going on in the class. And I think that helps the teacher stay focused on the kids, too.

Participant 1A also felt the consistent presence of the principal helps increase student engagement, which in turn leads to more effective instruction.

Teacher interview question four. In what ways do principals demonstrate a deep understanding of instructional strategies?

Several participants recognized that modeling instructional strategies during faculty meetings, professional development meetings, or in classroom settings is a manner in which principals can demonstrate an understanding of instructional strategies. Participant 1B stated:

> I am continually impressed by administrators who, if they are able to considering the size of the school, maintain an instructional presence in the classroom regardless if it's just for one class. I'm also impressed with administrators who, even if they're not teaching high school, do some sort of continuing education and teach on the college level.

Participant 2C agreed and reflected, "When principals themselves use the instructional strategies, that tells you, as the teacher, that they understand those strategies."

Several other participants, including Participants 2A, 3A, and 3C, stated that during observational feedback is a time they expect to see a principal demonstrate his or

her knowledge of instructional strategies. According to Participant 2A, "Principals should be able to give feedback on the instructional practices without having to get bogged down in the material. I think that can be challenging, but a good administrator should be able to that." Participant 3C described the characteristic of a principal who demonstrates "a conversational aspect when you're discussing the observation." Participants 1C, 2B, and 3B discussed the ability of principals to provide targeted and focused instructional strategies to teachers via email, newsletters, or faculty meetings.

Teacher interview question five. With regard to feedback from NEE observations, in what ways could a principal provide feedback to teachers in a more effective manner?

Nearly all participants reported being mostly satisfied with the feedback in the NEE system. Participants 1A, 2B, 3A, and 3C all felt the face-to-face follow-up is the most valuable method. Several reported the ability to ask follow-up questions and work collaboratively to discuss strategies for improvement as the rationale for face-to-face feedback being the preferred method. Participant 1B stated face-to-face feedback in a timely manner is preferable if the observation reveals an area that requires significant improvement.

Participants 1A, 1B, 1C, 2B, and 3C all stated they find value in thorough comments regarding the feedback from the observation. Several stated this allows the follow-up face-to-face conversation to be more productive, while others felt that when feedback is thorough, a follow-up conversation is not warranted. Comparing both the numerical rating and comments, Participant 2B explained:

> I think it is really essential, whatever level a principal is evaluating a teacher at to leave a comment on why a teacher is receiving a particular rating. This tells us what we are doing well on, what we can improve upon, and what we need to do to reach the next level. Face-to-face also provides an opportunity for the teacher to dialogue with the principal so that if the teacher wants them to elaborate on the comments, that opportunity is there.

Participants 3A and 3B both stated the numerical score given on each indicator in an observation report can, at times, be a barrier to receiving feedback. Participant 2C explained:

> I know that there are indicators that we have to select, but sometimes you might have a lesson that would indicate other strengths not being looked at, because those are not the indicators selected. I wish there was a way for principals to say maybe this indicator was not so great, but this standard we are not looking for you did really well on.

Participant 2C was the only participant to report not receiving feedback in a timely manner.

Teacher interview question six. In what ways do teachers view principals as instructional leaders?

Participant responses varied widely in terms of principals as instructional leaders. Participants 1A, 2B, 3A, and 3B cited the setting of the tone, climate, and focus for the building. Participant 2B described the role of the principal as an instructional leader:

> Principals set the tone for the entire building regarding expectations of the academic environment. What they set as their standards and what they also allow

> teachers to get away with is one aspect of instructional leadership. I also view the principal as the primary data guru with the responsibility of sharing results so that teachers can use that to guide their lesson planning and assessment.

Participant 3A emphasized the importance of goal setting: "I like having a couple of overarching goals that come from administration so that we can all work towards them." Participant 3B emphasized the importance of the principal setting an education-centered tone, not one of just making sure students get by.

Participants 1C, 2A, 2C, and 3C all recognized the principal should both be a resource and have the ability to provide resources for teachers to improve. According to Participant 3C:

> Early in my career, principals were seen as administrative, managerial, disciplinary, financial, scheduling, and all of that mess. But I think that is changing. Our principal has switched our faculty meetings to be more instructional. We always have one or two times in a meeting where a teacher presents on something they are doing in their classroom. And I think this role is not only rearranging that meeting but to include professional development at other times as well. I think that shows he is changing more as an instructional leader than just a numbers and scheduling kind of role.

The ability to develop new and emerging teachers was presented as a desirable characteristic by Participants 1C and 2C.

Teacher interview question seven. In your opinion, what are the most important qualities building principals should possess as instructional leaders?

Participant perceptions varied widely in response to this question. Several participants responded that consistency in both the expectations set for teachers and in how principals support teachers is an important quality for principals to possess. Participants 2A, 3A, 3B, and 3C all referenced communication as an important trait, including both the articulation of goals to staff but also in the ability to listen. Participant 2A stated, "I want them to be a good communicator. Whether it is something you want to hear or something you don't. They come with both the good and the bad, but that listening part goes in there for communication." Participant 2C acknowledged:

> I think they have to be approachable, and I think they have to have a clear goal for a series of actions that they want to achieve. They have to be able to communicate that clearly to the faculty and students to be able to achieve that.

Other comments relating to instructional knowledge included keeping up on trends, knowing what good instruction looks like, and setting high standards and clear goals.

Principal interview question two. What types of observations (formal, scheduled, and of longer duration; or unscheduled, shorter, and more frequent) do you feel are most valuable, and why?

Principals 1, 2, and 3 all responded they prefer shorter, unscheduled observations. Principal 1 stated, "I think they are more valuable because you see teachers when they are not expecting you, so it is a more normal function." Principal 3 described the perceived benefits and barriers of shorter, more frequent observations:

> I think probably unscheduled, shorter, more frequent. The more you're in the room, the better. Because I think you get a better picture of what's really going on. The reality is we would like to be in the room longer, but in this job it's very

> difficult. So, whenever I get an opportunity and I can take five to 10 minutes, it's nice to just pop in. And then I think the biggest value of these is the fact that they know you're going to be in there.

Principal 2 stated that to ensure principals do not let other duties interfere with observations, they schedule their own time for observations, but the observations are unscheduled for teachers.

Principal interview question three. In your opinion, how many of each type of observation are necessary for instructional improvement?

Principal responses varied. Principal 1 stated:

> I think it varies. I think if you have a teacher that's obviously been observed for years, they're really good at it. I don't think you have to observe them probably as much if you have to a teacher who struggled, and I think it takes the teachers like here, if I have a teacher who I think may be struggling a little bit, I usually try to do two to three a month. With somebody who I know is knocking out of the park, if I get in there once a month, that's usually pretty good. I think it varies from teacher to teacher. If you really tried to make a lot of improvement, I think it has to be at least two to three times a month.

Principal 2 reported:

> When I first started as an administrator, we ended up with, with two formatives and a summative, but they were full class period. And so, if you take the amount of time that you do with six to eight, you're spending about the same amount of time.

Principal 3 responded with a range of six to eight and stated, “I just think as many times as you can get in there as possible. You don’t always have to write stuff down, but that you’re just seeing what’s going on and getting some feedback when you see things.”

Principal interview question four. In what ways might you support a teacher in providing effective instruction for student achievement?

Principals 1 and 3 both identified local resources. Principal 1 matches all new teachers with a buddy or mentor. According to Principal 1:

> We do a lot in our post-observation conferences, talking about different strategies and methods for most of my younger teachers. And if I see one or two areas that could really help, we’ll focus on one, maybe two specific instructional strategies, and we’ll hammer that down.

Principal 1 also pointed out it is important to use workshops, conferences, or Edhub as resources for teachers to improve instruction. Principal 3 emphasized utilizing instructional coaches for teachers who need improvement. Describing expectations, Principal 2 stated:

> For effective instruction, the kids have to know what is expected, the PLC model of what do we expect teachers and students to know. I want to know that the learning objective is there every day for kids. It’s not a guessing game.

Principal 2 characterized setting consistent instructional expectations and goal setting throughout the building as a method to ensure effective instruction throughout the building.

Principal interview question five. In what ways do you demonstrate a deep understanding of instructional strategies?

Principals 1 and 3 reported discussing and using research-based strategies when presenting material to their staff during staff meetings. Principal 1 stated, "We try to use effective strategies as part of our faculty meetings." According to Principal 3:

> We talk about it in PLCs a lot, and I try to listen in and add where I can, and then when I do get feedback, I do try to talk about some of the work of various people and different, research-based methods, and best practices.

Principals 1 and 3 also emphasized the importance of follow-up once a strategy has been presented.

Principal 2 stated, "First and foremost, I just try to not forget my days in the classroom, and then, as a learner, what my needs are. I think that it is super important to have empathy and have understanding." Additionally, Principal 2 indicated the importance of possessing the knowledge base to be effective. Specifically, "I think I need to have a strong understanding of what good instruction looks like and what it should look like. But then it has to be able to be modified and adapted to the learners' needs."

Principal interview question six. With regard to feedback from NEE observations, in what ways could you provide feedback to teachers in a more effective manner?

Principal 1 presented time as a major factor that negates the ability to provide effective feedback:

> To me, it's the time. I mean, we're a smaller school. I've got 26 teachers, but still, we do the observation on a Tuesday, [and] you want to be able to talk to them by Wednesday, but things happen, you know, whether it's a snow day…

> So, to me I think the thing I'd like to do better at is be timelier as far as getting back to them.

Principal 1 stated it is important to provide teachers with specific comments so they get immediate feedback and can prepare for the post-observation conference.

Principal 2 expressed the feedback loop is the most important component of the observation process, especially for new teachers:

> I try hard to spend more time with my first- and second-year teachers and the teachers that are struggling, but not forget that all of my teachers need support. And so, this is the hardest piece. It is really the hardest. We have 196 evaluations in our small, small building to make sure that we get eight. Eight evaluations with every teacher is the hardest piece.

Principal 2 also noted comments in each section of the observation report are important.

Principal 3 depicted the difficulty in providing feedback: "I wish I could give more one-on-one feedback afterwards." Principal 3 also noted the importance of comments in the observation form. Even if a formal post-observation conference was not achievable, Principal 3 noted the importance of following-up with teachers after observations and letting them know what was noticed during the observation. Principal 3 reported it is critical to provide young teachers with immediate feedback, in particular, encouragement and reinforcement to build rapport and trust.

Principal interview question seven. In what ways do you present yourself as an instructional leader?

Principal 1 pointed out the importance of modeling: "Whenever we have staff meetings, I always try to present the information as if I was a classroom teacher so I can

model what I think are effective strategies." Principal 1 also stated the importance of staying up-to-date on curriculum in the building. According to Principal 3:

> I try to have time in my PLC leadership to talk about instruction. We talk about it in faculty meetings. I've turned it to more of a PD time as opposed to me giving out information and saying, you got to do this, you got to do that. I try to promote collegiality with my teachers. We do learning walks here where we get teachers out every hour to go see another classroom, and then we come back and reflect. I also try to be very clear that I expect our people to teach every day and to teach bell-to-bell and to keep kids in class.

Principal 2 noted the more personal characteristic of being humble in relationships with staff and shared, "I expect them to be the experts of their content, but I need to know what they are doing so that I can have intelligent conversations with them to be the leader of learning."

Principal interview question eight. In your opinion, what are the most important qualities building principals should possess as instructional leaders?

Principal replies also varied in terms of important qualities of instructional leaders. Principal 1 emphasized it is important principals are viewed as teachers themselves and continue to maintain an instructional presence in the classroom by teaching a class. Principal 3 stated, "I think the ability to do it is, is important. And I think that's one advantage being able to actually be a teacher."

Principal 2 described the personal qualities of flexibility, patience, grace, and hope for students. In agreement with Principal 1, Principal 2 stated, "I think you have got to model what you expect." Principal 2 suggested realistic expectations are important

and responded, “Do your very best job, I will do my very best job to support you, and then let’s see how far we can get with our students.”

Principal 3 indicated communication is important, including the ability to listen. As part of that process, Principal 3 stated, “You want teachers to understand that you have their best interest and the best interest of the students.” Principal 3 reiterated the ability to build relationships with staff is critical.

Principal interview question nine. In your opinion, what are the barriers that impede your ability to improve classroom instruction via the observation process?

All principals reported time as being the number one barrier. Principal 1 stated that testing, whether locally administered or state-required, takes up a lot of time for teachers and eliminates opportunities for observations to be conducted. Principal 2 stated:

> I do like the NEE observation tool; it is just the volume creates almost an inability to give feedback, as much feedback as probably as necessary, because you have just got to move on. And then the job as a principal and the job as a teacher is so time-consuming.

Principal 3 cited the level of trust among administrator, instructional coach, and teacher as a potential barrier to utilizing the full leverage of the observation cycle to improve instruction.

Principal interview question 10. Do you have any other opinions you would like to share about observation, feedback, instruction, etc.?

Participants were provided an opportunity to give opinions on observation, feedback, instruction, or other topics that may not have been part of the interview

instrument. Principal 1 stated feedback is the most important part of the observation process and expressed a desire to get better at delivering feedback. Principal 2 addressed evaluator bias and the difficulty of balancing relationships and providing objective evaluative feedback:

> I think the hardest part of any of this is just trying to remember as a teacher that when someone is your evaluator, it creates a relationship that someone is telling you whether you're doing a good job or not…, there is always an element of telling people what they think you want to hear. But when you rate somebody's performance, you are always assigning a value for the job that they do. And it always creates a strange relationship.

Principal 3 pointed out implementing multiple initiatives at once or not giving initiatives enough time to be proven valuable creates a level of burnout for principals and teachers alike and makes the improvement process difficult.

Summary

In Chapter Four, the data collected during this mixed-methodology study were presented. The quantitative portion of the study was designed to determine if there was a correlation between teachers' perceptions of principals conducting observations and student achievement as measured by the ACT composite average of the junior class. The quantitative data were reported in tables.

The qualitative data presented in this chapter were comprised of interview data collected from nine teacher participants and three principal participants from three randomly selected school districts in the southwest Missouri region of the NEE. Teacher participant years of experience ranged from five to 20 years in their current buildings,

while principal experience ranged from five to eight years in their current buildings. The interview responses were recorded and transcribed, and representative excerpts were presented in Chapter Four. The interview responses were analyzed to develop major themes and findings reported in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five includes the findings from the data and an explanation of teacher and principal perceptions of the principal's ability to promote effective instruction. Major themes developed from the interview responses are presented in the conclusions section. Also presented in Chapter Five are implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions

This mixed-methods study was conducted to determine if principals who are adept at providing feedback to teachers, impact student achievement. Quantitative data were collected from the NEE teacher survey item 2.1 – promoting effective instruction and student achievement – in the form of secondary data including ACT composite scores for the junior class in Missouri during the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years. Interview participants included teachers who participated in the NEE teacher survey and principals trained in the NEE observation system. During the interview, participants discussed their perceptions of observation and feedback. Teacher and principal participants also offered perceptions of principals' abilities to impact instruction and the barriers to improved instruction via observation.

In this chapter, the findings from the research questions are presented. Detailed are the conclusions and implications for practice. Finally, recommendations for future research are presented.

Findings

Data for the quantitative portion were secondary data in the form of composite ACT scores collected from the MODESE comprehensive data system website. Quantitative data were also collected from the NEE teacher survey component scores of principals for the study years 2016–2017 and 2017–2018. The data were organized into an Excel spreadsheet and analyzed using a Pearson product-moment correlation (PPMC) to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between student achievement and the principal's ability to promote effective instruction via feedback within the NEE observation system.

Research question one was developed to determine if principals, adept at promoting effective instruction, impacted student achievement during the study years 2016–2017 and 2017–2018. The null hypothesis was not rejected due to a lack of sufficient evidence to support the alternative hypothesis. It can be concluded that there was no significant positive correlation consistently found when disaggregating by indicator and number of principals conducting observations; therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

The data for the qualitative portion of the study were collected via interviews of teachers and principals. Research questions two and three were developed to investigate the perceptions of teachers and principals regarding the principal's ability to promote effective instruction. The participants were interviewed, and their responses were recorded on a digital recorder. After interviews were completed, the recordings were transcribed. The written transcriptions were then coded using open coding, during which "the researcher needs to sift through informant's responses and organize similar words and phrases, concept-indicators, in broad initial thematic domains" (Williams & Moser, 2019, p. 4). Once the open coding was complete, axial coding was used to identify the relationship between the open codes and to develop themes from the participant responses. The themes aligned with the review of literature.

The first notable theme was the frequency and duration of observations needed for professional growth. Nearly all participants reported finding value in observations of shorter duration and more frequent in nature. Several participants also reported the need for a system with both shorter and longer observations.

The second theme was qualities of instructional leaders desired in principals. Being present in classrooms was highlighted as one of the most important methods principals should utilize when helping teachers improve instruction. Many teachers reported the knowledge and ability of the principal to locate and provide resources for professional growth as qualities that aid in improving instruction. Building trust was one of the most common qualities reported by participants. Principals also demonstrate instructional leadership via their ability to demonstrate and practice quality instructional strategies.

The third theme was feedback on instructional practices. Nearly all respondents cited the value of having a conversational aspect to feedback following the observation of teaching practices. The desire for feedback qualitative in nature and not simply a rating of instruction along a continuum was valued by teachers and principals alike.

The fourth theme was barriers to improving instruction. Initiative overload and fatigue, as well as lack of time, were reported by both respondent groups as impairing the ability to improve instruction. Principals in particular reported time and responsibilities associated with the position as barriers to the ability to conduct observations of teaching and to provide teachers with feedback.

Conclusions

Triangulation of the data is a method of employing multiple sources of data in an effort to draw conclusions and validate the findings within a study (Boudah, 2020; Johnson & Christensen, 2020). Each research question is addressed in this section. The conclusions were formulated based upon triangulation of the data collected from the

review of literature, the quantitative data from the NEE teacher survey and secondary ACT data, and the qualitative data collected via teacher and principal interviews.

Research question one. Research question one was developed to determine if principals effective at promoting instruction following the observation of teaching practices impact student achievement. Prior researchers established that classroom teachers have the highest impact on student achievement, and their influence is direct, while principals have the second-highest impact on student achievement, and their influence is indirect (Leithwood et al., 2004). According to Marshall (2017), the best observation method to leverage for improved instruction is when "supervisors make short, frequent, unannounced classroom visits followed promptly by face-to-face coaching conversations and succinct narrative write-ups" (p. 3). Balyer and Özcan (2020) stated improved instruction can be achieved when principals provide teachers with feedback from observation of instruction.

When interpreting the data collected to address research question one, there was not a consistent significant positive relationship between the variables studied by indicator, year, or number of principals conducting observations. Of the 42 PPMCs conducted, only eight yielded a significant positive relationship. Indicator 2.1.b – this principal expects me to provide effective instruction for student achievement – resulted in a significant positive relationship most frequently. Indicator 2.1.c – this principal provides specific feedback to me regarding ways I can improve – was the only other indicator to reveal a significant positive relationship more than once.

Research questions two and three. To answer research questions two and three, themes were developed based on the perceptions of teachers and principals of the

principal's ability to promote effective instruction. Both groups of participants were interviewed, and the resulting themes included frequency and duration of observations needed for professional growth, support for instruction and professional growth, qualities of instructional leaders desired in principals, feedback on instructional practices, and barriers to improving instruction. Based on the review of literature, these themes align with the framework of Marshall's (2017) method of observation and the NEE (University of Missouri, 2019b), which utilizes short observations combined with face-to-face feedback.

Frequency and duration of observations needed for professional growth. Interview participants from all three schools discussed the value of both shorter, unscheduled observations as well as longer, more formal observations. The number of observations reported for instructional improvement varied among participants from four to eight per year. Marshall (2016) recommended up to 10 observations of 10–15-minute duration per teacher each year for improved instructional improvement. The MODESE (n.d.) Missouri Model Evaluation's aim is continuous improvement via a formative observation process. The NEE model's design encourages administrators to employ short, frequent, formative walkthroughs to gather data on instruction occurring on a daily basis in each classroom (Network for Educator Effectiveness, 2020).

During the interviews, a majority of both teacher and principal participants reported preferring shorter, more frequent walkthrough observations. Marshall (2017) asserted frequent observation provides teachers with motivation to strive to perform their best on a daily basis. Participants consistently reported walkthrough observations provided evaluators with a genuine snapshot of the classroom experience with the aim of

the follow-up session being professional growth. Mathus (2017) suggested consistent communication and understanding of evaluation systems are important for the success of new evaluation models.

Nearly all researchers of the impact of principals on student achievement described the impact as indirect and placed it second only to the influence of teachers (Day & Sammons, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2004). Principal and teacher participants from all three schools recognized the value of the principal presence in the classroom afforded through shorter, frequent observations. Participant 1A viewed the principal presence as having a significant impact on student motivation, effort, and behavior in the classroom. When principals visit classrooms more frequently, they are also provided with the opportunity to increase their instructional leadership capacity (Balyer & Özcan, 2020). Balyer and Özcan (2020) explained, "By visiting classrooms and making exchanges with teachers, they obtain a greater understanding of various instructional approaches" (p. 298). Principal 3 felt shorter, frequent observations have value in the simple fact that teachers can expect their principals to be in their classrooms on a regular basis.

Participants with more experience discussed the desire to have longer, more formal observations to receive feedback on a full lesson. These participants felt formal observations are valuable for veteran teachers, while newer teachers benefit from shorter ones. They also explained principals miss certain elements and the context of lessons when they employ shorter observations.

In addition, participants discussed the value of shorter, frequent observations when working on new instructional strategies for building initiatives. Principal 3 used these observations to identify teachers who need support from instructional coaches.

When implemented in a low-stakes setting, observations allow teachers to be more willing to be innovative and attempt new instructional strategies (Chandler, 2016; Hitt & Tucker, 2016).

Qualities of instructional leaders desired in principals. Recognition that the role of the principal has evolved to an expectation of being the instructional leader of the school was prevalent during the interviews. New observation systems developed as a result of various legislative and reform efforts have thrust principals into the role of instructional leader (Golden, 2019; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Various researchers have concluded that teaching can improve via the observation process when combined with professional development (Donaldson, 2016; Golden, 2019; Warring, 2015). The NEE (2020) evaluation system's aim is to provide principals with data to aid them in making decisions on the professional development needs of their staff.

Marshall (2017) recommended systems that employ short, frequent observations as effective because they allow principals to build trust with staff, encourage a professional and collaborative working environment, place principals out in the building making them more visible as instructional leaders, facilitate frequent conversations between teachers and principals, allow principals to intervene sooner when instructional issues arise, and place a focus on student learning. Multiple interview participants reported a desire for the principal to be present in classrooms, interacting with students, and demonstrating an interest in what students are learning. Participant 1A stated the presence of the principal in classrooms and within the building sets the tone for the entire building. Setting the tone, as well as developing and communicating the vision for

instruction, are key characteristics of instructional leaders (Day & Sammons, 2016; Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Day and Sammons (2016) further asserted:

> School leaders, particularly principals, have a key role to play in setting direction and creating a positive school culture, including the proactive school mindset, and supporting and enhancing staff motivation and commitment needed to foster improvement and promote success for schools. (p. 7)

All three principal participants explained being frequently in classrooms and dialoguing about instructional practices with teaching staff are critical for the instructional climate of the building.

Interview participants identified the ability of principals to locate and provide professional development as a quality of instructional leadership. Marshall (2017) asserted this is one of the keys to short, frequent observations; offering professional development allows principals to follow-up on what they see in the classroom and provide suggestions for improvement. Participant 2A described principals as a resource for teachers, stating it is important to know "that we can come to them, ask questions, and then for them to have something, maybe just a book, article, or other resource." Principal 1 described utilizing EdHub within the NEE observation system to provide professional development to staff. EdHub is designed to provide professional development tied to NEE indicators within the NEE observation tool (Chandler, 2016).

Participants also described a desire for principals to demonstrate instructional strategies during faculty meetings and professional development opportunities. Participant 2C stated that by employing instructional strategies, principals build credibility with the staff, and staff are more receptive when principals provide feedback

during follow-ups to observations. Principal 1 described the importance of using instructional strategies in faculty meetings and continuing to teach one class a day allowing them to maintain an instructional presence in the classroom. Herman et al. (2017) found leaders who focus on instruction are more effective than those focused on transformative leadership at a rate of nearly four to one in terms of gains in student achievement.

Feedback on instructional practices. In response to the ESSA and the observation system reform effort that followed, DuFour et al. (2018) argued:

> Teachers do not need a principal to judge them—they need two things: (1) a process that provides ongoing feedback on the impact of their teaching so they can make adjustments and (2) a support system of colleagues to help them. States should ensure that every teacher has access to that feedback and support. (p. 33)

Various researchers have agreed that one of the key levers for improving instruction is observation paired with feedback, some form of practice, and professional development (Golden, 2019; Marzano et al., 2011). Missouri's model evaluation system is designed to improve teacher abilities via observation and feedback (MODESE, n.d.). The NEE evaluation model's goal is to improve teaching by providing focused feedback and is aligned with Missouri's model evaluation system (Chandler, 2016).

Teachers appreciate the benefit of follow-up conversations surrounding observational data and feedback on teaching practices (Donaldson, 2016). Quality observation systems not only provide teachers with feedback on teaching practices but also allow teachers to reflect upon that feedback and focus on strategies for improving student achievement (Chandler, 2016). For feedback to be effective at improving

instruction, principals must understand what quality instruction looks like and be able to provide teachers with accurate feedback (Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016).

Nearly all interview participants felt the NEE system and their principals provide them with satisfactory feedback on teaching practices. The preferred method of receiving feedback via face-to-face conversations was reported by a majority of participants. Participant 1B reported face-to-face feedback was extremely valuable, especially in areas identified for improvement, and specified, "If it's an urgent issue, I would like to see it addressed face-to-face in a timely manner." Those participants who preferred written feedback cited the stress of receiving feedback perceived as critical to their teaching practices as a barrier to receiving it face-to-face.

Multiple participants also noted finding far greater value in the comments provided in the feedback than in the numerical score received on the indicators observed within the NEE system. Participant 2B felt the comments provide teachers with a good indication of their current level and what they could do to improve. Participant 2B elaborated that when thorough written feedback is combined with face-to-face conversation, teachers and administrators are better able to identify opportunities for teacher improvement.

During principal interviews, all three participants explained thorough comments paired with face-to-face feedback are critical for improving teaching practices. Principals 1 and 2 both recognized that when teachers are provided with written feedback prior to post-observation conferences, teachers are more prepared for follow up conversations, and the conversations are richer surrounding teacher needs for instructional improvement, focusing on instructional strategies and meeting students' needs through differentiation.

Principal 3 reported feedback is critical for new teachers by offering "encouragement and reinforcement" to build a collegial environment and develop rapport.

Barriers to improved instruction. During this era of increased accountability, teacher stress and workload have been found to inhibit the teacher's ability to improve (Donaldson, 2016). As observation systems move from evaluative to a more formative process aimed at improving instruction, a collegial and professional learning environment must be present for teachers to not fear a negative observation and the process of improving in that area reflecting negatively during a future observation (Chandler, 2016). When new evaluation systems are implemented, it is key for leaders to provide teachers with an understanding of the new system to maximize its impact on instruction (Mathus, 2017).

Two of the most widely recognized barriers to improved instruction via the observation of teaching practices are the demands on principal time and the relationships between principals and teachers (Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016). New observation systems require extensive training, more classroom observations, and when combined with the normal day-to-day operational duties of principals, have placed a greater demand on the time principals have to fulfill their duties (Golden, 2019). Principals must also not allow their relationships to interfere with the ability to provide teachers accurate feedback if the aim of the observation system is instructional improvement (Brownie, 2015; Chandler, 2016).

Several participants stated face-to-face follow-up conversations cause them stress when discussing an observation. These participants shared they glean more from and prefer the comments on the observation report. Participant 1B discussed the importance

of clear observation expectations including the number per year and when issues will be discussed. Participant 1B also noted experience in multiple districts within the NEE system and how varying levels of communication impact the perception of the system in each district.

Principal participants unanimously discussed time as the number one barrier to the perception of their ability to effectively impact instruction. Principals 2 and 3 discussed the volume of observations within the NEE system makes it difficult to conduct both the observations and follow-up conversations. Principal 2 noted the inability to provide teachers with face-to-face feedback due to time constraints on both the teacher and principal as a detriment. Specifically, Principal 2 shared, "I try hard to spend more time with my first- and second-year teachers that are struggling, while not forgetting about all of my teachers that need support." Principal 3 noted that when staff are not open to a collaborative learning environment and do not understand that the observation system is more about coaching than evaluation, the impact on instructional improvement can be hindered.

Implications for Practice

Educational reform efforts over the past quarter-century have focused largely on improving the quality of instruction teachers deliver with the intent to increase student achievement (Day & Sammons, 2016; DuFour et al., 2018; Golden, 2019). The foundation of Missouri's model evaluation system lies with improving student performance by improving the practice of educators via a formative continuous improvement process (MODESE, n.d.). The NEE observation system is aligned with Missouri's model evaluation system and is designed to increase the effectiveness of

educators by combining high-quality post-observation feedback with meaningful coaching conversations and professional development resources (Bergin et al., 2017).

Fidelity of implementation. The workload of teachers and principals alike continues to grow in the age of increased accountability; however, for any observation system to impact instruction, adherence to key practices must be maintained. Districts and principals must support teachers by providing them with the necessary resources to carry out curriculum and instruction, reducing stress and workload to allow for a focus on professional growth (White, 2018). For teachers to see the benefit and for instruction to improve within an observation system, principals should clearly communicate the goals and understanding of the system and implement it consistently, especially in buildings where there are multiple principals conducting observations (Mathus, 2017).

In systems that rely upon feedback, administrators must receive ongoing training on educational best practices and development of their ability to provide specific and actionable feedback to teachers aimed at improving instruction (Chandler, 2016). Balyer and Özcan (2020) found teachers' frustration with observation systems is largely derived from a lack of specific feedback and the absence of suggestions and resources on new instructional strategies. Herman et al. (2017) reported student achievement is impacted positively when professional development activities are focused on increasing leadership capacity and leaders are focused on instruction.

Collaborative and trusting culture. As a means for instructional practices to improve, teachers and principals alike must recognize the goal of the observation system as one focused on improving the quality of instruction students receive. Hitt and Tucker (2016) suggested the most effective principals are those who share leadership with staff

and focus on improving instruction via the creation of collaborative, professional working environments. School leaders most directly impact student learning when their focus is on instruction within the school and how they can work with staff to improve that instruction (Day & Sammons, 2016).

Golden (2019) stated principals clearly understand the difference between evaluation and observation, using the latter only for improving teachers' instructional practices. Teachers must be comfortable knowing they are free to take risks and be innovative in their instructional practices without fear of reflecting negatively in an evaluation (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Teachers have been found more likely to expand their instructional practices when they feel supported by administration in doing so (Chandler, 2016; Mathus, 2017).

Provide teachers with high-quality feedback. For teachers to show improvement within an observation system, an emphasis must be placed on the value of feedback and its use in the instructional improvement process. According to Bergin et al. (2017), "Inaccurate ratings are unfair to teachers, and provide misinformation on teachers' effectiveness globally as well as misidentify particular strengths and areas needing growth" (p. 1). For teachers to improve, the instrument used must be accurate, and principals must be focused on providing teachers with useful feedback (Golden, 2019).

Three components that must be in place for feedback to improve instruction include feedback focused on effective teaching practices, active reflection by the teacher, and instructional goals focused on student achievement (Chandler, 2016). Feedback simply given to teachers without ample time for reflection and conversation surrounding

that feedback does little in the way of improving instruction (Mathus, 2017). The NEE observation model trains principals not only to accurately rate teachers but also to provide teachers with specific feedback as well as a professional development library to offer teachers with the follow-up necessary for instructional improvement (Bergin et al., 2017; Chandler, 2016).

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies on the impact of feedback on student achievement should focus specifically on the feedback cycle, specific principal behaviors, and schoolwide support structures within that cycle. A qualitative investigation of principal behaviors would better provide an understanding of how principals impact student achievement. The study could be used to identify both the qualities principals should possess along with the appropriate combination of school structures such as Professional Learning Communities or district-developed professional development that promote increased student achievement.

Another recommendation for future research would be to conduct a longitudinal case study over multiple years in a single building. A study conducted in the same building over multiple years would allow the researcher to isolate specific behaviors of a principal as they relate to teacher and student growth. The study would also provide insight into the impact of a district's professional development program within an observation system.

Finally, a similar study could be replicated utilizing an alternate student achievement measure. This would allow for variances in the level of importance that districts place on tests such as the ACT. Utilizing data from the Missouri Assessment

Program, such as end-of-course exam scores, may provide the researcher with stronger correlational data.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine if principals, adept at promoting effective instruction, as measured by the NEE teacher survey impact student achievement as measured by the ACT. Secondary data, interview participant perceptions, and the review of literature were all considered and used to triangulate the impact of principals on promoting effective instruction and impacting student achievement. This study was significant because it addressed the lack of research in the area of how principals impact student achievement via feedback on the observation of teaching practices within an evaluation system (Chandler, 2016; Mathus, 2017; Winslow, 2015).

Chapter One began with a background of the study including the reforms to teacher observation models and the role of the principal within those models as a response to legislative efforts (Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Marshall, 2017). The Marshall (2017) method of teacher evaluation was introduced as the conceptual framework. The statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and the research questions and hypotheses were provided. The significance of the study, which addressed the lack of research in the area of how principals impact student achievement via feedback, was addressed. Also included in Chapter One were the definition of key terms, limitations, and assumptions of the study.

Chapter Two included the review of literature. The conceptual framework was further investigated as the use of feedback and continuously embedded coaching and professional development within a system that employs shorter, frequent observations

may impact student achievement (Warring, 2015). The contemporary history of legislation and teacher evaluation was addressed. The response to legislative reform efforts on teacher evaluation and the response by the MODESE were described in detail, as well as the development of the NEE by the University of Missouri and the Heart of Missouri RPDC. Finally, the role of instructional leadership was examined, including feedback and barriers to improving instruction.

In Chapter Three, the problem and purpose of the study and the research questions were restated. The research design was then discussed. Next, a detailed explanation of the population and sample and instrumentation design for the study were shared. The quantitative sample included secondary data from the MODESE comprehensive data system website as well as teacher survey data provided by NEE personnel. The qualitative sample included teachers and principals from the southwest Missouri region listed on the NEE website (University of Missouri, 2019e). Random sampling was used to select the districts participating in the study (Dobson et al., 2017). Secondary data were collected to determine the impact of principals in the area of student achievement within the NEE observation system. The qualitative data were collected to elicit the perceptions of teachers and principals about the principal's ability to promote effective instruction.

A discussion of how the data were analyzed was presented. A PPMC was employed to determine the strength of the relationship that existed between the two variables. Finally, an explanation of ethical considerations in place was presented.

In Chapter Four, an analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data was presented. The quantitative data were analyzed from the final two years of ACT census testing of Missouri juniors. The null hypothesis was not rejected for research question

one. The interview questions were discussed with two groups of participants: teachers and building principals. Four major themes were identified during the qualitative phase. The four major themes included frequency and duration of observations needed for professional growth, qualities of instructional leaders desired in principals, feedback on instructional practices, and barriers to improving instruction.

Chapter Five included the findings and conclusions of this study. Implications for practice were described, including the need for maintaining the fidelity of implementation of observation systems. Second, the creation of a collaborative and trusting culture is critical to maximize the impact on instruction via the coaching and feedback process. Lastly, teachers must be provided with high-quality feedback enabling them to determine their current and desired level of instructional quality.

Recommendations for future research were also provided in Chapter Five. The first recommendation was to analyze the feedback cycle and specific principal behaviors, combined with a schoolwide support system in a single observation model. The second recommendation was to conduct a longitudinal study in a single building over multiple years. Finally, the use of an alternate student achievement measure within a similar study was suggested.

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Appendix A

Permission to Conduct Interviews

[Date]

[Superintendent Name and Address]

RE: Permission to Conduct Research in [School District]

Dear [Superintendent]:

I am writing to request permission to conduct research in the [School District]. I am currently pursuing my doctorate through Lindenwood University and am in the process of writing my dissertation. The study is entitled *The Effects of Principal Feedback on Instruction and Student Achievement*.

I am asking permission to conduct interviews of the high school building principal and three randomly selected high school teachers.

If you agree, please sign below, scan this page, and email it back to me, Jeremy Brownfield, at [redacted].

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I would be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have regarding this study.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Brownfield
Doctoral Student at Lindenwood University

Approved by:

_____	_____	_____
Print Name and Title Here	Signature	Date

Appendix B

IRB Approval Letter

Dec 16, 2019 6:55 PM CST

RE:
IRB-20-108: Initial - The Effects of Principal Feedback on Instruction and Student Achievement

Dear Jeremy Brownfield,

The study, The Effects of Principal Feedback on Instruction and Student Achievement, has been Exempt.

Category: Category 1. Research, conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, that specifically involves normal educational practices that are not likely to adversely impact students' opportunity to learn required educational content or the assessment of educators who provide instruction. This includes most research on regular and special education instructional strategies, and research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

The submission was approved on December 16, 2019.

Here are the findings:

Regulatory Determinations

- This study has been determined to be minimal risk because the research is not obtaining data considered sensitive information or performing interventions posing harm greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.
- The secondary data collection component of the study does not constitute human subjects research as these data will be anonymous from the perspective of the investigator.

Sincerely,
Lindenwood University (lindenwood) Institutional Review B

Oct 14, 2020 12:55 PM CDT

RE:
IRB-20-108: Modification - The Effects of Principal Feedback on Instruction and Student Achievement

Dear Jeremy Brownfield,

The study, The Effects of Principal Feedback on Instruction and Student Achievement, has been Approved as Exempt.

Category: Category 1. Research, conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, that specifically involves normal educational practices that are not likely to adversely impact students' opportunity to learn required educational content or the assessment of educators who provide instruction. This includes most research on regular and special education instructional strategies, and research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

The submission was approved on 2020-10-14.

Here are the findings:
Regulatory Determinations

- This modification entails the attachment of a site approval letter. This modification does not affect the prior risk determination or ongoing approvability of the study.

Sincerely,
Lindenwood University (lindenwood) Institutional Review Board

Appendix C

Request to Provide Data

Date:

Dear <Title First Name and Last Name>

I am writing to request data from the Network for Educator Effectiveness. I am currently pursuing my doctorate through Lindenwood University and am in the process of writing my dissertation. The study is entitled *The Effects of Principal Feedback on Instruction and Student Achievement*.

I am requesting the following data:

1. A list of all high schools in Missouri that utilized the Teacher Survey during the school years 2016–2017 and 2017–2018. Once received, I will input the ACT data for each school and return via email.
2. Once the list is returned, please have personnel input the mean for each building for the seven items on the Teacher Survey for indicator 2.1 – Promoting Effective Instruction.
3. Once the data are paired, please have personnel de-identify and organize the data into the following categories: a) buildings with one principal conducting observations; b) buildings with two principals conducting observations; c) buildings with three or more principals conducting observations.

Please contact me at [redacted] with any questions you might have.

Thank you,

Jeremy Brownfield
Lindenwood University
Doctoral Student

Appendix D

Letter of Participation

<Principal Interview>

Date:

Dear <Title First Name and Last Name>

My name is Jeremy Brownfield. I am a doctoral student at Lindenwood University, and I am conducting a research study titled *The Effects of Principal Feedback on Instruction and Student Achievement.*

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. I have attached the Research Information Sheet and a copy of the interview questions. If you choose to participate, please respond affirmatively to this email message, and I will be in contact with you to schedule a day and time that are convenient.

I would also like to request a list of email addresses for all teachers who have taught in the building at least three years and have at least five years of teaching experience. This list will be used to randomly select teacher interview participants.

Please contact me at [redacted] with any questions you might have.

Thank you,

Jeremy Brownfield
Lindenwood University
Doctoral Student

Appendix E

LINDENWOOD

Research Information Sheet

You are being asked to participate in a research study. We are conducting this study to determine if there is a correlation between principal scores on the teacher survey portion of the Network for Educator Effectiveness and students' scores on the American College Testing exam. During this study, you will be interviewed to determine your perceptions of a high school principal's ability to promote effective instruction. It will take about 20 minutes to complete this interview.

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw at any time.

There are no risks from participating in this project. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study.

We will not collect any data which may identify you.

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. We do not intend to include information that could identify you in any publication or presentation. Any information we collect will be stored by the researcher in a secure location. The only people who will be able to see your data include members of the research team, qualified staff of Lindenwood University, and representatives of state or federal agencies.

Who can I contact with questions?

If you have concerns or complaints about this project, please use the following contact information:

Jeremy Brownfield [redacted]

Dr. Shelly Fransen [redacted]

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or concerns about the project and wish to talk to someone outside the research team, you can contact Michael Leary (Director - Institutional Review Board) at 636-949-4730 or mleary@lindenwood.edu.

Appendix F

Principal Interview Questions

1. How long have you been a high school principal, and of those years, how many were spent in your current building?

2. What types of observations (formal, scheduled, and of longer duration; or unscheduled, shorter, and more frequent) do you feel are most valuable, and why?

3. In your opinion, how many of each type of observation are necessary for instructional improvement?

4. In what ways might you support a teacher in providing effective instruction for student achievement?

5. In what ways do you, as a principal, demonstrate a deep understanding of effective instructional strategies for your teachers?

6. With regard to feedback from NEE observations, in what ways could you provide feedback to teachers in a more effective manner?

7. In what ways do you present yourself as an instructional leader?

8. In your opinion, what are the most important qualities you should possess as an instructional leader?

9. In your opinion, what are the barriers that impede your ability to improve classroom instruction via the observation process?

10. Do you have any other opinions you would like to share about observation, feedback, effective instruction, etc.?

Appendix G

Letter of Participation

<Teacher Interview>

Date:

Dear <Title First Name and Last Name>

My name is Jeremy Brownfield. I am a doctoral student at Lindenwood University, and I am conducting a research study titled *The Effects of Principal Feedback on Instruction and Student Achievement.*

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. I have attached the Research Information Sheet and a copy of the interview questions. If you choose to participate, please respond affirmatively to this email message, and I will be in contact with you to schedule a day and time that are convenient.

Please contact me at [redacted] with any questions you might have.

Thank you,

Jeremy Brownfield
Lindenwood University
Doctoral Student

Appendix H

Classroom Teacher Interview Questions

1. How long have you been a high school teacher, and of those years, how many were spent in your current building?

2. What types of observations (formal, scheduled, and of longer duration; or unscheduled, shorter, and more frequent) do you feel are most valuable, and how many of each type are necessary for instructional improvement? Why?

3. In what ways might a principal support a teacher in providing effective instruction for student achievement?

4. In what ways do principals demonstrate a deep understanding of effective instructional strategies?

5. With regard to feedback from NEE observations, in what ways could a principal provide feedback to teachers in a more effective manner?

6. In what ways do teachers view building principals as instructional leaders?

7. In your opinion, what are the most important qualities a building principal should possess as an instructional leader?

Vita

Jeremy L. Brownfield obtained his Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Education from Missouri State University in 2002. He attended Lindenwood University and earned a Master of Arts in Educational Administration degree in 2007. In 2010, he obtained an Educational Specialist degree from Southwest Baptist University.

Jeremy began his career in education at Fordland R-III School District in 2005, where he taught high school industrial education for two years. In 2007, he moved to the Ozark R-VI School District, where he taught high school pre-engineering for seven years. In 2014, he became an assistant principal at Ozark High School. Jeremy currently serves as principal of Ozark High School, a role he began in 2017.