TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR EVALUATIONS: IMPACT OF THE NETWORK FOR EDUCATOR EFFECTIVENESS (NEE) DATA TOOL ON TEACHER GROWTH, TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS, AND LEARNING-CENTERED CULTURE IN A MISSOURI RURAL PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of Missouri

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In Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

By:

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JULY 2019

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR EVALUATIONS: IMPACT OF THE NETWORK FOR EDUCATOR EFFECTIVENESS (NEE) DATA TOOL ON TEACHER GROWTH, TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS, AND LEARNING-CENTERED CULTURE IN A MISSOURI RURAL PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Presented by Dorian Keith White,

a candidate for the degree of doctor of education,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completing of my Dissertation in Practice (DIP) has been a six-year journey that I feared many times I would not complete. In this span of time much has happened in my personal and professional life that have led me to take some detours and journeys, which at the time felt overwhelming and sometimes too difficult to endure. In reflection, many of my detours have led to great opportunities for personal and professional growth. At the end of this DIP journey I reflect upon what my wonderful advisor and DIP chair Dr. Cynthia MacGregor shared with us at the beginning of this process. To paraphrase, she warned us that this would be journey of growth and testing that would stretch and grow us more than we could imagine or understand. In the past six years my children have gone from young children to one pre-teen daughter and two teenage sons playing sports and excelling in advanced classes at my high school, my beautiful wife and I have grown in our relationship and as individuals throughout this educational journey. I have went from serving in the role of an assistant principal at Marshfield High School for the first three years to the principal at Buffalo High School for the past three years. I have grown tremendously as an educational leader and person throughout the past six year and all glory goes to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! Additionally, I specifically want to thank my special wife of 23 years, Angela, for not giving up on me during this journey, my children Colton, Conner, and Cicely for your patience and encouragement to finish, extended family (especially my praying and supportive mother Dora and mother-in-law Nancy), co-workers, church Legacy Baptist, MSU Cohort 9 teammates (especially "the guys" Curt, Jeff, Rob, & Brandon), my wonderful advisor "Dr. Mac", DIP committee members, and all of the many countless people who have assisted me along the way.

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SECTION ONE:

INTRODUCTION TO DISSERTATION

Background

As public schools continue to face growing pressure to increase standardized test scores and improve nationwide student achievement levels, policy makers and school officials are looking for every opportunity for improvement. Three of the major areas of focus in this national debate are teacher growth, effectiveness, and learning-centered cultures in schools that lead to teacher collective efficacy and improved student performance. This study will focus on teacher evaluations as a tool for promoting teacher growth, improving teacher effectiveness, and promoting a learning-centered culture in a rural public school. Specifically, the researcher plans to measure the impact of the Network For Educator Effectiveness (NEE) Data Tool upon teacher growth, effectiveness, and the learning-centered culture through teacher perceptions in one rural public high school (NEE Data Tool Online Manager, n.d.).

In order to better understand the focus on teacher growth, effectiveness and learning-centered cultures it is important to understand the context from which this new focus has been birthed. The history of public education in the United States has been often wrought with differing views and political stances. The past two decades in public education reform have been highly focused upon accountability and improvement. Public education has become a highly political field with each of the past several U.S. presidents using education reform as a political platform for election. Many people are aware of the high stakes accountability of the 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) or better known publicly as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, which was signed by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002. Under the NCLB, the way schools operated completely changed and a timeline was created for

all students in schools to test on grade level in reading and math by 2014. The progress of each school was measured through a systematic Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) school monitoring system that used longitudinal data.

Many schools in the country improved greatly during the NCLB era, but "teaching to the test" became the norm for numerous schools in order to meet their yearly AYP goals. As the 2014 timeline and each school's AYP targets got harder to meet, the researcher observed many school leaders, teachers, students, parents, and lawmakers became outraged by the looming perception that their schools could not meet the 2014 timeline. In reaction to this highly politically charged environment, many state education departments pleaded with the Department of Education for NCLB reform and waivers from the strict regulations.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, on September 23, 2011, the White House issued a press release that waivers would be granted for the rigorous and high stakes accountability measures of NCLB. In the press release, President Barack Obama stated that "to help states, districts and schools that are ready to move forward with education reform, our administration will provide flexibility from the law in exchange for a real commitment to undertake change" (U.S. Department of Education, 2011, p. 1). The opportunity for a waiver was a great relief for many schools as a way to avoid the looming NCLB timeline that would have required many school districts to communicate with their communities about their failure to meet the NCLB timeline requirements.

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) completed a waiver application to release Missouri public schools from the NCLB

timelines and expectations as long as schools would agree to follow and implement the new federal guidelines (D. Lineberry, personal communication, June 26, 2014). DESE committed to following the federal timeline of implementation but found that developing competent teacher evaluation systems was not the biggest issue at hand. DESE quickly developed a teacher evaluation model in response to the 2011 changes that was then implemented in over 170 public school districts in Missouri.

However, in response to the initial freedom given to states in the 2011 guidelines, an alternative model for teacher evaluation was developed. That alternative is the Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE) which is a "collaborative effort of two auxiliary units of the College of Education at the University of Missouri: the Heart of Missouri Regional Professional Development Center (RPDC) and the Assessment Resource Center (ARC)" (NEE, n.d. p. 1). Over 270 public school districts in Missouri fully implemented the NEE model during the 2018 school year (with several schools having completed their sixth or seventh full year if they were a pilot school). This process requires that all their administrators are trained and certified to accurately evaluate classroom teachers within a variance of one on a seven-point scale in 29 measurable research-based teacher qualities instead of the traditional three-point Performance Based Teacher Evaluation (PBTE) model (NEE, n.d. p. 1). Their motivation is to utilize the research and data generated by participating NEE school districts to improve teacher growth, effectiveness, student learning, learning cultures, and ultimately to help improve teacher preparatory training in higher education with the data gathered.

Both the DESE and the NEE models legally meet the 2011 ESEA waiver guidelines, and choosing between the two required some major decisions (i.e., systematic

and monetary) for the public school districts in Missouri. The major difference lies with the approach of the two major evaluation models in Missouri. The DESE model allows the local school district to decide which indicators to focus on as part of the Missouri Education Evaluation System (MEES). The Missouri Education Evaluation System (MEES) is explained by the following:

> MEES is founded on general beliefs about the purpose of the evaluation process. Central to these beliefs is a theory of action, which maintains that improving student performance is predicated on the improvement of educator practice. These beliefs include that evaluation processes are formative in nature and lead to continuous improvement; are aligned to standards that reflect excellence; build a culture of informing practice and promoting learning; and use multiple, balanced measures that are fair and ethical. (Teacher Evaluation pdf, DESE, 2018, p. 4).

One of the tools developed by MEES is the Teacher Evaluation Protocol and the primary purpose "is to promote growth in effective practice that ultimately increases student performance" (p. 4).

The NEE model works closely with their member school districts to tie research-based performance to the teacher evaluations. Furthermore, the DESE model is offered at no external costs to school districts, while the NEE model does have an annual cost of $375 per hundred students in a school district up to 200 students and then increases to $1,000 per hundred students to cover the training and support of the teachers and administrators (M. Doss, personal communication, November 19, 2018). Dr. Mark Doss, the Region 5 NEE Field Representative, further explained, "NEE bases the number of students for each district on the September headcount that is submitted by the districts to

DESE. That is a nice stable number that everyone can agree on, and it is set early so the fee amount can be built into the upcoming FY budget" (M. Doss, personal communication, November 19, 2018). Though this cost may seem small to some, in large districts that have thousands of students this can be a large financial obstacle. Thus, several of the largest districts in Missouri have developed their own model utilizing the DESE guidelines.

In order to better understand the race to develop effective teacher evaluation tools in Missouri, it is in important to understand the context from which these initiatives were created. In December of 2015, President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which started the clock for the 18-month transition period that required states to align their accountability systems to the ESSA. The ESSA accountability started officially for schools at the start of the 2017-2018 school year. According to the ESSA Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sheet issued by the American Federation of Teachers:

> ESSA will end the obsession with testing in schools that began with its predecessor, No Child Left Behind, and was expanded through Race to the Top and waivers. These laws and regulations forced states to change their laws to compete for much-needed funds at a steep cost: a high-stakes, one-size-fits-all accountability system that ignored the reality of schools and required improvement strategies that did not work. (American Federation of Teachers FAQ, 2018, p. 1)

The FAQ also states that educators have been heard and that ESSA allows for state and local level opportunities to create systems where "teacher evaluation will be used to grow

and strengthen the profession, not sort and punish" (American Federation of Teachers FAQ, 2018, p. 1).

According to Darling and Hammond et al. (2016), "The new law provides the possibility that states can create more balanced systems of support and accountability focused on educating young people so they can become productive, engaged citizens who are prepared for 21st century college and careers" (p. i). The language in ESSA appears to be more focused on a holistic approach to overall school improvement versus the specific student testing and school accountability focus of previous educational reform. The ESSA has more "reasonable goals and objectives [which] can be collaboratively established that align with the needs of students" (American Federation of Teachers FAQ, 2018, p. 1). The political debate about state and national educational reform rages on, but for now the researchers opinion is that Missouri is in a somewhat stable and manageable place as related to teacher evaluations as a tool for promoting teacher growth and improving learning cultures in public schools.

Statement of the Problem

After 21 years as an educator in Missouri public schools, the researcher believes there tends to be a lack of focus on developing teacher growth, teacher effectiveness, and learning-centered schools that promote growth at all levels (i.e., students, teachers, and administrators). As a principal who has evaluated teachers for seven years using NEE, the researcher found that what is evaluated tends to become the focus of the school's learning culture. Thus the researcher believes teacher evaluations can be a valuable tool in promoting teacher growth, effectiveness, and a learning-centered culture in a school if they are implemented and used appropriately.

Problem of Practice

Nation-wide policy makers and school leaders are constantly looking for every opportunity to improve schools and prepare students to compete in a global economy. One of the areas that is measured and continuously debated is student academic growth, which is generally reported by where students and schools rank locally, statewide, nationally and world-wide. As a result public schools face continuous pressure to improve student achievement levels as measured by standardized tests. A current trend and focus of attention in this highly debated topic is the impact of teacher effectiveness upon student performance. One inclination for improving teacher effectiveness is to improve teacher evaluation systems nation-wide and to tie student performance measures directly to teacher evaluations. The premise is that what gets evaluated gets taken care of. There are many opinions, ideas, data sets, evaluation models, and suspected correlations that have divided public and professional opinion about this topic and assumption. Teacher evaluations need to promote teacher growth, improve teacher effectiveness, and promote a learning-centered culture in a school. The problem of practice is how does an evaluator make sure these important items get taken care of though the use of a teacher evaluation system. This study hopes to use this problem of practice to springboard into the research necessary to evaluate the impact of a teacher evaluation system based on this premise. Additionally, the problem of practice will be expanded upon based on the literature and research question in this study.

Existing Gap in the Literature

Current research literature available is somewhat lacking in the area of teacher perspectives related to teacher growth, effectiveness and building learning-centered

schools. The researcher found few scholarly articles that discuss the voice of the teachers who are those most directly affected by the evaluative practices and changes. There are some examples of teacher frustration in newspaper articles, for example, an article posted on The New York Times website discussed how New Mexico teachers resisted a plan designed by the secretary of public education. This plan was designed to evaluate teachers by calculating 50% of a teacher's evaluation on their student's standardized test scores which came from the belief that teacher accountability is best way to help struggling students (Frosch, 2013). In a qualitative study of teachers who refused to participate in the mandatory National Teacher Evaluation System (NTES) in Chile, it was found that the teachers found the system unfair, lacked legitimacy, feared the results of the system, and had a culture of distrust of evaluation systems (Tornero & Taut, 2011, p. 138). Existing research does not address what teachers think actual evaluation systems should look like. The front-line people who teach students each day need to have a voice in this important problem of practice of how they are evaluated. The researcher has found throughout his career that in order for a teacher evaluation system to be effective in promoting teacher growth and effectiveness it may be necessary for teachers to have some "buy-in" and input in the process and purpose of their evaluations. Also, for a school to be a true learning-centered school there is strong evidence to support that there may need to be a collective commitment by all participants.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to obtain and analyze the impact of the NEE Data Tool from teachers' perspectives through a case study of NEE Data Tool teacher evaluations as related to promoting teacher growth, improving effectiveness, and

promoting a learning-centered culture in one rural Missouri high school. The researcher will use this case study to inform the teachers being investigated, provide an opportunity for teachers' voices to be heard, and provide a platform for teachers' perspectives to be an active part of the change process. Additionally, the researcher plans to provide NEE with the findings and recommendations based on this study. The ultimate goal is to fill some of the void in these important areas of research and to add to the scholarly discussion on teacher effectiveness and building learning-centered cultures in schools, which is taking place nationwide and is a major focus in the state of Missouri.

Research Question

The research topic selected was the following: what is the impact of NEE Data Tool on teacher growth, effectiveness, and learning-centered culture in a Missouri rural public school? What are teachers' perspectives about this topic? Additionally, does the NEE Data tool impact teachers in the areas of teacher growth, effectiveness, and learning-centered culture of the school? The research question, which guided this investigation, was the following:

1. As perceived by teachers, how does the Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE) Data Tool: (a) promote teacher growth, (b) improve teacher effectiveness, and (c) promote building a learning-centered culture in a Missouri rural public school?

This study focused on studying the impact of the NEE Data Tool for promoting teacher growth, improving teacher effectiveness, and building learning-centered cultures at Buffalo High School (BHS).

Conceptual Frameworks

During the development of the framework for this study, the researcher bridged several different theories and disciplines to unfold the direction of the conceptual framework. Bolman and Deal's (2008) human resource frame continued to be intertwined throughout the study since the beginning. The Human Resource Frame assumption "holds that the needs of individuals and organizations can be aligned, engaging people's talent and energy while the enterprise profits" (p. 121). This symbiotic relationship is also a foundational truth of promoting teacher growth, effectiveness, and a learning-centered culture in schools. The goal of schools is to effectively educate their students and prepare them for their futures, and "the single most influential component of an effective school is the individual teachers within that school" (Marzano, 2007, p.1).

Abraham Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs is also intertwined within the framework of this study. Maslow's hierarchy of needs includes physiological needs, safety needs, belonging needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization. Maslow presented this theory of psychology in his 1943 paper titled "A Theory of Human Motivation" and changed psychology theory forever. For a learning culture to be fully developed using this lens, the deficiency needs have to be met before the growth needs in the hierarchy are met in order for individuals to develop their full potential of self-actualization. Therefore, the researcher focused on evaluating whether the students and teachers' basic or deficiency needs that could be addressed were being met in the selected school and then moved up the pyramid to make sure the school counselors, teachers, administration,

security procedures, and support services were in place to meet the hierarchy of needs (see Figure 1).

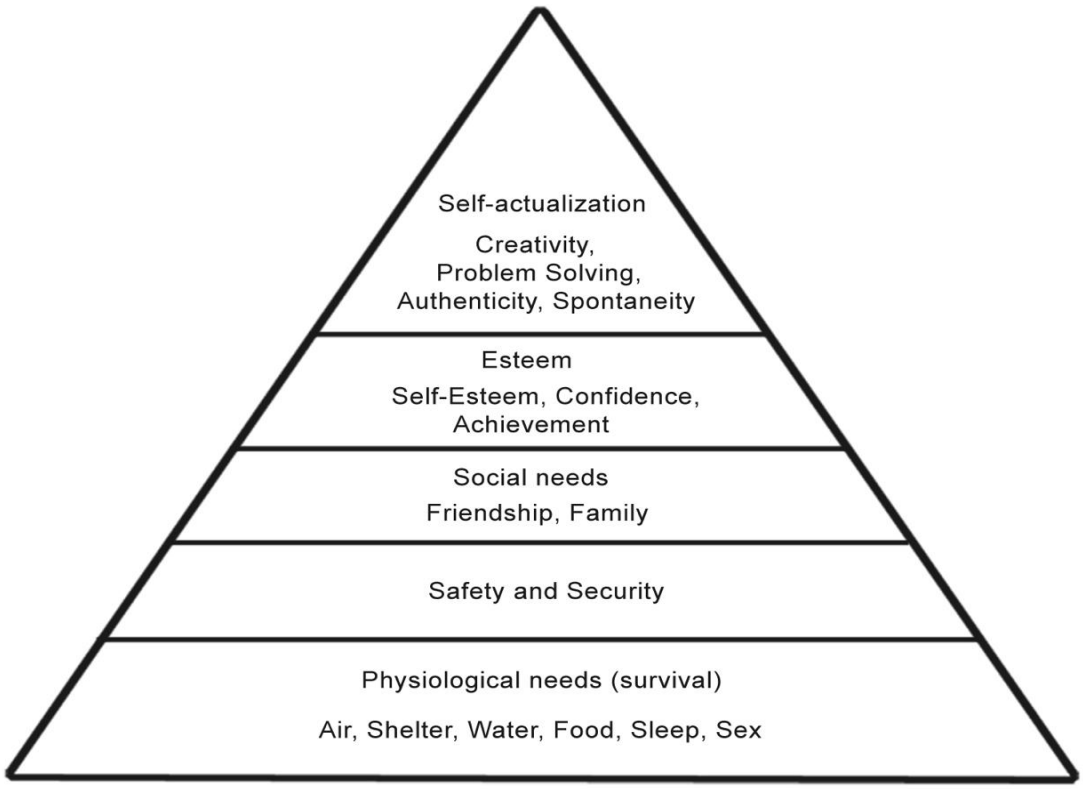


Figure 1. Maslow (1943) A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, *50*, p. 371.

Another component of the conceptual framework is based on the principals of motivation theory, which has been implemented in the school being studied. In the book *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, Pink (2009) explains that the different intrinsic aspects of human motivation can be divided into autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Pink notes that for many years scientists only recognized that two "drives powered behavior" (p. 3), the biological drive and external rewards. Pink re-examines and expands upon the 1949 psychological research of professor Harry Harlow who first introduced a third drive "performance of the task" (p. 5) which began the study of

intrinsic motivations and later was expanded upon by Edward Deci in 1969. Pink introduced what he calls "motivation 3.0" (p. 208) and explains how autonomy, mastery, and purpose promote student learning to be self-directed, engaging, and maximizing. The researcher purposely developed building goals over the past three school years for student learning based on autonomy, mastery, and purpose, and had many conversations with the selected teachers about promoting student ownership of learning in faculty meetings, lead team meetings, and individual teacher feedback meetings after NEE walk-throughs.

Another key part of the conceptual framework is growth mindset, and this concept and research has also been taught and implemented in the building being studied. Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck in her 2006 book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, introduced the concept of how people can fulfill their potential and explained how the psychology of success can be linked to two types of mindsets. Dweck explained that "Mindsets are just beliefs. They're powerful beliefs, but they're just something in your mind, and you can change your mind" (p. 16). Dweck defined a "fixed mindset [is] believing that your qualities are carved in stone [which] creates an urgency to prove yourself over and over" (p. 7) and that a "growth mindset is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts, your strategies, and help from others" (p. 7). The author pointed out that lowering standards in schools to provide opportunities for student success (self-esteem) does not work but "just leads to poorly educated students who feel entitled to easy work and lavish praise" (p. 196). Dweck contended that teachers and schools should set high standards, and growth-oriented teachers "believe in the growth of the intellect and talent, and they are fascinated

with the process of learning" (p. 197). The researcher has purposely hired growth oriented teachers the past three years who promote student ownership of learning and has based many of the school initiatives including the selection of the NEE indicators on this premise.

Utilizing the human resource frame the researcher planned to measure the studying the impact of the NEE Data Tool for promoting teacher growth, improving teacher effectiveness, and building learning-centered cultures at BHS. The researcher chose to use the human resource lens as a framework as a way to measure the different components from Maslow, Marzano, Pink, and Dweck's valuable aspects and their impact on the selected school for this study. Research by these authors has been implemented in the selected school in recent history, including faculty meeting and lead team meeting conversations, the NEE indicators selected for teacher growth, and in post classroom observation meeting dialogue with the selected school's teachers. The NEE Data Tool has been used to improve teacher growth, sometimes called teacher efficacy, to promote a student learning culture in the selected school that improves student-learning performance. One of the main goals of this study is to measure the effectiveness of these plans from teachers' perspectives and ultimately the impact of the NEE Data Tool and learning culture that currently exists.

Design of the Study

A case study program evaluation of the 35 teachers at BHS was selected in order to examine the factors that affect the chosen teachers' evaluations, and provide for statistical data and teacher feedback from teachers in the rural Missouri NEE public school selected.

Setting. The researcher conducted a case study of the teachers at Buffalo High School (BHS) in Buffalo, Missouri, at the end of the 2018-2019 school year. The city of Buffalo, Missouri, is located in Southwest Missouri and has a population of 3,026 with a 22.9% poverty rate (Data USA: Buffalo, Missouri). Buffalo is a rural town in Dallas County, which is primarily an agricultural community that is located 37 miles north of Springfield, Missouri, on Highway 65. BHS had 35 teachers during the 2018-2019 school year with 12 years average teaching experience, an average of 8.8 of those years of experience at BHS. Of the BHS teachers, 40% have a master's degree or advanced degree, and is composed of 68.6% female and 31.4% male teachers.

Participants. The methodological approach for the case was descriptive, utilizing Likert and open-ended survey items. The 35 teachers at BHS were invited to participate, informed about the purpose of the study, and provided an informed consent form (see Appendix A). Of the 35 BHS teachers, 28 teachers chose to participate in the case study, an 80% participation rate. Identities were kept anonymous throughout the investigation, as participants were not asked any identifiable items and their emails were not collected to ensure anonymity. To mitigate deductive disclosure risks, the researcher provided the basic teacher population demographics through information collected from the human resources officer of the district and did not collect any personal information.

Data Collection Tools. The survey was sent out in a Google Forms survey format to the selected group of 35 teachers at BHS. Some of the survey questions were quantitative and designed utilizing a six-point Likert scale which Fink (2013) calls a "*forced-choice* method because the middle option of *neither agree nor disagree* or, by

convention, *neutral* is not available" (p. 45). The case study also included qualitative questions that are open-ended to allow the respondents to write as much as they wanted (see Appendix B). The survey contained 12 quantitative and 12 qualitative items. Participant responses were collected upon completion and combined utilizing Google Forms survey response tool. The response tool allowed the researcher to view the responses as soon as the participants completed the survey, and start coding the responses immediately based on pre-determined themes from the literature and the case study data.

Data Analysis. The researcher analyzed the survey data based on similar answers, which were sorted utilizing the summary of responses tool in Google Forms. McDavid, Huse, and Hawthorn (2013) stated that a researcher should "analyze the data, focusing on answering the evaluation questions" (p. 36). The research questions guided the data analysis by building a case for the study with the survey questions and then utilizing the specific results to help direct the analysis after the responses were collected.

Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the quantitative data collected, sorted by frequencies as "descriptive statistics provide simple summaries about the sample and the responses to some or all of the questions" (Fink, 2013, p. 116). For the qualitative responses, open coding was used, and the respondents' answers were sorted based on type (yes/no for example), and then coded by themes accordingly to pull out the rich and thick descriptions provided to each question.

At the completion of the data analysis process, the researcher interpreted the data. The researcher has access to NEE teacher evaluation comparison data from the Southwest Missouri region without identifiers for comparison with the chosen schools indicators. The comparison mean data in the selected NEE indicators will be compared to responses

from BHS teachers and compared to our district data. The researcher requested data from NEE used for some contextual and background data for the study.

Limitations, Assumptions, and Design Controls

The following section addresses the limitations, assumptions, and design controls in relation to the role of the researcher in this study. The researcher is the principal and supervisor of the building where the case study will take place. The anonymity of the participants will be carefully protected through the structure of the dissemination of the survey and the use of Google Forms survey tool so the researcher cannot see any identifiers about the participants. The researcher is also certified NEE evaluator and master scorer for NEE, and therefore has some natural biases to the NEE evaluation system. The researcher has also been selected as a master scorer by NEE to watch videos of teachers and then rate them based on the indicators provided by NEE and *look for's* that break down each indicator into seven rating points with numeric amounts including but limited to "more than half of the students" and "less than half of the students". The master scored videos are used by the regional NEE trainers to train new administrators and share with NEE schools for teachers to practice scoring in order to help them understand the process. The researcher is aware that there may be some biases and limitations from the differences of the roles of teachers and administrators that the researcher will need to be aware of throughout this study. With this in mind the researcher is aware of his biases and will attempt to stay as neutral as possible to all portions of the research as related to the NEE case study data to protect anonymity. This bias will be a limitation to the neutrality of the researcher, but also provides an insider's view of the NEE evaluation and its underpinnings in the chosen school.

Definitions of Key Terms

Rural Population

There are several accepted definitions of rural population but the researcher will explain two of the most common federal government definitions that will be the basis for this research. The U.S. Census Bureau developed a commonly accepted definition of rural population. The U.S. Census Bureau defines urban areas (UAs) as areas of 50,000 people or more and actually does not define rural areas but states that "Rural encompasses all population, housing, and territory not included within an urban area. Whatever is not urban is considered rural" (www.census.gov, Dec. 2016). For several decades, the U.S. Census Bureau used the UAs population density method to define urban regions until the increase in technology allowed them to be more specific and calculate urbanized areas and clusters, which are defined as a place with 2,500 or more people with a density of 1,000 or more people per square mile (ppsm). With these changes the U.S. Census Bureau clarified that urban areas are "more dense, large population, built up, close together" and everything that was not defined as urban areas or clusters was defined as rural which is "less dense, sparse population, not built up, at a distance" (Ratcliffe, et al., 2016, p. 3).

Student Performance

Student performance was defined as student achievement levels at a given time for grades and subjects as related to academic achievement assessments. Some of the student performance data most commonly utilized in Missouri public schools are the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP), End of Course Exams (EOC), American College Testing (ACT), Pre-ACT, ACT Aspire, Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery

(ASVAB), and grade level benchmarks. The researcher like many administrators uses student performance data to help make decisions about teacher effectiveness, student interventions, curriculum, course offerings, new course adoptions, teacher professional development, and teacher placement.

Teacher Evaluations

For the purpose of this study teacher evaluation was defined as the process utilized by administrators to evaluate teacher effectiveness in the classroom with their students for the purpose of developing more effective teachers (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011).

Teacher Effectiveness

Developing teacher growth and effectiveness is the main purpose of high-quality teacher evaluation systems. The purpose of this study, teacher effectiveness was looked at through the lens of student growth and the impact teacher practices have on their students and school culture. According to Jenson et al. (2014), "High-performing systems around the world know that improving the effectiveness of teaching is the way to lift school performance…[and] we must make time for programs that develop teacher skills and deliver great teaching" (p. 1). According to Todd Whitaker in his 2012 book *What Great Teachers Do Differently*, "Effective teachers have a strong core of beliefs—principles that guide their decisions, touchstones that help them distinguish right from wrong, goals that define their vision for the school year" (p. 111).

Collective Teacher Efficacy

According to The Center for Comprehensive Reform and Improvement (2007), collective efficacy "is the perception of teachers in a school that the efforts of the faculty

as a whole will have a positive effect on student learning" (p. 1). Brinson and Steiner's (2007) research showed a sustained 27% increase of students who meet or exceed standards in Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in one school. The study concluded that relationships played a role in staff interventions, but "relationships alone were not enough to produce results in student academic performance" (p. 1). This study revealed "only through focused and ongoing professional development and specific actions on the part of the principal were the teachers…able to dramatically improve student performance" (p. 1). In another study involving 452 urban elementary teachers in 47 schools "they found that even when taking into consideration the effects of student demographics such as race, socioeconomic status, and gender (that is, factors beyond a school's control), perceptions of collective efficacy still were strong predictors of academic performance" (Brinson & Steiner, 2007, p. 2). The authors concluded that school leaders help build collective teacher efficacy "by providing teachers with opportunities to build instructional knowledge and collaborate with colleagues…[and]…with feedback that is insightful and with a vision of success in which teachers are treated as sources of expertise" (p. 5).

Motivation Theory

Author Daniel Pink in his 2009 book *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, explained that the age-old carrot and stick motivation techniques lead to what he calls "motivation 2.0" (p. 1). Pink explained the idea as "rewarding an activity will get more of it. Punishing an activity will get less of it" (p. 34). The author explained that carrots and stick techniques only provide baseline rewards and the opposite results are actually more likely to result. "Mechanisms designed to increase motivation can dampen it. Tactics aimed at boosting creativity can reduce it. Programs to promote good

deeds can make them disappear…[and]…instead of restraining negative behavior, rewards and punishments can often set it loose—and give rise to cheating, addiction, and dangerously myopic thinking" (p. 35). Pink also explained the differences of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and the strengths and weaknesses of each. The author presents a "motivation 3.0" (p. 95) that is the basis of his motivation theory and is composed of the "three elements" of autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Autonomy (choice) is considered by the author to be an essential feature in improving personal performance and the "four aspects of work: what people do, when they do it, how they do it, and whom they do it with" (p. 95) are the areas that people need some autonomy in for maximum engagement levels so they do not feel controlled. Mastery is defined by Pink as "the desire to get better and better at something that matters…[or their]…flow" (p. 111). The author stated "a study of 11,000 industrial scientists and engineers working at companies in the United States found that the desire for intellectual challenge—that is, the urge to master something new and engaging—was the best predictor of productivity" (p. 117). Purpose is what the author calls the "third leg…[and what]…provides a context for its two mates" (p. 133) of autonomy and purpose. The author further explained, "the most deeply motivated people—not to mention those who are the most productive and satisfied—hitch their desires to a cause larger than themselves" (p. 133). The following sums up pink's motivation theory 3.0:

> We're designed to be active and engaged. And we know that the richest experiences in our lives aren't when we're clamoring for validation from others, but when we're listening to our own voice—doing something that matters, doing it well, and doing it in the service of a cause larger than ourselves. (p. 146)

For the purpose of this study, Pink's Motivation Theory was utilized as part of the conceptual framework for the study as part of understanding the human resource frame when working with teachers as related to teacher evaluations and learning cultures.

Growth Mindset

Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck in her 2006 book Mindset: The New Psychology of Success presented the foundational work done in the area of growth mindset. She studied how people learn to cope with their failures. Out of her research she discovered that there are two major mindsets, a fixed mindset and a growth mindset. Dweck concluded that people with a growth mindset believe "intelligence can be developed, leads to a desire to learn and therefore a tendency to embrace challenges, persist in the face of setbacks, see efforts as the path to mastery, learn from criticism, and find lessons and inspiration in the success of others" (p. 263). This important research concludes that people with a growth mindset "reach ever-higher levels of achievement" (p. 263) than those with a fixed mindset as "they may plateau early and achieve less than their full potential" (p. 263).

According to a study published by the National Institute of Education (2018) about the neuroscience of growth mindset, brain researcher Ng (2018) concluded that growth mindset "is the belief that intelligence can be nurtured through learning and effort, while intrinsic motivation is the volition to engage in a task for inherent satisfaction. Individuals with growth mindset believe that motivation can be nurtured, and that extrinsic motivation can be internalized" (p. 2). The author also noted, "growth-minded individuals perceive task setbacks as a necessary part of the learning process and they bounce back by increasing their motivational effort" (p. 2). The author concludes

that the "promotion of a growth mindset can nurture individuals to learn…[and with]…a growth mindset, students will learn with a positive attitude" (p. 8).

Significance of the Study

The ongoing debate over teacher evaluation systems nationwide has the potential to drastically reshape educational policy and practice with varying stakeholders providing input. According to Mitchell, Crowson, and Shipps in their 2011 book *Shaping Education Policy*, "rhetoric has created legitimacy issues for educators with various publics at all levels of government…among these are the business and legislative communities, which have emerged as loud and powerful voices" (p. 179). With this in mind, educators need to understand that they are constantly contending for a voice in the debate about educational reform, and should not sit back and let others tell their story. Teachers should be active and vocal in the process so that their perspectives and insights are heard. The researcher plans to provide input not only to NEE, but also to scholarly research by submitting a journal article, and hopes to get it published in teacher and leader publications to impact and inform practice in the field of education.

Practice

The researcher plans to develop this important study and provide a springboard for the necessary research to follow about teacher perspectives of teacher evaluations and developing learning-centered cultures in public schools. The plan is to evaluate the impact of the NEE teacher evaluation system in the selected school as well in order to inform the process as related to teachers' perspectives. The study was designed to provide a voice to teachers in one Missouri rural public school about these topics to help fill a gap in research, and to help educate school leaders and teachers about the changes

in teacher evaluation policy in Missouri in order to promote better learning cultures for students.

Summary

The pressure to improve student and school performance nationally is increasing every year. Policy maker's focus on student achievement as a way to measure school success is here to stay for the foreseeable future and teacher effectiveness has a greater impact than all other measures (Marzano et al., 2011). The NCLB student performance accountability measures were temporarily put on pause with President Barack Obama's Race to the Top waivers. In order to receive the waivers, states and therefore schools, agreed to meet his new federal guidelines about teacher evaluations. There are alternatives in Missouri other than the provided DESE evaluation tool, which met the legality measures of NCLB, one of those alternatives is the NEE model. With the NCLB and Race to the Top initiatives being put on pause with the passing of the ESSA, educational leaders and politicians will continue to interpret and work toward implementing the new law to help improve teacher effectiveness with a holistic approach.

A major gap in the current research and literature is an absence of the perspectives and input of classroom teachers regarding their evaluation and the learning cultures of schools. Nationwide teachers are pushing back against teacher evaluation systems and accountability measures placed upon them (Frosch, 2013). This might be due to teachers' voices not being included in two areas that impact them so greatly. The researcher plans to gather teacher perspectives about these topics to help provide an opportunity for teachers' voices to be heard in this important teacher evaluation debate and in ongoing policy creation. The researcher will utilize the data collected from this

case study to help identify areas that need to improve, and to inform practice in the areas of teacher growth, effectiveness and learning-centered cultures. The researcher gathered qualitative and quantitative data for a well-balanced data set. The data will be analyzed and descriptive statistics will be utilized to summarize the findings. The researcher plans to inform practice and provide NEE with valuable feedback from the chosen group of teachers. The ultimate purposes are to improve the practitioner's school and inform the education world with teachers' perspective on their evaluations.

SECTION TWO:

PRACTITIONER SETTING FOR THE STUDY

Introduction

Nationwide policy makers and school leaders are constantly looking for every opportunity to improve schools and prepare students to compete in a global economy. One of the areas that is measured and continuously debated is student academic growth, which is generally reported as to where students and schools rank locally, statewide, nationally and worldwide. As a result, public schools face continuous pressure to improve student achievement levels as measured by standardized tests. A current trend and focus of attention in this highly debated topic is the impact of teacher effectiveness upon student performance. One strategy for improving teacher growth and effectiveness is to improve teacher evaluation systems nationwide and to tie student performance measures directly to teacher evaluations. The premise is that what gets evaluated gets taken care of in schools. There are many opinions, ideas, data sets, evaluation models, and suspected correlations that have divided public and professional opinion about this topic and assumption (Hill & Grossman, 2013).

Shorter and more frequent teacher evaluations (mini-observations) have become accepted as a best practice versus less frequent and longer evaluations (Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016). It is argued that these mini-observations provide a more accurate sample of the every day instruction happening in classrooms. Another benefit of more frequent mini-observations is increased opportunities for teacher feedback with the goal of improving teacher effectiveness (Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016). The NEE training the researcher has received emphasizes that evaluators need to do an average of six of these ten to fifteen-minute mini-observations each school year. The researcher plans to measure from teacher's perspectives the impact of the NEE Data Tool teacher evaluations

effectiveness as a tool for promoting teacher growth, and building learning-centered cultures, in one Missouri rural public school.

History of Organization

The researcher plans to administer a case study at BHS where he is the current principal, and has firsthand knowledge and motivation to improve the educational practice. The selected school for this case study is a 9-12 high school located just less than an hour outside of Springfield, Missouri, in a rural community. The selected school is a rural high poverty school, which has approximately 510 students and a free and reduced lunch rate of 53 percent (Missouri DESE, 2019). The school has recently seen an increase of almost 100 students in the past three school years and has started several new initiatives, renovations, and school improvement programs focused on improving school pride and the learning culture. According to Hollie Elliot the Executive Director for the Dallas County Economic Group, the Buffalo community is also seeing a recent trend in population growth and economic development due to recent growth of the schools and the initiatives of the City of Buffalo in partnership with the Growth in the Rural Ozarks economic development program (H. Elliot, personal communication, January 16, 2019).

BHS started utilizing the NEE evaluation system in the fall of 2016 after district administrators investigated the model, met with NEE representatives, and talked to other area schools which already implemented the NEE model in their district. The researcher was hired by the district in the spring of 2016 and officially started as the principal in the fall of 2016. All district administrators attended a two-day NEE evaluator training in the summer of 2016 and had to pass a qualifying test by accurately rating multiple videos of

different teachers within the variance of one on the seven-point scale. The training provided opportunities for the trainers to provide practice, discussion, and feedback to ensure the evaluators truly understood the NEE system and what to "look for" in classrooms on each of the chosen indicators. Each summer all of the district administrators must attend and successfully complete a one-day NEE re-certification course.

Organizational Analysis

The political and structural frames are clearly present and active in the dynamics of this study, but the human resource framework was what the researcher primarily utilized for the organization of this study. Bolman and Deal (2008) stated that education is a "complex policy ecosystem" (p. 239) and that political agendas can corrupt decisions as "individual errors typically occur downstream from powerful forces channeling decision makers over a precipice no one sees until too late" (p. 193). The NCLB legislation and The Race to the Top initiatives have been championed by two different U.S. presidents, and have definitely impacted and had many unforeseen impacts upon education. Bolman and Deal also pointed out that "by virtue of their position, authorities are entitled to make decisions binding on their subordinates" (p. 201). The educational reforms made by a leader many times outlive their time (and possibly their lifetime) in power, and have long lasting and sometimes detrimental unknown or undesirable effects for years to come.

The structural frame is very important "like an animal's skeleton or a building's framework, structural form both enhances and constrains what an organization can accomplish" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 50). The educational reforms and mandates have

to be sent down to the different state departments of education and ultimately the local school districts to see how effective they will become. Structural decisions have to be made to meet the standards or changes put into place in the "form of job descriptions, procedures, routines, protocols, or rules" (p. 52). Bolman and Deal warned about "*suboptimization*, an emphasis on achieving unit goals rather than focusing on the overall mission" (p. 53). Some major points of contention for many people with NCLB and The Race to the Top are that the focuses are on standardized test scores and complex evaluation systems instead of teaching and learning. According to Hill and Grossman (2013) in "the service of finding expedient and efficient evaluation systems, however, we risk overlooking the importance of subject matter and the developmental needs of learners as they relate to teaching" (p. 374).

Improving the human resource management of an organization is the primary focus of this study since improving teacher effectiveness and the learning culture is what is being analyzed. Schools are finding that it is important to "develop human capital…[and to] see talent and motivation as business necessities (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 139). Bolman and Deal listed six human resource principles which relate to the effectiveness of schools and their learning culture: (a) build and implement an HR strategy, (b) hire the right people, (c) keep them, (d) invest in them, (e) empower them, and (f) promote diversity. The authors also pointed out, "Progressive organizations give power to employees as well as invest in their development" (p. 149). The organizational growth will be examined to help the researcher determine the effectiveness of NEE as related to teacher evaluations and the learning culture in the rural Missouri public school selected and studied.

Leadership Analysis

Northouse (2013) defined leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 5). He also noted "defining leadership as a process means that it is not a trait or characteristic that resides in the leader, but rather a transactional event that occurs between the leader and followers" (p. 5). The researcher chose his school as he is constantly trying to learn and improve as a leader, and truly wants to improve the teacher effectiveness and learning culture at BHS to ensure that the students, staff, and school succeed. Bolman and Deal (2008) stated many believe "all good leaders must have the right stuff—qualities like vision, strength, and commitment" (p. 345). Others believe the type of leader that is needed depends on the situation. It seems there is no right answer or end to the proposed theories about what makes a good leader, or even whether leadership can be defined by personality traits or characteristics. The researcher has purposely tried to adapt his leadership approaches and decision making to attempt to best meet the needs of his school. One of the ways the researcher has adapted his leadership approach is through the selection of the four NEE indicators used for annual teacher evaluations on the specific needs of the students, staff, and school during that particular school year.

The leadership in the district being studied has had a major overhaul over the past four years. The current progress and notable change started with the hiring of the current superintendent who brought a plethora of knowledge and strong leadership in the areas of leadership, vision, finance, academic growth, facility improvement, and a commitment to the recruitment and retention of highly effective building leaders, classroom teachers, and personnel serving in a supportive role for students. After a year of observing the previous

teacher evaluation tool, the administrative team identified the need for a growth model for teacher evaluation, professional development, and curriculum re-writing. To address the need for a growth model for teacher evaluation the NEE teacher evaluation tool was selected after a presentation in the spring of 2016 to the Dallas County R-1 (DCR-1) leadership team by Dr. Mark Doss the Region 5 NEE Field Representative (M. Doss, personal communication, November 19, 2018). Figure 2, an image from the Teacher Evaluation Handbook at Columbia Public Schools, illustrates each of the key areas of the NEE model, which are discussed in detail by the NEE trainers in the yearly training sessions administrators receive as part of the NEE yearly qualifying trainings.

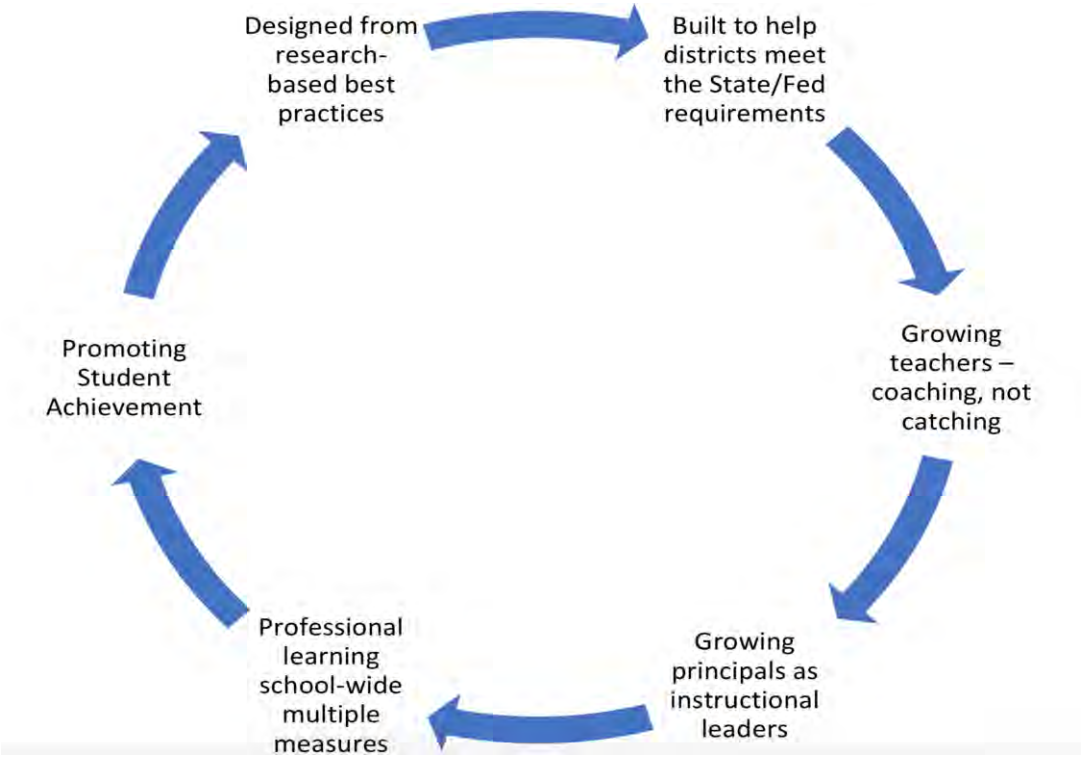


Figure 2. The Network For Educator Effectiveness (NEE) Model. Retrieved from www.cpsk12.org

The NEE method, research, and implementation plan were presented to the DCR-1 Board of Education and approved for the start of the 2016-2017 school year.

As mentioned earlier, all DCR-1 administrators attended a two-day training session over the NEE tool and were required to successfully complete the qualifier videos within a variance of one on a seven-point scale in the four selected indicators prior to conducting teacher evaluations. The DCR-1 administrative team includes the superintendent, two assistant superintendents, four building principals (including the researcher), three building assistant principals, and the special education director. The administrative team met a few times throughout the summer of 2016 and into the fall of 2016 to identify the four selected indicators based on the DCR-1 Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP), each of the Building School Improvement Plans (BSIP), and the areas identified for focus with the teachers. Each building principal (including the researcher) also met with their building level lead teams and teachers to select the four NEE indicators for the 2016-2017 school year. The initial four selected NEE indicators were goal setting, motivation, engagement, and prior knowledge. These areas were the most obvious student needs as identified by the lead team and through discussions the researcher had with staff, students, and community members. This correlates with what Cohen and Goldhaber (2016) stated in their findings "first, and most importantly, classroom observations need to be validated based on a range of student measures we care about" (p. 384).

As the principal of BHS, the researcher initially followed the structure of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) collaborative leadership model that was currently in place upon his arrival as the new principal in July of 2016 called the BHS Lead Team. According to Carl Glickman in his 2002 book *Leadership for Learning; How to Help Teachers* Succeed, "a collaborative [leadership] approach is often the

desired choice…both leader and teacher[s] approach the tasks of improvement as a meeting of equals, trying to generate together the best course of future actions" (p. 83) in schools. As the new principal, the researcher tried hard to use this collaborative approach and the ideas of shared leadership for most of the major decisions made for the direction of the school.

One of the first collaborative decisions was made by the BHS Lead Team about the selection of the NEE indicators for the 2016-2017 school year. The team consisted of the principal, assistant principal, and one department member from math, science, english language arts, social studies, physical education, practical arts, fine arts, and special education. Throughout the first year of NEE implementation, the BHS Lead Team set up training sessions and a Google Classroom course for all of the BHS teachers to help them better understand the NEE indicators, NEE Look Fors, NEE Edhub resources, research about each selected indicator, goal setting information, NEE Unit of Instruction information, and the implementation timeline for the school year.

During this first year of implementation, the researcher took a considerable amount of time explaining each NEE observation with the BHS teachers throughout the school year and found that in all four selected NEE indicators the teachers needed extensive building level professional development to support their growth, understanding, and proper implementation. The researcher also tied the BSIP goals to the four NEE indicators so the teachers would write their Teacher Professional Development Plans (TPDP) around the four NEE indicators selected to help teachers to focus their efforts and understandings. The following were the building goals for the first year of NEE

implementation and the re-norming of the PLC restart the Lead Team decided was needed based on teacher feedback:

2016-2017 BHS BUILDING GOALS

1. Have caring relationships with students/staff and build a culture of compassion, respect, and responsibility (motivation).
2. Set high standards (goal setting) and motivate students to reach them.
3. Connect the curriculum to students' lives, make learning relevant, and engaging (engagement).
4. Participate in ongoing and relevant professional development.

These basic building goals helped the BHS Lead Team focus their time and attention to assisting with the implementation of the NEE tool and the necessary support for the teachers.

At the end of the 2016-2017 school year, the researcher completed a NEE summative evaluation for all probationary teachers (in their first five years of employment) and the tenured teachers, who were in their sixth year or on a three-year summative rotation based on the year they started. The NEE summative evaluations are generated on the NEE Data Tool based on the six observations done by the principal (four observations for each teacher and two for special education and shared teachers with the Middle School), assistant principal (two observations for each teacher and one for shared teachers with Middle School), and special education director for special education teachers (two observations per special education teacher), and were reviewed with each of the teachers in a summative evaluation meeting with the principal. These summative evaluation meetings were a review of the mean data for the teacher based on

their six observation ratings for each indicator, comparison mean data to all the teachers in BHS (scores only), comparison mean data to all teachers in the DCR-1 school district (scores only), a review of the principal's written comments about the year the teacher had, and a time for reflection by the teachers to discuss their strengths, weaknesses, and plans for future growth.

The researcher has consistently continued this process for the past three school years with minimal changes to the NEE evaluative practices, so the expectations were clear and process was transparent for teachers. During the 2018-2019 school year, the researcher formally added the NEE TPDP that was started with a half-day training by Dr. Mark Doss. It included a timeline for the submission of each teacher's TPDP to be submitted, a mid-year check-in, and a year-end reflection. All BHS teachers were given instructions by the researcher to select their lowest NEE indicator and to focus their TPDP around researching and implementing what they learned from the NEE Edhub resource that were provided to help them grow in the classroom in their chosen indicator. The researcher reviewed each of the three reviews of their TPDP and individual comments were sent back to each teacher for review, reflection, and comments.

Implications for Research in the Practitioner Setting

All of the frames including political, structural, symbolic, and human resource (Bolman & Deal, 2008) are relevant and applicable to better understanding and improving teacher effectiveness and learning cultures. However, for the purpose of this study the researcher will focus on the human resource ramifications of teacher evaluation systems as related to teacher effectiveness in the chosen school for this case study. Bolman and Deal explain the human resource frame as the image of an organization and

specifically in this study the "family" relationship between the organization and its members (teachers).

The researcher is an administrator, and NEE is utilized in his building for teacher evaluations. The study will allow for the researcher to gain insights about the perceptions of his staff about teacher growth, effectiveness, and the learning-centered culture in the practitioner's setting. The insight gained from this study will allow the researcher to make valuable adjustments and use the data to continue to improve the evaluation practices, and extend the work that has been started in developing the learning-centered culture at BHS.

Summary

The ongoing debate over teacher evaluation systems nationwide has the potential to drastically re-shape educational policy and practice with varying stakeholders having input. According to an article in *Shaping Education Policy*, "rhetoric has created legitimacy issues for educators with various publics at all levels of government…among these are the business and legislative communities, which have emerged as loud and powerful voices" (Mitchell, Crowson, & Shipps, 2011, p. 179). With this in mind, it is important to understand that educators are constantly contending for a voice in the debate about educational reform and should not sit back and let others tell their story, but be active and vocal in the process so their perspectives and insights are heard. The researcher wants to help his school be an active voice in their own educational reform and help inform the practice of other schools utilizing the NEE teacher evaluation tool.

SECTION THREE:

SCHOLARLY REVIEW FOR THE STUDY

Introduction

Public education has greatly changed over the past century in the areas of technology and course delivery, but it is questionable if it has changed at as fast a rate in the area of teacher evaluations and school cultures. According to Cohen and Goldhaber (2016), "improving teacher evaluation is one of the most pressing and contested contemporary educational policy issues [and] their measurement properties have been scrutinized and found wanting by some given the likelihood of misclassifying an effective teacher as ineffective or vice versa" (p. 378). With this in mind many teachers might argue that teacher evaluations are highly subjective and based on the like or dislike of their administrator's or evaluator's preferred teaching styles. For many administrators another reason for classroom teacher evaluations is to be "used nearly universally to assess teachers" (p. 378) for helping make decisions about staffing needs. This reason is not entirely about the effectiveness of teachers but could be more about the placement or hiring of teachers based on structural needs in a school. As an educational leader, the researcher is starting to see a new trend in educational leadership on developing teachers through growth models utilizing evaluations to provide feedback in order to help teachers be more effective and, therefore, improve the learning cultures in schools. The idea of growth models is for more focus on the amount of growth of an individual teacher compared to an earlier point in time in their own personal growth as a teacher, rather than compared to other teachers.

People might argue that the learning cultures of schools are still very similar to what their parents or even grandparents may have experienced. With these two commonly held perspectives the researcher found the need to dig deeper into what

research is saying about these areas and how much they truly have improved and changed. Gill (2010) summed it up well by stating the following:

> Like growing a garden, evaluation for learning requires constant tending. You can ignore it for a long time, and you still have a garden, but not the beauty and bounty that you desire. You must ask the tough questions and ask them frequently. (p. 157)

The researcher chose the topic of teacher perspectives of teacher evaluations and learning cultures as the unique perspective of teachers needs to be examined, and it could be argued, much more frequently than in past educational practice. The following review of extant scholarship examines the history of teacher evaluations for growth, teacher effectiveness, teacher observations, and learning cultures as related to this case study of the impact of the NEE Data Tool on teacher growth, effectiveness, and the learning-centered culture in one Missouri rural public school.

Review of the Extant Scholarship

A History of Teacher Evaluations Leading to NEE's Development

As described earlier, teacher evaluations have become a major focus of the high stakes accountability educational legislation and media focus in recent history (Tornero & Taut, 2011). Many federal and state policies have impacted education and led to current educational reform measures and initiatives. In Missouri, the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993 laid some of the groundwork for accountability and student performance measures. Statewide performance standards were established and have been adjusted, modified, and renamed several times since that time (Missouri Governor's Office, 1993). The most notable federal accountability measures were put in place by

President George W. Bush signing the reauthorization of the greatly modified Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 2001 or better known publicly as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). NCLB was an unprecedented educational overhaul and reform measure that aspired for all groups of students in the country to reach academic proficiency in mathematics and reading within 12 years. Proficiency has been measured by assessing all students with pre-determined scores on annual standardized tests to see where students measure up compared to their peers statewide and nationally. Additionally, distinctions were given to the schools that met the Average Yearly Progress (AYP) and sanctions for schools that failed to meet the defined goals (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

Many schools nationwide found NCLB standards, expectations, and timelines to be unattainable for all students and especially the lowest achieving sub-groups of students, but very rapid education reform measures were implemented by states in reaction. After close to a decade of schools trying desperately to meet the goals of NCLB and the many state policy changes, politicians and state education leaders became involved. A "national partnership led by the National Governors Association and the Chief State School Officers to develop a common core of new, rigorous college and career-ready standards in reading and math" (The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2009, p. 1) was established. Then, on July 24, 2009, President Barack Obama introduced The Race to the Top education reform movement with the following quote:

> America will not succeed in the 21st century unless we do a far better job of educating our sons and daughters…and the race starts today. I am issuing a challenge to our nation's governors and school boards, principals and teachers,

> businesses and non-profits, parents and students: if you set and enforce rigorous and challenging standards and assessments; if you put outstanding teachers at the front of the classroom; if you turn around failing schools – your state can win a Race to the Top grant that will not only help students outcompete workers around the world, but let them fulfill their God-given potential. (The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2009, p. 1)

As continued pressure to meet the 100% proficiency requirements of NCLB's timelines grew closer to realization, public outcries and demand for change were led by teacher unions, administrator associations, parent organizations, state education departments, and legislators. In response, the White House issued a press release on September 23, 2011, that waivers would be granted for the rigorous and high stakes accountability measures of NCLB. In the press release, President Barack Obama stated that "to help states, districts and schools that are ready to move forward with education reform, our administration will provide flexibility from the law in exchange for a real commitment to undertake change" (U.S. Department of Education, 2011, p. 1).

As expected, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) completed a waiver application to release Missouri public schools from the NCLB timelines by agreeing and committing Missouri's public schools to follow and implement the new federal guidelines (D. Lineberry, personal communication, June 26, 2014).

A major change to teacher evaluation policy was the expectation that student performance measures would be tied directly to teacher evaluations in order to show teacher effectiveness. A proponent of these changes was The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) that has a mission statement of "ensuring every child has an

effective teacher" (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2014, p. 1). According to the NCTQ website, the following timeline was presented for the state of Missouri as related to the changes to teacher evaluation systems: (a) initially college and career-ready standards were adopted in June 2010; (b) in June 2011, the state adopted the model evaluation guidelines called the Missouri Educator Evaluation System (MEES); (c) during the 2011-12 school year, 170 school districts field-tested the state model evaluation system; (d) schools piloted the educator evaluation system per the ESEA waiver during the 2012-13 school year; (e) in May of 2013, the State Board approved the Missouri Educator Evaluation System; (f) for the 2013-14 school year, all schools were mandated to adopt an evaluation system or align to the state model; and (g) in the 2014-15 school year, full implementation was expected by all Missouri public school districts and the "first year ratings must inform personnel decisions, per ESEA waiver" (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2014, p. 1).

Soon after the timeline was published, DESE chose to table the student performance measure for the remainder of 2014-15 school year, but by July of 2015, all public schools in Missouri had to include a student performance measure as part of their teacher evaluation system. In a study done by Shakman et al. (2012), five key states (Delaware, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas) led the way in performance-based teacher evaluations as recently as 2010. In the 2011-2012 school year, Delaware and Tennessee implemented plans to include student growth data in their teacher evaluation systems for individual teachers (Shakman et al., 2012).

The 2015-16 school year required student growth measure to be included as part of teachers' effectiveness ratings. The inclusion of student growth measures created a

policy problem and the dilemma of what data to utilize increasing high stakes testing as the most obvious measurement. According to Dr. David Lineberry (past Missouri School Board Association [MSBA] Associate Executive Director of Education and Training), an evaluator trainer for the Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE), only about 25% of Missouri's students take part each year in the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) or End Of Course (EOC) high stakes exams as these assessments are only given in certain grades at the lower levels or specific courses in high school (D. Lineberry, personal communication, June 26, 2014). This creates a problem of equitable teacher evaluations since the high stakes tests are grade and course specific, and the majority of teachers do not directly teach the grades and courses that could be tied to the evaluations. In response to this dilemma, DESE communicated that the requirement for all teacher effectiveness ratings is to include a student performance strand that will be decided at the local level or by each school district (D. Lineberry, personal communication, June 26, 2014). This response addresses the issue to some extent but leads to an unclear directive without much guidance, which led to extremely varied evaluation systems throughout Missouri.

Both of the DESE and the NEE models fully met the ESEA waiver guidelines legally, but they create some systematic, monetary, and political decisions for public school districts in Missouri. The major difference, as related to teacher evaluations being tied to student performance, lies with the approach of the two major evaluation models in Missouri. The DESE model allows the local school district to decide which student performance achievement data to tie to teacher evaluations. The NEE model is working closely with their member school districts to tie research-based performance to the

teacher evaluations. NEE's focus is the research and data generated leading to higher teacher effectiveness and student learning which can be used in teacher preparatory training in higher education. Each district has to decide to simply meet the requirements and save money or be part of the research study NEE is guiding with the hope that sound research-based decisions will be made along the way instead of rash decisions that could have lasting negative outcomes.

Three inter-connected but separate criteria have been revealed in analyzing this problem. The first criterion is what Bardach (2012) called "legality," (p. 41), and all of the three alternatives (DESE model, the NEE model, or individual district developed models which are described in more detail later) have the potential to meet the guidelines of the ESEA waiver and, therefore, meet the legality criteria. The second criterion is "political acceptability" (p. 41) where each school district will choose which option fits the local district and is politically acceptable in that region of the state. The third criterion is "robustness and improvability" (p. 41) which will determine whether policy implementation will be successful over time. Only time will tell, and as the national debate continues about teacher evaluations and student performance, the successfulness of the programs is yet to be determined for this policy decision.

NEE Indicators and "Look Fors"

BHS uses two indicators from standard two, which is titled: "Understands and Encourages Student Learning, Growth, and Development." Indicator 2.2 is titled "The teacher sets and monitors student goals." Indicator 2.5 is titled "The teacher builds on students' prior experiences, learning strengths, and needs. The focus school uses one indicator from standard five, which is titled "Creates a Positive Classroom Learning

Environment." Indicator 5.1 is titled "The teacher uses motivation strategies that affectively engage students." The focus school uses one indicator from standard seven, which is titled "Uses Student Assessment Data to Analyze and Modify Instruction." Indicator 7.4 is titled "The teacher monitors the effect of instruction on the whole class and individual learning."

One of the strongest aspects the researcher has personally experienced with the NEE evaluation tool is that the indicators have clear language in the seven-point rating scale that provide "look fors" which range from "few students," "some students," "more than half of the students," and "most of the students." This allows the evaluator to more closely identify the most appropriate number on the seven-point scale based on the "look fors." According to Dr. Mark Doss, the "look fors" and seven-point indicator ratings are based on specific and measurable indicators in the classroom and is what truly sets NEE apart from other teacher evaluation tools, and is a large part of the reliability and consistency of how the tool can be used to promote teacher growth, improve teacher effectiveness, and promote a learning-centered culture in a school (M. Doss, personal communication, November 19, 2018). The researcher personally witnessed and participated in many positive conversations with teachers about their effectiveness and growth based on these aspects of the NEE evaluation tool.

Evaluation Changes for Teacher Growth

Teacher evaluation systems have changed drastically in the past couple decades due to legislation and more focused research on teaching and learning practices. Some common systematic and procedural changes have been implemented in many schools, which have truly changed and improved the evaluation practice. One example is the

procedures or format for how teacher evaluations are processed and then later disseminated. For example, when the researcher began teaching twenty-one years ago administrators carried legal pads, printed packets, or duplicate forms to classrooms for formative and summative evaluations of teachers only once or twice a year. Many times, forms were out of date and were highly focused around the behaviors of the teacher or even the students. Often the focus was on classroom management and the structure or setting of the classroom. While these components are important aspects of classroom organization, classroom management and structure do not necessarily lead to enhanced student learning or improve the learning culture of the classroom. The researcher has watched well-behaved students sit in classrooms with complacent behaviors that look good to the untrained eye but are void of actual student learning.

Teacher evaluations are often called observations, and most of the data collected for summative evaluations of teachers are made up of several "mini-observations" throughout the school year. These periodic observations "have high levels of face validity because they assess teaching practices that teachers themselves can observe [and] for those striving to become better practitioners, this information can provide timely and actionable formative feedback" (Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016, p. 378). In a large national analysis of principal survey data, the 2011-2012 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), it was found "that more than 95% of teachers were evaluated based on formal classroom observations" (p. 379). The SASS noted that "a single observation is unlikely to reflect a teacher's broader repertoire of practices, and multiple observations sampled across time and content would likely better assess instructional quality" (p. 381). In this study, the average number of observations was 3.1 for untenured teachers and 2.8 for tenured

teachers to maintain the validity of the observations. Additional variables noted that could make a difference in the instructional quality in classrooms is "inherently situated [and] good teaching likely varies in response to contextual factors, including school and district leadership, curricula, and collegial support" (p. 381).

Teacher evaluations have also changed in structure during the researcher's career. In the past, many evaluations the researcher saw were based on a four-point rating scale of exceeds expectations, meets expectations, progressing, or not meeting expectations. The NEE Data Tool's structure is based on nine research-based standards with multiple indicators within each standard that schools can choose based on their district or building goals or academic focuses for teachers and students. For example, at BHS there are four NEE indicators selected from three of the seven available standards that evaluators use primarily for each walk-through teacher evaluation.

According to a memo posted on the DESE website titled *Essential Principles of Effective Evaluation*, "the growth and learning of children is the primary responsibility of those who teach in our classrooms and lead our schools" (p. 1). Therefore, an effective evaluation system needs to be in place that is based on "research-based essential principles…[and]…promote[s] the improvement of professional practice resulting in the improvement of student performance" (p. 1). DESE outlined the essential principles of

effective evaluations in Figure 3.

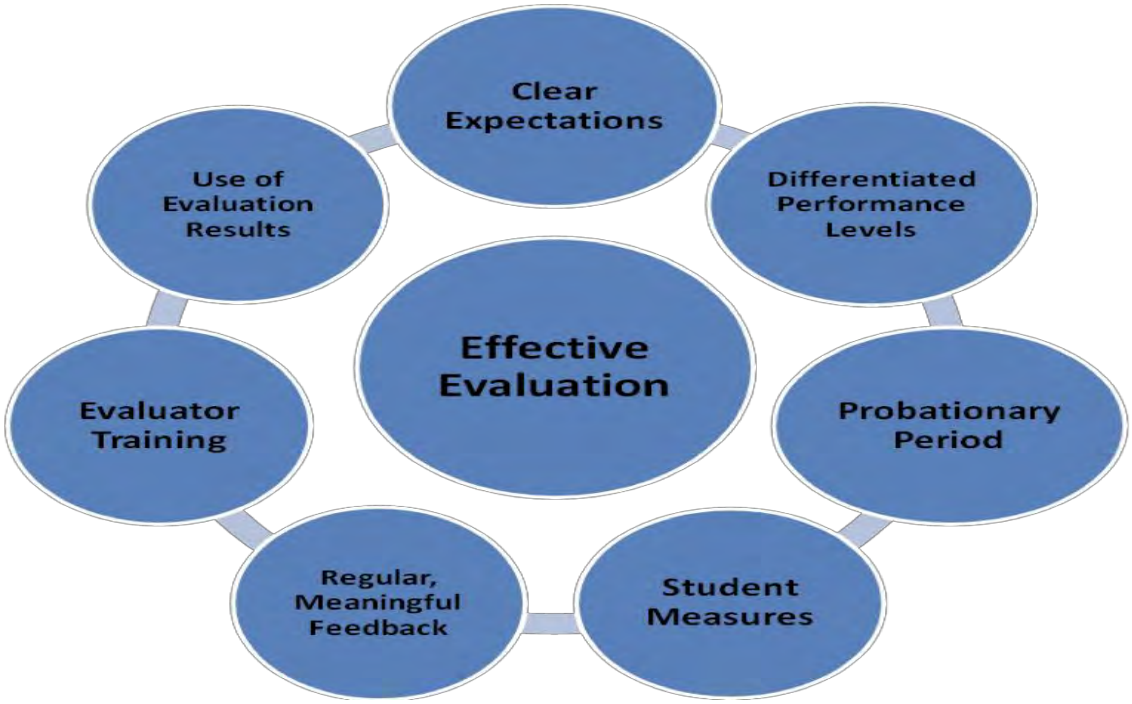


Figure 3. DESE Essential principles of effective evaluation. Retrieved from: www.dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/eq-ees-essential-principles.pdf

Teacher Effectiveness

Teacher effectiveness implies that quality teachers do have characteristics and behaviors that have a large impact on student performance or outcomes. Educational research supports that an effective teacher has a larger impact on student learning than any other factor in a school (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005).

> The results suggest that the effects of a costly ten student reduction in class size are smaller than the benefit of moving one standard deviation up the teacher quality distribution, highlighting the importance of teacher effectiveness in the determination of school quality. (p. 417)

Therefore, teacher effectiveness is highly important and is a variable that educational leaders, administrators, and teachers can have a direct impact on in order to improve student learning in classrooms.

Charlotte Danielson's (1996) book *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*, outlines five elements in the instructional domain that engage students in learning. The elements are (a) representation of content, (b) activities and assignments, (c) grouping of students, (d) instructional materials and resources, (e) the structure, and pacing. The author and many educational experts consider these elements and how well they are implemented to be the areas that distinguish more effective teachers and classroom learning cultures.

In order for school leaders to "develop, retain, and reward great teachers, school systems must be able to know how to recognize effective teaching" (Kane et al., 2013, p. 38). Kane et al. (2013), explained that the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project was developed to "test replicable methods for identifying effective teachers" (p. 2). The MET project is a study of over 3,000 teachers in six urban districts. With the increased pressure for schools to identify effective teachers, many school leaders have "begun to provide more differentiated feedback to teachers using student achievement gains, classroom observations, and student surveys" (p. 38). The study found that the "existing measures of teacher effectiveness provide important and useful information on the causal effects that teachers have on their students' outcomes" (p. 39). If these measures are closely monitored and promoted in schools than the assumption could be that student learning would improve and therefore the learning cultures created would promote higher student learning will occur.

Learning-Centered Cultures

Stephen Gill (2010) wrote the book *Developing a Learning Culture in Nonprofit Organizations* with the purpose of helping organizations adapt their practices and culture to better meet the needs of their clients, customers, employees, and anyone who is impacted by an organization. Gill defined organizational learning as the means of "knowing how to know; knowing what you know; and knowing how to apply that knowledge to individual, team, organization, and community improvement" (p. xi). The author also pointed out:

> Significant barriers stand in the way of learning in organizations. These barriers are manifested in subtle and not-so-subtle resistance to creating a culture of learning. If you want to be successful over the long term, you have no choice but to face these barriers and overcome them. (p. 15)

The hope is that educational leaders and schools can properly identify their barriers and develop plans for not only overcoming them, but also ultimately improving their learning cultures. A learning culture can be developed and "consists of the values, basic assumptions, beliefs, expected behaviors, and norms of an organization" (Gill, p. 19). In order for a learning culture to develop, there needs to be "a culture that supports continuous learning for continuous improvement" (Gill, p. 28).

In November 2018 the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) published an article entitled *Building Ranks, K-12: A Comprehensive Framework for Effective School Leaders,* in their monthly journal *Principal Leadership*. This resource is directed toward improving principals and administrators to help them develop and build more positive school cultures in their schools. According to the

NASSP Executive Director JoAnn Bartoletti, "Its charge is to help you develop and enhance the impact that you, as a principal, can have in your school and in the learning community it serves informed by the real-world experiences of principals in the field" (p. 43). The executive summary published the Building Ranks Logic Model and identified the values of student-centeredness, wellness, equity, relationships, communication, ethics, and global-mindedness as the values that should be strived for in a building culture to "help promote student success…[and]…adult success" in schools (p. 44). The summary also explained how leaders can encourage growth by leading learning through vision and mission, collaborative leadership, result-orientation, innovation, human capital management, strategic management, reflection, growth, curriculum, instruction, and assessments.

Summary

In conclusion, the research and emphasis on teacher evaluations for teacher growth, teacher effectiveness, and learning-centered cultures have advanced tremendously in a short amount of time. The barrier appears to be how seriously teachers, school leaders, states use the literature to truly improve the learning cultures in their communities and states. Evaluation "is about collecting information that can be used for feedback…and everyone should be asking themselves questions that cause them to reflect on the quality and effectiveness of their actions" (Gill, 2010, p. 156). Teacher evaluations, therefore, are mainly collections of information from classroom observations in order to provide valuable feedback to teachers. The key question for this study is how well does the NEE Data Tool capture this important feedback for teachers in the areas of teacher growth, teacher effectiveness and promoting a learning-centered culture. This

literature review has helped develop this important study and established a springboard for the necessary research to follow about teacher perspectives of their evaluations, and the impact of the NEE on teacher practices and school cultures in one Missouri rural public school.

SECTION FOUR:

CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE

Introduction

For the contribution to practice, the researcher developed a presentation for The Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE), Mark Doss the Region 5 NEE Field Representative, and the rest of the NEE leadership team. This presentation includes a general overview of the study with a focus on the findings, suggestions, and conclusions of the study. NEE is offered through the Hook Center and Assessment Resource Center at the College of Education at the University of Missouri – Columbia. The rationale for this contribution to practice is to let the proposed research provide a teacher voice to the debate over teacher evaluations and learning-centered cultures developed in schools to help school leaders and policy makers have a more balanced perspective. The researcher worked closely with Dr. Mark Doss, the Region 5 Field Representative, for the past seven years and the NEE leadership team has been open to receive research and best practice data to help them continue to improve the NEE Data Tool and their resources to better meet the needs of the school districts, administrators, teachers, and other educational professionals they serve. The NEE leadership team has agreed to allow the researcher to present this contribution of practice presentation to them to help add to their important work and plan to add a tab to their website to allow people to see the dissertations that have been completed about NEE including this contribution of practice.

Executive Summary

The ongoing debate over teacher evaluation systems nationwide has the potential to drastically reshape educational policy and practice with varying stakeholders providing input. According to Mitchell, Crowson, and Shipps in their 2011 book *Shaping Education Policy*, "rhetoric has created legitimacy issues for educators with various publics at all levels of government…among these are the business and legislative communities, which have emerged as loud and powerful voices" (p. 179). With this in mind, educators need to understand that they are constantly contending for a voice in the debate about educational reform, and should not sit back and let others tell their story. Teachers should be active and vocal in the process so that their perspectives and insights are heard. Public schools are facing growing pressure to increase standardized testing scores and improve nationwide student achievement levels. In reaction to this pressure, policy makers and school officials are looking for every opportunity for improvement. In order to increase student achievement, many believe that improving teacher growth, teacher effectiveness, and creating a learning-centered culture are the keys. Many of the well-intended educational policies and legislation at the state and national levels end up directly impacting teachers in classrooms. The focus gets put on teachers to improve their effectiveness with their students, and therefore improving teacher growth, teacher effectiveness, through teacher evaluation and professional development initiatives becomes the focus of many educational leaders. Many believe that what gets evaluated gets done and therefore the assumption is that a school leader can improve student learning by more stringent teacher evaluations and school learning-culture initiatives. Unfortunately, many times the actual teachers in schools may be the last to be asked for

ideas on how to improve student achievement or even their own growth, effectiveness, or the learning-centered culture of the school. This study aimed to evaluate through the perspectives of the 35 teachers of BHS the impact of the Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE) Data Tool teacher evaluation system and measure the impact it is having on teacher growth, teacher effectiveness, and the learning-centered culture of BHS during the 2018-2019 school year.

Research Question

- As perceived by teachers, how does the Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE) Data Tool: (a) promote teacher growth, (b) improve teacher effectiveness, and (c) promote building a learning-centered culture in a Missouri rural public school?

Design of Study

- A case study program evaluation at BHS was conducted to examine the factors that affect the chosen teachers' evaluations. The methodological approach for the case study was descriptive, utilizing Likert and open-ended survey items.
- The 35 teachers at BHS were invited to participate, informed about the purpose of the study, and provided an informed consent form. Their responses were kept anonymous throughout the study. Of the 35 BHS teachers 28 chose to participate in the case study, which was an 80% participation rate.
- The survey was sent out in a Google Forms survey format to the teachers at BHS. 12 of the survey items were quantitative and utilized utilizing a six-point Likert scale. The survey also included 12 qualitative, open-ended, items so respondents could write as much as they wanted in a paragraph format.

- Participant responses were collected upon completion and combined utilizing Google Forms survey response tool.

Findings

- The response were overwhelmingly supportive in both the quantitative (85.5% strongly agree, agree, or slightly agree) and qualitative (83.9% of the 280 responses) items about the perceptions of the teachers at BHS and how the NEE Data Tool promoted teacher growth, improved teacher effectiveness, and promoted building a learning-centered culture at BHS.
- The following nine themes surfaced from the qualitative responses about teacher growth:
    - Feedback helped promote teacher growth.
    - Personal goal setting helped promote teacher growth.
    - Teacher mindset helped promote teacher growth.
    - High expectations improved teacher effectiveness.
    - Focused direction improved teacher effectiveness.
    - Principal feedback improved teacher effectiveness.
    - Working together promoted a learning-centered culture.
    - Student-focused school promoted a learning-centered culture.
    - Communicating honest feedback promoted a learning-centered culture.
- The following is an example of the qualitative responses:

  I feel the NEE focuses on the areas in the classroom that are often easy for instructors to overlook. For example, as an instructor I have a perception of myself and how I teach, but the NEE indicators and evaluations allow me to see

how I teach through someone else's perception so that I can adjust and provide a better quality of instruction.

Conclusions

- Based on the overwhelmingly supportive responses to the case study it is the recommendation of this study for BHS to continue the positive work they are doing to build teacher growth, teacher effectiveness, and a learning-centered culture at their school.
- There are some recommendations to improve the NEE Data Tool including the following:
    - Add a teacher comment section in NEE Data Tool observations so teachers can respond to the evaluator comments to provide more clarity and transparency.
    - Create a way to link EdHub resources from the teacher observations so the evaluator can assign tasks or attach links while completing the classroom observation.
    - Add email notifications to the Teacher Professional Development Plans (TPDP) setup to allow for teachers to get a notification after the evaluator has completed the Pre-Implementation Approval, Mid-Year Approval, and End-of-Year Approval.
    - Adjust the student survey scale to match the teacher observation scale so the data better correlates during summative evaluations and for TPDPs.

Complete Report

For a copy of this research study, please contact Dorian Keith White, Ed.D. at keith.white@bisonpride.org. This report is a result of the dissertation written by Dorian Keith White Ed.D. The following individuals served on the dissertation committee: Cynthia MacGregor, Ed.D., Denise Baumann, Ed.D., Jeffrey Cornelius-White, Psy.D., and Patricia "T. C." Wall, Ed.D.

Presentation to the NEE Leadership Team

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR EVALUATIONS: IMPACT OF THE NETWORK FOR EDUCATOR EFFECTIVENESS (NEE) DATA TOOL ON TEACHER GROWTH, TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS, AND LEARNING-CENTERED CULTURE AT BUFFALO HIGH SCHOOL

Dr. Keith White

BACKGROUND

- Public schools continue to face growing pressure to increase standardized test scores and improve nationwide student achievement levels.
- Policy makers and school officials are looking for opportunity for improvement.
- Three of the major areas of focus in this national debate are teacher growth, teacher effectiveness, and learning-centered cultures in schools that lead to teacher growth for improved student performance.
- This study focused on the NEE Data Tool's impact on teacher growth, teacher effectiveness, and the learning-centered culture at Buffalo High School (BHS).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

- After 21 years as an educator in Missouri public schools, the researcher believes there tends to be a lack of focus on developing learning-centered schools that promote growth at all levels (i.e., students, teachers, and administrators).
- As a principal who has evaluated teachers for seven years using NEE, the researcher has found that what is evaluated becomes the focus of the school's learning culture.
- Thus the researcher believes teacher evaluations can be a valuable tool in promoting teacher growth, teacher effectiveness, and a learning-centered culture in a school.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

- The purpose of this research study was to obtain and analyze the impact of the NEE Data Tool from teachers' perspectives through a case study of NEE Data Tool teacher evaluations as related to promoting teacher growth, effectiveness, and learning-centered culture at BHS.
- The researcher will use this case study to inform the teachers being investigated, provide an opportunity for teachers' voices to be heard, and provide a platform for teachers' perspectives to be an active part of the change process.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question, which guided this investigation, was the following:

- As perceived by teachers, how does the Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE) Data Tool: (a) promote teacher growth, (b) improve teacher effectiveness, and (c) promote building a learning-centered culture in a Missouri rural public school?

CONCEPTIONAL FRAMEWORKS

- The framework for this study was bridged from several different theories and disciplines to unfold the direction of the conceptual framework.
- Bolman and Deal's (2008) human resource frame continued to be intertwined throughout the study since the beginning.
- The Human Resource Frame assumption "holds that the needs of individuals and organizations can be aligned, engaging people's talent and energy while the enterprise profits" (p. 121).

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

- A case study program evaluation at BHS was conducted to examine the factors that affect the chosen teachers' evaluations.
- The researcher gathered qualitative and quantitative data for a well-balanced data set.
- The 35 teachers at BHS were invited to participate, informed about the purpose of the study, and provided an informed consent form.
- The survey was sent out in a Google Forms survey format to the teachers at BHS.

SETTING

- Buffalo, Missouri, is located in Southwest Missouri and has a population of 3,026 with a 22.9% poverty rate (Data USA: Buffalo, Missouri).
- Buffalo is a rural town in Dallas County which is primarily an agricultural community that is located 37 miles north of Springfield, Missouri, on Highway 65.
- BHS had 35 teachers during the 2018-2019 school year with 12 years average teaching experience, an average of 8.8 of those years of experience at BHS.
- Of the BHS teachers 40% have a master's degree or advanced degree, and is composed of 68.6% female and 31.4% male teachers

PARTICIPANTS

- The methodological approach for the case study was descriptive, utilizing Likert and open-ended survey items.
- Of the 35 BHS teachers, 28 teachers chose to participate in the case study, which was an 80% participation rate.

LIMITATIONS

- The biggest predicted limitation was that the researcher is also the principal at BHS and was unsure if the teachers would participate in the case study survey, and would provide honest and useful information.
- Participants were assured their identities would be kept anonymous throughout the investigation as they were not asked any identifiable items.
- To mitigate deductive disclosure risks, the researcher provided the teacher population demographics and did not collect any personal information.

METHODS

- The 28 Buffalo High School teachers who responded completed 12 quantitative survey questions utilizing a six-point Likert including strongly disagree, disagree, slightly disagree, slightly agree, agree, and strongly agree.
- The survey included 12 qualitative, open-ended items so respondents could write as much as they wanted in a paragraph format.
- Participant responses were collected upon completion and combined utilizing Google Forms survey response tool.

DATA ANALYSIS

- The raw data was initially sorted utilizing the summary of responses tool in Google Forms, which provided percentages of responses for each question.
- Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the quantitative data collected, sorted by frequencies, and placed in bar graphs for each quantitative question.
- The qualitative responses were open coded and sorted based on type (yes/no for example), and then coded by themes according to the three components of the research question for rich and thick descriptions.

NEE STANDARDS AND INDICATORS USED

- NEE Standard 2 (Understands and Encourages Student Learning, Growth, and Development) and specifically indicator 2.2 (The teacher sets and monitors student goals) and indicator 2.5 (The teacher builds on students' prior experiences, learning strengths, and needs).
- NEE Standard 5 (Creates a Positive Classroom Learning Environment) and specifically indicator 5.1 (The teacher uses motivation strategies that affectively engage students).
- NEE Standard 7 (Uses Student Assessment Data to Analyze and Modify Instruction) and specifically indicator 7.4 (The teacher monitors the effect of instruction on the whole class and individual learning).

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

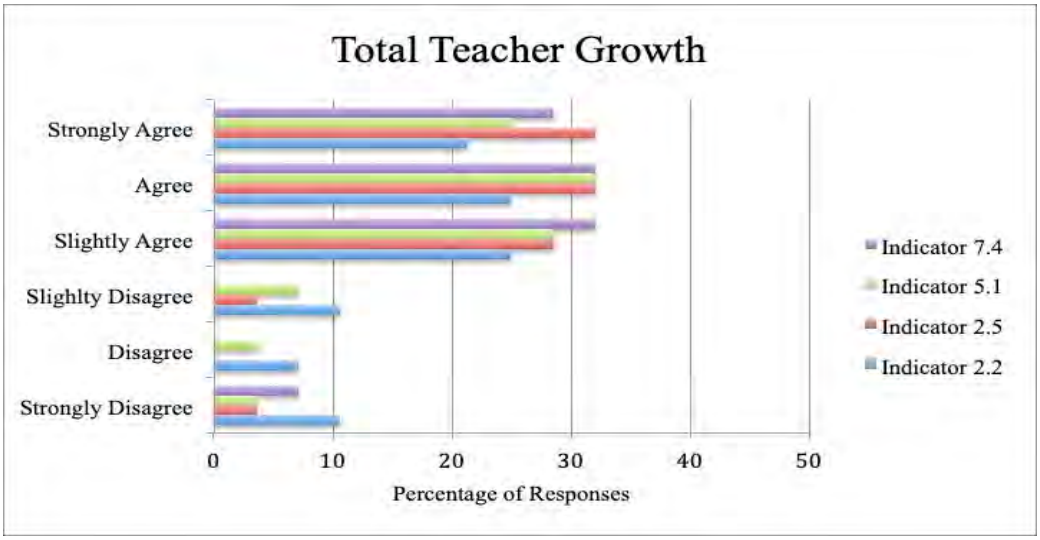


Figure 1. Total responses of all four teacher growth items (The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data Tool helped me grow as a teacher.) NEE Indicators 2.2 (The teacher sets and monitors student goals), 2.5 (The teacher builds on students' prior experiences, learning strengths, and needs), 5.1 (The teacher uses motivation strategies that affectively engage students), and 7.4 (The teacher monitors the effect of instruction on the whole class and individual learning).

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

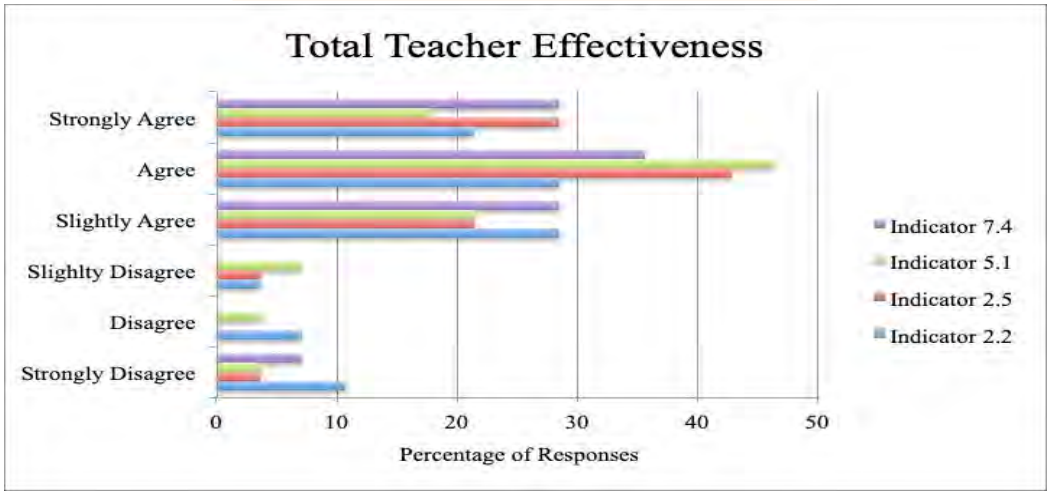


Figure 2. Total responses of all four teacher effectiveness items (The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data tool helped me to be a more effective teacher.) NEE Indicators 2.2 (The teacher sets and monitors student goals), 2.5 (The teacher builds on students' prior experiences, learning strengths, and needs), 5.1 (The teacher uses motivation strategies that affectively engage students), and 7.4 (The teacher monitors the effect of instruction on the whole class and individual learning).

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

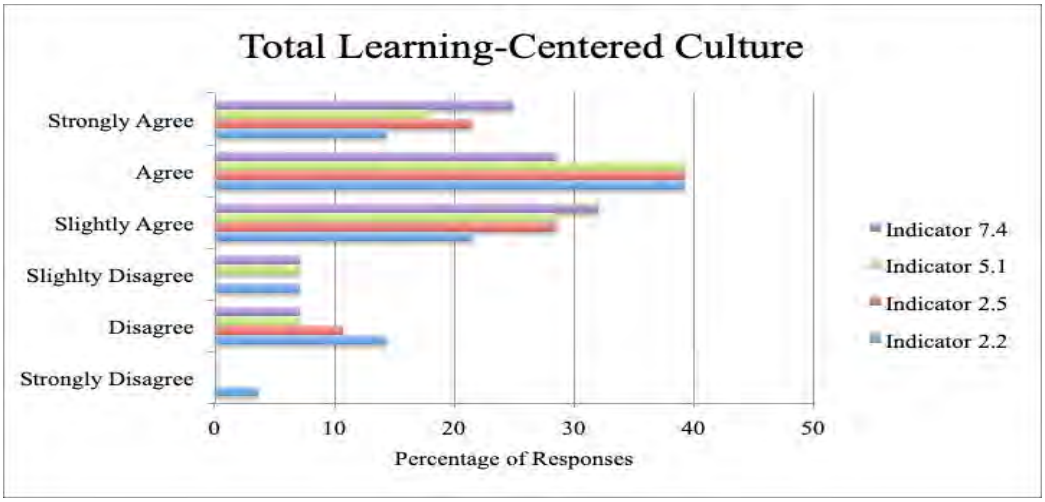


Figure 3. Total responses of all four learning-centered culture items (The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data helped have a more learning-centered culture.) NEE Indicators 2.2 (The teacher sets and monitors student goals), 2.5 (The teacher builds on students' prior experiences, learning strengths, and needs), 5.1 (The teacher uses motivation strategies that affectively engage students), and 7.4 (The teacher monitors the effect of instruction on the whole class and individual learning).

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS TEACHER GROWTH

The following three themes surfaced from the qualitative teacher growth responses:

- Feedback helped promote teacher growth.
- Personal goal setting helped promote teacher growth.
- Teacher mindset helped promote teacher growth.

"I feel that the NEE promotes teacher growth by giving critical feedback as well as positive feedback on what is working and what may need to be changed in the classroom. For me, the NEE allows me to assess my strengths and weaknesses."

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS FOR TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

The following three themes surfaced from the qualitative teacher effectiveness responses:

- High expectations improved teacher effectiveness.
- Focused direction improved teacher effectiveness.
- Principal feedback improved teacher effectiveness.

"I have been able to use the feedback and process it into making me grow as a teacher and become more effective in my strategies."

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS FOR LEARNING-CENTERED CULTURE

The following three themes surfaced from the qualitative learning-centered responses:

- Working together promoted a learning-centered culture.
- Student-focused school promoted a learning-centered culture.
- Communicating honest feedback promoted a learning-centered culture.

"It helps the learning culture to be more unified as a school and helps everyone to get on the same page, whether it is students or teachers. It helps to target areas that need improvement."

FINDINGS COMBINED

- There was an overall positive agreement with the impact of the NEE Data Tool for all 12 quantitative survey items of 85.5% which included a distribution of 27% slightly agree, 35.1% agree, and 23.4% strongly agree and only a 14.5% disagreement which included a distribution of 4.7% slightly disagree, 4.3% disagree, and 5.5% slightly disagree.
- Overall the qualitative, open-ended responses were overwhelmingly supportive with 83.9% of the 280 responses agreeing or somewhat agreeing, and only 16.1% disagreeing that the NEE DATA Tool promoted teacher growth, improved teacher effectiveness, and promoted a learning-centered culture at BHS during the 2018-2019 school year.

CONCLUSIONS

- The researcher believes that current research literature supports the findings from this study and that if BHS stays the course and continues to improve using the NEE Data Tool effectively teacher growth will be promoted, teacher effectiveness will be improved, and the learning-centered culture of the school will be promoted.
- The researcher strongly supports the evidence in this study that the NEE Data Tool effectively promotes teacher growth, improves teacher effectiveness, and promotes a learning-centered culture.

DISCUSSION

- The portent moment for the researcher was during the writing of the findings section.
- The data collected showed that the majority the teachers at BHS appreciate and value honest and purposeful feedback for promoting their growth, improving their effectiveness, and promoting a learning-centered culture at BHS.
- The follow-up feedback conversation between the principal and teachers is pertinent to all teachers and extremely important for the younger teachers or teachers new to BHS for understanding the purposes and importance of each of the areas the study.

DISCUSSION CONTINUED

- The data also pointed out the need for teachers to collaborate, and have an open and effective working relationship with their administrator for them to be more successful in these areas.
- Teachers want and need to have input about the learning-culture of the school, and about continuing effective practices, adjusting practices, and abandoning ineffective practices.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The researcher plans to take a deeper look into the following:

- To further promote teacher growth by providing more face-to-face feedback and target professional development for teachers specifically related to the NEE indicators.
- To further improve teacher effectiveness by researching teacher motivation techniques (for both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated teachers) and providing better communication and teacher collaboration.
- To further promote a learning-centered culture by focusing more on student growth and better communication of the vision as related to the NEE Data Tool.

SUGGESTIONS FOR NEE DATA TOOL IMPROVEMENT

- Add a teacher comment section in NEE Data Tool observations so teachers can respond to the evaluator comments to provide more clarity and transparency.
- Create a way to link EdHub resources from the teacher observations so the evaluator can assign tasks or attach links while completing the classroom observation.
- Add email notifications to the Teacher Professional Development Plans (TPDP) setup to allow for teachers to get a notification after the evaluator has completed the Pre-Implementation Approval, Mid-Year Approval, and End-of-Year Approval.
- Adjust the student survey scale to match the teacher observation scale so the data better correlates during summative evaluations and for TPDPs.

SECTION FIVE:

CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP PLAN

To Be Submitted to:

Critical Questions in Education

(The manuscript is only under consideration with CQIE)

Authors:

Dorian Keith White, Ed.D.

Cynthia MacGregor, Ed.D.

Denise Baumann, Ed.D.

Jeffrey Cornelius-White, Psy.D.

Patricia “T. C.” Wall, Ed.D.

Abstract

The purpose of this research study was to obtain and to analyze the impact of the Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE) Data Tool from teachers' perspectives through a case study of NEE Data Tool teacher evaluations as related to promoting teacher growth, improving teacher effectiveness, and promoting a learning-centered culture in one rural Missouri high school. A case study impact evaluation of the teachers at Buffalo High School (BHS) was selected in order to collect descriptive statistics, utilizing Likert and open-ended survey items in the practitioners setting. The case study consisted of 12 quantitative and 12 qualitative survey items, to examine the factors that affect the chosen teachers' evaluations, and to provide statistical data and teacher feedback from teachers in the rural Missouri NEE public school selected. The responses were overwhelmingly supportive in both the quantitative and qualitative items about the perceptions of the teachers and how the NEE Data Tool promoted teacher growth, improved teacher effectiveness, and promoted building a learning-centered culture. The quantitative analysis, descriptive analysis, and findings showed an overwhelmingly total supportive percentage (85.5%) agreed with the 12 Likert survey items in all three parts of the research question. The qualitative analysis and findings also showed an overwhelmingly supportive response (83.9% of the 280 total qualitative responses wrote supportive stances). The researcher will use this case study data to inform the teachers investigated, provide an opportunity for teachers' voices to be heard, and provide NEE with the findings and recommendations based on this study.

Keywords: Teacher Evaluations, NEE Data Tool, Teacher Growth, Teacher Effectiveness, and Learning-Centered Culture

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR EVALUATIONS: IMPACT OF THE NETWORK FOR EDUCATOR EFFECTIVENESS (NEE) DATA TOOL ON TEACHER GROWTH, TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS, AND LEARNING-CENTERED CULTURE IN A MISSOURI RURAL PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Introduction

The ongoing debate over teacher evaluation systems nationwide has the potential to drastically reshape educational policy and practice with varying stakeholders providing input. According to Mitchell, Crowson, and Shipps in their 2011 book *Shaping Education Policy*, "rhetoric has created legitimacy issues for educators with various publics at all levels of government…among these are the business and legislative communities, which have emerged as loud and powerful voices" (p. 179). With this in mind, educators need to understand that they are constantly contending for a voice in the debate about educational reform, and should not sit back and let others tell their story. Teachers should be active and vocal in the process so that their perspectives and insights are heard.

Public schools are facing growing pressure to increase standardized testing scores and improve nationwide student achievement levels. In reaction to this pressure, policy makers and school officials are looking for every opportunity for improvement. In order to increase student achievement, many believe that improving teacher growth, teacher effectiveness, and creating a learning-centered culture are the keys. Many of the well-intended educational policies and legislation at the state and national levels end up directly impacting teachers in classrooms. An emphasis gets put on teachers to improve their effectiveness with their students, and therefore improving teacher growth and

teacher effectiveness. To ensure student growth the focus of many educational leaders becomes teacher evaluation models and professional development initiatives including the development of learning-centered cultures to ensure student growth. Many believe that what gets evaluated gets done and therefore the assumption is that a school leader can improve student learning by more stringent teacher evaluations and school learning-culture initiatives. Unfortunately many times the actual teachers in schools may be the last to be asked for ideas on how to improve student achievement or even their own growth, effectiveness, or the learning-centered culture of the school. This study aimed to evaluate through the perspectives of the 35 teachers of Buffalo High School (BHS) the impact of one teacher evaluation system and measure the impact it is having on teacher growth, teacher effectiveness, and the learning-centered culture of a rural Missouri pubic high school. The rationale for this contribution to scholarship is to let the research provide more teacher voice to the debate over teacher evaluations and specifically teacher growth, teacher effectiveness, and the learning-centered cultures developed in schools to help school leaders and policy makers have a more balanced perspective.

Literature Review

Public education has greatly changed over the past century in the areas of technology and course delivery, but it is questionable if it has changed at as fast a rate in the area of teacher evaluations and school cultures. According to Cohen and Goldhaber (2016), "improving teacher evaluation is one of the most pressing and contested contemporary educational policy issues [and] their measurement properties have been scrutinized and found wanting by some given the likelihood of misclassifying an effective teacher as ineffective or vice versa" (p. 378). With this is mind many teachers

might argue that teacher evaluations are highly subjective and based on the like or dislike of their administrator's or evaluator's preferred teaching styles. For many administrators another reason for classroom teacher evaluations is to be "used nearly universally to assess teachers" (p. 378) for helping make decisions about staffing needs. This reason is not entirely about the effectiveness of teachers but could be more about the placement or hiring of teachers based on structural needs in a school. As an educational leader, the researcher is starting to see a new trend in educational leadership on developing teachers through growth models, utilizing evaluations to provide feedback in order to help teachers be more effective and, therefore, improve the learning cultures in schools. The focus of growth models is for more emphasis to be placed on the amount of growth of an individual teacher compared to an earlier point in time in his/her own personal growth.

People might argue that the learning cultures of schools are still very similar to what their parents or even grandparents may have experienced. With these two commonly held perspectives the researcher found the need to dig deeper into what research is saying about these areas and how much they truly have improved and changed. Gill (2010) summed it up well by stating the following:

> Like growing a garden, evaluation for learning requires constant tending. You can ignore it for a long time, and you still have a garden, but not the beauty and bounty that you desire (p. 157).

The researcher chose the topic of teacher perspectives of teacher evaluations and learning cultures as the unique perspective of teachers needs to be examined, and it could be argued, much more frequently than in past educational practice. The following review of extant scholarship examines the history of teacher evaluations, teacher effectiveness,

teacher observations, and learning cultures as related to this case study of NEE teacher evaluations as connected to promoting teacher growth and learning-centered cultures at BHS. Before assessing the impact of the NEE Data Tool's impact upon teacher growth, teacher effectiveness, and the learning-centered culture at BHS, it is important to understand the changes to teacher evaluations that led to the origin of the NEE Data Tool.

A History of Teacher Evaluations Leading to NEE's Development

As described earlier, teacher evaluations have become a major focus of the high stakes accountability educational legislation and media focus in recent history (Tornero & Taut, 2011). Many federal and state policies have impacted education and led to current educational reform measures and initiatives. In Missouri, the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993 laid some of the groundwork for accountability and student performance measures (Missouri Governor's Office, 1993, p. 1). Statewide performance standards were established and have been adjusted, modified, and renamed several times since that time (p. 1). The most notable federal accountability measures were put in place by President George W. Bush signing the reauthorization of the greatly modified Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 2001 or better known publicly as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). NCLB was an unprecedented educational overhaul and reform measure that aspired for all groups of students in the country to reach academic proficiency in mathematics and reading within 12 years. Proficiency has been measured by assessing all students with pre-determined scores on annual standardized tests to see how students measure up compared to their peers statewide and nationally. Distinctions were given to the schools

that met the Average Yearly Progress (AYP) and sanctions for schools that failed to meet the defined goals (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

Many schools nationwide found NCLB standards, expectations, and timelines to be unattainable for all students and especially the lowest achieving sub-groups of students, but very rapid education reform measures were implemented by states in reaction. After close to a decade of schools trying desperately to meet the goals of NCLB and the many state policy changes, politicians and state education leaders became involved. A "national partnership led by the National Governors Association and the Chief State School Officers to develop a common core of new, rigorous college and career-ready standards in reading and math" (The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2009, p. 1) was established. Then, on July 24, 2009, President Barack Obama introduced The Race to the Top education reform movement with the following quote:

> America will not succeed in the 21st century unless we do a far better job of educating our sons and daughters…and the race starts today. I am issuing a challenge to our nation's governors and school boards, principals and teachers, businesses and non-profits, parents and students: if you set and enforce rigorous and challenging standards and assessments; if you put outstanding teachers at the front of the classroom; if you turn around failing schools – your state can win a Race to the Top grant that will not only help students outcompete workers around the world, but let them fulfill their God-given potential. (The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2009, p. 1)

As continued pressure to meet the 100% proficiency requirements of NCLB's timelines grew closer to realization, public demands for change were led by teacher

unions, administrator associations, parent organizations, state education departments, and legislators. In response, the White House issued a press release on September 23, 2011, that waivers would be granted for the rigorous and high stakes accountability measures of NCLB. In the press release, President Barack Obama stated "to help states, districts and schools that are ready to move forward with education reform, our administration will provide flexibility from the law in exchange for a real commitment to undertake change" (U.S. Department of Education, 2011, p. 1). As expected, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) completed a waiver application to release Missouri public schools from the NCLB timelines and expectations by agreeing and committing Missouri's public schools to implement and follow the new federal guidelines (D. Lineberry, personal communication, June 26, 2014).

A major change to teacher evaluation policy was the expectation that student performance measures would be tied directly to teacher evaluations in order to show teacher effectiveness. A proponent of these changes was The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) that has a mission statement of "ensuring every child has an effective teacher" (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2014, p. 1). According to the NCTQ website, the following timeline was presented for the state of Missouri as related to teacher evaluation systems: (a) initially college and career-ready standards were adopted in June 2010; (b) in June 2011, the state adopted the model evaluation guidelines called the Missouri Educator Evaluation System (MEES); (c) during the 2011-12 school year, 170 school districts field-tested the state model evaluation system; (d) schools piloted the educator evaluation system per the ESEA waiver during the 2012-13 school year; (e) in May of 2013, the State Board approved the Missouri Educator Evaluation

System; (f) for the 2013-14 school year, all schools were mandated to adopt an evaluation system or align to the state model; and (g) in the 2014-15 school year, full implementation was expected by all Missouri public school districts and the "first year ratings must inform personnel decisions, per ESEA waiver" (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2014, p. 1).

Soon after the timeline was published, DESE chose to table the student performance measure for the remainder of 2014-2015 school year, but by July of 2015, all public schools in Missouri had to include a student performance measure as part of their teacher evaluation system. In a study done by Shakman et al. (2012), five key states (Delaware, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas) that led the way in performance-based teacher evaluations as recently as 2010 did not include student growth data in their teacher evaluations. In the 2011-2012 school year, Delaware and Tennessee implemented plans to include student growth data in their teacher evaluation systems for individual teachers (Shakman et al., 2012).

The 2015-16 school year required student growth measure to be included as part of teachers' effectiveness ratings. The inclusion of student growth measures created a policy problem and the dilemma of what data to utilize increasing high stakes testing as the most obvious measurement. According to Dr. David Lineberry (past Missouri School Board Association [MSBA] Associate Executive Director of Education and Training), an evaluator trainer for the Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE), only about 25% of Missouri's students take part each year in the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) or End Of Course (EOC) high stakes exams as these assessments are only given in certain grades at the lower levels or specific courses in high school (D. Lineberry, personal

communication, June 26, 2014). This creates a problem of equitable teacher evaluations since the high stakes tests are grade and course specific, and the majority of teachers do not directly teach the grades and courses that could be tied to their evaluations. In response to this dilemma, DESE communicated that the requirement for all teacher effectiveness ratings is to include a student performance strand that will be decided at the local level or by each school district (D. Lineberry, personal communication, June 26, 2014). This response addresses the issue to some extent but leads to an unclear directive without much guidance, which led to varied evaluation systems throughout Missouri.

Both of the DESE and the NEE models fully met the ESEA waiver guidelines legally, but they create some systematic, monetary, and political decisions for public school districts in Missouri. Three inter-connected but separate criteria have been revealed in analyzing this problem. The first criterion is what Bardach (2012) called "legality," (p. 41), and all of the three alternatives (DESE model, the NEE model, or individual district developed models) have the potential to meet the guidelines of the ESEA waiver and, therefore, meet the legality criteria. The second criterion is "political acceptability" (p. 41) where each school district will choose which option fits the local district and is politically acceptable in that region of the state. The third criterion is "robustness and improvability" (p. 41) which will determine whether policy implementation will be successful. Time will tell, and as the national debate continues about teacher evaluations and student performance, the successfulness of the programs is yet to be determined for this policy decision.

NEE Indicators and "Look Fors"

BHS uses two indicators from standard two, which is titled: "Understands and Encourages Student Learning, Growth, and Development." Indicator 2.2 is titled "The teacher sets and monitors student goals" (University of Missouri, 2013). Indicator 2.5 is titled "The teacher builds on students' prior experiences, learning strengths, and needs. The focus school uses one indicator from standard five, which is titled "Creates a Positive Classroom Learning Environment." Indicator 5.1 is titled "The teacher uses motivation strategies that affectively engage students." The focus school uses one indicator from standard seven, which is titled "Uses Student Assessment Data to Analyze and Modify Instruction." Indicator 7.4 is titled "The teachers monitors the effect of instruction on the whole class and individual learning."

One of the strongest aspects the researcher has personally liked about the NEE Data tool is that the indicators have clear language in the seven-point rating scale that provide "look fors" which range from "few students," "some students," "more than half of the students," and "most of the students." This allows the evaluator to more closely identify the most appropriate number on the seven-point scale based on the "look fors." According to Dr. Mark Doss, the "look fors" and seven-point indicator ratings are based on specific and measurable indicators in the classroom is what truly sets NEE apart from other teacher evaluation tools, and is a large part of the reliability and consistency of how the tool can be used to promote teacher growth, improve teacher effectiveness, and promote a learning-centered culture in a school (M. Doss, personal communication, November 19, 2018). The researcher personally witnessed and participated in many

positive conversations with teachers about their effectiveness and growth based on these aspects of the NEE evaluation tool.

Evaluation Changes for Teacher Growth

Teacher evaluation systems have changed drastically in the past couple decades due to legislation and more focused research on teaching and learning practices. Some common systematic and procedural changes have been implemented in many schools, which have truly changed and improved the evaluation practice. One example is the procedures or format for how teacher evaluations are processed and then later disseminated. For example, when the researcher began teaching twenty-one years ago administrators carried legal pads, printed packets, or duplicate forms to classrooms for formative and summative evaluations of teachers only once or twice a year. Many times, forms were out of date and were highly focused around the behaviors of the teacher or even the students. Often the focus was on classroom management and the structure or setting of the classroom. While these components are important aspects of classroom organization, classroom management and structure do not necessarily lead to enhanced student learning or improve the learning culture of the classroom. The researcher has watched well-behaved students sit in classrooms with complacent behaviors that look good to the untrained eye but are void of actual student learning.

Teacher evaluations are often called observations, and most of the data collected for summative evaluations of teachers are made up of several "mini-observations" throughout the school year. These periodic observations "have high levels of face validity because they assess teaching practices that teachers themselves can observe [and] for those striving to become better practitioners, this information can provide timely and

actionable formative feedback" (Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016, p. 378). In a large national analysis of principal survey data, the 2011-2012 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), it was found "that more than 95% of teachers were evaluated based on formal classroom observations" (p. 379). The SASS survey noted that "a single observation is unlikely to reflect a teacher's broader repertoire of practices, and multiple observations sampled across time and content would likely better assess instructional quality" (p. 381). In this study, the average number of observations was 3.1 for untenured teachers and 2.8 for tenured teachers to maintain the validity of the observations. Additional variables noted could make a difference in the instructional quality in classrooms is "inherently situated [and] good teaching likely varies in response to contextual factors, including school and district leadership, curricula, and collegial support" (p. 381).

Teacher evaluations have also changed in structure during the researcher's career. In the past, many evaluations the researcher saw were based on a four-point rating scale of exceeds expectations, meets expectations, progressing, or not meeting expectations. The NEE Data Tool's structure is based on nine research-based standards with multiple indicators within each standard that schools can choose based on the needs of their district or building goals or academic focuses for teachers and students. For example, at BHS there are four NEE indicators selected from three of the seven available standards that evaluators use primarily for each walk-through teacher evaluation.

According to a memo posted on the DESE website titled Essential Principles of Effective Evaluation, "the growth and learning of children is the primary responsibility of those who teach in our classrooms and lead our schools" (p. 1). Therefore, an effective evaluation system needs to be in place that is based on "research-based essential

principles…[and]…promote[s] the improvement of professional practice resulting in the improvement of student performance" (p. 1). DESE outlined the essential principles of effective evaluations (see Figure 1).

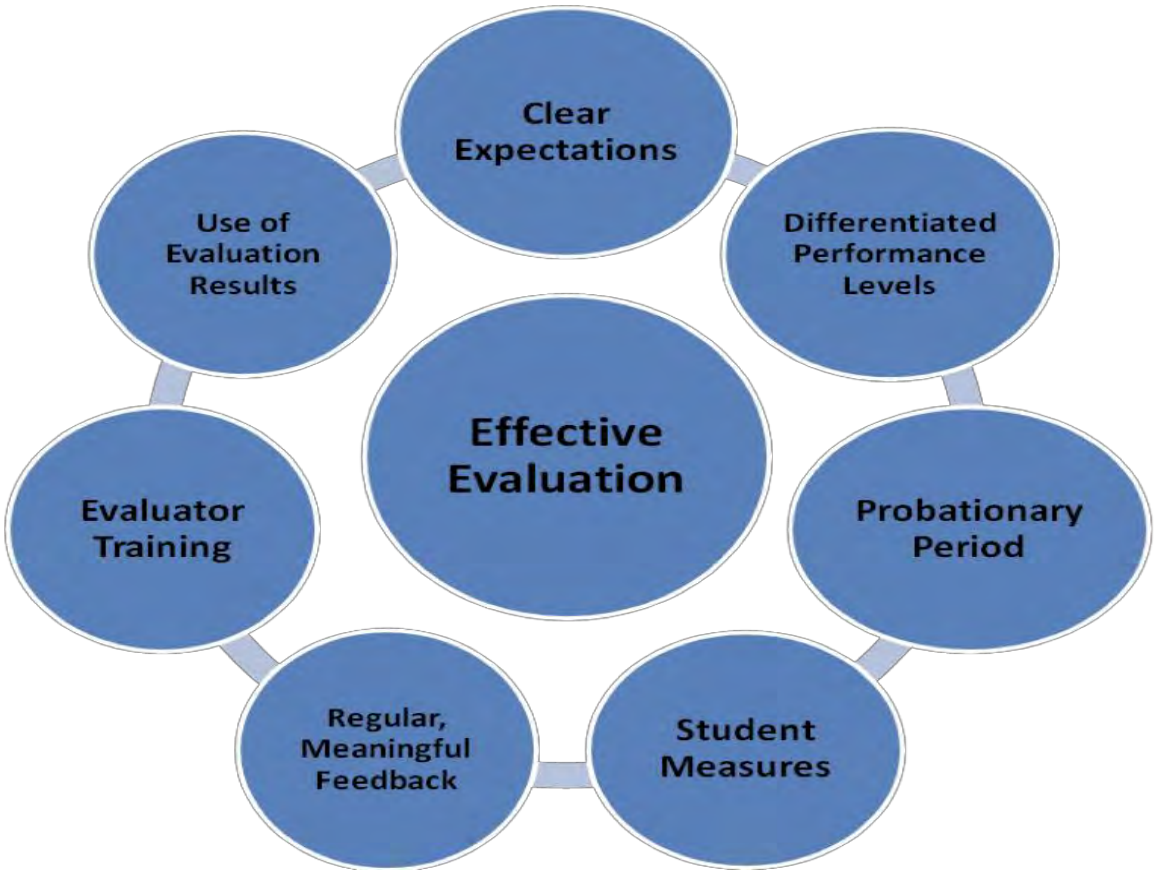


Figure 1. DESE Essential principles of effective evaluation. Retrieved from: www.dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/eq-ees-essential-principles.pdf

In November 2018 the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) published *Building Ranks, K-12: A Comprehensive Framework for Effective School Leaders,* in their monthly journal *Principal Leadership*. This resource is directed toward improving principals and administrators to help them develop and build more positive school cultures in their schools. According to NASSP Executive Director JoAnn Bartoletti, "Its charge is to help you develop and enhance the impact that you, as a principal, can have in your school and in the learning community it serves informed by

the real-world experiences of principals in the field" (p. 43). The executive summary published the Building Ranks Logic Model and identified the values of student-centeredness, wellness, equity, relationships, communication, ethics, and global-mindedness as the values that should be strived for in a building culture to "help promote student success…[and]…adult success" in schools (p. 44). The summary also explained how leaders could encourage the growth by leading learning through vision and mission, collaborative leadership, result-orientation, innovation, human capital management, strategic management, reflection, growth, curriculum, instruction, and assessments.

The research and emphasis on teacher evaluations for teacher growth, effectiveness, and learning-centered cultures have advanced tremendously in a short amount of time. The barrier appears to be how seriously teachers, school leaders, states use the literature to truly improve their learning cultures in their communities and states. Evaluation "is about collecting information that can be used for feedback…and everyone should be asking themselves questions that cause them to reflect on the quality and effectiveness of their actions" (Gill, 2010, p. 156). Teacher evaluations, therefore, are mainly collections of information from classroom observations in order to provide valuable feedback to teachers. The key question for this study is how well does the NEE Data Tool capture this important feedback for teachers in the areas of promoting teacher growth, improving effectiveness, and promoting a learning-centered culture. This literature review helped develop this important study and develop a springboard for the necessary research to follow about teacher perspectives of the impact the NEE Data Tool has on promoting teacher growth, improving teacher effectiveness, and promoting a learning-centered culture in one Missouri rural public school.

Research Question

The research topic selected was the following: what is the impact of NEE Data Tool on teacher growth, teacher effectiveness, and learning-centered culture at BHS? What are teachers' perspectives about this topic? Additionally, does the NEE Data tool impact teachers in the areas of teacher growth, teacher effectiveness, and learning-centered culture of the school? The research question, which guided this investigation, was the following:

> As perceived by teachers, how does the Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE) Data Tool: (a) promote teacher growth, (b) improve teacher effectiveness, and (c) promote building a learning-centered culture in a Missouri rural public school?

This study focused on studying the impact of the NEE Data Tool for promoting teacher growth, improving teacher effectiveness, and building learning-centered cultures at BHS.

Conceptual Frameworks

During the development of the framework for this study, the researcher bridged several different theories and disciplines to unfold the direction of the conceptual framework. Bolman and Deal's (2008) human resource frame continued to be intertwined throughout the study since the beginning. The Human Resource Frame assumption "holds that the needs of individuals and organizations can be aligned, engaging people's talent and energy while the enterprise profits" (p. 121). This symbiotic relationship is also a foundational truth of promoting teacher growth, effectiveness, and a learning-centered culture in schools. The goal of schools is to effectively educate their students and prepare them for their futures, and "the single most

influential component of an effective school is the individual teachers within that school" (Marzano, 2007, p.1).

One of the points of emphasis is to promote teacher growth by improving teacher effectiveness in a school to better educate the students. Teacher effectiveness implies that quality teachers do have characteristics and behaviors that have a large impact on student performance or outcomes. Educational research supports that an effective teacher has a larger impact on student learning than any other factor in a school (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005).

> The results suggest that the effects of a costly ten student reduction in class size are smaller than the benefit of moving one standard deviation up the teacher quality distribution, highlighting the importance of teacher effectiveness in the determination of school quality. (p. 417)

Therefore, teacher effectiveness is highly important and is a variable that educational leaders and teachers can have a direct impact to improve student learning in classrooms.

Charlotte Danielson's (1996) book *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*, outlines five elements in the instructional domain that engage students in learning. The elements are (a) representation of content, (b) activities and assignments, (c) grouping of students, (d) instructional materials and resources, (e) the structure, and pacing. The author and many educational experts consider these elements and how well they are implemented to be the areas that distinguish more effective teachers and classroom learning cultures.

In order for school leaders to "develop, retain, and reward great teachers, school systems must be able to know how to recognize effective teaching" (Kane et al., 2013, p.

38). Kane et al. (2013), explained that the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, was developed to "test replicable methods for identifying effective teachers" (p. 2). The MET project is a study of over 3,000 teachers in six urban districts. With the increased pressure for schools to identify effective teachers, many school leaders have "begun to provide more differentiated feedback to teachers using student achievement gains, classroom observations, and student surveys" (p. 38). The study found that the "existing measures of teacher effectiveness provide important and useful information on the causal effects that teachers have on their students' outcomes" (p. 39). If these measures are closely monitored and promoted in schools than the assumption could be that if learning-centered cultures are cultivated then student learning will occur.

Another point of emphasis to help promote teacher growth and improve teacher effectiveness in a school to better educate the students is to promote the learning-centered culture of the school. Stephen Gill (2010) wrote the book *Developing a Learning Culture in Nonprofit Organizations* with the purpose of helping organizations adapt their practices and culture to better meet the needs of their clients, customers, employees, and anyone who is impacted by an organization. Gill defined organizational learning as the means of "knowing how to know; knowing what you know; and knowing how to apply that knowledge to individual, team, organization, and community improvement" (p. xi). The author also pointed out:

> Significant barriers stand in the way of learning in organizations. These barriers are manifested in subtle and not-so-subtle resistance to creating a culture of

> learning. If you want to be successful over the long term, you have no choice but to face these barriers and overcome them. (p. 15)

The hope is that educational leaders and schools can properly identify their barriers and develop plans for not only overcoming them, but also ultimately improving their learning cultures. A learning culture can be developed and "consists of the values, basic assumptions, beliefs, expected behaviors, and norms of an organization" (Gill, p. 19). In order for a learning culture to develop, there needs to be "a culture that supports continuous learning for continuous improvement" (Gill, p. 28).

Another key part of the conceptual framework is growth mindset, which has been emphasized and implemented at BHS. Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck in her 2006 book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, introduced the concept of how people can fulfill their potential and explained how the psychology of success can be linked to two types of mindsets. Dweck explained that "Mindsets are just beliefs. They're powerful beliefs, but they're just something in your mind, and you can change your mind" (p. 16). Dweck defined a "fixed mindset [is] believing your qualities are carved in stone [which] creates an urgency to prove yourself over and over" (p. 7) and a "growth mindset is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts, your strategies, and help from others" (p. 7). The author pointed out that lowering standards to provide opportunities for student success (self-esteem) does not work but "just leads to poorly educated students who feel entitled to easy work and lavish praise" (p. 196). Dweck contended that teachers and schools should set high standards, and growth-oriented teachers "believe in the growth of the intellect and talent, and they are fascinated with the process of learning" (p. 197). The researcher

has hired growth-oriented teachers the past three years who promote student ownership of learning and based the selection of the NEE indicators on this premise.

Utilizing the human resource frame the researcher planned to measure the impact of the NEE Data Tool for promoting teacher growth, improving teacher effectiveness, and building learning-centered cultures at BHS. The researcher chose to use the human resource lens as a framework as a way to measure the different components from Marzano, Rivikin, Hanushek, Kain, Danielson, Kane et al., Gill, and Dweck's valuable aspects and their impact on the selected school for this study. Research by these authors has been implemented in the selected school in recent history and the NEE indicators selected for teacher growth, and in post classroom observation meeting dialogue with the selected school's teachers. The NEE Data Tool has been used to improve teacher growth, sometimes called teacher efficacy, to promote a student learning culture in the selected school that improves student-learning performance. One of the main goals of this study is to measure the effectiveness of the NEE Data Tool from teachers' perspectives and the impact it has had upon the learning culture.

Methods

Setting

The researcher conducted a case study of the teachers at Buffalo High School (BHS) in Buffalo, Missouri, at the end of the 2018-2019 school year. The city of Buffalo, Missouri, is located in Southwest Missouri and has a population of 3,026 with a 22.9% poverty rate (Data USA: Buffalo, Missouri). Buffalo is a rural town in Dallas County, which is primarily an agricultural community that is located 37 miles north of Springfield, Missouri, on Highway 65. BHS had 35 teachers during the 2018-2019

school year with 12 years average teaching experience, an average of 8.8 of those years of experience at BHS. Of the BHS teachers, 40% have a master's degree or advanced degree, and is composed of 68.6% female and 31.4% male teachers.

Participants

The methodological approach for the case was descriptive, utilizing Likert and open-ended survey items. The 35 teachers at BHS were invited to participate, informed about the purpose of the study, and provided an informed consent form (see Appendix A). Of the 35 BHS teachers, 28 teachers chose to participate in the case study, an 80% participation rate. Identities were kept anonymous throughout the investigation, as participants were not asked any identifiable items and their emails were not collected to ensure anonymity. To mitigate deductive disclosure risks, the researcher provided the basic teacher population demographics through information collected from the human resources officer of the district and did not collect any personal information.

Data Collection Tools

The survey was sent out in a Google Forms survey format to the selected group of 35 teachers at BHS. Some of the survey items were quantitative and designed utilizing a six-point Likert scale which Fink (2013) calls a "*forced-choice* method because the middle option of *neither agree nor disagree* or, by convention, *neutral* is not available" (p. 45). The case study also included qualitative items that are open-ended to allow for the respondents to write as much as they wanted (see Appendix B). The survey contained 12 quantitative and 12 qualitative items. Participant responses were collected upon completion and combined utilizing Google Forms survey response tool. The response

tool allowed the researcher to view the responses immediately, and start coding the responses based on pre-determined themes from the literature and the case study data.

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the case study survey quantitative data based on similar questions about the focus of this study and the impact of the NEE Data Tool on the teachers who participated in the survey. McDavid, Huse, and Hawthorn (2013) stated that a researcher should "analyze the data, focusing on answering the evaluation questions" (p. 36). The research question guided the data analysis by building a case for the study with the survey items and then utilizing the specific results to help direct the analysis after the responses were collected. The researcher kept the following chosen research question at the forefront of the data analysis, construction, and analysis: As perceived by teachers, how does the Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE) Data Tool: (a) promote teacher growth, (b) improve teacher effectiveness, and (c) promote building a learning-centered culture at BHS? The three main topics of the research question were each analyzed separately and collectively.

The raw data was initially sorted utilizing the summary of responses tool in Google Forms, which automatically provided percentages of responses for each question as the respondents completed the survey. The researcher built individual bar graphs for each quantitative question utilizing the charts option in Microsoft Word program by transferring the percentages to the Charts spreadsheet based on the six Likert options of strongly disagree, disagree, slightly disagree, slightly agree, agree, and strongly agree. The researcher then summarized the data for each question based on the percentages of the respondents who selected one of the agreement responses of slightly agree, agree, and

strongly agree. The bar graphs and summaries for each question were sorted into the three categories identified in the research question about teacher effectiveness, teacher growth, and learning-centered culture to do a side-by-side analysis.

Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the quantitative data collected and sorted by frequencies as "descriptive statistics provide simple summaries about the sample and the responses to some or all of the questions" (Fink, 2013, p. 116). For the qualitative responses, open coding was used, and the respondents' answers were sorted based on type (yes/no for example), and then coded by themes according to the three components of the research question to pull out the rich and thick descriptions.

Findings

This case study focused on studying the impact of the NEE Data Tool for promoting teacher growth, improving teacher effectiveness, and promoting a learning-centered culture at BHS. The research question was the following: As perceived by teachers, how does the Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE) Data Tool: (a) promote teacher growth, (b) improve teacher effectiveness, and (c) promote building a learning-centered culture at BHS? The three parts of the research question followed by quantitative and qualitative data analysis and findings separate the findings section.

Teacher Growth

There were four teacher growth quantitative items asked in the case study, which regarded the use of the three NEE Data Tool Standards and specifically the four NEE indicators used to observe teachers at BHS during the 2018-2019 school year. The researcher measured how the BHS teachers perceived these four indicators promoted teacher growth during the 2018-2019 school year. There were also four teacher growth

qualitative open-ended items asked in the case study, which regarded the use of the four indicators, and feedback received. These eight items collectively were intended to gather the teachers' perceptions of the impact of the NEE Data Tool observations on promoting teacher growth.

Quantitative Findings. The first of the four quantitative items focused on the use of NEE Standard 2 (Understands and Encourages Student Learning, Growth, and Development) and specifically indicator 2.2 (The teacher sets and monitors student goals). The item asked if the teachers perceived their NEE Data Tool classroom observations in this indicator helped them grow as a teacher. Figure 3 shows 71.5% of the 28 respondents slightly agreed (25%), agreed (25%), or strongly agreed (21.5%) that they grew as a teacher as a result of the observations they received using this indicator. There were 28.5% of the 28 respondents who slightly disagreed (10.7%), disagreed (7.1%), or strongly disagreed (10.7%) that they grew as a result of the observations they received using this indicator.

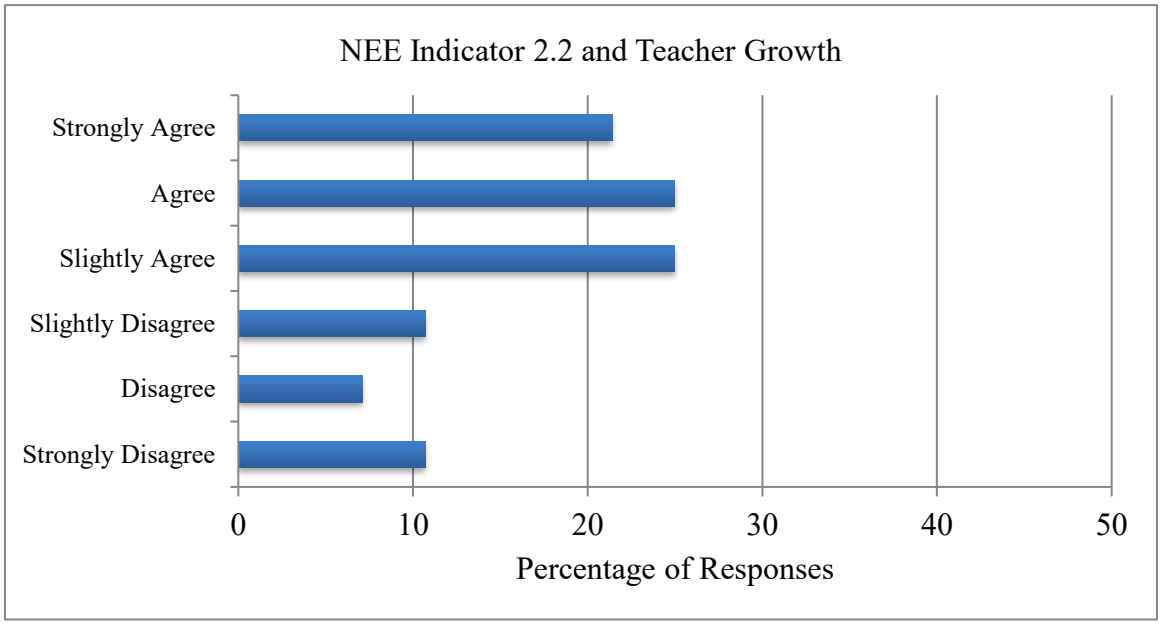


Figure 3. NEE Indicator 2.2 (The teacher sets and monitors student goals). The classroom

observations I received this school year using the NEE Data tool for this standard helped me grow as a teacher**.**

The next quantitative item about teacher growth in the case study regarded the use of NEE Standard 2 (Understands and Encourages Student Learning, Growth, and Development) and specifically indicator 2.5 (The teacher builds on students' prior experiences, learning strengths, and needs). The item asked if the teachers perceived their NEE Data Tool classroom observations received using this indicator helped them grow as a teacher during the school year. Figure 4 shows an overwhelming 92.8% of the 28 respondents slightly agreed (28.6%), agreed (32.1%), or strongly agreed (32.1%) they grew as a teacher as a result of the observations they received using this indicator. There were only 7.2% of the 28 respondents who slightly disagreed (3.6%), disagreed (0%), or strongly disagreed (3.6%) that they grew as a result of the observations they received using this indicator.

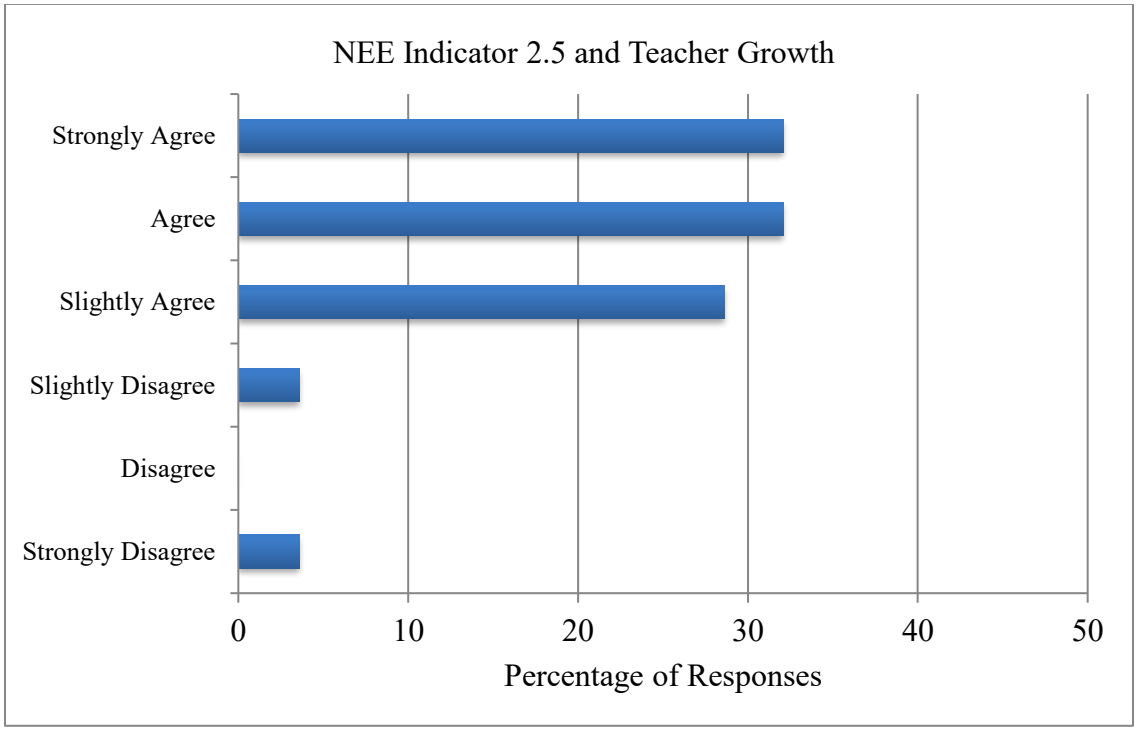


Figure 4. NEE Indicator 2.5 (The teacher builds on students' prior experiences, learning strengths, and needs). The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data tool for this standard helped me grow as a teacher.

The next quantitative item asked in the case study about teacher growth regarded the use of NEE Standard 5 (Creates a Positive Classroom Learning Environment) and specifically indicator 5.1 (The teacher uses motivation strategies that affectively engage students). The item was asked if the selected teachers perceived their NEE Data Tool classroom observations received using this indicator helped them to grow as a teacher. Figure 5 shows 85.7% of the 28 respondents slightly agreed (28.6%), agreed (32.1%), or strongly agreed (25%) they grew as a teacher as a result of the observations they received using this indicator. There were only 14.3% of the 28 respondents who slightly disagreed (7.1%), disagreed (3.6%), or strongly disagreed (3.6%) that they grew as a result of the observations they received using this indicator.

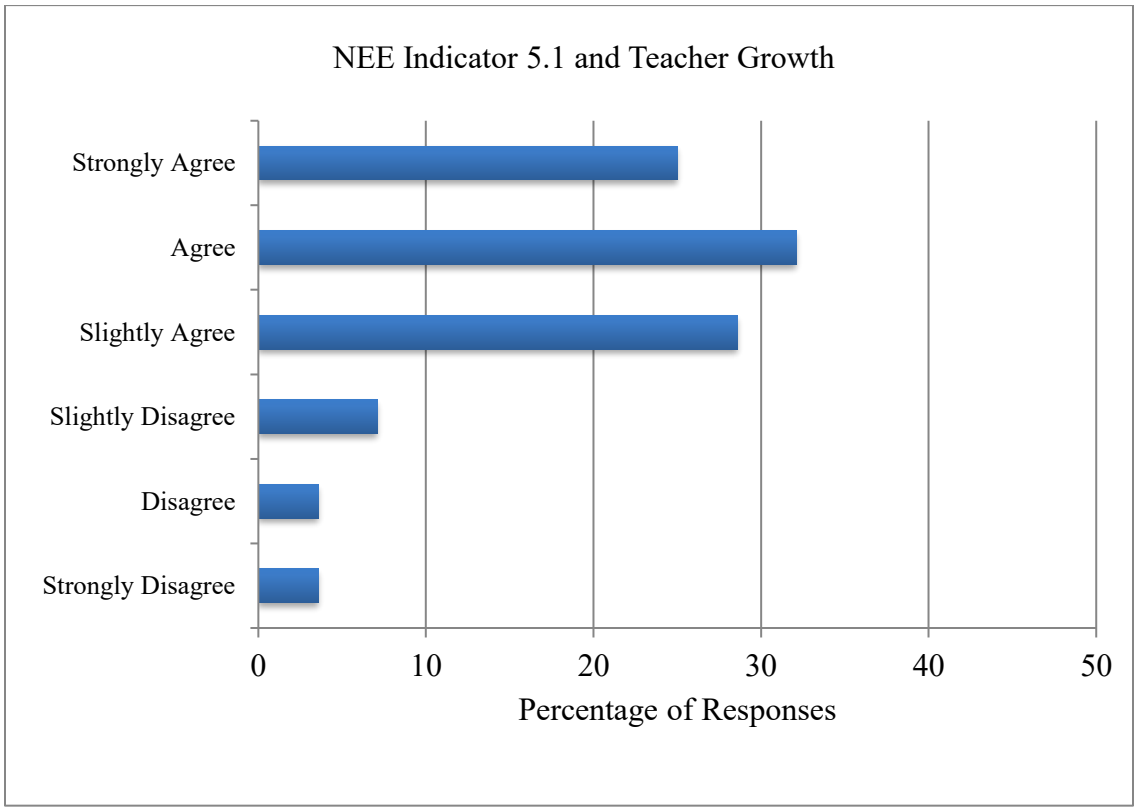


Figure 5. NEE Indicator 5.1(The teacher uses motivation strategies that affectively engage students). The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data Tool for this standard helped me grow as a teacher.

The final quantitative item asked in the survey about teacher growth regarded the use of NEE Standard 7 (Uses Student Assessment Data to Analyze and Modify Instruction) and specifically indicator 7.4 (The teacher monitors the effect of instruction on the whole class and individual learning). The item asked if the selected teachers perceived their NEE Data Tool classroom observations received using this indicator helped them grow as a teacher. Figure 6 shows an overwhelming 92.8% of the 28 respondents slightly agreed (32.1%), agreed (32.1%), or strongly agreed (28.6%) they grew as a teacher as a result of the observations they received using this indicator. There were only 7.1% of the 28 respondents who slightly disagreed (0%), disagreed (0%), or strongly disagreed (7.1%) that they grew as a result of the observations they received using this indicator.

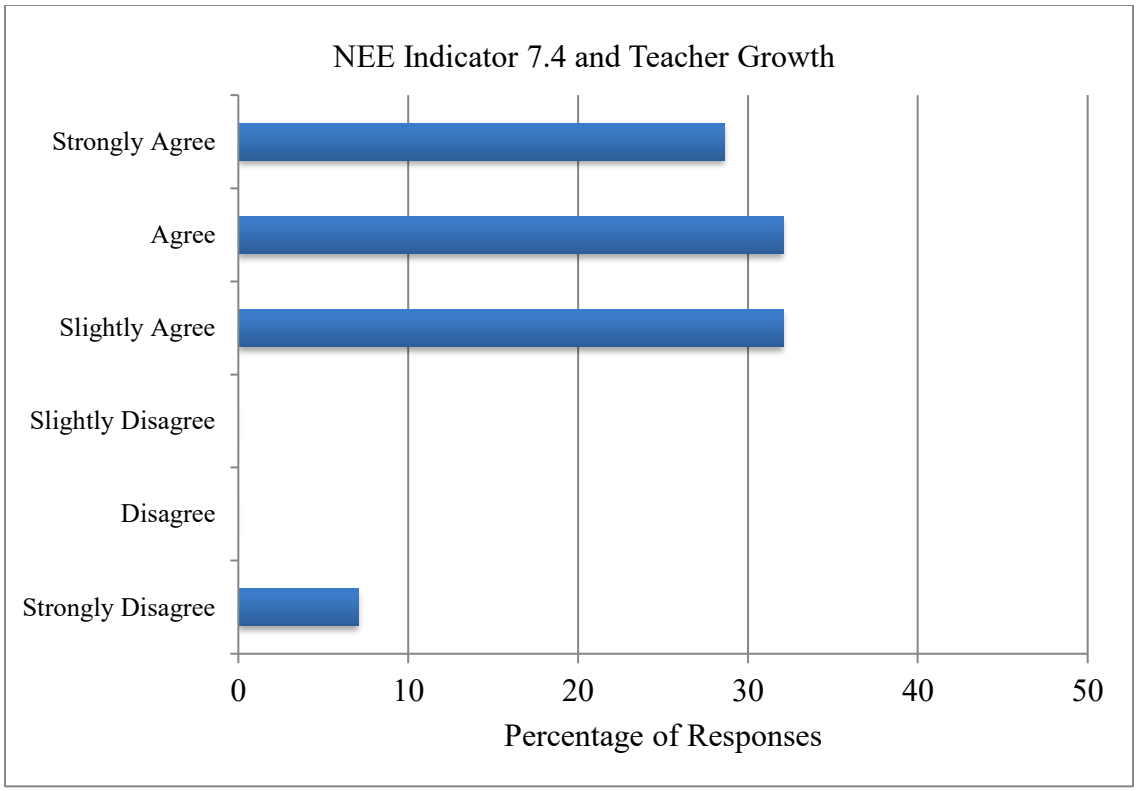


Figure 6. NEE Indicator 7.4 (The teacher monitors the effect of instruction on the whole class and individual learning). The classroom observations I received for this standard this school year using the NEE Data Tool helped me grow as a teacher.

Overall the quantitative responses were positive about the teacher perceptions of the impact of the four NEE indicators as related to teacher growth of BHS teachers during the 2018-2019 school year. The lowest rated indicator was indicator 2.2 (The teacher sets and monitors student goals) with only 71.4% of the teachers surveyed perceiving this indicator helped promote teacher growth and 28.5% disagreed. The researcher anticipated indicator 2.2 (The teacher sets and monitors student goals) would receive the lowest ratings as this indicator has had the most push back from the BHS teachers over the past three years of implementation. It has also been the hardest indicator to evaluate during the observations as many times goal setting happens at the beginning of the class and may not be observable later in a class period without interrupting the students or teachers to ask questions about when and how it occurred.

Indicator 5.1 (The teacher uses motivation strategies that affectively engage students) ranked the second lowest but still had a positive response with 85.7% of the respondents agreeing this indicator helped promote teacher growth and only 14.3% disagreed. Two indicators, 2.5 (The teacher builds on students' prior experiences, learning strengths, and needs) and 7.4 (The teacher monitors the effect of instruction on the whole class and individual learning), were tied with 92.8% of the respondents agreeing these indicators promoted teacher growth and only two teachers (7.2%) disagreed. Indicator 2.5 (The teacher builds on students' prior experiences, learning strengths, and needs) also had the highest amount of teachers who selected strongly agree of the four items about teacher growth with nine teachers, which was 32.1% of the respondents, and indicator 7.4 (The teacher monitors the effect of instruction on the whole class and individual learning) had the second highest amount of respondents who selected strongly agree with eight teachers, which was 28.6% of the respondents. Additionally it is important to note Dr. Mark Doss, the Region 5 NEE Field Representative, stated at NEE principal re-certification trainings that indicator 7.4 (The teacher monitors the effect of instruction on the whole class and individual learning) is also one of the most statistically reliable as far as promoting teacher and student growth but also one of the lowest scoring indicators for teachers (M. Doss, personal communication, June 5, 2018).

Qualitative Findings. There were four qualitative items asked in the case study about the NEE Data Tool's structure as related to promoting teacher growth including the following: (a) *How well does [do] the NEE observations promote teacher growth?* (b) *How could the NEE feedback loop be improved for you as a teacher?* (c) *In your opinion, how could teacher growth be improved in our school?* and (d) *What do you think should be changed about the NEE evaluation tool to make it more beneficial to improve teacher growth and student learning in the classroom?* There were 93 total responses to the four items, 84.9% respondents wrote mostly supportive stances, and 15.1% wrote unsupportive stances about the NEE Data Tool being an effective tool to promote teacher growth. Through the coding process three main themes surfaced about teacher growth including (a) value of feedback, (b) personal goal setting, and (c) teacher mindset (fixed vs. growth mindset).

Feedback helped promote teacher growth. Of the responses to the teacher growth items, 19 responses were clearly related to the valuable role of feedback in promoting teacher growth. One teacher described the value of feedback as allowing "teachers to see what they are doing well" and "what they need to focus on improving." Specifically, this teacher said, "constructive feedback fosters growth." Similarly, another teacher said, "the feedback provided from the observations helps to promote teacher growth." This was also described as "critical feedback as well as positive feedback on what is working and what may need to be changed in the classroom." Thus, this teacher said, "for me, the NEE allows me to assess my strengths and weaknesses."

Personal goal setting helped promote teacher growth. Of the responses to the teacher growth items, 14 responses were clearly related to the valuable role of personal

goal setting in promoting teacher growth. This finding was articulated by a teacher who said "by focusing on teachers setting their own goals, teachers are encouraged to grow themselves and continue to learn." This goal setting also allows teachers "to make adjustments that are needed throughout the school year." Similarly, another teacher said NEE helps teachers to "refocus and make our instruction better, we grow positively as an instructor, which should always be a goal for a quality teacher."

Teacher mindset helped promote teacher growth. Of the responses to the teacher growth items, 10 responses were clearly related to the valuable role of teacher mindset in promoting teacher growth. One of these responses was:

> Teacher growth will happen when teachers dive deeper into their subject and take advantage of professional development opportunities to mingle with like-minded and paired individuals who can share ideas. Going to trainings and working to better deliver the information is always going to lead to teacher growth. I am always looking for new techniques and methods to use in my classroom that work well, and work to incorporate something different in each class every year.

Unsupportive teacher growth findings. Even though there were few unsupportive responses, the one that stood out was "The NEE observations do not promote growth very well. I think they serve to highlight areas that growth is needed in, but do not promote that growth as they are currently used." The purposes of the NEE Data Tool may have been missed by the respondent as the goal is to promote teacher growth through clearly defining the areas of needed growth through the comments (feedback) and the teacher working with the principal on developing a personalized (goal setting) teacher PD plan based on the areas needing growth. The idea of needing more targeted

PD did come out in a few of the unsupportive responses such as "teacher growth could be improved by providing practical, professional development that focuses on relationships and growth-mindsets for teachers." Also a teacher requested that "more practical PD opportunities [be] provided in areas that we are going to be evaluated on."

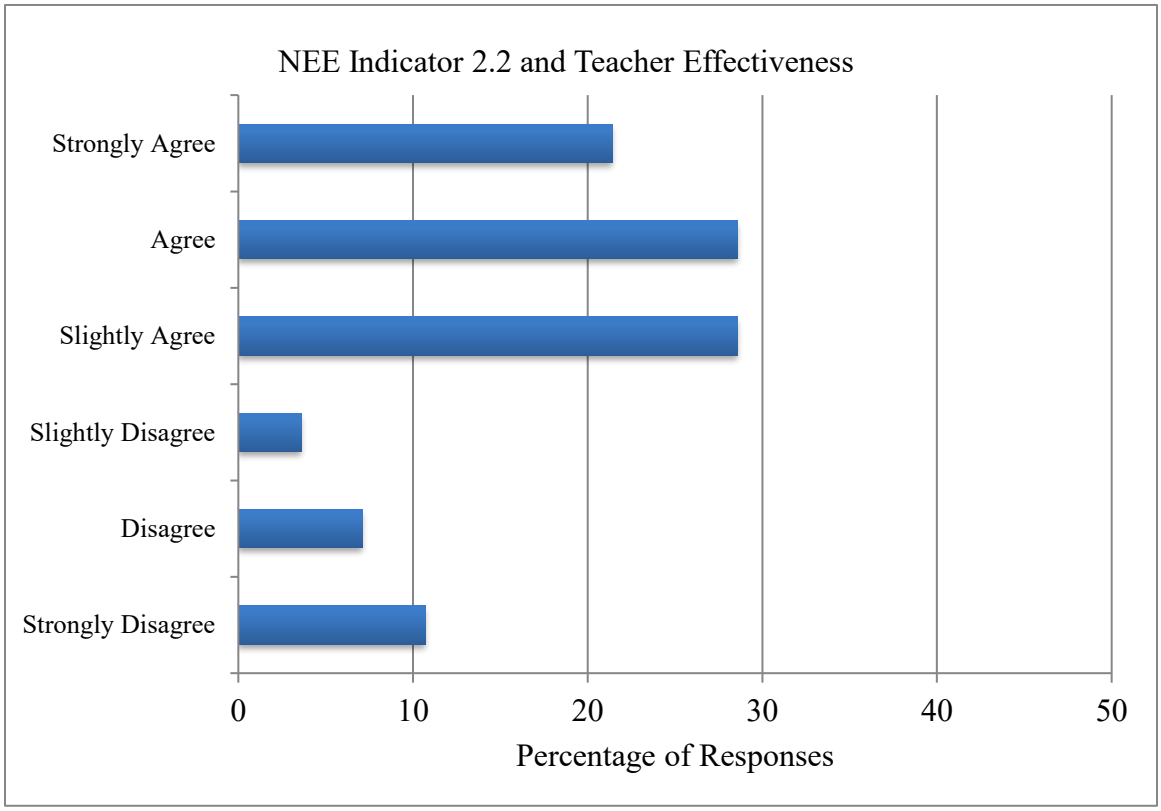
Summary of teacher growth qualitative findings. The researcher concluded the four items demonstrated that the NEE Data Tool promoted teacher growth at BHS during the 2018-2019 school year, and the three overarching themes that arose from the responses of feedback value of feedback, personal goal-setting, and teacher mindset (fixed vs. growth mindset) may be some of the most influential factors to many of the respondents.

Teacher Effectiveness

There were four teacher effectiveness quantitative items asked in the case study, which regarded the use of the three NEE Data Tool Standards and specifically the four NEE indicators used to observe teachers at BHS during the 2018-2019 school year. The researcher wanted to see how the BHS teachers perceived these four indicators improved teacher effectiveness during the 2018-2019 school year. There were also four teacher effectiveness qualitative open-ended items asked in the case study, regarding the use of the four indicators, and the observations and feedback they received. Specifically the teachers' perceptions of the impact of the NEE Data Tool observations upon improving teacher effectiveness were the focus of these survey items.

Quantitative Findings. The first question of the next four quantitative items the use of NEE Standard 2 (Understands and Encourages Student Learning, Growth, and Development) and specifically indicator 2.2 (The teacher sets and monitors student

goals). Figure 7 shows 78.6% of the 28 respondents slightly agreed (28.6%), agreed (28.6%), or strongly agreed (21.4%) they were a more effective teacher as a result of the observations they received using this indicator. There were 28.5% of the 28 respondents who slightly disagreed (3.6%), disagreed (7.1%), or strongly disagreed (10.7%) they were a more effective teacher as a result of the obs



ervations they received using this indicator.

Figure 7. NEE Indicator 2.2 (The teacher sets and monitors student goals). The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data tool for this standard helped me to be a more effective teacher.

The next quantitative question in the survey asked about teacher effectiveness regarding the use of NEE Standard 2 (Understands and Encourages Student Learning, Growth, and Development) and specifically indicator 2.5 (The teacher builds on students' prior experiences, learning strengths, and needs). The question was asked to determine if the selected teachers perceived their NEE Data Tool classroom observations received

using this indicator during the school year helped them to be a more effective teacher. Figure 8 shows overwhelmingly 92.8% of the 28 respondents slightly agreed (21.4%), agreed (42.9%), or strongly agreed (28.5%) they were a more effective teacher as a result of the observations they received using this indicator. There were only 7.2% of the 28 respondents who slightly disagreed (3.6%), disagreed (0%), or strongly disagreed (3.6%) that they were a more effective teacher as a result of the observations they received using this indicator.

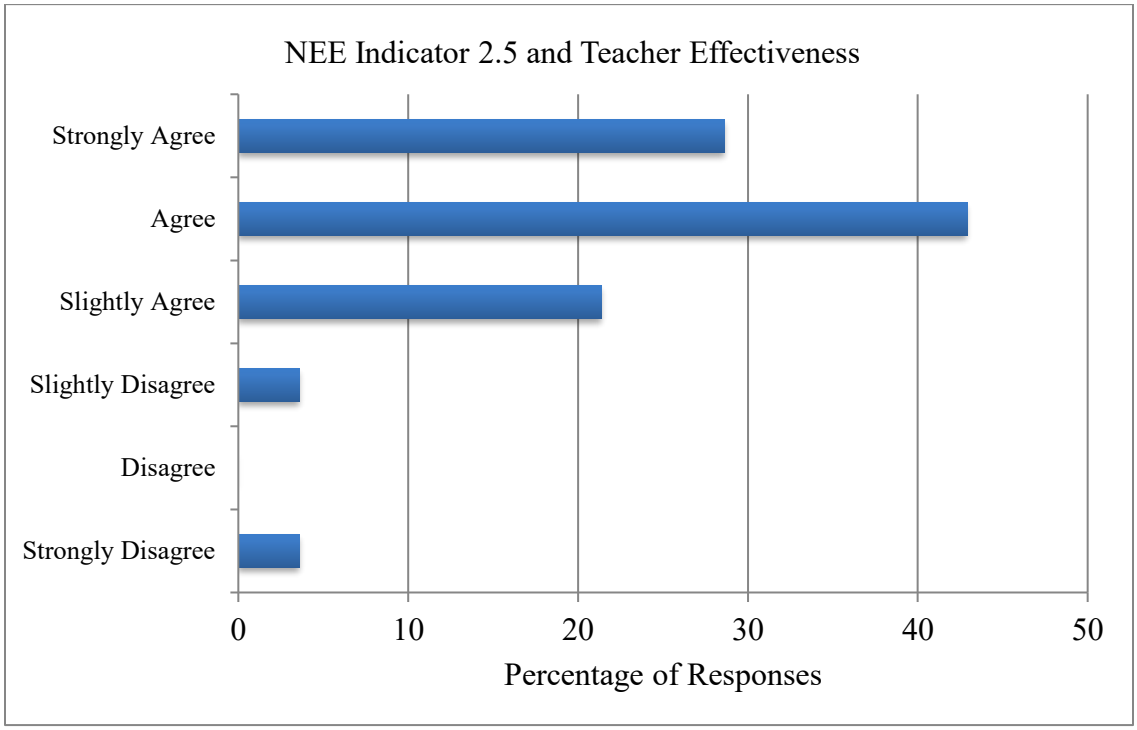


Figure 8. NEE Indicator 2.5 (The teacher builds on students' prior experiences, learning strengths, and needs). The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data tool for this standard helped me to be a more effective teacher.

The next question asked in the case study regarding the use of NEE Standard 5 (Creates a Positive Classroom Learning Environment) and specifically indicator 5.1 (The teacher uses motivation strategies that affectively engage students). The items were asked to determine if the selected teachers perceived their NEE Data Tool classroom observations received using this indicator during the school year helped them to be a

more effective teacher. Figure 9 shows 85.7% of the 28 respondents slightly agreed (21.4%), agreed (46.4%), or strongly agreed (17.9%) they were a more effective teacher as a result of the observations they received using this indicator. There were 14.3% of the 28 respondents who slightly disagreed (7.1%), disagreed (3.6%), or strongly disagreed (3.6%) that they were a more effective teacher as a result of the observations they received using this indicator.

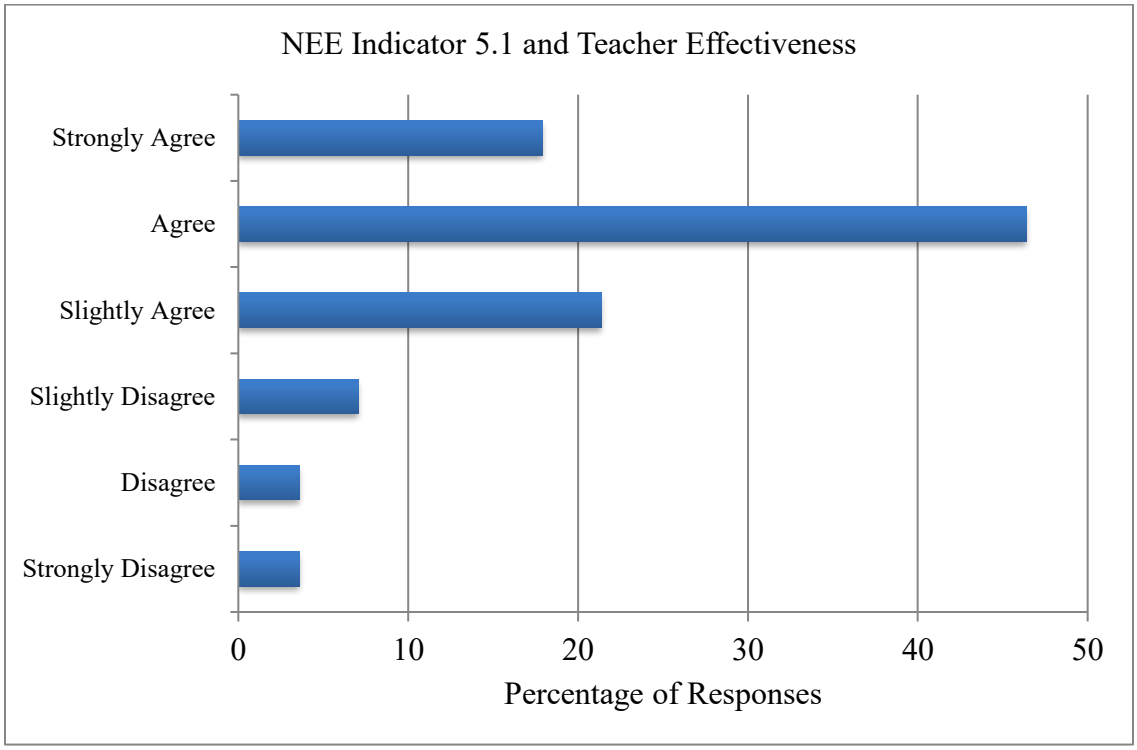


Figure 9. NEE Indicator 5.1 (The teacher uses motivation strategies that affectively engage students). The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data Tool for this standard helped me to be a more effective teacher.

The next quantitative question asked in the case study about teacher effectiveness regarding the use of NEE Standard 7 (Uses Student Assessment Data to Analyze and Modify Instruction) and specifically indicator 7.4 (The teacher monitors the effect of instruction on the whole class and individual learning). The question was asked to determine if the selected teachers perceived their NEE Data Tool classroom observations

received using this indicator during the school year helped them to be a more effective teacher. Figure 10 shows that an overwhelmingly 92.9% of the 28 respondents slightly agreed (28.6%), agreed (35.7%), or strongly agreed (28.6%) they were a more effective teacher as a result of the observations they received using this indicator. There were only 7.1% of the 28 respondents who slightly disagreed (0%), disagreed (0%), or strongly disagreed (7.1%) that they were a more effective teacher as a result of the observations they received using this indicator.

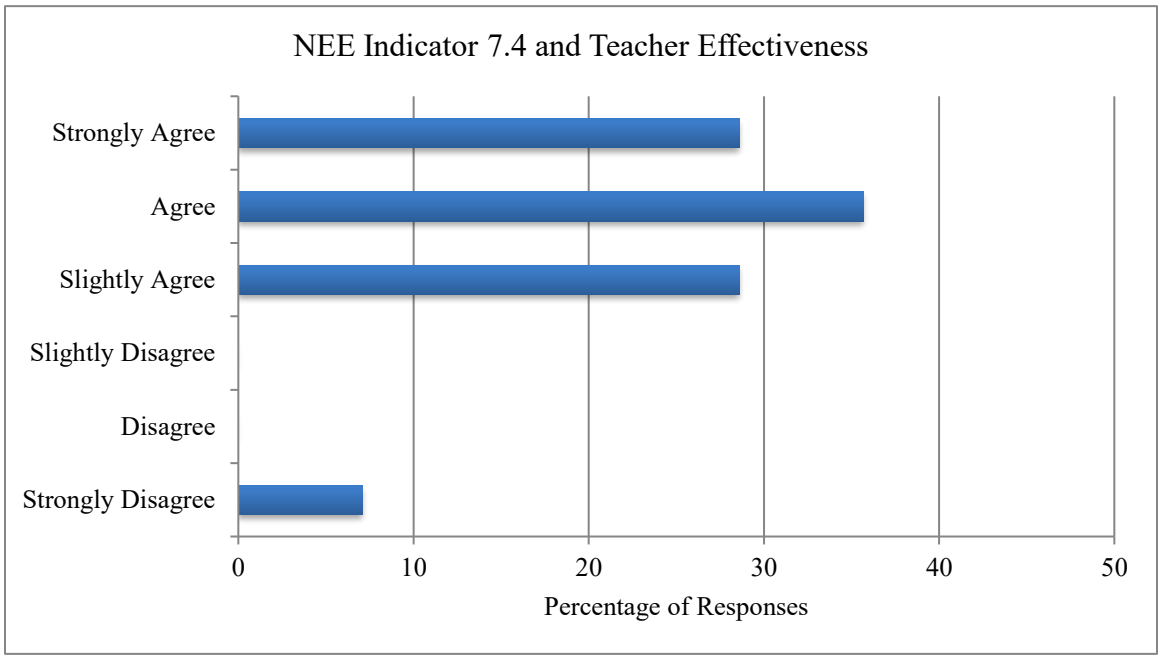


Figure 10. NEE Indicator 7.4 (The teacher monitors the effect of instruction on the whole class and individual learning). The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data Tool for this standard helped me to be a more effective teacher.

Overall the quantitative responses were positive about the teacher perceptions of the impact of the four NEE indicators as related to promoting the effectiveness of the BHS teachers during the 2018-2019 school year. The lowest rated indicator was indicator 2.2 (The teacher sets and monitors student goals) with only 78.6% of the teachers surveyed perceiving this indicator helped them be a more effective teacher and

28.5% disagreed. As mentioned above in more detail the researcher anticipated indicator 2.2 (The teacher sets and monitors student goals) would receive the lowest ratings, and this trend continued in this category about improving teacher effectiveness. Indicator 5.1 (The teacher uses motivation strategies that affectively engage students) ranked the second lowest but still had a positive response with 85.7% of the respondents agreeing this indicator helped them to be a more effective teacher and only 14.3% disagreed. Two indicators, 2.5 (The teacher builds on students' prior experiences, learning strengths, and needs) and 7.4 (The teacher monitors the effect of instruction on the whole class and individual learning), were both tied with 92.9% of the respondents agreeing and only 7.1% disagreed these indicators helped them to be a more effective teacher and only two teachers not agreeing in both survey items about each of the indicators. Indicator 5.1 (The teacher uses motivation strategies that affectively engage students) had the highest amount of teachers who selected agree with 13 teachers or 46.4% of the respondents, and indicator 2.5 (The teacher builds on students' prior experiences, learning strengths, and needs) had the second highest amount of teachers who selected agree with 12 teachers or 42.9% of the respondents out of the four items about teacher effectiveness.

Qualitative Findings. There were four qualitative items asked in the case study about the NEE Data Tool's structure as related to improving teacher effectiveness including the following: (a) *How much do the NEE indicator "look fors" help you as a teacher?* (b) *How well do the NEE Indicators focus on the important aspects of quality instruction?* (c) *How useful is the NEE evaluator feedback for your effectiveness as a teacher?* and (d) *In your opinion, how could teacher effectiveness be improved in our school?* There were 93 total responses to the four items, 83.9% respondents wrote mostly

supportive stances, and 16.1% wrote unsupportive stances about the NEE Data Tool being an effective tool to improve teacher effectiveness. Through the coding process three main themes surfaced including (a) high expectations (sets the standard for instruction), (b) focused direction (purposeful approach), and (c) principal feedback (outside perspective) improved teacher effectiveness.

High expectations improved teacher effectiveness. Of the responses to the teacher effectiveness items, 20 responses were clearly related to the valuable role of high expectations in improving teacher effectiveness. One of the responses summed it up:

> High expectation[s] with compassion goes a long way. Keep doing what has been done over the past year or two. I think our school is moving in the right direction and teachers have many opportunities to get involved and be included in the school atmosphere as well as within the teacher community, and to get connected with professional development. Change is here, and it is good.

Three teachers expressed appreciation for the high expectations NEE provides: "the indicators in NEE set a good standard for quality instruction in the classroom," additionally, "the indicators are so much better than previous evaluation systems. We have consistent and specific goals," and "I feel like it is an effective way to help me become a better teacher." One teacher pointed out how the consistent process of high expectations is improving teacher effectiveness: "continue to frequently be in the classrooms to ensure teachers are engaging students in the learning process."

Focused direction improved teacher effectiveness. Of the responses to the teacher effectiveness items, 17 responses were clearly related to the valuable role of focused direction in improving teacher effectiveness. One of the teacher said, "It helped

me understand what I should be looking for in my teaching. So it helped me focus on certain goals to improve my teaching." Similarly, another teacher said, "I think the indicators are very focused on aspects of quality instruction." Thus for teachers effectiveness to be improved then students success is important; the following teacher agreed: "I feel like the indicators that NEE has are the things that should be focused on for students to have success" and "the NEE focuses on the areas in the classroom that are often easy for instructors to overlook." Lastly, what is focused on for effective instruction matters thus "they focus on an educator's focus/planning for instruction, which is essential for quality instruction [and] we need reminders of what to focus [on] more to make instruction better."

Principal feedback improved teacher effectiveness. Of the responses to the teacher effectiveness items, 21 responses were clearly related to the valuable role of principal feedback in improving teacher effectiveness. One teacher described the importance of principal feedback by saying "as an instructor I have a perception of myself and how I teach, but the NEE indicators and evaluations allow me to see how I teach through someone else's perception so that I can adjust and provide a better quality of instruction." Another teacher also expressed appreciation stating, "the feedback from evaluation is invaluable! Having moved to a new building/grade level, I was able to use the information from the evaluation to address areas where I needed to grow and continue practices that were effective." Thus, these teachers agreed also saying "evaluator feedback [is] very useful for my effectiveness as a teacher because it gives me an idea of how another educator interprets my instruction" and "I have been able to use the

feedback and process it into making me grow as a teacher and become more effective in my strategies." A teachers response summed it up:

> I appreciate the critiques that the NEE evaluations gave me…what helped me become more effective were the conversations I had with my principal about my evaluations and the fact that he actually paid attention while observing me and understands how to read body language and was able to help me address areas I could work on. He was also willing to talk with me about standards that don't come naturally to me and gave some suggestions on what I could do to improve.

Unsupportive teacher effectiveness findings. A few responses raised concerns about the use of the NEE Data Tool as related to facilitating teacher effectiveness. There was a response that questioned the designed structure of the NEE indicators being used in every classroom all the time, but did see principal feedback as valuable for improving teacher effectiveness

> I believe the NEE indicators are subjective in nature. If one particular indicator works in one classroom, I do not believe they have to be implemented in all classrooms in order for a teacher to be effective. I do, however, agree that using indicators and the discussion that follows is what can help a teacher…become a better facilitator of education in the classroom.

The idea that a teacher's motivation determines how effective they are did come up as a teacher said "I don't believe the NEE observations have much impact on teachers as a whole unless the teachers have the intrinsic motivation to grow and better their practice." Also a teacher thought that tuning in to the students is a better determining factor related to teacher effectiveness and was explained as:

> I personally don't think it is super helpful for my effectiveness, but it is nice to get feedback from my administrators and to have them get a glimpse into what I am doing in my classroom. Tuning in to the students is a great way to tell how effective I am and that guides my teaching, but NEE helps to guide that teaching.

A couple teachers showed a need for more communication and collaboration, and this may be something the researcher needs to examine more closely as a teacher said "effectiveness could be improved by providing more conversations about what is effective in the classroom as well as diving into the harder conversations about what may need to be changed." Also, a teacher said:

> Collaboration and communication. It's harder to do that across curriculum but to gain ideas and methods within a department to help support each other is invaluable. Get rid of complacency within teachers and effectiveness will improve. I will say that with all of the thousands of things we have to do that it will never be perfect, but to focus on the students and giving them the best education possible should be at the forefront and take precedence above all else.

Summary of teacher effectiveness findings. Overall the responses were positive and supported that the NEE Data Tool improved teacher effectiveness at BHS. The researcher concluded the four items demonstrated that the NEE Data Tool improved teacher effectiveness at BHS during the 2018-2019 school year, and the three overarching themes that arose from the responses of high expectations (sets the standard for instruction), focused direction (purposeful approach), and principal feedback (outside perspective) may be some of the most influential factors to most of the respondents. The

responses about additional communication and collaboration needed may require some additional focus to help improve teacher effectiveness at BHS for some of the teachers.

Learning-Centered Culture

There were four learning-centered culture quantitative items asked in the case study, which regarded the use of the three NEE Data Tool Standards and specifically the four NEE indicators used to observe teachers at BHS during the 2018-2019 school year. The researcher wanted to see how the BHS teachers perceived these four indicators promoted the learning-centered culture during the 2018-2019 school year. There also were four learning-centered culture qualitative open-ended items asked in the case study, regarding the use of the four indicators and the observations and feedback they received during the school year. Specifically the teachers' perceptions of the impact of the NEE Data Tool observations upon promoting a learning-centered culture at BHS were the focus of these survey items.

Quantitative Findings. The next four quantitative items asked in the case study about teacher perceptions of the NEE Data Tool focused upon the learning-centered culture at BHS. The first quantitative question asked in the case study regarded the use of NEE Standard 2 (Understands and Encourages Student Learning, Growth, and Development) and specifically indicator 2.2 (The teacher sets and monitors student goals). The question was asked to determine if the selected teachers perceived their NEE Data Tool classroom observations this school year in the indicator helped promote a learning-centered culture in the school.

Figure 11 shows that 75% of the 28 respondents slightly agreed (21.4%), agreed (39.3%), or strongly agreed (14.3%) the learning-centered culture of the school was

promoted as a result of the observations they received using this indicator. There were 25% of the 28 respondents who slightly disagreed (7.1%), disagreed (14.3%), or strongly disagreed (3.6%) that the learning-centered culture was promoted as a result of the observations they received using this indicator.

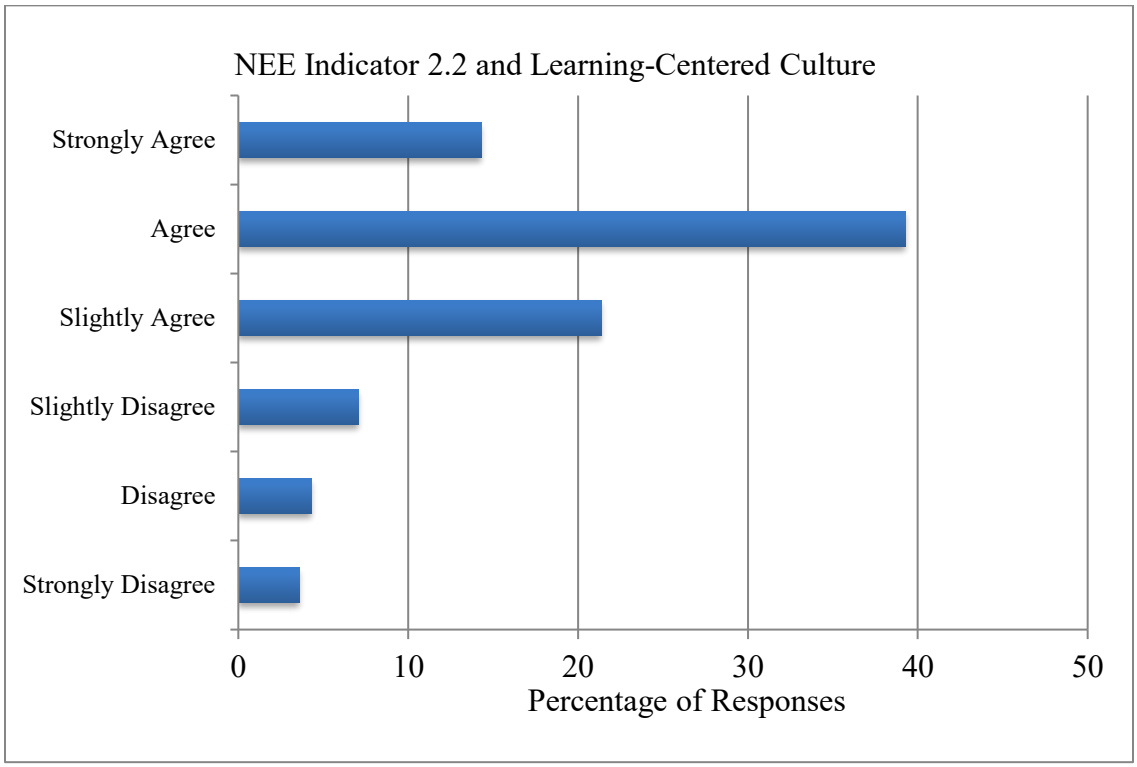


Figure 11. NEE Indicator 2.2 (The teacher sets and monitors student goals). The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data tool for this standard helped our school have a more learning-centered culture.

The next quantitative question asked in the case study regarded the use of NEE Standard 2 (Understands and Encourages Student Learning, Growth, and Development) and specifically indicator 2.5 (The teacher builds on students' prior experiences, learning strengths, and needs). The question was asked to determine if the selected teachers perceived their NEE Data Tool classroom observations received using this indicator helped BHS promote a learning-centered culture.

Figure 12 shows that 89.3% of respondents slightly agreed (28.6%), agreed (39.3%), or strongly agreed (21.4%) the learning-centered culture of the school was promoted as a result of the observations they received using this indicator. There were only 13.7% of the 28 respondents who slightly disagreed (10.7%), disagreed (3%), or strongly disagreed (0%) that the learning-centered culture was promoted as a result of the observations they received using this indicator

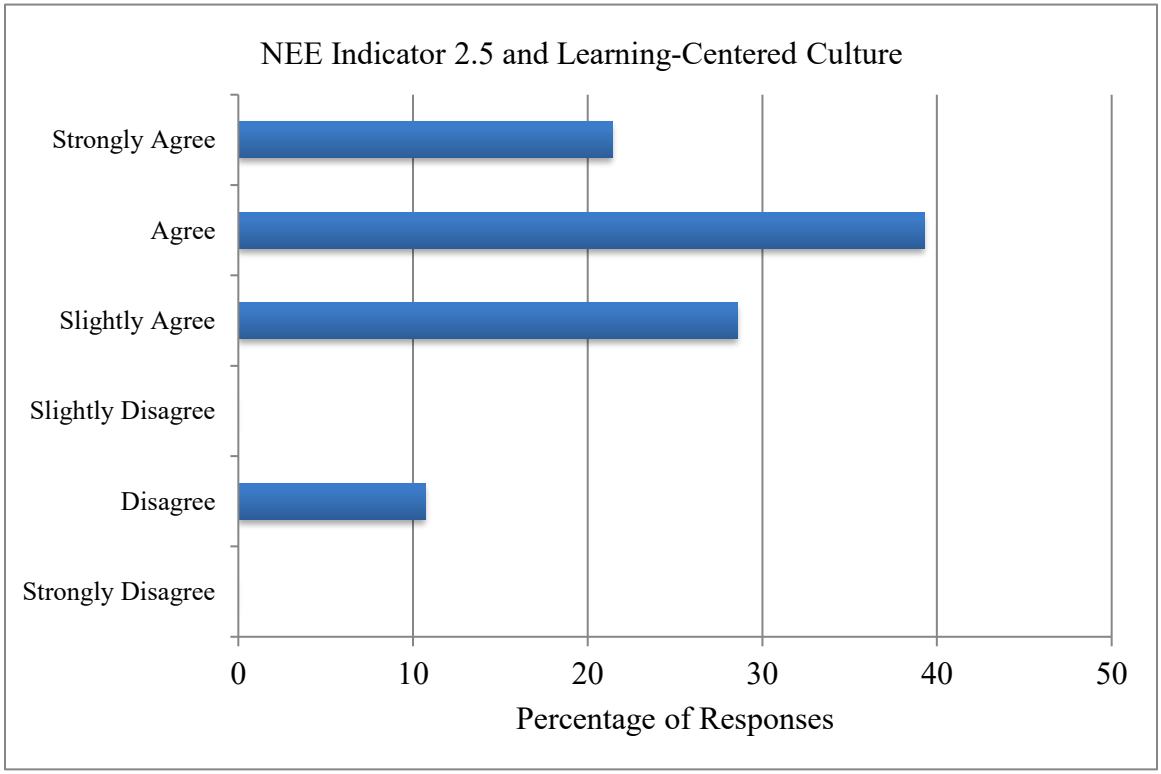


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Figure 12. NEE Indicator 2.5 (The teacher builds on students' prior experiences, learning strengths, and needs). The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data Tool for this standard helped our school have a more learning-centered culture.

The next quantitative question asked in the case study regarded the use of NEE Standard 5 (Creates a Positive Classroom Learning Environment) and specifically indicator 5.1 (The teacher uses motivation strategies that affectively engage students). The question was asked to determine if the selected teachers perceived their NEE Data

Tool classroom observations received using this indicator during the school year helped promote a learning-centered culture. Figure 13 shows that 85.8% of the 28 respondents slightly agreed (28.6%), agreed (39.3%), or strongly agreed (17.9%) the learning-centered culture of the school was promoted as a result of the observations they received using this indicator. There were only 14.2% of the 28 respondents who slightly disagreed (7.1%), disagreed (7.1%), or strongly disagreed (0%) that the learning-centered culture was promoted as a result of the observations they received using this indicator.

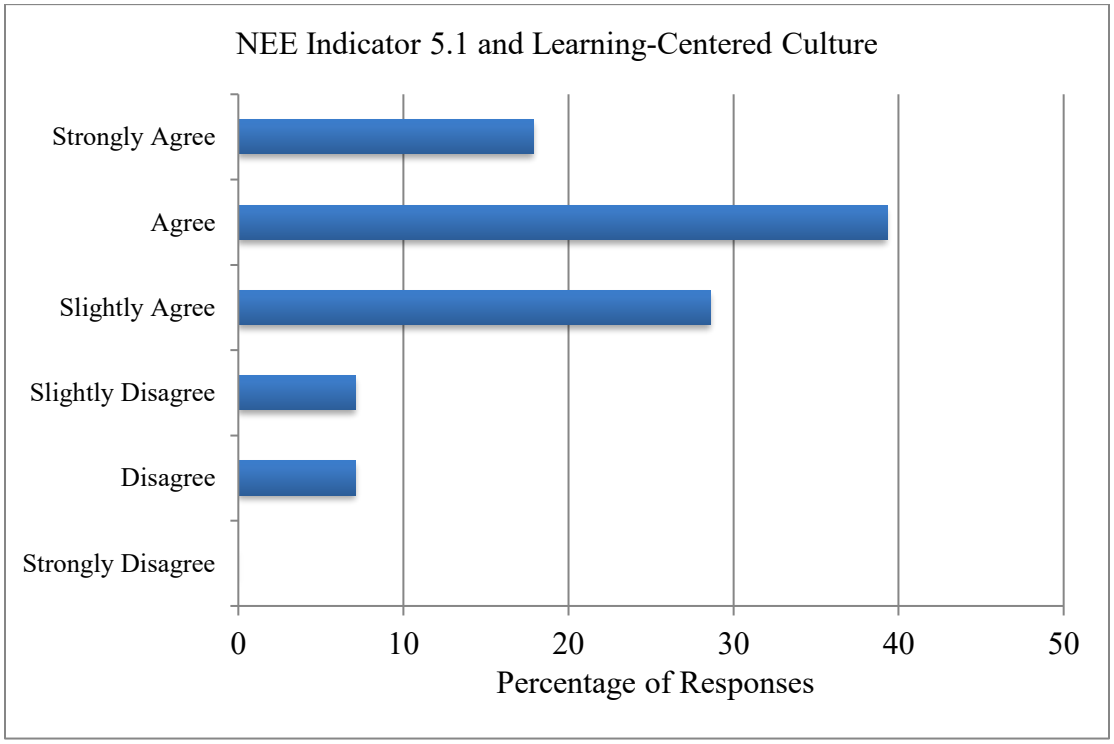

Figure 13. NEE Indicator 5.1 (The teacher uses motivation strategies that affectively engage students). The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data Tool for this standard helped our school have a more learning-centered culture.

The last quantitative question asked in the case study regarded the use of NEE Standard 7 (Uses Student Assessment Data to Analyze and Modify Instruction) and specifically indicator 7.4 (The teacher monitors the effect of instruction on the whole class and individual learning). The question was asked to determine if the selected

teachers perceived their NEE Data Tool classroom observations received using this indicator during the school year helped our school promote a learning-centered culture. Figure 14 shows that 85.8% of the 28 respondents slightly agreed (32.1%), agreed (28.7%), or strongly agreed (25%) the learning-centered culture of the BHS grew as a result of the observations they received using this indicator. There were only 14.2% of the 28 respondents who slightly disagreed (7.1%), disagreed (7.1%), or strongly disagreed (0%) that the learning-centered culture was promoted as a result of the observations they received using this indicator.

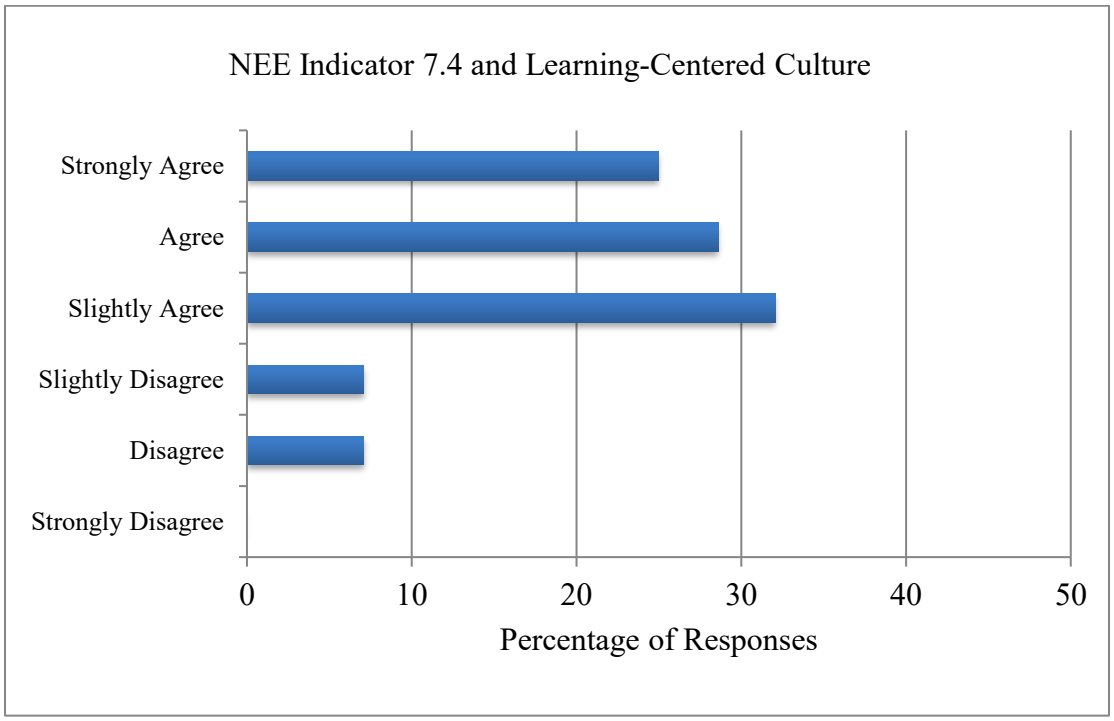

Figure 14. NEE Indicator 7.4 (The teacher monitors the effect of instruction on the whole class and individual learning). The classroom observations I received for this standard this school year using the NEE Data Tool helped our school have a more learning-centered culture.

Overall the quantitative responses were positive about the teacher perceptions of the impact of the four NEE indicators as related to promoting a learning-centered culture at BHS during the 2018-2019 school year. The lowest rated indicator was indicator 2.2

(The teacher sets and monitors student goals) with only 75% of the teachers surveyed perceiving this indicator helped the learning-centered culture improved and 25% disagreed. As mentioned above in more detail the researcher anticipated indicator 2.2 (The teacher sets and monitors student goals) would receive the lowest ratings, and this trend continued in this category as well. Indicators 5.1 (The teacher uses motivation strategies that affectively engage students) and 7.4 (The teacher monitors the effect of instruction on the whole class and individual learning) ranked the second lowest but still had a positive response with 85.8% of the respondents agreeing this indicator helped improve the learning-centered culture and only 14.2% disagreed. Indicator 2.5 (The teacher builds on students' prior experiences, learning strengths, and needs) was the highest with 89.3% of the respondents agreeing and only 10.7% disagreed this indicator improved the learning-centered culture of BHS.

Qualitative Findings. There were four qualitative items asked in the case study about the NEE Data Tool's structure as related to promoting a learning-centered culture including the following: (a) *In your opinion, what impact has the use of the NEE data tool had on the learning-culture of our school?* (b) *In your opinion, how could we improve our learning culture in our school?* (c) *How well do your principal/evaluators communicate feedback about your observations using the comment section?* and (d) *Would a [teacher] comment section in the NEE observations be valuable to you as a teacher?* There were 94 total responses to the four items, 80.9% respondents wrote mostly supportive stances, and 19.1% wrote unsupportive stances about the NEE Data Tool being an effective tool to promote a learning-centered culture at BHS. Through the

coding process three main themes surfaced including (a) working together, (b) student-focused, and (c) communicating honest feedback promoted a learning-centered culture.

Working together promotes learning-centered culture. Of the responses to the learning-centered culture items, 16 responses were clearly related to the valuable role of working together in promoting a learning-centered culture. One of the teachers described the value of working together as "the main improvement has been to get all teachers working towards the same improvements in the school. This allows the principal to identify weaknesses in learning and the culture in our school." Similarly, two more teachers said, "everyone is on the same page working toward a common goal" and "It helps the learning culture to be more unified as a school and helps everyone to get on the same page."

Student-focused school promotes learning-centered culture. Of the responses to the learning-centered culture items, 13 responses were clearly related to the valuable role of being a student-focused school promotes a learning-centered culture. One teacher said it succinctly "continue to be student-focused and another teacher said, "continue to find ways to reach all students [and] try to get as many students involved in all activities and continue to be a positive light to every student that comes through the doors of BHS." Additionally, a teacher provided some advise, "the learning culture could be improved by focusing more on student growth [and] letting go of old traditions and practices that get in the way of learning."

Communicating honest feedback promotes learning-centered culture. Of the responses to the learning-centered culture items, 10 responses were clearly related to the valuable role of communicating honest feedback promotes a learning-centered culture.

One teacher described the value of honest feedback as "our principal does a great job of feedback and has always given me honest feedback to all of my responses." Similarly, another teacher said, "my principal does a great job [and] he is very detailed and thorough in his responses." Thus, these teachers also said, "he leaves example here and there and it helps to show what he was talking about specifically" and "my evaluators do an excellent job of providing feedback in the comment sections and typically face-to-face meeting afterward about the evaluation." Additionally, one teacher said, "every classroom and subject is different, [and] it can be a challenge to give targeted and meaningful feedback in certain areas. That being said our principals do an effective job of communicating feedback."

Unsupportive learning-centered culture findings. A few of the responses questioned the connection of the NEE Data Tool indicators to improving the learning-centered culture that shows the possibility of a need for the researcher to present a clearer vision and explanation of the purpose of the NEE Data Tool as related to improving the learning-centered culture of the school. One teacher said:

> It has been hard to see a connection between feedback at the individual level and what is happening in the school culture. Learning is happening, and the culture is changing, but I'm not sure that it can be connected to the NEE data tool itself. It is not that they aren't necessarily related, but the connection isn't obvious the way things are currently implemented.

Summary of learning-centered culture findings. Overall the responses supported that the NEE Data Tool promoted a learning-centered culture. The researcher concluded the four items demonstrated that the NEE Data Tool promoted a learning-centered culture

at BHS during the 2018-2019 school year, and the three overarching themes that arose from the responses of working together, student-focused, and communicating honest feedback may be some of the most influential factors to most of the respondents. The responses about the need for a more clear connection of the purpose of the NEE Data Tool and the need for more student voice may need some additional focus and research to better promote a learning-centered culture at BHS for some of the teachers.

Conclusion

The responses were overwhelmingly supportive in both the quantitative and qualitative items about the perceptions of the teachers at BHS and how the NEE Data Tool promoted teacher growth, improved teacher effectiveness, and promoted building a learning-centered culture at BHS. The quantitative analysis, descriptive analysis, and findings showed an overwhelmingly total supportive percentage (85.5% of the responses overall strongly agreeing, agreeing, or somewhat agreeing) agreed with the 12 Likert survey items in all three parts of the research question as related to each survey item. The qualitative analysis and findings also showed an overwhelmingly supportive response (83.9% of the 280 total qualitative responses, coded as responses either strongly agreeing, agreeing, or somewhat agreeing) by the BHS teachers to the survey items with nine main themes arising from the open-ended items about the parts of the research question.

The top three teacher growth themes, which arose from the data, were: (a) value of feedback, (b) personal goal setting, and (c) teacher mindset as the top themes the BHS teachers perceived promoted teacher growth the most. The top three teacher effectiveness themes, which arose from the data, were: (a) high expectations, (b) focused direction, and (c) principal feedback. The top three learning-centered culture themes,

which arose from the data, were: (a) working together, (b) student-focused, and (c) honest feedback. Overall, the researcher learned through the coding of the qualitative items, analysis, and writing up the findings that the BHS teachers perceived that the NEE Data Tool does promote teacher growth due to the structured feedback, opportunities and expectations for teachers to do personal goal setting, and the overall growth mindset of the BHS teachers to embrace change with a determination to grow. Also, the researcher learned through the coding of the qualitative items, analysis, and writing up of the findings that the BHS teachers perceived that NEE Data Tool improved their effectiveness due to the high expectations of all of the teachers, the focused direction of all of the teachers working on the same goals, and the value of the principal feedback to help them be more effective. Lastly, the researcher learned through the coding of the qualitative items, analysis, and writing up of the findings that the BHS teachers perceived that NEE Data Tool promoted a learning-centered culture at BHS due to working together towards the same goals, being a student-focused, and through honest and effective feedback. The qualitative findings and themes that arose verified and reinforced the positive impact of the NEE Data Tool and the direction of the school improvement plan as related to the promoting teacher growth, improving teacher effectiveness, and the promotion of a learning-centered culture at BHS

Discussion

This case study intended to answer the research question regarding the impact of the NEE Data Tool on promoting teacher growth, improving teacher effectiveness, and the promotion of a learning-centered culture at BHS. The findings strongly supported that the NEE Data Tool promotes teacher growth, improves teacher effectiveness, and

promotes a learning-centered culture. The literature used for this study was consistent and aligned with the findings in this case study. For example, Cohen and Goldhaber, (2016) stated in their research that a goal in teacher growth and teacher effectiveness research "is developing more robust evidence around the quality of enactment of teaching practice (and corresponding score points) necessary to support student learning" (p. 380). The data collected in this study will add to the "robust evidence" to support improving student learning through the focused impact of the NEE Data Tool upon teacher growth, teacher effectiveness, and the learning-centered culture of BHS. Additionally, Cohen and Goldhaber concluded that, "teachers' responses to consequential observations will ultimately dictate the degree to which these measures support improvement in instructional quality" (p. 384). The researcher is encouraged by the data from this study as it shows an overwhelmingly supportive teacher perspective of the NEE Data Tool's impact and therefore hopefully will continue to support further improvement in the teacher growth, teacher effectiveness, and learning-centered culture at BHS.

Gill (2010) defined organizational learning as the means of "knowing how to know; knowing what you know; and knowing how to apply that knowledge to individual, team, organization, and community improvement" (p. xi). The case study was thorough, and the items asked to the teachers in the trenches of the school answered the first question of knowing how to know. The BHS teachers have firsthand knowledge of what the perception of the school is as related to the research question and answered from their perspectives about each part of the research question. The collection of the responses and analysis answered the second question of knowing what you know as the quantitative and qualitative responses showed overwhelming support for the impact of the NEE Data Tool

upon the three areas investigated. Lastly, through the development of the findings of the data collected the last question of knowing how to apply the knowledge gained to the organization was answered.

The responses provided ideas for going deeper and improving each of the areas even more for the students, teachers, school, and community. Gill (2010) also pointed out that in order for a learning culture to develop there needs to be "a culture that supports continuous learning for continuous improvement" (p. 28). The researcher concluded through the collection, analysis, and development of the findings that there are areas for improvement in each NEE Data Tool standards and indicators. Also, the findings pointed out some areas where the NEE Data Tool's purpose could be more clearly communicated and developed to further improve teacher growth, teacher effectiveness, and the learning-centered culture at BHS.

The portent moment for the researcher was during the writing of the findings section. The data collected showed that BHS is headed in the right direction in the areas identified in this study, but more importantly that the majority the teachers at BHS appreciate and value honest and purposeful feedback for promoting their growth, improving their effectiveness, and promoting a learning-centered culture at BHS. Additionally, that the follow-up feedback conversation between the principal and teachers is pertinent to all teachers and extremely important for the younger teachers or teachers new to the building for understanding the purposes and importance of improving teacher growth, teacher effectiveness, and the learning-centered culture of a school. Lastly, the data also pointed out the need for teachers to collaborate and have an open and effective working relationship with their administrators for them to be more successful in

the identified areas. Also that teachers want and an need to have input about the learning-centered culture of the school and about continuing effective practices, adjusting practices, and abandoning ineffective practices.

The findings are significant as they point to the positive value that the BHS teachers are having upon the students at BHS. Kane et al. (2013), in their analysis of the MET project explained that, "assigned teacher effectiveness is the prediction of the assigned teacher's value-added in that subject, based on value-added, student surveys, and observations in the prior school year" (p. 26). This is encouraging as the NEE Data Tool utilizes each of those aspects to help promote teacher growth, improve teacher effectiveness, and promote a learning-centered culture.

Implications

The researcher was initially worried about his role in the school and whether or not the teachers would respond to the survey and honestly provide their perceptions for this study. Immediately after the case study survey was sent out the responses quickly emerged for a total 80% participation rate, and provided rich and thick qualitative responses to the items. Leaders need to take to heart the outliers in any study, and for this study, there could be improvement in the areas of communicating the direct purpose of the NEE Data tool as related to the three areas of focus. Additionally, it might be beneficial to revisit components of the NEE Data Tool feedback model for purposeful face-to-face meetings with each teacher after an observation and restating the vision of a school as related to the role of their teacher evaluation tool to help promote teacher growth, improve teacher effectiveness, and promote a learning-centered school.

Specifically the next steps for research in the setting are the areas brought to light in the quantitative data and the qualitative responses. The quantitative data pointed out that NEE indicator 2.2 (The teacher sets and monitors student goals) was the lowest rated indicator as related to the research question and the researcher plans to research the possibility of switching to another indicator for the next academic year that would more effectively meet the needs of the students, teachers, and school to help promote teacher growth, improve teacher effectiveness, and promote a learning-centered school. Additionally, the researcher plans to take a deeper look at the following:

- To further promote teacher growth by providing more face-to-face feedback and target professional development for teachers specifically related to the NEE indicators.
- To further improve teacher effectiveness by researching teacher motivation techniques (for both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated teachers) and providing better communication and teacher collaboration.
- To further promote a learning-centered culture by focusing more on student growth and better communication of the vision as related to the NEE Data Tool.

The findings from this program evaluation case study will help school leaders, including the researcher, better meet the needs of teachers as related to the NEE Data Tool. This case study was extremely insightful for the researcher and will help springboard improved use of the NEE Data Tool in the future as related to promoting teacher growth, improving teacher effectiveness, and promoting a learning-centered culture at BHS.

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SECTION SIX:

SCHOLARLY PRACTIONER REFLECTION

Dissertation in Practice Reflection

In this section of my paper I will reflect on the Dissertation In Practice (DIP) experience. I will address the valuable information I learned in the University of Missouri Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis (ELPA) Cohort 9 Educational Leadership (Ed.D.) program, which helped shape and forever changed me. Specifically, I intend to answer how the DIP influenced my practice as an educational leader and how the DIP process influenced me as a scholar.

How has the Dissertation Influenced Your Practice as an Educational Leader?

Upon reflection of how the DIP has influenced my practice as an educational leader it is necessary to explain the context from which I developed and changed throughout this educational journey. When I started this DIP journey in 2013, I was an assistant principal and vocational coordinator at Marshfield High School. The dissertation was still a lofty personal and professional goal, but I truly had no understanding of how much this process would actually change me as an educational leader along the way. As the saying goes ignorance is bliss, and I simply did not know what I did not know about leadership and truly being an educational leader. The journey has been a lot longer than I initially thought, and actually much tougher and more fruitful than I ever thought was possible.

I started this journey by learning about my top five leadership strengths through The Gallup Organizations Strengths Finder tool (Rath, 2007, p. 1). My top five strengths are context, woo, communication, belief, and responsibility. I have to assume to some degree they were all strengths I must have already had as they were my top five strengths after taking the Strengths Finder assessment, but each have been defined more clearly and

expanded upon greatly throughout the past six years of the DIP journey. I will use each of my five identified strengths as the lens to frame my leadership development during my DIP journey.

My top strength is context, and Rath (2007) defines it as "People strong in the Context theme enjoy thinking about the past. They understand the present by researching its history" (p. 1). I have always needed to know the context for situations or the rest of story to get my bearings to understand what has happened so I can hopefully make develop a good plan for going forward. The DIP process and all that it has encompassed has truly helped to embrace the strength of context as a leader. I learned to not see it as burden of needing so much contextual information, but to see that by embracing this strength I can be more prepared for making important decisions and planning for positive change. This revelation has actually been a game changer for me. I gained a tremendous amount of confidence throughout the DIP process as it has truly helped me build a solid contextual understanding of leadership information and practical application tools for being a better leader. When I began the DIP coursework, I was not sure I could or wanted to lead a school and truly enjoyed my role as an assistant or, as I learned in the leadership studies, the role of managing. Through gaining confidence and an unbelievable amount of knowledge I simply could not stay in that role any longer and had to get out of comfort zone and do that for which I was prepared to do. Shortly after completing the oral and written comprehensive exams I applied for and was hired to be the principal at Buffalo High School (BHS) were I have served the past three years and have had the opportunity to use many of the leadership skills I have learned in the DIP process.

This is where and when my second top strength of woo had a chance to shine and truly be polished using many of my DIP experiences. Woo is defined by Rath (2007) as "People strong in the Woo theme love the challenge of meeting new people and winning them over. They derive satisfaction from breaking the ice and making a connection with another person" (p. 3). I embraced my strength of woo as the leader of BHS, in the Buffalo community, and leading some major changes to our BHS facilities through two different 2 million dollar construction projects in the first two years and assisting with a successful 11.4 million dollar tax levy bond issue passing this past year for a new Technical Center being built on the BHS campus. I have always liked to network and get to know new and interesting people, but the DIP process opened up a completely new world to me through the transformation learning process that the coursework and cohort model experience afforded. What I discovered was that by facing my fears with the confidence of the knowledge I had gained in the DIP process I could truly do much more as a servant leader than just help people, but truly step out and be myself with confidence as transformational leader.

My third top strength of communication has not always served me well as an educational leader as my sometimes-insatiable amount of words and talking has tended to wear on people over time. I have had more than one person tell me including my current boss that less is more and sometimes I simply just say too much. My passion for clearly communicating and learning as much as I possibly can about people and situations is what fuels this, but I had to learn to temper this strength which is actually helping me be a more effective listener and educational leader. Communication was defined by Rath (2007) as "People strong in the Communication theme generally find it easy to put their

thoughts into words. They are good conversationalists and presenters" (p. 1). This strength has developed throughout the doctoral program greatly as well as the cohort organization promotes learning about how to be an effective and complimentary team member through the many research teams, study groups, expert groups, work teams, and presentations. I have learned through the DIP how to be a much better communicator and more importantly how to effectively communicate within teams of peers.

My fourth top strength is belief and just like the other strengths mentioned this was not a shock to me upon learning it was one of my top strengths. I have always tried to be purposeful in all that I do and have attributed it to an inner drive to succeed balanced with my Christian faith and treating people the way I would want to be treated in all that I do as leader. Belief was defined by Rath (2007) as "People strong in the Belief theme have certain core values that are unchanging. Out of these values emerges a defined purpose for their life" (p. 1). I have learned through the DIP process and that I have to stay true to who I am in my core beliefs and not try to be somebody or something I am not. I learned to be comfortable with who I am created to be and to focus on being purposeful for goal setting, planning, and goal attainment as an educational leader with those on my educational teams as a servant leader. Northouse (2013) states that "Servant leaders put followers first, empower them, and help them develop their full personal capacities [and] lead in ways that serve the greater good of the organization community, and society at large" (p. 219). The DIP process has given me many opportunities to be and learn more about how to be a more effective servant educational leader that has helped me and my school grow through the belief that there is always a right and good

way to improve the educational experience for our students, staff, and community members.

My fifth top strength is responsibility and just like the others it made sense as I have a strong desire and need to responsible in all that I do as an educational leader. Responsibility was defined by Rath (2007) that "People strong in the Responsibility theme take psychological ownership of what they say they will do. They are committed to stable values such as honesty and loyalty." The biggest challenge to me as an educational leader has been opening my mind to how much responsibility and duties I truly can take on and be successful at any given time. This need for learning how to balance all of my responsibilities came through learning how to face my fear of failure that was holding me back prior to the DIP process and even throughout it. A great example of this was how long it took me to successfully complete my dissertation proposal and work toward completing my dissertation. I am a perfectionist by nature and with the need for extreme amounts of context I have an uncanny ability to procrastinate if I do not feel like I can complete a task successfully or do not have enough information to make the right decision or produce a great product. This was an area I had to break through to get back on track after changing jobs, taking on more duties as a leader, and eventually the president of the Southwest region of the Missouri Association of Secondary Principals. I have a tendency to take on big roles without reservation and then find myself overwhelmed when they all start overlapping and interfering with each other. I had to let go of a few responsibilities this past year, define days and dates to go to dissertation boot camps at MU, and get back into the practice of reading, thinking, and writing weekly to push through my mental roadblocks to completing my DIP.

How has the Dissertation Process Influenced you as a Scholar?

My DIP scholarly journey included but was not limited to the completion of the two years of DIP coursework, summers on campus, research teams, study groups, successful passing of the written and oral comprehensive exams, proposal writing, successful proposal hearing, IRB approval, data collection, analysis of data, and dissertation writing to prepare for a successful DIP defense. As mentioned Dr. MacGregor has been a great help and resource throughout this entire DIP process. She drilled into my head the need to read, think, and write, and that scholarly discipline served me well not only in the DIP, but also in my personal and professional life as a scholar. Instead of rushing into making decisions or making policy decisions about complex issues, I now make time to research the topic I am dealing with, take time to process the information gathered, and create a plan or process for making the decision. I have also learned to use the idea of peer review for complex policies or vision casting as a leader by reaching out to my fellow principals and scholarly peers to share ideas and ask for advice. I have found that if I chose to open this door of shared leadership and ask for ideas that many times this leads to my peers feeling comfortable to bounce their issues and ideas off of me as well. I have found that both ends of the peer review roles has great benefits and helps me catch many errors prior to sending out documents, policies, handbooks, and building improvement plans and goals for each school year.

My writing and communication skills have greatly improved as well throughout the DIP process that helped me be a better scholar and leader. I find that I embrace the need to research and use data to help make decisions and let the data drive the decisions much better after going through the DIP process. I have become a lover of charts,

spreadsheets, and correlation studies due to the scholarly process I have learned in my DIP journey. I plan to keep growing as a scholar and write journal articles past the DIP process to help me to continue to grow educationally and to add to the educational scholarly world.

Conclusion

The DIP process afforded me great opportunities to learn and grow as both an educational leader but also as a scholar. I learned to embrace my strengths and weaknesses so that I can grow and learn from every experience and situation. I know it sounds cliché, but I am truly a different person then when I first began this process. I gained a more mature confidence in who I am as a person, scholar, and educational leader, an unimaginable amount of important information, and found that I can do way more than I ever thought possible as a reader, thinker, and writer.

Finally, I need to give credit to all of the wonderful and encouraging professionals in my MSU Cohort 9 group and especially my advisor Dr. MacGregor who have never given up on me, but have pushed, prodded, and encouraged me to embrace all that I have learned and experienced throughout the DIP process to be the best person, leader, and scholar I can be. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to be part of the doctoral program and will be forever changed for the better for it. Levi (2014) states "Leaders provide direction, motivate team members, and ensure the team stays on course. Leaders help develop the hybrid culture that unites a diverse team" (p. 276). I plan to continue to use the information and practitioner approaches I learned to keep growing as a servant leader to help positively impact change in my home, school, community, state, nation, and in the educational world.

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Appendix A

Case Study Informed Consent Form

Consider carefully before deciding to participate in this research.

Description: I am an EdD student at the University of Missouri – Columbia in the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis program, and I am surveying teachers at Buffalo High School regarding their perceptions of the effectiveness of the Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE) Data Tool on teacher growth, effectiveness, and learning-centered culture at Buffalo High School.

Purpose of the research: To determine the impact of the NEE Data Tool the survey will ask you of your experiences with and perceptions associated with your participation in the NEE Data Tool evaluations.

What you will do in this research: If you choose to participate, you will take a short survey about your experiences, perceptions, and challenges regarding your NEE Data Tool observations.

Time required: The survey will take approximately 10 minutes.

Risks: No risks are anticipated and your anonymity will be protected.

Benefit: To assess the effectiveness of the NEE Data Tools. The data collected will improve teacher evaluation in your school.

Confidentiality: Your responses to the survey questions and your identity will be kept anonymous. At no time will your identity be revealed to me or anyone else. The data collected may be included in my dissertation in practice or other later publications but only in aggregate form.

Participation and withdrawal: Your participation is voluntary, and you may refuse to participate by not taking the survey or withdraw from the survey at any time.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant: Please contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) at irb@missouri.edu or by phone at 573-882-3181.

To contact the researcher: If you have any questions, comments or concerns about this researcher, please contact: Keith White, 417-540-4971, keith.white@bisonpride.org. You may also contact the faculty member supervising this work: Dr. Cynthia MacGregor, MU-MSU EdD Advisor, 417-836-6046, cmacgregor@missouristate.edu.

Agreement: This research project has been sufficiently explained, and I agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw any time while completing the survey. I understand I do not need to answer all of the questions on the survey.

Click on the link to the survey to participate.

Close this window if you choose not to participate

Appendix B

Survey Questions

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR EVALUATIONS: IMPACT OF THE NETWORK FOR EDUCATOR EFFECTIVENESS (NEE) DATA TOOL ON TEACHER GROWTH, EFFECTIVENESS, AND LEARNING-CENTERED CULTURE IN A MISSOURI RURAL PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL.

1. **Please respond to the following three items regarding the use of NEE Standard 2 (Understands and Encourages Student Learning, Growth, and Development) and specifically indicator 2.2 (The teacher sets and monitors student goals). The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data tool for this standard....helped me to be a more effective teacher.**
   Mark only one oval.
   - ◯ Strongly Disagree
   - ◯ Disagree
   - ◯ Slightly Disagree
   - ◯ Slightly Agree
   - ◯ Agree
   - ◯ Strongly Agree

2. **The use of NEE Standard 2 (Understands and Encourages Student Learning, Growth, and Development) and specifically indicator 2.2 (The teacher sets and monitors student goals). The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data tool for this standard....helped me grow as a teacher.**
   Mark only one oval.
   - ◯ Strongly Disagree
   - ◯ Disagree
   - ◯ Slightly Disagree
   - ◯ Slightly Agree
   - ◯ Agree
   - ◯ Strongly Agree

3. **The use of NEE Standard 2 (Understands and Encourages Student Learning, Growth, and Development) and specifically indicator 2.2 (The teacher sets and monitors student goals). The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data tool for this standard….helped our school have a more learning-centered culture.**
   Mark only one oval.

   - ◯ Strongly Disagree
   - ◯ Disagree
   - ◯ Slightly Disagree
   - ◯ Slightly Agree
   - ◯ Agree
   - ◯ Strongly Agree

4. **Please respond to the following three items regarding the use of NEE Standard 2 (Understands and Encourages Student Learning, Growth, and Development) and specifically indicator 2.5 (The teacher builds on students' prior experiences, learning strengths, and needs). The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data tool for this standard….helped me to be a more effective teacher.**
   Mark only one oval.

   - ◯ Strongly Disagree
   - ◯ Disagree
   - ◯ Sightly Disagree
   - ◯ Slightly Agree
   - ◯ Agree
   - ◯ Strongly Agree

5. **The use of NEE Standard 2 (Understands and Encourages Student Learning, Growth, and Development) and specifically indicator 2.5 (The teacher builds on students' prior experiences, learning strengths, and needs). The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data tool for this standard…..helped me grow as a teacher.**
   Mark only one oval.

   - ◯ Strongly Disagree
   - ◯ Disagree
   - ◯ Slightly Disagree
   - ◯ Slightly Agree
   - ◯ Agree
   - ◯ Strongly Agree

6. **The use of NEE Standard 2 (Understands and Encourages Student Learning, Growth, and Development) and specifically indicator 2.5 (The teacher builds on students' prior experiences, learning strengths, and needs). The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data tool for this standard....helped our school have a more learning-centered culture.**
   Mark only one oval.

   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Slightly Disagree
   - Slightly Agree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

7. **Please respond to the following three items regarding the use of NEE Standard 5 (Creates a Positive Classroom Learning Environment) and specifically indicator 5.1 (The teacher uses motivation strategies that affectively engage students). The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data tool for this standard….helped me to be a more effective teacher.**
   Mark only one oval.

   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Slightly Disagree
   - Slightly Agree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

8. **The use of NEE Standard 5 (Creates a Positive Classroom Learning Environment) and specifically indicator 5.1 (The teacher uses motivation strategies that affectively engage students). The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data tool for this standard…..helped me grow as a teacher.**
   Mark only one oval.

   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Slightly Disagree
   - Slightly Agree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

9. **The use of NEE Standard 5 (Creates a Positive Classroom Learning Environment) and specifically indicator 5.1 (The teacher uses motivation strategies that affectively engage students). The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data tool for this standard….helped our school have a more learning-centered culture.**
   Mark only one oval.

   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Slightly Disagree
   - Slightly Agree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

10. **Please respond to the following three items regarding the use of NEE Standard 7 (Uses Student Assessment Data to Analyze and Modify Instruction) and specifically indicator 7.4 (The teacher monitors the effect of instruction on the whole class and individual learning). The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data tool for this standard….helped me to be a more effective teacher.**
    Mark only one oval.

    - Strongly Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Slightly Disagree
    - Slightly Agree
    - Agree
    - Strongly Agree

11. **The use of NEE Standard 7 (Uses Student Assessment Data to Analyze and Modify Instruction) and specifically indicator 7.4 (The teacher monitors the effect of instruction on the whole class and individual learning). The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data tool for this standard....helped me grow as a teacher.**
    Mark only one oval.

    - Strongly Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Slightly Disagree
    - Slightly Agree
    - Agree
    - Strongly Agree

12. **The use of NEE Standard 7 (Uses Student Assessment Data to Analyze and Modify Instruction) and specifically indicator 7.4 (The teacher monitors the effect of instruction on the whole class and individual learning). The classroom observations I received this school year using the NEE Data tool for this standard….helped our school have a more learning-centered culture.**
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Strongly Disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Slightly Disagree
- ◯ Slightly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly Agree

13. **How well do the NEE indicators focus on the important aspects of quality instruction?**

14. **How well does the NEE observations promote teacher growth?**

15. **How useful is the NEE evaluator feedback for your effectiveness as a teacher?**

16. **How much do the NEE indicator "look fors" help you as a teacher?**

17. **How could the NEE feedback loop be improved for you as a teacher?**

18. **Would a comment section in the NEE observations be valuable to you as a teacher?**

19. **How well does your principal/evaluators communicate feedback about your observations using the comment sections?**

20. **What do you think should be changed about the NEE evaluation tool to make it more beneficial to improve teacher growth and student learning in the classroom?**

21. **In your opinion, what impact has the use of the NEE data tool had on the learning-culture of our school?**

22. **In your opinion, how could teacher effectiveness be improved in our school?**

23. **In your opinion, how could teacher growth be improved in our school?**

24. **In your opinion, how could we improve our learning culture in our school?**

VITA

Dorian "Keith" White is the principal at Buffalo High School (BHS) in Buffalo, Missouri and just finished his 21st year in education. He has served in this role for three years. Prior to being the principal at BHS, he worked as an assistant principal (AP) and vocational coordinator (VC) at Marshfield High School (MHS) for six years. Prior to being the AP and VC at MHS, he worked for six years as an assistant principal, A+ Coordinator (AC), and At-Risk Coordinator (ARC) at Joplin High School (JHS). Prior to being the AP, AC, and ARC at BHS, he taught social studies and coached wrestling, football, and track. Keith holds a Bachelor's of Science in Secondary Social Science Education from Southwest Baptist University; a Master's of Education in Elementary and Secondary Administration from Williams Woods University; and upon a successful defense of the present dissertation will meet the remaining requirements for a 2019 completion of his Doctorate of Education in Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Missouri – Columbia. Keith resides with his wife Angela and three children Colton, Conner, and Cicely in Conway, Missouri on their family farm. In his free time, he enjoys serving as Deacon in his church, spending time with his family, working on the farm, hunting, fishing, learning, and doing DIY projects.