A Study of Secondary Teachers' Perception of the TKES Evaluation System

Kevin C. Trobaugh

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A study of secondary teachers’ perception of the TKES evaluation system

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Kennesaw State University

2019

Dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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Dedication

There is no other choice for a dedication of this work, then my family. It is their sacrifice that made all of this possible, and without them I would not have been able to reach this achievement. To my wife, Tara, the long nights and long weekends of work are done, and that time belongs to you again. Thank you for all that you did to help make it all possible and provide me the time to work. To my children, Nathan, Teagan, and Rowan, yes, I am done with grad school work. I don’t think that I will ever be able to express to you how much your great attitudes, and excitement, about my achievements mean to me. While I am so proud of what this document represents, it will never equal the pride that I have in you, always remember that. Without my family and what they gave up, I would never have started this degree, and most assuredly never have finished.
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Finally, I would also like to extend a thank you to my own personal learning community, better known as The Kings. These men have made me a better teacher and a better man, they have provided numerous readings of drafts, and invaluable time listening to and advising my work. Brad Biggers, Chris Dunn, Luke Glassett, Seth Winstead, and Tod Witman; thank you for your friendship, work, and encouragement.
Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the perception of secondary (9-12) teachers on the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System, or TKES. The Teacher Keys Effectiveness System is a statewide system of teacher evaluation that is used for all public school teachers in Georgia. The literature examines current system of evaluations, current teacher attitudes towards evaluations, the impact of teacher perceptions of evaluation systems, and feedback. This mixed method study uses interviews and a survey to ascertain those perceptions and compare them to the stated purpose of the TKES system. The teachers in the study expressed a generally negative feeling towards the evaluation system. Not towards the system as a whole, but to its implication for their teaching practice.

Keywords: Teacher Evaluations, Teacher Perceptions, Secondary Education, TKES
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Chapter 1: Introduction

With 40 minutes left in the 95 minute period the principal, Mr. Atkins, walks into Mr. Pilot’s classroom. He does his best to not disturb the class as he finds a place to sit, while Mr. Pilot continues his lesson. Mr. Atkins turns on his device where he has the ten standards, developed by the state, that are used to evaluate teachers. He looks around the room at the students and watches Mr. Pilot continue his lesson, while making notes on his device. Twenty five minutes, later the principal finds Mr. Pilot’s lesson plans and reviews them. He thanks the teacher and leaves the room. Sometime later, maybe that day, maybe several days Mr. Pilot gets an automatic notification that his observation has been entered into the state system. Because this was a formative evaluation he has been rated on all 10 of the standards. He receives a three out of four, what he has been told is the target, on all areas with the exception of one. On lesson planning he receives a two out of four. The principal notes in two sentences what areas the teacher is expected to show in his lesson plans. There is no other conversation, there is no informal aid given to Mr. Pilot in order to aid his work on his lesson plans. He is given two sentences of feedback and expected to improve his work before the next observation. The data generated from these observations will be used at the end of the year to establish the teaches summative score, a score will be 50% of the larger score that will determine if Mr. Pilot gets to renew his teaching certificate in five years. A principal visiting a classroom with a standardized from and evaluating all teachers on the same standards is how 95% of observations are done in the United States, 95% according to Doherty & Jacobs, as cited in Wind, Tsai, Grajeda, & Bergin (2018).

Statement of Problem

I admit that I do not remember anything about teacher evaluations that occurred, or did not occur, when I was student. By the time that I entered the teaching profession in the early 2000s, education was under the microscope of No Child Left Behind. The evaluation systems
that I was part of early in my career consisted of a pre-conference, scheduled evaluation, and post-conference. The intention of the pre-conference was to allow for questions about the observation or the rating scale to be addressed. Additionally, the teacher or administrator could bring up specific areas of concern to be noted during the observation. After the scheduled observation, the teacher and the administrator would have a post-conference where the ratings or any previously noted areas were addressed. My own experience with this system was that my administrators were no more interested in the process than the teachers, seeing the conferences as formalities; as long as I was showing satisfactory progress, then the observations were simply something to check off. There are anecdotal stories of teachers that pulled out their best lessons, the ones that are far superior to the lesson plans used their everyday routine. These lessons are what some would call a “staged production” for the administrator (Johnson, 1990, p. 273).

Future governmental intervention in education such as the Race to the Top provided new incentives, primarily financial, for states and school systems to reform their teacher evaluation systems. In Georgia this reform became the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) which was implemented state-wide in 2012, with a stated purpose of “supporting the continuous growth and development” of teachers (GADOE, 2012, p. 8) by improving the practice of teaching (GADOE, 2013; GADOE, 2016; GADOE, 2017; GADOE, 2018). TKES provides teachers the opportunity for teachers to “refine their practice” (GADOE, 2016; GADOE, 2017; GADOE, 2018). It is set up and described as a system that is formative in nature and intended to aid the teacher in the process of becoming better through specific standards and feedback. My experience in the TKES system has been one where I have received very little feedback on how I am meeting, or not meeting the standards, and even less on how to improve my teaching practice. I am given advice on how to improve my ratings on the system, but I am not sure how that makes me a better teacher.
Am I the only one who does not know this? Do most other teachers find that the evaluation process is helpful and valuable? Do they receive feedback that informs their practice as a teacher? Perhaps there are teachers that find the current TKES system is beneficial to their teaching and to their improvement as teachers. This study seeks to know how teachers perceive their evaluations within the TKES system. Is it perceived by teachers as a formative process that improves their practice or do teachers view their jobs as dependent upon the outcome?

If the TKES system is designed to make teachers better, than teachers’ perception of the system- will make the difference in its effectiveness (Wolf, 1973; Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; Datnow & Castellano, 2000). This study seeks to begin to fill a gap in the current literature that is specific to the TKES system. If teachers see the TKES system as a formative process, then the process is working to improve teaching and the state can seek ways to improve upon shortcomings of the current system. If teachers see the system as summative and their jobs are dependent upon these evaluations, then TKES is failing at its stated purpose and must be reevaluated at its base level to determine where it is failing. The TKES system is attempting to use one evaluation tool for both of these purposes and as Marzano (2012) notes, evaluation tools that are used to develop teachers will look different from those that are used to assess teachers for retention.

**Purpose of Study**

The literature shows that teachers have a complicated relationship with evaluations; yet they are an essential aspect of the evaluation system, and teacher perceptions will be essential to its success or failure (Clipa, 2015; Datnow & Castellano, 2000; Hopkins et. al., 2016; Johnson, 1990; Peterson, 1985; Tuytens & Devos, 2009). Improving teachers and their teaching has become a primary concern for not only policymakers but administrators and teachers (Reddy, Dudek, Kettler, Kurz, & Peters, 2016). In order to find this improvement, the need for further research has also been well established by the literature. Wolf (1973) found that there is
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a need to understand teachers’ feelings about evaluations.

Jiang, Sporte, & Leppescu (2015), doing research on the evaluation system in Chicago, urged further research into teacher perceptions. It has been found that by measuring teacher perceptions, the findings can help schools and systems analyze the problems created by evaluations and provide solutions (Tuytens & Devos, 2009). However, there have been few studies about teachers and their interactions with evaluation policies (Smylie, 2014). Sheppard (2013) examined teacher and principal perceptions in Georgia, but that work was done on a previous evaluation system.

According to Ruffini (2014), stakeholders, including teachers, understanding and valuing the evaluation system is the best way to ensure the sustainability of any system. This study is not intended to measure the TKES as an evaluation tool, in relation to its stated purpose, but to determine the perception of the system by teachers, in relation to the stated purpose. In Georgia, there are no studies that have been done to measure teacher attitudes or perceptions about the current evaluation system.

Research Question

The research question guiding this study: How do Georgia secondary (9-12) teachers perceive the Teacher Keys Evaluation System (TKES)?

Significance of Study

Smylie (2014) asserted that there were very few studies that looked in the specifics teacher evaluations and teachers’ experiences with them. Since then there have been studies done such as Jiang et. al. (2015) and Callahan (2015), among others that have examined evaluations and teachers’ role. The topic of teacher perceptions, especially as they relate to teacher evaluations is a growing area of research. Those studies indicated that more research into these topics was needed. Hirsch (2018) examined teachers’ emotional reactions to the TKES system, however there is currently a lack of research into teacher perceptions at this level in the state of
Georgia as to teachers’ perceptions of the evaluation system. As the literature review will show, how teachers perceive the system will affect the outcome of the evaluation system. On a more specific level a school or school system, would benefit from knowing how their teachers perceive the evaluation system. Once that is established then, changes can be made to move the system in line with the school or school systems purpose of evaluations. This research can be used, along with other studies with similar interests, at the state level to determine if the TKES system is meeting the intended goals and how it needs to be adjusted to better serve that purpose.

**Researcher relationship to topic**

While I have had my leadership certification for over a decade I have found my desire to become an administrator has been absent. As I think about the future of my educational career and I consider what I may want to do that is outside of the classroom, I find that if I am not teaching students I want to help teachers. Therefore, when I was exploring topics for this study I wanted to examine a subject that would be beneficial to teachers in the future. Having been a teacher for nearly twenty years, in two states, I have been a part of several evaluation systems that have played different roles in my development as a teacher. The amount of recent research on all sides of the teacher evaluation discussion shows that the future of evaluations is far from certain. It is my hope that this research can specifically help teachers in my state.

**Definitions of relevant terms**

Within this study several abbreviations are used frequently. While these are identified and explained within the work they are also identified here for ease of reference.

**Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES).** The system used to evaluate public school teachers, at all levels, in the state of Georgia.

**Teacher Evaluation Experiences Survey- Teacher Form (TEES-T).** Survey developed by Reddy, Dudek, Kettler, Kurz, & Peters (2016) used in this study to gather quantitative data.

**Georgia Department of Education (GADOE).** Responsible for determining and maintaining
the curriculum and educational standards for the state of Georgia. Also develops, administers, and reports state wide standardized testing. Developed and administers the TKES evaluation system.

**Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GAPSC).** Responsible for the issuance, upgrade and renewal of teaching certificates in the state of Georgia.

**Teacher Effectiveness Measure (TEM)** This generates a score based on TKES evaluation scores, professional development, and student growth. This is managed and used by the GAPSC to determine teaching certificate renewal.

**Qualtrics.** Cloud based software that allows for the collection, analysis, and sharing of data. Used in this study to build, distribute, collect, and analyze data from the Teacher Evaluation Experiences Survey (TEES-T).

**Atlas.ti 8.** This is qualitative data analysis software (QDAS)

**Conceptual Framework**

Ravitch & Riggin (2017) describe a conceptual framework as the reason for a study and the rigor behind the study. Creswell (2013) says that a phenomenological study describes the meaning of several individuals “lived experiences” of a phenomena. Each teacher in a classroom has an experience that is unique to them yet at the same time is the same experience that every teacher has, an observation. In Georgia, teachers are observed using the TKES system, therefore, sharing in an event that is happening to them, while the observations are completed using the same instrument that the Georgia Department of Education states will be used to make better teachers. The current research states that the perception of teachers will, in the end, determine the success or failure of any system (Tuytens & Devos, 2009; Kauchak, Peterson, & Driscol, 1985). For this reason, this study seeks to find the perception that teachers have about this observation tool. Phenomenological research draws heavily from the works of Moustakas (1994) and van Manen (1990) who draw much of their philosophical work from
Edmund Husserl. The rigor referred to earlier, is provided through a mixed-method design that is best described by Leavy (2017) as a nested design where the quantitative findings are nested within the qualitative findings. This type of research is described by Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner (2007) as qualitative dominant where the addition of quantitative data are likely to benefit most research. This study ultimately falls to Creswell (2014) and his description of a convergent parallel mixed method design where the data from each of the two types are collected at the same time and then analyzed and compared to make judgements about confirmation or disconfirmation of findings.

**Organization of Study**

Chapter one has presented the introduction, the purpose of the study, research question, the significance of the study, the relationship of the researcher to the topic, description of relevant terms, and the conceptual framework. Chapter two presents the review of related literature. The review examines the current system of teacher evaluation, purpose of teacher evaluations, the perceptions and attitudes of teachers towards the current systems, why teacher
perception matters, and feedback that teachers receive from evaluations. Chapter three presents the methodology and procedures used in the research. The findings of the research are contained in chapter four. While chapter 5 contains the discussion of the findings, implications of the findings, and recommendations for future research.
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Current Literature

A search among academic publications would turn up a very large number of works on the subject of teacher evaluation. Studies that are usually, like this one, focused in on some particular aspect of the process, or how evaluations interact with something else. There are major works from organizations like the New Teacher Project (Weisberg 2009) that examine multiple systems across the United States. Studies such as Jiang et. al. (2015) examine teacher evaluations in large systems like Chicago.

This study helps to fill a void in the current research that is specific to teacher perceptions. This specific area is noted in other studies as a need for research and is a growing research area. Since the beginning of the research for this study several works have been completed that examine teacher perceptions (Beaulieu, 2018; Derrington & Martinez, 2019; Puckett, 2019; Tuma, Hamilton, & Tsai, 2019). Beaulieu (2018) found in a quantitative study of 139 teachers that teachers felt that feedback from walkthrough observations had a positive impact on instructional practice and student learning. In their study, Derrington and Martinez (2019) surveyed teachers in east Tennessee. The study examined the evaluation system five years after initial implementation. It found that the system examined leans too heavily on the principal and is not providing teachers learning opportunities. Their findings support this study by stating that supervisions by a principal are to help teachers grow professionally, a formative approach. However the study shows that two-thirds of their respondents find their evaluation system emphasizes a summative nature over a formative. Additionally, the study notes that since formative evaluations take time that the evaluation will likely devolve into something that principals have complete, among all of their other responsibilities. Puckett’s (2019) examination of the Midwestern teacher and student advancement program indicated that the teachers interviewed all noted that the evaluation program in some way positively impacted
their teaching practice. The quotes from teachers in the study show that this impact comes mainly, if not totally, from the rubric used in the process. Puckett continued to note that these same teachers also indicated the evaluation system also increased their stress levels. Tuma et. al. (2019) examined data from the American teacher panel survey. They indicate that the data from this shows that regular feedback was more helpful in improving instructional practice, teacher perceptions were associated with frequency of feedback and observations, and teachers were more likely to see a system as fair if they believe the system is in place to promote teacher growth.

This study also adds to the body of work from researchers like Deani (2019) that examines evaluation systems related to the Race to the Top program initiated by the federal government. TKES was implemented as part of that program in 2012.

TKES as an evaluation system is also a growing body of work. Croft, Roberts & Stenhouse (2015) used TKES and Georgia as an example of education reform using testing and evaluations are creating an environment where the curriculum is narrowed due to teachers teaching to the test. They insist that teachers no longer standby and wait for this to pass, as many new initiatives in the past have, but instead to stand up and resist. This focus both nationally and in Georgia carry, according the authors, a cost both financially and psychologically for teachers, students, and families. Stults’ (2015) dissertation examined principal’s role as an implementer of policies, such as TKES. It found that the role of the principal as an implementer of policy is one that requires the leader to delegate and lead. It also noted that there is a role for all stakeholders to play in the process but that ultimately the final answers and decisions lie with the principal. Finally, Hirsch’s (2018) dissertation examined teachers’ emotional reactions to the TKES evaluation system. That study found, as did this study, that the time administrators spent doing evaluations and the feedback that was provided for teachers were essential elements of the TKES process. Hirsch’s work examined specifically
the emotional reaction that the subjects were having a result of the process, not the perceptions of the system.

While this study finds that it is part of this growing body teacher perceptions, race to the top, and TKES as system in Georgia. The study finds itself uniquely placed as the only work that examines teacher perceptions of the TKES system in Georgia.

**Current System of Evaluation**

The current system of teacher evaluations is one that is far from uniform across the country, but the relevant literature reveals that the systems seem to have many commonalities. This current system of visits by an administrator using a standardized measurement tool are perceived by some teachers as being completed so that systems can say that something, in terms of teacher evaluation, is being done (Johnson, 1990). This system is dominated by the process of the observations, the outside influences, and the purposes of the evaluations. The observations are being done by an administrator, usually a principal that is using some type of standardized form (Johnson, 1990; Hammond, Wise, & Pease, 1983; Peterson, 2004; Wind, et. al. 2018). These visits are often infrequent, and the use of the standardized forms does not allow for the differentiation of the teachers (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015; Weisberg, et al, 2009; Wind, et. al., 2018). These infrequent visits are concerning for teachers because of the formulaic nature of the visits (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015). Teachers say that in these visits some observers are more concerned with entering the information about the visit into the collection device, a tablet or something similar, in real time than they are about actually observing the teacher (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015). All of this focus on the form and entering of information causes procedures of observation to be more important than the content (Johnson, 1990). Even if the observation instrument that is being used is effective, standardized or not, research has shown that there is no method that is “unvaryingly successful” (Hammond, et al, 2014, p. 308).
Purpose of Teacher Evaluation Systems

The purpose of teacher evaluation systems is twofold: summative evaluation used for retention and formative evaluation used for improvement (Bradley-Levine, Romano, Reichart, 2017). One tool being used for both is ineffective and, in practice, at odds with each other (Johnson 1990; Marzano 2012). Teachers treat this system not as a way to improve but instead as stressful and not to be trusted (Wolf 1973; Goe, et. al. 2012; Hopkins et al. 2016). Therefore, when the observations are being conducted, the lesson turns from something that could be used by the teacher for personal growth through feedback into an attempt to meet the perceived needs of the evaluation instrument (Johnson, 1990). Due to this distrust of the system and how much is riding on these summative assessments, teachers will use this opportunity to try and impress the observer or disguise a weakness. There is also a fear to show innovation in the lessons, and teachers simply put on a performance in hopes that they are meeting the criteria of the evaluation (Hopkins et al., 2016; Johnson, 1990).

Weisberg, et. al. (2009) indicated that the current system is not doing either purpose very well. In that research, nearly 75% of teachers got no specific feedback about their teaching and less than half, 45%, of those teachers that had an area identified as needing development, reported that they received any useful support to improve. In fact, there is no one formula for how to determine who is a good teacher, so there is no one formula for what should be included in an evaluation (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015). Therefore, if teacher evaluation is going to try and do both, evaluations for performance should be separated from evaluations that determine job status (Johnson, 1990). The measurement of teachers and the development of teachers are different and carry different implications (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015).

Due to the way the teachers will react to the purpose of the evaluation, and the implication that these purposes should not be in the same instrument no one system can effectively do both. (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015)
Teachers Perceptions and Attitudes Towards the Current System

Clipa (2015) shows that teachers do not hate the evaluation system but instead see it as a necessary evil. This finding is further boosted by the work of Kauchak et al. (1985) which determined that teachers do not have problems when principals visit their classroom. What does concern teachers is when the evaluator is someone that they perceive as not knowledgeable. This is especially true of secondary teachers who are being evaluated by someone who is not an expert in their subject area, and it is not reasonable to expect that the principal could be an expert in all areas (Kauchak, et al. 1985; Peterson 2004). Ultimately despite teacher’s willingness to have the principal in their room, they view these visits as not actually for their growth (Kauchak, et. al., 1985), and believe it has no impact on their teaching (Clipa 2015).

Teachers are part of the evaluation system in that they are the subject of the evaluation system. Some teachers do place emphasis on the results; they feel their careers are on the line (Wolf 1973). Teachers place self-esteem and self-fulfillment on their jobs. Thus, when an evaluation tells them they are not doing their job well, there is fear (Tuytens & Devos, 2009). Teachers feel they are participating in a system that places stress on them because they are not in control and that the system causes them emotional and professional damage (Hopkins et al., 2016). The systems of evaluation that teachers do place value in have two items in common, good supervisors and teachers who get to set their own goals (Johnson, 1990). In the end though, Smylie (2014) discovered that only 25 % of teachers felt that their most recent evaluation useful, regardless of system.

Why the Teachers’ Perception Matters

There is a vast amount of research, including some that is used for this study, that discuss how evaluations should be built to break apart these dual roles of summative and formative evaluation. These studies give specific suggestions for how this new system should be established and carried out (Bradley-Levine et. al, 2017; Darling-Hammond et. al., 2012;
Goe et al., 2012; Jiang et al., 2015; Marzano, 2012; Smylie, 2014; Weisberg et al., 2009). That discussion, however, ignores the teachers themselves, and research has shown that they play a significant role in these changes.

When a new evaluation policy is implemented, it is important to take into account the different stakeholder groups, including teachers (Tuytens & Devos, 2009). The ability of teachers to understand the new system is critical (Datnow & Castellano, 2000). If teachers find that their ideologies are in line with the change, then they will typically support the change; however, if they find that their interests or held beliefs are threatened, they will resist change (Datnow & Castellano, 2000). In fact, teachers will sometimes simply ignore the information that does not coincide with their beliefs (Datnow & Castellano, 2000). On the other hand, if the teachers see the evaluation policy as needed they will be more like to act upon the feedback they receive (Fullan, 2001). Reddy, et. al. (2016) indicates that the ultimate success of evaluation systems depends on how those that are affected by the policy interpret it and how they interact with it (Wolf, 1973; Berman & McLaughlin, 1978). Datnow & Castellano (2000) found that the attitude of teachers will have an impact on their ability to profit from the evaluation system, and Hammond, et al (2014) concluded that if teachers perceive that the system is soundly based and results in rewards or sanctions, there will be increased efficacy for teachers. The literature shows that teachers’ perceptions matter and could determine the success or failure of evaluation systems (Tuytens & Devos, 2009; Kauchak, et al. 1985).

Feedback

As the discussion of evaluations becomes a more popular topic of research so does the investigation of feedback as part of that process. There is a vast amount of research into feedback and teacher evaluations. Tuytens & Devos (2016) found that the feedback that teachers are receiving from administration will have a significant effect on the school and development of teachers. Cherasaro, Brodersen, Reale, & Yanoski (2016) found that the
teachers will respond to feedback that is given to them by evaluators that they feel are credible. They also suggested that feedback to teachers be specific in ways to improve content and subject knowledge.

Firestone (2014) shows that the feedback that teachers receive can, but are not limited to, providing recognition for performance or providing assistance for growth. Stronge and Tucker (2003) found that recognition of noteworthy performance should be a part of feedback. There is a large amount of research both past and new that looks into feedback, teacher evaluations, and its effect on teacher growth and practice. Firestone (2014, p.105) also indicates that what teachers need is “fine grained feedback that does not encourage gaming the system, and such feedback seems unlikely to come from the state.” Stronge & Tucker (2003) find that feedback that is meaningful, through good evaluation of teachers, can lead to significant improvement in classroom performance.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Worldview
As a teacher of social science, more specifically world history and economics I find myself examining problems from multiple perspectives. In fact these two subjects require looking for solutions to problems with different methods and different approaches. I find that my formal training as a historian and my experience of teaching these subjects has caused me to develop a worldview that shapes not only the way that I approach research but has an influence on the topics that I would select for research.

I find that my initial approach to research is that of a pragmatist. The pragmatist, according to Cherryholmes (1992) and Holmes (1990) (cited in Cresswell (2013), is not tied to one philosophy or system. Additionally, they focus on the outcome of the research. Creswell (2013) also remarks that in practice they will use multiple methods, focus on the practical implications of the research, and emphasize research that best answers the question.

While as a pragmatist I am not tied to specific philosophy I find that the subjects that I teach drive me towards an interpretivist/constructivist approach first, then others if they would be a better approach. In the case of this phenomenological research, it is in fact the best approach.

Phenomenology as part of the interpretative approach shares “the goal of understanding human ideas, actions, and interactions in specific contexts or in terms of the wider culture.” (Glesne, 2016. P. 9) An interpretivist researcher looks to examine the perspectives of several people that are part of a larger social group. Just as history is built upon the perspectives of all its participants it would be irresponsible of the historian to begin with the answer in mind, instead just as the researcher looks to find the themes that emerge from the work they are carrying out, the historian finds the answers in the people, not the people for the answer.

Problem Statement and Research Question
Teacher evaluation is not new; it has been around since the one room schoolhouse. Research on teacher evaluation is extensive and ongoing and has shown that what teachers think
about and how they perceive their system of evaluation will contribute to the success or failure of that system (Datnow & Castellano, 2000; Peterson, 1985; Reddy, et. al., 2016; Tuytens & Devos, 2009) The research also shows that teacher evaluation systems should be used for formative (improvement) or summative (retention) of teachers (Hammond et. al., 1983; Hopkins et. al., 2016; Johnson, 1990). If the purposes of the evaluation system do not match with the application of that system, then it will not be as effective as it could be. (Tuytens & Devos, 2009)

Georgia currently uses the TKES to evaluate all public school teachers. The state does allow each school system latitude in the maximum number of times that each teacher is observed, however there is a minimum for each teacher and they all use the same system. The TKES system uses the terms walkthrough, formative, and summative to describe the evaluation process. A walkthrough is a 10-15 minute observation that would primarily assess teachers on 1 to 3 of the ten standards. (Appendix A) A formative evaluation is a minimum of 30 minutes, and would assess the teacher on all 10 standards. The summative conference occurs at the end of the year and uses the data from the walkthroughs and formative observations to provide the teacher with the final assessment of all 10 standards (GADOE, 2018). There is no prescribed method by which administrators take the scores received in walkthroughs and formative assessments to give the teacher their summative score. The TKES system is run by the GADOE which is also responsible for the general curriculum and standards that teachers are expected to use in their classrooms. The GADOE also administers the state wide standardized testing. The GAPSC is responsible for issuing teaching certificates and the renewal of certificates, while also maintaining and policing the code of ethics.

There is presently no evidence as to what perception teachers have about this system of evaluation. The state of Georgia views TKES as a way to improve the practice of teachers, through specific feedback about set standards, as a formative process that will improve the quality of teaching. (GADOE, 2018). However, they also plan to use the TKES evaluation
scores as part of summative process to determine certificate renewal using the Teacher Effectiveness Measure or TEM score.

The TEM score is composed of three elements, the TKES evaluation score (50%), professional development (20%), and student growth (30%). In Georgia teacher certification and certification renewal are completed by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GAPSC), the data from the TKES evaluation process are collected by the GADOE and reported to the GAPSC. According to the current plan, in the 2020-2021 school year teachers will begin receiving full TEM scores. If teachers receive more than three needs improvement or ineffective scores in five years they will not be able to renew their performance based certificate. If the teacher receives two scores below proficient they will not be allowed to renew the performance based certificate without satisfactory remediation (GAPSC 2107). In 2017, the GADOE said in its TKES handbook that TKES was to be “a true coaching tool, not a punitive measure” (GADOE, 2016, p. 14; GADOE, 2017, p 14.). By 2018 the same section of the handbook reads that TKES “should be an authentic coaching tool” (GADOE, 2018, p. 14; GADOE, 2019, p. 14) deleting the punitive tool phrase.

The current literature makes that case that the evaluation system should focus on one purpose. TKES literature acknowledges its dual purpose by informing the teacher that their evaluation scores will be part of the TEM score (GADOE, 2018). Which purpose of the TKES system do teachers view their evaluations informing within the TKES system? Teachers’ perceptions about evaluation systems, such as TKES, would be valuable when determining if those systems are something that they view as informing the practice of teaching or as test for job retention.

The research can be used, along with other studies with similar interests, at the state level to determine if the TKES system is meeting the intended goals and how it needs to be adjusted to better serve that purpose.
The research question: How do Georgia secondary (9-12) teachers perceive the Teacher Keys Evaluation System (TKES)?

Research Design

Phenomenological Research

If a researcher is examining how people experience a topic that is under investigation they may be working from a phenomenological viewpoint (Leavy 2017). A phenomenological research study seeks to understand the shared experience of a group of people. According to Creswell (2103) the basic purpose of phenomenology is to bring the universal experiences to a universal essence. The researcher must also consider their own relation to the topic and determine in what way they should approach their own experience. One way, and the way that this study approached this topic, is to bracket out the researcher. Creswell (2013) describes bracketing as the researcher describing their own experiences so as to allow the reader to judge for themselves if the researcher has focused solely on the participants experiences in the description.

This study followed a phenomenological design of transcendental phenomenology with a mixed methods approach. Moustakas 1994 (cited in Creswell 2013) illustrates procedures for this type of research.

- Bracket out ones experiences
- Collect data from several persons who have experienced the phenomenon
- Analyze the data by reducing to statements and quotes
- Combine statements and quotes into themes
- Develop a textual description of the experiences
- Develop a structural description of the experiences
- Combine the descriptions into an overall essence of the experience
Each year teachers are evaluated by administrators within their building. While the number of observations may vary, all teachers are evaluated under the same TKES system by evaluators who are all trained by the state board of education. Thus, all teachers are subject to the same event, the evaluation as a process, each year. The event is nearly identical, or is intended to be, for each teacher. Therefore, the teachers, even when they are at different schools or in different systems, have perceptions and place value on the same process, the phenomena of evaluation.

Mixed Methods

The study follows an approach described by Leavy (2017) as a nested study where the quantitative data is nested within the qualitative design. Creswell (2014) states that mixed method studies enable researchers to be able capture the benefits of both types of research and have increased in usage in recent years. Onwuegbuzie & Johnson (2006) use the words complementary strengths to describe gaining the strengths of both types of research. The research will be built around a convergent parallel mixed-method design which has the researcher collect the data at the same time and then interpret the results (Creswell, 2014). This approach stems from a pragmatist worldview where the emphasis is on the research problem, and the attempt is made to use all approaches available to understand that problem (Creswell, 2014). The pragmatic researcher is interested in the problem, and the outcome of the problem. Creswell (2013) indicates that in practice the researcher will use multiple methods, multiple data sources, and focus on the practical implications of the research.

In this mixed methods approach the quantitative data was collected through a survey, the Teacher Experiences Evaluation Survey- Teacher Form developed by Reddy et. al (2016), while the qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Leavy (2017) describes interview as being along a spectrum from unstructured to highly structured. Leavy expresses that a researcher that is seeking more structure would ask the same questions in the
same order. I describe my interview as semi structured, since I asked all the participants the same questions but they were not necessarily in the same order. Also, I followed up on comments that participants made in the course of the interview that were not part of the set of interview questions.

**Context and Participants**

The study will focus on two adjacent school systems in Northwest Georgia. Both of the school systems are considered to be small, while one would be considered suburban and the other rural. For the purposes of this study they are referred to as Riverfront School System and Praireview Schools. Within these two systems are five high schools, three in Riverfront and two in Praireview Schools, they serve just below 6000 students while the enrollment in individual schools ranges from approximately 981 to 1385. There are approximately 500 teachers in the five schools. All of these teachers were potential subjects as all participate in the TKES evaluation process. After completing the proposal defense and receiving IRB approval for the study I contacted the central office of both school systems. Riverfront school system required that as part of the system approval process, I receive approval from the principal at each of the three high schools. After an initial email contact, I traveled to each of the three high schools and met with the principal. I explained the process and purpose of my research and answered questions. After receiving approval from the principals, I was given approval from the central office. In the Praireview system the central office asked for, and received, my proposal and then granted me permission to engage in research. I then sent both of the Praireview school system high school principals an email to introduce myself and my research and offered to answer any questions. In the Riverfront system I was able to send the initial contact email directly to all of the teachers, in the Praireview system the principal of the school forwarded my email to their teachers.

The initial email to teachers (Appendix B) asked them to participate in the research, and
contained information pertaining to the purpose of the study, informed consent, and links. One link was to the survey portion of the research, and the other link was to a form that gathered information for those teachers interested in participating in the interview portion of the study. In both cases the first information that teachers saw was informed consent. The survey began after the participants agreed that they understood the informed consent. (Appendix C) Those teachers that had selected the link for the qualitative portion of the research saw again the purpose of the study and informed consent (Appendix D) but also extended details concerning the requirements of the interview portion.

Eighty teachers began the survey which is approximately 16% of the teachers that were considered to be possible subjects of the research, 70 teachers moved past the demographic questions, and 64 or approximately 12% completed the survey. I sent out additional emails to two schools seeking participants for the interview portion of the research. My desire was to have 10 interviews, which would include two teachers from each of the five high schools. I completed nine interviews with two from both of the schools in the Parierview system and two of the schools in the Riverfront system. The remaining school in the Riverfront system had only one teacher respond to the request, despite additional requests after the initial email. In total, sixteen teachers responded to the request for interview participants. To select teachers for the interview portion of the study it must first be determined how many to interview. Dukes (1984) as cited in Creswell (2013) puts the ideal number for a phenomenological study at three to ten. Ten was the number sought since there were five schools and the design was to have two from each school. To determine who those 10 would be, the study used maximum variation sampling (Creswell 2013) where the criteria were selected beforehand. For this study the criteria were: number of years taught, subjects taught, level of education, and school. Creswell (2013) continues to note that after the selection of the criteria then participants are selected that are quite different on that criteria. This increases the likelihood that the findings
will “reflect differences or different perspectives- an ideal in qualitative research” (Creswell 2013, p. 157). Once the criteria were established the potential participants were asked to identify themselves in each area. The study then selected participants from across the areas in order to increase the trustworthiness of the study. Once teachers had volunteered I selected 10, and contacted them. All ten teachers, again expressed their willingness to participate in the research. Two teachers were removed after multiple attempts to schedule the interviews failed and were replaced. It would be easy to dismiss the findings of research about teachers if all of the subjects were new teachers or teachers that were close to retirement. The table in Appendix E shows the nine teachers and their variations in the established criteria.

Data Gathering and Analysis Methods

Quantitative Data
The Teacher Evaluation Experiences Survey- Teacher Form (TEES-T) was developed by Reddy et. al. (2016) and is intended to “measure teachers’ perceptions of their evaluation system” (p. 122). The TEES-T works under an assumption that an evaluation system should seek to ”measure and promote effective teaching” (p. 122), of which the TKES systems claims to be. The TEES-T (Appendix F) asks teachers to rate on a one to five Likert scale, 41 questions in four areas: evaluation system, evaluation feedback, evaluation process, and motivation to change. Evaluation system informs the relevance of the system, feedback concerns the value of evaluation feedback, process or appraisal of the evaluation process, and motivation to change is the influence on the impact and importance of evaluation on the teacher’s classroom practice (Reddy et. al. 2016). It assesses teachers’ attitudes and perceptions of an evaluation system as a formative process and is designed to generate feedback to guide future professional development and implementation of evaluation systems (Reddy et. al., 2016). Reddy et. al. (2016) used their study to show the internal structure validity, construct validity, and validity evidence based on other variables. The study found that the
survey had an overall consistency of $\alpha = .97$, for internal consistency, and that three of the factors were $\alpha > .90$ and one factor $\alpha = .86$ on the Cronbach’s alpha. The study notes “This level of internal consistency is sufficient for the measure’s intended purpose, to gather feedback on the social validity of an educator evaluation system” (Reddy et al. 2016, p. 129). It continues to say “Evidence of relation to other variable, both at the item level and at the score level, was positive in the support of the TEES-T.” (Reddy et al. 2016, p. 129)

Data collection and analysis was done using Qualtrics. Qualtrics is an online survey platform used by business and academic institutions to gather information in projects that range from product development to educational research. The Qualtrics platform allows the researcher to build the survey and collect the data within the same program. The program allows for the researcher to choose options that allow for anonymous data collection making it useful for surveys and quantitative data collection. Once collected Qualtrics provides tools for the researcher to analyze the data. Proper permissions for the use of the survey were obtained prior to IRB approval of the study. (Appendix G) While all questions on the survey were presented to the subjects, not all questions were used to for data analysis. Questions that were not used for analysis asked about how the evaluation system effected the teacher and common core, monetary incentives, grade levels, and national teaching standards. Questions about national teaching standards and common core do not apply to either of the two systems as Georgia is no longer a part of common core testing and neither systems used national teaching standards. Also, the question about grade level was not considered as teachers at the secondary level are likely to have more than one grade level in a day or even in a class. Finally, neither of the two school systems provide any financial incentives for the results of TKES evaluations. Additionally, there were demographic questions asked in the survey process. (Appendix H) All of the questions were examined, using the tools within the Qualtrics program, for statistical significance in each of the demographic areas.
There were not enough survey responses to the survey to apply the findings to all of the teachers in the two school systems but as this is not a quantitative study, the survey was never intended for that purpose. The data from the survey is intended to support or not support the qualitative data. The data was collected at the same time as the qualitative data, and was analyzed at the same time as the other data. Therefore, the data from the surveys was not an influence on the questions that were asked in the qualitative portion of the study. The statistical data for the survey questions can be found in appendix I.

**Qualitative Data**

Once interview participants agreed through email to participate, a time for each was scheduled. Each of the interviews took place in a one-on-one setting, at a location of the subjects choosing, where they were presented and signed a paper copy of the informed consent form, they had previously seen on the website. (Appendix D) They were also asked to provide consent that the interview to be recorded for accuracy. Participants were also informed that they would have the opportunity to review their transcript and a draft of the discussion of findings for member checking. In the informed consent document the teachers are told that pseudonyms would be used in the research reporting. I also reminded them of this verbally as we reviewed the process of the interview. Pseudonyms are used throughout the study for the participants, the schools, and the school systems. Also, in the transcripts the names of specific administrators were redacted.

While the interviews were being conducted I took minimal notes, to watch for body language as a way to assess what the subject was saying and in order to return specifically to something that the subject had said. After transcription of interviews into a document, the transcripts were uploaded to Atlas.ti 8. Atlas.ti 8 is qualitative data analysis software (QDAS). Once documents are uploaded the researcher is able to create code and mark data within the transcripts with those codes. Once the data has been coded the researcher can see all data
within a code or have the program display data where co-occurrence of codes occurs. Initial analysis, was done through coding, or looking for common words and themes (Creswell 2013). After the initial coding was completed each the data associated with each code was printed. The second step of the analysis was to examine the codes, by hand, for further divisions into groups within the codes.

**Mixed Methods**

The use of multiple methods helps the researcher to assure the readers of the accuracy of findings (Creswell 2014). While validity is a term used widely in quantitative research, it can be problematic for qualitative researchers. Creswell (2013) recommends that a qualitative researcher use two of eight identified approaches to validity. This study used three: multiple data sources, member checking, and peer review. The interview and survey results, are used as data. This data will be compared, and the themes of the study will be built from those sources of data. Second, each interviewee was a part of member checking. Member checking is described by Stake (2010, p. 126) as making sure the “story is complete” and involves having the person check that their meanings and intentions were related correctly. This is not providing them with the raw data from their interview but taking the final report or specific descriptions to the participant (Creswell 2014). Each of the participants was sent the transcript of their interview and a late draft of the themes of the research. The mixed method design of the study brings together two data sources: the survey and the interviews. Finally, the study used peer debriefing, or having someone else to examine and ask questions of the study while providing an external check of the process (Creswell 2013; Creswell 2014) as the final method to establish legitimation of the study. I had current secondary teachers both inside and outside Georgia reading and providing comments about not only the process but checking that the assertions of the study match the data that is being collected.

Another school of thought looks at qualitative, and mixed method studies, needing to
use other terminology. Onwuegbuzie & Johnson (2006) assert that to use the term validity in mixed method research can be counterproductive, so the term legitimation can be used as descriptive and inclusive term that can draw in validity, trustworthiness, credibility, and others. They continue to say that the use of traditional terms such as trustworthiness, creditability, plausibility, and dependability should not stop, rather other terms, like legitimation or similarly inclusive terms should be used. Onwuegbuzie & Leech (2007) reiterate that a qualitative study cannot be assessed for validity. They contend that assessing legitimation does not lead to valid or invalid outcomes but rather a degree or level.

Onwuegbuzie & Johnson (2006) indicate that legitimation in mixed research should be “a continuous process” (p. 56). The evaluation of legitimation comes from examining 24 strategies that aids in “assessing the truth value of qualitative research” (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 239). This study does not address all 24 of these strategies it does use several, leaving an audit trail, member checking, weighing the evidence, peer debriefing, rich and thick descriptions, Leaving an audit trail, where the researcher maintains extensive documentation of records and data. Member checking, where feedback from the study group is obtained. Weighing the evidence, here the study notes that some data is better than other. This study gives greater weight to the qualitative data and uses the quantitative data to serve in a nested role that supports or does not support. Peer debriefing where someone poses questions to the researcher about their methods, interpretations, and conclusions. Rich and thick descriptions, Becker (1970) (cited in Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007) indicates that this type of description can come from having full transcripts instead of just notes. This study utilizes each of these processes in the collection and analyzation of its data.

Survey Analysis

Survey data was collected and analyzed through Qualtrics. The intention of the survey was to nest within the qualitative data for support or contradiction of the study’s findings. With
a sample size of only 64 participants completing the survey, that sample size means that it is not statistically possible to use these results as representative of all the teachers in the two school districts where the survey was completed. They can however show trends among the teachers and support or contradict the interview data. To analyze the results the answer options were coded in a one to five scale. Strongly agree was coded as a five, agree was coded as a four, respectively down to strongly disagree as a one. Therefore, if a participant answered neutral to a question that was coded as a three. The results were also examined as percentages. For all the tables, in chapter 4, the results are shown as percentages of answers for each of the five answer choices available. These two methods of analysis allow for the study to identify mean scores for each question and for statistical analysis.

I had the Qualtrics program run Chi-squared analysis, at 95% confidence, on the questions comparing gender, school taught, system taught, subject taught, and years of teaching to each of the questions/statements in the survey. This was to determine which, if any, questions had a statistical significance, shown in the tables as overall stat test of percentages. I wanted to determine if there were differences in the results based on these distinctions. Did those who had taught longer have different perceptions than those that were new teachers?
Chapter 4: Findings

Chapter four presents the findings of this study through a discussion of the survey, the results of the survey, questions from the survey that had a statistical significance, and participant profiles. Those profiles focus on the thoughts and attitudes of the participants in the areas of observations, feedback, impact on teaching, and the future of TKES.

The purpose of this study is to determine teacher’s perceptions of the TKES system. As noted in the literature review evaluations can serve one of two purposes. An evaluation system can be a formative process by which teachers become better, or it can be a summative process by which a teacher’s job retention is determined. To evaluate these perceptions a mixed method design was used, where the quantitative data comes from teacher surveys and the qualitative data from teacher interviews. In both cases the participants were recruited through mass emails that were sent to their school email address. Fifteen people responded to the request for interviews and 9 were completed, 70 teachers began the survey with 64 teachers completing the entire survey which is approximately 13% of the eligible participants.

Surveys

The study used the Teacher Evaluation Experiences survey- Teacher Form by Reddy, et.al. (2016). The survey was designed to assess teachers’ attitudes about their evaluation system as a formative process. This study is using the survey data in what Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner (2007) calls a nested design. The results of the survey are being used to support or contradict the qualitative findings of the study. Eighty respondents completed the informed consent, 78 completed the demographic questions, and 70 started the questions about evaluations. Sixty-four participants completed the survey, thus 80% of the participants that started the survey completed it, which is approximately 12% of the eligible participants. Of those who completed the survey approximately 10% had five years or less of teaching experience and one third had 20 years or more. The largest single subject area was Language
Arts with approximately 21% while Fine Arts and Physical Education had approximately 9% combined. Sixty four percent were female and 36% were male in total responses, however at the three school females were in the 73% to 77% range of respondents. Comparing the five schools the highest percentage of respondents was 28% with the lowest being 13%. Nearly two third of respondents came from the three schools of the Riverfont School System, with the two schools of Prairieview Schools making up the other one third.

**Survey Results**

Using the Likert scale of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree (one to five respectively). There were only eight questions on the survey that had a mean score of 3.5 or greater. These seven questions had a mean of 3.5 or greater but a mean below 4.

- The evaluation system communicated clear expectations for classroom teaching.
- The evaluation feedback was timely.
- The evaluation feedback was aligned with the school instructional improvement.
- The evaluation feedback was aligned with the school district goals.
- I was satisfied with the feedback I received from my teacher evaluation.
- During the feedback meeting(s), I was encouraged to share my thoughts.
- I was satisfied with the discussion(s) of my performance.

Most of the seven questions that had a mean of 3.5 or higher dealt with feedback in some way. The questions about expectations and timeliness speak to the setup of the TKES system. Within the TKES system the state provides teachers with ten standards (Appendix A) and evaluators must provide the results of observations and feedback within one week. In
interviews it was noted that the formal feedback teachers are receiving does come to them quickly. The mean of three and a half but below four, means that all of these questions were still in the neutral area of the scale but were above the halfway mark with one being strongly disagree and five being strongly agree. There was only one question that had a mean score of four or above, during the feedback meeting(s), I was able to share my thoughts. This was the only question in the entire survey that had a mean score that fell above the neutral and into the area of agreement.

There were 19 questions had a mean of less than three. This mean score represents that that these question fell into the area of disagreement. The bulk of these questions were in the areas of improvement of practice, student learning, and changes in classroom practice. There were other questions that in a mean area of three to three and a half. These questions fall in the neutral area but lean towards disagreement.

**Statistical Significance**

While analyzing the data, the questions were checked against the demographic areas of the survey: gender, school system, school taught, subject taught, and years taught. Most of the questions in all of these areas did not show any type of statistical significance. This section discusses those questions that show a statistical significance in at least one area.

In the area of gender, the question about specificity of feedback had statistical significance ($p=.041$) and indicated that females were more likely than males to agree or strongly agree that the feedback was specific (Table 1).
Table 1

The feedback was specific, as percentage of responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall Stat Test of Percentages
0.04061

When asked if the evaluation system provided professional development opportunities that motivated change in classroom practice, it was found that there was a statistical significance in two separate areas. Table two shows there was a significance ($p=.00713$) based on school system, those that teach in the Praireview school system were more likely to agree or strongly agree. As a percentage those that answered strongly disagree or disagree were almost equal across the two school systems.

Table 2

The teacher evaluation system provided professional development opportunities that motivated me to change my classroom practice, as percentage of responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Riverfront</th>
<th>Praireview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall Stat Test of Percentages
0.00713
Table three shows that there is a statistical significance ($p=0.02785$) on the same question as table two. However the significance here is by school taught, not school system. This table shows that the teachers at Mountaintop high school are more likely to strongly agree or agree with the question. Forty percent of teachers at Mountaintop agree or strongly agree, which is well above the overall percentage of 22.2% and the next closest individual school was Banks high school at 22.2% agree with no teachers indicating that they strongly agree.

Table 3

The teacher evaluation system provided professional development opportunities that motivated me to change my classroom practice, as percentage of responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Delta High</th>
<th>Scenic High</th>
<th>Banks High</th>
<th>Mountaintop High</th>
<th>Bend High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When examining the questions against the area of subject taught there were two that produced statistical significance. Table four shows that there was a statistical significance ($p=0.01927$) between subject taught and if evaluation feedback was aligned with the subject(s) that a teacher taught. Over fifty percent agreed or strongly agreed that the system was aligned with their subject with English/LA, Fine Arts, and Science all indicating above the overall percentage is in the agree/ strongly agree areas. Teachers in PE or other, were well above the overall percentages in the neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Teachers in P.E., Social Studies, and other areas not specifically listed, were the most likely to indicate that the feedback did not align.
Table 4

The evaluation feedback was aligned with the subject(s) that I teach, as percentage of responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception Level</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>English/LA</th>
<th>Fine Arts</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>PE</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>SPED</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall Stat Test of Percentages
0.01927

A second significance ($p = 0.02492$) was seen when examining subjects taught, when asked if the evaluation system helped to improve quality of instruction. Here the vast majority of teachers are in the disagree/strongly disagree areas. But notably no teachers, in any area, strongly agree. However, teachers of math, science, and social studies were more likely to agree with the statement than teachers of any other subject.
Table 5

The evaluation system helped me to improve the quality of instruction, as percentage of responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>English/LA</th>
<th>Fine Arts</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>PE</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>SPED</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall Stat Test of Percentages
0.02492

The questions were examined against the number of years taught, which resulted in three significant responses. Table six shows a statistical significance ($p=0.00379$) with the statement that the evaluation system was comprehensive. This shows that those with more than five years of experience were more likely to agree or strongly agree that the system was comprehensive. Those with more than five but less than twenty had the highest percentage of those who agree or strongly agree. This data shows that as teachers have more years of experience, they are more likely to show approval of the evaluation system as comprehensive.
Table 6

The evaluation system was comprehensive, responses as percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>0-2</th>
<th>3-5</th>
<th>6-10</th>
<th>11-15</th>
<th>16-20</th>
<th>20+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall stat test of Percentage 0.00379

A second area of significance ($p=0.003218$), in relation to years taught was seen when asked if the evaluation feedback was useful. Those with 10 years or less of teaching experience are more likely to be neutral or to answer disagree/strongly disagree to the statement that feedback was useful. As teachers have more experience, 11 years or more, they tend to be more spread out across strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, and agree. Only one level of teaching experience, 11-15, strongly agreed with the statement.

Table 7

The evaluation feedback was useful, responses as percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>0-2</th>
<th>3-5</th>
<th>6-10</th>
<th>11-15</th>
<th>16-20</th>
<th>20+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>52.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall stat test of Percentage 0.003218

The final significance ($p=0.00640$) seen with years taught was when participants were asked if the evaluation feedback provided information for professional development.
opportunities. Here as teachers have more years of experience they are more likely to disagree/strongly disagree with the statement.

Table 8

The evaluation feedback provided information for professional development opportunities, responses as percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>0-2</th>
<th>3-5</th>
<th>6-10</th>
<th>11-15</th>
<th>16-20</th>
<th>20+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall stat test of Percentage 0.00640

**Interviews**

After collecting the responses of those interested in the interview portion of the study I began the process of selecting participants. The participants were divided according to school, subject taught, years taught, and educational level. After selecting participants I began to set up interviews, either through email or phone calls depending on the preference of the participants. During this process two participants were deselected due to a lack of communication about setting up an interview. Those two participants were replaced by two others on the list. The interviews were completed at a location and the time of the participants choosing. I listened to the audio recordings of the interviews and then transcribed them, then read through the transcriptions looking for errors in spelling and grammar in the transcription going back to the audio for corrections when needed. I then uploaded them into Atlas.ti 8 and began the process of coding. The Atlas.ti 8 program allowed me to read through the transcripts and highlight parts of text, the program identifies these at quotations, and assign them a code. Codes could
be pre-established within the program or the highlighted text could be used to create a code. I established a set of codes that I believed, after transcription, would be the primary codes. I found that as I was reading and marking that I did not use some codes and created others. The Atlas.ti 8 program then allowed me to identify a code, or co-occurrence of the code, and print all quotations that had been marked with that code. This made the process of then sub dividing codes more efficient as all text with that code was together. After identifying sub divisions, by hand, within the codes I went to the survey data and began the process of matching questions in the survey with the themes from the interviews.

**Participant profiles**

**William**

William teaches Language Arts at Scenic High in Praireview school district. He has a Master of Arts degree in teaching and has taught for seven years.

**Observations**

His experiences with observations are in line with the typical observation noted at the beginning. He noted that observations were brief. He believes that the purposes of evaluations are such that the administration to see “what your classroom instruction is like”. It came across that his biggest problem with evaluations was with the system itself but with the people that are responsible. He mentioned that the “structure doesn’t matter as much as the people using the platform matter”. He believes that the observations are being done simply for the administrators to “check the box”, possibly because the administrators are simply “busy”.

When discussing the scores on those evaluations, William was more opinionated. He indicated that the scores do not mean much to him or in general. He relates that the administrators indicated that the average scores were too high, therefore “of course the next year we saw a lot more twos. Which what changed, nothing changed”. His biggest concern about scores was what seemed to him to be a true lack of meaning to the scores. He expressed
that the indication to him was that the evaluations that took place during the year did not really matter, “the summative is the only thing that counts.”

Feedback

William indicated that in the current year he might see more constructive feedback because an administrator that had provided better feedback would be doing observations that year. Overall though his attitude towards feedback was that it was canned, brief comments that were “copied and pasted”. He expressed that feedback was a way for the TKES system to actually do some good, he remarked that the system should do something to make feedback “more authentic and more tied to your actual classroom and actual practice”. He believes that the TKES should be a way to facilitate conversation but it is just not accomplishing that.

Impact on teaching

William revealed that if feedback was something that was more specific and meant something “in terms of actionable items” that it would have an impact on his, and he believes, others teaching practices. Here though he expressed what appeared to me to be his biggest problem with the way that the system is carried out. He expressed that he had received a two in an observation in the area of instructional planning. He found this to be troublesome to him as a professional. He recounted the hours that he spends on research and preparing for lessons that cannot be seen by an administrator in 10 or 30 minute observation.

Future of TKES

William believes that the TKES standards that teachers are evaluated on “paint a nice general picture of what a teacher should be”. That if administrators are held accountable about the feedback that they are giving to the teachers and that the feedback is constructive and specific to the teachers with ways to improve their practice that the TKES system could be a beneficial process.
Christina teaches language arts at Delta High School in the Riverfront School system. She has been teaching for two years, and has a master’s degree.

Observations

Christina revealed the observations that she was part of were unannounced and that the administrator would sit in the back of the room and make notes. She believes that the purposes of these evaluations are primarily for administrators to “check something off a list”. Christina doesn’t put much faith into the scores that she receives on her observations, declaring that she gets a number “and move[s] on with [her] life”. She reported that she is not sure ”they’re giving me the four because I deserve the four of if they are giving me the three because I deserve the three”. For Christina the observations and the score she receives from them just do not mean much.

Feedback

Christina spent some time comparing her previous observation experiences with those at her current school. It was not the formal feedback was much different but her informal feedback was not as good at her current school as it was at her previous school. She views feedback as way for her to improve, however, with the TKES system she is not seeing feedback that helps her improve. She revealed that feedback is “…not really helping [her] advance what [she] could do in [her] classroom”. She sees the feedback that she receives as generic and that it could be better.

Impact on teaching

Christina expressed that she is a competitive person, this revealed itself as she spoke about her scores and the impact they have on her classroom. Upon receiving a three she takes it personally thinking “..nope, I’m going to prove to you I can get a four on this” When asked,
she revealed that getting that four didn’t mean that she was a better teacher. Her attitude about how the TKES system impacts her teaching can be summed up with her comment that she has “little faith in the TKES system as far as, it motivates me to do better.”

**Future of TKES**

While Christina did not express that the current implementation of the TKES system is doing much to improve her practice she did respond to questions that if the system provided ways for the system to be more of “…a conversation than just checking some boxes on a computer”. She also revealed that the amount of time that administrators spend completing observations matters. When discussing the way it could be improved through conversations she also noted that it would be difficult for administrators to devote that level of time to the process. However, if that process could be accomplished the feedback would be “…really helpful critique and criticism in a positive way”. That positive system would then “…be a growth for the teacher and the administrator to see challenges and also positives in the classroom, with that teacher. I think that’s the perfect world”.

Christina does not currently draw much meaning or inspiration out of the TKES system, but she sees that evaluations can provide a path to better teachers.

**Kyle**

Kyle teaches in the CTAE program at Mountaintop High School in the Riverfront school system. He has been teaching for four years and has a Specialists degree in education.

**Observations**

Kyle’s recollection of observations were that administrators would come in the room, sit in the back make notes and leave. No interaction just the observation. Kyle reported that the scores he receives from those observations he takes “…like a grain of salt”. However Kyle
brought out a unique viewpoint about observations, he mentioned the idea of having the same observer over and over. His attitude was that when you have different observers that the standard changes for each one and by implication the scores for the same actions could be different. He believes that if he were observed by the same person and received a score that was higher than before “…then I would think that I have improved, at least I am showing them what they wanted to see”. Kyle indicated that he wants to receive fours, despite the fact that he had noted the scores did not mean much to him, because a four means that the teacher is exceeding standards. “So I want to exceed, I want to be, I want to be the best, the best I can be, and the best.”

**Feedback**

Kyle reported that the feedback he receives from his administration was very specific to his teaching. The feedback gave him “…guidance, pointing him in a direction, a specific direction”. He remarked that the feedback tells him what the administrator thinks about how well he is doing in his classroom. He also conveyed that the informal feedback he is getting at his school is good. The administrators “always welcome you into their office” for discussion. Finally, he declared that it is important for feedback to provide guidance, that observers should not be just a critic.

**Impact on teaching**

Kyle was very succinct about how the system encourages change in his teaching practice. He indicated that the TKES standards, and the scores that he receives do not change his practice. As noted before he asserts that the informal feedback that he receives is more valuable to him.

**Future of TKES**

Kyle expressed that he did not really see the need for the evaluation system for veteran teachers. He relates that for someone who has been teaching for 20 years and everyone knows
SECONDARY TEACHERS PERCEPTION OF TKES

that they are a good teacher, why do we need to evaluate them four or five times a year? He asserted that the TKES system could be better if it was more personalized, “…we’re told not to teach standardized but with TKES we are evaluated standardized”. As a teacher that is also in graduate school he conveyed that the scores make the TKES a quantitative system that needs more qualitative elements. He also, sees the potential for TKES to be a truly formative process but that it needs to be “…more of a conversation than just checking some boxes on a computer”

Benjamin

Benjamin has been teaching for 14 years, has completed a master’s degree and is currently working on his specialist’s degree. He is in the CTAE department at Banks High School in the Riverfront School System.

Observations

Benjamin had a great deal to say about the observation process. His previous experience in the armed services, by his own admission, influences the way he sees observations. He expressed that he wasn’t sure that administrators were “actually doing assessment or they were just looking for things to check the list”. He also suggested that the scores did not mean much to him because he fails to understand them. He frames his discussion around the scores with a basic idea that “what’s the difference between a two, a three, and a four?”. His experience with military observations shape what he expects from the TKES system.

Feedback

Benjamin discussed that at his school there is little to no feedback. He expressed that he desires the feedback as a way to improve, but that “we don’t take time to have this conversation”. Benjamin also sees himself as someone that wants to excel in all that he does. He conveyed that in his own graduate school classes he wanted to know why he missed the points when he receives a 98 out of a 100. Therefore he wants the feedback to show where he
is not meeting the standard to get a four on the TKES score.

**Impact on Teaching**

Benjamin does not use the TKES system to identify what he needs to work on to improve his practice. He practices a lot of self-reflection with himself and his classes. When asked about how TKES changes his teaching he indicated that it only tells him what he “needs to show when the person walks in the room to observe.”

**Future of TKES**

Of all the interviews Benjamin had the most positive statements about the potential of the TKES system. His attitudes centered around good feedback and conversations about the feedback. He revealed that he believes the system does need to be overhauled and should center around skills or competencies that would show that teachers are effective. He also asserted that the TKES system should not be used in a summative way, it “…should not be a, by the way you’re fired. It shouldn’t be that…”

**Kimberly**

Kimberley teaches science at Bend High School in the Riverfront School System. She holds a master’s degree and has been teaching for seven years

**Observations**

Kimberly felt that the reason that administrators are in her room is to observe, and to make sure that the kids are working and that she is doing a good job. She reported that the administrator sits in the back and makes notes, then gets an email that the data is in the TKES system. Her thoughts about observations have been influenced by her previous educational experience that provided new teachers with a mentorship type experience where they were observed more times and for longer periods of time then what is done in the TKES system. She expressed that TKES “skims the surface of checking in and saying, hey, yes you guys are on
the right track, you’re doing great.”.

**Feedback**

Kimberly conveyed that the feedback she receives is “pretty typical” and results in “very generalized comments”. She indicated that many times it is a summary of what was seen in the class and what she as the teacher was done. Kimberly, unlike other interviews indicates that she is receiving some formal feedback that is specific to her classroom, in that they are describing what is happening in the room. She does to continue to assert that “[w]hat I would love is, more constructive criticism, more specific things that I could work on”. Kimberley also conveyed that she does receive informal feedback from her administrators that is good.

**Impact on Teaching**

Kimberly reported that as long as she is “living in the threes” she is good. She revealed that if she gets a two that she looks for comments to make sure she knows what they are seeing. In that sense she is using the scores to try and improve her score on TKES, however she remarked that if “…as long as my administrators are happy and they like what they see then I’m going to continue doing what I do”. As mentioned earlier, as long as she is getting threes, there does not seem to be an impetus to change.

**Future of TKES**

Kimberly discussed how observations could be improved but did not relate that it could be done within the TKES system. She mentioned that preliminary meetings where the teacher can identify weaknesses for the administrator to watch for would be beneficial. She asserted that if a teacher is struggling it “would take beyond the TKES evaluations to support them.” Later she added that “[t]hen I guess it would be on me if I felt like I needed something to go out and seek that help”.

**Thomas**
Thomas teaches social studies at Delta High School in Riverfront School system. He is in his first year in this school system, but has come from another Georgia school system that also used the TKES system. He has been teaching for eight years and holds a master’s degree.

**Observations**

Thomas noted that his observations were unannounced but that at times they can make him a bit nervous. He mentioned that he is not sure that with the time they are spending in his class that they are getting a true look “at what actually goes on in my classroom”. He related that the process at times is frustrating as an administrator may be looking for something specific, like a standard, and if it is not where it is expected to be the administrator will take the TKES score down. Thomas was unique in this study in that he was new to the Riverfront school system but had been in a Georgia school system the year and thus was part of the TKES system. He commented that in his new position he was receiving higher scores than before, he responded “I changed counties and now I’m like this magically better teacher to me I’ve always viewed it, as long as I get that three, I’m good…”.

**Feedback**

Thomas conveyed that the feedback he is receiving from his TKES evaluations, regardless of system, were “arbitrary and not helpful”. He also mentioned that the feedback he received would be “…something that was clearly copied and pasted from some manual or training..”. Thomas did remark that he has received informal feedback was helpful but that “…I haven’t seen as much on a TKES report…”.

**Impact on Teaching**

Thomas asserted that he has “…never looked at TKES report and thought, yeah you’re right I need to change that or reconsider how I do that”. His comments indicated that the TKES process does not influence his teaching practice in a meaningful way. From arbitrary comments to feedback that is generalized and “..not specific enough or individualized
enough…”, Thomas simply does not see the TKES process as informative.

**Future of TKES**

Thomas sees TKES in his new system as less of a “gothca” system than it was before. However he does not discuss how the system could be, or should be changed to make it better. He sees it as a summative, accountability, tool to check in on teachers.

**Heather**

Heather works in the area of special education of Mountain Top High School, has a master’s degree and has been teaching for 19 years. She is not the only special education teacher interviewed for the study but is the only one that is not teaching any classes as a solo teacher and is also co-teaching classes outside of her highly qualified field.

**Observations**

Heather expressed that her observations are typical in that the administrator comes in, sits in the back and makes notes. As a teacher outside of her highly qualified field she is frustrated by a TKES model “… that doesn’t really fit…”. She acknowledged that more recently she has gotten administrators who “understand that they are only getting a glimpse…”. She conveyed that part of the problem for a co-teacher in this system is the relationship between the classroom teacher, or teacher of record, and the co-teacher has an influence on the observation. If that relationship is not good then it becomes very hard for the co-teacher to show the observer what they are seeking. She asserted that if she was in her field that the process would be more applicable to her, that as it is now, being expected to preform outside of her field is “unfair”.

**Feedback**

Because of her position within the TKES system feedback for her takes on a different role. She already sees the system as one that does not fit where she is within the process so,
feedback to her is even less meaningful that other teachers interviewed. She did remark that the feedback she does receive is “perfunctory”. She mentioned that since administrators are so busy that they are forced to “…pulling these stock phrases to put stuff down.”.

**Impact on Teaching**

Heather did not indicate that the TKES process influenced the way that she teaches. This comes from her situation of being outside of her primary teaching field. She simply sees the scores as something that is given to her, not something that reflects her teaching. She admits that if she were “…a regular classroom teacher, it would fit a lot more. Of if I were a SPED teacher that was allowed to teach in my subject area it would fit a lot more”. Heather presents a situation where it seems that for special education co-teachers the standards and the system doesn’t really fit, and has a limited amount of influence on their practice.

**Future of TKES**

Heather sees the TKES system as something that can work for the general classroom teacher, or the special education teacher who has the opportunity to teach. She asserted that the process can be a paper trail to remove clearly unprofessional teachers that are resistant to support. However, if a teacher is good then the system should support them and let them be good, and that evaluations should quit trying to put a one size fits all approach to all teachers.

**Eric**

Eric has a specialist’s degree and works at Banks High School in the Riverfront School system. He teaches music, holds a specialist’s degree and has taught for more than 20 years.

**Observations**

Eric notes that as music teacher the entire TKES system seems to work a bit different for him then it does for academic subject areas. When administrators come to observe his classes he will “…go over and say here’s what we are doing today, here’s kind of our lesson
plan for the day and our objective that sorta stuff…”. He attempts to bring the administrator into what they are doing since his administrators do not have a music background. Given the nature of a class like music he mentioned that he has had an observation done at a performance.

**Feedback**

Eric conveyed that while the feedback he receives is generally positive it seems to be “generic” and “… the same for everybody”. He expressed that the feedback shows what the evaluator is looking for when they are doing observations.

**Impact on Teaching**

Eric disclosed that the TKES system has no real effect on his teaching. He mentions that it works better for a “…core teacher that has objectives and evaluations..” but that music is different. He asserted that the music classroom is different and uses a different set of standards, thus the TKES evaluations simply does not guide his practice. He also reported that he is “…harder on myself than an evaluator is…”.

**Future of TKES**

He expressed in his interview that he wished that the system could adapt to programs like music better. He remarked that for programs that are not core academic subjects that there are standards there but since most administrators do not have any type of music background it can be difficult for them to evaluate. His desire for TKES is that it becomes something that is “more detailed” and something “…more personal. Because it is a personal thing, what we do”. He conveyed that perhaps “…they could develop a TKES just for music teachers, or an art teacher, or a PE teacher, or social studies or something like that”. He added “…cause right now its standard across the board for everybody”.

**Charles**

Charles teaches language arts at Scenic High in the Prarieview school system. He has a
bachelor’s degree and has been teaching for 8 years.

**Observations**

Charles believes that observations are done for administrators to check of the box and to evaluate teachers. When administrators come into his room they sit and take notes on a tablet or computer. He continues teaching trying to not draw attention to the evaluator in the room. When the observations are over and he receives scores his usual reaction to that is “…well you don’t have all the information you need to make an assessment”. His concern stems from the fact that the administrator is only in the room for a 10 or 30 minute period of time and simply cannot see everything that they need to see in that amount of time.

**Feedback**

Charles sees the feedback as nonspecific and not helpful. He remarked that it seems to be preset statements with nothing personal in there. He added that the feedback is broad and “…it doesn’t address me by name, it’s not personal. It’s just like teacher does this, this, this.” He does not see that the feedback is helpful in anyway as “…there is nothing specific in there that tells me what I need to do to change or if I don’t need to change…”. He expressed that he wants to do his best but the feedback is just not personalized enough to know what he needs to do for improvement.

**Impact on Teaching**

When asked about the impact on his teaching Charles put it simply, “…you know, it doesn’t really seem to much”. He attributes that to the feedback, or the lack of feedback, the he receives through the process. It does not do enough to provide him with the necessary knowledge to make changes.

**Future of TKES**

The way that Charles views feedback also influences what he sees as potential for the
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TKES system. His desire is for administrators to be more involved in the process. As he sees it the system is still about making sure that teachers are doing what they are supposed to be doing in their classes. However, he sees a system where evaluators do not just look over a lesson plan for some aspect of learning, instead if they cannot observe what they are looking for at that time then they come back later. Charles expressed that he is not sure how this would look but “…even a drop in and if its five minutes, ten minutes, then they can see if they can evaluate that way”.

Chapter four presented the findings of the study by providing the data from the survey, those survey questions that showed a statistical significance, and the profiles of the interview participants. Those profiles focused on the thoughts and attitudes of the participants in the areas of observations, feedback, impact on teaching, and the future of the TKES system. Chapter five will present a discussion of the findings of the study. That discussion includes the themes that developed from the interviews, discussion of those themes, implications, limitations, researcher comments, and recommendations for further research.
Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings

This chapter will present the themes that developed in the interviews, discussion of those themes, relation of findings to relevant literature, limitations of the study, researcher comments, and the recommendations for future research.

The question that guided this study was essentially the purpose of the phenomenological study, how do secondary (9-12) teachers perceive the TKES evaluation system. The study interviewed nine teachers from five high schools from within the two schools systems that were part of the study. All of the schools had two teachers represented with the exception of one school where only one teacher volunteered to be interviewed. The semi-structured interview provided the data for the qualitative portion of the study. (Appendix J) Teachers from various levels of experience, subjects taught, and degree levels were represented. The study offered the TEES-T to all of the secondary teachers in five high schools in two Georgia school systems. The purpose of the survey is to measure how much teachers see the evaluation system as formative. The survey data was then nested within the interview data for the purposes of confirming or contradicting the responses in the interviews.

Themes

Observations and interactions with administrators

The teachers in this study indicated that the observations that they experienced were all the same, largely unannounced, where administrators visited the room, and took notes. Kimberly noted they “come in discretely and sit in the back”. She adds that they “make some notes, head on out, they end up sending an email” indicating that the evaluation had been put in the TKES system. Kyle conveyed that the administrators will be in the “back of the room where they can see the action of students and observe”. He also mentioned “they will have their laptops and they’ll be typing stuff in…they don’t really say anything, they come in and do it and then go.” Thomas and Heather both replied that the observations were “unannounced”.
Only one teacher indicated that the visits by administrators made them uncomfortable or anxious in any way. Several teachers indicated that when the administrators come into the room they continue what they do, as if the administrator was not in the room. Some teachers, including Eric, will engage with the administrator, including them into the lesson, or at least telling them what was going on in the classroom, “I’ll go over there and say here’s what we’re doing today”, while Charles indicated that the attempts to not draw any attention to the administrator in the room. The only negative thought about observations came from Benjamin who indicated that sometimes he wondered “if they were actually doing assessment or they were just looking for things to check off the list.” Overall teachers indicated the observations are brief, and un-intrusive.

**Administrator’s time**

Teachers also noted the amount of time that administrators are forced to spend on the TKES observations. This presented itself in two different areas. The first is that nearly half of the teachers interviewed said that the administrators are just getting the job done, Christina said that administrators are just “trying to check something off a list that they are having to do, everyone has to do them.” Charles stated, “it seems like for administrators too it’s another box for them to tick off.” Thomas conveyed that “it’s a grind, it’s a hoop that they have to jump through no matter where you’re at, what school you’re at”. Heather expressed “they’re just trying to do whatever minimum they need to do, the administrators, they’re so overwhelmed with how many teachers they have to evaluate”. Christina notes that after an observation, “if then you could have a conversation about what they saw and it was more a conversation than just checking boxes on the computer.”

While these might indicate that the teachers view the administrators’ role in the TKES system as a negative, it was clear from the interviews that all of the teachers felt that administrators are overwhelmed for time. This lack of time is the second area that developed
within the administrators time theme, all of the teachers indicated that administrators have a lot going on in their day. For some of the teachers this gave a reason for why they may be not able to do more with evaluations. Thomas noted, “They clearly have more on their plate than they probably should have. I’ve heard them talk about what a grind it is to get all that stuff in the computer.” Benjamin asserted “the pressures, the amount of time…responsibility of teachers and administrators”. Eric said, “My big thing is that I really don’t know that administrators have enough time, to be able to do what they really need to do, that’s a lot of work, especially because an administrator doesn’t know what they’re going to get hit with every day.” William put it simply, “I’m not saying anything negative about them, they’re very busy.” The interviews also indicated that the a majority of teachers wish that administrators could spend more time on the observations, possibly in their classrooms, but as Kimberley responded, “that would be a ridiculous expectation of the administrators, it would be wonderful if we had people on staff that would just do that, but that probably isn’t feasible either.”

**Feedback**

Feedback from administrators was area that all of the teachers had similar feelings and it was supported by the survey data. The survey had a specific section that addressed feedback, Table nine shows five questions as a representation of the way that the teachers responded to questions about feedback.
Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Percentage of teachers that agree or strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The evaluation feedback was timely</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The evaluation feedback was specific</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was satisfied with the feedback I received from my teacher evaluation.</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The evaluation feedback was constructive</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The evaluation feedback was useful</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the interviews teachers indicated that the feedback is quick and is specific to the standards being address but was not specific to the teacher or what was seen in the class. This is supported by the survey as teachers indicated that what they are getting is given to them quickly but in the end is not constructive or helpful. Two of the teachers, Kimberly and Eric, indicated that as long as the feedback was not pointing out something they needed to change they were satisfied with the feedback and saw no need to change what they were already doing.

Feedback can be divided into formal feedback, what teachers are receiving from administrators on the TKES evaluation forms, and informal feedback which was discussed as occurring outside the evaluation system. This informal feedback can be a conversation in the hallway or even in the office of the administrator but is still done outside of the TKES process. Regardless of the type of feedback, it was the area where teachers saw the most potential for improvement.

**Formal feedback**

All of the teachers indicated that the feedback that they have received from within the TKES process was brief and non-specific. William described it as “canned”, Heather described it as “perfunctory”. William, Thomas, and Heather all used similar language to assert that the feedback administrators are giving to them seemed to be copy and pasted, possibly from some
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list of comments that the administrators received from training or conference. Heather connected this lack of good feedback to the lack of time that administrators have, she remarked “That’s why they are pulling these stock phrases to put stuff down, cause they have to do, a ridiculous amount”. Teachers also indicated that when they got feedback that it was specific to the standard but was not specific to their actual classroom or what had been observed in the classroom. Charles noted that it seems to be “preset statements that they just kinda put in there, and it’s not really helpful a lot of times.” He continued “it’s not personal. It’s just like the teacher does, this, this, this”. He was not alone in expressing the generic, nonspecific nature of the feedback. William responded that the system could do something to make the feedback “more authentic, more tied to your actual classroom and your actual practice”. Christina and Eric both expressed that the statements are “generic”.

Informal feedback

There is a distinction between how teachers view the formal feedback of the TKES system and the informal feedback that they receive from administrators. The feedback that they are receiving in informal situations has a higher value, and is perceived as better since it is more specific to the teacher and to their work. Kyle said “they open you in their office with open arms and you can talk to them” Kimberley noted “I get good feedback, informally from them”. On the subject of informal feedback Thomas stated “Oh definitely yes. I’ve had them ask me where I get an activity….I’ve had them make suggestions.”. While not all the teachers presented examples of great informal feedback or even instances of informal feedback the few that noted this type of feedback were emphatic that it was different and better than formal feedback.

Meaning of scores

When teachers are evaluated on the TKES system they get a rating of one to four on a set of 10 standards. It might be that they are only rated on one or two of the standards in a
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classroom visit or all ten. When examining the perception that teachers have about the TKES system, what they thought about the scores they received spoke to the overall system. Survey data here shows that the scores the teachers are receiving are not accurately assessing them as teachers. When given the statement that the system assessed their effectiveness as a teacher, zero teachers strongly agreed and only 37% agreed. When given the statement, the system represented my instructional ability, again, zero teachers strongly agreed and only 25% agreed. This evidence, along with the interviews show that the teachers are receiving scores that are not, in their perspective, assessing them properly or telling them much about their practice. It also informed another theme, change in practice. There were three areas within this topic that came out of the interviews. Teachers do not understand the scores, they do not trust that administrators are evaluating them accurately, and the scores do not inform the teachers about their teaching.

Understanding the scores

Teachers have been told that the target score is a three. Where the teachers begin to have a problem is their understanding of the scores. The majority of interviews indicated that they were not sure what a score means. Benjamin said “maybe I don’t really understand the difference between a two, a three, and a four.” He later added, “Is that a four, why isn’t that a three?” Christina discussed that when she receives a three, she wants to do the work to get to a four. When asked if in some way getting a four indicated that she was a better teacher she said “No, I by no means think making the four makes me a better teacher.” She continued to say “it motivates me to do better but like I said I don’t know if that number is even a real thing.” Thomas said, “I have always kinda viewed it as a statement about how I’m viewed as a teacher. I feel like it’s not specific enough or individualized enough to me.” William says, “But I just don’t know that I feel like the scores mean much so I don’t care about them.” Charles related that in talking with another teacher he noted that he had received threes on his evaluation, “I
was told a three is not really a three, it’s a two.” The teachers simply do not know what to do with the scores.

**Teachers do not trust that administrators are judging them accurately**

The problem for teachers in this area is not that they do not trust their administrators or they believe that the administrators are in some way out to get them. As William said “I think there is a perception that it’s expected that they give some low scores. I think that they are looking for opportunities to get low scores on things.” Later he added that “[t]he perception becomes that the system isn’t useful because you expect to get some twos even if you don’t really earn them.” Christina revealed “I wonder if they are just having to mark me a three or having to mark me a four so that it’s not all the same number…I think they are honest with it but I also feel like we can’t give the all threes and we can’t give them all fours.” She disclosed that she is “…not sure that they’re giving me the four because I deserve the four or if they are giving me the three because I deserve the three.” Thomas, who noted that he was receiving higher scores at his new system reported that he, “…changed counties and now I’m like this magically better teacher? To me I’ve always viewed it, as long as I get that three, I’m good, you know.” Benjamin said, “I’m not sure that I really understand what a three and four is, I’m not convinced my bosses do either. You know, why isn’t that a four? Is that a four, why isn’t that a three? I don’t have confidence in that.” He later said “you’re gonna rate me a three as opposed to a four on this? It kind of, causes some doubts on the authenticity of the whole thing.” This lack of understanding about what the scores tell, also extends to teachers concerns about the administrators themselves. The teachers were not concerned that the administrators are not qualified to do the observations, but that the observations are being done on a standardized system by evaluators with different views. Kyle noted, “because all observers have different views, there’s no one view. It’s not a standardized view how can you have a standardized system?” William noted that there is a perception that different administrators
may score easier or harder based on “an area of focus…they will care about one issue over another.”

Some of the teachers also felt that their administrators were being directed by those above in levels above them, that there is some measure of truth to what their own administrators are giving them but that the administrators have been given directions about the scores that they are handing out. For example, Kyle noted “I know that the state, at one point, said you’re giving out too many fours.” When discussing the administrators giving scores Benjamin said, “well we can’t give the fours, we can only give a few of those, maybe we’ll give you one or two, here’s a carrot.” William stated, “we were told directly by our administrators that our average TKES score was too high. They were told they were giving out too many threes and fours. Of course the next year we saw a lot more twos”

**Scores do not inform teachers practice**

In the interviews the teachers were asked specifically what the scores tell them. Nearly all the teachers indicated that the scores tell them little or nothing. Comments included statements like one from William, “to be completely honest almost nothing.” Kyle who stated, “I take TKES scores about like a grain of salt”, Eric, “I don’t let the TKES guide me in that aspect.” When asked how the TKES scores informed his practice he revealed, “not sure to be totally honest”. To the same question Thomas admitted, “It honestly doesn’t. I mean honestly”. Finally, Christina said “honestly I don’t know what really comes of it right now other than the fact that I get a number and move on with my life afterwards.” On this topic Kimberly had a different view than the other teachers, here she indicated that as long as she was getting threes that she was doing a good job, if she needed to work on something they needed to let her know but that as long as she is comfortable with what is happening in her room and she “living in the threes” she was good.
Teachers change in practice

All of the teachers interviewed indicated that the scores they are receiving from TKES evaluations do not influence change in their teaching practice. This is supported by the data from two survey questions. When given the statement: The evaluation system informed changes in my classroom practice, only 34% of teachers strongly agree or agree. While 53% disagree or strongly disagree. When given the statement: I was motivated to make changes to my classroom practice, only 30% of teachers indicated that they agree or strongly agree and 45% disagree or strongly disagree. Christina said, “I wish that number was an actual thing that I can believe in, I just don’t. I have little faith in the TKES system as far as, it motivates me to do better but like I said I don’t know if that number is even a real thing.” William indicated that “if I got more constructive feedback maybe they would, maybe if a two on differentiation meant something in terms of actionable items for how to make that not a two anymore, yeah, then maybe it would.” He later added, “I don’t think the scores do much in particular to inform my practice. Because again, I don’t have a lot of faith that there is much thought going into them.” Thomas commented that “day to day I’ve never looked at a TKES report and thought, yeah you’re right I need to change that or reconsider how I do that”.

Some teachers referenced more than scores when thinking about changing their classroom practice. Kyle mentioned the ten standards that are used for teacher evaluation, he remarked that the standards do not inform his practice. Benjamin conveyed that the standards, “identify what I need to show when the administrators come in”.

This theme and the feedback theme are closely related as teachers have indicated the feedback they are receiving is not specific enough to provide teachers with the necessary information to make changes to their practice.

Purpose of evaluation

When discussing the purpose of evaluations, all of the teachers indicated in some way
that they felt that the purpose of an evaluation was summative in nature. They did not explicitly indicate the observation was to determine if the teacher should keep their job but the language used indicated that teachers believe the purpose is to make sure that teachers are maintaining some minimum level of proficiency or teaching performance. William, after noting that evaluations are to get a general impression of a classroom added, “to evaluate a teacher.” Christina adds another layer to that idea, “to make sure that teachers are following the standards that the state puts out for us.” She also expressed that evaluations are “[t]o make sure that the administration is checking that we are doing what we are supposed to do.” This concept, of what teachers are supposed to do continues through other interviews as well. Benjamin, “They gotta hold us teachers accountable, they gotta make sure that teachers are doing the right thing.” Kimberly, “I believe it’s to make sure that all the teachers are doing what they need to be doing in the classroom.” Nearly all the teachers have a comment that stays with this same general idea. The teachers are viewing evaluations as someone checking up on the teachers, to ensure that they are doing the job that is expected of them. None of the teachers indicated that the purpose of an evaluation was to make them a better teacher or to improve the performance of the teacher. There were some teachers who indicated that the evaluations were at times used to praise a teacher. For example, William noted “a place where they can celebrate a teacher they think is doing a good job.” Eric found that for him “it’s an affirmation, hey I’m doing a good job.”

Perception of TKES system

As teachers began discussing the TKES system specifically the ideas and attitudes mirrored those of the evaluation system in general. The consensus is that teachers view the TKES system as way to check up on teachers in the classroom. “TKES and TKES observation, to measure my effectiveness” is how Charles addressed the system. Heather remarked that is all, “… just CYA. It’s like now there is government intervention, that everybody wants to
make sure that they are not complicit in anything that looks not good.” She continued on to discuss that she senses the system is “unfair”. She said as a special education teacher, that is outside of her highly qualified field and therefore for her to be judged on this system is unfair. She says that they will “evaluate her general competence in the classroom and that nothing much more will come of it than that.” Benjamin says, “I think the legislators have been convinced that there needs to be some sort of accountability system for teachers, to hold them accountable.” Kyle said, “the whole reason for TKES is to ensure that the state has highly qualified professionals in schools.” But his thoughts about the TKES system were more critical than most of the other teachers. He continued to on, “TKES is just a means to basically set us up as factory workers with students as the assembly line products,….They just want to cookie cutter and get them out, hence the standards.” This attitude was not seem among the majority of the teachers. Another teacher went the other way to note that “I think TKES is under used. Not that I want more, but the potentials there.” Charles summed up his thought about it with, “I’m really not sure what I believe it’s for.” There was a concern among a majority of interviews that the system is, or could become, a gotcha system where the school or school system is using the TKES process as a punitive measure. Even teachers such as Benjamin who see potential in the system notes “it concerns me that it could be an, I gotcha system.” When asked if it could be a gotcha system, William, responded with “from my perspective and experiences, I think it kinda is. But I don’t think that’s the intent, but I think it kinda can be.” Kimberley who sees the system ultimately as a way to check that teachers are doing what they need to do, sees that same check as way to tell teachers that they are doing a good job, and identify those that might need assistance. She said, “Then I guess it would be on me if I felt like I needed something to go and seek out that help.” Even in the situation where the teacher sees the TKES system as helpful to the struggling teacher it is imperative that the teacher seek out that help. Eric wraps up the idea that these teachers fail to see the TKES system as
formative by saying, “Does it make good teachers better, I’m not sure.”

**Administrators matter**

A final theme that developed was that the specific administrator matters. In the interviews the two teachers from Mountaintop High School spoke positively about their principal or other administrators. Specific to the TKES process Kyle said, “Here we have great administrators, very approachable”. Heather noted, “more recently I have had administrators who understand that they are only getting a glimpse.” This is supported by the survey statement that the evaluation system was useful. Sixty percent of the responses from Mountaintop High School agreed, while only 34% of respondents across all the schools agreed with that statement. While this question did show a statistical significance in relation to the school taught Mountaintop was the only school to be over 39% agree or strongly agree on that statement. Additionally, Mountaintop High showed higher percentages of strongly agree/agree than other individual schools and the overall percentages in all of the following:

- The evaluation system was comprehensive
- The evaluation system improved my professional growth
- The evaluation system informed changes in my classroom practice
- I was satisfied with the evaluation system.
- The evaluation feedback was useful.
- The evaluation feedback was constructive.
- During the feedback meeting(s), I was encouraged to share my thoughts.

While these are not statistically significant differences, they do stand out well above the other schools. The majority of interviews only mentioned their administrators in general terms and with neutral statements, while the two teachers from Mountain Top high school spoke positively. Mountaintop had and administration change within the last two years, this could
not account for the change by itself, since the other school in the Prairieview school district also had administration change and those teachers did not have the same positive statements. Longevity does not seem to be the difference either as all three of the schools in the Riverfront district have had their principals and a majority of their administrators for several years.

Overall teachers view the TKES evaluation system as a process that is simply a check on their teaching ability, a summative type system. They see the potential that the system could be something more and something better, a formative system, but it is not there yet. This discussion section is intended to expand upon the overall findings of the research and connect it with the themes written about in detail in chapter four.

Discussion of themes

Feedback

“School leaders directly influence teachers through the feedback they provide during the teacher evaluation process”. (Tuytnes & Devos 2016, p.12) In the process of completing the study, feedback became an important area of focus. It is through this feedback that teachers draw much of their perception and meaning from the TKES system. Currently teachers see the feedback that they are receiving from administrators as limited, the comments are perceived as being taken from a pre populated list so as to satisfy the fact that comments were part of the evaluation process. The feedback is not specific to the teacher or to what the administration sees in the classroom, it is not constructive. This feedback is not helpful to the teacher in understanding the evaluation process or in making changes to their practice. What teacher’s desire is feedback that is specific, constructive, and informative. While the work done by Hirsch (2018) was about emotional responses to TKES, the teachers in that study noted the same attitudes toward feedback that are found here. If the administrator sees something that would prevent the teacher from receiving the highest possible score on an evaluation, teachers desire to know specifically what is occurring or not occurring that causes this to happen.
Teachers desire to know how to improve their teaching. Even when teachers consider themselves to be good teachers they know that they can improve on what they are doing. They desire for the feedback to be a constructive part of the process of getting better, limited non-specific feedback is not beneficial in this process. Finally, teachers desire for the feedback to be informative to their practice. Cherasaro et. al. (2016) found that teachers’ response to feedback is related to how they perceive the usefulness of that feedback. Even if the feedback is more specific and constructive than current feedback teachers desire for that feedback to be informative to their practice. Administrators can provide teachers with feedback that gives the specific examples of poor performance, of desired outcomes, or ways to change what they are doing now to improve.

Teachers and administrators

The study revealed that teachers are unsure about their own administrations level of knowledge about the TKES system. The teachers in this study did not indicate that they in anyway doubt the credibility of administrators nor did they have issue with observations being done in their classrooms. In fact, given what teachers say about the feedback they desire from administration, they desire more observations and feedback. Additionally, teachers desire for the people that are doing their observations to be able to spend more time, not less, in their classrooms and be able to see what it is actually happening and not small snapshots of activity. However, the current reality is that teachers perceive that the administrators know about as much about the TKES system as they do. Teachers perceive that for administrators, the TKES system is simply something that has to be done, and is a checkoff for administrators that already have more to do than time in their day to get it done. The data does not show any type of difficulty, or animosity, between administrators and teachers over the TKES system, it seemed more that teachers perceived themselves and administrators in this same evaluation system together.
Teacher perception of TKES

The study revealed three primary perceptions teachers have about the TKES system: (1) the scores that they receive from evaluations do not carry much meaning; (2) it is viewed as a summative system; (3) and see potential for the system to be formative.

Teachers indicated that the scores they are receiving from TKES evaluations do not carry much meaning. This stems from several factors discussed in the themes. Teachers indicated that they were unsure that if TKES evaluations were accurately measuring their teaching, better scores do not mean better teachers, and scores do not inform change in their classroom. Due to the fact that evaluators are in teachers classrooms for such a short period of time, and that scores are not paired with good feedback teachers do not give much credit to what the evaluations are telling them. As noted in the findings about feedback, teachers desire for administrators to spend more time evaluating them. This extended time paired with good feedback would provide teachers with more information and would enable them to learn more from evaluation scores. The study also indicated that teachers do not believe that getting better scores means that one is a better teacher. All of the teachers indicated that the scores are not currently telling them much, but they also noted that given the current system even when they do receive higher scores it does not indicate that it carries with it the meaning that they are a better teacher. When teachers believe that the scores carry with it meaning then they will place more importance on the score. Thus by association, this would mean that when teachers receive low scores, unless they are accompanied by good feedback, teachers may not believe that it indicates that they need to improve. Finally, since the scores are not telling teachers much about their teaching they then do not turn that information into changes in their practice. As Firestone (2014) noted teacher evaluation is often used perfunctory as a formal, technical procedure with the individual teacher without a clear contribution to professional improvement.
**TKES is perceived as a summative process**

Teachers do not use the language of summative and formative when discussing the evaluation process but they clearly indicated that they view the TKES system as a system that is being used for accountability and a check in on how teachers are doing in the classroom. All of the teachers in the interviews used language that indicated that they do not see the TKES system as a method to make better teachers, the system is only in place for the purposes of making sure that teachers are doing the minimum. Thus, teachers see the process as summative in nature and therefore the benefits that could be captured by a formative system, mainly improving the quality of teachers, will not be captured by the current system.

**Potential of system**

While teachers use language that indicates that they perceive the system to be summative they also clearly indicate that the TKES system does have potential to be formative system. As teachers discussed the system they were always coming back to how the system could be better. It was not that it needed to be scrapped all together, or that it was not worth the time, only that it needed to be fixed. Those fixes included more time available for administrators to do observations, time that needed to be taken from other responsibilities. The feedback teachers receive needs to be better, and the system has to move away from being perceived as a one that is out to get teachers. Teachers do not hate evaluation systems, in fact they see how evaluation systems can be beneficial for themselves and their teaching practice. The current form of the TKES system holds potential to be a formative evaluation system that makes better teachers.

**Implications for practice**

While teachers are the participants in this phenomena of the evaluation the implications of their perceptions of that system have practical implications for the state department of education, schools, and school systems. Reddy et al, (2016) found that improving teacher
quality and effectiveness through evaluation systems reform has become a primary concern for policymakers, school administrators, and educators alike. Tuma et. al. (2019) indicates that consistent communications, across all levels, about the potential benefits of a system would provide improved engagement from all stakeholders.

**For state department of education.**

If the GADOE desires for its evaluation system to be a formative system then they must change the current TKES system. Under the current plan established by the GADOE, teachers will begin to receive TEM scores in the 2020-2021 school year. By staying on this path and continuing to plan for this use of the TKES evaluation data the state is placing more emphasis on the summative nature of the TKES process. The state needs to decide which of the purposes, formative or summative, that it wants the evaluation system to serve. Once that is decided it can use the TKES system to meet those needs. The TKES system can go either way, however if they desire a formative system the state must train administrators to use the TKES in that way and be able to talk to teachers about how and why the system is formative. If a summative system is the goal, then similar changes are required, which would include the deletion of formative language from the TKES implementation guide.

**For school systems and schools**

While a school system or individual schools cannot change the way the state is using the information that comes from the TKES system they can decide how they wish to influence the way they are using the system with their teachers. Communication with teachers about the purposes of the system would be key for schools in getting everyone on the same page. If the schools simply wish to maintain the status quo with the state then that should be communicated to the teachers. If the schools desire for the TKES system to be a formative system, then feedback is the key. Administrators can indicate to teachers that the scores they give them on evaluations matter by providing specific, helpful feedback about why teachers received the
scores that they did. Pairing this with informal feedback will enable teachers to understand not only how to improve scores on their evaluations, if that is their goal, but also how to become a better teacher. Additionally, schools and systems can develop ways that allow for evaluators to have more time for the purposes of evaluations. This would be specific to each school, it may be represented in evaluators having more time in classrooms, or simply more time for being able to provide feedback to teachers, perhaps more time for teachers and administrators to meet together. Schools and school systems cannot by themselves remove the summative purposes nor change the perception of teachers about the system as a whole, but they can make the TKES a system that makes more of a difference for their teachers.

**Relation of findings to relevant literature**

The teachers in this study are evaluated in much the same way that teachers across the country are, brief observations with a standardized form. Some of that is expected as the state requires that public school teachers be evaluated using the TEKS method and the rubric that are part of that.

However, there was more than one teacher that expressed concerns with the standardized nature of the process. These teachers disclosed this as an area of concern and a way for the system to improve, confirming the research presented in chapter two (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015; Weisberg, et al, 2009; Wind, et. al., 2018).

As Johnson (1990) had reported the teachers in this study were not using the evaluations as way to improve their practice, they were just trying to meet the needs of the evaluation system. When this is the case teachers do not innovate and teach to the evaluation tool (Hopkins et. al., 2016). As referenced in the themes of the study most teachers were happy with getting the threes that they were told are the targets. No teacher indicated that they used or had thought about using the observations as a way to try something new. Nor were the visits for growth as (Kauchak, et. al., 1985), reported.
The attitudes of teachers towards the evaluation system is largely driven by the feedback that they are getting from the evaluations. Stronge and Tucker (2003) found that feedback that is meaningful, through good evaluation of teachers, can lead to significant improvement in classroom performance. Teachers in this study indicated that the type of feedback that would accomplish this for them would be specific, and constructive. Like the feedback that Johnson (1990) suggested that teachers prefer, thoughtful candid appraisals of their work to blanket commendations. What teachers reported that they are getting is not what Cherasaro, Brodersen, Reale, & Yanoski (2016) suggested when they found that feedback to teachers should be specific in ways to improve content and subject knowledge.

Teachers revealed that evaluations and scores do not inform or change their practice. Clipa (2015) noted this same finding. Datnow & Castellano (2000) found that teachers will sometimes simply ignore the information that does not coincide with their beliefs. While the teachers did not indicate that the system did not fit with their beliefs when the teachers convey that the scores have no meaning, and do not inform what they are doing, or inspire changes in their practice. For practical purposes they are ignoring the system. Therefore when Reddy, et. al. (2016) find that the ultimate success of evaluation systems depends on how those that are affected by the policy interpret it and how they interact with it, it would seem that these systems are in danger of being ineffective.

Johnson (1990) asserted that good systems have good supervisors. The results from this study indicate that is true. The survey data along with the interviews show that at some schools the reactions of teachers to at least parts of the system were different and this was due to the administrator’s role in the evaluation and feedback.

Limitations

The study was conducted in two Georgia School systems that were geographically close to each other. The two systems contain five high schools with approximately five hundred
secondary teachers. As the study was only examining secondary (9-12) teachers the potential to apply the findings of this study to other grade levels may not be appropriate, even though those teachers are being evaluated by the same system. The study interviewed nine teachers, two from, each of the schools with the exception of one, where only one teacher volunteered for the interview process. All of the teachers that were interviewed were Caucasian and all but one hold advanced degrees. Two thirds of the interviews have more than five years of experience. The survey had 80 participants say yes to the informed consent and answer the basic demographic questions, only 70 started the questions about evaluations and 64 completed the survey, approximately 12% of the eligible participants. There were not enough responses to the survey to establish a satisfactory sample size to be able to say with satisfactory confidence that the results of the survey can be extended to all of the teachers in these two school systems. It is possible that a low number of survey completion at one school could skew the data for that specific school when examining the percentages across schools. Two concerns prior to the study were one, demand characteristics (Orne, 1962) and two, respondent fatigue. Demand characteristics are described as the desire for the survey respondent to respond to the questions in the manner in which they believe that the researcher desires for them to answer. Respondent fatigue occurs when respondents grow tired of the task and the quality of the data begins to decline (Lavrakas, 2008). When evaluating the guideline provided by Lavrakas (2008) this study hoped to keep this at a minimum through no open ended questions on the survey and breaking the questions into sections. However, it cannot guarantee that it will was eliminated altogether. It does not appear that demand characteristic or respondent fatigue affected the study with over 90% of people who started the questions on the evaluation finishing the survey and the data seems to stay consistent across the scope of the questions. Any study carries with it aspects of the design, participants, or methodology that limit the scope of the study or its findings. Teacher evaluations create stress and, therefore, can cause teachers to develop strong
feelings about that system. In doing a study where volunteers were sought, it is possible that those teachers that have very strong feelings towards the system were more likely to volunteer, thus causing a skewed sample.

**Implications for future research**

As noted in the limitations, this research only assessed the perceptions of teachers in two school systems. Expansion of this research to more teachers across the state, at both the secondary level and below, would make it possible to assess if these themes and implications carry beyond this research. This would allow for the decision makers at the system and state level to have the necessary information to make changes to the TKES system that would enable it to reach the purpose they desire, making better teachers.

Teachers in this study show the importance of administrators and the role that they play in the evaluation process. The perception of administrators into the TKES system is an area that needs further research. As the frontline in the process of evaluating teachers if they do not see the process as formative, or do not desire to make the process formative, even if the state of Georgia wants, and develops such a process, it will not be successful.

The survey data generated several questions that showed statistical significance. While all of those questions would not warrant further research the two questions that showed significance when related to subject taught should be examined. In these questions teachers of particular subjects found the system to align better or improve the quality of instruction. This is supported by interview data that remarked that the TKES system could be more personalized.

**Researcher Comments**

I believe that this research shows that teachers do not view the TKES as a formative evaluation process. The interviews all used language that show their perceptions center around the idea that the evaluation is there to check in on teachers, not to make them better. The results of the survey support this assertion both as a whole, and through specific questions. The
GADOE, clearly states in the literature for the TKES system that it is the purpose of the system to make better teachers (GADOE, 2018). However, that same system is planning to use the data from TKES to determine if teachers renew their certificates at their current level (GADOE, 2018). When teachers have the opportunity to share their areas of need, have meaningful conversations with evaluators, and receive constructive feedback then the evaluation process will make better teachers. The research is there to show how this process should work, it is up to the state of Georgia to make a commitment to the process of improving teachers. However, they must make the TKES process truly formative and separate the formative and summative process. The current system, at least as this research shows, is not beneficial to teachers. Peterson (2004) notes that evaluation systems that use “complex data-gathering techniques” are not really necessary to identify teachers with bad practice. There are many ways that the state, systems, and teachers can work together to improve the current system, or develop a replacement system. It takes however a commitment on the part of all stakeholders to use the research available to make a system work that will truly improve the practice of teachers.
References


Deani, T., & Wieczorek, D., (2019) What did we learn from the race to the top teacher evaluation systems?. *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice,* 16(2), 18-34, (Accession Number 137675773)


Appendix A

Initial email to teachers

My name is Kevin Trobaugh, I am a doctoral candidate enrolled in the Secondary Education program at Kennesaw State University. I am inviting you to participate in a research study that is being done as part of my dissertation requirements and will analyze the perception of secondary teachers in regards to the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System or TKES. You have been identified as a teacher in your school system and therefore selected as a possible participant. This research has been approved by the IRB board at KSU….(pertinent IRB information here)

There are two ways in which you can participate:

1) You can complete an anonymous survey that can be found at this link (hyperlink). This will take 15-20 minutes of your time and will ask your perceptions about aspects of the TKES evaluation.

2) I am also seeking volunteers for one-on-one interviews about the same topic. These will be conducted at a location of your choice and pseudonyms will be used in all research materials. If you would like to volunteer or would like more information about this portion of the research please go here (hyperlink)

Participation in any aspect of this research is completely voluntary.

If you have any questions about this research or anything pertaining to the study please email me at ktrobaugh@students.kennesaw.edu.
Appendix B

Informed Consent Information on Survey website

Thank you for your time in the completion of this survey. This information is anonymous and the data that is generated here will be used in my research of teachers’ perceptions of the TKES evaluation system. This has been approved by the Kennesaw State University IRB (IRB approval information here)

Your completion of this survey indicates that you are agree to participate and are doing so willingly. You also understand the information provided above and have the right to withdraw your consent at any time. If you have questions please do not complete the survey and contact me at ktroaug@students.kennesaw.edu

Thank you,

Kevin Trobaugh
Appendix C

Informed Consent on Interview Website

Thank you for your interest in my research into teacher perceptions of the TKES evaluation system as a step in my doctoral work at Kennesaw State University. The information that you provide here will be used to find participants for a qualitative section of the research.

If selected you will be asked to do the following:

Meet with the researcher, myself, at a location and time of your choice.
Participate in a semi-structured interview that would be audio recorded.
Provide me with your TKES observation results (optional)

Pseudonyms will be used in all research reporting.

You will be allowed to review your specific data to confirm that it matches with your intended meanings. As a participant you can withdraw your consent and withdraw from the study at any time.

By completing this form you acknowledge that you understand all of the previous information and agree to participate in the research study, and are aware of your right to stop participation at any time.

If you have any questions please contact me at ktrobaug@students.kennesaw.edu
Thank you,

Kevin Trobaugh

(Questions on this form)

Name:

Personal contact email (non-school email):

Contact phone number (non-school number):

School:

Subjects taught:

Years taught (all years):

Education level:
### Appendix D

#### Interview Sample

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<td>21+</td>
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Hi Kevin,

Please find attached our published survey. You have permission to use this in your study with the appropriate citations.

Sincerely,

Dr. Reddy
Appendix F

Teacher Evaluation Experiences Survey – Teacher Form (TEES-T)
Reddy, Dudek, Kettler, Kurz, & Peters © 2015 Rutgers University

All statements have a Likert Scale choices:

1- Strongly Disagree
2-Disagree
3- Neutral
4- Agree
5- Strongly Agree

**Evaluation System construct**

1  The evaluation system was useful.

2  The evaluation system communicated clear expectations for classroom teaching.

3  The evaluation system helped to improve the quality of instruction.

4  The evaluation system was comprehensive.

5  The evaluation system helped to improve student learning.

6  The evaluation system assessed my effectiveness as a teacher.

7  The evaluation system assessed my teachers' effectiveness.

8  The evaluation system improved my professional growth.

9  The evaluation system improved my teachers' professional growth.

10 The evaluation system represented my instructional ability.

11 The evaluation system informed changes in my classroom practice

12 The evaluation system informed changes in my teachers' classroom practices.

13 I was satisfied with the evaluation system.
Evaluation Feedback construct

1. The evaluation feedback was useful.
2. The evaluation feedback was timely.
3. The evaluation feedback was specific.
4. The evaluation feedback was constructive.
5. The evaluation feedback helped to improve my instructional effectiveness.
6. The evaluation feedback represented my instructional ability.
7. The evaluation feedback informed specific changes in my classroom practice.
8. The evaluation feedback was aligned with the National Teaching Standards.
9. The evaluation feedback was aligned with Core Curriculum Content Standards.
10. The evaluation feedback was aligned with the grade level(s) I teach.
11. The evaluation feedback was aligned with the subject(s) that I teach.
12. The evaluation feedback was aligned with the school instructional improvement goals.
13. The evaluation feedback was aligned with the school district goals.
14. The evaluation feedback provided information for professional development opportunities.
15. I was satisfied with the feedback I received from my teacher evaluation.

Evaluation Process construct

1. During the feedback meeting(s), I was able to share my thoughts.
2. During the feedback meeting(s), I was encouraged to share my thoughts.
3. My self-reflections on the observed lesson(s) were included in my evaluation.
4. Prior to my observation(s), I had the opportunity to discuss my lesson plan goals with my evaluator(s).
5 After my observation(s), I had the opportunity to discuss my lesson plan and goals with my evaluator(s).

6 During the feedback meeting(s), my evaluator collaborated with me on identifying my professional goals.

7 I was satisfied with the discussion(s) of my performance.

**Motivation to Change construct**

1 I was motivated to make changes to my classroom practice.

2 I was motivated to make changes that contributed to the achievement of district goals.

3 The teacher evaluation system increased my motivation to change my classroom practice.

4 The school environment supported my commitment to change my classroom practice.

5 The teacher evaluation system provided professional development opportunities that motivated me to change my classroom practice.

6 The teacher evaluation system will provide monetary incentives, which motivated me to change my classroom practice.
Appendix G

Demographic Questions for Survey

How many full years have you taught:
- 0-2
- 3-5
- 5-10
- 10-15
- 15-20
- 20+

What is your gender:
- Male
- Female
- Other

What school system do you teach in:
- System A (identified in survey)
- System B

Which school do you teach at:
(Schools listed in survey)

What is your primary subject area:
- Math
- Science
- Social Studies
- English/Language Arts
- Special Education
- Physical Education
- Fine Arts
- Other
## Appendix H

<table>
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<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1.03</td>
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<td>System communicated clear expectations for classroom teaching</td>
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<td>0.85</td>
<td>70</td>
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<td>0.95</td>
<td>69</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.05</td>
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<td>70</td>
</tr>
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<td>System helped to improve student learning</td>
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<td>2.3</td>
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<td>0.72</td>
<td>70</td>
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<td>System assessed my effectiveness as a teacher</td>
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<td>69</td>
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<td>2.76</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>70</td>
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<td>2.67</td>
<td>1.01</td>
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<td>70</td>
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<td>Kurtosis</td>
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<td>-----------------------</td>
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<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
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<td>Evaluation feedback informed specific changes in my classroom practice.</td>
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<td>3.41</td>
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<td>3.63</td>
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<td>2.66</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.01</td>
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<td>I was satisfied with the feedback I received from my teacher evaluation.</td>
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<td>3.52</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>1.14</td>
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<td>3.72</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prior to my observation(s). I had the opportunity to discuss my lesson plan goals with my evaluator(s).</td>
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<td>3.52</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1.03</td>
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<td>0.90</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.66</td>
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<td>I was motivated to make changes to my classroom practice.</td>
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<td>2.59</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>64</td>
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<td>2.60</td>
<td>1.02</td>
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motivated me to change my classroom practice. | 1 | 5 | 1.6 | 0.77 | 0.59 | 63
Teacher evaluation system will provide monetary incentives, which motivated me to change my classroom practice. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
Appendix I

Semi–Structured Interview Questions

When you think back on the observations done by administrators in your classroom what are your experiences like?

What do you believe are the purposes of evaluations?

When you receive your observation scores (either walkthrough or formative) what do those scores tell you?

What feedback do you receive from those evaluations?

How does the TKES system inform your teaching practice?

What do you expect from the TKES evaluation process?

What do you believe is the purpose of the TKES system?
Appendix J

TKES Performance Standards

Planning

1. Professional Knowledge: The teacher demonstrates an understanding of the curriculum, subject content, pedagogical knowledge, and the needs of students by providing relevant learning experiences.

2. Instructional Planning: The teacher plans using state and local school district curricula and standards, effective strategies, resources, and data to address the differentiated needs of all students.

Instructional Delivery

3. Instructional Strategies: The teacher promotes student learning by using research-based instructional strategies relevant to the content to engage students in active learning and to facilitate the students’ acquisition of key knowledge and skills.

4. Differentiated Instruction: The teacher challenges and supports each student’s learning by providing appropriate content and developing skills which address individual learning differences.

Assessment of and for learning

5. Assessment Strategies: The teacher systematically chooses a variety of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment strategies and instruments that are valid and appropriate for the content and student population.

6. Assessment Uses: The teacher systematically gathers, analyzes, and uses relevant data to measure student progress, to inform instructional content and delivery methods, and to provide timely and constructive feedback to both students and parents.

Learning Environment

7. Positive Learning Environment: The teacher provides a well-managed, safe, and orderly environment that is conducive to learning and encourages respect for all.

8. Academically Challenging Environment: The teacher creates a student-centered, academic environment in which teaching and learning occur at high levels and students are self-directed learners.

Professionalism and Communication

9. Professionalism: The teacher exhibits a commitment to professional ethics and the school’s mission, participates in professional growth opportunities to support student learning, and
contributes to the profession.

10. Communication: The teacher communicates effectively with students, parents or guardians, district and school personnel, and other stakeholders in ways that enhance student learning.