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Measuring the effects of an observational format on the professional growth of the faculty at Lake Tract School

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Recommended Citation

MEASURING THE EFFECTS OF AN OBSERVATIONAL FORMAT

ON THE PROFESSIONAL GROWTH OF THE FACULTY

AT LAKE TRACT SCHOOL

By
Shelli Doran

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts in School Administration Degree
Of
The Graduate School
At
Rowan University
May 2004

Approved by
Professor

Date Approved _____

ABSTRACT

Shelli Doran
Measuring the Effects of an Observation Format on the
Professional Growth of the Faculty at Lake Tract School
2003/04
Dr. Ronald Capasso
Master of Arts in School Administration

The purpose of this study was to design a new teacher observation format used by

the building mentors of Lake Tract School in observing the participants. The format

revolved around the use of pre and post conferences based on a cognitive coaching

approach in order to gain professional development and growth. A total of ten tenured

and non-tenured teachers participated in the study. All faculties were surveyed as to their

perceptions of the current observational format. The data was analyzed using

percentages and the responses of the survey guided the creation of the format. Each

participant attended a pre-conference to establish a weakness, was observed teaching a

lesson, and also attended a post conference to discuss the findings. Participants were

interviewed upon conclusion of the study on their perceptions and abilities to develop

professionally through the use of the new tool. The teachers reported they preferred

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all of the staff members who let me use them and their experiences to conduct this study. I would also like to thank the principal of Lake Tract School for her support and guidance throughout my internship experience. I would like to thank my mother for always editing my assignments and allowing me to become the writer I am today. Most of all, I would like to thank my fiancé for leaving me alone and giving me time to complete all of the requirements of this experience. Now I can get to work planning our wedding!!

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Education must be on the cutting edge of the information age to meet the ever-growing need of student achievement. Curriculum and programs must strive to coincide with the standards set forth by the nation and state. Children are held accountable for their learning and are remediated if they fail to succeed at or above expected levels. Teachers also need to be held accountable. New Jersey has instituted the need to obtain 100 professional development hours over the course of a five-year period. Unfortunately, teachers in the Deptford Township School District seem to provide hours for events that are required such as attendance at an opening day faculty meetings. These types of activities alone do not seem to be developing the professional.

The current evaluation process also does not fully serve as a constructive method for learning and expanding the capabilities of a teacher. It is administratively driven with little input from the instructor. Suggestions are seldom made for improvement and follow up observations are never conducted. If children are being held accountable for poor performance, the teachers should be as well.

This proposal seeks to develop and implement a new observation format to better enable the professional to flourish and grow. Participants will be tenured and non-tenured teachers. Participating tenured teachers will improve instruction to raise student achievement. Participating non-tenured teachers will grow professionally to eliminated failure, improve the delivery of instruction, and ultimately increase student achievement.

A survey will be distributed to the faculty of Lake Tract School to assess the current perceptions of the existing observation format. The data will provide direction for the creation of a new observation form. A pre-conference, which consists of a meeting between the building mentor and the teacher, will be utilized to target an instructional weakness. Guided by the discussion in the pre-conference, the mentor will observe the teacher using the new observation form. After the observation, the teacher will complete a self-reflection of the lesson. Both parties meet again in a post conference to review the findings. The purpose of the post conference is to allow the teacher to provide a self-corrective plan for improvement. The entire process will be repeated to ensure the plan has been activated and a new weakness then is targeted. All participants will gather at an informal meeting to discuss their perceptions of the format and the information will be logged. All data will be analyzed to show the effectiveness of the new observation format.

This study will be of significance to the participants and the administration and will result in improved instruction, which will lead to increased student achievement. If successful, implementation across the district may be possible. This study will provide the teachers with the opportunity to truly develop professionally.

Focus of the Study

The intern wants to design and implement a new teacher observation format to be used by the building mentors at Lake Tract Elementary School in evaluating tenured and non-tenured teachers in order to enhance performance and increase student achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to design a new teacher observation format to be used by the building mentors of Lake Tract School in observing the faculty using pre and post

conferences revolving around the observation form. At this stage of the research the observational procedure will be defined as a pre observation-conference discussing the behavior to be observed, followed by the use of a new observational form, concluding with a post observation conference to discuss the results of the observation. Repeating the process will allow the mentor to see if the suggestions discussed have been utilized.

<u>Definitions</u>

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): Federally mandated program that will ensure the success of all children. Every teacher, by the end of 2005-2006 school year working in a public school, must be "highly qualified". This means that a teacher is certified and has demonstrated proficiency in his or her subject matter, either by having majored in the subject in college of by passing a subject-knowledge test.

Present teacher observation form: Evaluations are given to non-tenured teachers three times a year and tenured teachers once over the course of the year. This is a formative evaluation grading the teacher in several categories on a needs improvement (NI), satisfactory (S) or unsatisfactory (U). A suggestions and comments section is provided but often not utilized.

Pre observation conference: The teachers are engaged in a meeting with the observer before the observation and strengths and weaknesses are discussed. One area is targeted as a weakness and the observer agrees to focus upon this aspect during the observation.

Initial Observation: The teacher is observed for a 30-minute period instructing a lesson of his or her choosing. The observer focuses on the aspects discussed in the pre-conference and also notes any additional observations made during the time period.

New Observational Form: The observer uses this form during the observation of the participant. The observer is instructed to focus on the areas discussed in the pre conference. This form will serve as a data collection instrument. It exists of six areas of focus.

Post observation conference: This takes place after the observation is held. The teacher and the observer meet again to discuss the observed lesson and direction is given for improvements to be made. This conference must take place within two days of the observed lesson. The pair then agrees on an additional observation time to show how these suggestions have been implemented into the teacher's new style of teaching.

Second Observation: The observer comes into the classroom for a second time to find evidence of the suggestions taking place. Also, at the second pre conference, the teacher identifies a second weakness in instruction or area of improvement. This is the focus of the second observation.

Final post conference: The teacher and observer meet again to discuss the changes and also the professional growth of the teacher.

Limitations of the Study

The findings of this study cannot be generalized to any other group of teachers. The sample size is small and only includes those who were selected to participate based on their number of years teaching at Lake Tract School. Time may also serve as a limitation since this procedure is more time consuming than the current practice. The building mentors may not be able to complete the required observations of the project.

Setting of the Study

Deptford Township is located in Southern New Jersey and is approximately 15 miles outside Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The population of Deptford Township is currently

26,763 and it spans 17.56 square miles. (Courier Post Newspaper [On-line]). The population is steadily increasing due to the construction of new housing developments.

The township government has a Mayor and six Council members. The township is in the First Congressional District and the Fifth Legislative District.

In 2000 there were 10,013 households residing in Deptford Township. The average homeowner residency was 13.2 years with the average resident approximately 37.3 years of age. The township demographics are as follows: Caucasian-83.4%, African American-12.4%, Hispanic- 1.7%, and American Indian and other- less than 1%.

Deptford Township has a 94.8% employment rate. Unemployment in the township is a low 5.2%. The majority of occupations held in the district are management, professional, sales, and office occupations. These comprise 56.5% of the population. The median township household income is $50, 147 and the median assessment of a home is $106,000. Residents pay an estimated tax of $2,957 on a median valued home. For the 2003-2004 school year, the cost per pupil is $7,528 with 59.8% of the taxes to be paid by the local tax and 39.3% to be paid by the state.

Budget elections have been successful in the past for Deptford Township. Seven consecutive years the residents have agreed to the tax hikes. Two years ago, Deptford Township School District sought to past a $30 million bond referendum for renovations to existing buildings and the construction of an early childhood center. The public denied the bond the first time and forced the school district to try again. The second time the bond referendum was passed. In April 2001, however, the budget was defeated. Many residents felt they had already passed the referendum and the new budget increase was uncalled for at

the time. In April of 2003, the school budget passed again by a slim nine votes. Today, the construction is almost completed and the Deptford Township School District will become the focal point of the community.

This community may not view higher education as a top priority since many of the community members did not go on to receive post secondary degrees. An analysis of the communities' educational background yielded the following results: 20% of residents have less than a high school degree, 40.4% are high school graduated, 18.2% have some college with no acquired degree, 6.2% have an Associates Degree, 11% have received a Bachelors Degree and 4.2% have earned a Graduates Degree. The amount of schooling attained by the residents may be a direct impact on the passing of the budgets and the view of education as a whole.

Deptford Township School District is a comprehensive pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade school system. There are six elementary schools from grades pre-kindergarten through six that house 2,279 students. The middle school comprised of grades seven and eight currently has 682 students enrolled. The high school, grades nine through twelve, houses 1,137 students. Deptford Township also has a school which 28 severely special education children attend.

The Deptford School District has aligned its entire curriculum with the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. All the students in grades pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade are being challenged using the best educational practices and materials. The new Everyday Mathematics program has been adopted for grades kindergarten through fifth with two pilot programs in sixth grade as well as Accelerated Math in grades seven and eight. A new social studies program has been adopted for grades

kindergarten through second. The district is implementing the Rigby reading program in grades kindergarten through fourth with several pilots in grades five through twelve. Additional courses have been added to the high school requirements that include technology, graphics animation, and forensic science. High school students have also had the pleasure of participating in distance learning. The teachers are given the opportunity to enroll in the University of Pennsylvania's on-site graduate level course Penn Literacy and several professional development opportunities are provided throughout the school year.

The Deptford Township School District has a total enrollment of 4,126 students according to the district's December 2002 report. The ethnic breakdown is as follows: Caucasian- 74%, African American- 20%, Hispanic-3%, Asian or Pacific Islander- 2%, and American Indian- less than 1%. Lunch assistance is offered to any family meeting the criteria. It was found that 24% of students in the district receive free lunch and 11% of the students are eligible for reduced lunch prices (New Jersey School Report Card 01-02).

Deptford Township School District employs 19 full-time administrators (90% Caucasian and 10% Minority) and 6 part-time administrators and supervisors (100% Caucasian). There are 344 educational professionals (91% Caucasian and 9% Minority) and 195 support staff (89% Caucasian and 12% Minority). The average salary of the district employees is $49,945 and the average number of years in service is 12.

This study will involve Lake Tract Elementary School. Lake Tract School houses pre-kindergarten through sixth grade students with a population of 607. There are 74.4% Caucasian students and 23.6% Minority students. The average class size is 24.5. One Principal administers the school with a student/faculty ratio of 19.3:1. The faculty

attendance rate of 98.2% is higher than the state average. Of the faculty 89% hold a Bachelor's Degree and 11% have attained their Master's Degree. There are several teachers new to the district and building this coming school year. In addition, there are three teachers leaving for maternity obligations.

Organization of the Study

The remainder of the study will be presented as follows: Chapter 2- Review of the Literature, Chapter 3- Design of the Study, Chapter 4- Presentation of Research Findings, and Chapter 5- Conclusions, Implications, and Further Study.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

<u>Introduction</u>

In today's educational world, teachers are expected to remain life-long learners. It is no longer acceptable that a teacher receives his or her degree from an institution and is finished with his or her education. Currently, there are standards in place to address the need for continuing education. New Jersey has initiated the requirement of 100 professional development hours. These hours of professional development must be obtained over a five-year span. The purpose is to ensure quality of education and to enhance instructional goals and ultimately service the students in the best possible manner. With the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), teacher quality will also play an important role in the education of our youth.

Current evaluation methods of teachers do not account for growth and change of an individual. In the Deptford Township School District tenured teachers are evaluated once a year and non-tenured teachers are evaluated three times within a year. The administrator completes the evaluation tool without input from the professional. Professionals are not provided the opportunity to improve their teaching techniques and reflect on their practices. The amount of growth a teacher may gain from the current tool is minimal and it is often viewed as a burden rather than a means of improvement. The intern seeks to design and implement a new teacher observation format to be used by the building mentors at Lake Tract School in evaluating tenured and non-tenured teachers to allow for maximum professional growth, to enhance performance, and ultimately increase student achievement.

The literature has been reviewed to understand the components of professional development and to provide a clear direction for the creation of a new evaluation form.

Professional Development and Teacher Quality

The New Jersey Professional Teaching Standards Board has developed their definition of professional development. It states that educators are viewed as "dedicated to a continuous plan of professional development that begins with their pre-service activities, that continues through their induction into the profession, and that extends through the life of their professional career in education through on-going and sustained professional development endeavors". Educators should seek to improve their skills, practice, and methods. Teachers must strive to meet the needs of the entire learning community and professional development activities should coincide with personal objectives as well as district-wide objectives.

Professional development is the guide for instructional methods. Teachers consistently update their data bank in order to deliver the best techniques to their students. It helps teachers learn new roles and strategies that will improve student performance. Curriculum approaches are constantly fluctuating and professional development allows educators to have the latest data and information on the effectiveness of such programs.

Teacher quality also has an impact on the amount of learning that takes place in a classroom. As reported in Education week, studies conducted in Tennessee show that "the difference in achievement between students who attended classes taught by high-quality versus those taught by low-quality teachers for three consecutive years is

approximately 50 percentile points on standardized tests" (McCabe, 2003). Teacher quality is difficult to measure. Many states require teachers to pass a knowledge exam at the completion of a certification program.

Teacher quality is a central component in educational policy. The federal No Child Left Behind act of 2001 (NCLB) requires that "by the end of 2005-06 school year, every public school teacher must be highly qualified". The NCLB definition of "highly qualified" means that a "teacher is certified and has demonstrated proficiency in his or her subject matter, either by having majored in the subject in college or passing a subject-knowledge test". Research clearly correlates highly qualified teachers to high achievement levels of students (Sanders & Rivers, 1996).

More importantly to the issue of highly qualified teachers is accountability. College institutions are strengthening their requirements of teacher preparation programs. State exam scores are currently reported. However, pass rates differ from state to state and it is difficult to hold institutions accountable for teacher preparation programs. Quality Counts 2003 reported that there is a gap in the number of highly qualified teachers teaching in low-income areas. The report examines what states are doing to attract, keep, and support highly qualified teachers for high-need schools. It also includes findings from a survey of 30 large school districts about attempts to improve teacher quality, particularly for students who need skilled teachers most. Quality Counts 2003 shows that "five states have taken their accountability issues further by holding their graduates of teacher-training programs accountable in a classroom setting" (Olson, 2003).

Adults as Learners

In order for professionals to change and develop, it is important to focus on how adults learn. During the past decade researchers have focused on different learning styles of adults and children. Knowles (1980) was the first to refer to the "art of teaching adults as andragogy". This theory is based on the following assumptions:

- Adults are more self-directed than children.

- Adults have more experiences that can be used as learning resources.

- Adults have internal incentives.

- Adults learn for specific purposes

- Adults immediately want to apply what they are learning.

Adults as learners seek to find the knowledge they require. Adult learners actively participate in their learning and assume responsibility for it. Drawing on past experiences becomes more prevalent since adults hold more life experiences than children. Connections are established quickly and, if the information meets the need of the learner, it is maintained. Adults are more self-directed than children. They take control of their own learning and set their own learning goals. They are able to locate resources, decide which learning methods to use, and evaluate their progress. Adults are also goal orientated (Schugurensky, 1970).

Pratt (1988), however, suggests that a number of variables exist that affect adult learners. These may include the teacher or learner's personality, the environment, and the level of need for the knowledge. In some circumstances, the learner may need the information because they lack current skills. Learners may also need support because

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they are not committed to the learning process or they lack confidence. Pratt's learning model suggests that learners decide what to learn and how to carry out the learning process and their competence to do so (Imel, 1994).

According to Newman (1994) adults learn best when they are involved in a learning community. Newman suggests that a learning community consists of "school staff members taking collective responsibility for a shared educational purpose, and collaborating with one another to achieve that purpose" (p. 1). Lockwood (1995) also defines a learning community as "teachers collaborating to make shared decisions". Teachers are considered active participants in professional development and try to refine their knowledge and strategies.

Motivation is another aspect of adult learning. There are six factors serving as sources of motivation for adult learning (Lieb, 1991). Social relationships are motivation to make new friends and meet the need for associations and friendships. External expectations exist for the learner to comply with instruction from someone else. This is viewed as the formal authority. Social welfare is another source of motivation. Learners are motivated to improve their ability to serve mankind. Personal advancement motivates learners to achieve higher status in a job, secure a profession, and stay above competitors. To relieve boredom, learners are motivated by escape and stimulation. Finally, motivation is influenced by cognitive interest. Learners learn for the sake of learning. They seek knowledge to quench their own inquiring minds.

Lieb (1991) also suggests that barriers play a role against adult learning. The typical barriers are money, time, confidence, and interest. When barriers weigh against motivation learning seems to diminish. True learning takes place when a balance between barriers and motivation exists. If the reasons for learning are enhanced and barriers are decreased, the adult is able to learn.

In order to establish an educational program for adults, Knowles (1980) suggests that certain conditions must exist. Programs should have a respect factor. Adults are seeking this knowledge and should be respected for their effort and not treated like children. They should allow for self-direction and empowerment. Participation in the program is paramount for the adult learner. Learners' experiences should be capitalized.

In addition to Knolwes' recommendations, Speck (1996) adds that learners should have their objectives connected to the real world. Adult learners need to be able to apply their learning to day-to-day activities. Support should be given and feedback is encouraged.

Current Evaluation Procedures

Evaluating a professional is extremely time consuming for the administrator. Evaluations may take the form of either summative or formative. A summative evaluation is used to determine the overall effectiveness of the professional. It is conducted at the end of a school year. Good and efficient evaluation improves, shapes and forms practice (formative evaluations), makes summary judgments about merit and value for decision-making (summative evaluation), and watches for changes or problems that require quick term judgment and action (monitoring evaluation). Merit is the quality

or goodness of the performance itself; value is the worth or importance to the District, and decision-making includes status judgments of tenure, retention, remediation, and award of leadership positions.

New trends are emerging for evaluating the professional. Peer coaching teams are being established. The teacher identifies the growth area he or she wants to work on during instruction. Teachers invite other teachers into to observe their lessons and focus on the growth area. A post conference is usually held to discuss the findings. This means of professional growth is seen as non-threatening since the administrator is not the person observing. A trust relationship must be formed for participants to remain honest and objective. These teams may remain intact for a year or more to continue growth and support.

Close to the idea of peer coaching is cognitive coaching. Cognitive coaching also uses a three-phase system including a pre-conference, observation, and post-conference. This process is used to solely assist the teacher to improve teaching techniques and reflection practices. The teacher, not the coach, evaluates the lesson in the post-conference discussion. To implement this form of growth, extensive training needs to be given to the teacher coaches. They need to remain objective and allow the teacher to self-monitor, self-analyze, and self-evaluate (Garmston, 1993).

Action research is also being implemented as professional growth plan. Teachers are permitted to select an area to be studied and to be improved. Usually, when action research is selected, the participants meet with administrators and other teachers to discuss their findings. These findings could be generalized to a larger population when permitted (Barkley & Cohn, 1999).

Personal growth plans can also be utilized. The teacher decides the area for improvement and then, in writing, expresses how he or she will accomplish the task at hand. This may include coursework, workshops, seminars, reading professional books, and collaboration in study groups. This teacher developed plan also includes how the information learned can be assessed and evaluated (Barkley & Cohn, 1999).

Portfolios can be maintained as evidence of growth and improvement. Teachers collect items that document their current skill level and achieved growth. These could include a specially designed unit of study, student work samples, letters from parents or community members, and other similar material. In this instance, the portfolio serves as a collection of data not just a 45-minute observed lesson.

Team evaluation is also a new concept to the educational field. Commonly referred to as 360-degree feedback, this form of evaluation has existed in the medical and business fields for several years. This form of evaluation involves parents, students, administrators, and other teachers providing feedback for directional improvement of the professional. There are two main reasons schools are beginning to implement the 360-degree feedback evaluation. First, student achievement does not improve when a teacher is evaluated with a single evaluation form (Manatt, 1997). Secondly, conventional evaluation does not "sort" the findings of the evaluation. This results in everyone getting high ratings.

This form of evaluation allows for performance to improve year after year. A five-year study of the 360-degree feedback for educators was conducted in the Hot Springs County School District in Thermopolis, Wyoming. It was reported that a 15 percent increase in achievement across subjects was measured by the state standardized test. This increase was correlated to the use of the feedback program (Manatt, 1997).

If implementation of the 360-degree feedback program is not practical, some districts are turning to the parents and students. Teachers send home surveys about instruction, daily routines, interactions, etc. with the students. Parents and students complete the surveys and return them to the teacher. The teacher is then able to understand the perspective of both the parent and student and make changes accordingly. These surveys are not shared with the administrator, but are solely for professional development purposes and not evaluation (Mathews, 2000).

Components of a Good Evaluation Tool

With an abundance of evaluation tools developed today, what are the components of an effective one? This next section will address the components of a good system. According to Danielson and McGreal (2000) an "effective teacher evaluation system is far more complex than the forms and should contain three essential elements:

- A coherent definition of the domain of teaching (the what?) including decisions concerning the standard for acceptable performance (How good is good enough?)
- Techniques and procedures for assessing all aspects of teaching (the How?)
- Trainer evaluators who can make consistent judgments about performance, based on evidence of the teaching manifested in the procedures.

Many perspectives should be accumulated during the process. Teachers, administrators, and the teacher's association should be elicited. Teacher evaluations are designed to serve two purposes: to measure teacher competence and to foster professional development and growth. Therefore, teachers should be given useful feedback on the classroom needs, the opportunity to learn new teaching techniques, and council from principals and other teachers on how to make changes in the classroom (Boyd, 1989).

There are four components of professional practice (**Provided by Educational Testing Service**). The first domain includes planning and preparation. This domain focuses on student backgrounds, understanding of the content to be taught, and the design of instruction and assessment. The second domain is the classroom environment. This domain includes the teacher's skill for creating a classroom suitable for learning. Managing classroom procedures, student behaviors, and organizing physical space are expectations in this domain. The third domain is instruction. This includes the teacher's ability to engage students in learning and the techniques and strategies used to do so. Teachers are evaluated on their communication skills, discussion and questioning techniques, and abilities to be flexible and responsive to the students. The last domain covers professional responsibilities. This section considers the teacher's additional professional responsibilities including reflection and communication with parents. Service to the school, district, and professional growth are weighted in this domain.

Evaluators must first set these domains areas and include specific procedures and standards. The standards should relate to important teaching skills, be as objective as possible, be clearly communicated to the teacher before the evaluation begins and be linked to professional development. The standards of performance must be clear.

Evaluation criteria must be obtainable. For example, if teachers are going to be evaluated on communications with parents, the opportunity for such communication must be made possible (Boye, 1989).

For the struggling professional not meeting the standards set forth by the district, assistance must be offered. Additional professional development should be provided and teachers should be given the opportunity to observe a successful professional or have a grade level partner mentor them (Danielson and McGreal, 2000).

Evaluators should be accurately trained. Judgments should remain accurate, consistent, and based on evidence. The result of an evaluation should be the same regardless of the person conducting the evaluation. Evaluators must be able to recognize criteria in action. Correct interpretation of the observation is paramount. Sometimes people see things they expect to see and do not truly observe what is happening. Finally, observers must interpret the observation. They must be able to link the observed behaviors to the described criteria set forth by the district (Boyd, 1989).

A post-observation conference is useful for providing teachers with feedback on their strengths and weaknesses. This feedback should be delivered in a positive manner. Ideas and suggestions should be given to the teacher, but too many suggestions are overwhelming. Find the balance between praise and criticism (Boyd, 1989).

Reflection on practice is also important. As stated in the research above, teachers learn best when they are able to correct their own deficiencies. Reflection may also take the form of collaboration. Given the time to discuss issues with colleagues, teachers feel safe and non-threatened (Danielson & McGreal, 2002).

Conclusion

The demand for highly qualified teachers continues to strengthen in our country. Teachers are expected to remain life long learners and continually update their teaching styles and techniques. A strong teacher evaluation system allows for teachers to

grow professionally and involves the self-directional learning of the professional. Over the years, the types of evaluation systems have been changing. No longer is an evaluation strictly the supervisor observing the teacher. Systems have span to include parent and student evaluation surveys, portfolios, peer evaluation and mentoring, and self-reflection practices.

A high-quality teacher evaluation system is comprised of the four domains of professional practice, but should also include a place for the professional to decide on his or her areas of improvement. Supervisors should meet with the professional to discuss current levels of performance including strengths and weaknesses. Together, they should decide which areas to improve. The teacher should be given the proper support, references, and direction for the improvement. The supervisors then observe the professional to see if the improvement has occurred. In a post conference, the professional should reflect on the implementation and decide what further action is needed.

Chapter 3

Design of the Study

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to design a new teacher observation format to be used by the building mentors of Lake Tract School in observing the faculty using pre and post conferences revolving around the observation form. Currently in Lake Tract School, tenured and non-tenured teachers are evaluated once and three times a year, respectively. The principal observes a 45-minute lesson and completes an observational form. A post conference is held to summarize the observed performance. Suggestions for improvement and resources to develop in the profession are not usually offered by the observer and the process does not allow for maximum professional growth.

This study seeks to revamp the procedure to include an opportunity for growth as well as to develop a new format for evaluation. Teachers are better able to change and grow when they are involved in the process. The new method will include a section in which the teacher is able to select an area for improvement. The building mentor will focus on this area during the observation and report any findings to the teacher in a post conference. Presently, this practice is non-existent in the district and teachers have little input into the evaluation process. The study is significant to the teacher because it will provide her the prospect of adapting instructional methods to better serve the student population and, ultimately, flourish.

General Description of the Research Design

The teachers' beliefs about the current observation form were evaluated through the use of a survey. The survey was given to the faculty in the beginning of October. They were instructed to complete the survey based upon the district's observation procedures and observation form. They were also prompted to select areas of the current system they would like to see reformed. Their responses were used to create a new observational format for conducting an observation. The participants prior to the commencement of the project also reviewed this form.

The participants in the study were then selected. First year teachers were asked to participate in the project. This sample was chosen because this population could greatly benefit from the project. In order to gain insights from seasoned teachers in regards to the newly designed format, one veteran teacher grade partner was selected to participate as well.

All participants were asked to complete a pre-conference form, which enabled them to mentally plan for the lesson to be observed. The teacher selected the area of instruction on which to improve and dictated the preferred method of data collection by the observer. The participant met with the building mentor to discussed the pre- conference form and finalize the plans for the observation.

During the observation, the building mentor completed the observation form, focusing on the area for improvement as suggested by the participant. After the observation, the participant was asked to complete a reflection piece. Questions were provided to guide the participant through the reflection of the lesson and of the instructional delivery.

The participant and the mentor brought their completed forms to a post conference. Discussion took place about the observation and the mentor was instructed to guide the participant into creating his/her own suggestions for improvement. The two parties agreed upon the future action to take place in order to correct the deficient area. This entire process was repeated. During the second observation, the mentor was instructed to look for the improved area of concern and to now observe the second weakness in delivery, as per the second pre-conference discussion between the mentor and the participant.

Upon the conclusion of the project, all participants, building mentors, and the intern met to informally discuss the project. The participants were asked to reflect upon their involvement and to compare this procedure with the existing procedure in the district. This informal meeting was held in February 2004. Data gathered throughout the project was evaluated to determine the effectiveness of the new format for professional development.

Development and Design of the Research Instrument

The initial survey was given to the entire faculty of the elementary school. The faculty was asked to voluntarily complete the 15-question survey. They rated their opinions of the current observational system on a scale of one to four; 1=satisfaction, 2=somewhat satisfied, 3=unsatisfied, and 4=somewhat unsatisfied. They were then instructed to return to the questions and indicate which categories should be revamped or supplemented in the current system.

The categories on the survey were chosen based on the review of the literature. In chapter two, the research presented the need for teachers to play a role in their own professional development. It was stated that teachers should be guided to create their own

improvements and have ownership over the changes of their instructional delivery rather than the bias offerings of administration. The survey was designed to show a need for an improvement of the current observational system.

The pre-conference form was designed to allow the participant to select the area of improvement. The participant selected the area of improvement after mentally preparing for the lesson. The participant must state the reasons for the selected area of improvement on the form. This showed a commitment on the part of the participant for a true desire to change. Additional questions on the pre conference form allow the participant to elaborate on the steps previously taken to correct the unwanted behavior. The style in which feedback should be given to the participant is also selected. This process was designed with the professional at the helm of the change process.

The building mentor completed the observational form during the scheduled observation. The mentor was instructed to document a summary of the lesson, the strengths of the teacher being observed, and to present the findings in a method previously selected by the participant. Again, the design of the observational form allowed for the observer to remain unbiased.

The participant was given reflection questions to guide her thinking as she reflected upon the lesson. These questions were designed to allow the teacher to ponder the lesson and to take the initiative in correcting the targeted behavior. The questions allow the teacher to provide her own thoughts and eventually lead to the improved behavior. The teacher was instructed to bring these responses to the post conference. At the post conference, the

observer followed the agenda provided. The post conference agenda reminded the observer of the items that had to be discussed and helped to keep the discussion on track. The intern created both the reflection questions and the post conference agenda.

The informal discussion held at the conclusion of the project was documented in a journal and consisted of the feelings of the participants about the project. These recorded reflections will be analyzed and will serve as the main data collection source in measuring the effectiveness of the observational format.

<u>Description of the Sampling Technique and Sampling Technique</u>

The population of this study involved five tenured and five non-tenured teachers at Lake Tract Elementary School in the Deptford Township Public School District. The non-tenured teachers were selected because they were newly hired this year in the district. These participants will grow professionally to prevent failure, improve the delivery of instruction, and ultimately, student achievement. A tenured teacher in the same grade level was also chosen to participate. These teachers will improve instruction to raise student achievement. The two groups will be compared to see if both tenured and non-tenured teachers benefit from participating.

The non-tenured teachers represented grades two, three, four, five, and the media specialist. Each teacher was newly hired to the district. The second and fourth grade teachers are non-tenured teachers hired directly out of college. They have no experience teaching other than their college student teaching experience. The third grade teacher had been teaching in a previous district for eight years before coming to Lake Tract. The fifth grade teacher has been instructing his class in an inclusion setting. He is the special

education teacher. He had been an aide in the district for two years before accepting this position. The media specialist had finished her master's degree in the past year and had been hired for this school year as the librarian. She has had no classroom experience.

Tenured teachers had also been selected to participate in the project. The second grade teacher had four years experience in second grade but had been teaching in the district for a total of ten years. The third grade teacher had seven years experience teaching with only two years as a third grade teacher. The fourth grade tenured participant had been teaching for 28 years and 15 of those years had been at the fourth grade level. The fifth grade teacher had a total of 24 years experience with 20 of those years instructing fifth grade. The final tenured participant was the basic skills teacher. She had instructed sixth grade for 28 years before accepting the basic skills position at Lake Tract four years ago.

The tenured teachers were selected to match the grade level of the newly hired professionals. The educational backgrounds of the tenured teachers were all Bachelor of Science degrees, with one participant holding a Masters Degree. This educational profile also coincided with the non-tenured participants.

Description of Data Collection Approach

The faculty of Lake Tract School was given a survey in October 2003 to access their perceptions of the current observational system. The survey was administered at the beginning of the school year in order to establish a need for the reform of the observational format and to determine which aspects to change or include on the new form. The surveys were placed in the teachers' mailboxes and returned to the intern. From the responses, the new observational format was created and participants were selected to participate. A

meeting was held in the middle of October to address the participants and apprise them of the project. At this meeting, each participant was given a copy of all of the data collection instruments.

Pre-conference dates were also established at this meeting. One observation was conducted every other week for the months of October and November. Dates were flexible since the observations were conducted on the mentors' preparatory periods. Parameters were outlined for the mentors and they understood that one observation must take place every other week, starting with the second grade teacher.

Observations were required to last a minimum of 30 minutes. Again, this time was at the discretion of the mentor and participant. The post conference was held within two days of the observation and lasted from 20 to 30 minutes.

All initial pre-conference meetings, observations, and post conferences were completed by December 12, 2003. The second rounds started in January and the mentors were instructed to complete all observations in the months of January and February. The informal conclusion meeting was held in March 2004. The same mentor was used in the observation of the participant each time. The data collected from all forms and meetings was used to determine the effectiveness of this procedure on professional development.

Description of the Data Analysis

The survey data was analyzed to establish a baseline desire for the need of a new observational format. An analysis of each question with a response of "unsatisfaction" and "somewhat unsatisfied" was conducted on the survey to assist in the development of the new format. The observation form was analyzed to see the types of information found during an

observation. The reflection pieces were used to guide the post conference discussions. The informal meeting at the conclusion of the project was documented in a journal and was analyzed to show the effectiveness of the project. The responses given during the meeting serve as the main data collection procedure and hold the most significant findings of the study.

Chapter 4

Presentation of Research Findings

Introduction

The study in Chapter 1 was conducted to determine the effectiveness of a new

observation format in order to enhance professional development and instruction to increase

student achievement. The study resulted in an analysis of a survey given to all teachers at

Lake Tract School to determine the need for a new observation tool. Once the tool was put

into place and the project conducted, the participants were asked to reflect upon the

experience during an informal round table discussion.

Grand Tour Question – What should an effective observational format include?

Observational Survey

The observational survey was given to the faculty of Lake Tract School in September

2003 in order to determine a need for an improved observational format. They were asked

to rate their responses on a scale of one (satisfied) to four (somewhat unsatisfied) in

response to the current observational procedure and form and its ability to allow for

maximum professional development.

For purposes of analysis, responses of "satisfied" and "somewhat satisfied" were

combined, as were responses of "dissatisfied" and "somewhat dissatisfied". The faculty was

also asked to indicate the categories currently in need of change on the existing form. Fifty

one percent of the surveys were returned to the intern. The results of the surveys are listed

in the following table:

Results of the Observational Survey

Satisfaction of item below	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Improvement Desired
Number of times observed in a year	100%	0%	0%
Quality of observer's comments	100%	0%	7%
Professional Growth Ability	93%	7%	7%
Amount of teacher input	87%	13%	27%
Being observed by one person	100%	0%	7%
Length of observation	100%	0%	0%
Teacher's decision of what to observe	87%	13%	27%
Opportunity for lifelong learning	100%	0%	0%
Resources for adapting instruction	87%	13%	27%
Areas on current form for observation	100%	0%	7%
Opportunity for discussion before and after observation	87%	13%	27%
Written reflection of teacher	93%	7%	27%
Ability to discuss foreseeable disruptions prior to observation	73%	27%	27%
Opportunity to voice opinion of lesson	93%	7%	7%
Suggestions for improvement	93%	7%	7%

Items on the survey that were selected as "needs improvement" most frequently were the ability to discuss foreseeable disruptions prior to the lesson, the opportunity for discussion before and after an observation, amount of teacher input, teacher's decision on what to observe, resources for adapting instruction, and a written reflection by the teacher regarding the lesson. These areas were designated for improvement 27% of the time on the surveys. All of these categories currently do not exist on the teacher observation form.

Those items that were also suggested by the teacher to need improvement were the quality of the observer's comments, the ability to grow and develop professionally, the number of people observing a teacher, the designated areas that currently exist on the form

for evaluation, and the opportunity to voice an opinion after teaching the lesson. The teachers 7% of the time on the surveys designated these areas.

The results of the survey were used in order to create a new teacher observation format. The teachers were "satisfied" with the number of times they were being observed during a year. Research in Chapter 2 stated that teachers should be observed more frequently to see if suggested improvements were taking place. The teachers were also "satisfied" with the quality of the observer's comments and the areas for observation on the current form. However, both categories were cited as needing improvement.

The biggest discrepancies were teacher input and the decision on what to observe, the teacher's ability to discuss foreseeable disruptions, and the resources currently provided for adapting instruction. The intern selected these three categories as the major focus areas for the newly developed observation format. Once the observation format was created from the teacher input, the intern returned to the participants to review the form and receive critiques. In accordance with the research presented in Chapter 2, the new format involved teachers and used a building mentor as the observer and not the building administrator. Grand Tour Question – How could teachers improve practice?

The pre-conference form was created to allow the teacher the ability to visualize the lesson and describe it to the observer. The teacher was asked to indicate his/her strengths as a teacher. The strengths of the participants as reported on the pre-conference form are listed below:

➢ "My ability to adapt a lesson if it is not going well"

➢ "My genuine care and love of the children."

➢ "the knowledge base of the subject matter. This allows me to create teachable moments."

> "I am a very good organizer. I have a strict and regimented class structure and this allows me to better instruct my students."

> "The relationships that I am able to form with the students assists me in instruction. I am able to have a light-hearted discussion with my students and they seem interested in what I am saying."

> "I am able to teach to all levels of my students. I am able to adapt a lesson to better fit their needs and ultimately allow them to succeed."

> "I feel I have awesome preparation skills. If I am able to prepare for a lesson, it goes smoothly and learning occurs."

The pre-conference form also provided a road map for the observer. The teacher discussed his/her lesson objectives, plans for carrying out the lesson, and evaluation procedures of the children with the observer.

The teachers were also asked to report on what he/she was hoping to learn about his/her practices as a result of the lesson. They were able to discuss with the observer the area they wished the observer to focus upon during the lesson. The teachers also were instructed to vocalize and record the reason for selecting this area for improvement. Their responses as indicated on the pre-conference form are below:

> "I want you to focus on my body language. Am I using appropriate language for the grade I teach? Am I speaking clearly and slowly? Do I pronounce all letters in all words? At times, I feel that I am making mistakes and I want to see how noticeable they are to the children. Also, I feel that I may loose the students during my lesson as a result of my language patterns"

> "I would like to learn about my interactions with the students, as a teacher, disciplinarian, and a mentor to young minds. I feel that this is the most difficult area to improve without a connection to the students. Instruction will not matter to the students unless they feel a connection to me as all of these figures."

> "Please focus upon my questioning techniques. Do I call on an equal number of girls and boys? Minorities and majorities? Do the students think on a higher level as a result of my questioning techniques? I seek to have a fair and equal classroom

giving all students the equal opportunity to succeed. I also hope that I challenge my students into thinking on a higher level to gain deep understanding of a concept."

➤ "I find myself, at times lost as a teacher and becoming more of a disciplinarian. This is my first year of teaching and I never knew discipline would account for so much of my day. I am looking for ways in which to improve in this area. During my lesson, am I losing the interested students because of the disruptive ones?"

➤ "When you visit, please check to see that I am actively engaging all learners. This is a technique that I have been struggling with this year. I have a few students that are distracted easily and I continue to search for methods of engaging them throughout the lesson."

➤ "Time is my biggest enemy. We have so much to teach in a day and I find myself spending too long on one lesson. I have trouble fitting in every subject I need to in one day. Please see if there is any part of my lesson that I may leave out or condense into another section."

➤ "No matter how hard I try to prepare for a lesson I still feel as if I am never truly ready. I examine all components of a lesson, prepare materials in advance, and think the lesson through to eliminate any foreseeable obstacle. In math class, since there is so much to do in one lesson, I try to have everything ready. Can you see if you feel I am as prepared as I should be?"

➤ "I would like assistance with hands-on lessons. Social studies seems so boring and I would like you to offer any suggestions for me to restructure my lesson to include hands-on learning in this subject."

➤ "My students enjoy learning in my classroom. I try to have creative lessons and allow them to experience fun in learning. At times, however, I am unable to get them back into the serious mode. Please focus on my ability to switch gears with the students from fun to serious."

➤ "I would like direction on classroom control. I see other teachers and their ability to manage students. When I look into some rooms, students are all quietly listening or participating and I do not have that control over my students. During my lesson, please indicate ways in which you would handle this better."

These topics were all selected by the participants and enabled them to have control over

their professional development. They were able to pin point their weaknesses and

vocalize the desire to improve them. The current system does not allow this preparation

before a lesson and the conversation between the teacher and observer is non-existent.

The teachers were also able to discuss some of the obstacles they may face during a lesson. Some of the common responses as indicated on the pre-conference form were: "student interruptions and disruption, teachable moments, student interest, students not mastering the information presented, missing assignments, instructional delivery problems, and time constraints."

The observation form was also compiled with teacher input. The observer was asked to record a summary of the lesson, strengths of the teacher observer, and the data to be collected as discussed in the pre-conference meeting. The teacher provided the observer with the method of data collection he/she preferred. Many participants agreed to have the data provided to them in person in privacy and not in front of a group. The observer could also note alternative areas worth improving if the participant agreed to it at the pre-conference.

Upon completion of the pre-conference and the actual observation, the teacher was asked to reflect upon the lesson before meeting with the observer at the post conference. This reflection allowed the teacher time to review the lesson objectively and to begin to capitalize on improvement. Questions that guided the reflection were:

How do you feel the lesson went?
What did you notice in your students that made you feel this way?
What do you recall about your own behavior during the lesson?
What can you say about your students' achievements?

What new insights have you inquired for future instruction?
What did this coaching session do for you?
What suggestions do you have for me to increase my effectiveness as a coach?

The teachers included everything in their reflections and, at times, seemed harder on them than the observer was in her comments and evaluation. The reflective piece is currently not in the observation format of this district. The teachers enjoyed this aspect of the project. They have never been given the chance to self-evaluate and they were able to see some of their faults and, in turn, grow professionally. Portions of each participant's reflections are recorded below:

> "...I felt this lesson was average. It did not go bad, but it wasn't outstanding. A majority of the students were cooperating and paying attention, yet there were others who were oblivious or did not care. That made me a bit uncomfortable when teaching and I searched for ways to control that. I do remember moving a bit faster than I would have wanted to due to the time constraints. There were many students who did understand the lesson and actually did what I was looking for as a result. I was pleased with the lesson because it helped me to get a better insight into my classroom management and how I need to start working more with each child in class."

> "...I presented the material clearly and had the students' attention throughout the lesson. Class participation was extremely high. My behavior was consistent. I spoke slowly and loudly as I walked around the class. My students understood the materials and applied it to their own experiences. I am aware of how I drop my endings of words (ex. "gonna" for "going to").

> "...I tried to interact with the students in an appropriate manner. I had to wear all three hats: teacher, disciplinarian, and mentor during this lesson. I felt my teaching was strong and my discipline could use a little work. It was difficult to try to teach when "J" kept getting out of his seat. I did not control the situation in the best manner. His inappropriate behaviors made it hard to re-direct myself and re-engage the students..."

> "...While teaching the lesson, I felt I was able to call on an equal number of boys and girls. I heard myself use Bloom's words like compare and contrast, analyze, and discuss. I do feel that I could have had the students elaborate more on their responses. The other students in the class could have benefited from a student's point of view instead of a teacher's..."

> "...That lesson did not go as planned. I am frustrated with the small whispers while I am trying to teach and felt embarrassed in front of the observer. I used proximity to the students to control the unwanted chatter, but they did not get the message. I became oblivious to the words coming out of my mouth during my instruction because I was focused on resolving the behavior problems..."

> "...I used several of the techniques I learned this summer in the ITIP training. I was able to actively engage all learners in my lesson. The subject matter lent itself easily to this as well. Students remained on task for the most part and enjoyed themselves. I fear once the subject matter changes, their active participation may as well..."

> "...My day begins with the constant battle with time. Students arrive late from band practice; others are going in and out of my room all day long. Constant teacher interruptions and the pressure of the bell are also a distraction. This lesson was no exception. I tried to pace myself throughout the lesson, becoming ever aware of the ticking of the clock. I felt rushed at the end because I knew we were going to switch classes again. Maybe I spent too long reviewing homework and not enough time instructing through examples and participation..."

> "...students were able to follow the lesson and used their slips of paper to decide which family the word belonged to by holding up the corresponding color of paper. This was the first time I tried this and it seemed to work. I was pleased..."

> "...As you can see, I still have difficulty gaining the students' attention after a silly and fun activity. I tried to count to five and have the students in their seats by the time I got finished. I will work more with the students on this task..."

> "...The students seemed on task for most of the lesson. They were a little on the noisy side but it seemed to be controlled chatter. They were discussing the different possible words that the covered word could be. They enjoyed the lesson and I felt good about my management and control. I hope this transpires to the rest of the day as well...

The reflections were honest and fair. The teachers were able to step back from the lesson and recall it objectively, focusing on the skill for improvement. Their lengthy responses showed the amount of thought each one put in to the process.

Grand Tour Question-How does the new process enhance professional growth and development?

The new observation format was conducted twice. The observer and teacher met a second time at a pre-conference to target another behavior to improve and to see if suggestions had been implemented. At the conclusion of the project, the intern met with all participants at an informal discussion meeting to discuss their perceptions of the process.

The tenured teachers enjoyed participating. They felt they still need "to improve in some areas of teaching" and "this process helped them to focus on an area of their choosing". The current system does not allow the teacher to select the areas of observation and no teacher input is considered. These participants also elaborated on the new format and the "time involved conducting the project". They felt it was "extremely time consuming" and found it "difficult to agree on dates for the pre and post conference with the observer". Many teachers have commitments before and after school that prohibit them from arriving or remaining at school to conduct the conferences. This only left lunch periods and predatory periods as a common conference time.

The tenured group of teachers felt that they were able to "grow professionally and improve their instructional delivery to benefit all children". They were made "more aware" of their shortcomings and "embraced the suggestions made by the observer". These simple suggestions ranged from "placement in the classroom while instructing" and "time management techniques". They also agreed that this process would be paramount to a newly hired or first year teacher.

The non-tenured group of teachers felt obligated to participate. They jokingly informed the intern that they must be "the new guinea pigs of the school". Their participation in the project was more elaborate than that of the tenured teachers. The length and detail in the completion of the forms was evidence of this. They wanted to improve and

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saw this process as "less pressure than being observed by the administration". They felt "at ease with the building mentors" and "accepted the comments and suggestions provided throughout the process". They were "eager to implement suggestions and enjoyed showing what they had learned". The non-tenured group felt "extremely supported by the staff" during their first years in the building.

During the conclusion meeting, the non-tenured group also expressed concerns with "the amount of time taken in the completion of the forms". They vocalized on several occasions that they "gained more from the self-reflection piece than the pre-conference form". However, one non-tenured teacher stated her "desire to use the form for every lesson she plans". She said that she "was able to see the lesson come to life and predict any problems she faced". Both tenured and non-tenured teachers agreed with this statement. They were able to critique their plans, actions, and behaviors through the forms. One participant even said, "The only thing missing is a form that should be completed by the children."

Spirits were high in the meeting and all participants seemed to enjoy the project. A few were sorry that it was coming to an end and hoped this opportunity would be provided for them next year as well. Others were glad that they did not have to relinquish their time to tend to the lengthy forms. The majority, however, were made "more aware of their weaknesses" and were also glad that "an objective person was offering the suggestions for improvement". They felt less threatened to be honest and admit their faults to the mentors than they would have to the administrator.

Conclusions

Chapter 5 will present a more comprehensive analysis of the conclusions,
implications, and need for further study or lack thereof.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Implications, and Further Study

Introduction

In order to present the conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis of the data gathered for this study, it must be pointed out that many variables may have affected the outcomes. While no attempt will be made to define each variable, it is clear that attempts should be made by the school district to study certain variables more closely as part of the continued decision-making process involving the observation and evaluation of tenured and non-tenured teachers; teacher methodology, training and level of honesty in the continued implementation of the skills designated for improvement.

Grand Tour Question – What should an effective observational format include?

According to research and the findings of this study, teacher input is the key to an effective format. Teachers that were given the opportunity to voice their opinion and have a say in the area of observation were more likely to develop professionally. Teachers that chose the area of improvement identified this as their weakness and sought to improve with the assistance of the building mentor. The faculty also felt less threatened with the new observational format and was given the chance to reflect upon their own lesson. Questions guided the post conference discussion allowing the observer to remain objective and encourage the teacher to make his/her own evaluation. Suggestions were provided to the teacher and then implemented with ease. The participants, as reported in the final meeting, felt a part of the process and viewed it as a development of skills to enhance instruction and ultimately learning rather than strictly evaluative in nature.

Many teachers were using outstanding methods of instruction and were able to share them with their colleagues. The building mentor acted as a facilitator of improvement instead of a dictator of change. The observational format was received as an instrument of improvement; one that could bring about change.

Grand Tour Question – How could teachers improve practice?

All participants openly and honestly admitted a weakness in their instruction. These weak areas ranged from classroom control to speech and language usage. They looked deeply within themselves and decided on an area to change. This designated area of change was observed by the mentor and reflected upon by the participant. Corrections were attempted which ultimately resulted in improved instruction and, therefore, increased learning.

The participants were able to script any obstacles they may face during a lesson. This allowed for greater preparation and methods of coping. All participants expressed satisfaction with this area on the observation form. It prepared them for change and reinforced the need for flexibility. This also led to increase instructional delivery, more time on task, and focused curriculum acquisition by the students.

Grand Tour Question – How does the new process enhance professional growth and development?

Both tenured and non-tenured teachers agreed that this process was fulfilling. They targeted an area of weakness and were able to improve upon it. Pre and post conferences provided the participants with a chance to lay a foundation for the lesson to be observed.

Teacher input into the process was, by far, the biggest advantage in this process. From the beginning to the end of the project, participants were consulted, informed, and were the instrumental leaders in their own change. All participants benefited in some nature from the active involvement in the process.

Participants, however, agreed that this process is rather time consuming between the paperwork and the conferences. It was difficult to schedule common times to hold the conferences. These slight drawbacks, however, could be easily adapted in the future. Another disadvantage to the process was relying on the teacher's honesty to report a weakness. It could be assumed that the participants were telling the truth, but this could pose a problem if they were not.

Self-reflection was noted as the most valued piece to the study. Teachers were aggressive in their reflections, which led to self-corrective measures. The mentor served more in the capacity of facilitator than dictator. The teachers were able to review a lesson objectively and reconfigure methodology for future instruction.

It was also reported that the suggestions were useful to the participants. Topics of suggestion included management techniques, tricks, behavior modifications, student-teacher interactions, etc. Web sites were provided to the teachers to research methodology for improvement as well. The mentor even guided the teacher to offer his/her own suggestions in some instances.

The opportunity for professionals to develop and grow was the ultimate goal of the study. This was reported by the participants to be accomplished. Student performance and achievement also increased due to the improved instructional methods. The participants in the final meeting also reported this.

Impact of the Study on the Intern's Leadership Growth

People are open to change and development when they are considered a building block in the foundation. Teachers, when given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process, perform at a higher level. Communication among professionals is essential to raise performance. Staff should be treated as an ingredient to a child's future and not just evaluated based on the observer's preconceived notions. The teachers should be provided with the prospect of changing their own behaviors.

An administrator and the task of evaluating a teacher can be viewed as a method for improvement and not as a chore or something feared. The two parties can work together to build upon the skills of the teacher and ultimately increase student production.

Relation to ISLLC Standards

The following standards were addressed in the study:

1. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

2. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conductive to student learning and professional growth.

3. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, effective, and efficient learning environment.

4. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

Further Study

In the future, the observational format would better serve the faculty if common free time were given to schedule conferences. Also, the process should be opened to all teachers willing to participate. More building professionals could be training in the cognitive coaching style to allow more mentors to perform the observations. A different point of view may have benefited the participants. In addition, although it was reported that time was a major disadvantage, participants agreed that the follow through observation was necessary to observe implemented suggestions.

With the implementation of the 100 professional hours required by the State of New Jersey, this format should be granted professional development hours. It is at its best professional development when all parties involved are honest and objective and dedicated to the growth of the individual.

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APPENDIX A

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Consent Form
For Participation in the Cognitive Coaching Study

I give consent to participate in the research being conducted by Shelli Doran at Lake Tract School for the completion of her Master's thesis at rowan University. I understand that all responses will remain anonymous and confidential and will not affect my employment in this district.

I understand that his research is being conducted to improve the amount of professional development that currently exists in our observational forms. I understand that I will be involved in a cognitive coaching setting in which I will be observed by the building mentor. I have agreed to invite the mentor into my classroom to observe my instruction and will work together with the mentor to improve professionally.

By signing below, I am indicating that I have read and understand the information presented here.

Participant's Signature_____

Date_____

Observational Survey

Please take a few moments and complete the following survey. This survey measures your satisfaction with the current observational forms and procedures and also measures your level of desire for a new approach to the observational format. Your responses will remain anonymous and confidential. Under no circumstance will your responses affect your employment in this district. The responses will be used for my master's thesis at Rowan University. You may choose not to respond to any or all of the questions on this survey. Your participation in this project is voluntary. Please return your completed survey to me at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your cooperation. Shelli Doran 856-686-2240

Please rate your **satisfaction with the observational form and procedures used in your district**. Circle the number that corresponds to your answer. Use the scale below to determine your responses:

1 = Satisfied   2 = Somewhat satisfied   3 = Unsatisfied   4 = Somewhat unsatisfied

_____* number of times you are observed	1	2	3	4
_____* quality of observers comments	1	2	3	4
_____*ability to grow and develop professionally	1	2	3	4
_____*amount of teacher input	1	2	3	4
_____*being observed by one person	1	2	3	4
_____*time spent by observer in your classroom	1	2	3	4
_____*teacher's decision on what to observe	1	2	3	4
_____*lifelong learning opportunities available	1	2	3	4
_____*resources provided for adapting instruction	1	2	3	4
_____*areas for evaluation currently on the form	1	2	3	4
_____*opportunity for discussion before **and** after observation	1	2	3	4
_____*written reflection by teacher regarding lesson	1	2	3	4
_____*ability to discuss foreseeable disruptions prior to observation	1	2	3	4
_____*opportunity to voice your opinion of lesson	1	2	3	4
_____*suggestions for improvement	1	2	3	4

➢ Ideally, which of the above categories would you like to have included or changed in the current procedures for observing teachers? Place a check mark on the line next to each area.

Cognitive Coaching Pre-Conference Form

*To be completed by the teacher and reviewed with coach prior to the observation

Name_____   Grade Level_____
Are you a first year teacher at LT? _____   Number of teaching years at LT___

Please complete your approximate schedule in the following subject areas:
Language Arts Literacy_____   Math_____
Science_____   Social Studies_____
Health / Character Education_____

What are your strengths as a teacher?

What are your objectives for the lesson to be observed?

What will the students be doing?

What is your plan? What will you do first? Next? Last?

What will you see the students doing or hear them saying that will indicate your lesson is a success?

As a professional, what are you hoping to learn about your practices as a result of this lesson? What will you want me to look for and give you feedback about while observing your lesson?

Why have your selected this area for improvement?

What are some of the obstacles that could arise during your lesson to inhibit your professional growth?

What actions have you already taken to improve this area?

Do you feel you exhibit this behavior during certain subject areas or across the curriculum?

How would you like the data to be gathered during your observation?

How would you like to receive your feedback (directly v. indirectly, written v. verbal, in front of a group v. alone, immediately v. delayed, etc.)?

Observation date_____   Time of observation_____

Subject area_____   Coach to observe_____

Cognitive Coaching Observation Form

Name of teacher being observed_____   Date of observation_____
Observation number_____   Name of coach_____
Subject area_____   Length of observation_____

Summary of lesson

Strengths of teacher observed

Preferred method of data collection for observed area of improvement (as discussed in the pre-conference)

Alternate areas worth noting for improvement

Suggestions/resources to be elicited from teacher during post conference

Suggested date to schedule 2nd observation to observe improvements of desired area and to observe 2nd target area

Post Conference Agenda

*The coach may record thoughts given by the teacher in the appropriate areas.

- ✓ Review teacher's reflection

- ✓ Discuss lesson

- ✓ Review strengths noted by teacher and observed by coach

- ✓ Discuss target area of improvement

- ✓ Suggestions / Recommendations provided by teacher

- ✓ Direct teacher to alternative resources

- ✓ Confirm schedule for second observation to see improvements

- ✓ Discuss second target area to be observed

- ✓ Disseminate second pre conference form to be completed by the teacher regarding the second target area

Questions to Guide Teacher's Reflection of the Lesson

*Please address each question in your reflection of your lesson. Feel free to include any additional thoughts on your performance.

- ➢ How do you feel the lesson went?
- ➢ What did you notice in your students that made you feel this way?
- ➢ What do you recall about your own behavior during the lesson?
- ➢ What can you say about your students' achievement of the objectives?
- ➢ What new insights have you acquired for future instruction?
- ➢ What did this coaching session do for you?
- ➢ What suggestions do you have for me to increase my effectiveness as a coach?

Please bring your reflection to the post conference scheduled on _____.