Principals’ Experiences Adapting to a New State-Mandated Administrator Evaluation Process: a Phenomenological Study

Kathleen Ann Teed Ramirez
Western Michigan University, kramirez@hollandpublicschools.org

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PRINCIPALS’ EXPERIENCES ADAPTING TO A NEW STATE-MANDATED ADMINISTRATOR EVALUATION PROCESS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Kathleen Ann Teed Ramirez

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership, Research and Technology at Western Michigan University, April 2016

Doctoral Committee:

Patricia Reeves, Ed.D., Chair
Louann Bierlein Palmer, Ed.D.
Margaret Webb-Doyle, Ph.D.
In the early stages of Michigan’s enactment of new educator evaluation statutory requirements, there is an opportunity to examine the readiness of Michigan’s principals to adapt to the new evaluation models and processes by engaging a sample of administrators who are in the process of adapting to both new teacher and new administrator evaluations. We can potentially get out in front of emerging patterns of impeding factors and reinforce enabling factors that impact the adaptation and transition process and impinge upon the potential for enactment of new educator evaluation models and processes to actually result in acceleration of the growth and success curve for students.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of 12 principals, as players in the work of school reform and renewal, and how they have experienced the shift from static and disjointed educator evaluation models to a model that is framed around growth, development, and research, and is evidence-based. Specifically, this study was designed to give voice to principals, as full partners in the pursuit of continuous growth and improvement, and how they are actually experiencing these performance evaluation systems and what the shift to one of the new systems means to them.
This study desired to understand and gain a deeper understanding of the readiness of principals and their need for ongoing engagement with the evaluation tool to become better able to connect the performance indicators with their day-to-day work. In essence, principal performance evaluation and feedback is one means by which principals could receive valuable guidance and support for their growth and development in the role of an Instructional Leader.

This study revealed that participants wanted to be the best instructional leaders to impact their teachers, students, and the whole school community. The participants in this study vocalized the need for further training and coaching, but it must come from a supervisor or coach who has been trained and has a working knowledge of the adopted evaluation tool. Principals are the fulcrums of all school improvement efforts and deserve a performance review process that not only utilizes a research-supported and well-vetted performance review instrument, but also utilizes a process where they can concentrate on a few high-priority performance growth areas at one time.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writing of this dissertation required endurance, sacrifice, grit, and an abundant amount of encouragement and support. Without a very strong and dedicated support system, this dissertation would have never come to fruition. There are many individuals I would like to thank and acknowledge, as it was through these people I was able to complete this accomplishment.

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Acknowledgments—Continued

My husband, Mr. Peter Ramirez, has not been with me through this whole journey but has been here for the most important stage, which is the writing of this dissertation. When we first met, he had no idea what a dissertation entailed nor the amount of hours that he would sacrifice to ensure I would accomplish my goal, but he continued to support me in any way necessary, even when it meant my going away for two weekends to focus and write. I do not think there is anyone more proud of me than my husband.

If there is one person who truly understands this dissertation process, it is Mrs. Anna Clawson. This past year, Anna and I have worked side-by-side through this process, holding each other up and making sure we reach the finish line together. We have cried, laughed, thrown temper tantrums, and encouraged each other when the other was down and I feel very blessed to have Anna on my team. We have spent many Saturdays and two working weekends with each other, and through this time, I have gotten to know Anna on a personal level. I am honored to call Anna my friend, colleague, fellow doctoral student and soon to be Dr. Anna Clawson.

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I also would like to recognize and thank my other doctoral committee members, Dr.
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Holland West K-7 in Holland, Michigan. I want to commend the teachers and staff of
these three fine institutions for dedicating their lives to becoming educators and spending
the long and tedious hours required to meet the needs of their students. The number one
determinant for success of a student is the teacher. Not only do teachers impact students;
they impact families and the communities they serve. Education is a selfless career.
Every day, teachers mold, transform, and impact their students at various levels. The
relationships teachers create can last a lifetime. This hard work may not be realized until
years later when students come back and thank teachers for impacting their lives and
helping them become the best version of themselves!

Lastly, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to all the principals and assistant
 principals who are the instructional leaders of their buildings. The life of a principal is no
easy undertaking. On any given day, principals are the lunchroom supervisor, guest
teacher, janitor, nurse, counselor, child and parent advocate, mediator, legal advisor,
Acknowledgments—Continued

parent, friend, chaperone, fundraiser, decision maker, technologist, social worker, grounds keeper, prayer warrior, and instructional leader. Principals are the heartbeat of their building and no one works harder on any given day. To all 12 of the principals that I interviewed, thank you for your dedication to your profession, the compassion to all students you serve, and the commitment to continuous learning for yourself and your staff. You are the heart of your building!

Kathleen Ann Teed Ramirez
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The Study Focus

The importance of the role of K-12 principals in turning underperforming schools into schools where students have the appropriate and sustained educational experiences and supports to attain academic success is well established in the research. Marzano (2003) has shown that students in effective schools as opposed to ineffective schools have a 44% difference in their expected passing rate on a test that has a typical passing rate of 50%. At a high level, the traditions and beliefs about leadership in schools are no different from those regarding leadership in other institutions. Leadership is considered to be vital to the successful functioning of many aspects of a school; however, extensive research scrutiny of the special leadership characteristics associated with school principals during the 1990s (e.g., Hallinger & Heck, 1996a; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005) has confirmed that there are specific leadership characteristics that can be associated with school level leadership that leads to improved student outcomes.

One such finding, according to findings from studies by Hattie (1999), is learning leadership—leadership that emphasizes student and adult learning and occurs when leaders promote and participate in teacher learning through such approaches as providing coaching over an extended time, establishing data teams, focusing on how students learn subject matter content, and enabling teachers to work collaboratively to plan and monitor lessons based on evidence about how students learn. For instance, in a study of influences
that effect student learning, Hattie, found an impressive 0.84 correlation between the exercise of learning leadership by the principal and student learning. Such findings place learning leadership among the most significant as it correlates to the quality of student learning in schools. Sleibowitz (2013) wrote,

> We need effective principals but not the principals we have previously imagined—not just the disciplinarians and schedulers; not only the visionaries, and not even just the instructional leaders. We need principals who also coach and are coached, who support teachers to look at student work together and who humbly join mind and heart with teachers and students in the sacred task of learning.

The principal occupies the leadership position to ensure that good teaching and learning spreads beyond single classrooms and ineffective practices are not allowed to continue unchallenged. To achieve this, both Reeves (2009b) and Marzano et al. (2005) argued that principals require training and development that equip them with a broad range of competencies, including the recognition and coaching of effective instruction, the development of teacher capacity, and the knowledge and tools to make evidence-based decisions. Several additional researchers have studied principals’ preparation and on-the-job professional development and concluded that the quality of training that principals receive before they assume their positions, along with continuing professional development they get once they are hired and throughout their careers, has a lot to do with whether or not school leaders can meet the increasingly tough expectations of these jobs (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007).

Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners increasingly recognize the role of school leaders in developing high-performing schools. This recognition coupled with a growing shortage of high-quality leaders in American schools has heightened interest in leadership development as a major reform strategy (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). With
a national focus on raising achievement for all students, both state and federal school reform and improvement policy initiatives, since the initiation of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2012), have increasingly addressed the importance of school leadership at the principal level. For instance, NCLB initiated the requirements that states enact provisions for change in school leadership for persistently failing schools.

Subsequent updates to NCLB and specifications of the Race to the Top (RTTT) provisions of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) (U.S. Department of Education, 2014)—also known as the $787 billion “economic stimulus package”—included more than $130 billion for United States Department of Education programs, and billions more for community and job related programs (Kessler & Howe, 2012). With an emphasis on ensuring that all schools have effective teachers and leaders, ARRA has also raised the focus on pivotal roles of school leaders in improving the quality of schools. Some of the ARRA provisions have led to states enacting stiffer specifications for the takeover of schools, the replacement of school staffs and school leaders, and the performance evaluation of both school leaders and their staff.

As a result of the emphasis that ARRA placed on evaluating the effectiveness of teachers and administrators, a growing number of states, including Michigan, passed legislation requiring rigorous evaluation practices. According to the Michigan statutory requirements for administrators under section 1249 of Public Act, Performance Evaluation System, July 2011 (Legislative Council, State of Michigan, 2009), beginning in 2012-2013, a statewide system of educator evaluations was enacted. Subsequent to the
initial enactment and under the provisions of that act, Governor Snyder established the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness (MCEE) with the charge to identify, evaluate, and recommend evaluation model(s) and growth model(s) to be subsequently implemented based on the educator evaluation pilot test results, practitioner focus groups, and recommendations of experts consulted by the MCEE (Kessler & Howe, 2012). Concurrent with the development of this dissertation, Michigan awaits the development and passage of additional statutory provisions that will respond to and codify specific aspects of the MCEE recommendations.

In the meantime, the statutory provisions passed in 2011 stipulate that the school board of a Michigan school district shall ensure that the performance evaluation system for building-level school administrators and for central office-level school administrators who are regularly involved in instructional matters meet a set of criteria. The criteria must include the following:

1. The performance evaluation system shall include at least an annual year-end evaluation for all school administrators.
2. For the annual year-end evaluation for the 2013-2014 school year, at least 25% of the annual year-end evaluation shall be based on student growth and assessment data. For the 2015-2016 school year, at least 25% of the annual year-end evaluation shall be based on student growth and assessment data.
3. The portion of the annual year-end evaluation that is not based on student growth and assessment data shall be based on the administrator’s proficiency in using the evaluation tool for teachers and the progress made by the school or school district in meeting the goals set forth in the school’s and/or district’s
school improvement plan. Also included in this criterion is student attendance as well as feedback by students, teachers and parents.

According to a MCEE (2013) report, Michigan is advised to require local school districts and Intermediate School District (ISD) and Education Service Agencies (ESAs) to choose from one of two administrator evaluation tools: The School ADvance™ Administrator Evaluation System by P. Reeves and P. McNeill (2011) or the Leadership Performance Matrix™ by D. B. Reeves, one of which may eventually be designated by the state as the state tool. The School ADvance™ (Reeves & McNeill, 2011) principal evaluation framework is organized into five domains of principal responsibilities—four practice domains and one student growth domain. The four practice domains are further broken down into 25 practice characteristics arranged under eight performance factors. The Leadership Performance Matrix (D. B. Reeves) is organized into 10 domains and 40 elements. Both the School ADvance™ (P. Reeves & McNeill, 2011) and Leadership Performance Matrix principal rubrics provide descriptors for progressively developed levels of research-proven practices for effective building-level leadership.

While other evaluations models may be considered by the state legislature (the State House of Representatives passed revisions to P.A. 1249b to also include the School Leadership Evaluation Model by Marzano, but, at the time of my study, provisions naming any specific evaluation models were subject to either confirmation or substitute bill provisions put forth by the State Senate), the two identified by the MCEE typify the movement to evaluating educator performance through developmental rubrics that reflect major research findings about the practice and strategies school leaders employ in schools where student achievement is either at a high level overall and/or continuously improving
across all student demographic categories. The School ADvance™ (P. Reeves & McNeill, 2011) and Leadership Matrix (D. B. Reeves, 2009a) administrator performance frameworks and rubrics are extensive (as are other comparable research-based administrator and teacher evaluation models), because the research base that informs these models has demonstrated how complex and broad the work of school leadership and teaching can be.

**Study Background**

**Federal Funding**

One of the prime outgrowths from the *A Nation at Risk* report (U.S. Department of Education, 1982) was the effective schools movement. The report put a spotlight on the fact the U.S.’s once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, and science was encountering significant challenge from competitors throughout the world, who (in some cases) were overtaking or threatening to overtake technological innovation in specific economic sectors (Education Week, 2004). This report was concerned with only one of the many causes and dimensions of the problem (i.e., the nation’s public education system), but that system is the one that undergirds American prosperity, security, and civility. American people can take justifiable pride in what our nation’s schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people; however, critical reviews of the U.S. educational system, since the original bell-ringing launched by *A Nation at Risk* (U.S. Department of Education, 1982), contend that the educational foundations of U.S. society are being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens this nation’s competitive standing among developed nations. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur: other countries are
matching and surpassing our educational attainments. The *A Nation at Risk* report, the result of 18 months of study, sought to raise awareness of the need to pursue reform of our educational system in fundamental ways and to renew the nation’s commitment to schools and colleges of high quality throughout the length and breadth of our land (Education Week, 2004).

While decisions about public education—including decisions related to principal/teacher evaluation—continue to be somewhat decentralized, depending on the specificity of state statues aligned with RTTT requirements, federal actors have created financial incentives for districts and states to reconsider their approaches to delivering a high-quality education to all students. These reconsiderations include an extensive overhaul of the basis for the tools, practices, and processes employed use to evaluate the performance of both teachers and administrators. The federal data-driven education reform acts, NCLB and RTTT (U.S. Department of Education, 2014), brought the quality of performance of American school teachers and principals under sharp scrutiny.

Initially, states responded by focusing most intently on strengthening the evaluation of teacher performance and linking the assessment of performance to student outcomes. Perhaps that is because NCLB had already raised the issue of teacher quality by requiring schools to note where and how their teachers are “highly qualified.” While administrator evaluation was also referenced in most of the earliest statutory responses to RTTT (Michigan Department of Education, 2010), including that done in Michigan, it has come to the forefront along with teacher evaluation as more and more states enact new legislation. This means that states and schools are now seriously considering the ways
and means of articulating and assessing effective school leader performance at both the school and district levels.

Studies in recent years from the National Institute for School Learning and the Wallace Foundation found that the leadership qualities of the principal, or the lack thereof, strongly correlated with student achievement across the board in grades K-12, in small and large, urban and suburban, healthy and underserved schools. Those findings included evidence that leadership by the principal was one of the most pressing issues in public education (second only to classroom instruction), among school-related factors that affect student learning. According to the Wallace Foundation’s report (2013), *The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning*, teacher quality stood above everything else, but principal leadership came next. According to the extensive body of research funded over 10 years by the Wallace Foundation, *Review of Research: How Leadership Influences Student Learning* (Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004), *Six Districts Begin the Principal Pipeline Initiative* (Turnball, Riley, Arcaira, Anderson, & MacFarlane, 2013), and *The School Principal As Leader* (Harvey & Holland, 2013), standards for principal performance are arguably the foundation on which everything else rests. Ideally, school leader practice standards will provide a guide for addressing local school and district needs and underpin what is taught to those enrolled in principal training programs, what is looked for in job candidates, what is built upon in professional development, and what is assessed in on-the-job performance evaluations (Mendels, 2012).
State Funding

Across the United States, profound changes in principal and teacher evaluations are underway as a result of a series of new laws enacted in many states competing for ARRA funds under the RTTT initiative. In Michigan, despite the state’s failed bid to win some of the federal RTTT funds, state laws began changing in 2011 to require more rigorous, research-based, and growth-focused evaluation systems and processes. In 2011-2012, Michigan school districts began the development of educator evaluation systems in order to meet the requirements of legislation (MCL 380.1249) passed by the Michigan state legislature and signed by Governor Snyder on July 19, 2011. The goal of this legislation, as with other educator quality initiatives, was to set standards for qualifications, practice, and evaluation of all educators so that all students can be exposed to high-quality educators and graduate from high school career and college-ready.

Specifically, the new statutory changes to the Michigan School Code require all public school and charter school districts in Michigan to evaluate all of their educators (both teachers and administrators) using a rigorous, transparent, and fair performance evaluation system and to report the results of those evaluations in the state’s Registry of Educational Personnel (REP), maintained by the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI). This law also requires evaluations to be based “in significant part” on student growth and to be used to inform decisions regarding instructional leadership abilities, teacher and pupil attendance, professional contributions, training, progress report achievement, school improvement plan progress, peer input, and pupil and parent feedback.
Michigan school reform law requires that districts adopt and implement an annual performance evaluation system for both teachers and administrators. The Federal State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) requires districts, as a condition of receiving funds, to sign assurances that include an agreement to report on the results of these evaluations, and that the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) will support districts in their implementation of these evaluations (Ballard, 2010).

**Educator Evaluations**

The Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) report issued in January 2013 by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2009) spelled out the challenges of improving K-12 education in the next decade. The next generation of evaluation models must be designed to improve the quality of teaching over time and the ultimate goal is to use classroom observations to help teachers improve student achievement (Marzano, Toth, & Schooling, 2011). The MET project has demonstrated that it is possible to identify great teaching by combining three types of measures: classroom observations, student surveys, and student achievement gains. This has given rise to a new set of expectations for performance evaluation systems; i.e., evaluation systems should not only identify great teaching, but also provide the feedback teachers need to improve their practice and serve as the basis for more targeted professional development. In order for students to learn more, teachers must become students of their own teaching and see their teaching in a new light. It is not just about accountability, but rather providing the feedback every professional needs to strive toward excellence and progress in the development of his or her practice and performance.
There is little mystery as to what makes one teacher more effective than another. After reviewing hundreds of meta-analyses on teaching effects, Hattie (1999) concluded the mantra that teachers make the difference is misleading, because not all teachers have a positive effect on students. The findings that led to such conclusions also point out the link between effective teachers and effective principals. During the past several decades, a consensus on two major themes on how school leaders impact school improvement has emerged. First, the impact of school leadership on student improvement is indirect and mediated by the work of teachers in classrooms. In this causal chain, principal leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping the school culture and driving organizational changes that ultimately lead to a more effective learning environment. Second, among the core components of principal leadership, instructional leadership emerged as one of the essential correlates for school improvement (Cravens, Goldring, & Penaloza, 2011). Such findings establish the direct link between the work of the principal and the effectiveness of teachers in a school. By establishing a culture of learning for all students and providing the focus, support, and influence on the quality of teaching that occurs in the school, the principal plays a critical role in the success of all students.

**Problem Statement**

In the book, *School Leadership that Works* (2005), Marzano et al. wrote,

Given the perceived importance of leadership in schools and the central role of the principal, one can assume that suggestions regarding leadership practice in schools are based on a clear, well-articulated body of research spanning decades. Unfortunately, this assumption is incorrect for at least two reasons. First, far less research on school leadership has been done than one might expect. Second, the research that has been done on school leadership is quite equivocal, or at least is perceived as such. (p. 6)
Since publishing these conclusions in his 2005 book, Marzano has continued to follow and become involved in an extensive aggregation of new research funded by the Wallace Foundation and other federal and private sources through multiple grant projects. This research both confirmed and extended and/or clarified findings that Marzano first captured in his 2005 meta-analysis with co-authors Waters and McNulty through McREL. These findings are captured in Review of Research: How Leadership Influences Student Learning (Leithwood et al., 2004), Six Districts Begin the Principal Pipeline Initiative (Turnball et al., 2013), and The School Principal as a Leader (Harvey & Holland, 2013) and translated to multiple indicators that informed the formation of administrator evaluation systems, such as those recognized by the MCEE and Michigan State House of Representatives (i.e., School ADvance by P. Reeves & McNeill [2011], The Principal Leadership Matrix by D. B. Reeves [2009b]; and The School Leadership Evaluation Model by Marzano [2013]).

Also, a participant in Wallace-funded research, the principal investigator and co-author/developer for School ADvance, Reeves drew upon both the findings from two Michigan-based Wallace Foundation grant projects under principal researchers Shen and Cooley. Through an aggregation of findings from such funded projects conducted by university and field-based researchers (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b; Leithwood et al., 2004; Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2007; D. B. Reeves, 2009b; P. Reeves & Berry, 2008; Shen et al., 2012), researchers are operationalizing school leader practice into multi-rater instruments (e.g., The Balanced Leadership Profile [Waters & Cameron, 2007]; The Val-Ed Assessment; DDIM on High Impact Strategies) and developmental evaluation rubrics
(e.g., School ADvance Administrator Evaluation System by P. Reeves and McNeill [2011]; The Principal Leadership Matrix by D. B. Reeves [2009b], and Marzano School/District Leader Evaluation System by Marzano [2013]. While other researchers and authors have developed additional school leader rating instruments and performance evaluation frameworks, rubrics, and systems, those referenced in this dissertation are of particular interest because they have been referenced by, investigated by, or recommended by the MCEE (2013).

In 2011, the Michigan legislature passed a law that partially explains and defines the new evaluation system for Michigan through Section 1249a and 1249b of the Michigan School Code (Legislative Council, State of Michigan, 2009). The new statutory provisions also called for the creation of a governor-appointed council with the specified responsibility to bring recommendations for further specifications for Michigan’s educator evaluation statutes, including identification of evaluation models; requirements for implementing state-approved models; and requirements for developing growth ratings, practice ratings, and overall performance ratings among other details. Both the process of the MCEE study and the response of the legislature to the final MCEE report and recommendations took much longer than originally anticipated to the point where the implementation timelines stated in the initial statutory provisions were difficult or impossible for districts to meet because of the lack of further guidance from the state.

For this and other subtle reasons, most districts are behind the initial established timelines for compliance, especially as it relates to the adoption and implementation of one of the recommended models for administrator evaluation. Because of pressures from unions to act on the selection of a teacher evaluation model, at the writing of this
dissertation, the majority of schools have either adapted their previous teacher evaluation process, adopted one of the four teacher evaluation models piloted by the MCEE as part of their study, or are in the process of comparing the MCEE-recommended models toward making a decision regarding which of the models to adopt (MCEE, 2013).

The same, however, is not true for administrator evaluation and, while the Michigan Association of School Administrators (MASA) reported a gradually growing number of districts adopting and/or receiving training on a new administrator evaluation model with the 2013-14 school year, the initial rate of decision making for administrator evaluation lags considerably behind that of teacher evaluation. At the time of writing this dissertation, however, MASA was reporting an acceleration of administrator evaluation adoptions for the School ADvance™ (P. Reeves & McNeill, 2011) system (approximately 150 districts as of spring 2015), while Houghton Mifflin (the distributor for the Principal Leadership Matrix) reported no Michigan adoptions since acquiring the rights to that system. Data for adoptions of the Marzano administrator evaluation system in Michigan were not available.

As of early 2015, a significant percentage of school districts in Michigan were still waiting to make final decisions about which model to adopt for administrator evaluation. Reports from officials of the state administrator professional associations, MASA, Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association (MEMSPA), Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP), Michigan Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (MI-ASCD), Michigan Association of Schools Boards (MASB), and Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA), indicated a common concern among members about moving
ahead with a decision until the legislature confirms the choices of evaluation models, the training requirements, and the potential for training and support funding. That said, however, somewhere between 20 and 30% of Michigan districts did move ahead and began to both adopt a new administrator evaluation model and start training their administrators on that model, according to MASA officials.

Michigan is not alone in the lag between the implementation of new teacher evaluation models after the passage of state educator evaluation legislation. Of the 49 states that adopted new educator evaluation statutes to take effect by January of 2014, 25 states had passed legislation specifying the requirements for administrator evaluation and many of those included specifications for or identification of administrator evaluation models along with those pertaining to teacher evaluation models (MCEE, 2013). Moreover, in the five years since the initial RTTT, 19 states adapted their statutes to meet federal educator evaluation requirements. This has spawned a new line of research with a majority of studies focusing on teacher evaluation processes and the various state versions of student growth or value added models (MCEE, 2013). To date, this researcher has found no studies that describe the implementation of the new administrator evaluation models under new state statutes to meet the requirements of RTTT.

Previous studies about administrator evaluation, however, revealed that there have been no consistent measures, evaluation instruments, and/or evaluation processes used in administrator evaluation (Ryley, Goodwin, & Gaddy, 2000). Given the more standardized processes that new state-level statues require and the recent movement toward performance rubrics as opposed to rating scales and other less structured evaluation methods for administrators (Davis, Kearney, Sanders, Thomas, & Leon, 2011), it is
reasonable to expect that administrators will experience a period of adjustment and adaptation as districts do begin to implement the new administrator evaluation models. This is especially likely where the new evaluation model requires evidence-based ratings against explicitly stated performance criteria, as most administrator evaluation instruments used prior to the new legislative requirements called for judgment or opinion-based rating (Condon & Clifford, 2012).

Given how early studies reveal some of the complexities of implementing the new teacher evaluation requirements under state-level legislation to meet the RTTT requirements, it is prudent to conduct studies that focus on the early stages of implementing the changes for administrator evaluation. As with any legislated initiative that involves significant change at the practitioner level, early studies are needed to provide adopters with guidance regarding the issues that they may encounter and possible responses to those issues. For example, there is no research that assesses administrators’ readiness to be evaluated by or evaluate others with a developmental rubric. Likewise, there is no research to assess how ready administrators are to play an active role in their own evaluation through the documentation of their practice and the analysis of student growth data. Finally, there is no research that indicates how evaluators of school principals adjust to engaging more deeply, more specifically, and more rigorously in the evaluation of principal performance utilizing evidence based on developmental rubrics, student growth data, stakeholder feedback, and other requirements build into the new statutory evaluation requirements.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study is to discover how prepared school administrators are to implement the new Michigan education evaluation requirements. Emerging findings from studies that focus on the implementation of new teacher evaluation models suggest that if the educator is not trained in using the evaluation tool, does not understand his/her role and responsibility in the process, and does not fully understand the means for developing both practice and growth performance ratings, the implementation process will be full of challenges (Leithwood et al., 2004). Other studies suggest that when the guiding principles behind the whole evaluation process are not clearly articulated or are in conflict with other core operating principles, values, and beliefs, levels of confidence and trust are eroded and can undermine other school improvement initiatives such as professional learning communities, collaborative inquiry, and other practices supporting high degrees of professionalism and professional efficacy.

In the book, *Leading Change in Your School*, Douglas Reeves (2009b) wrote,

Educators are drowning under the weight of initiative fatigue-attempting to use the same amount of time, money, and emotional energy to accomplish more and more objectives. The strategy, fueled by various mixtures of adrenaline, enthusiasm, and intimidation, might work in the short term. But eventually, each initiative added to the pile creates a dramatic decline in organizational effectiveness. (p. 14)

In order for the new administrator evaluation model and process to be effective and ultimately increase teacher growth and student achievement, all parties involved in the evaluation process will undergo some level of adjustment and adaptation. The purpose of this study is to begin to describe that adaptation and adjustment process and isolate any issues that arise from the process of acclimation and implementation.
The following quote from *School Leadership that Works* further frames the purpose of this study.

A change becomes second order when it is not obvious how it will make things better for people with similar interests, it requires individuals or groups of stakeholders to learn new approaches, or it conflicts with prevailing values and norms. Different perceptions about the implications of change can lead to one person’s solution becoming someone else’s problem. (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 72)

This quote captures the reason early studies can contribute to the implementation of change, especially when the studies are focused on how the people most affected by the change experience the process of adjustment, adaptation and assimilation into the new norms that accompany the change. This study seeks to provide an early window into the implementation of administrator evaluation in Michigan by focusing on how administrators describe the process of district change to a new administrator evaluation model along with any challenges and opportunities that they experienced under the new model. At a deeper level, this study seeks to identify (a) how principals understand the values and beliefs that underpin the new evaluation model they are using, (b) how they describe their readiness to make changes in their own evaluation practices that align with the new evaluation model (e.g., practices, processes, values, and beliefs), (c) how they process the difference between the new model and the one(s) they previously experienced, (d) where they would put the emphasis on district follow-up and support for implementation of the new model, and (e) what they hope to achieve with the new model.

**Research Questions**

The nature of this study required an in-depth engagement with a sample of participants who could provide a highly descriptive portrayal of their experiences in the early stages of implementing a new administrator evaluation model that meets the
requirements of new state statutes on educator evaluation. Michigan provides an opportune setting for such a study as new statutory changes require the replacement of old administrator evaluation models and practices with a state vetted model meeting specific requirements. The overarching question that frames this study is, how do principals describe the process of change from the previous district model and approach for administrator evaluation to a new model and approach that meets the requirements of Michigan’s educator evaluation statute? This overarching question is further developed through the following five sub-questions:

Question 1: How do principals compare the principles, values, and beliefs that they associate with both the former and the new evaluation models and processes?

Question 2: How do they compare the evaluation processes and procedures between their old and new evaluation models?

Question 3: How do they describe their own adjustment to any changes in practice, process, values, and beliefs associated with the new model? Where do they describe more or less readiness to make these adjustments?

Question 4: What recommendations would they make for district follow-up and support to help implement the new model?

Question 5: What do they hope will be the impact on the new model for themselves and their school or district?


**Importance of the Study**

Leadership is an essential element of successful schools. The identification and development of effective leadership, however, has been significantly hampered by the paucity of technically sound tools for assessing and mentoring leadership performance (Porter, Goldring, Murphy, Elliott, & Cravens, 2006). In July of 2013, the state of Michigan authorized MCEE to publish their findings and recommendations for state approval of two different administrator evaluation tools: The School Advance Administrator Evaluation System by P. Reeves and McNeill, and the Leadership Performance Matrix by D. B. Reeves. Subsequently, draft bills that passed the Michigan House of Representatives in May of 2014 confirmed those recommendations and added one more, i.e., the Marzano School/District Leader Evaluation tools. If the Michigan Senate confirms these models or requirements that favor the adoption of these or similarly vetted models, every LEA and ISD/ESA in the state of Michigan will need to replace any administrator evaluation model they have been using with one of the three models referenced in this study or another model that meets the same standards of research base and technical rigor as these three models.

Principals in the state of Michigan are in the process of learning and adapting to one of the four new teacher evaluation tools recommended by the MCEE in response to MCL 380.1249 of 2011. Adapting to the new teacher evaluation models and processes will, in of itself, be a major change for both principals and teachers. In addition, however, school districts are also required to adopt new administrator evaluation systems and processes, which means that principals are simultaneously adapting to both new teacher and new principal evaluation systems at the same time. Implementing new teacher and
administrator evaluation systems involves extensive training and, in many cases, also learning a new online management system for both.

While existing literature, as reported by the American Institute for Research (Lin, 2011), points to the deep impact of principal effectiveness as it relates to student achievement, there is nonetheless a scarcity of research on how prepared principals and district administrators are to implement an administrator evaluation model that is actually grounded in that research and expressed in terms of behaviors that align to research informed practice. For this reason, LEAs and ISD/ESAs are undertaking changes to their evaluation models and processes without benefit of research guidance on the best way to assist principals and district administrators in the implementation and understanding of new evaluation models. Michigan House Bills 1249A and 1249B (Legislative Council, State of Michigan, 2009) responded to this issue by requiring that districts secure training by the provider of the evaluation model (or by trainers authorized by the provider of the model) for all who will use the new evaluation model to evaluate others. In addition, some of the evaluation model providers also recommend that all persons being evaluated under the new model receive training as well, especially in the case of the school administrators (MCEE, 2013).

To address the deficiency in the research on how administrators actually experience and adapt to the shift to new and different evaluation models (for both teacher and administrator evaluation), this study was conducted to specifically explore how principals and their evaluators compare the principles, values, and beliefs that they associate with both the former and the new evaluation models and processes. This study engaged a sample of principals to gain an understanding of their lived experiences
adapting to a new evaluation model, as well as their own issues and concerns related to
the administrator evaluation process.

**Methodology**

This study used a qualitative research approach with a phenomenological design. According to Newton and Rudestam (2001), qualitative designs typically are not intended to prove or test a theory, and it is more likely that the theory will emerge once the data are collected (p. 43). Qualitative research is intended to understand phenomena in their setting and it is where the researcher goes to the site of the participants to conduct the research. This enables the researcher to develop a level of detail about the individuals and to be involved in the actual experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2003).

Creswell (2003) stated that phenomenological research is used to understand a phenomenon through the lived experiences of those who have deeply lived with or through the phenomenon. “Lived experiences marks phenomenology as a philosophy as well as a method, and the procedure involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning” (p. 15). This study took place in the natural setting of a public school and engaged principals who have experienced the phenomenon of implementing and adapting to a new administrator evaluation model.

**Conceptual Framework**

Theory is defined as a body of knowledge that organizes, categorizes, describes, predicts, explains and otherwise aids in understanding phenomena (Cipoletti, 2006). The history of evaluation theory is deeply rooted in the need for accountability and social
inquiry. In the context of evaluation theory, accountability encompasses the assessment of goals, processes and outcomes. Tyler is noted as an instrumental figure in evaluation theory. Addressing the early 20th century school systems’ lack of educational objectives, Tyler proposed the use of objectives-oriented evaluation. Growing out of the emphasis placed on linking evaluation to validated outcomes, theory-driven evaluation is now one of the most commonly practiced types of evaluation theories. The program theory (objective) of theory-driven evaluation is formed by stakeholder’s implicit and explicit assumptions of what actions are required to solve a certain problem and why the problem will respond to action. The evaluation strategy involves dialogue between stakeholders and practitioners as a means to further define the resources and social context required for program success. Genetically, humans are programmed to learn from negative and positive experiences, registering data for future output. Thorough evaluations help improve the operation of social programs (Libbi, 2009).

The call for improved student achievement (or else), has led politicians and educators to look, once again, at principal effectiveness as a critical lever in transforming education results. Under federal policies such as No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top and School Improvement Grants (SIG) competitions (Kessler & Howe, 2012), a principal’s job security rest squarely upon his or her success in promoting and sustaining acceptable levels of student academic achievement. Important questions are raised regarding the effect of a principal’s behavior and leadership practices on enhancing teacher performance, increasing student learning, and improving academic achievement results. Principals need clear expectations and standards for leadership performance; fair, consistent, timely, and reliable performance assessments; and assessment procedures and
practices that rate the quality of leadership performance while providing useful feedback for professional growth and development, and this is achieved through a principal evaluation system (Davis et al., 2011).

The American Institute for Research published key findings in *The Ripple Effect: A Synthesis of Research on Principal Influence to Inform Performance Evaluation Design* (Clifford, Behrstock-Sherratt, & Fetters, 2012), and in this brief it is stated that an effective principal can influence school performance, but what is not known is what qualities make up an effective principal. Principal effectiveness is defined as the intended or expected effects of principals’ work. Ensuring that new evaluation systems are valid, fair, and useful requires them to reflect an accurate definition of principal effectiveness. To develop definitions of principal effectiveness, policymakers must reference policy, seek principals’ perspectives on their work, and review available research on principal effectiveness to create new performance evaluations designs. Principals’ voices have, at times, have been lost in efforts to create better performance evaluation systems.

Feedback from practitioners and university scholars suggest that effective systems of principal evaluation are certain to exist among the approximately 14,500 school districts across the country. However, identifying specific districts with strong principal evaluation systems or accessing substantive and comprehensive information about such systems is very difficult. Further, while some exemplars may be enthusiastically promoted, they may not be research-based or may have not yet been evaluated (Davis et al., 2011). With a research base that is informative, but not necessarily conclusive, evaluation models that are recent iterations of an emerging body of research about characteristics of effective school leader performance, and the lack of noteworthy
examples, it is timely to add studies to the research base that capture the actual experiences principals can relay as they shift to and adapt to new evaluation models derived from the most recent research on school leader practice for their own performance assessment. These experiences can provide powerful insights into the magnitude of the change principals are experiencing, some of the challenges they are encountering as they make that change, and some of the means by which they meet those challenges. Additional such studies can provide school districts and policy makers with important clues as to the needs and issues that must be addressed if the shift to the new evaluation models and processes are to actually enhance principals’ ability to achieve better outcomes for students in their schools.

**Definition of Terms**

Throughout this study the author uses key terminology that may not be familiar to the reader. The terms are defined below for clarity and understanding.

*High quality educator evaluation system* is defined as a system that provides regular, comprehensive, meaningful and fair evaluations by trained evaluators, based on multiple indicators that included teacher practice, teacher growth, and contribution to students to student learning (Long, 2011).

*Clear and rigorous expectations* are defined as expectations based primarily on evidence of student learning. Evidence should reflect excellence in the classroom and should be precisely worded and built around observable evidence that students are actively engaged in the lesson (Hart, Natale, & Starr, n.d.).

*Formative assessment* provides opportunities to receive and use feedback about practice so that principals have opportunities to improve practices.
Summative assessment is a formal and final assessment of principal performance that involves some scoring and reflection on performance (Johnson & Jenkins, 2009).

Data informed is using multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative data tied to student achievement and evidence-based practice including achievement and observational data (Fenton & Murphy, n.d.).

Effective schools movement rested on the concept of equity between children from differing socioeconomic classes. As educators became concerned about equity among other subsets of the population, gender, ethnicity, disabilities, and family structure were added to the mix. Effective schools movement emphasized the individual school as the unit of change. Eventually, it became clear that school improvement resulting in increased student achievement could only be sustained with strong district support (Lezotte, 2010).

Chapter I Summary

In the current age of increased accountability, growing global competition, and mounting state, local and federal demands, principals are held accountable for how well teachers teach and how well students learn. The explicit standards of teaching and learning derived for the NCLB legislation of 2001 have placed principals under immense pressure to improve student achievement to meet the goals of all students reaching proficiency levels in the core curriculum and elimination of achievement gaps between defined student groups. Principals not only need to be educational visionaries; instructional leaders; curriculum coordinators; assessment experts; disciplinarians; community builders; public relations experts; budget analyzers; facility managers; overseer of legal, contractual, and policy mandates; facilitators of conflict resolution
among parents, teachers, unions, district offices, and state and federal agencies; but they now must take on the enormous responsibility of increasing student achievement (Davis et al., 2005).

The ultimate goal of schools is to increase student achievement and this achievement is affected by classroom practices of teachers, which in turn are influenced by the principal’s instructional leadership skills. If the progression of quality instruction leading to sustainable gains in student achievement is going to occur, principals must be immersed in the teaching and learning that occurs in their school. “Instructional improvement is the prime focus in the lives of effective principals, and their decisions and priorities reflect their commitment. Increased learning and instructional improvement are the hallmarks of effective schools” (DiPaola & Hoy, 2008, p. 7). The primary role of the principals is to create a school atmosphere where teachers improve their collective capacity to ensure all students are acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to become successful (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008).

The Wallace Foundation’s Principal Pipeline Initiative, conducted by the Policy Studies Associates (Turnball et al., 2013), has noted the growing prominence of school leadership as a topic in the national policy conversation about education reform and as a priority in achieving the aims of state and federal reform policy such as RTTT. The Wallace Foundation has served as a clearinghouse for much of the leading research on school leadership. From this body of work, the Foundation concludes that school leadership deserves prominence as a policy and practice concern, that much is known about effective practices of principals, and that useful insights are also available to guide district policy around principal preparation, hiring, evaluation, and support. Yet white
papers issued by the Foundation also conclude that serious gaps remain in the manner in
which principals are trained, supported, and evaluated (Turnbull, Riley, Arcaira,
Anderson, & MacFarlane, 2013). This study addresses one of those gaps by bringing
forth principal experiences in the early stages of implementing new administrator
evaluation models as a result of changes in state and federal policy.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

History of Educational Evaluations

In the 1700s, education was not considered a professional discipline, and in the beginning of America’s primary education system, clergy were chosen to supervise the schools and teachers. Teachers were considered servants of the community; supervisory committees were given the task of overseeing the quality of instruction, and the feedback given to teachers was varied. With the rise of the industrial base and the common schooling movement that continued through the 1800s, schools began to spread out through urban areas, forming more complex school systems. These schools often had a head teacher who would assume administrative duties along with their teaching duties (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011).

The history of supervision as a formal activity conducted by administrators did not take place until the formation of the common school in the late 1830s. The period from the beginning of formal education in the United States up to the mid 1800s was the dawning of an awareness that pedagogical skills were an important part of effective teaching, and even though effective teaching was not yet defined, this was the first step to developing teacher expertise (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011).

The search for great teachers began in 1896 when Kratz asked 2,411 students in grades 2 through 8 in Sioux City, Iowa, to describe what they considered to be characteristics of a good teacher. His goal was to establish a benchmark against which all
teachers would be judged. Some 87% of those young Iowans mentioned “helpfulness” as the most important teacher characteristic, but a stunning 58% mentioned “personal appearance” as the next most influential factor (Pearlman, 2003).

The early 20th century was dominated by two competing views of education. One was embodied in the writings of Dewey. He saw democracy, not scientific management, as the conceptual underpinning of human progress. Progressive ideas such as student-centered education, connecting the classroom to the real world, and differentiation based on student learning needs were concepts that Dewey thought would bridge the gap between students’ passive role as learners and the active role they would need to play as citizens. The second view of education was represented in the work of Taylor. Taylor took the view of scientific management and believed that measurement of specific behaviors of factory workers was perhaps the most powerful means to improve production. He argued that, if there were 100 ways to perform a task, some methods would be more efficient than others. Taylor’s principles began to have an impact on K-12 education (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011).

In 1929, Wetzel proposed measuring student learning to determine the effectiveness of a teacher or school. He recommended three components as the basis for scientific supervision: the use of aptitude tests to determine the ability level of each child; the establishment of clear, measurable objectives for each course; and the use of reliable measures of student learning. After World War II, a movement began to focus on the teacher as an individual, rather than on the scientific approach to schooling. During this time, the role of the supervisor was defined in rather specific terms, but, unfortunately, the list of supervisory responsibilities was quite long and broad. One positive outcome
Formation of teachers’ unions in the 1950s led to collective bargaining agreements that defined the process for teacher evaluation, and these agreements generally limited the principals’ control over teacher hiring, firing, and evaluation (Borthwick, 2010). The Industrial Revolution brought about some changes in the evaluation process as schools became larger and unions started to exert their influence. The Cold War focused additional attention on education by raising fears that Soviet students were better educated than American students. The search for better teachers in order to compete with the Soviets led to more men entering the field of teaching, and unions increased their influence in the role and evaluation of teachers (Markley, 2004).

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, clinical supervisory models were introduced and spread rapidly. By 1980, one study found that about 90% of school administrators used some type of clinical supervisory model. In the 1980s, Hunter developed a model for designing lessons. Hunter’s seven-step framework became the prescription for teacher evaluation in many states and was referred to as “mastery teaching” (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011).

In 1982, the report A Nation at Risk changed the educational landscape by telling the country that education was, again, in trouble. Students were not learning at rates necessary to maintain a competitive edge in the evolving world economy and lacked some of the requisite skills needed to play productive roles in the U.S. economy. One of the outcomes of this report was the effective schools movement. Conducting regular
teacher evaluations became increasingly important as a call for effective teachers spread across the country (Markley, 2004).

Contributing to the debate about the proper approach to supervision was a study conducted by the RAND Corporation (Wise, Darling-Hammond, Tyson-Bernstein, & McLaughlin, 1984), which investigated the types of supervisory and evaluation practices that were actually occurring in school districts across the United States. Its report, titled *Teacher Evaluation: A Study of Effective Practices*, found that many of the systems of supervision and evaluation in place at that time were quite didactic and formulaic in nature. Four consistent problems with supervision and evaluation were identified in the study. First, most respondents felt that principals “lacked sufficient resolve and competence to evaluate accurately”; second, the report noted teacher resistance to feedback. The third identified problem was a lack of uniform evaluation practices based on established teacher competencies. The fourth problem was a lack of training for the evaluators (Brown-Sims, 2010).

With the standards movement of the late 1990s came increased expectations for student performance and renewed concerns about teacher practice. Driven by politicians, parents, and (notably) teacher unions, school districts began an analysis of teacher evaluation goals and procedures. The traditional model of teacher evaluation, based on scheduled observations of a handful of direct instruction lessons, came under fire. “Seventy years of empirical research on teacher evaluation shows that current practices do not improve teachers or accurately tell what happens in the classroom” (Pearlman, 2003, p. 3).
At the turn of the twenty-first century, people continue to debate whether teaching is a true profession. Questions persisted about educators’ lack of self-regulation, the nebulously defined knowledge base upon which teaching rests, the lack of rigid entrance requirements to teacher education programs, the level of teachers’ salaries, and the locus of control in matters of evaluation. Yet school districts, state governments, the federal government, and national professional and lay organizations appeared intent, as never before, on building and strengthening teaching as a profession. In light of federal and state policy and legislative changes initiated since 2000 that impact the preparation, credentialing, compensation, and employment processes, it is likely that ideas and processes regarding teacher evaluation will continue to grow and develop as the concept of teaching as a profession evolves.

Already pro-forma year-end evaluations for both teachers and administrators are giving way to evaluation models and systems that call for ongoing performance assessment and feedback with a focus on continuous growth in both practice and impact on students. Computer technology is assisting this shift by providing new tools to support both formative and summative evaluation processes informed by multiple forms of performance and impact evidence (Pearlman, 2003). As new teacher and administrator evaluation systems generate more data to attempt to understand the realities and complexities of teaching and leading schools in the 21st century, reformers may have a more informed basis for future policy changes. In the meantime, knowledge of what it means to be a teacher or school leader may increase through the use of better tools and processes to both interpret and guide continuous growth in their work. If developmental, growth-focused evaluation tools and processes can be sustained, administrators of the
future will demonstrate much higher levels of knowledge and skill than their predecessors, leaving the teacher profession better than they found it (Pearlman, 2003).

**History of Leadership Theories**

In his seminal work of the 1970s, Burns (1978) authored his now famous treatise, *Leadership*. In that work, he posed that crisis of leadership is the mediocrity or irresponsibility of so many of men and women in power, and the fundamental crisis underlying mediocrity is intellectual.

If we know all too much about our leaders, we know far too little about leadership. We fail to grasp the essence of leadership that is relevant to the modern age and, hence, we cannot agree even on the standards by which to measure, recruit, and reject it. (p. 52)

Burns concluded that leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth. Becoming a leader should be viewed less as an achievement and more as a calling. In this regard, an individual should understand that by accepting a leadership role, he or she is embarking on an ongoing journey (Zigarmi, Fowler, & Lyles, 2007).

A theory is a statement (generalization) that explains some phenomena in a systematic way. Theories may range from a simple generalization to a complex set of laws, from philosophical to scientific. Some theories deal with simple generalizations, such as results of polls or surveys. More sophisticated theories may seek to explain why particular phenomena occur; examples are Einstein’s theory of relativity and Newton’s theory of the physical universe (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012). Leadership theories are the latter, in that they attempt to explain and predict complex human behavior and the
nuanced interactions between leaders and followers within human enterprises and endeavors.

When we look at the leaders around us, whether it is an employer or the President, we might find ourselves wondering exactly why these individuals are successful (or not) in such positions. People have been interested in leadership throughout human history, but only somewhat recently have several formal leadership theories emerged. Early leadership theories focused on what qualities differentiate leaders and followers, while subsequent theories have looked at other variables, such as situational factors and skill levels (Cherry, 2013). While many theories have emerged, most can be classified in one of eight macro theories.

During the 1840s, the Great Man Theory evolved. This theory assumes that the qualities of leadership are intrinsic, which means that great leaders are born and not made. This theory sees great leaders as those who are destined by birth, and suggested that these leaders would rise when confronted with the appropriate situation. In 1860, Spencer disputed the Great Man Theory by affirming that these heroes are simply the product of their times and their actions are the result of social conditions (Cherry, 2013).

The Trait Leadership Theory evolved during the 1930s and 1940s. This theory posits that people are either born with or develop certain qualities that will make them excel in leadership roles. That is, certain qualities, such as intelligence, sense of responsibility, creativity, and other personal traits, may put anyone in position to be a good leader (Cherry, 2013).

The Behavioral Theory evolved during the 1940s and 1950s. In reaction to the Trait Leadership Theory, the Behavioral Theory offered a new perspective, one that
focuses on the behaviors of leaders as opposed to their mental, physical, or social characteristics. Behavior-based leadership theories suggest that anyone with proper conditioning can develop the right behaviors that would provide access to the heretofore considered elite club of naturally gifted leaders. In other words, behavioral theories of leadership contend that leaders are made, not born, and they can learn from teaching and observation (Cherry, 2013).

In the 1960s, the Contingency Leadership Theory argued that there was no single way of leading and that every leadership style should be based on certain situations. By extension, contingency theories suggest that certain people perform at their maximum level in certain places depending on the match between leadership characteristics (traits) and/or behaviors and the leadership needs of the context and situation. Within this theory, no leadership style is best in all situations. Success depends upon a number of variables, including the leadership style, qualities of the followers, and aspects of the situation (Cherry, 2013).

During the 1970s, distinctions were drawn between transactional and transformational leadership (Burns, 1978). In transactional leadership, leaders approach followers with an eye to exchanging one thing for another: jobs for votes or subsidies for campaign contributions. Such transactions comprise the bulk of the relationships among leaders and followers, especially in groups, legislatures, and parties. Burns put forth a theory of leadership that is transformative and thus better suited to sustainable adaptive change, especially when that change is connected with moral purpose. Burns argued that transforming leadership, while more complex, is more potent. The transactional leader recognizes and exploits an existing need or demand of a potential follower. The
transforming leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower (Burns, 1978).

**Evaluation Theories**

Theory is also defined as a body of knowledge that organizes, categorizes, describes, predicts, explains, and otherwise aids in understanding phenomena. The history of evaluation theory is deeply rooted in the need for accountability and social inquiry. In the context of evaluation theory, accountability encompasses the assessment of goals, processes, and outcomes. Social inquiry is a set of diverse study methods that recognizes that human actions are attributed not only to natural and physiological elements but also to a varied set of social components (Cipoletti, 2006).

Much of the current interest in evaluation theory and practice can be directly linked to the expansion of government programs, the onset of which is often attributed to President Roosevelt’s “New Deal” for lifting the country up from the Great Depression in the 1930s with a series of new program initiatives. During the 1960s, President Johnson launched his “Great Society” agenda and, most notably, the Economic Opportunity Act, which established federal programs to carry on his “War on Poverty.” From there, Johnson gained passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which, through a progressive string of five-year reauthorizations, eventually led to President Bush’s No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation in 2001.

With each of these successive presidential initiatives, federal influence on the ways and means of public education grew. In spite of a shift in government program expansion through President Clinton’s Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996, subsequent reauthorizations to ESEA added increasingly prescriptive
provisions for reforming public education, and each new provision spawned new areas of specialized reform activity and thus new areas for research, theory, and practice development. Through such expansions of federal policy and funded education reform initiatives, educator evaluation eventually emerged as an activity in search of research-informed theory translated to into professional practice (Smith, 2006). Performance evaluation theory grew out of the broader discipline of program evaluation, which emerged in the 1960s in response to government and stakeholder needs to account for the impact of a rapidly expanding public investment in social programs (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007).

Theory-driven evaluation is based on Chen’s contributions to the realm of theory-driven evaluation as a means to identify areas of potential conflict. The evaluation strategy involves dialogue between stakeholders and practitioners as a means to further define the resources and social context required for program success (Cipoletti, 2006). According to Cipoletti, the theory-driven evaluation process involves the following steps: engage stakeholders, describe the program, focus the evaluation design, gather credible evidence, justify conclusions, and ensure use and share lessons learned. Evaluation theories are a way of consolidating lessons learned, that is, of synthesizing prior experience and enabling us to learn from the experience of others. Comparing evaluation theories is a useful way of identifying and better understanding the key areas of debate within the field. Evaluation theory is “who we are,” but people come to evaluation through quite varied pathways, many of which do not involve explicit training in evaluation. There are myriad pathways to what evaluation is, of course, which is a source
of great strength for the field, bringing diversity of skills, opinions, knowledge sets, and so on (Mark, 2005).

Despite the positive consequences of the various ways that people enter the field of evaluation, this diversity also reinforces the importance of studying evaluation theories. Methods are important, but, again, they need to be chosen in the service of some larger end. Theory helps us figure out where an evaluation should be going and what it is to be an evaluator (Mark, 2005).

Much is written about evaluation as it is related to the theory and practice in education—a great deal of which is misleading and confused. As Gitlin and Smyth (1990) commented, from its Latin origin meaning “to strengthen” or empower, the term evaluation has taken a numerical turn—it is now largely about the measurement of things—and in the process can easily slip into becoming an end rather than a means. During evaluation, educators are constantly called upon to make judgments, to make theory, and to discern whether what is happening in the classroom is for the good (Smith, 2006).

Education involves more than gaining and exercising technical knowledge and skills, and it depends on cultivating a kind of artistry. In this sense, educators are not engineers applying their skills to carry out a plan or drawing; they are artists who are able to improvise and devise new ways of looking at things. Schon (1996) spoke about professionals being researchers in the practice context. Schon further stated that research is a frame of mind—a perspective people take toward objects and activities. The conduct of action research is not restricted to people with long and specialized training; rather, it involves practitioners stating a problem to be investigated, developing a process of
inquiry, and creating explanations that enable people to understand the nature of the problem and the impact of various means of response to the problem (Smith, 2006). Educators are not only artists who improvise and devise, they are also action researchers who seek to try out various ways and means to influence student learning. In accepting teaching as a multi-faceted and complex process involving both artistry and science, practice and persistence, research and action, along with positive expectation, it is no surprise that evaluation of the performance of teaching is also multi-faceted and complex.

The purpose of an evaluation is to reflect critically on the effectiveness of personal and professional practice and to guide professional growth. It is to contribute to the development of “good” rather than “correct” practice. Performance evaluation of educational practice is not primarily about the counting and measuring of things. It entails both valuing and interpreting, informed by performance standards and guided by context and situation. To achieve this blend, educator evaluators have to develop the dispositions of inquiry and the perspectives of both learners and educators to ensure a process of looking, thinking, and acting that is participative and interactive rather than disassociated (Smith, 2006).

**Performance Evaluation Review**

The performance review is designed to facilitate constructive discussion between the employee and manager in order to clarify performance objectives, provide feedback about an employee’s performance with respect to skills and behaviors, provide a framework for identifying the employee’s development plans, and serve as a basis for merit increase decisions. For many employees, a face-to-face performance review is the most stressful work conversation they will have all year. For managers, the discussion is
just as tense. Evaluating an employee’s job performance should consist of more than an annual chat; it should be a process that allows ongoing, real-time feedback (Knight, 2011).

As a contributor to the *Harvard Business Review*, Knight (2011) offered a set of recommendations for conducting a performance review based on prominent practices in business and industry. First, she stated that the employer needs to set expectations early and be clear on how employees will be evaluated. At the beginning of each evaluation cycle, the employer should hold a meeting to discuss the employee’s goals and the employer’s expectations. She advises employers to ask employees to identify and write down accomplishments they are particularly proud of prior to performance conferences and reviews with their supervisor. Prior to completing a performance review, the supervisor should review his or her notes on the employee, and, finally, ask for feedback from others in the company who work closely with that employee.

Knight (2011) further added that it is important to set a tone. Most employees are good solid workers, so for the vast majority, it is important to focus on how well the employee has performed. For the marginal workers, critical feedback should not be sugar-coated; rather, it should be specific and clear. Performance reviews are also a chance to confront poor performers and stipulate requirements for improvement along with constructive coaching to guide learning and growth. With solid performers, Knight advises a balanced discussion of strengths and achievements along with encouraging the person to reflect on his or her own performance. She emphasized that focusing on behaviors and not dispositions takes the personal edge out of the performance review conversation. The supervisor should express both praise and advice for further
performance growth in specific actionable terms. Finally, Knight noted that during the review it is important for supervisors to hold their ground. The hot-button issues associated with performance reviews are money and rank. This means that performance reviews are high stakes and, as a result, employees can push back on a critical review. If a company allows it, separating any talk of compensation from the performance review helps, but supervisors must be able to stand behind their performance review conclusions, even when those conclusions are met with negative response from the employee. A majority of companies require managers to rate their employees, and the supervisor’s goal is to review the data (performance evidence) and make an informed judgment call. Considering both supervisor-observed evidence and employee-provided evidence, along with feedback from others through valid and reliable feedback processes, increases the likelihood of a fair and accurate performance appraisal.

Performance reviews are standard protocol in corporate America. The objective seems to be for the company to give formal and direct feedback to employees, who are assumed to understand that the reviews represent an opportunity to get a status check (like a report card) that can help them improve their performance and, in the end, further their careers (Szaky, 2012). Employers need to be careful to avoid creating an environment in which they fail to confront unsatisfactory performance when it happens or acknowledge great work when it is delivered. While these perspectives on effective performance review processes are derived from business and industry, they offer valuable insights for constructing more effective evaluation practices for educators as well.
Types and Models of Performance Evaluation in the Corporate World

The primary reason that evaluation is adopted in businesses and educational sectors is that it helps the entity to determine if the training or process is effective and what further steps can improve the process (Rampur, 2012). In the business sector, formative evaluation, sometimes called developmental evaluation, is used to assess the value of an activity or project as it is taking place to determine how it can be improved. The goal of formative evaluation is to ensure that a project’s or activity’s purpose is being fulfilled in the most effective ways (Roberts, 2009). Formative evaluation typically involves a small group of users and participants in the project or activity who are evaluated. Participants in formative evaluations look not only at the goals of the process and whether those goals are achieved, but also at the process itself to determine where that process is more and less successful (Roberts, 2009).

Summative evaluations reveal the ultimate effectiveness of the overall process, activity, or performance that is carried out. They focus on determining if the purpose of the performance, process, or activity was fulfilled. Summative evaluation strategies follow a retrospective procedure and often include such steps as final results assessments, effectiveness evaluations, and cost-to-benefit comparisons. Unlike formative evaluation strategies, summative evaluation is executed at the very end of a process, project, or activity or at the end of a performance review cycle (Rampur, 2012).

Inspection evaluation is, most generally, an organized examination or formal evaluation exercise. Inspection involves the collection of performance evidence through direct observation, or examination of performance evidence gathered through other means (e.g., portfolios, demonstrations, and work products). The performance evidence is
usually compared to specified requirements and standards for determining whether the process, performance, or activity is in line with established performance standards or targets (Collins & Kuserk, n.d.). Inspections can be visits to a facility or site (e.g., business, school, and landfill) for the purpose of gathering information to determine to what degree and in what manner the focus of the evaluation is or is not in compliance with performance expectations and/or standards.

Another model is inputs and outputs. Input is something put into a system or expended in its operation to achieve an output or a result. Because the outputs can be the results of an individual unit of a larger process, outputs of one part of a process can be the inputs to another part of the process (Collins & Kuserk, n.d.). Any business or enterprise can be looked at as a process with inputs and outputs, and inputs and outputs can be identified as having a positive, negative, or neutral impact. One of the main objectives of classifying inputs and outputs is to identify those inputs and outputs that, if modified, can make significant improvements toward operating more sustainable and improving or improved performance (Sustainable Operating Strategies [SOS], 2012).

**Types and Models of Performance Evaluation in the Education World**

In the education realm, schools use the evaluation model to create a culture in which all school-based personnel have a clear understanding of what defines excellence in their work; have opportunity for self-reflection as a way to ensure professional growth; are provided with constructive and data-based feedback about their performance; and receive support to increase their effectiveness using an evaluation system that is rigorous, transparent, and fair. Educator performance evaluation systems typically use multiple rating categories to differentiate and distinguish among varying levels of performance.
effectiveness across a broad range of performance criteria organized into domains of practice, thus enabling the application of both formative and summative evaluation models. Since the enactment of the educator evaluation provisions of RTTT (Michigan Department of Education 2010), state-mandated educator evaluation systems also use student growth data that are determined by multiple measures of student learning as a significant component of an overall performance evaluation rating, thus borrowing from the inputs and outputs approach. The primary purpose of educator evaluation systems is to help increase teacher effectiveness so that, as a system, we can increase student learning.

In education, there are multiple types of evaluations that educational entities use when assessing the effectiveness of their organization. A formative evaluation is used to validate or ensure that the goals of the instruction are being achieved to improve instruction, if necessary, by means of identification and subsequent remediation of problematic aspects. This is a technique that aims at making processes and activities better by removing unnecessary or impeding policies and practices. Formative evaluation’s main objective is to give importance to available strengths and convert weaknesses into strengths (Rampur, 2012). Formative evaluation in education relies on many of the same techniques that other forms of performance assessment use. Surveys, interviews, and collected data are all used to focus on various aspects of a process or performance and help prevent or resolve performance problems. Formative evaluations can use both qualitative data, such as narrative descriptions of a project, process, and performance, as well as quantitative data, such as perception surveys and outcome measures (Roberts, 2009).
A summative evaluation in education is used to look at the ultimate effectiveness of the overall program, process, or performance that is carried out. Summative evaluation plans are comprised of steps such as final result assessments, effectiveness evaluations, and cost-to-benefit comparisons (Rampur, 2012). Summative evaluation provides information on the efficacy of programs and processes (the ability to do what they were designed to do) and the effectiveness of performers who deliver programs and services. For example, did learner demonstrate mastery of the content standard after completing a learning experience or program? Or, did a teacher demonstrate elements of effective practice in their teaching? In a sense, summative evaluation lets the learner, the teacher, the program, etc., know “how they did.” More importantly, by looking at how the learner, the teacher, the program did, summative evaluation establishes the basis for recognizing and affirming effective performance and providing corrective action for ineffective performance. Summative evaluation can also use both qualitative and quantitative evidence, but usually interprets qualitative evidence against defined performance levels to profile performance and achieve an overall performance rating (e.g., a letter grade, performance score, or other system for categorizing or classifying overall performance).

**National and Michigan Regulations**

One of the prime outgrowths from the report *A Nation at Risk* (U.S. Department of Education, 1982) was the effective schools movement. Principal and teacher evaluations gained new importance as a call for effective principals/teachers spread across the United States (Markley, 2004). While decisions about public education—including decisions related to principal/teacher evaluation—continue to be largely
decentralized, federal actors are creating financial incentives for districts and states to reconsider their approaches to evaluation. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan is using the $4 billion in the Race to the Top fund to encourage states to consider what policies will create “Great Teachers and Leaders”—the review criterion with the highest point value on applications for state funds (Borthwick, 2010).

On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which, among other things, set aside roughly $4.35 billion for states to improve their education systems. The competition, known as Race to the Top, distributed funding to states that meet specific requirements and set up concrete plans to improve their schools. One key area of reform, as laid out by the law, was principal/teacher evaluations. As such, the contest sparked a whole host of reforms, many of which have led to a number of conflicts between unions and government officials (Choe & Pathe, 2013).

Across the states, there is unprecedented momentum toward developing and implementing principal/teacher evaluation systems that factor student achievement into the ratings. The move to rethink how to evaluate principals/teachers and explicitly tie assessments of principal/teacher performance to student achievement marks an important shift in thinking about teacher and school leader quality. The change is significant because policymaking in regard to improving principal/teacher quality to date has focused almost exclusively on their qualifications rather than on their effectiveness in the classroom and the results they get with students (Choe & Pathe, 2013).

RTTT may have been a first impetus for change in this area, but more than a few states have revised their policies on principal/teacher evaluation without competitive
discretionary federal grant incentives. In 2011, states including Idaho, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, and Nevada passed new principal/teacher evaluation legislation as part of compliance with broader federal requirements under NCLB for sustaining categorical federal funding, even though additional competitive RTTT grant funds were no longer available to them. With future ESEA (NCLB) reauthorizations, further changes are likely to keep coming. In the meantime, the U.S. Department of Education announced in September of 2011 flexibility provisions that allowed states to apply for waivers of some of the specific requirements of NCLB in exchange for demonstrating, among other things, that they are employing principal/teacher evaluation and support systems focused on the quality of instruction and student results (Michigan Department of Education, 2013). Michigan responded by passing educator evaluation legislation to meet the waiver requirements and replace the annual yearly progress system required under NCLB with an alternative school rating system.

In 2011-2012, Michigan school districts implemented significant new legislation (under the New School Reform Law Enrolled SB 98 Section 1249) regarding educator evaluations. Every district in Michigan evaluated all of their educators (including teachers and administrators) and reported the results of those evaluations in the state’s Registry of Educational Personnel maintained by the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI). This new law requires evaluations to be based “in significant part” on student growth and to be used to inform decisions regarding placement, promotion, compensation, and retention (Kessler & Howe, 2012).

States like Indiana, Michigan, and Florida require notification of parents if their child is placed in a classroom with an ineffective teacher; however, it is likely that the
Michigan legislature will delay and modify this provision as a result of the delay in passing further clarifications to the 2011 educator evaluation legislation. Under the provisions of the 2011 Michigan educator evaluation statutes, there are consequences for an ineffective performance rating, such as a required improvement plan accompanied by specific measures to guide and support improvement. If a teacher (or administrator) is determined to be ineffective for three consecutive years, the teacher will be dismissed. Finally, performance ratings under the 2011 Michigan educator evaluation statutes can also impact layoff and recall and compensation.

To achieve a successful adaptation to the new educator evaluation requirements, districts must establish common goals, language, understandings, and professional training/learning pertaining to their educator evaluation system and processes. Additional provisions in the Michigan House-passed bills to amend sections 1249 a and b of the educator evaluation statute address further requirements. For instance, one House-approved pending provision holds districts responsible for providing professional training to ensure that evaluators and staff are thoroughly trained in all aspects of the evaluation process being used in the district. Other provisions imply that the evaluation process must not only be embedded in district, school, and personal improvement goals, but it must be a more holistic view of performance comprised of multiple measures over time. Finally, pending provisions in the Michigan House bills stipulate additional requirements for observations, feedback, and improvement plans, along with additional clarifications regarding the creation of growth ratings and the selection of evaluation models. Of particular interest to this study are the provisions that delineate the choices of evaluation models or provisions for alternative models, because the identified models were
extensively reviewed and vetted by the MCEE and because they all follow distinct evaluation processes that are likely to be a departure from past practice. They use evaluation tools comprised of developmental rubrics aligned to research-supported performance criteria—also a likely departure from the evaluation instruments formerly used by most districts.

**Principal Impact on Teachers**

In her book *Principal Leadership* (2002), Wilmore wrote about the ever-changing role of the principal. She explained how the primary function of the principal evolved from “principal teacher” whose limited duties required keeping the school organized and operating efficiently, to the principal as the chief executive officer of the campus. The responsibility of the principal has shifted from curriculum and instruction to management and operations (p. 4).

With the impact of *A Nation at Risk* (U.S. Department of Education, 1982), a renewed interest and focus has been placed on ensuring that every student has access to free and appropriate learning opportunities. With emphasis on high-stakes testing, focused attempts are made to see that at-risk students can and do pass these tests. With the increased focus on accountability and student success, another transition has occurred in school leadership. The role of the principal has transitioned again from school manager to the school catalyst for success for all stakeholders. The role of the principal becomes the primary voice of the school, the champion of free and appropriate education for all students, and the chief proponent of the value of education in a democratic society. In other words, the principal has become the main educational facilitator of the learning community (Wilmore, 2002).
Effective education leadership makes a difference in improving learning. There is nothing new or especially controversial about that idea. What is far less clear, even after several decades of school renewal efforts, is just how leadership matters, how important those effects are in promoting the learning of all children, and what the essential ingredients of successful leadership are. Within the past decade, however, the research on how principals impact student learning through their impact on teachers and on the school-level conditions that impact both teaching and learning has reached a critical mass. It turns out that leadership not only matters, but it is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning. In order for leaders to make this impact, it is important that they chart a clear course that everyone understands, setting high expectations and using data to track progress and performance. Leaders must provide teachers and others in the system with the necessary support and training to succeed. It is also imperative that leaders of schools ensure that the entire range of conditions and incentives in districts and schools fully supports rather than inhibits teaching and learning (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Reeves (2009b), in his book Leading Change in Your School, wrote about focusing on changes with the greatest results.

School leaders are often held accountable for things beyond their control. The skills that students bring to kindergarten; the educational attainment of families in the community, the local tax base, and the pool of available teacher candidates—all these factors affect student achievement. The most important resource any education leader allocates is teachers. (p. 61)

With the teacher being the most important resource in a school, the principal needs to know how to measure the teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom so that student learning and achievement increases. With states passing new laws that mandate teacher
observation and evaluations, it is important to know what resources and training 
principals need in order to have a positive impact on teacher performance and 
development and, thus, student achievement.

**Evaluating Principals**

Assessing principal and teacher effectiveness has been an important element of 
school improvement for more than two decades. Ideally, a principal assessment should be 
easy to administer, capture the essence of the role of a school principal, and provide valid 
and reliable data for purposes such as professional development and performance 
evaluation. However, criticism exists regarding the adequacy of assessment instruments 
and the processes employed to evaluate principals (Goldring et al., 2009).

The stakes for effective school leaders are high in today’s climate of system-wide 
accountability where American public schools are subgroups of increasingly diverse 
student population. Never before has the effectiveness of school been monitored so 
closely and measured by quantifiable standards across schools, districts, and states. 
Despite increasing attention to improving school leadership and renewed emphases on 
principal training and preparation programs, leadership assessment and evaluation have 
received far less attention and research (Goldring et al., 2009).

The research on principal evaluation is surprisingly thin. What does exist varies 
widely in purpose, topic, and methodology. Although states and districts require principal 
evaluation, research suggests that compliance with the law does not ensure that quality 
performance evaluations are used. Two independent reviews of research on principal 
evaluations concluded that evaluation systems have not been designed or enacted in ways 
that promote accurate judgments of principal effectiveness (Clifford & Ross, 2012).
Components of a Good Administrator Evaluation Tool

In 2009, Congress passed an economic stimulus bill that gave the U.S. Secretary of Education unprecedented authority through the $4.35 billion RTTT federal competitive grant program. RTTT was designed to push massive reforms and compel states to remove legal, statutory, or regulatory barriers and to link student achievement data to teachers and principals for evaluation purposes. At the same time, interim final requirements were issued for the School Improvement Grants (SIGS) program authorized under Title I of the ESEA (Clifford & Ross, 2012).

The U.S. Department of Education defines “effective principal” as one “whose students, overall and for each subgroup, achieve acceptable rates (e.g., at least one grade level in an academic year) of student growth.” RTTT went further proclaiming that states, local education agencies, or schools must use multiple valid measures of performance, provided that principal effectiveness is determined, in significant part, on the basis of growth in student achievement on assessment required under ESEA. Principal evaluation can be one important source of feedback to support learning and help districts and states make important decisions about leadership and principals’ continued employment (Clifford & Ross, 2012).

Policymakers at all levels of the American public education system increasingly understand the importance of the principalship. Nearly all states and most local education agencies (LEAs) have adopted school leadership standards identifying what principals should know and be able to do. These standards often form the basis of policies related to principal licensure, training, and evaluation. Recent federal policy has likewise emphasized the need for states and LEAs to attend to principal effectiveness as a key
strategy for improving student achievement. A large number of states and LEAs are
dissatisfied with their current principal evaluation systems and are seeking assistance to
develop new ones (New Leaders for New Schools, 2010).

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principal training and preparation programs, leadership assessment and evaluation have
received far less attention and research (New Leaders for New Schools, 2010).

Principal effectiveness is central to raising student achievement. Nearly 60% of a
school’s total impact on student achievement is attributable to principal and teacher
effectiveness. Moreover, a comprehensive review of the research on school leadership
found that the quality of the principal alone accounts for 25% of a school’s impact on
student achievement (New Leaders for New Schools, 2010). While research on effective
administrator evaluation models is just emerging, a few researchers and research entities
are moving forward to develop evaluation tools and processes that focus on
developmental growth against strong research-supported school- and district-level
leadership behavior associated with improving student achievement. Like most of the
recognized teacher evaluation models, these new administrator evaluation models are
likely to be organized around specific domains of leadership practice and evaluation
criteria that tend to be articulated in behavioral terms.
The administrator evaluation models recommended by the MCEE fit this description and were all found to be technically sound through a rigorous process of review and analysis. Moreover, all three of the administrator evaluation models recognized in the Michigan House Bills to amend 1249 a and b of the School Code (the School ADvance Principal evaluation, the Principal Leadership Matrix, and the Marzano school leader evaluation) focus to varying degrees on the work of principals to develop teacher capacity in areas critical to improving student outcomes.

**Readiness of Administrators**

In *Caring Enough to Lead*, Pellicer (1999) presented a personal perspective on what it means to care enough to lead. His book does not discuss leadership theory or the organizational structures, but rather understanding who we are as leaders and how leaders can bond with others in meaningful ways to transform our nation’s schools. As we begin to measure the readiness of administrators not only to evaluate and observe their teaching staff but also to participate in and contribute to their own evaluation, it is important to remember the core foundation of a true leader. Pellicer summed up leadership in this way:

People choose to follow a leader because they can identify with the leader’s values. Leaders earn the trust and respect of their followers to the extent that they are able to demonstrate their allegiance to a set of universally accepted values as they carry out their daily responsibilities in a leadership role. The leader’s actions serve as the confirmation that the head, the heart, and the hand are truly joined, and the leader is indeed authentic. The knowledge and skills required to develop a perfect master schedule, design great curricula, select the best people, and so forth are not adequate substitutes for congruency, which manifests itself in such things as honesty, integrity, caring, and commitment to a set of worthwhile values. (pp.122-123)
Our nation’s underperforming schools and children are unlikely to succeed until we get serious about leadership. As much as anyone in public education, it is the principal who is in a position to ensure that good teaching and learning spreads beyond single classrooms, and that ineffective practices are simply not allowed to fester. Clearly, the quality of training that principals receive before they assume their positions, and the continuing professional development they get once they are hired and throughout their careers, have a lot to do with whether school leaders can meet the increasingly tough expectations of the job (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

Research over the past 30 years clearly demonstrates that principals are important catalysts for shaping school improvements, creating lasting foundations for student learning, and accelerating teacher effectiveness. Our nation’s 95,000 public school principals influence 3 million teachers and 55 million students, pre-K through grade 12. Many state and district evaluations of principals are neither technically sound nor useful for improving principal performance, and most principals are not formally evaluated in a meaningful way (Clifford & Ross, 2012).

This lack of attention to principals’ need for professional development is alarming for three reasons. First, principals can determine the effectiveness of high- and low-performing teachers, but they have difficulty differentiating teacher performance for the approximately 60% of teachers whose effectiveness is average or near average. Second, principal preparation programs have little or no focus on evaluating teachers and providing meaningful feedback that will improve their classroom teaching. Finally, most principals have not evaluated teachers where multiple measures are used and high stakes are attached. If school districts do not prepare their principals and administrators, they
can open themselves up to legal challenges from teachers who suffer the consequences of a poor evaluation (Grossman, 2011).

Although considerable attention has been paid to the need of evaluating teachers for their effectiveness in the classroom, far less attention has been paid to the readiness of principals conducting these evaluations. During the past few years, more than 30 states have passed legislation to change the way that teachers are evaluated. The new laws across the country require that every teacher is evaluated annually and new teachers receive multiple evaluations in a year’s time. Many high-stake decisions, such as tenure, compensation, and employment, are made based on the outcome of a teacher evaluation. With such decisions being tied to evaluation results, it is important that governors lead efforts to make changes to state policy to ensure that school principals and administrators responsible for conducting evaluations are trained and certified to conduct them (Grossman, 2011).

**Chapter II Summary**

In *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, Maxwell (2007) wrote,

I believe that success is within the reach of just about everyone. But I also believe that personal success without leadership ability brings only limited effectiveness. Without leadership ability, a person’s impact is only a fraction of what it could be with good leadership. (p. 5)

Maxwell also emphasized the importance of empowerment as a leader, and when the leader cannot or does not know how to empower others in the organization, barriers will be created and followers cannot overcome them. In the education field, one of the most important jobs as a leader is to empower the teachers in the classroom so that they can empower their students, which will lead to academic success.
There are many books written about leadership and how to improve within the arena of leadership. In the many books that I have read, a common theme describes the difference between leadership and management. I find this significant because, if a person really wants to make a change, he or she must be a leader and not a manager. In his book *Good to Great* (2001), Collins explained how to take any organization from good to great. The key to this success is through leadership. He wrote,

Leading from good to great does not mean coming up with the answers and then motivating everyone to follow your messianic vision. It means having the humility to grasp the fact that you do not yet understand enough to have the answers and then to ask the questions that will lead to the best possible insights. The good to great leaders understood the distinctions, creating a culture wherein people had a tremendous opportunity to be heard and, ultimately, for the truth to be heard. (pp.74-75)

In the book *School Leadership that Works*, authors Marzano et al. (2005) describe the importance of leadership in schools and how the principal of the school is key to the success of their school.

Given the perceived importance of leadership in schools and the central role of the principal in that leadership, one might assume that suggestions regarding leadership practice in schools are based on a clear, well-articulated body of research spanning decades. Unfortunately, this assumption is incorrect for two reasons. First, far less research in school leadership has been done than one might expect. Second, the research that has been done on school leadership is quite equivocal. For example, some assert that it provides little specific guidance as to effective practices in school leadership. Recent studies of schools invariable identify the principal’s leadership as a significant factor in school’s success. Unfortunately, these studies provide only limited insight into how principals contribute to their school’s achievement. (p. 6)
CHAPTER III

STUDY DESIGN

Overview of Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe how principals, as players in the work of school reform and renewal, experience being the “Tip of the Spear” in the shift from static and disjointed educator evaluation models to growth- and development-oriented, research-informed, and evidence-based models designed to engage teachers and school leaders as full partners in the pursuit of continuous growth and improvement. In the early state of Michigan’s enactment of new educator evaluation statutory requirements, there is an opportunity to examine the readiness of Michigan’s principals to adapt to one of the newly revised and recommended evaluation models and processes. By engaging a sample of administrators who are in the process of adapting to a new administrator evaluation, this study sought to identify emerging patterns in the experiences of some of the first principals whose districts adopted a new administrator evaluation system in response to statutory requirements for more rigorous, research-based, and data-informed performance evaluations and evaluation ratings. By doing so, the study hoped to isolate impeding and enabling factors that impact the adaptation and transition process and impinge upon the potential for enactment of new educator evaluation models to actually result in accelerated growth and increased success for students.
The focus of this study was to examine how Michigan public school administrators are experiencing the new Michigan education evaluation requirements. Michigan is just one of about 26 states that have implemented new educator evaluation statutes in response to the RTTT provisions of the American Recovery and Resurgence Act of 2009 (ARRA). The new education evaluation requirements have a direct impact on both teachers and principals, but, to date, research studies have focused primarily on how the new value added student growth measures are affecting teacher evaluation ratings and how teachers are experiencing the new evaluation requirements and processes. Very few studies focus on the impact of the new statutory requirements on principals, and I was not able to find any studies that focused on how principals are experiencing the change in evaluation requirements and processes for their own evaluation. The purpose of this study is to begin a new line of inquiry into the experiences of principals with statutory changes to their own evaluation systems and processes. Specifically, this study was designed to give voice to principals through a phenomenology that engages a criterion sample of principals across the state of Michigan where 2011 statutory changes in educator evaluation requirements prompted many districts to adopt both new teacher and administrator evaluation models.

One of the provisions of the new educator evaluation statutes in Michigan was to establish a special governor’s commission to evaluate and recommend evaluation models for both teacher and administrator evaluations. The commission used field testing and focus groups to further vet models they considered to be fair, reliable, and effective (MCEE, 2013). The MCEE final recommendations identified four teacher and two administrator evaluation models. Though the legislature failed to act on these
recommendations for almost four years after enacting the 2011 statutory requirements, school districts across the state began adopting one of the recommended models for evaluating teachers. At a much slower pace, many districts also began adopting new evaluation systems for administrators as well.

Both the instruments and the processes associated with the MCEE-recommended evaluation systems are significantly different from what most districts used and most administrators experienced in the past. Because of these differences and the emergence of performance evaluation as a high priority annual activity with high-stakes implications, it was likely that administrators (both those being evaluated and those evaluating others) would experience a period of adjustment and learning into the new models. Thus, this study focused on an opportune period in which to examine and understand how principals are experiencing and adapting to the change in evaluation system, process, and implications as Michigan’s early adopting school districts made the shift to new evaluation models for administrators. Specifically, this study explored how a sample of building-level administrators understood the purposes and processes for the administrator evaluation model that their district adopted in response to the MCEE recommendations. This study also explored the ways in which the sample of building-level administrators experienced the transition to a new evaluation system and how they interpreted those experiences.

The goal of this study was to provide data that would be useful to superintendents and school board members as they consider and plan for how to best guide and support the transition to a new administrator evaluation model. It was also our intent to add new information early in the process of a shift to new administrator evaluation systems that
meet statutory requirements adopted by many states. I wanted to understand the experiences of principals who made that shift, explore what contributed to or detracted from the implementation process as principals’ districts adopted new administrator evaluation systems, and inform future development of state and local policy regarding principal evaluation. My study was important because it gave voice to a heretofore ignored voice in the shift to more comprehensive, more high stakes, and more complex performance assessment systems and processes. The MCEE-recommended evaluation models (both teacher and administrator) are all focused on recognizing and reinforcing research-supported teacher and leader practices while informing the process of learning and growth for professional educators. I was interested in just how principals are actually experiencing these performance evaluation systems and what the shift to one of the new system means to them.

As the call for improved student achievement increases, important questions are raised regarding the effect of a principal’s behaviors and leadership practices on enhancing teacher performance, increasing student learning, and improving academic achievement results as well as closing student achievement gaps. Since adopting newly revised and (prospectively) improved evaluation models and processes is a key strategy in the RTTT education reform agenda, local districts and their school- and district-level leaders will carry a significant responsibility for the quality of administrators’ implementation experience. My study was undertaken to inform that responsibility through early capture of early adopters’ experiences, especially through the perspectives and voices of principals who received performance reviews under the new statutory requirements.
Participant Recruitment

Participants for this study were recruited from a pool of about 350 Michigan principals whose districts have adopted and completed training for one of the MCEE-recommended administrator evaluation models since the passage of the new Michigan educator evaluation statutes in 2011. Recruitment took place through a database of Michigan districts that have adopted and completed training for the School ADvance Administrator Evaluation system. This database was available through the Michigan Association of School Administrators (MASA), which serves as the dissemination provider for this system in Michigan. The principal researcher for this study, Dr. Patricia Reeves, is also the principal researcher and developer of the School ADvance system and, thus, was able to provide the listing of Michigan districts and principals using the system.

The School ADvance system is one of the two systems recommended by the MCEE (2013); approximately 20% of Michigan districts have adopted this system. This was significant because the majority of Michigan school districts were still delaying adoption of a new administrator evaluation system until final passage of subsequent Michigan statutes that clarify the choices and parameters that districts must comply with in adopting a new system. At issue were two questions: Would the final statutory revisions (passed by the Michigan legislature in November 2015 and signed into law in December 2015) require districts to select among the MCEE recommendations or other models that meet the MCEE-recommended standards for evaluation models, and would there be both a requirement for and funding for training administrators on the new evaluation system?
My study was interested in the experiences of principals whose districts have adopted a vetted model and provided training to both the evaluators and evaluates on that model. Since, at the time of this study, the majority of districts that met this criteria had adopted the School ADvance model, participants for this study were recruited only from the pool of principals whose districts were listed on the database of those that had secured user licenses for and/or completed the adoption training for that model. At the time of this study, some Michigan districts had adopted models vetted by the MCEE but not included in the MCEE recommendations or models not reviewed by the MCEE, so the recruitment pool did not include principals in those districts. Additionally, Houghton Mifflin, the distributor of the second MCEE-recommended administrator evaluation model—the Reeves Principal Leadership Framework—reported only a few pending adoptions, so these districts were not included in the pool either.

The above criteria for inclusion in the recruitment pool resulted in a potential participant pool of 350 principals, but that number was fluid, since new trainings were occurring as this study was in process. That pool was further limited to principals whose districts completed the adoption and training at least six months prior to the collection of data for this study. This further limitation of the pool was to ensure that the principals had a minimum of six months experience working with the new evaluation system. This additional criterion reduced the potential pool to about 275 principals.

The goal for this study was to recruit a sample of 12 to 15 of those principals who met the study criteria. School ADvance provided a list of principals who met my study criteria and their work email addresses. I emailed each of those principals with the
recruitment email provided in Appendix C. The recruitment email included the additional criteria for inclusion in the study as follows:

**Inclusionary Characteristics:**

1. A minimum of three years’ experience as a building principal or assistant principal.
2. A minimum of one year in current principal assignment (i.e., school).
3. A minimum of two years’ experience evaluating teachers.
4. A minimum of one year working under one of the MCEE newly reviewed and recommended administrator evaluation models through a district change in response to the MCEE (2013) report.

**Exclusionary Characteristics:**

1. An ineffective or unsatisfactory performance appraisal as principal or assistant principal in the most recent two performance appraisals.
2. A personal or school-related condition that significantly interferes with the potential participant’s ability to conduct and participate in the performance appraisal process as defined under current law and enacted through the local district’s implementation of a new administrator evaluation model per the MCEE recommendations.

Criterion sampling works well when all the study’s subjects have experienced the central phenomenon and can potentially contribute to the study in a meaningful way. Creswell (2007) recommended that when conducting a phenomenology, the number of participants should range from 1 to 10 (p. 126). For this study, the number of targeted participants was 12 to 15 principals, with at least four from each of the following levels:
K-5/6, 6/7-8/9, and 9/10-12. To achieve the stratified pool of 12 to 15 participants for this study, I employed the following procedures:

1. The recruitment email letter in Appendix C was sent to the entire pool as described above. The recruitment letter provided the name and contact information of Kathleen Ramirez and requested that the principal contact her for more information on the study if potentially interested in becoming a participant. The recruitment email letter also included the inclusionary and exclusionary criteria for the study, so principals were saved the time and effort of responding if they do not meet the study criteria.

2. Ms. Ramirez responded by phone to all principals from the pool who contacted her. In that phone call, she provided a full description of the study and the requirements, risks, and benefits to participants. If the respondent was still interested in potentially participating in the study, Ms. Ramirez emailed a link to the consent form with a provision for the potential participant to complete an electronic signature or download and return a signed hard copy.

3. Upon receipt of signed consent, the respondent was confirmed as a participant in either phase one or two of the study. The first five consenting principals from each of the three stratified levels (K-5/6, 6/7-8/9, and 9/10-12) were confirmed for phase one of the study. Principals who consented after the pool for phase one had been completed were included in phase two of the study, which did not stratify participants. I accepted the first 15 consenting respondents who met the study criteria, and maintained contact information for any principal responding to the recruitment flier after securing the initial
pool of 12 to 15 in case I needed to better balance the pool of participants between elementary, middle, and high school, or needed to consent additional participants to either address participant attrition or achieve saturation.

**Informed Consent Process**

As stated above in the recruitment process, I provided interested respondents to the recruitment email an opportunity to learn more about the study, get their questions answered, and review the consent form online. After all three of these steps, a respondent who wished to participate and met the study criteria completed the consent process via one of two options for completing and returning the signed consent form. Either the respondent could download the electronic copy of the consent form, sign, and return by fax, scanned email, or hard mail, or the respondent completed an electronic signature via the online copy. Please see Appendix D for the Participant Consent Form.

**Methodology**

**Study Approach**

This study used a qualitative phenomenological research approach. According to Creswell (2003), when using a qualitative approach, the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives (the multiple meanings of individual experiences with an intent of developing a pattern). I collected open-ended emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from the data (p. 18). In the tradition of phenomenology, this study of administrators included those who can give voice to the perspectives of school principals who experience the phenomenon of shifting to a performance assessment, feedback, and rating system that (a) was based in research standards of professional practice; (b) utilized a developmental rubric of behavioral
descriptors of standards-based practice; (c) created a performance rating for each performance criteria and an overall performance rating in accordance with statutory requirements for performance ratings; (d) included evidence of student growth (at a school level) as part of the performance rating; (e) included attendance, parent, staff, and student feedback, and progress on school improvement goals as part of the performance rating; (f) required that performance ratings be based on observed or demonstrated evidence; and (g) provided the basis for determining employment, layoff-recall, and (in some cases) compensation decisions. Additionally, this phenomenon included statutory requirements for dismissal if a principal was found to be ineffective on three consecutive annual performance reviews. The result was a phenomenon of moving from an evaluation experience that was highly variable and not statutorily regulated to one that complied with specific statutory and quality standards and was used for high-stakes decisions.

According to Merriam (1998), few areas of practice offer as many opportunities for research as does the field of education. Having an interest in knowing more about the field and in improving the practice of education leads to asking researchable questions, some of which are best approached through a qualitative research design. I selected to design this study as a phenomenology, because I agree with Merriam that “research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education” (p. 1). Qualitative inquiry, which focuses on meaning in context, requires a data collection instrument that is sensitive to underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting data. Humans are best suited to be the instrument of data collection for a phenomenological study, especially because interviewing, observing, and
analyzing are activities central to qualitative research (Lester, 1999), and because phenomenology calls for thick, rich description of individual’s lived experiences. No instrument can adapt to the unfolding rendition of an individual’s lived experience better than a human researcher trained to engage a participant in an open-ended and non-limited or non-judgmental way.

Creswell (2007) described two types of phenomenological studies: hermeneutic (or interpretive) and transcendental (p. 59). For the purpose of this study, the transcendental approach was used. Transcendental or psychological phenomenology is focused less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of participants. Under this approach, I set aside my own experiences (since I am a principal whose district adopted and implemented one of the MCEE evaluation models) and took a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination. After the data were collected, I analyzed the data by reducing the information to significant statements or quotes, creating categories of codes with like meaning, and further reducing the categories to themes and sub-themes that capture both the textural and structural aspects of participants’ experiences.

When phenomenology is applied to research, the focus is on what the person experiences and the expression in language that is as loyal to the lived experience as possible (Newton & Rudestam, 2001). The transcendental approach allowed me to engage with study participants through experiences that were current and ongoing rather than occurring in some past time. As such, the findings from this study had a temporal aspect focusing primarily on early experiences and participants understanding of and meaning for those experiences in the moment rather than through a retrospective.
Data Collection Methods

Data for qualitative studies are typically ordinary bits and pieces of information found in the environment or close approximations to experiences in their most natural form. Whether or not a bit of information becomes data in a research study depends solely on the interest and perspective of the investigator. Interviewing is probably the most common form of data collection in qualitative studies in education (Merriam, 1998). Interviews in a phenomenology are generally conducted in a conversational manner and focused on eliciting the participants’ natural rendition of their experience with the phenomenon under study. This type of interview produces data that follow a narrative pattern rather than a researcher-constructed sequence. Data for this study were derived through a phenomenological form of interviews designed to capture the experiences of participants as they began the transition to new forms of administrator evaluation. As such, the data constituted a slice in time from an early stage of experience relating a larger experience that will, most likely, continue to be an adaptive process over a more prolonged period of time.

The most common form of interview is the person-to-person encounter in which one person elicits information from another. A person-to-person interview can be defined as a conversation, but a conversation with a purpose (Merriam, 1998). I used one-on-one open-ended, in-depth interviews and extended conversations with the principals as the source of the data. I used skillful techniques such as listening, observing, and forming an empathic alliance with the subject. Merriam (1998) explained:

We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe. We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how
people have organized the world and the meaning they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective. (p. 72)

For this study, I employed an open-ended, in-depth interview strategy with an interview guide that began with conversation prompts that focused on eliciting verbal narratives about participants’ past and current experiences with the performance evaluation process; then, we delved deeper into that experience with interview probes that aligned with the elements of the research sub questions for this study (see Appendix F for a copy of the interview protocol). In-depth, open-ended interviewing is the most technically challenging and, at the same time, the most innovative and exciting form of interviewing. By in-depth, I mean exploring a topic in detail to deepen the interviewer’s knowledge of the topic. Open-ended refers to the fact that the interviewer is open to any and all relevant responses (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). In-depth interviews typically are much more like conversations than formal questions with predetermined responses. The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant’s views but otherwise respects how the participant frames, sequences, and structures the responses (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Throughout the interview, I asked open-ended questions (both in the guiding questions for the interview and in posing probes to follow-up on elements that emerged naturally from the participants’ conversations and were also of particular interest to this study) in order to allow the participants to voice their feelings, thoughts, and experiences, and these questions allowed the participant to speak openly and not be led in a certain direction during the interview.

Because the phenomenon of principals experiencing a shift to a new research-based, high-stakes evaluation system was layered and complex, the interview protocol in
Appendix F is a little longer and more detailed than typical for this type of phenomenology. To get to a deeper unpacking of participants’ experiences, I modified the typical open-ended, in-depth interview protocol to also be semi-structured, in that it is designed to structure the conversation with participants through some of the anticipated layers of their experience with the phenomenon. The interviews took approximately between 60 and 100 minutes.

**Location for Data Collection**

In consideration of the extensive demands on school administrators’ time, I conducted the interview in one setting. The interviews took place at a location selected by the interviewee that afforded safety and security for both the interviewer and interviewee as well as complete privacy for the interviewee. I provided the administrator a conversation guide prior to the interview, so as to give time for recall and reflection leading up to the interview.

To ensure that the data I collected provided a full and rich rendition of participants’ experiences in the early stages of adapting to the new evaluation models, I provided each participant with a full transcription of their interview with an invitation to add to or further develop the conversation through added text. This strategy, called member-checking, is intended to avoid loss of detail and richness that can sometimes occur in a one-time interview. Member checking also added to the trustworthiness of the study findings by insuring that transcriptions of the interview data (and, therefore, subsequent analysis of the data) conformed to how participants understand their own experience and the meaning they derive from that experience (see the last page of the
Interview Protocol, Appendix F, for how the member-checking process was explained to participants).

**Duration of the Study**

I collected the data for this study over a period of several months. Data collection began while further legislation to clarify the issues left unaddressed in the original legislation was still pending. Specifically, many districts were still waiting to see what choices they would have of various evaluation models and for a release of training funds appropriated in the 2014-15 state fiscal year but not released due to a tie-bar to further legislation. As a result, the potential pool of participants remained primarily those whose districts had adopted School ADvance as one of the two MCEE-recommended evaluation models for administrators.

The total time required of each participant was approximately 30 minutes to respond to the recruitment letter, complete a phone conference with the researcher to learn more about the study, and complete the consent process. The time commitment to complete the interview was approximately 60-100 minutes, and the time to complete the member-checking process was approximately 30-60 minutes; however, the member checking was optional and not required if a participant chose not to do that step.

**The Exploratory Nature of This Study**

As stated above, this study used a qualitative research approach with a phenomenological design. According to Newton and Rudestam (2001), qualitative designs typically are not intended to prove or test a theory, and it is more likely that the theory will emerge once the data are collected (p. 43). Qualitative research is intended to understand phenomena in their setting and it is where the researcher goes to the site of the
participants to conduct the research. This enables the researcher to develop a level of
detail about the individuals and to be involved in the actual experiences of the
participants (Creswell, 2003).

Creswell (2003) stated that phenomenological research is used to understand a
phenomenon through the lived experiences of those who have deeply lived with or
through the phenomenon. “Lived experiences marks phenomenology as a philosophy as
well as a method, and the procedure involves studying a small number of subjects
through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of
meaning” (p. 15). This study took place in the natural setting of a public school and
engaged principals who had experienced the phenomenon of implementing and adapting
to a new administrator evaluation model. This study was designed to produce thick, rich
description of principals’ experiences so as to identify emerging patterns in those
experiences. Such exploratory approaches are useful in the early stages of any change
process, in that they allow for those most affected by the change to be heard and
understood on important issues that affect them as the change continues and shapes new
conditions that affect their lives.

Data Analysis

Reflexivity

Prior to the interview, I journaled my own experiences with the phenomenon of
experiencing a new performance evaluation process under Michigan’s statutory
requirements. This is known as developing a personal epoche and is an important first
step in the researcher’s practice of reflexivity. This journaling of my own experiences
allowed me to “gain clarity from [my] own pre-conceptions” (Marshall & Rossman,
2006, p. 148) and informed the continued process of memoing and bracketing that I used to put aside my own personal experiences and biases and make room for the perspectives of my participants to emerge in the interview process and speak from the data collected through those interviews. The direct involvement of the researcher in data collection and analysis is a key challenge of qualitative research (Creswell, 2003), and the practice of reflexivity is essential for maintaining integrity as the instrument of data collection.

As the researcher, I was the primary source for data collection, so, therefore, was concerned about the clarity of my own communications during the data collection process. In order to reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation, I used a process that records multiple perceptions in order to verify an interpretation of an observation. This process is called triangulation and it is used to clarify the meaning of the data collected for the researcher by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen. Data triangulation is used to contrast and validate the data (Groenewald, 2004). Since the interviews used to collect data for this study were scheduled as a one-time face-to-face engagement between the study participants and me, I used probing to ensure that participants had the opportunity during the interview to explore their own multiple perspectives. I also provided another opportunity for participants to do this through the member-checking process, which invited participants to elaborate upon or add to what they had said during the audio-taped interview after reading the transcription of that interview. This form of triangulation provides a participant multiple opportunities to clarify and add to the renditions on their experiences and their perspectives about those experiences.
Data Analysis Approach and Procedures

The process of data analysis involved making sense out of text data that was derived from audio-taped interviews. Thus, field notes and memos I wrote after each interview assisted me in capturing and integrating non-verbal cues (non-verbal vocalization, facial expressions, and body language) in achieving a fuller sense of participants’ perspectives about their experiences. Data analysis was recursive, in that I gained deeper understanding each time I interacted with the transcripts as I reviewed my field notes and memos, as I read and re-read the transcripts, and as I moved through recursive rounds of data analysis, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data, and discerning the meaning participants attach to the data to derive the larger meaning.

In this study, participant interviews served as the primary source of data. Each participant interview was transcribed and analyzed for salient points that address the purpose of the research and the research questions. Data analysis in qualitative research follows a familiar pattern. Marshall and Rossman (2006) described the seven phases of data analysis: (a) organizing the data, (b) immersion in the data, (c) generating categories and themes, (d) coding the data, (e) offering interpretations through analytic memos, (f) searching for alternative understandings, and (g) writing the report or other format for presenting the study. I adapted this process by identifying and categorizing in vivo codes (natural segments of data) for each participant’s data and comparing those codes to emerging codes and categories cumulatively using the constant comparative approach for data reduction into emergent themes and sub-themes. Each phase of data analysis entailed data reduction, as the reams of collected data were brought into manageable chunks of
participant experience and meaning until common themes and sub-themes could be crystalized, and thus reveal meaning and insight from the words and acts of the participants in the study.

**Dissemination of Study Findings**

The information was collected for a dissertation in the completion of a doctoral degree; however, given the timely nature of the topic and focus for this study, the researchers intend to also disseminate the findings to administrator professional associations in the state of Michigan and their national affiliates.

**Ethical Considerations and Protection of Participants**

This study complied with all the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) guidelines put forth by Western Michigan University. Steps were taken to assure the privacy and confidentiality of each study participant. A protocol of informed consent was followed in order to see that each participant’s privacy was protected. The Western Michigan University HSIRB approval process was completed before the data collection process began.

In qualitative studies, ethical dilemmas are likely to emerge with regard to the collection of data and in the dissemination of findings. Overlaying both the collection of data and the dissemination of findings is the researcher-participant relationship. In conducting this study, I maintained a high level of sensitivity to my participants and was completely transparent about the fact that I, too, am a principal experiencing the same phenomenon as they. I made it clear, however, that I was interested in their story—not mine—and I was careful to establish rapport by creating a safe, non-judgmental, and supportive environment.
My goal was to create an environment where each respondent felt comfortable and free to share his or her experiences without any hesitation. To that end, I followed the following four attributes in conducting this study in order to collect the most reliable and honest responses from the participants. The first attribute is being reflexive (as described above). This is when a relational climate is present so that the participant can share his or her own truth without worrying about the researcher’s reaction. The second attribute is to understand that each participant’s experience as contextual. The third attribute is to accept the subjectivity of each participant’s view of his or her own experience and look for the essence of that person’s experience. The last attribute is the ability to be descriptive when retelling the participants’ experiences with the phenomenon because I, as interviewer, am also living the same phenomenon (Merriam, 1998).

I took a number of precautions to protect the anonymity and privacy of my study participants. Participants were assigned a number and a code pseudonym so that information that they provided was not attributed to them. Audio-tapes and transcripts referred to participants by number and code only. Any personally identifying information revealed during the audio-taping of the interview was either redacted or replaced with pseudonyms during transcription.

Benefits of This Study

The goal of this study was to provide data that will be useful to policy makers, professional association leaders, superintendents, principals, and school board members as they consider and plan for how to best guide and support the transition to a new administrator evaluation models. It is also my intent to add new information early in the process of Michigan’s shift to new educator evaluations that can contribute to improved
As the call for improved student achievement increases, important questions are raised regarding the effect of a principal’s behaviors and leadership practices on enhancing teacher performance, increasing student learning, and improving academic achievement results as well as closing student achievement gaps. Since adopting new and (presumably) improved evaluation models and processes is a key strategy in the national education reform agenda, local districts and their school and district level leaders will carry a significant responsibility for the quality of teachers’ and administrators’ implementation experience. This study seeks to inform that responsibility through early capture of early adopters’ experiences.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

Delimitations, explained by Creswell (2003), “address how the study will be narrowed in scope” (p. 148). As such, delimitations identified with this study focused on specifics involving the selection of the targeted population. The population identified for this study was limited to principals in the public schools in the state of Michigan. Further, the selection of a small sample from a few school districts increases the richness of data by allowing the researcher to delve deeply into the experiences of participants. The focus on a limited sample and the absence of efforts to make that sample broadly representative does, however, limit transferability for the findings. Further, restricting the study’s focus to principals in the state of Michigan may limit the relevance to public schools outside of the state.

According to Foss and Waters (2007), “limitations are restrictions concerning your study that, somehow, invalidates (or reduces reliability and validity for) your study” (p. 237). The nature of this study required participants to be honest and open regarding
their experiences and their own feelings and beliefs as they relate to the process of adapting to a new teacher and principal evaluation system. The concern over full and honest disclosure by participants could interfere with both the reliability and validity of this study; however, I did employ the above referenced measures for trustworthiness to minimize this possibility.

**Chapter III Summary**

The purpose of the study was to examine the experiences of principals who are adapting to changes in the models and processes used by their districts to evaluate educators and, more specifically, administrators. Additionally, this study examined the readiness of public school principals in the state of Michigan to implement the new administrative evaluation requirements. Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2007). A phenomenological study describes the meaning of their lived experiences with a phenomenon for several individuals with particular interest on what participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). In Chapter IV, I profile the participants who contributed to this study, discuss both the most common findings in terms of themes and sub-themes, and look at less common findings that may be of interest in further studies.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe how principals, as players in the work of school reform and renewal, experienced being the “Tip of the Spear” in the shift from static and disjointed educator evaluation models to growth- and development-oriented, research-informed, and evidence-based models designed to engage teachers and school leaders as full partners in the pursuit of continuous growth and improvement. In the early stage of Michigan’s enactment of new educator evaluation statutory requirements, there was an opportunity to examine the readiness of Michigan’s principals to adapt to one of the newly revised and recommended evaluation models and processes. This study included principals whose districts adopted one of the two vetted and recommended principal evaluation models by the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness (MCEE, 2013), a model reviewed by the MCEE but not recommended, or a model created by a non-reviewed and vetted source. By engaging a sample of administrators who are in the process of adapting to a new administrator evaluation, under the statutory provisions of Section 1249 of the Michigan School code as amended in 2011 and 2015, I sought to ascertain any emerging patterns of impeding factors or enabling factors that impact the enactment of new educator evaluation models and processes designed to accelerate the growth and success curve for students.
This study engaged a sample of principals who have experienced the shift from a previous or no evaluation model or system to one of the three listed options to examine the following questions.

1. How do principals compare the principles, values and beliefs that they associate with both former and new evaluation models and processes?

2. How do they compare the evaluation processes and procedures between their old and new evaluation model?

3. How do they describe their own adjustment to any changes in practice, process, values, and beliefs associated with the new model? Where do they describe more or less readiness to make these adjustments?

4. What recommendations would they make for district follow-up and support to help implement the new model?

5. What do they hope will be the impact of the new model for themselves, and their school or district?

**Recruiting Participants**

After receiving a database of current Michigan administrators from the Michigan Association of School Administrators (MASA), I identified 130 possible participants by area of region and put them into three categories: elementary school, middle school, and high school. I emailed a recruitment letter to each principal in this pool to enlist participation in the study. I sent a first round of emails during the first weeks of August 2015 and a second round approximately three to four weeks later. As participants responded to the recruitment letter, I further explained the study, confirmed that the respondent met the study criteria, and confirmed verbal consent with those respondents.
who indicated a desire to participate in the study until securing a sufficient sample for the study. Once a participant agreed to participate in the study by completing the interview process, I set a time and day to accommodate the administrator. Each administrator chose to meet at their own school building, and I traveled to their location.

Upon arrival to the administrator’s place of employment, I again reviewed the participant consent form, secured the participant’s signature, and asked the participant to complete a principal participant profile questionnaire prior to starting the interview. During the interviews, each participant could follow along using the interview protocol, which I provided prior to the interview meeting.

To ensure confidentiality of participants, I assigned a pseudonym to each participant according to the following scheme: “Principal 1” and “P1,” and so forth.

I audio-taped each interview, then transcribed each interview assigning the pseudonym to each recorded interview and transcript to protect confidentiality and anonymity. Additionally, I redacted all identifying information from the transcripts to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. Any participant quotes used by the researcher were not identified except by using the “Principal 1” and “P1” pseudonym destinations. Where I provide quotes from specific participants, the quote is intended to be representative of a specific theme or sub-theme that I found to represent the experience of multiple participants rather than a complete characterization of that participant.

**Participant Characteristics and Profiles**

The background characteristics I collected about the participants portray a diverse sample relative to (a) building level, (b) years of experience as a principal, and (c) years of experience in current assignment. Of the 12 participants, 5 (42%) were in an
elementary building, 1 (8%) was in a K–7 building, 3 (25%) were at a 6–9 middle school building, and 3 (25%) were at a 9–12 high school building. Of the 12 participants, 6 (50%) had 10 or more years’ of experience as a building principal, 4 (33%) had 3 years or less in their current assignment, and 4 (33%) had 10 or more years in their current assignment. The participants’ school level and number of years of experience as an administrator and number of years in current assignment are visually displayed in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Participant School Level, Years as Principal and Years in Current Assignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>Years as Administrator</th>
<th>Years in Current Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>9 or 10-12</td>
<td>10 or more</td>
<td>1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>6 or 7-8 or 9</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>9 or 10-12</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>10 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>K-5 or 6</td>
<td>10 or more</td>
<td>4-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>K-5 or 6</td>
<td>10 or more</td>
<td>10 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>K-5 or 6</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>K-5 or 6</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>4-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>K-5 or 6</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>10 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>6 or 7-8 or 9</td>
<td>10 or more</td>
<td>7-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>K-7</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>7-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P11</td>
<td>6 or 7-8 or 9</td>
<td>10 or more</td>
<td>10 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12</td>
<td>9 or 10-12</td>
<td>10 or more</td>
<td>1-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants also represent a diverse range of (a) number of years’ experience evaluating teachers, and (b) number of years receiving a written annual evaluation as a
principal. The number of years using an MCEE-reviewed and/or recommended administrator evaluation model was not as diverse due to the limited number of years Michigan’s adoption of statutory requirements for administrator evaluation. Of the 12 participants, 9 (75%) had 7 years or more of experience evaluating teachers, compared to 3 (25%) who had only 4 years or less. Of the 12 participants, 9 (75%) had 7 years or more of receiving a written annual evaluation of their own performance as a principal compared to 3 (25%) who had received formal evaluation feedback and/or ratings for 3 years or less. The participants’ number years of evaluating teachers, receiving a written annual evaluation as a principal, and working under one of the MCEE evaluation models under the Michigan 2011/2015 statutory administrative evaluation requirements are visually displayed in Table 2.

**Data Analysis**

The major themes that developed from this study are discussed from the perspectives of the participants. As both a principal who has and is experiencing the phenomenon under study, I used my own epoche and memoing process to bracket and manage researcher bias and remain open to the way the experiences and perspectives of my study participants bring rich description to the experience and the meaning of that experience. This helped me stay focused on interpreting the data, not from the researcher’s perspective, but from the point of view of the participants. The processes of probing and member checking were essential steps to ensure there was proper accounting for the actual perspectives of the participants.
### Table 2

*Participant Years’ of Evaluating Teachers, Receiving an Evaluation, and Under State Statutory Requirements of 2011 and 2015*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Years Evaluating</th>
<th>Years Receiving Evaluation</th>
<th>Years Using an MCEE Reviewed Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>10 or more</td>
<td>10 or more</td>
<td>2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>10 or more</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>10 or more</td>
<td>10 or more</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>10 or more</td>
<td>10 or more</td>
<td>2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P11</td>
<td>10 or more</td>
<td>10 or more</td>
<td>2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12</td>
<td>10 or more</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>2-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* MCEE-recommended.
** MCEE-reviewed but not recommended.
+ Modified version of MCEE reviewed but not recommended.

While the original intent of the study was to engage a sample of principals whose districts had adopted one of the two MCEE-recommended models, the actual sample included 10 participants whose districts adopted one of the MCEE-recommended models; one whose districts adopted an MCEE reviewed but not recommended model, and one whose district was using a superintendent-adapted version an MCEE reviewed but not recommended model, as stated in Table 2.
Since an evaluation model had to be vetted by the MCEE advisory panel based on research-based criteria, qualifications of authors/developers and availability of training and support both of the evaluation models in use by the 12 participants’ districts are assumed to be in general alignment with the Section 1249 (2011/2015) statutory requirements. The exception could be the superintendent adapted version of the MCEE-reviewed but not recommended model, depending on the nature and degree of adaptation.

In addition to noting which evaluation model each of the 12 participants’ districts is using to comply with the 2011/2015 revisions to Section 1249 of the Michigan school code, I also looked at the experience of the participants regarding training on the new model. Table 3 shows the distribution of training experiences across my sample.

Table 3

*Distribution of Principal’s Training Experience*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>No Training</th>
<th>Training by Model Providers</th>
<th>Training by ISD Official</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P11</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The distribution of training experience shows that, while 10 of participants received an official training on the new model via an authorized provider of the model, one received second-hand training via a local official and one received no training at all.

The recursive data coding and categorization process served to draw out major themes and sub-themes that helped to interpret the data in an informative manner, using the research questions as the frame for examining the meaning of the themes and subthemes. After the interviews were transcribed, the first step of the coding process consisted of organizing the data into Word documents. The second step consisted of reading each interview in its entirety to gain a general understanding of the data that were collected and making memos on the transcripts. The third step involved highlighting significant statements in the Word document and the fourth step involved copying and pasting the significant statements into a spreadsheet. The fifth step involved putting the data into categories of like content, then re-distributing those categories based upon the interview questions and how they related to the exploratory questions, the research questions, and the conceptual framework.

The sixth step was to identify themes and subthemes. To identify emergent themes and sub-themes, I further reduced the data within each research question category by finding clusters of codes that suggested a common concept or construct relative to that question. After finding clusters of codes with similar meaning within question categories, I looked for connecting patterns of ideas across the question clusters. Where there were connecting patterns linked to multiple participants, I formed clusters of thematic units, then used those clusters to identify both broad and supporting thematic elements. Finally,
I created a schema of overarching and supporting ideas to generate and name the themes and sub-themes.

To verify the conformability of my themes and sub-themes, I concluded the data reduction process by cross-tabulating each theme and sub-theme according to which participant’s data supported that theme or sub-theme. The themes and sub-themes and cross-tabulation to each participant are summarized in Table 4 and discussed in this chapter.

I extrapolated the following five major themes from the most prominent patterns of meaning across the transcripts of each principal’s lived experience with the previous and current evaluation tool:

1. Despite lack of input into the selection of the new evaluation model or tool, principals are glad to have an aligned evaluation tool.

2. Their former evaluation tool had no structure, while the new tool is based on the work of an instructional leader.

3. Even though the new tool has many components, the adjustment for principals is easier once they have had professional training.

4. Principals expressed very specific recommendations.

5. Principals identified specific ways the new tool is impacting their work.
### Table 4

**Distribution of Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
<th>P4</th>
<th>P5</th>
<th>P6</th>
<th>P7</th>
<th>P8</th>
<th>P9</th>
<th>P10</th>
<th>P11</th>
<th>P12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. New evaluation tool</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 No input</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Instructional leader</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Too much</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4 Aligns better</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Former tool and new tool</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1 Former – Relationship</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2 Former - No substance</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.3 Former – Understanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>2.4 New – Change</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.5 New – Welcomed</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2.6 New – Instructional Model</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.8 New – Disconnect</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3. Adjustment and training</td>
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<td>3.1 Tool too big</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2 Adjustment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4 Trainer</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>4. Recommendations</td>
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<td>4.1 Feedback</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>4.2 Better understanding</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>4.3 Too many goals</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>5. Principal Impact</td>
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<td>5.1 Self – Grow teachers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>5.2 Self – Good leader</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>5.3 Building – Student growth</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5.4 Building – Climate/Culture</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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</table>
The principals spoke openly in the semi-structured interviews, giving specific examples of their lived experiences while transitioning from the previous evaluation tool to the new tool. The open-ended interview questions allowed the principals to include key information and there were some responses that covered multiple questions during the interviews. At the end of each interview, principals had the opportunity to add any additional information. Some of the additional information from probing or member checking added greater detail or depth to what the principal had already said, and sometimes it added new dimensions or elements of their experience. In some cases, these additions solidified an emerging theme, and sometimes they opened a new line of thought. While not all of these additions contributed to prominent themes, most gave dimension to the sub-themes through more detail and some gave rise to ideas that were not present across the majority of participants, but meaningful nonetheless. These additional ideas will be discussed at the end of themes and sub-themes section.

**Theme and Sub-Themes Related to Research Question 1**

**Theme 1: Despite Lack of Input, Principals Are Glad to Have an Aligned New Tool**

One principal could not recall which model she previously used, and five principals stated they either had not received an evaluation in some time or had not received an evaluation at all. Two principals stated the old tool was tied to year-end student data, but not in the way prescribed by Michigan statute for creating a student growth rating. Principal 2 stated, “I think the former evaluation, the values and the beliefs, were tied a little bit more to student achievement and student results.” In contrast, Principal 5 mentioned, “I never knew which of the values or beliefs he (referencing the superintendent) may be evaluating me on.”
While the breakdown of sub-themes illustrates a common concern with not having input on the selection process and the number of different items the new evaluation instruments require, the frustration from those issues is mitigated for principals by their belief that the elements in the new evaluation system align better with the important work of a principal. They indicated that the evaluation criteria fit better with their lived experiences as a principal, or they indicated that the criteria more closely aligned with either the work they do on a daily basis or the work that research suggests they should be doing. However, half of the sample expressed skepticism that they could be effective or highly effective on the number of performance indicators in the evaluation tool all at once. Essentially, this theme represents a dichotomy of responses to research question 1, i.e., the contrast between the ways that principals believe that the new evaluation system better reflects the important work of principals, their disappointment at not having had input in the selection of the tool, and concern about their ability to be effective or highly effective on all indicators.

**Sub-theme 1.1: Principals are concerned about having no input.** The first sub-theme that emerged from the interviews relating to principles, values and beliefs was the lack of voice that principals, 75% of those interviewed, had when their district implemented a new principal evaluation tool. Principal 9 indicated, “The superintendent made the decision when it came out, to go with School Advance.” She also mentioned she wished the principals in her district were given a voice in the decision-making process.

Nine principals felt a great sense of frustration because they did not have the opportunity for input on the new evaluation tool. Principal 12 shared, “I mean my hardest
thing, I felt uninvolved and it was a decision that was made for me. Kind of a sad that we were part of a process, and I had never felt that way before.”

**Sub-theme 1.2: The new tool helps principals become better instructional leaders.** A second sub-theme that emerged from the interviews relating to principles, values, and beliefs was an expectation the new model would help principals, 67% of those interviewed, become better instructional leaders in their building. By attaching a rubric to the new evaluation tool, seven principals felt that they could find some of their values, principles, and beliefs embedded in the tool. Principal 2 indicated, “I was happy to read on the new model that there’s a descriptive about being intentional around building relationships with kids, with your colleagues, and with parents and community members.” Eight principals believed the new tool was the right move for education and gave them a roadmap for improving and reflecting. Principal 5 compared the new tool to the business world:

> It’s the right direction to go for education. When you look at businesses, they all have performance evaluation after 90 days. I don’t think we can go to that same standard, but I do think we need to evaluate more frequently, quickly, and provide more support, and a lot of time we don’t.

**Sub-theme 1.3: The tool has too many elements and principals feel they cannot be Highly Effective in all elements.** A third sub-theme that emerged from the interviews relating to principles, values, and beliefs was the rubric of the new tool had too many indicators. Principals, 50% of those interviewed, were questioning themselves and their ability to achieve a rating of effective or highly effective under the new tool, given the number of elements or characteristics the tool encompasses. Five principals felt their new tool does not align with who they are or could lend itself to just being busy
work. When discussing his concerns, Principal 1 felt “Now it’s like you have to do them all, and if you don’t, it can come up as minimally effective or ineffective.”

Principal 3 reinforced the tension between wanting to perform well and skepticism that is possible to be equally strong in all areas assessed by the evaluation tool. She put it this way: “I’m always aiming to be highly effective but with the new tool, I’m not sure that it is attainable.” She continued by stating, “I think if you are aiming towards the highly effective, I think a lot of it is busy work. I think some of it was unreasonable.”

**Sub-theme 1.4: The new tool aligns better with principal’s beliefs.** A fourth sub-theme that emerged from the interviews relating to principles, values, and beliefs was the new evaluation tool aligns better with principal’s personal beliefs and because it aligns better, it is easier to use. Of those interviewed, 42% of principals agreed the new tool aligned better. Principal 2 put it this way “I think it aligns better because some of my personal values is just effective communication and relationship building.” Principal 1 spoke about his specific evaluation tool and how his personal philosophy is aligned with the tool: “Our School Advance is more aligned because with all those descriptors, you’re bound to find one that aligns to your personal philosophy as a school administrator.” Five principals spoke of specific ways they found one or more of their personal values or beliefs directly reflected in the new evaluation tools.

**Interview Summary Theme 1**

During the interviews, a major issue that emerged from this question was how principals related to their previous evaluation tool. Principals felt the old evaluation model did not contribute to them improving and growing as an instructional leader. While
principals had a good relationship with their supervisors under the former model, the summative conversations were casual, had no process, no formal model, and no meaningful feedback was given. One principal mentioned she could not identify any values or principles in the former evaluation model.

That said, there was a high level of frustration from nine principals who expressed they did not have a voice in the selection of the new evaluation tool. When asked who was responsible for choosing the tool, their reply was either the superintendent, school board or central office. This frustration with having no input, however, did not preclude all but one of the principals stating that the new evaluation model was better aligned to either what research says is important work for a principal or their personal values about the work.

Principals in my study felt the new evaluation model is more rigorous and is tied to their building’s school improvement goals. The new model has good descriptors and standards that correlate to a model that is designed to support principals to become effective instructional leaders. Even though the new model was not welcomed by half of the principals, they do agree that feedback is more rigorous and the summative conversations are more collaborative and reflect the work of principals. Again, there is a tension between the principal’s acknowledgement of better alignment and support for growth as instructional leaders and a frustration and fear of receiving poorer evaluation ratings because they are being rated on so many characteristics at once.

See Table 5 for a summary of principal responses related to research question 1.
Table 5

**Theme 1: Despite Lack of Input, Principals Are Glad to Have an Aligned Evaluation Tool**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
<th>Illustrative Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Former Model</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Student results | ~ “It was just evidence you did something.”  
~ “The values and beliefs were tied a little bit more just to student achievement.” |
| Cannot identify them | ~ “I would have a difficult time identifying them.”  
~ “Wasn’t evaluated every year.”  
~ “I wasn’t evaluated.” |
| **New Model** | |
| Instructional leader | ~ “I think much more specific and more student focus.”  
~ “This one is definitely better and I think more of what positive leadership is and what a principal should do.”  
~ “This is really what makes a great principal.”  
~ “New one opens up more components of being an instructional leader.” |
| Aligns better | ~ “Also aligns to our school improvement plan.”  
~ “Serves as a guide for me to get my work done.”  
~ “You have standards now.” |
| No input | ~ “We did not have input on tool.”  
~ “The superintendent made the decision.”  
~ “There wasn’t a lot of conversation.”  
~ “My hardest thing, I felt unininvolved.” |

**Theme and Sub-Themes Related to Research Question 2**

**Theme 2: Their Former Tool Had No Structure, While the New Tool Is Based on Instructional Leadership**

Nine of the principals agreed they had a good working relationship with their supervisor and six of them stated that, under the former evaluation process, the evaluation meeting was more of a casual conversation. Principal 3 felt comfortable with her supervisor:
Relationship with supervisor, nothing has really changed. I had a really good evaluation. I wasn’t completely highly effective but like several areas I had highly effective in. And I know that’s not part of your thing, but I mean, I felt comfortable with it. So it didn’t change my relationship. I am who I am, and I always try to do everything really well.

As with theme 1, this theme also represented a dichotomy of reactions to the new evaluation tool and process. While, on one hand principals expressed appreciation for a more defined process and more defined and standards-based set of expectations, they worried that the realities of their day-to-day work might not align with the expectations embedded in the new evaluation rubric. Sub-themes for this theme centered around the impact of the new evaluation process on the relationship with the supervisor or evaluator.

**Sub-theme 2.1: Nothing changed in the principal’s relationship with supervisor.** A sub-theme that came out of the interviews as it relates to the principals’ experience with the former and new evaluation tool was the principal’s relationship with their current supervisor. Nine principals, 75%, stated they had a good working relationship with their supervisor before implemented of the new tool and stated the relationship did not change after the implementation. Principal 5 described her relationship in this way: “We have a very good relationship in the sense of everyone is very respectful of each other. We are friendly yet professional.” Principal 7 also described his supervisor:

He’s always been very supportive. If I ever have a concern, he was always very responsive to that concern. I’ve always felt supportive. Honestly, I can’t think of there’s been a big change and how I work with my boss and how he works with me.

**Sub-theme 2.2: The previous evaluation had no substance.** The second sub-theme that emerged from the interviews as it relates to the principals’ experience with the former and new evaluation tool was how the former evaluation tool had no substance tied
to it. Nine of the principals, 75%, stated their formal model did not have any substance, nor was it tied to any specific rubric or expectations. Six principals explained that, when meeting with their supervisor at the end of the school year, the evaluation meeting was more of a conversation and it was not constructive. Principal 1 remembered, “Even the actual evaluation was more just like, sit down, let’s talk about how your year was and we’ll write that up and make sure that’s good for you. Here are some things you should work on for next year.” When speaking with Principal 7, she could not remember what the process was. “I mean I met with the superintendent throughout the school year, but I don’t think there was ever like an evaluation at the end of the year. I don’t remember that being the case.”

**Sub-theme 2.3: The previous tool had no structure for how to grow practice.**

The third sub-theme that emerged from the interviews as it relates to the principals’ experience with the former and new evaluation tool was a lack of understanding as it related to the former evaluation. Five principals, 42%, stated they could not articulate the structure of the tool. Principal 5 commented about her superintendent and the process that was used:

He was always very positive, and would sit and talk with us about our evaluations. And always gave suggestions for things he felt you might want to work on. It was really easy going but it was also, you had no idea where some of this stuff came from or why? What he used to determine that? There was no real standard.

**Sub-theme 2.4: Principals did not want to change to a new system.** The fourth sub-theme that emerged from the interviews as it relates to the principals’ experience with the former and new evaluation tool was how five of the principals, 42%, did not
want to change to the new evaluation tool and preferred to stay with their current tool.

Principal 7 stated how she liked the old tool:

I felt that it was very a fair evaluation. I never felt that I was being judged on my performance. I felt like we were having a professional conversation in a professional setting about the great things that were happening and the things we need to do next at your building to help move the district along.

Principal 3 was concerned with the change and voiced, “The former one was much simpler, it didn’t have a lot of values and judgements. It was evidence you did something.”

**Sub-theme 2.5: The change was not welcomed, but when it happened, principals welcomed it.** The fifth sub-theme that emerged from the interviews as it relates to the principals’ experience with the former and new evaluation tool was how principals welcomed and embraced the new evaluation tool. Eight principals, 67%, were excited to have a tool with substance and structure. Principal 2 expressed his view of the new tool: “The new one, I would say, definitely has more components to it, more descriptors in there for us to adhere to. In the new one, I would say is much more detailed and much more drilled down.” Principal 3 has very similar thoughts as principal 2: “I would say that the new one is much more detailed and many more parts to the rubric and very pointed pieces, very specific, the other one was much more general.”

**Sub-theme 2.6: The new tool provided a model for instructional leadership.**

The sixth sub-theme that emerged from the interviews as it relates to the principals’ experience with the former and new evaluation tool was how principals viewed the new tool as an instructional model—one they could use in their schools to become a positive and effective instructional leader. Eight of the principals, 67%, were eager to embrace a tool that complemented their school improvement plan and included descriptors that had
standard levels attached to it. Principal 1 acknowledged, “Now we have an instructional model that we all use K-12 that kind of aligns to our teacher evaluation system which also aligns to our school improvement plan.” Principal 4 felt “I think our administrators get valuable feedback on what they need to make improvements on. And they have an opportunity to show what they are doing.”

Sub-theme 2.7: Principals liked the way the rubric provided a “roadmap” for growth. The seventh sub-theme that emerged from the interviews as it relates to the principals’ experience with the former and new evaluation tool was how principals liked having a rubric attached to the evaluation tool. Seven of the principals, 58%, stated they appreciated having the rubric and they explained how this rubric helped them collect meaningful artifacts for the summative evaluation. Principal 5 indicated, “Probably the most significant differences are the facts that you have standards now and you have an example of what those all look like.” When discussing her experiences, Principal 12 explained, “I can’t remember a time administratively we’ve had a rubric or a true process that everyone knew what it was.”

Sub-theme 2.8: Principals feel that there is a disconnect between what they do every day and what the rubric describes. The eighth sub-theme that emerged from the interviews as it relates to the principal’s experience with the former and new evaluation tool was how principals felt a disconnect from the tool’s rubric and how it related to their everyday work in their building. Seven of the principals, 58%, felt the rubric does not always reflect the needs of their school, students, and staff, and even though the rubric is based on what makes a successful principal, it does not always
correlate to the actual day-to-day interactions and responsibilities. Principal 1 stated his concerns:

Could you imagine if central office or if the board knew the conversations we’ve just had. From the kid who doesn’t have shoes, to the parent who wants to complain about something that isn’t ours to complain about. To the teacher that was late and we had to cover their classroom, and that was just the first hour and a half.

Principal 12 was able to articulate her concerns on how the tool doesn’t match who she is:

So you would look at, even though it is a good system, and you know it’s based on research, and you know this what makes a good principal, but then you look at your own beliefs of who you are as a principal, and how do those two match together?

Interview Summary Theme 2

During the interviews, a major issue that emerged was a lack of structured processes or procedures under the old model. Five of the principals, 42%, were not clear on the process nor did they understand how they were being evaluated by their supervisor. Eight principals, 67%, described their year-end goals as beginning and end of the year results, evidence that you accomplished something, a goal-setting tool, and a casual conversation summarizing the principal’s school year.

In this study, principals reported being excited to have an aligned evaluation tool that complements and describes the attributes of an effective building principal and instructional leader. Principals explained how the rubric of the tool was a guide that included good descriptors, details, and standards. Under the new tool, principals are providing evidence and artifacts that reflect their work and, during their summative with their supervisor, the feedback lends to a richer conversation based on the tool’s descriptors.
While acknowledging that the feedback indicators of the new tool better represent standards for the work of a principal, more than half of the principals indicated they felt a disconnect between how the new tool’s rubric defines an effective principal and their day-to-day real lived experiences and responsibilities as the building principal. Principals were feeling a real sense of anxiety and were not sure if their focus should be on the evaluation rubric or around the real needs of their building. Principals were having a difficult time understanding and articulating the correlation or intersect between the two. It seemed to be a battle of the heart (I know what I need to do for my students and staff) versus the mind (the rubric is telling me to focus my time and energy on these specific items). See Table 6 for a summary of principal responses related to research question 2.

Table 6

Theme 2: The Former Tool Had No Structure, While the New Tool Is Based on Instructional Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Theme</th>
<th>Illustrative Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Former Model</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Relationship with supervisor | ~ “The relationship was even.”  
~ “I’ve always had a pretty good relationship with superintendent.”  
~ “Very good relationship.”  
~ “Superintendent and I have a good relationship.” |
| Informal conversation      | ~ “It was a very narrative evaluation.”  
~ “It was just a conversation.”  
~ “No one ever talked about the expectation.” |
| No real standards          | ~ “Here are some things to work on for next year.”  
~ “There was no real standard to speak of.” |
| New Model                  |                                                                                     |
| Challenging model          | ~ “Definitely has more components.”  
~ “More detailed and more parts.”  
~ “This is much more complex.”  
~ “It is very, very rigorous.” |
| Evidence and artifacts     | ~ “You’re providing evidence as artifacts.” |
| Rubric                     | ~ “More parts to the rubric and very pointed pieces.”  
~ “It gives us more of a guide.” |
Theme and Sub-Themes Related to Research Question 3

Theme 3: Even Though the New Tool Has a Lot of Components, the Adjustment for Principals Is Easier Once They Have Had Professional Training

A third theme identified in the study was principal’s adjustment to the new evaluation tool and how training had an impact on their readiness. Eight principals, 67%, welcomed the new tool and six principals were relieved to have a tool where the rubric is clear, concise, and based on research. The adjustment and readiness for the change to the new tool, however, varied among principals. Six principals, 50%, expressed they experienced a lot of anxiety over the new tool and were concerned how this tool would impact their rating as a principal. Principal 1 was concerned with his evaluation and voiced,

So how does what I believe, how’s my mind set, how’s my strength? If it’s really a growth model, I know where I need to grow. I know where my strengths are. How does that play into all of this? We all have weaknesses too and I can’t eliminate my weaknesses.

As principals were trained and had the opportunity to disseminate the rubrics, their comfort level grew with the tool and felt the change was positive and a needed change. Principal 5 confirmed, “We’re just in the beginning process of it. I am not at all afraid of it and I am not overwhelmed by it. I think it’s a positive change.” As with the first two themes, this theme illustrates a tension between the ways principals intellectually accept the new evaluation tool and their anxiety about how they might be evaluated on the tool. Training on the new tool and process coupled with the principals’ level of confidence in their own work seemed to mitigate the anxiety.

Sub-theme 3.1: The new tool is too big to learn all at once. The first sub-theme in adjustment and training is how principals felt the tool was too big. Eight of the
principals, 67%, stated the evaluation tool was too big and had concerns learning all the components of the rubric. Three principals, 25%, felt that the rubric needed to be broken down into chunks and they should be given only a few of the components each year to be responsible for (as recommended by the official training provided by the developers of the tool). Principal 9 indicated, “It’s not getting overwhelmed. It’s recognizing you can only do as much as you can do and being able to let some of it go because you can’t do it all.” Principal 12 expressed her frustration with the size of the tool: “I got frustrated last year cause I couldn’t keep up. It was, you have your rubric and mark me ineffective because physically, there is no way right now I can do everything that needs to be done.”

Sub-theme 3.2: Adjustment to the new tool was easier than principals anticipated. The second sub-theme in adjustment and training is the varying levels of adjustment principals experienced in moving to the new tool. Six of the principals, 50%, expressed their adjustment to the new tool was not an issue and these principals felt confident in themselves and their ability to acclimate to the new tool. Principal 2 confirmed, “But it appeared to be the best practice administrator evaluation system and so I felt confident in the validity of it,” and Principal 7 agreed: “I mean it was overwhelming to put it all together, but once you have, and I took ownership of it.” In contrast, several principals expressed concern that they did not fully understand the performance indicators and that made them feel more tentative about the adjustment. Principals 1, 6, and 12 specifically expressed the need to better understand the new system and its performance indicators (see Table 7).

Sub-theme 3.3: Having a professional trainer is important for success. The third sub-theme in adjustment and training is how principals appreciated having a
professional trainer come to their district to train them in the new evaluation tool. Eight of the interviewed principals, 67%, acknowledged the importance of training. Principal 5 described her experience with her training as, “Well, as far as interacting with it, I thought the training was very beneficial. They really connected what you are doing to what is expected. And they give very concrete examples as they are going through training.” Principal 11 described his experience as, “They brought in the presenters from the state and we hosted any other schools that were interested. They went through it blow by blow through the rubric.”

Sub-theme 3.4: While the majority of principals receiving training, it was not enough. The fourth sub-theme in adjustment and training is the actual training that principals received pertaining to the new evaluation tool. Eleven of the principals, 92%, received some sort of training and it ranged from outside trainers to in-house training. After seven of the principals, 58%, attended the training, they felt the training was not enough and still had a lot of unanswered questions. Principal 4 explained her training as, “It was semi valuable, I mean I think it was valuable to kind of go through it, but I am one of those people that have to experience it.”

Principal 2 stated, “They [district] brought in a professional that truly understood the evaluation model.” He went on to explain how the district followed up on the training by giving the administration team time to learn the tool:

The district was great and they allowed principal meeting time for us to really discuss the rubric in great detail and for each administrator to kind of share their thoughts around it. This gave us a lot of opportunities to collaborate so we’re pretty clear as to what we were graded on by the end of the year.

Principal 1, who did not receive training from professional trainers, described his experience with the learning the tool as, “Really wasn’t much training. We went through
the rubric, kind of the look for and that kind of stuff. And we said at that time, boy, there’s a lot of things and pieces. How can we do all those effectively?”

**Interview Summary Theme 3**

In this theme, principals again indicated the adjustment to the new evaluation tool was not overwhelming for them; however, most of the principals expressed their frustration and anxiety pertaining to the size of the tool and the volume of the rubrics. Of greatest concern to the principals was their own work reality and the fear that the day-to-day exigencies of the job would make it difficult to attain a rating of Effective or Highly Effective. They feared that they could not perform at equally high levels on all the many indicators in the new evaluation tool and, seemed to think that the inability to demonstrate high levels of performance on any of the indicators would result in an overall low evaluation rating.

Another interesting finding is how principals feel training is critical to the understanding and mastery of the tool and how it correlates to their readiness to implement the new tool. Seven principals, 58%, admitted that, while the training was beneficial and important to their understanding of the new tool, they feel the need for ongoing training. A few expressed the insight that real deep understanding will only come after principals have immersed themselves in the tool and kept the rubric at the forefront of their everyday work as a principal.

See Table 7 for a summary of principal responses related to research question 3.
Table 7

Theme 3: Even Though the New Tool Has a Lot of Components, the Adjustment for Principals Is Easier Once They Have Had Professional Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
<th>Illustrative Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I need to find more time</td>
<td>~ “Takes a lot of time.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~ “I got frustrated last year because I couldn’t keep up.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~ “It rests on me to schedule all that.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation is big and overwhelming</td>
<td>~ “It was so big and different from what we ever experienced.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~ “As you go through it, you get overwhelmed.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~ “Overwhelmed and so many pieces to it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready to make the change</td>
<td>~ “It’s a lot of work, I would say I’m adjusting.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~ “I felt ready to make the change.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~ “I didn’t feel it was a big deal at all.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a clear understanding</td>
<td>~ “We still feel like we don’t know what it is.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~ “I know nothing more than when I first started.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~ “I just want someone to help me clarify my own thinking.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New evaluation tool training</td>
<td>~ “They brought in a professional that truly understood the model.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~ “We did a full two days of training.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~ “I thought the training was beneficial.”</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Theme and Sub-Themes Related to Research Question 4

Theme 4: Principals Expressed Very Specific Recommendations

Three of the principals, 25%, inquired if the Michigan Department of Education understood what is happening in the classrooms of schools. Principal 9 felt that she was being set up to fail by the state and she continued by rhetorically asking, “Is that their goal? Have they really looked through it as a group themselves? I mean, there’s so many questions when it goes to the state deciding things around education.” This skepticism about the intent of state policy in the matter of teachers’ and administrators’ performance
evaluations was an undercurrent in the conversations with these principals. The anxiety about how evaluation ratings are derived from the new evaluation instruments and how those ratings will impact the principals was evident in varying degrees across all participants, but not to the degree that they rejected the new evaluation system. On the contrary, the principals in this study were positive about having an evaluation tool that is more aligned to research, more reflective of an instructional improvement focus, and capable of giving them more specific feedback for growth. The principals did, however, readily provide suggestions for better implementation through more and ongoing training as indicated in the sub-themes for this theme:

**Sub-theme 4.1: Principals want specific feedback.** The first sub-theme is feedback. Principals want to grow in their development as educational leaders, and as with any growth model, meaningful and honest feedback is critical. Seven of the principals, 58%, reported they want feedback from their supervisor and want it to be more than just a casual conversation. When discussing feedback, Principal 2 replied, “I want it to be objective. I want it to be fair and honest and I want it to be more than a conversation” and Principal 4 agreed: “I think I want some honest reflection and some honest feedback.”

**Sub-theme 4.2: Principals want ongoing training and coaching.** The second sub-theme is how principals want a better understanding of the new evaluation tool. Six principals, 50%, stated how the training component must be an ongoing process, and training needs to include the supervisor who is evaluating them. Principal 12 wanted to understand the tool and added, “To help me get better at those things that we know will make a difference and I want someone to say to me, try this and then, this isn’t working,
so read this. I will try it on my own but if you see something and you know something, tell me.” Three principals expressed their desire for this to be a coaching model instead of an evaluative model.

**Sub-theme 4.3: Principals are experiencing too many improvement goals.**

The third sub-theme is the tool has too many goals in the rubric and six of the principals, 50%, wanted fewer goals. Principal 9 admitted, “I would prefer to have two or three really solid focus areas that we know impact achievement. That’s an issue with any evaluation, if you have too many goals, you have none.” Principal 10 felt, “There’s things that I feel are important as far as impact on the building and the climate and culture, the achievement and all that stuff, and there’s other things people think are important.” Four principals, 33%, agreed they need help in accomplishing their personal goals and there is a lack of support and understanding of the evaluation tool at their district level.

**Interview Summary Theme 4**

In my study, principals indicated they want feedback that is meaningful, objective, fair, and honest. If a principal is to grow as an instructional leader, the feedback must be given through a growth model lens and not through a conversation that does not focus on the growth needs of the principal.

Principalss expressed the need for more training for themselves but also for their supervisor who is evaluating them. Principals want their evaluator to be physically present in their building on a regular basis so they can have an understanding of the everyday challenges they experience. All of the principals, 100%, expressed the need and desire to spend their time in the classrooms with teachers and students and provide the leadership and direction that is needed to grow their teachers and students. Principals
want their supervisor to support them in this growth model but are questioning their supervisor’s knowledge base on the evaluation tool.

Principals are concerned with the size of the evaluation tool and they fear that the extensiveness of the rubric indicators could lead to busy work if they are expected to provide evidence that they accomplished something on every indicator every year. While principals are excited to have this new evaluation tool, they are unsure of the attainability of an effective or highly effective rating unless their district selects a few focus areas each year and provides them the time and support to fully develop both their understanding and their performance under those focus areas.

See Table 8 for a summary of principal responses related to research question 4.

Table 8

*Theme 4: Principals Want More Training/Coaching to Better Understand the New Tool*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
<th>Illustrative Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>~ “I want it to be fair and honest.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~ “Unless it’s presented with merit, it doesn’t mean to carry anything.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~ “Coach me through how to improve.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need more training</td>
<td>~ “You have to do better but we don’t know what that means.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~ “Provided more experience in training of principals.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~ “It still feels ambiguous and I’m not sure.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many goals</td>
<td>~ “Whether reality is can I accomplish these.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~ “I can’t get good at anything because it is too broad.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~ “To be evaluated on all that every year is really not realistic.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
<th>Illustrative Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I want a coaching model</td>
<td>~ “Why can’t it be coaching.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~ “Intentional coaching through the year helping us grow towards the instructional goal.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~ “Those evaluating me are not doing it well and half of evaluation should be ideas, suggestions, try this.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal burnout</td>
<td>~ “The burn out of how I get it all done and are they (State) setting you up to fail.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~ “Central office have completely lost touch with what’s it like to be a building principal.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Theme and Sub-Themes Related to Research Question 5

Theme 5: Principals Identified Specific Ways the New Tool Is Impacting Their Work

A fifth theme identified in the study was the impact the new evaluation tool is having on principals and their work. Just as teachers were impacted by their new evaluation tool, principals are feeling the same impact but at a higher level. All 12 of the principals, 100%, expressed their passion in their calling as a principal. They called on their values, principles, and beliefs in stressing the importance of ensuring students make the growth that is needed and required and helping teachers grow in their knowledge of teaching and instruction. Principal 1 expresses his desire for his students: “My aspirations for my building are simply stated, that every kid in my building has an advocate. Every kid has an adult that they can go to and help them. This sounds simplistic but it doesn’t happen.” Principal 9 has a very simple goal for her school: “Well, first and foremost, I just want our staff and students to have fun learning.”
Sub-theme 5.1: The new tools helps them grow leaders. The first sub-theme in the impact principals aspire to is they want to grow their teachers. Eight of the principals, 67%, stated that one of the most important aspects of their job is spending time in classrooms with teachers and providing leadership and direction. Specifically, Principal 4 stated, “If you want to impact student growth, you really got to make some changes within the teacher who has the ability to impact growth. So you got to provide the leadership and the direction and the structure to do that.” Principal 5 believes she knows what the needs are in her building. She feels she puts the needs of her students and teachers first, so when asked about the impact of the new evaluation process, she replied:

It does relate back to the data. They (the rubrics) align with mine pretty well because my belief is our students need to come first and I believe teachers need to be important to me, to make sure they’re learning and growing and developing, so it aligns really well with my own personal beliefs.

Sub-theme 5.2: The new tool gives principals a roadmap for becoming a better leader. The second sub-theme in the impact principals seek is, they strive to be a good instructional leaders, so they want their evaluation system to help them achieve that. All 12 of the principals, 100%, have the passion and commitment to continually grow and learn as instructional leaders. Even though two of the principals I interviewed are retiring at the end of the school year, their goal was to continue to lead their building so that the next principal will be to take over with everything in place. Principals are not afraid to reach out to their supervisors, and they welcome feedback to help them frame their work.

Principal 11 reflects on his goals for himself by stating, “In my situation I wanted to improve in shared vision. The only way that I’m going to become better is if I’m reflecting upon my progress towards approximating that goal.”

Principal 6 explains how his goal is help teachers grow instructionally:
I’d really like to reach a point of being instructionally tight, of being intentional, explicit, formative, and formative assessments being tied to each thing that you’re going. Moving away from that sense of teacher in the front talking, exploring it all together as a class, working through the assignment together as a class, and then turning it in as evidence.

**Sub-theme 5.3: Principals use the tools to guide them in achieving student growth.** The third sub-theme relating to the new evaluation system is how it will impact student growth. All 12 principals, 100%, acknowledged the importance of student growth and how this growth is depicted in the new evaluation tool. Principals spoke about closing the achievement gap in their schools, and two principals articulated how data needs to tell a story as it correlates to students, teachers and their building. Principal 12 explains how the new evaluation tool has helped her become more intentional with student data and she summarized her learning this way:

I’m further with data this year than last year. I’m trying to triangulate it back. I’ve had this data or this data but it never gave me a story. I never worked on data being a story. On my school data pieces, I’m learning and that’s been huge. And I would have never done it that way I don’t believe without looking at this (evaluation rubric) and having that whole section on data and how we use it.

Principal 4 responded, “That’s kind of been one the district’s focuses, every child should be making a year’s worth of growth.” Principal 5 acknowledged the same sentiment:

“Now we have to provide really strong evidence of student growth and teachers can do it in multiple ways. So I guess the belief and my own value is you want the students to make growth.”

**Sub-theme 5.4: Principals feel that the rubric elements give them specific ways to improve the culture and create community.** The fourth sub-theme is how the rubric will give principals specific ways to improve the culture in their school and help them create a community. Ten principals, 83%, believe the climate and culture in their
building is the most important aspect of their school. Seven principals, 58%, wanted a culture that is safe for students and one where relationships with students is the number one priority. Three principals, 25%, recognized the need to build awareness of cultural competence and bring an awareness of poverty amongst all staff. Principal 2 explains:

Provide empathy for students but not sympathy. Build cultural competence and recognizing barriers like poverty and other environmental constraints that plague students. But not recognizing to the sense, we’re just aware of them and we work around them, but not to use them as excuses.

Principal 11 explains his view on climate and culture: “I’m trying to change the culture and it’s been very difficult because the undercurrent . . . it’s not a vocation, it’s a job.”

Principal 4 adds, “We’re trying to build our sense of community within our school, so I think we’ve been doing a lot with culture of the building, the culture of the students and building those cultures of dependence of one another, to help one another.”

**Interview Summary Theme 5**

All of the principals I interviewed, 100%, were certain that the new model will impact student growth and, in some cases, shrink or close the achievement gap in their school. Principals understand when using data with fidelity, the data will tell the story of their building, their teachers, and their students.

Principals in my study are passionate about growing teachers as strong instructional leaders and they realize if they are able to grow teachers, then the teachers will be able to help their students make academic growth. Principals want their building to have a climate and culture that is safe for students and create a school community where every student can learn and be successful.

See Table 9 for a summary of principal responses related to research question 5.
Table 9

*Theme 5: Principals Identified Specific Ways the New Tool Is Impacting Their Work*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
<th>Illustrative Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Principal centered      | ~ “It helps me frame my work.”  
                            ~ “Changing from managing to providing leadership.”  
                            ~ “Being very intentional with my professional development time.” |
| Teacher centered        | ~ “If we grow our teachers, then we’re going to affect student achievement.”  
                            ~ “A principal that can support and grow teachers.”  
                            ~ “To impact student growth you got to make some changes within teachers.” |
| Student centered        | ~ “The real work is with the students.”  
                            ~ “I want all students to be successful.”  
                            ~ “It’s about getting this building student centered.” |
| Positive change         | ~ “Teachers understand we’re using a similar system.”  
                            ~ “I did implement new things just from reading the tool.”  
                            ~ “Eye opener for me, there were expectations I wasn’t aware of.” |
| Disconnect of reality versus the tool | ~ “How and where does this fit in.”  
                            ~ “It’s basically a jack of all trades master of none.”  
                            ~ “It’s been a long time since central office have spent time in the principal’s office.” |

**Additional Comments Principals Made at the End of the Interview**

At the end of each interview, I asked the participants if there was anything else that they would like to add and Table 10 displays their comments.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“There’s still a lot of work that we have to do that nobody understands what’s going on.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“I just want to make the point that although it’s a more challenging evaluation model, the new one, more rigorous, I could say. I think with anything, if it’s a little bit more challenging than you respond to, and it helps you grow. I think it is the best practice evaluation model that really is going to help grab some good instructional leaders over time.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“No, I can’t think of anything.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>“I’m curious about the whole School Advance and having all of the rubrics. It’s like, to me that seems like a lot of things to document. I’m thinking, do you rotate every three years and pick a third, a third and a third and just kind of rotate around them and focus on them?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>“You know, when I became a principal, I don’t think I knew what I was getting into even though I had been her 20 years. But it’s a lot different than you anticipated. You know, it’s not an easy job and I think, in the past some principals made it look that way. So people went into it and then it’s not at all what you think it’s going to be. I mean I love it. I would not want to do anything different. I love my whole educational career.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>No comment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>“No, I think it has been an easy transition.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>“How many times we base decision on finance? When we really shouldn’t be doing that but should look at student needs. I guess the other thing I wish we would have something similar and maybe we will and it could be our superintendent’s plan that we’re going to get the teachers all set.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>“So that whole piece on student achievement data is definitely a very hot topic with teachers and administrators. You know, the real liability, the validity of testing. Just all kinds of things make it very difficult for teachers to ever feel like 50% of their evaluation should be on a standardized test score.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>“I just think it needs to be more usable, user friendly. And you can call it evaluation but if it’s more geared around feedback and coaching. But to have all those things that are here in that tool alone and be evaluated, there’s just no way that I can imagine anybody getting a true read on what they do as a building principal.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>No, I just appreciate the opportunity to talk with you because I know the more you talk about it the more you can learn and remind yourself the things that you should be learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>That I think it’s a good positive thing that we’re having something that can measure and something that is based on research, if you do these things, you know the positive outcome with your school and be the best principal you can be. But you have to have a system and a process to really put that in place and make it work or it becomes just another thing that we talk about and really don’t do.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additional Findings

During my study, there were additional findings that were not strong enough for themes and sub-themes, but raised additional questions for further research. All the principals in my study are passionate about their position as principal, and even the two principals who are retiring at the end of this school year expressed how this passion will stay with them until the last day of their tenure. The principals are concerned with the demanding work load of their job and the changing responsibilities and situations that arise within their buildings. They want to be instructional leaders but when dealing with situational crises, it is not easy to keep the new evaluation tool and rubric at the forefront of their work. Principals expressed their need and want for systems and processes to help them be the best instructional and building leader while at the same time, they are not afraid to do the work.

Principals voiced their frustration with the disconnect between supervisors, local policy makers, and state officials who create and mandate these new initiatives, who might not have worked in education, nor have recently been in a school building and interacted with a school principal. A few of the principals expressed their concern of “being set up to fail” by the Michigan legislators and questioned if these legislators who are making decisions that affect school administrators really have a true read on a principal’s everyday lived school life.

When principals were interviewed, three of the principals, 25%, suggested that they would like to see a “coaching model” instead of an “evaluation model.” They explained how teachers grow when they are given the opportunity to collaborate with a reading or math coach, because such coaching is not punitive nor connected to an
evaluation in any way. One principal shared how he worked with an individual who was not his evaluator, and how she was able to work on data with him and correlate the data directly to classrooms and students. He believes the purpose of the evaluation system is to provide feedback and coaching and to provide principals with the tools needed to be successful. Principal 12 expressed her desire to move into a coaching model:

There’s research based ideas that go with each section of the rubric that supervisors can say to you, these are some resources, so look into it. After I spend time looking into their suggestions, I want them to come back again. I need help with the rubrics that don’t match who I am and I don’t feel like someone is supporting me to get there, I need someone to coach me, help me through this transition.

The last additional finding from the interviews was the needs of students. Principals believe students are being left out of the whole equation as it relates back to the evaluation tool. One principal explained how the evaluation tool should put the needs of students first and with this tool the value of students is mediocre at best. Principals indicated their top priority was providing a safe, caring, and compassionate climate and culture for their students. Principals described the physical needs of students, such as food, housing, mental health and clothing, is a bigger indicator of success compared to any academic assessment given to students. Principal 5 beautifully expressed how a caring and nurturing environment is essential for the success and growth of every student:

I can call it my personal aspiration as the principal. We’ve created a vision, a shared vision together in our building on what does that look like, and sound like as we go into classrooms and how do we support kids through some of those pieces. The vision for this school is definitely a school that has shared leadership. First and foremost, safe, positive environment, that creates risk taking. That really holds the whole child in their hand and knowing that the way to getting them to think at higher levels and take risks, to push themselves. To care about excelling and exceeding standards is to really show them how much you care about them. So that is really what we work on. And I’ll tell you, we’ve got a great culture.
Chapter IV Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe how principals, key players in the work of school reform and renewal, experience being the “Tip of the Spear” in the shift from static and disjointed educator evaluation models to growth and development oriented, research informed, and evidence base models designed to engage teachers and school leaders as full partners in the pursuit of continuous growth and improvement. This chapter included a description and understanding how principals made meaning of their experience with implementing the new Michigan educational evaluation requirements. The themes and sub-themes were developed from analyzing the interviews and in so doing, provide some insight into the research questions that gave focus to this study. The principals’ feelings were revealed through these themes and sub-themes and these responses were all stated in Chapter IV. Implications of these themes and sub-themes are discussed in Chapter V.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR FUTURE STUDY

Summary of Major Findings

In the first chapter, I introduced the research study and explained the importance of this study. According to the research, the importance of the role of K-12 principals in turning underperforming schools into schools where students have the appropriate and sustained educational experiences and supports to attain academic success is well established in the research. Marzano (2003) has shown that students in effective schools (as opposed to ineffective schools) have a 44% difference in expected passing rate on a test that has a typical passing rate of 50%. Such findings from the effective schools research emphasized the importance of school level leadership to such a high level that the next round of research focus after school and teacher effectiveness was principal effectiveness. Starting with the Balanced Leadership meta-analysis work led by Marzano and Waters (2009), and continuing with the multiple research sites and teams funded by the Wallace Foundation over approximately a 20-year period, study after study clarified both the significance of leadership as a vital school based function with identifiable characteristics that can be associated with improved student outcomes.

An example of such specialized variations on principal leadership is Learning Leadership, which, according to findings from studies by Hattie (1999), is leadership that emphasizes student and adult learning and occurs when leaders promote and participate in teacher learning through such approaches as providing coaching over an extended
time, establishing data teams, focusing on how students learn subject matter content, and enabling teachers to work collaboratively to plan and monitor lessons based on evidence about how students learn. While there are additional phrases such as instructional leadership that hold prominent in the research on principal leadership, the common denominator is leadership that develops the capacity of teachers to create more effective learning environments and experiences for students, adapt those learning environments and experiences to meet the needs of a wide range of learner characteristics and, thus improve student achievement.

While this line of research fed into federal and state policy across the U.S. in ways that led to rating schools according to student outcomes and intervening when student outcomes failed to meet state and federal minimum standards (NCLB & RTTT), it also influenced provisions within state and federal school accountability systems that focus on the quality of both teaching and leadership. Early iterations of this influence were expressed as specific interventions to either replace or improve teachers and principals where student achievement failed to meet minimum state and federal standards. The logical next iteration of the focus on teaching and leadership quality was to establish federal, and thus, state requirements for schools to conduct annual performance reviews of teacher and principal (administrator) performance against research-based standards of practice. Michigan joined the trend in this direction as part of its federal waiver system to replace “adequate yearly progress” and a few other core provisions of NCLB with a different system of accountability that classifies the performance of schools as “Priority, Focus, or Rewards” schools based on student achievement. Along with this new rating system for schools, Michigan adopted the
Common Core State Standards and established statutory requirements for annual teacher and administrator performance evaluations and ratings (Michigan Department of Education, 2013).

The goal of this research study was to discover to what extent 12 school administrators were prepared to implement the new Michigan principal evaluation requirements. Principals chosen for this study represented a cross section throughout Michigan with a range of experience as a principal and a range of previous experience evaluating teachers and being evaluated in the role of principal by a supervisor.

During the past several decades of research on principal leadership, a consensus on two major themes on how school leaders impact school improvement emerged. First, the impact of school leadership on student improvement is indirect and mediated by the work of teachers in classrooms. In this causal chain, principal leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping the school culture and driving organizational changes that ultimately lead to a more effective learning environment. This influence on the school environment and school processes influences the quality of teacher performance and teacher collaboration which, in turn, influence student outcomes. Second, among the core components of principal leadership, instructional leadership emerged as one of the essential correlates for school improvement (Cravens et al., 2011).

My study focused on principal performance evaluation and feedback as one means by which principals can receive valuable guidance and support for their growth and development in the role. Michigan provided a perfect opportunity to see how principals are adapting and responding to new evaluation tools and processes that respond to statutory changes calling for more defined, consistent, research-based, and growth-
focused evaluation models and processes. Since Michigan was in the first 5-year period of adapting to new evaluation models and systems that meet state requirements, this made for a prime opportunity to develop some focused research questions to explore how principals are making sense of their experience with the shift from previous evaluation practices to those prescribed under new statutory requirements.

To gain the principals’ perspective on adapting to the new Michigan performance evaluation statutory requirements, I designed this study to investigate five research questions while giving principals a voice to portray and make sense of their experiences in the early stages of implementing a new administrator evaluation model. The overarching question that framed this study is: How do principals describe the process of change from the previous district model and approach for administrator evaluation to a new model and approach that meets the requirements of Michigan’s educator evaluation statute? This overarching question is further developed through the following five sub-questions. The following discussion provides a summary of how the study themes, sub-themes, and additional findings from Chapter IV provide insight related to each research sub-question.

Findings Aligned to Research Questions

Research Sub-question 1

*How do principals compare the principles, values and beliefs that they associate with both the former and the new evaluation models and processes?*

According to the data, principals indicated the new evaluation tool is modeled to improve instructional leadership and align with a principal’s personal beliefs and values as instructional leaders. When relating their principles, values, and beliefs to the former
model, they had a difficult time identifying any particular values or beliefs that they associated with the previous evaluation tool or process. They felt that the former evaluation tool and process was more pro forma. Principal 3 even stated the old model was just evidence that something was completed. Principals welcomed a new evaluation tool and process that mirrors their own beliefs as an instructional leader.

At first, principals were resistant to adopt a new tool, partly because they had no input into that decision. Once they started learning the new system, however, principals found that it was much more grounded in research and much more aligned with the kind of principal they aspire to be. On the other hand, they questioned the understanding of the tool by their supervisor. Principal 1 shared that he felt Central Office was telling him these are the things you need to do and he expressed that it is a different world at Central Office than it is in a building. Principal 5 was resistant to make the change but also expressed that the new tool was a move in the right direction for education.

Principals want the new tool to help them create an environment that is student centered. They expressed the belief that all children can learn and be successful. In order for this to take place, however, principals feel they need to create a climate and culture that focuses on safety, learning, and acceptance. Principal 1 explained his aspirations for his building is for every student to have an advocate and an adult they can go to and help them out. Principals want a better understanding of the new model to help them create a positive learning environment in their building.

**Research Sub-question 2**

*How do they compare the evaluation processes and procedures between their old and new evaluation models?*
Principals did not have a clear understanding of their previous evaluation model and it was possible that principals were not evaluated at all or every year. Both Principals 3 and 7 stated they wrote their own year-end evaluation and it was a goal-setting tool.

One theme that was constant among the 12 principals was how inconsistent the processes and procedures were with their old evaluation model. Principal 9 shared her experience:

Before School Advance, we had our district priorities that became our principal goals. We needed to look at activities, resources, and measures of how we were going to make gains and improvements. Then we would meet periodically with the superintendent and go over what we have done, where we are and look at our data. It was just three focus areas that we worked on.

Principals stated the new tool is an instructional model and it aligns to their school improvement plan and it is a model that works from kindergarten through grade 12.

Principal 2 described the new model as a guide for him to get his work done and help him make sure he was communicating regularly with the community and modeling with technology. Ten of the principals, 83%, described the new model as one that is detailed with descriptors and has different levels of standards for instructional leadership.

Principal 12 describes the new model as positive and based on research, indicating that she knows if she follows the rubrics, she will have a positive impact on her school.

**Research Sub-question 3**

*How do they describe their own adjustment to any changes in practice, process, values and beliefs associated with the new model? Where do they describe more or less readiness to make these adjustments?*

The adjustment to the new model was easy for six principals, 50%, and it did not cause them to worry about the transition. Principal 5 felt the new model was fair and was comfortable with it, not overwhelmed and it was a positive change. Even if the
adjustment was easy, 50% of principals expressed the tool was too large and had too many components to learn all at once. Principal 3 was overwhelmed by the new tool and believed it had too many pieces to it and she feels it is very tedious. For many principals, they were still learning the new model and the process attached to it. Principal 7 explained that the tool was implemented in parts; then she took ownership of it.

Principals want a better understanding of the new tool and feel they need additional training. Eight of the principals, 67%, had professional training on the tool and rubric and welcomed the expertise, but also expressed the need for ongoing training and still had a lot of unanswered questions.

**Research Sub-question 4**

*What recommendations would they make for district follow-up and support to help implement the new model?*

In order for principals to grow professionally, they voice the need for feedback that is objective, fair, and honest and more than just a casual conversation. When they meet with their supervisor, they want the meeting to focus on their building and instructional leadership. Principal 9 shared how valuable the principal time is and to do things just out of compliance is a frustrating component in her day.

Principals voice that there is a disconnect between the tool’s rubric and what principals do on a daily basis. Four principals, 33%, question the feedback from their supervisor as to how it corresponds to what they believe is needed in their building. Principals are concerned with the amount of goals required to master based on the rubric, and question the reality of achieving Effective or Highly Effective on their summative evaluation.
Principals want professional training as they learn the new tool and feedback is critical for them to grow as educational leaders. Training has come up multiple times in the data and principals voice their need to understand the evaluation tool and rubric. They also express the need for support in looking at and analyzing student and building data.

**Research Sub-question 5**

*What do they hope will be the impact on the new model for themselves and their school or district?*

The new tool has helped principals become a positive instructional leader. Seven of the principals, 58%, have indicated the new model makes them think about what they need to do to be a good leader and helps them frame their work. They are now leading their building and not just managing it.

Principals want to grow their teachers in the area of practice and instruction and through the rubric and feel evaluation is a priority. Principal 9 explained how the real work is with the students and teachers, and if principals can grow their teachers and their craftsmanship in teaching and instruction, student achievement will improve.

Student growth is depicted in the new tool. Seven principals, 58%, believe that students need to make at least a year’s growth and, in order for students to grow, principals must provide leadership and direction for teachers. Principal 12 described how she has begun to use data as a story, a story of a particular student or the story of her building.

Principal 2 explained how the new tool gives him credibility with his teachers because his evaluation mirrors the teacher evaluation. When both the principal and
teacher evaluation includes student data, the two entities begin to learn and grow together and a collaborative community expands.

My study was important because previous studies about administrator evaluation reveal that there have been no consistent measures, evaluation instruments, and/or evaluation processes used in administrator evaluation (Ryley et al., 2000). Given the more standardized processes that new state-level statutes require and the recent movement toward performance rubrics as opposed to rating scales and other less structured evaluation methods for administrators (Davis et al., 2011), it is reasonable to expect that administrators will experience a period of adjustment and adaptation as districts begin to implement the new administrator evaluation models.

In Chapter II, I explained the history of educational evaluations, the different theories behind all types of evaluations, how the principal impacts teachers and students, the components of a principal evaluation. It was revealed that, compared to evaluating teachers for their effectiveness in the classroom, far less attention has been given to the readiness and preparation of principals. Through this study, I was able to gain some insight from a broad-based sample of Michigan principals regarding their readiness for shifting to new administrator evaluation models and processes. I was also able to provide them with the opportunity to describe the nature of their experiences in the early stages of implementing and adjusting to significant changes in the tools, processes, and implications for their performance evaluation.

In Chapter III, I explained my rationale for designing this study as a transcendental phenomenology in order to capture principals’ lived experiences while their districts transition to a new administrator evaluation model and also provide those
principals with the opportunity to give voice to the meaning they are deriving from their experiences so far. In this fashion, I designed a study that looks for what we can learn from principals in the early stages of adjusting to and complying with a very complex set of statutory requirements and implementing a new evaluation system to meet those requirements. I employed phenomenological open-ended and semi-structured interviews with a sample of 12 principals who were currently using one of the MCEE-recommended principal evaluation tools. This aspect of the study design was designed to elicit a picture of how the officially vetted and recommended evaluation models constitute a shift in experience for the principals in the study. I was also looking for how principals interpret this shift in terms of their values, beliefs, and previous experience as principals.

I used an interview guide that began with conversation prompts that focused on eliciting verbal narratives about principals’ past and current experiences with the performance evaluation process. Throughout the interviews, I kept probing to derive as full and rich a rendition of principals’ experiences and interpretations of those experiences as possible. I also invited participants to add further detail and insights into their sense-making through the member-checking process. The data derived from this process constituted a slice in time from an early stage of experience relating to a larger experience that what will, most likely, be an unfolding story over a more prolonged period of time. The value in this early slice in time is the ability to give voice to school leaders in the early stages of implementing sweeping statutory changes that will dynamically impact the way they see their work, the way they understand their performance in that work, and the way they frame expectations for their own continued learning and growth in that work.
The following five major themes were extrapolated from the transcripts of each principal’s lived experience with the previous and current evaluation tool:

1. Despite lack of input, principals are glad to have an aligned evaluation tool.
2. The former tool had no structure, but the new tool is based on instructional leadership.
3. Even though the new tool has a lot of components, the adjustment for principals is easier when they have had professional training.
4. Principals want more training/coaching to better understand the new tool.
5. The new evaluation tool is having a positive impact on principals, their students, and their building.

Each theme and sub-theme was explained in Chapter IV as it related to the experiences of the 12 principals. At the end of the interview, each principal was afforded the opportunity to add additional comments regarding their experience with the new evaluation tool and these comments are represented in additional findings in Chapter IV.

**Summary of Major Findings**

The major findings of my research are discussed in this section. The focus of this study was to discover the readiness and adjustment of principals to implement the new evaluation tool. The emphasis was giving principals a voice on their personal experiences and allowing them to articulate their lived experiences within their building and their day-to-day responsibilities.

Table 11 is organized based on the five research questions, showing the previous research from Chapter II and connecting it to the current findings by Ramirez.
Table 11

Comparison of Ramirez’s Key Findings to Existing Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New evaluation tool</th>
<th>Previous Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>~ Principals are concerned about having input in selection of evaluation tool</td>
<td>New Finding: This finding adds new insight where there is no previous research findings. No previous research found, thus Ramirez provides new insight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ New evaluation tool is modeled to improve instructional leaders.</td>
<td>Aligns with previous research: Wilmore (2002) who found the role of the principal is the school catalyst for success for all stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ New evaluation tool has too many indicators to be an effective principal.</td>
<td>New Finding: This finding adds new insight where there is no previous research findings. No previous research found, thus Ramirez provides new insight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ New evaluation tool aligns with the principal’s personal beliefs.</td>
<td>Aligns with previous research: Smith (2006) who found the purpose of an evaluation is to reflect critically on the personal and professional practice of educator.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Former tool and new tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Finding:</th>
<th>Previous Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>~ Principal’s relationship with supervisor stayed consistent between the former and new evaluations.</td>
<td>New Finding: This finding adds new insight where there is no previous research findings. No previous research found, thus Ramirez provides new insight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ Former evaluation tool had no substance or tied to a specific rubric.</td>
<td>Aligns with previous research: New Leaders for New Schools (2010) which found that currently a large number of states are dissatisfied with their current principal evaluation system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ Principal had a lack of understanding as it related to their former evaluation tool.</td>
<td>New Finding: This finding adds new insight where there is no previous research findings. No previous research found, thus Ramirez provides new insight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ Principals were resistant to adopt the new evaluation tool and questioned the understanding at the state level.</td>
<td>New Finding: This finding adds new insight where there is no previous research findings. No previous research found, thus Ramirez provides new insight.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ramirez (2016) Key Findings</th>
<th>Previous Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>~ Principals embraced the new evaluation tool.</td>
<td>Aligns with previous research: Pearlman (2003) who found principals want to models and systems that focus on continuous growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ The new evaluation tool helped principals become a positive instructional leader.</td>
<td>Aligns with previous research: New Leaders for New Schools (2010) which found the quality of the principal alone accounts for 25% of a school’s impact on student achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ Principals like having a rubric attached to the new evaluation model.</td>
<td>Aligns with previous research: Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness (2013) which found that new evaluation tools comprise of developmental rubrics aligned to research-supported performance criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ There is a disconnect between the tool’s rubric and what principals do on a daily basis</td>
<td>Aligns with previous research: Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) who found that it is unclear what the essential ingredients of successful leadership.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adjustment and training on new evaluation tool

| ~ Principals stated the new evaluation tool is too big to learn effectively. | New Finding: This finding adds new insight where there is no previous research findings. No previous research found, thus Ramirez provides new insight. |
| ~ Principals expressed their adjustment to the new evaluation tool was not hard. | New Finding: This finding adds new insight where there is no previous research findings. No previous research found, thus Ramirez provides new insight. |
| ~ Principals appreciated having a professional trainer as they were learning the new evaluation tool and they received some form of professional training. | Aligns with previous research: Rampur (2012) who found that one of the reasons for evaluation is to determine if the training was effective. Aligns with previous research: Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, and Cohen (2007) who found the quality of training principals receive correlates to school leaders meeting the increasingly tough expectations of the job. |
Table 11—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ramirez (2016) Key Findings</th>
<th>Previous Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommendations</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ Principals want feedback to grow as educational leaders.</td>
<td>Aligns with previous research: Knight (2011) who found evaluating an employee’s job performance should allow for real-time feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aligns: Clifford and Ross (2012) who found principal feedback supports learning and helps districts and states make important decisions about leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ Principals want a better understanding of the evaluation tool and additional training.</td>
<td>Aligns with previous research: Legislative Council, State of Michigan (2009) found that the use of the evaluation model is created to give educators a clear understanding of what defines excellence and ensure professional growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aligns with previous research: Grossman (2011) found the lack of attention to principal’s need for professional development is alarming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ Principals feel that the evaluation tool has too many goals in the rubric and impossible to master all of them.</td>
<td>Aligns with previous research: Goldring et al. (2009) found that a principal assessment should be easy to administer and provide reliable data for purposes such as professional development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principal impact</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ Principals want to grow teachers with leadership and direction.</td>
<td>Aligns with previous research: D. B. Reeves (2009b) found that the teacher is the most important resource in a school, the principal needs to know how to measure the teacher’s effectiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ Principals strive to be good instructional leaders and want a coaching model and Not an evaluative model.</td>
<td>New finding: This finding adds new insight where there is no previous research findings. No previous research found, thus Ramirez provides new insight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ Student growth is depicted in the new evaluation tool.</td>
<td>Aligns with previous research: Kessler and Howe (2012) found the new law requires evaluation to be based on student growth and to be used to inform decisions regarding placement, promotion, compensation and retention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ Principals feel that a climate and culture that focuses on safety, learning and acceptance is the most important aspect of a school.</td>
<td>Additional finding: Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) found that leaders of schools must ensure that the entire range of conditions and incentives in schools fully supports rather than inhibits teaching and learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interpretation of Findings

New Findings

As Table 11 indicates, eight new findings were found beyond anything that I could find in previous literature. The first new finding was the importance of principals having a voice in the selection of the district-selected evaluation tool. In this study, most of the principals did not have a voice in the selection of the new tool and a high level of frustration was evident due to not having a voice in choosing the tool. Even though principals were frustrated, overall they did accept the new evaluation tool and believed the new model aligned better with the expectations of a principal. This finding suggests that, even when principals accept and honor the evaluation tool used to rate them, they want shared ownership.

Another finding suggested the new tool has too many indicators for the principals to learn or focus on all at once. The research does state that the principal assessment should be easy to administer and capture the real essence of the role of a school principal; however, it does not identify how many indicators should be in a performance evaluation instrument or rubric. There is research explaining the attributes and behaviors of a good instructional leader (one who leads a school to better student outcomes), but what is lacking is information on how to best use a comprehensive performance evaluation rubric to guide the performance development of principals without overwhelming them. Additionally, the practice of treating all performance indicators as equally important in all contexts at all times does not align with studies that illustrate the contextual and situational nature of effective leadership practice, e.g., flexibility (Marzano et al., 2005).
Because the research base for principal evaluation rubrics is wide and deep, the performance evaluation instruments that are gaining preference for districts to use are also very wide and deep in the number and variety of leadership characteristics and behaviors they address. As a result, the participants in this study are experiencing many expectations for demonstrating performance proficiency and/or too many targets for improved performance at one time. Further, while there are now state-reviewed and vetted instruments that identify specific research supported principal performance characteristics, there are not studies that address the relative importance of those characteristics or provide guidance to districts in determining where and how to identify those priorities for their principals. Some of the principals in this study indicated that their training suggested setting performance priorities and phasing in the use of the new comprehensive evaluation tool, but some stated that their district was implementing the whole instrument at once or that their district has not yet worked out how to phase-in or set performance priorities. The principals who participated in this study indicated the need for systems and processes that would assist them in the process for setting priorities for both their work and their performance development in that work.

The next two new findings were related to the previous evaluation tool that was used for the principal evaluation. Principals explained how their previous evaluation tool had no real substance. Principals noted that the evaluation criteria in the former evaluation instruments were often not or minimally tied specifically to the work they do as principals, especially the work of instructional leadership. With the new instruments, however, principals saw a greater connection to their day-to-day practice (or what they believe they should focus on in their day-to-day practice), but they still expressed concern
that much of their day-to-day work fell outside of the performance indicators in the evaluation rubric. This could reflect (a) a continued disconnect between the reality of their jobs and the performance criteria embedded in the evaluation instrument, (b) unfamiliarity with the performance characteristics described in the rubrics, (c) lack of clarity about how their day-to-day work actually demonstrates one or more of the performance characteristics assessed by the evaluation instrument, and/or (d) any combination of these issues. In support of these possibilities is the finding in my study that principals perceive that both they and their supervisors lack true understanding and comprehension of the principal evaluation tools being used by their districts. Not one of the principals interviewed had a full comprehension of the evaluation tool that they are held accountable to, and several indicated they were skeptical their supervisors has a solid understanding as well.

The next new finding is how reluctantly, tentatively, or vulnerably principals were adapting to their new evaluation tool despite appreciating how the tool better aligns to what they believe is the important work of principals and/or what they try to focus on or make important in their work. Principals had a real sense of nervousness and anxiety when the new evaluation tool was introduced and adopted by their district. Principals were confident in their abilities as leaders but with the demanding load of changing responsibilities and situations, they questioned their own grit to accomplish all the requirements. Again, the issue appears to be about the quantity of expectations and the fear that they would be expected to perform at high levels on all the performance criteria embedded in the new instrument at the same time and/or improve on all at the same time. They also doubted their ability to “prove” or demonstrate their performance levels on all
the performance characteristics embedded in the instrument in every evaluation cycle. This could link back to how incomplete they perceive their understanding of the performance criteria to be.

Since most of the principals in this study had received training on the new evaluation system by authorized providers, this fear of being held responsible for high levels of performance on all the evaluation criteria at one time is somewhat surprising. According to the training manual for School ADvance™ (P. Reeves & McNeill, 2011), districts are advised to (a) phase-in the new evaluation tool by focusing on a sub-set of performance characteristics each year for three (or more) years to provide principals and their supervisors time to fully learn into the new performance rubrics; (b) establish performance priorities based on evidence (data) of performance improvement priorities; and (c) use the performance rubrics as the basis for ongoing performance development conversations, professional development, and work sessions for principals and their supervisors. While several of the participants acknowledged that their district was following this “phase-in” advice, many indicated that they felt more training was needed to fully understand and implement the practice of setting evidence-based performance priorities after the initial phase-in process is complete.

Another new finding was the concern over the many components in the rubric and the need for more training and understanding about those components. The principals who received training to start using the new evaluation instrument felt that training was critical to the beginning stages of understanding the new evaluation tool. They also expressed concern, however, that initial training is not sufficient to fully understand either the new performance criteria or adapt to the new performance review process. This
concern is supported by the fact that (a) several principals noted that their district was not fully following the implementation process recommended in the training, and (b) none of them described an ongoing process occurring in their district to continue to unpack and interpret the performance criteria in the new instrument. Evidence of any district sponsored plan for ongoing training was almost non-existent in the way the principals described the implementation process for the new evaluation system in their districts.

That said, a few principals in this study were able to connect the importance of having instructional coaches available for their teachers to the need of instructional leader coaches for themselves. Principals, generally, felt that the impact of shifting to an evidence/research based evaluation instrument that described principal practices associated with improving student results would be far greater across their entire school program if the evaluation model their district adopted was utilized as an instructional coaching, learning, or growth focused tool and process. These principals would like more of an emphasis on using the new principal evaluation tool to align expectations and support them in meeting those expectations, and less emphasis on using the evaluation tool to create an evaluation rating in compliance with the new educator evaluation statutory requirements in Michigan. They accept the reality that they will receive an overall performance rating, but they are more interested in meaningful feedback, clear, but manageable expectations for growth, and an opportunity to engage in dialogue and idea exchange with supervisors about how to achieve that growth.

**Added Findings**

There is research on the importance of principals creating an environment where conditions and incentives are present to enhance the learning culture throughout the
school. What is not known is how the basic needs of students in the present day public schools are reflected in the evaluation tools. The rubrics in the new evaluation tools provide districts with a research-supported set of performance characteristics that are associated with a positive influence on student outcomes. However, the evaluation rubrics, themselves, do not provide guidance on how districts can set priorities within the evaluation characteristics that reflect the specific conditions in any given school. Thus, some principals expressed a disconnect between the reality of their daily work as a school leader and the expectations set forth across the evaluation rubrics. The new evaluation rubrics vetted by the state of Michigan MCEE all focus on student growth and student data, but connecting that data to making decisions regarding what practices are most important in a principal’s daily work at any given time in any given set of school conditions and with any given student achievement profile is work that is left up to the local implementers of the evaluation models. In other words, making decisions about where to set and support performance priorities for principals that reflect their present working conditions, resources, and identified student needs is not explicitly stated in the new evaluation models.

**Aligned Findings**

Research on different evaluation tools finds the tool must have substance and it was found that most states are not satisfied with their current educator evaluation tool and are seeking out new and aligned tools that will help grow principals. Smith (2006) wrote, “The purpose of an evaluation is to reflect critically on the effectiveness of personal and professional practice and guide professional growth” (p. 15).
Principals want evaluation tools that help improve instructional leadership and align with their own personal beliefs on the qualities of an effective principal and want a tool that has specific rubrics attached to allow them the ability to maintain and master the expectations. If a tool has too many components (or if principals are expected to master all components at once), the principals will feel defeated and overwhelmed. Goldring et al. (2009) reported that an ideal principal assessment should be easy to administer, capture the essence of the role of a school principal, and provide valid and reliable data for purposes such as professional development and performance evaluation. However, criticism exists regarding the adequacy of assessment instruments and the processes employed to evaluate principals.

Principals want their students to grow and to make at least a year’s growth. The U.S. Department of Education (2012) defines “effective principal” as one “whose students, overall and for each subgroup, achieve acceptable rates (e.g., at least one grade level in an academic year) of student growth.” Principals are becoming better at using data effectively as well as helping teachers become more proficient at analyzing student growth, and this is reflected in their concern that their performance evaluation system support student growth.

Principals in this study voiced the need for continuous training and feedback and some linked that to peer coaching. The quality of training principals receive before they assume their positions and the continuing professional development they get once they are hired and throughout their careers have a lot to do with whether school leaders can meet the increasingly tough expectations of the job (Davis et al., 2005). The principals in this study demonstrated a keen sense of responsibility for continuous improvement and
growth as school leaders. At the same time, they desire performance expectations they can meet and reasonable opportunity to master some performance expectations before taking on additional ones.

**Conceptual Framework**

The overarching question that framed this study is: How do principals describe the process of change from the previous district model and approach for administrator evaluation to a new model and approach that meets the requirements of Michigan’s educator evaluation statute? A preliminary conceptual framework was designed to define this study. A graphic display of the preliminary conceptual framework is included in Appendix A.

I used evaluation theory as the foundation for this study due to the deep rooted need for performance accountability both at the individual and collective levels. Accountability encompasses the assessment of goals, processes, and outcomes within a socially constructed shared environment called a school. Thus, evaluation is also a socially negotiated process around performance expectations, performance criteria, performance evidence, and performance ratings. This process is also guided by a socially negotiated process involving dialogue between stakeholders and practitioners to define school mission, goals, processes, and resources for school success based on student success.

In my initial investigation of the research, I found three important areas that must be defined in order for school leaders to shape their leadership understandings, strategies, and behaviors. First, the core to any leader is their beliefs and values and how these are intertwined with the guiding principles that influence how they go about their everyday
work. Second, leaders must have defined roles and responsibilities upon which they base their daily work priorities. The roles change within the parameters of a day from managing the school building and all the functions that occur (inspection) to instructional leadership where principals are charged with improving teaching and learning (demonstration).

Third, the set of ideas that shape a principal’s orientation to their work relates to the school processes. School leaders must have processes in place that will allow them to enhance teacher performance, increase student learning, and improve academic achievement results. Principals must have a purpose for their work and it needs to drive and motivate them as well as having clarity on the outcomes. School processes are the means by which school leaders carry out that purpose and achieve those outcomes.

Under the new Michigan education evaluation requirements, the evaluation tools used to provide teachers and administrators with performance feedback and performance improvement focus should be based on standards of practice supported by research. These standards of practice provide guidance on the important work of both principals and teachers and, if used with fidelity and reliability, the outcome should be increased student achievement. The challenge is to translate standards of practice to observable behaviors that can be demonstrated in the course of teacher or administrator performance as measures to describe performance effectiveness.

The initial conceptual framework provided in Chapter I is different from the modified framework in that my focus was most concerned with the lived experiences of principals as they were adjusted to their previous evaluation tool to their newly district adopted tool. While principals’ experiences with their previous evaluation tool and
process were interesting and provided background knowledge, I found they did not add value to the current state of readiness and adjustment process as principals experienced the shift to new performance evaluation models and processes.

As a result of my findings, I felt the need to make an adaptation to the initial framework (see Appendix B) from that which provided initial focus for this study, because my research revealed the following: At the core of principal readiness to adopt and adapt to a new evaluation tool is the ever-changing and demanding load that principals are experiencing in their everyday work. The responsibilities of principals are ever increasing and the situations of their school population continue to change. These responsibilities and situations are impacting the readiness of principals to fully acclimate to and become comfortable with in the new evaluation tools and processes.

**Implications for Practitioners and Users of the New Evaluation Models**

The principals in this sample were experiencing the new evaluation tool and process through the lens of their previous experience with performance evaluation. That is, they were assuming that the new evaluation rubrics would be applied to them in a static, all-inclusive manner wherein they would be at risk of an overall low performance rating if any one area of performance was deemed to be less developed than others. They, clearly, were not yet experiencing certainty about the potential for the evaluation frameworks and rubrics to be used situationally, that is, used as a “playbook” (P. Reeves & McNeill, 2011) to help them hone in on performance priorities based on student data and work on developing themselves in those priority areas as the basis for their overall performance rating.
This is an important finding in the early stages of states shifting to research-based performance evaluation rubrics. These evaluation instruments are comprehensive compilations of a large body of research on effective principal and teacher practice. They are designed as resource guides for learning, growth, and adaptation (P. Reeves & McNeill, 2011). As such, they are intended to be used situationally based on the evidence of greatest need within the school context where principals and teachers are provided performance feedback. They are also intended to provide a road map for targeted improvement rather put pressure on a teacher or principal to demonstrate high levels of performance development in all areas in all situations at once. Where the principals felt pressure to look “good” in every rating characteristic all the time, they also expressed skepticism that they could ever achieve an effective or highly effective overall rating.

This fear could be alleviated by districts establishing a process for setting performance priorities informed by their student data. Performance priorities could serve to create more concentrated focus on learning, growth, and improvement in targeted performance areas that align with priorities for improving student outcomes. As illustrated by the comments and interpretations of the principals in this study, it may be important for school leaders and policy makers to come to an informed consensus about the most meaningful way use the new evaluation models to support principals and teachers in their growth and the most responsible way to interpret performance ratings based on a combination of performance status and performance growth in targeted performance areas based on evidence of greatest need.
Recommendations for Further Research

This study clearly demonstrates that principals have the passion and desire to become the instructional leader in order to help teachers improve in their instructional practice and to help students grow both academically and emotionally. I offer these recommendations to further expand on the principal evaluation process:

1. First of all, it is recommended that this study continue to phase two, which would expand the sample size and the geographic area within Michigan. Since this study used a qualitative research design, it is recommended to use the same design. It is through the open-ended interviewing process that the voice of the participant is truly heard.

2. It is further recommended that future research studies include the evaluators of the principals as well as the systems and processes that are in place for principals. During the interviews, the principals had concerns with the fidelity of their evaluation based on the background knowledge of their evaluator using the evaluation tool. It is critical that principals have a strong working knowledge of the teacher evaluation tool and it is just as important that the principal’s evaluator develop this same working knowledge for the principal performance evaluation indicators. Principals are not afraid to do the work that is needed to grow teachers and students, but if the systems to support their learning and growth as leaders are not in place, they will have a difficult time becoming the building instructional leader.
3. Further research is needed to understand the working knowledge of the individuals who write and implement the laws requiring administrators to carry out the work at their building level.

4. Further research is needed in what impact offering a coaching model instead of an evaluative model would have on teachers, students, and the school community as a whole.

5. Further research is needed in how the climate and culture of a school could have a bigger impact on student growth than a state-adopted evaluation rubric.

6. Finally, it is further recommended that future research studies include the ever-changing and demanding responsibilities on principals and the systems that are in place to help them manage these demands.

**Chapter V Summary**

As a school principal, I have gained a deeper understanding of the readiness of principals to implement the new Michigan education evaluation requirements. The participants in this study were a very dedicated and passionate group of administrators who all believed in the importance of their work as a principal.

This study revealed that each participant wanted to be the best instructional leader to impact his or her teachers, students, and the whole school community. The participants enjoyed speaking about their school, and it was refreshing to connect personally with a fine group of educators. Participants vocalized the need for further training and coaching but it must come from a supervisor or coach who has been trained and has a working knowledge of the adopted evaluation tool. Principals are the fulcrum of all school improvement efforts; they deserve a performance review process that not only utilizes a
research-supported and well-vetted performance review instrument, but also utilizes a process where they can concentrate on a few high priority performance growth areas at one time. They need to be able to focus on a manageable number (2-3) targets for performance improvement without fear that the failure to be at a high level of performance on all elements of the comprehensive evaluation tool will produce a less than effective performance rating.

The principals in this study also shed light on the need for ongoing engagement with the evaluation tool to become better able to connect the performance indicators with their day-to-day work. This could be easily facilitated by district officials making it a priority to give principals time to work on unpacking the evaluation criteria together and creating shared understandings about how to demonstrate their performance on those criteria. This could lead to rich dialogue between principals wherein they can help each other growth. Finally, the findings from my study indicate that those who supervise and evaluate principals need to be part of the sustained dialogue that will help both principals and evaluators develop a shared understanding of performance priorities, performance evidence, and performance growth.

As a practicing principal, I am looking forward to being a continued advocate for effective performance review processes for our school leaders and intend to use the findings from this study to do just that. I will do that by sharing these findings with leaders in my own school district and with the professional associations that represent school leaders all over Michigan. Through publication of this study’s findings, I also hope to stimulate good dialogue among policy makers and practitioners as they shape policies and processes at the state and local levels for educator performance evaluation.
REFERENCES


Goldring, E., Craven, X. C., Murphy, J., Porter, A., Elliott, S., & Carson, B. (2009). The evaluation of principals: What and how do states and urban districts assess leadership? Retrieved March 3, 2014 from http://r.search.yahoo.com/_ylt=A0LEVxCcO89Ww1kAl5pXNyoA:_ylu=X3oDMTEyZHVwY3MzBGNvbG8DYmYxBHBvcwMxBHZ0aWQDQjExNTIlfMQRzZWMDc3I-/RV=2/RE=1456450588/RO=10/RU=http%3a%2f%2fwww.valed.com%2fddocuments%2f6_ESJ_Goldring%2520et%2520al_Published%2520version.pdf/RK=0/RS=mvQGJdT7L1j1lOuqbRlsGSJpfRY-


Appendix A

Preliminary Conceptual Framework
Assessing District Readiness to Implement the New Michigan Education Evaluation Requirements

New Michigan Educational Evaluation Requirements

- **History**
  - Employee Evaluation
  - Teacher Evaluation

- **Inputs**
  - Standards of Practice
  - Effective Evaluation Tools

- **Processes**
  - Effective Processes

- **Output**
  - Student Achievement Results

- **Purpose**
- **Process**
- **Evaluation Theories**

- **Readiness of Teachers and Administrators**
  - Roles and Responsibilities
  - Beliefs and Values

- **Inspection vs. Demonstration**
  - Guiding Principles

- **Concerns or Issues**
Appendix B

Adapted Conceptual Framework
Appendix C

Participant Recruitment Email
July 8, 2015

Dear Principal Colleague,

My name is Kathleen Ramirez, and I am a Principal of Holland West K-7 school. I am also completing my Ph.D. studies in Educational Leadership at Western Michigan University and would like to invite you to participate in a research project that I think will benefit all principals. The purpose of this study is to give voice to principals about their own personal experience transitioning to a new principal evaluation system that complies with Michigan's educator evaluation statutes. This research project is part of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at Western Michigan University, in which I am a student.

Specifically, you are invited to share your personal experiences transitioning from the evaluation system your district used before the educator evaluation laws took effect, to an evaluation system that complies with the new statutory requirements. We are particularly interested in principals who have experienced shifting to one of the two administrator evaluation systems recommended by the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness (MCEE). Your district has done that, so we are asking you to consider being a participant in our study.

You are receiving this invitation to participate because your district adopted one of the MCEE recommended systems. We are not conducting an evaluation of the system; rather we are interested in how you are experiencing the shift to an evaluation system that:

1. is based in research standards of professional practice;
2. utilizes a developmental rubric of behavioral descriptors of standards-based practice;
3. creates a performance rating for each performance criteria and an overall performance rating in accordance with statutory requirements for performance ratings;
4. includes evidence of student growth (at a school level) as part of the performance rating;
5. includes attendance, parent, staff, and student feedback, and progress on school improvement goals as part of the performance rating;
6. requires that performance ratings be based on observed or demonstrated evidence; and (e) provides the basis for determining employment, layoff-recall, and (in some cases) compensation decisions.

The criteria to participate in the study are as follows:

1. A minimum of three years experience as a building principal or assistant principal
2. A minimum of one year in current principal assignment (i.e. school).
3. A minimum of two years experience evaluating teachers.
4. A minimum of 1 year working under one of the MCEE newly reviewed and recommended administrator evaluation models through a district change in response to the MCEE Report (2013).

The following would disqualify a principal from participating in this study:

1. An ineffective or unsatisfactory performance appraisal as principal or assistant principal in the most recent two performance appraisals.
2. A personal or school-related condition that significantly interferes with the potential participant’s ability to conduct and participate in the performance appraisal process as defined under current law.

Participants in this study will be asked to complete a one-on-one confidential 90-120 minute interview with the researcher. The interview will take place in a comfortable and confidential setting of your choice. After the interview, you will be asked to review a transcript of the interview to add or expand upon what you said in the interview if you wish to do that. Both the audio recording and transcript of the interview will use a participant number and code name and any potentially identifying information about you or your school will be redacted. Only the researchers will know the names and schools of actual participants.

As a principal who is also being evaluated under the new Michigan requirements, I want to be sure that principals’ experiences can be heard and understood. You will be contributing to an important new area of research if you decide to participate.

Of course, I expect that you will need more information to make your decision. Please contact me at either this email address (kramirez@hollandpublicschools.org) or this phone number (616) 546-5681 and I will answer any questions and make sure you have all the information you need to decide if you will participate in this study. By contacting me, you are making no commitment unless you decide to complete the informed consent to participate after we talk.

Thank you for your consideration of this request to be part of an important study. I would appreciate a response to this email, so I know that you received it during this summer break period. You can call me directly or email a contact number, date, and time for me to call you.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Ramirez
Appendix D

Participant Consent Form
Principal Investigator: Dr. Patricia Reeves
Student Investigator: Kathleen Ramirez
Title of Study: How Principals Experience the Shift to Standards and Student Growth Based Performance Evaluations – A Phenomenology to Capture the Principal Voice

You have been invited to participate in a research project titled, "How Principals Experience the Shift to Standards and Student Growth Based Performance Evaluations – A Phenomenology to Capture the Principal Voice". This project will serve as Kathleen Ramirez's research project for the requirements of obtaining a Doctor of Philosophy. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will go over all of the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. Please read this consent form carefully and completely and please ask any questions if you need more clarification.

What are we trying to find out in this study?
The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe how principals, as key players in the work of school reform and renewal, experience being the "Tip of the Spear" in the shift from static and disjointed educator evaluation models to growth and development oriented, research informed, and evidence based models that produce high stakes performance ratings. By engaging a sample of principals who are in the process of adapting to new administrator evaluations systems and processes, we hope to help influence both local district practices and state/federal policy.

Who can participate in this study?
Participants will be principals whose district have adopted one of the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness (MCEE) recommended principal evaluation models and instruments. Additionally, participants must meet the following criteria:
1. A minimum of three years experience as a building principal or assistant principal
2. A minimum of one year in current principal assignment (i.e. school).
3. A minimum of two years experience evaluating teachers.
4. A minimum of 1 year working under one of the MCEE newly reviewed and recommended administrator evaluation models through a district change in response to the MCEE Report (2013).

Additionally the following disqualify a principal from participating in this study:
1. An ineffective or unsatisfactory performance appraisal as principal or assistant principal in the most recent two performance appraisals.
2. A personal or school-related condition that significantly interferes with the potential participant’s ability to conduct and participate in the performance appraisal process as defined under current law.
Where will this study take place?
The interviews for this study will take place at a location that is convenient for the study participant and also private, safe and comfortable for both the participant and the researcher.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?
Your total time commitment to the study will be approximately 90-120 minutes during which time the researcher (interviewer) will engage you in a conversation about your personal experience with a new administrator evaluation process. You will also have an opportunity to review the transcript of your interview and clarify or add to the transcript if you feel you have more to say. This may take you 30-60 additional minutes if you choose to do that.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?
If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in a 90-120 minute in-depth interview with the researcher. During the interview you will be asked a series of questions related to your experience with the new administrator evaluation process. The interview will be audiotaped and later transcribed. You will receive a copy of the transcript with an invitation to review and add to it if you want to clarify anything you said in the interview or add more information. This process may take anywhere from 10 minutes to an hour, depending upon whether or not you decide to add to the interview transcript.

What information is being measured during the study?
The interview will contain a few demographic questions to assist the researcher in profiling the participants of study. This information will not include your name or other identifying information that could be attributed back to you. The focus of the interview will be a conversation about your experience with performance evaluations as a principal both before and since the change in Michigan law and your district's adoption of a new interview process and instrument. You will be asked to describe your experiences and the meaning those experiences hold for you. Your descriptions will be compared with those of other study participants to identify common themes and/or ways in which principal's experiences differ from one another.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?
There are no known risks for your participation in this study; however, the topic may stimulate emotional responses for some participants. If this occurs, the researcher may pause or stop the interview if a participant appears to be in a state of emotional distress. The participant may also choose to stop the interview if he/she feels emotionally overwhelmed.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?
There are no known immediate benefits to participants for involvement in this study; however, participants may experience some emotional benefit from being afforded an opportunity to express their personal experience with performance evaluation. Moreover, participants
may experience a feeling of benefit from contributing to a study that gives principals a voice in how they are experiencing a highly controversial, complex, and high stakes trend in state statutes regarding performance evaluation. Finally, participants may contribute benefit to district leaders and policy makers through the understandings derived from this study.

**Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?**
There will be no monetary costs for participation.

**Is there any compensation for participating in this study?**
There is no compensation for participating in this study.

**Who will have access to the information collected during this study?**
The principal investigator, student investigator and transcriptionist will be the only persons to have access to the information collected as part of this study. Once transcribed, the digital recordings of the interviews will be deleted and the remaining transcription will have all identifying information redacted or replaced by a participant number or code. Data from the study will be maintained on an encrypted and password protected electronic storage device and stored in a locked file or cabinet in the researcher’s office until the conclusion of the study when the data will be transferred to and maintained by the Western Michigan University research archives for a minimum of three years, then destroyed. All information will be treated with complete confidentiality. You will be assigned a specific participant number to protect your identity and ensure confidentiality of your responses.

De-identified research findings will be published as part of the student researcher’s dissertation and may also be utilized by the researchers in future publications or presentations.

**What if you want to stop participating in this study?**
You can choose to stop participating in the study at any time for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your participation. You will experience NO consequences, penalty, or judgment if you choose to withdraw from this study.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study you can call me, the student investigator, at 616-494-2351 (office) or 616-546-5681 (cell) or via e-mail at kramirez@hollandpublicschools.org. You may also contact the primary investigator, Dr. Patricia Reeves at 269-387-3527 or via e-mail at patricia.reeves@wmich.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.
This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

Please Print Your Name

Participant’s signature                      Date
Appendix E

Participant Profile Questions
Additional Principal Participant Profile Questions:

Place an X before each response that best describes you as a participant in this study.

Your building grade level:

_____ K-5 or 6   _____ 6 or 7 - 8 or 9   _____ 9 or 10-12

Number of years' of experience as a building principal:

_____ 1-3   _____ 4-6   _____ 7-9   _____ 10 or more

Number of years' of experience in your current assignment (school):

_____ 1-3   _____ 4-6   _____ 7-9   _____ 10 or more

Number of years' of experience evaluating teachers:

_____ 1-3   _____ 4-6   _____ 7-9   _____ 10 or more

Number of years' receiving a written annual evaluation on your own performance as a principal:

_____ 1-3   _____ 4-6   _____ 7-9   _____ 10 or more

Number of years' working under one of the MCEE recommended teacher and administrator evaluation models through your district:

_____ 1   _____ 2-3
Appendix F

Interview Protocol
Interview Protocol

Project: Exploring Principal Experiences and Perspectives with Implementing the New Michigan Administrator Evaluation Requirements

Start Time of Interview: ________________________________

End Time of Interview: ________________________________

Date of Interview: ________________________________

Location: ____________________________________________

Interviewer: __________________________________________

Participant # and code: ________________________________

Thank you for consenting to participate in this study. I would like to record the interview so the study can be as accurate as possible. You may request that the recorder be turned off at any point of the interview. This interview will probably take between 90-120 minutes to complete.

Lead-in: Today, we are going to explore your experiences with your own performance review and evaluation. I would like to understand the nature of your experience both before your district changed to a new administrator evaluation model and since. I am most interested in giving principals like you an opportunity to describe what you have experienced under the new Michigan educator evaluation laws and how those experiences are impacting your life and work as a principal.

1. Please start by describing your history as a principal and how you came to your current position.

2. Next, please describe the current status of your school and any important issues you are dealing with as the principal.

3. Now that I have a sense of your background in the principalship and know a little about your school, please share with me your personal aspirations as a principal and your vision for the school.

4. Please describe your relationship and interactions with your direct supervisor prior to the passage of the new evaluation requirements.
5. How would you describe both the process and the system or instrument your district used to do your performance review before the new evaluation laws took effect.

6. Now, let's move to how your district has responded to the new statutory requirements. Please start at the beginning and describe how the district responded from that point to now.
   Probe: Please include a description of the process that the district used to make key decisions like which evaluation models to adopt and how to develop student growth ratings.
   Probe: Please describe how you were interacting with and feeling about the decision making process as it played out.

7. Once the decisions were made, please describe how you experienced the process of transitioning to a new administrator evaluation model and process.
   Probe: How did you prepare to make the change to the new administrator evaluation process?
   Probe: Please describe how you experienced training prior to transitioning to the new administrator evaluation.
   Probe: What would you say was your level of readiness to make the changes you needed to make in your own evaluation process?

8. From your perspective, what would you say are the most significant differences between your former principal evaluation instrument and process and the new one?
   Probe: How would you compare the principles, values, and beliefs embedded in the former principal evaluation model and the new one?
   Probe: Where and how do the principles, values, and beliefs embedded in the new principal evaluation model align with your own personal principles, values, and beliefs?

9. At this point in time, how would you describe your adjustment to the new principal evaluation model and process?

10. What, if any, impact have the changes in the principal evaluation model and process made on you...on your school...on your relationship with your supervisor(s)?

11. What are the most important things you want out of your own performance evaluation?

12. Is there anything else regarding your personal experience with the change in principal evaluation processes you would like to talk about?
Thank you for your time today. I appreciate your willingness to participate in our study. The information you shared is valuable and will be treated with complete confidentiality. The next step will be for the recording to be transcribed. I have hired a transcriptionist for this and she has signed a confidentiality agreement and will not know who provided me with the information. Her job will be to transcribe the recording of this interview verbatim. Once the recording of your interview transcribed I will contact you so you may review the transcription to ensure that it accurate and reflects what you said. When you receive the transcription, it will have a name and number and any information that identifies you, your school, or district will be redacted.

Your review of the transcript is completely voluntary. I you choose to review the transcript, it will help me validate the research and make it more credible and reliable. It may take me a few weeks to get the transcript of your interview back to you and it could take 30-60 minutes for you to read it and respond. Specifically, I will ask you to:

1. Read for accuracy. The transcription will verbatim, but you may want to elaborate upon, correct, or add to one or more areas of your responses.
2. Reflect on how well the transcript tells your story. Feel free to fill in any gaps.
3. Be sure that the transcript accurately captures both how you experienced things and how you make sense of your experiences. Again, feel free to fill in the gaps.

I will send you these same prompts when I send you the transcript. You will receive it as a word attachment to an email, so please provide me with a private email account, if you wish me to send it there rather than to your school account. I suggest you download the electronic word file of your interview transcript and use track changes (if you are comfortable with that process) to make your edits and revisions. If you would rather use a different process to highlight any additions you make to the transcript, just let me know at the time, so I am clear on how I will get your feedback. Do you have any questions?

Again, thank you for giving your time and voice to this study.

Kathleen Ramirez
Appendix G

Confidentiality Contract Transcriptionist
Confidentiality Agreement - Data Collection Transcriptionist

Western Michigan University
Department of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership
College of Education

Principal Investigator: Dr. Patricia Reeves
Student Investigator: Kathleen Ramirez

I understand that I have been asked to transcribe interviews as part of a doctoral research study for the doctoral student listed above. This research has been approved by the Human Subject Institution Review Board (HSIRB) of Western Michigan University and is approved doctoral research project. I have been thoroughly trained in the transcription protocol and I will not deviate from the protocol as presented.

I, Lilia Figueroa, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentation received from Kathleen Ramirez related to her doctoral study. Furthermore, I agree:

- To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio taped interviews, or in any associated documents;
- To not make copies of any recordings or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts;
- To store all study-related audiotapes and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession;
- To return all audiotapes and study-related documents to Kathleen Ramirez in a complete and timely manner.
- To transcribe the information collected verbatim to express the complete intent of the participant without adding any additional information, context, meaning or judgment.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the recordings and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber: Lilia Figueroa
Signature
Date 9-30-15

Student Investigator: Kathleen Ramirez
Signature
Date 9-30-15
Appendix H

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board
Letter of Approval
Date: September 18, 2015

To: Patricia Reeves, Principal Investigator
    Kathleen Ramirez, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 15-07-08

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “How Principals Experience the Shift to Standards and Student Growth Based Performance Evaluations – A Phenomenology to Capture the Principal Voice” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may only be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project (e.g., you must request a post approval change to enroll subjects beyond the number stated in your application under “Number of subjects you want to complete the study”). Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

Reapproval of the project is required if it extends beyond the termination date stated below.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: September 17, 2016