

ABSTRACT

MASSEY, MICHAEL JAMES. A Qualitative Study of First Year Teachers' Experiences with the Use of the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process as a Tool for Professional Growth. (Under the direction of Dr. Lance D. Fusarelli).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of first-year teachers to determine what role, if any, the North Carolina teacher evaluation process had on their development as a new teacher. For the purpose of this study, the teacher evaluation process included classroom evaluations using the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers.

Researchers posit that between 25 percent and 40 percent of new teachers leave the profession within their first five years in the classroom and explanations for these rates include: poor new teacher induction, lack of professional development for new teachers, and the perceived lack of administrative support. One factor that has not been extensively explored in the literature is how the teacher evaluation process is interwoven into pre-service experiences, professional development, and mentoring, to prepare novice teachers for their indoctrination into teaching and how the process is used in the development of instructional practice for new teachers.

This study relied on data collected through in-depth interviews in order to understand the experiences of first-year teachers as they participate in their first evaluation cycle. To supplement the interview data, a policy analysis of state legislation governing the teacher evaluation process was conducted in order to determine if the policy guidelines were being followed in school-based practice. The perceptions of first-year teachers in North Carolina and the role the teacher evaluation process had on pre-service training, planning, and implementation of professional development, beginning teacher support programs was

discussed. In addition, how feedback from the evaluation process helped participants develop their instructional practice was examined.

The results of the study support the idea that first-year teachers should receive thorough instruction that details the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards (NCPTS) and the North Carolina teacher evaluation process during both pre-service and in-service activities because teachers in the study shared feelings of being overwhelmed with the standards and not fully understanding them. Participants also noted a lack of relevant and actionable feedback also hindered their development. The teachers in this study did not feel as their practices were helped by feedback they received from their observations, but they also did not feel as though their teaching performance was hurt. The quality of feedback was something that participant's felt was lacking during both administrative and peer observations. Feedback was described as generalized, not pertinent to the lesson being presented, and not helpful in improving instructional practice.

Academic research along with results from this study suggested that first-year teachers would benefit from professional development involving the NCPTS as well as the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers so that they have a better understanding of what the performance criteria are, and they can identify areas they would like to focus on for professional growth.

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A Qualitative Study of First Year Teachers' Experiences with the Use of the North Carolina
Teacher Evaluation Process as a Tool for Professional Growth

by
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DEDICATION

At the time I am writing this dedication I have two children, a 14 year-old daughter named Nora and a 2 year old son named Trevor. Nora is an 9th grade student who earned National Junior Honor Society recognition in middle school. Trevor is developing an exuberant personality and has a contagious laugh that brightens up a room. I am extremely proud of both of them.

I dedicate this project to my children and my future grandchildren. I want them to know that nothing is unattainable as long as you are willing to work hard for it.

BIOGRAPHY

Michael James Massey was born in Boston, Massachusetts and raised in Lexington, Massachusetts. Lexington is also one of the wealthiest small cities in the country and has the #1 ranked school system in the state. Michael's father, Sammie, was an army veteran who worked as a nurse at a local Veterans Administration (VA) hospital and his mother, Ida, worked as a payroll clerk at Raytheon. The family was not wealthy like the other families in Lexington but were able to qualify for affordable housing due to Sammie's veteran status. Michael's father died on January 3, 1993 but his mother is still alive and living in Garner, North Carolina.

Michael attended the Lexington Public Schools and graduated from Lexington High School in 1996. After graduation, Michael attended the University of Massachusetts at Amherst (UMA) where he studied Sociology with a minor in Criminal Justice with the hopes of going to law school or entering law enforcement. After receiving his Associate of Arts degree from Middlesex Community College, he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Framingham State University.

Michael was a TA in a separate program that specifically worked with students with emotional and behavioral disorders who could not function inside the regular classroom. After his first year, the lead teacher retired and Michael was offered the opportunity to become the lead teacher as long as he was enrolled in a teacher education program that would lead to a license as a teacher of students with disabilities. That Fall, Michael enrolled in the Master of Education in Special Education program at Cambridge College in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The following year, he moved to Raleigh, North Carolina and was able to complete his teacher practicum at West Johnston High School in Benson, North Carolina

where he continued to serve as a behavior support teacher (BST) as well as assistant football. In 2006, Michael earned his M.Ed in Special Education.

The following year, Michael stopped working at West Johnston High School and began working in the same capacity as BST at Wake Forest High School (formerly known as Wake Forest-Rolesville High School) in Wake Forest, North Carolina when he decided to attend North Carolina State University (NC State) and start working toward earning his Master of School Administration (M.S.A.). As he worked toward his M.S.A., he had the privilege of serving as the special programs department chair and serve as an administrative intern. In 2009, Michael earned his M.S.A. from NC State. From 2010-2012, Michael served as an assistant principal at Wake Forest Middle School (formerly known as Wake Forest-Rolesville Middle School) before deciding to go back into the classroom and serve as the head football coach at a local 4A high school in Raleigh, North Carolina. At the time this manuscript was written, he was serving as an assistant principal at River Bend Middle School in Raleigh, North Carolina.

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Second, I want to thank Dr. Lance Fusarelli for not only teaching me in multiple courses at NC State but for also serving as my mentor and committee chair through the entire dissertation writing process. Without his support and reassurances, I do not know how I would have been able to complete this study.

Third, I want to thank my dissertation committee: Dr. Alyssa Rockenback, Dr. Tamara Young, and Dr. Gregory Hicks. Dr. Rockenbach provided insightful comments on the manuscript as well as provided her support with making sure the chapters always connected to the study's purpose and that the interview questions were succinct. Dr. Young provided guidance that helped strengthen the study but was also instrumental in helping ensure that the research questions aligned with my vision of what I wanted the study to explore. Dr. Hicks provided invaluable practitioner insight and helped me think about how to make the study relevant to other practitioners. I would recommend this committee to anyone working on their doctoral dissertation.

Next, I want to thank my mother for always believing in me and making me believe that I can accomplish anything I set my mind to. My grandmother, who passed away on September 1, 2018, also served as source of strength for me. Born in 1917, she had the inability to hear and speak. When I think of her, an African-American woman, moving from

pre-civil rights all the way through today without the ability to communicate, it reminds me that inner-strength and perseverance can help you accomplish anything.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge my children, Nora and Trevor. Together they have helped me prioritize my life and have served as my motivation to be the best father and best mentor for them.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Mentoring and developing beginning teachers is a critical role played by school administrators because teacher quality has been linked to overall student achievement (Harrison, 2013; Looney, 2011). According to Scheefer (2008), “Anyone who prepares, hires, or mentors teachers would agree that America’s children need highly effective teachers” (p. 145). Using teacher evaluations, mentoring support programs, and professional development, beginning teachers are transitioned from student-teaching practicums into becoming instructional leaders. Preservice experiences of beginning teachers continue to play an important role in the indoctrination of new teachers into the classroom (Kincaid & Keiser, 2014).

If the goal of teacher evaluation is to improve instructional practices (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Schmoker, 2012; Warring, 2015) in an effort to maximize student outcomes (Aguilar & Richerme, 2014), then it is important to engage in continual efforts to explore how teacher performance is being assessed and examine various strategies to improve our evaluation systems so that we are enhancing instructional practices and improving how students are being taught in the classroom. Fuller (2016) studied the teacher evaluation process in North Carolina and found that teachers enjoy the self-reflection aspect of the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers but found the evaluation instrument itself to be too firm with regards to actual classroom instruction.

Teacher Attrition

There is a link between the loss of new teachers and the quality of education provided to students; therefore, it is important to acknowledge the issue of early career teacher

attrition. Luekens, Lytter, and Fox (2004) report that 30 percent of teachers leave the teaching profession before the end of their third year in the classroom (as cited by Fry, 2010). Berry, Darling-Hammond, Hirsch, Robinson, and Wise (2006) report that 30 percent of all new teachers leave the teaching profession within five years; additional researchers find that 25 percent to 40 percent of new teachers resign or burn out within three to five years of teaching (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 1996, 2003; Ewing & Smith, 2003; Ferguson & Johnson, 2010; Network for Public Education; 2016; Swabey, Castelton, & Penney, 2010). Quality educators are developed through years of experience working with different students at different ability levels (Stronge, 2007) and the loss of seasoned teachers has an impact on student achievement and the overall school community (Buchanon, Prescott, Schuck, Aubusson, Burke, & Louviere, 2013).

In three studies that took place in North Carolina, researchers found that the time it takes for each evaluation was cumbersome. Conley (2015), Fuller (2016), and Wydo (2016) reported participants in their studies cited time and the length of the evaluation process as a burden. The weight of this evaluation process, along with other responsibilities that go along with teaching, results in feelings of helplessness which may lead to a teacher decision to leave the teaching profession altogether (Schaefer, Downey, & Clandinin, 2014). In addition, “high teacher turnover can have negative consequences. It can hurt student achievement by exposing more students to inexperienced teachers” (Darling-Hammond, 2000 as cited by Glazerman, Isenberg, Dolfen, Bleeker, Johnson, Grider, & Jacobus, 2010, p. vi). There are varying statistics that suggest the rate of teachers leaving the profession within the first five years range between five percent and fifty percent and is high for new teachers (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006, Harfitt, 2013; Inman & Marlow, 2004: as cited by DeAngelis &

Presley, 2011; Schaefer, Downey, & Clandinin, 2014). According to DeAngelis and Presley (2011):

For state administrators and policy makers, the loss of high percentages of beginning teachers from the profession raises a number of concerns related to the relative attractiveness and competitiveness of teaching as a profession, the efficiency of the production pipeline from teacher preparation programs into schools, and the adequacy of teacher supply for meeting schools' needs. (p. 607)

The consistent loss of teachers early in their careers significantly impacts schools on various levels including the cost of replacing the workforce and reduced student achievement (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Harrison, 2013). According to Ferguson and Johnson (2010), “states expended an estimated \$12,000 for each teacher who leaves the profession...add expenditures for induction, mentoring, and professional development, and the district has a substantial investment in each new teacher it hires” (p. 302).

While there are valid explanations for why this pattern of early teacher attrition emerges (Buchanan et al., 2013; Ferguson & Johnson, 2010; Harfitt, 2015; Inman & Marlowe, 2013; Sass, Flores, Claeys, & Perez, 2012; Schaefer, Downey, & Clandinin, 2014), one area to be explored is how beginning teachers (BT) who are in their first year of teaching are being evaluated in the classroom and how the evaluation process is included in mentoring and professional development. While this study will not directly examine the issue of beginning teacher attrition, it is critical topic related to how we induct novice teachers into the classroom. This study explored the perceptions of first-year teachers to determine how the North Carolina teacher evaluation process was used to develop new teachers. There was an exploration of how teachers were prepared for teaching appraisal, how the process was

taught in their pre-service teacher education programs, professional development opportunities as a beginning teacher, and in the beginning teacher support and mentoring program.

The best way to gain insight into this phenomenon was to engage first-year teachers to capture their point of view. The design of this qualitative study relied on semi-structured interviews to explore how the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards (NCPTS) and the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers were used to mentor, induct, and transition first-year teachers. A policy analysis of GS 115C-333, North Carolina legislation that defines the teacher evaluation process, was analyzed to examine how the policy is being implemented at the school level.

Teacher Induction

Research suggests student achievement is linked to effective teachers (Accomplished California Teachers, 2015, Koedel, Mihaly, & Rockoff, 2015, Stronge, Ward, Tucker, & Hindman, 2008, Wong, 2004). During the teacher selection process, teachers are hired based on previous experience, qualifications, and whether they can provide their students with high quality instruction (Scheeler, 2007). The right person for the job may be pre-service teacher who has met all state requirements for certification but may not have experience as a classroom teacher. When the decision is made to hire a first-year teacher, there is an implicit commitment by the school to mentor the teacher and provide them with the tools necessary to provide the students in their classroom with a positive educational experience while also providing opportunities for the novice teacher to grow professionally. Wong (2004) clarifies the terms induction and mentoring arguing that the two are not synonymous:

Induction is a process—a comprehensive coherent, and sustained professional development process—that is organized by a school district to train, support, and retain new teachers and seamlessly progresses them into a lifelong learning program.

Mentoring is an action. It is what mentors do. A mentor is a single person, whose basic function is to help a new teacher. Typically, the help is for survival, not for sustained professional learning that leads to becoming an effective teacher... a mentor is a component of the induction process. (p. 42)

Understanding the role mentors play in the transition of pre-service teachers was critically important to examining the topic of the study. The purpose of this research was to explore the perceptions of first-year teachers to determine what role, if any, the North Carolina teacher evaluation process had on their development as a new teacher.

In North Carolina, first-year and veteran teachers are evaluated using the same evaluation tool with the expectation that they both continuously meet the same performance standards as evidenced by the use of artifacts that support their instruction and performance ratings on the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers. Specifically, the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process guide suggests that the role of the teacher in the process is to:

1. Know and understand the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards.
2. Understand the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process.
3. Prepare for and fully participate in each component of the evaluation process.
4. Gather data, artifacts, and evidence to support performance in relation to standards and progress in attaining goals.

5. Develop and implement strategies to improve personal performance/attain goals in areas individually or collaboratively identified. (North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process, 2015, p. 7)

While the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Guide prescribes that all teachers should know the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards, it is vital to know if teachers are being taught the standards and if the policy is reflected in school-based practice. Conley (2015) studied a sample of North Carolina secondary and elementary teachers of varying experiences to determine their understanding of the. The study found:

The majority of the participants had negative perceptions about the fairness of the teacher evaluation process...very few participants knew the standards on their own and nobody could identify more than one standard. Once participants were reminded of each standard, participants had limited perceptions of what the standards entailed or included. The majority of participants had been rated as proficient and/or accomplished on each standard. (p. 142)

The evaluation activities should a vehicle to acclimate new teachers to teaching and provide meaningful data to inform instruction by helping teachers understand the standards. The sample in the Conley (2015) study suggest this may not be happening since the mastery of the standards were not demonstrated by the North Carolina teachers who participated in their study.

The current study examined how the teacher appraisal process was used in pre-service, peer mentoring, and professional development programs to induct new teachers into education. Having used in-depth, semi-structured, interviews, we gained an understanding of the perceptions of first-year teachers with regards to the evaluation instrument. We were able

to determine whether the evaluation process adequately used professional development and peer mentoring to help beginning teachers make informed decisions regarding instructional practice and identify appropriate goals for professional growth.

Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers

The Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers is designed to ensure that all teachers are meeting the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards (NCPTS). The rubric was developed in collaboration with McRel International and adopted by the North Carolina State Board of Education in 2008. According to the North Carolina State Board of Education and the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission,

The intended purpose of the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process is to assess the teacher's performance in relation to the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards and to design a plan for professional growth. The principal or a designee (hereinafter "principal") will conduct the evaluation process in which the teacher will actively participate through the use of self-assessment, reflection, presentation of artifacts, and classroom demonstration(s). (North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process, 2015, p. 1)

The NCPTS were designed in collaboration with 16 educators across the state of North Carolina "on the basis of teacher preparation, teacher evaluation, and professional development" (North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards, 2013, p. 1).

One of the stated purposes of the evaluation is to develop coaching and mentoring programs for teachers (North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process, 2015). Beginning teachers are asked to: (1) have a deep understanding of the NCPTS, (2) understand the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process, (3) gather data, artifacts, and evidence to support

educator performance aligned with the NCPTS, and (4) develop and implement strategies to improve performance and attain professional goals with the support of a peer coaching/mentoring program. The focus of a first-year teacher should be on professional growth as all new teachers are developing their skills to become effective classroom leaders and less time should be spent trying to satisfy standards that some veteran teachers not only have difficulty demonstrating but also understanding (Conley, 2015).

The six standards in the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process (2015) which teachers are evaluated on are:

Standard I – teachers demonstrate leadership

Standard II-teachers establish a respectful environment for a diverse population of students

Standard III-teachers know the content they teach

Standard IV-teachers facilitate learning for their students

Standard V-teachers reflect on their practice

Standard VI-teachers contribute to the academic success of students.

With the exception of the sixth standard, each includes specific elements on which teachers will be assessed during the performance evaluation. Each element are assigned the following rating based on what the evaluator observes during instruction: (1) developing, (2) proficient, (3) accomplished, (4) distinguished, or (5) not demonstrated. According to the North Carolina Teaching Evaluation Process Manual developed by McRel (2015), the “developing” rating means that “teacher demonstrated adequate growth toward achieving standard(s) during the period of performance, but did not demonstrate competence on standard(s) of performance (p. 5). The “proficient” rating means that the “teacher

demonstrated basic competence on standard(s) of performance” (p. 6). The “accomplished” rating suggests that the “teacher exceeded basic competence on standard(s) of performance most of the time” (p. 6). The “distinguished” rating means that the “teacher consistently and significantly exceeded basic competence on standard(s) of performance” (p. 6). When defining the “not demonstrated” rating, the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process states that the “teacher did not demonstrate competence on or adequate growth toward achieving standard(s) of performance” (p. 6). The sixth standard is not directly related to performance in the classroom but relies more on student achievement data from state assessments (value-added measures). In sum, “A teacher’s rating on the sixth standard is determined by a student growth value as calculated by the statewide growth model for educator effectiveness” (p. 6). Value-added measures are discussed in further detail in chapter two.

According to the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process, “effective 2013-2014, beginning teachers must be rated ‘Proficient’ on all five North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards on the most recent Teacher Summary Rating Form in order to be eligible for the Standard Professional 2 License” (p. 19) which means that in order for a teacher to continue working as a teacher they must demonstrate, in each of the first three years in service as an educator, that he/she has shown the evaluator a basic competence of all of the standards.

While the North Carolina State Board of Education and the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission claim that mentoring and peer coaching are purposes of the evaluation process, there are no standards within the evaluation instrument that address the quality or amount of mentoring that beginning teachers are receiving. This is a critically important omission when working to shift from the role of student-teacher to

classroom leader. If the literature suggests that mentoring and peer observation are important to evolving educational practice in the classroom (Jones, 2015), then guidance should be provided within the tool to define what peer coaching and mentoring look like in the school setting. Without that specific guidance, school systems are free to define their own processes of how to implement peer programs without being accountable for how effective they are for supporting beginning teachers. Toch (2008) presents the point of view that teacher working conditions as being important in retaining quality teachers, but effective evaluation systems coupled with instructional coaching, make working conditions more professional for all teachers.

Professional Development Plan (PDP)

According to the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process (2015) and the North Carolina State Board of Education (2010), all teachers are required to develop a PDP, including an individual growth plan, that addresses areas where the teacher would like to improve their instructional practice and teaching performance. The plans are developed with an evaluator and/or mentor that requires a mentor and evaluator's signature at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the evaluation cycle. According to Dr. Kimberly Simmons, the North Carolina Educator Evaluation Coordinator for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), the PDP is a separate component of the teacher evaluation process and serves as an artifact for the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina teachers. Dr. Simmons communicates that "the data collected using the rubric (for the self-assessment, observations and evaluation) is used to determine the individual goals of the PDP. An analogy: The Rubric determines where you want to go, the PDP is the roadmap you used to get there" (K. Simmons, personal communication, May 15, 2017). The PDP is

developed based off previous evaluations or a teacher's self-reflection and self-assessment of their own areas of concern. It is a separate document that is not incorporated in the observation rubric. First-year teachers do not have previous evaluations so they use their self-assessment to develop their PDP. "The self-assessment is used primarily for the PDP for 1st year teachers. We coach principals to have in-depth conversations with new teachers to determine their areas of focus which also includes continuous mentor support and input" (K. Simmons, personal communication, May 15, 2017).

Along with the findings of this study, research is available to offer insight into whether this theory is put into practice. Holt (2012) conducted a study of the perceptions of second year public high school teachers in North Carolina. In her study, she shared her participants' perspectives on their building principal's role in the PDP development process:

Sixty-four (N=14) percent of teachers reported that administrators did not assist them in the development of their professional development plan (PDP), 27% (N=6) did not revisit the plan at the middle of the year, and 27% (N=6) did not use those goals to guide their observations. However, 82% (N=18) of responding teachers reported that administrators used PDP goals to guide their final evaluation. (pp. 73-74)

Results from the Holt (2012) study suggest that administrative support was not provided for the development of their PDP's. The majority of participants did revisit their plans mid-year and the PDP goals were used at the end of the evaluation cycle to complete a summary performance rating form (i.e. a summative evaluation).

Curtis & Wiener (2012) argue that in order to teachers to benefit from the teacher appraisal process, they have to demonstrate a strong understanding of the teaching standards that are used to evaluate their instruction and "they have created growth and development

plans that identify specific standards and sub-standards that they are focusing on” (p. 53) and that those plans are based on the feedback they receive during their post-conference meeting.

Goe, Biggers, & Croft (2012) agree and share the following insight:

The process of evaluation provides the evidence of areas where teachers need help, but that process alone does not change teaching practice. Rather, using the evidence for professional growth opportunities and coaching sessions is where it will have an impact on instruction and student outcomes. Observation alone without the opportunity for feedback and discussion may serve accountability purposes but will have little or no impact on teaching and learning. (p. 15)

Statement of the Problem

Warring (2015) posits “the effects of the teacher evaluation systems must be evaluated in relation to its intended impacts on teaching and learning” (p. 703). Federal, state, and local policymakers and stakeholders should participate in a constant appraisal of how teachers are being evaluated in the classroom because one goal of the teacher appraisal process should be to improve the teaching practices of those being evaluated. Curtis & Wiener (2012) write “the real tragedy of current evaluations is that the lack of meaningful support for improvement forces school systems to tolerate mediocrity instead of striving for excellence” (p. 3). It is the responsibility of classroom observers to provide actionable feedback that teachers can use to cultivate their skills as an instructional facilitator. In North Carolina, teachers are evaluated using the NCPTS that were adopted by the state board of education and the induction of new teachers should be aimed at helping new teachers learn how to meet those standards:

Induction for beginning teachers has become a major topic in education policy and reform. The theory behind such programs holds that teaching is complex work, that pre-employment teacher preparation is rarely sufficient to provide all the knowledge and skill necessary to successful teaching, and that a significant portion of this knowledge can be acquired only on the job. This view holds that schools must provide an environment where novices can learn how to teach, survive, and succeed as teachers. (Ingersoll, 2012, p. 47)

One group of researchers found that “a number of studies that specifically focuses on teacher induction have identified that many early career teachers, regardless of route to certification, report an absence of effective induction and mentoring programs or complete absence of any induction or mentoring program” (Chesley, Wood, & Zepeda, 1997; Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Salyer, 2003 as cited by Elliot, Issacs & Chugani, 2010, p. 133). Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, and Rothstein (2012) report “the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) defined accomplished teaching to guide assessments for veteran teachers” (p. 13) but makes no specific mention about defining what accomplished teaching looks like for first-year and beginning teachers.

Elliot (2015) writes “for teachers, standards attempt to define quality teaching. Ranging from generic to subject-specific attributes, they outline what a teacher should know and be able to do” (p. 103). If the NCPTS were designed to help teachers by providing guidance on how they plan for and implement instruction, then it is important to see how the standards are utilized in the development of new teachers. Historically, this has not been the purpose of teacher evaluation. Teachers were never informed that they would benefit from continuous improvement of instructional practice and evaluators were not expected to

support teacher growth and development using the teacher evaluation process (Curtis & Wiener, 2012). Shakman, Zweig, Bocala, Lacireno-Paquet, & Bailey (2016) presented findings in their brief that was written about the teacher evaluation process and professional learning in a large school district. Their findings suggested that “evaluators tended not to prescribe professional development activities. Rather, they favored actions teachers could take on their own, either in the classroom or beyond it, that did not require them to work with other professionals, such as coaches, instructors, or evaluators” (p. 7). Professional development opportunities were not a priority for providing support in their sample school district.

Curtis & Wiener (2012) created a guide for developing teacher evaluation systems that support the growth and development of teachers. In their work, they write:

Deciding if every teacher will be evaluated in the exact same way or if treatment will be differentiated based on prior performance and/or experience level is an important decision each school system needs to make. Some argue that, for reasons of fairness and equity, every teacher should be treated the same. Others define equity as giving each teacher what he or she needs. (p. 27)

In their study of beginning teachers, Danielson and McGreal (2000) discovered the following:

Teaching, alone among the professions, make the same demands on novices, as on experienced practitioners. The moment first-year teachers enter their first classrooms, they are held to the same standard-and subjected to the same procedures-as their more experienced colleagues. Most other professions build in a period of apprenticeship. No one would expect a prospective surgeon, straight from medical school, to take

charge of a complex operation...yet the job of teacher for a novice is identical to that of a seasoned veteran (sometimes harder); and, the procedures used to value them are identical. (p. 5)

Shakman, Zweig, Bocala, Lacireno-Paquet & Bailey (2016) and Kraft & Gilmour (2016) found that a major limitation in current educator evaluation systems is that most do not differentiate among teacher abilities and that “they fail to provide teachers with recommendations for professional development or improvement” (p. A-4).

In a study of teacher perceptions of the teacher evaluation process in North Carolina, Conley (2015) found that a beginning teacher felt as though the evaluation tool was unfair because teachers are rated on instances of leadership and as a new teacher the participant felt as though she did not have the opportunity to display leadership in school. Therefore, she felt helpless with regards to how she would be rated by her evaluator.

North Carolina does not differentiate teaching evaluations between years of experience (North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process, 2015) and, according to several researchers, they are not alone: “most teacher evaluations neither differentiate among teachers and the quality of their instruction nor emphasize teachers’ influence on student achievement (Daley & Kim 2010; Measures of Effective Teaching Project, 2010; Weisberg et al., 2009 as cited by Shakman, Riordan, Sanchez, Cook, Fournier, & Brett, 2012, p. 1). Beginning teachers, including those who are in their first year of teaching, are evaluated using the same performance standards as veteran teachers and are expected to produce artifacts supporting the quality of their instruction. While teacher evaluation is critical in improving instructional practices both in and out of the classroom, “support for teacher

learning and evaluation must be part of an integrated whole that enables effectiveness during every stage of a teacher's career" (Darling-Hammond, 2012, p. 9).

In a study of North Carolina teachers and their perceptions of the teacher evaluation process, Case (2016) found that 40 percent of teachers in the study who had less than ten years of classroom experience felt that the evaluation process did not influence their instructional practice. Furthermore, Case found that 77 percent of the teachers involved in the study had a negative view of the evaluation process; many of the participants believed that evaluator bias influenced the outcome of the evaluation. In this same study, Case found that 50 percent of her participants had a negative tone when discussing the impact that the evaluation process has on teacher growth and felt like their professional growth was disconnected from the North Carolina teacher evaluation process.

First-year teachers were chosen to be the basis of this study because, theoretically, they can provide insight into how the North Carolina teacher evaluation process is utilized to guide professional growth decisions along with enhancing their instructional practices. Without having prior teaching experience nor having significant experience with the NCPTS and teacher evaluation process, these teachers were able to offer rich descriptions of their experiences with the evaluation system and how the process was used in their pre-service program, their beginning teacher mentor program, and selection of professional development opportunities. In talking with a teacher education program coordinator at a college in Raleigh, North Carolina, it was discovered that prospective teachers in their program undergo experiences that attempt to simulate the teacher evaluation process but do not replicate it. Students are asked to provide artifacts to demonstrate proficiency on certain tasks (W.

Parker, personal communication, April 27, 2017) but students in that program have not been trained specifically on how to prepare for the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers.

According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's (NCDPI) Beginning Teacher Support Program Standards (see Appendix I), mentors are expected to be provided protected time to meet with beginning teachers regarding the NCPTS. In addition, professional development is to be provided in the areas of NCPTS and the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation System. The research in this study helped determine if the Beginning Teacher Support Program Standards are being implemented and to examine the information provided by first-year teachers to determine their perception of whether the standards helped to develop them as new teachers.

The research conducted during this study adds to the existing research by examining how teachers who were new to the profession were being prepared for the North Carolina teacher evaluation process in their preservice teacher education program, with their peer mentor and professional development opportunities. The first years of a new teacher should focus on encouraging teacher progress while minimizing monitoring (Peterson, 2000). Current practices in beginning teacher evaluation results in professionals who are nonidealistic, timid, conservative, alienated, and (ultimately) of lower quality" (p. 270; See also Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2012) because current evaluation systems rely on infrequent observations that offer feedback that may not be helpful with helping teachers improve their current practices.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the perceptions of first-year teachers to determine what role, if any, the North Carolina teacher evaluation process

had on their development as a new teacher. For the purpose of this study, the teacher evaluation process was defined as classroom evaluations using the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers (see Appendix G), and how first-year teachers were prepared to be evaluated in the mentoring they took part in, the professional development goals they created, and pre-service training they received. The results of this study support the need for teacher evaluation reform for beginning teachers to achieve the goals of the teacher evaluation process in North Carolina.

The research described the experiences with the teacher evaluation process of first-year teachers North Carolina. The research answers the following questions:

1. How have first-year teachers' experiences in their teacher education programs prepared them for the different standards of the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers?
2. How is the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers incorporated into the mentor program to support beginning teachers?
3. Are professional development opportunities for first-year teachers aligned with the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers?
4. How do first-year teachers describe their experiences being evaluated using the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers?
5. How do first-year teachers utilize the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers to improve their instructional practices?

Definition of Terms

For clarification, the following are definitions of terms employed in this study using the North Carolina School Board Policy (GS-115C-333) and information found in the

Teacher Evaluation Process manual. The following definitions are found both in the policy and in the process manual:

1. Artifact – A product resulting from a teacher’s work. Artifacts are natural by-products of a teacher’s work and are not created for the purpose of satisfying evaluation requirements.

Artifacts can be presented by the teacher to the evaluator to provide evidence of descriptors in the rubric.

2. Beginning Teachers – Teachers who are in the first three years of teaching and who hold a Standard Professional I License.

3. Comprehensive Evaluation Cycle—is required for new teachers and includes a pre-observation conference which must precede the first of 3 formal observations, 1 peer observation, and Summative Evaluation.

4. Experienced Teachers—Teachers (including those with career status) who have been employed for three or more years.

5. Evaluation-Annual assessment of a teacher’s performance based on standards, captured on the completed Summary Rating Form.

6. Evaluator – The person responsible for overseeing and completing the teacher evaluation process. This is usually the school principal, but it may be someone who is designated by the principal to assume these responsibilities.

7. Evidence – Documents and events that demonstrate or confirm the work of the person being evaluated and support the rating on a given element.

8. New Teacher—A teacher who has not been employed for at least three consecutive years.

9. Observation—When an evaluator checks descriptors of the rubric while watching a lesson.

i. Formal Observation—A formal observation shall last 45 minutes or an entire class period.

ii. Informal Observation—An informal observation should last at least 20 minutes each. A post- conference is not required but can be requested by the teacher.

10. Orientation – Second component of the Teacher Evaluation Process to provide teachers with required documents. While a formal meeting is not required, supervisors may choose to hold this orientation as a group meeting at the beginning of the school year and/or individually as staff is added throughout the year.

11. Peer – A teacher who has been trained on the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process.

12. Performance Rating Scale – (There are different rating scales for standards 1-5 and standard 6.) The ratings for standards 1-6 will determine a teacher’s overall status for a school year. (See the definition of “status” below.) Performance Rating Scale for Standards 1-5: A teacher’s overall ratings for standards 1-5 are determined at the end of the year during the Summary Evaluation Conference. The overall ratings for standards 1-5 are as follows: developing, proficient, accomplished and distinguished.

13. Pre-Observation Conference – The third component of the Teacher Evaluation Process. The goal of the conference is to prepare the principal for the first observation by discussing the teacher’s self-assessment, professional growth plan and a written description of the lesson to be observed.

14. Professional Development Plan – Component eight of the Teacher Evaluation Process. One of three professional growth plans is required for all teachers: individual, monitored, or directed.
15. Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers – A composite matrix of the standards, elements, and descriptors of the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards:
- a. Performance Standard – The distinct aspect of teaching or realm of activities that form the basis for the evaluation of a teacher.
 - b. Performance Elements – The sub-categories of performance embedded within the performance standard.
 - c. Performance Descriptors – The specific performance responsibilities embedded within the components of a performance element.
16. School Executives – Principals and assistant principals licensed to work in North Carolina.
17. Self-assessment – Personal reflection about one’s professional practice to identify strengths and areas for improvement conducted without input from others. Purposes of the self-assessment are to clarify performance expectations, guide discussions about goal-setting and professional development and program needs, and provide input to the final ratings.
18. Standard Evaluation Cycle -- is an option for experienced teachers and includes a formal observation with a preconference, 2 formal or informal observations, and a Summative Evaluation.

19. Status – An overall status for a teacher is determined once the teacher has a three-year rolling average of student growth values to populate Standard 6. There are three categories for status:

- i. In Need of Improvement: A teacher who fails to receive a rating of at least “proficient” on each of the Teacher Evaluation Standards 1-5 or receives a rating of “does not meet expected growth on Standard 6 of the Teacher Evaluation Instrument.
- ii. Effective: A teacher who receives a rating of at least “proficient” on each of the Teacher Evaluation Standards 1-5 and receives a rating of at least “meets expected growth” on Standard 6 of the Teacher Evaluation Instrument.
- iii. Highly Effective: A teacher who receives a rating of at least “accomplished” on each of the Teacher Evaluation Standards 1-5 and receives a rating of “exceeds expected growth” on Standard 6 of the Teacher Evaluation Instrument.

20. Teacher – A person who holds a valid North Carolina teaching certificate and is employed to instruct, direct or supervise the instructional program.

21. Training – State-approved and sponsored training on the teacher rubric and evaluation process required of all teachers and individuals responsible for their evaluation.

Significance of the Study

Understanding the experiences of first-year teachers as they are being evaluated using the NCPTS and the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers was essential in helping school leaders make informed decisions about how to effectively support teacher improvement using the teacher evaluation process. This study examined the issue from the perspective of teachers throughout their first-year in the classroom to determine how the

teacher evaluation process was used in developing and mentoring first-year teachers. The study explored how the NCPTS and the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers were used in planning professional development and how teachers were being trained to meet the performance standards in their pre-service teacher education programs.

Overview of the Approach

Merriam (2009) notes that when using a qualitative approach to research, “the researcher is interested in understanding the meaning a phenomenon has for those involved” (p. 22) and the researcher interprets the data and the participant who provides the information (Creswell, 2007; Tracy, 2013). This qualitative approach allows the researcher to view the experience through the eyes of the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

After obtaining permission to collect data from the school system, I contacted each building principal to ask for them to send me the names and contact information of all first-year teachers in their building. After names were received from the building principal, an introductory email was sent to each prospective participant explaining the study and what their role in the study would be. Candidates were asked to answer questions designed to select the sample that would provide the best opportunity to meet the purpose of the study. After preliminary information was reviewed from the respondents, I used purposeful sampling to select participants for the study. The use purposeful sampling allowed for the participants selected to include the widest ranges of variation which will allow for the greatest range of application of the data by the target audience of the research (Merriam, 2007).

Data collection involved the use of semi-structured interviews with first-year teachers and an analysis of the North Carolina School Board Policy referred to as the Teacher

Performance Appraisal Process (GS-115C-333). Interviews are used in qualitative research uncover how participants make sense of their experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Gray, 2004; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2009; Richards, 2009). Semi-structured interviews allowed for the flexibility to follow up with participant responses to ask probing questions to gain clarity of participant responses and enhance the ability to receive more detailed information from the participants. Analyzing documents related to the topic of research is considered to be as reliable as observations and interviewing (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009) as a data collection tool in qualitative research. In order to determine if, based on the experiences of the participants in the study, the state policy is being applied to teachers in the classroom, the document analysis was completed.

Interviews in the study were guided by a list of open-ended questions that allowed the researcher to ask additional questions and seek clarification when needed (Merriam, 2009). The use of open-ended questions provided detailed responses from the participant which helped to enhance the meaning of the data collected. Each interview was recorded and transcribed for analysis and determination of patterns in the data. Transcriptions were coded and categorized (Bogdan & Biklen 2007; Creswell, 2007). Results from the document analysis were used to determine if actions in the policy are being used at the school level by evaluators by comparing the participant responses with procedural information described in the school board policy.

Using interview transcriptions, the researcher used open coding (Creswell, 2007; Esterberg, 2002; Gray, 2004) to code the data into different categories which led to selective coding which allowed for the results of each category to be interrelated allowing for interpretative analysis of the information provided by the participants (Charmaz, 2011;

Creswell, 2007). “In open coding, you don’t use someone else’s preestablished codes, or even your own. Rather, your goal is to see what is going on in your data. If you develop codes in advance, you will impose your own sense of what ought to be there in the data and may very well miss what is there” (Esterberg, 2002, p. 158). Open coding helped avoid researcher bias because the researcher was looking at the data from a neutral perspective in the early stages of analysis. According to Richards (2009), for qualitative researchers coding is about retaining data. “The goal is to learn from the data, to keep revisiting data extracts until you see and understand patterns and explanations” (p. 94).

Chapter Summary

There is research to suggest the positive influence that induction (the introduction of first-year teachers into the field of education) and mentoring can have on beginning teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Rumley, 2010). Absent from the research is the influence that the evaluation process has on the professional development and mentoring of first-year teachers. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship exists between the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers, professional development, and mentoring of first-year teachers in North Carolina.

Based on the research presented in this chapter, between 30 percent and 50 percent of new teachers leave education by the end of their fifth year. Imagine what the healthcare system would look like in the United States if half of all new doctors left the field of medicine within five years of starting to practice medicine. What would the quality of healthcare be if there was a constant turnover in doctors? The same result is happening in education (Morgan, 1999). Darling-Hammond (2003) posits “given the strong evidence that

teacher evidence increases sharply in the first few years of teaching this kind of churning in the beginning teaching force reduces productivity in education overall” (p. 8).

Chapter One provided evidence that suggests the way we evaluate beginning teachers influences whether they decide to remain in education. There was also an introduction of the NCPTS and the North Carolina teacher evaluation process. The Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers was examined to provide detailed information regarding the evaluation system. Key terms were identified and defined to provide clarification to the reader and the research questions were introduced.

The North Carolina Rubric for Evaluating Teachers asks teachers to demonstrate competency in many areas of instruction and teacher leadership. This study sought to explore how teacher education programs and school systems use the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers to plan professional development and provide peer mentoring programs for new teachers. The chapter also provided an overview of the research design and methodology employed in the study.

Chapter two includes a review of current literature that allowed for an exploration of: federal legislation that influenced the teacher evaluation process. Further, a review of information that helped to define what mentoring is and why it is important for supporting beginning teachers is also discussed. The importance of providing relevant professional development for novice teachers is examined as well.

Methodology will be discussed in-depth in chapter three and will include why the current research design was employed as well as explain the site and sample selection process used for data collection.

The perceptions of the participants of the study will be detailed in chapter four and will be followed by a discussion in chapter five of finding and recommendations for practice and future research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

“The Race to the Top initiative and recent changes to federal accountability requirements under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) have led many states to reevaluate what are, in some cases, long-standing teacher evaluation policies” (Ford, Van Sickle, Clark, Fazio-Brunson & Schween, 2017, p. 203). Due to changes in federal legislation, research that focuses on teacher evaluation practices generally revolves around the need for reform of the evaluation process. Research in this literature review assumes the position that teacher evaluation processes are in need of repurposing and redesigning in order to be effective in supporting and developing teachers. In this chapter, there is a discussion regarding how pre-service teacher education programs prepare student-teachers for becoming instructional leaders and train them for the evaluation process. Research has revealed that the evaluation of beginning teachers should include peer-to-peer mentoring (beginning teacher paired with an established veteran teacher) and purposeful professional development. Based on these recommendations, the literature review includes research related to mentoring and professional development.

The chapter begins with a discussion of federal legislation and how laws have shaped the teacher evaluation process. In addition, review of the existing literature pertaining to teacher evaluation, feedback, professional development, and mentoring is presented. By the end of this chapter, the reader will have been introduced to the anticipated outcomes of the teacher evaluation process, pre-service teacher education programs, mentoring, and professional development for new teacher support and development. Mentoring was

discussed in two different sections within the chapter. First, mentoring will be discussed as it pertains to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and then again as a strategy for developing new teachers.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that would “guarantee that the nation’s disadvantaged children would be provided equal and optimal learning opportunities” (Pae, Freeman, & Wash, 2014, p. 75) in an effort to strengthen the educational system in the United States and provide support for children who come from low-income households. ESEA was reauthorized in 2001 by No Child Left Behind (NCLB). NCLB was federal legislation signed by President George Bush that increased accountability for schools which included the requirement that every classroom be staffed by highly qualified teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2003). NCLB stipulated that school systems must engage in activities that: (1) implement professional development programs, (2) develop teacher advancement opportunities, and (3) establish and carry out programs to improve teacher recruitment and retention (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002). Specifically, subpart two, section 2123 of NCLB ordered that states receiving federal funding must develop and implement initiatives to assist in recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers and assign them within their area of expertise (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002). While retaining quality teachers was a major focus of NCLB, the legislation primarily left it to the states to develop an appropriate evaluation process to assess instruction (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002).

There were components of NCLB that offered the recommendation that teachers who have been deemed exemplary should participate in peer mentoring that served to induct and

support teachers during their first three years of employment (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002). Berry, Darling-Hammond, Hirsch, Robinson, and Wise (2006) conducted a review of NCLB and its impact on teacher recruitment and retention. In their synthesis, these researchers note that “an unfinished task in American education is to create conditions for better support of new teachers including protected initial assignments, mentoring and improved evaluation to help novices grow...and the rates [of attrition] are much higher for teachers who enter with less preparation and those who do not receive mentoring” (p. 3). While the NCLB legislation was aimed at improving the educational experiences of all students regardless of race and socioeconomic status by equally distributing quality teachers among schools, recruitment of new teachers and retaining these teachers was a focus of NCLB.

NCLB required states to improve teacher retention (No Child Left Behind, 2002). Berry et al. (2006) discuss mentoring as a means to decrease teacher attrition. The researchers assert:

...[a] new teacher [should have] access to qualified mentors who have expertise in the relevant teaching field and time to coach beginners. A number of states and districts have developed new teacher support programs, but most are only modestly conceptualized and funded. New teacher support programs must provide for mentor training as well as time for accomplished teachers in relevant teaching fields to work with appropriately paired novices. (p. 5)

In response to the NCLB mandate, schools and school districts should be providing beginning teachers with sustained access to professional development and mentoring with seasoned teachers. Several researchers conclude that beginning teachers should not be

expected to successfully enter into a classroom during their first year of teaching without support from administrators and veteran colleagues in the school building (Brill & McCartney, 2010; Ferguson & Johnson, 2010; Fry, 2010; Howe, 2006) because of the pressure NCLB places on teachers in the classroom (Kersten & Israel, 2005).

The United States Department of Education (USDOE) (2009) conducted a longitudinal study of NCLB and teacher quality. The report consists of data collected from states regarding their efforts to recruit and retain quality educators. In their report, strategies are provided for retaining teachers which include teacher mentoring and induction programs. In 2006-2007, 46 states and Puerto Rico reported using these strategies to retain teachers (USDOE, 2009). In addition, “a majority of states (30 and Puerto Rico) mandated the use of induction programs for all new teachers; however, states’ policies toward these programs varied in how prescriptive they were” (p. 73). Individual states developed and implemented policies to assist new teachers with a transition into the classroom such as mentorships and professional development (USDOE, 2009). These activities are supplemental activities to assess a beginning teachers’ preparation to lead instruction including in-class observations and summative evaluations. Data from the United States Department of Education (2009) report suggested that high-minority and high-poverty schools relied on induction and mentoring to retain teachers while more than 75 percent of low-minority, low-poverty schools did not. NCLB charged each state with developing its own process for evaluating teachers in the classroom but the USDOE report suggests that classroom observations should be used to supplement induction programs, professional development and mentoring, not replace them. NCLB laid a foundation for what the evaluation of instruction should look like

and the ESSA of 2009 offered incentives for states to repurpose and redesign teacher evaluation processes across the United States.

Race to the Top (RTTT)

In 2009, President Barack Obama signed into law an economic stimulus package that “sought to save and create jobs, provide temporary relief to those adversely affected by the recession, and invest in education, health, infrastructure, and renewable energy” (James-Burdumy, 2015, p. 1). In an effort to benefit the educational system, the Race to the Top initiative was included to encourage states to improve school practices. Marzano and Toth (2013) discuss teacher evaluation programs as they have been influenced by the Race to the Top (RTTT) grant program:

Designed to spur nationwide education reform in K-12 schools, the grant program [Race to the Top] was a major component of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The program offered states significant funding if they were willing to overhaul their teacher evaluation systems. (p. 3)

In her examination of effective teacher evaluation systems, Darling-Hammond (2012) writes “teacher evaluation is currently the primary tool being promoted to improve teaching. With its focus on teacher effectiveness, the federal Race to the Top initiative began the process of requiring participating states to develop more extensive evaluation systems” (p. 9) but goes on to argue that teacher evaluation reform alone will not transform classroom instruction.

According to a report developed by the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (2014) that specifically addresses RTTT and the impact it has on teacher evaluations, the report suggests that “evaluations are an important strategy to assess teacher quality, and there is growing consensus about the need for evaluation systems that could

yield higher-quality information to improve teacher performance” (p. 1). Aguilar and Richerme (2014) also discuss RTTT and teacher evaluations:

Since the announcement of Race to the Top, teacher evaluation literature aimed at practitioners has focused on potential evaluation components such as student growth measures, other quantitative measures associated with student performance, teacher observations by administrators or peers, and analysis of teacher artifacts. (Aguilar & Richerme, 2014, p. 111)

Since RTTT stipulated that only states who use value-added measures as a part of the teacher evaluation process can receive the grant (Duffrin, 2011; Steinberg & Donaldson, 2014), it is important to understand and review what value added measures mean with regards to the teacher evaluation process.

Value-added Models (VAM) and RTTT

RTTT promoted the use of VAM in teacher evaluations (Everson, 2017; Montes, 2012). As evaluation processes have evolved in response to the perception that the American education system is failing to produce students prepared for the 21st century, “the current rhetoric of Race to the Top has shifted the emphasis from classroom observation to student test scores” (Aguilar & Richerme, 2014, p. 110) which puts more pressure on teachers to produce students who can perform well on standardized assessments. VAM are designed to assess a teacher’s effectiveness by comparing a student’s projected performance on standardized tests with their actual performance (Amrein-Beardsley, Pivovarova, & Geiger, 2016; Duffrin, 2011; Gansle, Noell, Grandstaff-Beckers, Stringer, Roberts, & Burns, 2015; Everson, 2017; Garrett, 2011; Montes, 2012). In their summation of the purpose for value-

added measures in the teacher evaluation process, Amrein-Beardsley, Pivovarova, and Gieger (2016) explain:

In theory, measuring teachers' value-added allows for richer analyses of standardized test score data because groups of students are followed to assess their learning trajectories from the time they enter a teacher's classroom to the time they leave. That measured growth, so it's argued, can be used to quantify and determine a teacher's purported effect on student growth in achievement. (p. 36)

The idea of VAM originated in the study of economics and the idea that an object's value can be determined at different stages of production (Koedel, Mihaly, & Rockoff, 2015). In education, the use of VAM has been adjusted to reflect student growth and is also used to determine teacher effectiveness by using objective data to assess the teacher's influence on each individual student's learning.

Researchers acknowledge that there are dangers in using test data this way because there are other factors that influence student growth other than a single teacher (e.g., class size, home life, and the student's daily attendance in school) which would affect student learning but are out of control of the classroom teacher (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2012; Everson, Feinauer, & Sudweeks, 2013; Gansle et al., 2015; Goodwin & Miller, 2012). To this point, Everson, Feinauer and Sudweeks (2013) add:

At most, student test scores reflect a teacher's contributions to a limited range of academic abilities and performance in content areas that tests attempt to measure. Nevertheless, much of what affects student test scores, including students' prior academic and home experiences, is beyond the teacher's immediate influence. (p. 351)

There has been a growing criticism by researchers about teacher evaluation systems that use VAM because of questionable reliability with regards to determining teacher quality (Amrein-Beardsley, Pivovarova, & Geiger, 2016; Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016; DiCarlo, 2012; Everson, Feinauer, & Sudweeks, 2013; Ford, et al., 2017; Montes, 2012; Network for Public Education, 2016; Toch & Rothman, 2008). The question of reliability has to do with the idea that teacher effectiveness is based on individual student performance, year-by-year (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2012; Goodwin & Miller, 2012). One year a teacher may have students who perform well and the teacher would be deemed effective but the next year while working with a different group of students who do not experience the same success may result in the same teacher being rated as ineffective (Amrein-Beardsley, Pivovarova, & Geiger, 2016).

The utilization of high-stakes assessments to determine the quality of education in public schools has shifted the focus of evaluation to identifying teachers who produce students who can demonstrate mastery of the curriculum through testing (Vogler, 2003).

DiCarlo (2012) posits:

Opponents, including many teachers, argue that value-added models are unreliable and invalid and have absolutely no business at all in teacher evaluations, especially high-stakes evaluations that guide employment and compensation decisions...there is virtually no empirical evidence as to whether using value-added or other growth models—the types of models being used vary from state to state—in high-stakes evaluations can improve teacher performance or student outcomes. (p. 38)

The inclusion of student achievement data as part of the evaluation process for teachers places pressure on teachers and their efforts to teach students (Baker, Oluwole, &

Green, 2013; Buchanon, 2006; Ford et al, 2017). Peterson (2000) suggests that evaluation processes that include high-stakes instruments to assess beginning teachers produce low quality teachers. As a first-year teacher in the classroom, placing a heavy emphasis on student achievement rather than the actual development of teaching practices is burdensome and may not support the development of beginning teachers (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2012).

Proponents of VAM in teacher evaluation cite the fact that it is too early to determine whether VAM is a reliable measurement of teacher effectiveness since using VAM is a fairly recent development in teacher evaluation practice (Goodwin & Miller, 2012). Hanushek and Rivkin (2012) believe VAM are necessary in order to determine which teachers are consistently producing students who exceed projected growth and those who do not. By doing this, school administrators can begin a process of reducing the number of instances where students are interacting with teachers who may be ineffective.

Several years after the implementation of RTTT, President Obama authorized legislation that transitioned authority for academic accountability from the federal government to individual state programs.

The Every Student Succeeds Act

President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015 that reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA) of 1965 and replaced the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Darrow, 2016; Gross & Hill, 2016). One of the biggest changes from NCLB to ESSA is the shift from a federal prescribed accountability program to a state controlled program that allows states the flexibility to determine how to hold schools accountable for student achievement (Burnette, 2017; Darrow, 2016; Zarra, 2016). In

addition, the common core standards that were prevalent in public schools prior to ESSA are no longer mandated by federal legislation under the new law (Zarra, 2016).

When comparing NCLB and ESSA, there are several major differences between the legislation. Aside from the shift of accountability, the adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirement of NCLB which allowed the federal government to use data to determine if schools were meeting the needs of students was eliminated (Burnette, 2016). Under NCLB teachers had to be highly qualified in order to remain classroom teacher; the requirements for being highly qualified have also been removed in ESSA (Burnette, 2016).

With regards to teacher evaluations, ESSA continues to provide guidance for states that was originally set by RTTT:

Many teachers will breathe a sigh of relief that ESSA does not require specific educator evaluations. The new law does state that if Title II funds are used for developing or improving a rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation and support system, that system should be based ‘in part’ on evidence of student achievement, which may include student growth, and that the evaluation system must include multiple measures of educator performance and provide clear, timely, and useful feedback. (Burnette, 2017, p. 63)

While under NCLB teacher evaluations included student achievement data with regards to evaluating teacher performance, ESSA does not dictate to states not using Title II funds that student achievement data needs to be included in the evaluation of teachers (Darrow, 2016).

Pre-Service Teacher Preparation

Pre-service teacher preparation programs are designed to assist prospective teachers to learn the skills necessary to successfully navigate the process from the student-teacher

practicum to becoming an effective leader in the classroom (Cooper & He, 2012). Stronge (2007) writes:

Studies support the finding that fully prepared teachers understand how students learn and what and how they need to be taught. In addition, their background knowledge of pedagogy makes them better able to recognize individual student needs and customize instruction in increase overall student achievement. (p. 5)

One glaring issue that pertains to teacher education is whether or not student-teachers are able to transfer what they learn in their preparation programs into their own classrooms.

Ultimately, poor student achievement may not be the result of a poorly prepared teacher but rather a teacher who fails to use effective practices once in her own classroom. Unfortunately, teaching techniques that teachers learn and practice in university classrooms, practicum, and student teaching settings do not always transfer to real world classroom settings. (Scheeler, Bruno, Grubb & Seavey, 2009, p. 190)

In considering this viewpoint presented by Sheeler et al. (2009), the challenge becomes how do pre-service programs implement a program that allows students to sustain what they learn in their pre-service program?

It is essential, therefore, to prepare new teachers to not just demonstrate newly learned teaching skills in practicum or student teaching but to then retain these skills and apply them in their own classrooms as they transition from student teacher to professional without the supports of cooperating teachers and university supervisors. (Scheeler, 2007, p. 147)

In an effort to help student-teachers continue practicing what they learn in the classroom, students participate in student-teaching to help refine skills they learn in classroom

experiences (Anderson, 2007). In his study of fifty-six student teachers and forty-eight cooperating teachers, Anderson (2007) used interviews and surveys to conclude that cooperating teachers exhibit a large amount of influence over the student-teachers under their direction. The teachers who participated in this study noted that their cooperating teachers would conduct evaluations of instruction and felt supported by their cooperating teacher (Anderson, 2007). If the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards (NCPTS) are expected to be demonstrated once pre-service teachers transfer into the classroom, then the NCPTS should be a part of the pre-service curriculum and student-teaching practicum. Goe, Biggers, & Croft (2012) believe that “teaching standards should be introduced to teacher candidates in their teacher preparation programs” (p. 3) because pre-service teachers will gain a better understanding of the practices and performance standards that they will be expected to demonstrate as the classroom teacher.

Dr. Naomi Kraut, interim education program director at Duke University, reports that the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers is interwoven throughout their Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program. Specifically, she reports that speakers are invited to speak with the MAT students and that sessions are devoted to talking about the rubric. During fall internships, mentor teachers complete the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers and the students complete a self-assessment. During the spring internship, the rubric is used as a summative assessment. Specific assignments given to students are aligned with the rubric so that everything is related back to the rubric (N. Kraut, personal communication, April 18, 2017).

In a study of six beginning teachers in both elementary and secondary schools and their reflections on their preservice experiences before entering the classroom, Buchanon

(2006) found that participants in the study enjoyed the practicum and internship that provided classroom experiences in the pre-service teacher preparation program. One participant in that study found it useful that she was being taught in the preservice program by current, practicing teachers. There were areas that these beginning teachers noted in they did not feel adequately prepared: “The most consistent issues raised by the teachers were classroom management, (confidence in) dealing with parents, intercultural and interlanguage issues, children with learning difficulties, and literacy” (Buchanon, 2006, p. 41). The Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers specifically asks the evaluator to observe beginning teachers in these areas noted (North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process, 2015).

Teacher Evaluation

Teachers are the most important factor in the education of a student (Andere, 2015; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Carnoy et al., 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Gansle, Noell, & Burns, 2012; Hargreaves et al., 2007; Jacob, 2012; Nguyen & Pfliegerer, 2013; Sahlberg, 2011), but it is difficult to quantifiably define effective teaching (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2012). In response, school leaders in North Carolina use both quantitative (VAM) and qualitative (Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers) information to evaluate teaching. How teachers are evaluated during their first years in education and how those evaluations play a role in the teacher’s development and growth as an instructional leader are important when exploring the teacher evaluation process, teacher development, and teacher quality.

Gandha and Baxter (2015) present an in-depth discussion about classroom observations as part of the teacher evaluation process. They write:

Classroom observations continue to carry significant weight in the evaluation system of most states and districts and remain a part of the evaluation experience of every

teacher. This continued focus on classroom observation reflects the belief shared by policymakers and educators alike that an enhanced observation and feedback system for teachers can improve teaching and student learning (p. 2)... Classroom observation is a powerful component of teacher evaluation systems. It measures instructional practice, provides clarification on what effective teaching looks like and gives teachers the concrete and actionable feedback they need to improve teaching practice. (p. 3)

While classroom observation remains the primary vehicle for most classroom observations (Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016; Steinberg & Donaldson, 2014), there are several factors that make the classroom observation experience subjective based on the skills and training of the evaluator (Fetters, 2013; Gandha & Baxter, 2015). As opposed to the use of VAM to evaluate teachers, classroom observations are more accepted by teachers “because they assess teaching practices that teachers themselves can observe” (p. 378).

While some administrators use the summative approach to the evaluation of beginning teachers to ensure they have basic foundational teaching skills (McColskey & Egelson, 1993), research supports the idea of providing a more formative rather than summative approach to evaluation (Breedlove, 2011; Goe, Biggers, & Croft, 2012). The formative approach to evaluation places emphasis on teacher growth and supporting the development of effective teachers rather than a summative approach which does not take into consideration an educator’s current abilities as a novice teacher, nor does it afford teachers the opportunity to make mid-semester or mid-year adjustments to their teaching practices.

Papay (2012) writes:

Evaluations can provide valuable information to drive professional growth and, as such, can raise teacher effectiveness. As a formative professional development tool, evaluation provides feedback on teachers' instructional strengths and weaknesses, highlights areas for improvement, and supports teachers' continued development. (p. 124)

Goe, Biggers, & Croft (2012) agree when they present their findings:

Formative feedback is appropriately used by teacher leaders, principals, and peers to provide ongoing guidance for improving practice and student outcomes. Formative feedback should include multiple opportunities for discussion throughout the school year and may be focused on the teacher's priorities for growth as well as the results of evaluation cycles. (p. 8).

Stone & David-Lang (2017) present findings that suggest feedback given during evaluations is not the same as feedback given when trying to help someone improve their instructional practice. The feedback given to educators when they are engaged in the teacher evaluation process has been geared more towards making personnel decisions rather than improving instruction. These researchers warn school leaders that feedback for evaluation and feedback for coaching are not synonymous and care should be taken not to combine or confuse the two.

Summative approaches are popular amongst most states' teacher evaluation models, but researchers argue that a more formative approach, including providing constructive feedback, rewarding positive performance, and guiding teachers toward relevant professional development, is what will have the highest value on improving instructional practice (Looney, 2011; McColskey & Egelson, 1993; Morgan, 1999; Papay, 2012; Reese, 2010). To

their point, “evaluation systems designed to support teacher growth and development through an emphasis on formative evaluation techniques produced higher levels of satisfaction and more thoughtful and reflective practice while still being able to satisfy accountability demands” (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 15). Halverson & Clifford (2006) examine this idea in their study of how school leaders make decisions regarding policy implementation and program evaluation:

When teacher evaluation is aimed at summative quality control, formative practices often drop out and teachers end up isolated in classrooms with little valuable feedback. Teacher assessment is then used to ‘weed out’ poor performing teachers rather than to hold all teachers accountable or to improve the performance of all teachers. (Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1999; Haney, Madaus, & Kreitzer, 1987; as cited by Halverson & Clifford, 2006, p. 581)

School-based leaders are expected to accomplish a plethora of tasks with regards to the teacher evaluation process which makes it difficult for beginning teachers to receive the appropriate support and constructive feedback necessary for them to feel supported in the classroom and to improve their instruction (Curtis & Wiener, 2012; Painter, 2000). In his dissertation which examined the teacher evaluation process in North Carolina, Fuller (2016) acknowledges that in North Carolina the responsibility of teacher evaluation falls on school principals which suggests that beginning teachers may not be getting the full support of what is needed for teacher growth.

Conley (2015) found that North Carolina teachers were frustrated with the evaluation process because of the lack of feedback. Teachers in the study felt as though they were given a certain rating but were not told what they could do to improve their instruction. Studies

have shown that when administrators provide positive and constructive feedback, teachers feel more welcomed and are more comfortable collaborating with others. In these cases, when administrators take the time to visit classrooms of new teachers to assess their instructional practice, teachers feel less stressed and more supported (Chavis, 2016; Ferguson & Johnson, 2010; Fry, 2010). Evidence in the literature supports the idea that relevant and detailed feedback provided during classroom observations can have positive impacts on teacher growth and professional learning (Rowan & Raudenbush, 2016). Steinberg & Donaldson (2014) posit “emerging evidence suggests that ongoing, pre- and post-conferences between observers and teachers are critical components of the evaluation process, providing opportunities for the type of formative and ongoing feedback that is necessary for improving instruction and student achievement” (p. 12). Taylor & Tyler (2012) believe that, regardless of the evaluative criteria, the evaluation process could offer increased opportunities to engage in conversations that can have a meaningful impact on instructional practices in the classroom.

Without relevant feedback, school systems may not adequately support teachers and provide the necessary training they need. Feeney (2007) argues that, “the absence of quality feedback in an evaluation comes at a high price. Without quality feedback to inform teaching, a teacher’s independent creation of meaningful goals for his or her own professional growth probably will not happen” (p. 192). There are many facets of successful teaching that extend beyond mere content knowledge and instructional presentation; infrequent classroom observations or artifact analysis may not provide the evaluator with reliable information as to whether or not the beginning teacher is making progress toward successful teaching (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007).

Downey, Steffy, English, Frase, and Poston (2004) along with Ovando (2006) report that snapshot observations, or walk-throughs, have a stronger influence on teacher performance. Walk-through evaluations are very short but allow the evaluator to observe real-world teaching situations. This strategy is ideal for providing quick feedback and utilization of veteran teachers within the building. Formal teacher evaluation processes that focus on fewer observations are not as reliable a strategy for evaluating teachers as informal, frequent visits to the classroom (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2012; Marshall, 2012; Tucker & Stronge, 2005). In contrast, a study in North Carolina that was designed to examine the impact that the teacher evaluation process has on teaching and teacher leadership found that a majority of teachers who participated in the study preferred more summative evaluations because the data obtained from the evaluation can be used to guide future instructional practice (Wydo, 2016).

Curtis & Wiener (2012) discuss the need for teachers to, not only have a clear understanding of what effective instruction looks like, but teachers should also understand how to relate their daily instructional practice to the teaching standards.

Learning Environment

Warring (2015) asserts that teaching requires teachers to manipulate and work around factors that are not just connected to curriculum:

In a single environment, learners and teachers themselves vary in beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, self-efficacy, motivation, learning styles, cultural influences, and demographics or social identities (e.g., sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, ability/disability, socio-economic status, religion/spirituality, etc.). When teacher evaluations are conducted the many levels of diversity just noted (e.g., attitudes,

motivation, self-efficacy, etc.) are typically not considered in calculations since data are not collected based on these factors. (pp. 705-706)

Typical public school classrooms include students who come from different backgrounds, socioeconomic classes, have different learning styles, and vary dramatically with how well they respond to instruction (Warring, 2015). In their examination of the attitudes and experiences of beginning teachers that lead to the retention of new teachers, Inman and Marlow (2013) write:

Today's teachers face an increasing variety of classroom conditions, including English Speakers of Other Languages and language immersion classrooms, inclusion and state mandated programs, as well as a need for increased knowledge and skills in such diverse areas as portfolio assessment, technology, cooperative learning, and a wide variety of specific instructional strategies. (Potter, Swenk, et al., 2001; as cited by Inman & Marlow, 2013, p. 606)

Educational leaders within the classroom have to be well versed in how to differentiate instruction, how to work with students with disabilities, how to work with students with communication disorders, how to communicate with other specialists, and how to include parents in the educational process, just to name a few (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007). Stronge (2007) adds to the conversation by writing:

Experienced teachers differ from rookie teachers in that they have attained expertise through real-life experiences, classroom practice, and time. These teachers typically have a greater repertoire of ways to monitor students and create flowing, meaningful lessons. Teachers who are both experienced and effective are experts who know the content and the students they teach, use efficient planning strategies, practice

interactive decision making, and embody effective classroom management skills.

These experienced and effective teachers are efficient— they can do more in less time than novice educators can. (p. 5)

Validity of Current Process

There is a theme in the research that question the validity of current teacher evaluation practices. Marshall (2005) demonstrated that “the theory of action behind supervision and evaluation is flawed and the conventional process rarely changes what teachers do in the classrooms” (p. 274; as cited by Callahan & Sadeghi, 2015). Another perspective on the negative feelings towards the teacher evaluation process comes from a group of teachers who presented a study that examined the perspectives of teachers in California and their thoughts regarding the teacher evaluation process:

The focus of evaluations is not on improving the quality of teaching. There is rarely substantive discussion that occurs either before or after an observation that is focused on ways to get better at teaching. In most cases, the evaluations are conducted for compliance, not improvement. (Accomplished California Teachers, 2015, p. 4)

One of the arguments against teacher evaluations in the Accomplished California Teachers (2015) report was that teacher evaluations are more to remain in compliance with state and local policy regarding teacher evaluations rather than for meaningful, constructive feedback to improve classroom instruction. Other researchers believe that current evaluation systems are meaningless because they simply show all teachers to be proficient or satisfactory at their position (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2012; Marzano & Toth, 2013). Derrington (2011) asserts this position perfectly in her discussion of the effectiveness of teacher evaluation processes:

Evaluation of teacher competency is too often a perfunctory, episodic event rather than a meticulous measure of teaching effectiveness and student achievement.

Principals, checklist in hand, head down the hall once or twice a school year to conduct the obligatory classroom observation. Then the principal determines if what is seen in the 60-minute or-less observation complies with a checklist of items believed to correlate to effective teaching. (p. 51)

In his dissertation that delves into the use of teacher evaluation processes in North Carolina, Fuller (2016) also found that participants in this study found the teacher evaluation process to be too rigid and does not allow for teachers to use creativity in instruction.

Mentoring

What is Mentoring?

Ingersoll (2012) believes “the work of teachers is done largely in isolation from colleagues. This isolation can be especially difficult for newcomers, who, upon accepting a position in a school, are frequently left to succeed or fail on their own within the confines of their classrooms” (p. 47). Mentoring refers to the process of a veteran teacher providing personal guidance to a beginning teacher to acclimate them into the school building and teaching profession while improving instruction (Ferguson & Johnson, 2010; McColskey & Egelson, 1993; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004) and is an integral part of the new teacher induction process (Wong, 2004). Mentoring, as well as new teacher induction, is designed to continue developing novice teachers after they complete a teacher preparation program (Bettini et al., 2016). One major aspect that is included in on-site training is the importance of having veteran teachers serve as a mentor for novice teachers (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Fry, 2010).

In their study of beginning teachers and why they either choose to remain in education or leave, Ferguson and Johnson (2010) assert:

As new teachers begin their careers, they experience excitement, elation, uncertainty, self-doubt, isolation and, at times, an overwhelming sense of frustration. To deal with these conflicting emotions, new teachers may seek opportunities to share their experiences with other beginners as well as with veteran teachers at their school. (p. 303)

Wong (2004) asserts that “mentors are an important component, perhaps the most important component of an induction program...for a mentor to be effective, the mentor must be used in combination with the other components of the induction process” (p. 42). Mentoring coupled with professional development based on self-assessment information as well as comprehensive feedback provided as a part of teacher observations provide effective support for beginning teachers.

Mentoring Beginning Teachers

The North Carolina State School Board of Education (NCSBOE) has developed policies that involve the induction of new teachers during the first three years of experience:

Initial (Standard Professional 1) licenses are issued to teachers with fewer than three years of appropriate teaching experience (normally considered to be public school experience) in their initial licensure area. All teachers who hold initial (Standard Professional 1) licenses after January 1, 1998, are required to participate in a three year induction period with a formal orientation, mentor support, observations and evaluation prior to the recommendation for continuing (Standard Professional 2) licensure. (NCSBOE, 2010, p. 1)

The beginning teacher mentoring program was designed to allow novice teachers to collaborate with each other while using veteran mentor teachers as a support (Powell, 2016). The lack of collaboration and the feeling of isolation discovered in studies of first-year teachers is a common theme discussed when attrition is being examined (Harrison, 2013; Sass, Flores, Claeys, & Perez, 2012; Shoval, Erlich, & Fejgin, 2010). Beginning teachers who remain in education cite their colleagues as influential resources within the school (Harrison, 2013; Romano, 2008) while those who report receiving little assistance from veteran teachers leave the field. Darling-Hammond (2003) supports the research in her examination of the factors that have led to increased numbers of beginning teachers leaving the profession within five years of their first day in the classroom:

Schools can enhance the beneficial effects of strong initial preparation with strong induction and mentoring in the first years of teaching. A number of studies have found that well-designed mentoring programs raise retention rates for new teachers by improving their attitudes, feelings of efficacy, and instructional skills. (p. 11)

Mentoring new teachers is critical in the induction of new teachers into the classroom (Bettini, Benedict, Thomas, Kimberling, Choi, & McKlesky, 2016, Morgan, 1999; Wong, 2004). In his study that examined the beginning teacher and their perceptions of the importance of administrative support, Rumley (2010) provides evidence that mentoring continues to be important in providing support to new teachers when he writes “nearly all of the participants in this dissertation study discussed mentoring as a key element in their own support” (p. 98) and the study also noted that strong peer-to-peer mentoring does not replace the need for administrative support for beginning teachers.

In a study of second year public high school teachers in North Carolina, Holt (2012) examined beginning teachers' perception of the induction program. 40 percent of the participants in the study reported that, during their first year of teaching, they did not have a mentor who was located in close proximity to their classroom and 79 percent reported that their meetings with their mentor lasted fewer than thirty minutes.

New teachers are more likely to remain in education when they have opportunities to work with experienced teachers with whom they can share ideas and work collaboratively (Inman & Marlow, 2013). In their review of districts that use peer evaluators, researchers found that when high achieving mentor teachers are assigned to support novice teachers and their instructional practices, that teacher's effectiveness improves (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2012).

Walters (2002) explored the attitudes of superintendents and the states' mentoring program in a study of 70 public school superintendents in North Carolina. The results suggest that superintendents had mixed feelings regarding the program. Some of the participants felt that the program needed to be more extensive and go beyond the basic state requirements while other participants felt as though the mentoring program was beneficial for not only helping new teachers but also rejuvenating the veteran teachers participating in the program. Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2007) commented that, "Teachers who learn to teach without guidance often learn merely to cope rather than promote learning for their students, and they can acquire bad habits which are hard to unlearn" (p. 118). Teachers new to education are able to be molded and guided into becoming effective instructors. The opposite is also true and cannot be ignored. When supports are not in place for beginning teachers, they are left to fend for themselves. Self-reliance is dangerous given their lack of

experience and understanding of the social dynamics present in the school setting and the lack of understanding that classroom instruction is rarely perfect.

Veteran teachers who mentor young teachers will be beneficial to provide “the perspective that excellent teaching is at times, and in some details, less than perfection” (Peterson & Peterson, 2006, p. 72). Teachers who strive for perfection may lack self-esteem and self-efficacy that is present in many strong veteran teachers. Current evaluation processes seek perfection in teachers and, if novice teachers can work with veteran teachers to understand the complexities of dynamic teaching, then their perception of what good teaching is (and is not) will not deter them from continuously trying to improve their practice. The teacher evaluation process can rely on multiple observations to assess classroom instruction but there is an argument that suggests more than just observations are needed to fully evaluate the effectiveness of teaching that occurs in the classroom.

Implementing multiple data sources is important because teacher evaluation is too complex for one source to evaluate effective performance: “no single data source is valid or feasible for each and every teacher in school. Rather, multiple and variable data sources are needed to accurately and fairly evaluate all teachers” (Peterson & Peterson, 2006, p. 4). When veteran teachers become involved in the evaluation process of their colleagues their expertise and experiences can influence the performance of first-year educators. Peer review offers more support and guidance than other assessment techniques (Peterson & Peterson, 2006). McColskey and Egelson (1993) believe in the value of peer mentoring and peer evaluation because:

Peers are in an ideal situation to provide feedback to a teacher on how effectively the teacher has engaged students in a ‘big idea,’ because peers are working toward the

same goal. It would be difficult if not impossible for a single school administrator to have the depth of content knowledge needed to provide useful subject matter feedback to teachers across all grades and subject areas. The strength of a formative system is that it can draw upon the resources of colleagues in the school who do have the content area knowledge. (p. 15)

They assert that using veteran peers who are teaching the same subject and working to teach the same standards can offer more substantive feedback that is relevant to improving classroom instruction.

It is helpful to look at how other countries choose to transition pre-service teachers into the classroom as full-time educators. In a study of international induction programs, findings suggest that exemplary induction programs outside of the United States focused on mentor training to improve the coaching and pedagogical guidance of novice teachers (Howe, 2006). Among the other countries discussed in the study, Japan and Germany induct their new teachers by providing opportunities through real-world clinical trainings. Further, Howe (2006) notes that “new teachers can develop and perfect their teaching skills under the mentorship of more experienced and skilled colleagues” (p. 289).

Keyne-Michaels (2007) conducted a study of first-year teachers in the Pacific Northwest area of the United States to better understand her participants’ beliefs about the effectiveness of supports available to them. The majority of participants in her study recommended that first-year teachers find a veteran teacher whom they can trust to ask for help for effective classroom management and pedagogical strategies. Participants in the study also noted that it is important to have other teachers as resources to help with pedagogy and other instructional-related questions. One participant hinted at the value of having a

beginning teacher support group that would allow beginning teachers to collaborate about their experiences: “One thing that he did wish was that he could talk with someone who had more recent experience similar to what he was learning and experiencing during his first year of teaching (Keyne-Michaels, 2007, p. 129).

Peer Observers

Allowing mentor and peer teachers to observe, evaluate, and support new teachers is also important in reducing the role that a principal has in helping their teachers grow as classroom instructors. Darling-Hammond (2013) writes:

One of the historical failings of teacher evaluation systems in the United States has been their reliance on the school principal alone as the person expected to observe teachers, mentor beginners, coach those who need help, document concerns and support processes for those who struggle...It’s easy to see how attention to teacher support and evaluation can become difficult under these circumstances. (p. 24)

Kraft & Gilmour (2016) believe “relying on principals as the primary evaluators raises important questions about their willingness, capacity, and ability to implement observation and feedback cycles and support teacher development through the evaluation process” (p. 3). In their study, Kraft & Gilmour (2016) found that 50 percent of the principals stated that peer observations and peer feedback were more likely to help foster ideas for professional growth rather than the feedback provided by the principals.

In his dissertation that examined the use of peer observation as a part of the teacher evaluation process in North Carolina which included seven principals and five peer observers, Jones (2015) found that some principals in North Carolina do not allow mentors to observe classroom instruction of beginning teachers as a part of the evaluation process

because they do not want trust to be compromised between the mentor and beginning teacher. However, there was conflicting data to suggest that some principals in North Carolina do use their mentors to conduct peer observations. The perceptions of some of the principals who participated in the study suggest that those being observed are less stressed when the observer is a peer rather than an administrator. In her examination of the use of peers as part of the evaluation process, Darling-Hammond (2013) also finds value in the peer-to-peer evaluation process.

Mentor Selection

In most states, there is little funding and training for mentors which may force school districts to rely on unproven veteran teachers who may not be prepared to assume the role of mentor to provide proper support to new teachers. Connecticut is one state that aims to avoid this dilemma by training nearly forty percent of their veteran teachers in sound instructional practices in order to serve as a mentor for new teachers (Howe, 2006). Darling-Hammond (2003) agrees that in order for mentoring programs to work, they must be well designed and fully supported. A substantive selection process for identifying mentors should be in place and providing support both to mentors and to new teachers is a significant component of effective mentoring and induction programs. Another word of caution is that “other teachers, including those who serve as mentors, are stretched thin and feel overburdened by the needs of their colleagues in addition to those of their students” (Darling-Hammond, 2003, p. 8).

The NCSBOE (2010) states “mentors need the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be effective instructional coaches, emotional supports, and organizational guides to those entering the profession” (p. 3) and prescribes that individual school systems should develop a

process for training mentor teachers. The process for selecting mentor teachers is left entirely up to each individual school district.

Table 2.1. North Carolina Teacher Mentor Standards (Obtained from Powell, 2016; see Appendix H).

Number	Standard	Characteristics
Standard 1	Mentors support BTs to demonstrate leadership	1a. Trusting relationship and coaching 1b. Leadership 1c. Communication and collaboration 1d. Best practices 1e. Ethical standards 1f. Advocacy for beginning teachers and students
Standard 2	Mentors support BTs to establish a respectful environment for a diverse population of students	2a. Relationships with students 2b. Relationships with families 2c. Relationships at school and in the community 2d. Honor and respect for diversity 2e. Classroom environments that optimize learning 2f. Reaching students at all learning needs
Standard 3	Mentors support BTs to know the content they teach	3a. North Carolina Standard Course of Study and 21st century goals 3b. Content and curriculum
Standard 4	Mentors support BTs to facilitate learning for their students	4a. Instructional practice 4b. Professional practice 4c. Student assessment
Standard 5	Mentors support BTs to reflect on their practice	5a. Allocation of time with BTs 5b. Reflective practice 5c. Mentor data collection

Mentoring as a Business Model

As stated in the previous section discussion of value-added measures, the business sector has provided some insight into how schools can assess employees. Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, and Lima (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of corporate executives who participated in mentor programs and found that a pattern emerged to suggest that former mentees were paid more and promoted more often than those who did not participate in such programs. It can be argued that mentoring in educational organizations is far different than in the corporate realm; however, the goals are the same: to prepare those being mentored with the applicable knowledge and experience to be effective employees.

In a study of three internship programs that coordinated with three business schools affiliated with a large state university, Kiu and Xu (2011) determined that mentoring is one of the most important sources of learning for those entering the business community for the first time with no previous experience. McKeown (2011) supports the findings from the Liu and Xu (2011) study when he examines organizational leaders as mentors. McKeown (2011) found that when senior leaders participate in teaching young employees, then the company reaps long-term benefits. These corporate examples confirm that, regardless of the field in which it is being utilized, mentoring should be seen as an effective tool for inducting employees into their chosen career and improves their job performance over time.

Professional Development

Definition of Professional Development

While mentoring has been well grounded in research as being a positive influence in decreasing teacher attrition of first-year teachers and improving their instruction (Looney, 2011), it simply does not provide the support a novice teacher requires (Howe, 2006).

Teachers are expected to be experts in their respective subject areas (Cooper & He, 2012) and that is where professional development becomes important in the growth of new teachers. Lindstrom and Speck (2004) define professional development as follows:

Professional development is a lifelong, collaborative learning process that nourishes the growth of individuals, teams, and the school through a daily, job-embedded, learner centered, focused approach. It emerges from and meets the learning needs of participants as well as clearly focuses on improving student learning. Professional development is not something that is done to individuals or faculties on a periodic basis as a new mandate or as educational fads appear. It is an ongoing sustainable process that builds collaboration. (p. 10)

With regards to the teacher evaluation process, “professional development is a secondary and often overlooked purpose of teacher evaluation” (Tucker, Stronge, Gareis, & Beers, 2003, p. 591). Professional development includes comprehensive and systematic learning experiences based on identified needs of teachers that improve the effectiveness of teachers and increase performance outcomes (Reese, 2010). It is the responsibility of the school and school system to help teachers make sense of their observation data to identify areas they can refine. “Some [evaluation] systems believe that individual teachers are responsible for interpreting their evaluation information and pursuing learning opportunities that respond to their needs and help them improve” (Curtis & Wiener, 2012, p. 15). Evaluation systems that assume teachers are responsible for their own growth are vastly different than systems that assume responsibility in helping teachers develop (Curtis & Wiener, 2012). Shakman et al. (2016) argue that effective teacher appraisal interweaves the evaluation process with professional learning and they are not considered two separate

components of a teacher's professional growth. Kraft & Gilmour (2016) write "the purpose of teacher evaluation is, in theory, twofold: to serve as a professional development process and as a quality assurance mechanism" (p. 4).

In their study that relied on data collected from 24 principals to determine if principals believe they can promote professional development as evaluators, researchers found that 75 percent of their participants "viewed teacher evaluation as a system that should focus on helping teachers improve their practice" (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016, p. 21). The majority of participants in that study considered the teacher evaluation process as a vehicle towards helping teachers grow professionally.

Purpose of Professional Development

Looney (2011) discusses the importance of professional development when he writes, "teachers need to continuously update knowledge and skills over the course of their careers to reflect changes in curricula and new knowledge on effective teaching and learning and better meet diverse student needs" (p. 440). Professional development opportunities for new teachers are critical to keep their knowledge and instructional practice current so they can best meet the needs of students in their classrooms. The teacher evaluation process is a method to help develop teachers (Tucker et al, 2003).

In a mixed-methods study of 43 teachers in a large high school in North Carolina, McFarland (2014) studied the perceptions of classroom teachers as they pertain to professional development. McFarland (2014) found that 35 percent of his participants valued professional development that is geared toward the individual needs of the teacher to help promote learning in the classroom. 22 percent of participants in the study reported that they valued professional development that challenges them in a way that will allow them to

challenge students. When considering collaboration as a part of professional development, 24 percent of the participants reported that professional development was more meaningful when teachers are given the opportunity to exchange ideas with their colleagues (McFarland, 2014). Participants in his study do not want a one size fits all approach to professional development and do not believe the sessions need to be led by the school principal. Rather, principals should ensure a safe, non-threatening environment where teachers can implement new practices learned during professional development (E. McFarland, personal communication, May 7, 2017).

In a study of the Collaboration Centers Project (CCP), a federally funded program helping teachers address the needs of English Language Learners in their classroom, researchers aim to explore professional development and collaboration in schools to understand how professional development affects teachers. The findings of the study suggest that teachers benefit from collaboration with colleagues and reviewing a common vision. Professional development helped the participants overcome isolation and create professional learning teams to discuss instructional practice and modeling positive instruction (Musanti & Pence, 2010). At least initially, participants reported feelings of stress and anxiety at the thought of allowing others into their classrooms for purposes of teacher development. However, once trust had been established and relationships built, teachers reported that those feelings went away over time.

While encouraging teachers to attend professional development opportunities is crucial to improving instructional performance, asking teachers to document their professional activity can be an invaluable tool in beginning teacher evaluation (Peterson & Peterson, 2006). Teacher activity is not necessarily limited to professional development

trainings but could also include changing instructional practice after self-reflection and collaboration with peer observation (Jones, 2015). As stated by Peterson and Peterson (2006) who synthesized research and analyzed data regarding teacher evaluation, “individual teachers have the responsibility to gather, maintain, compress, and report their professional activity data. No supervisors are in a position to know about the extent and variety of individual teacher activity and accomplishments” (pp. 62-63). In order to achieve professional growth, teachers must self-reflect to identify personal strengths and weaknesses (Feeney, 2007; Howard & McColskey, 2001). It is unrealistic, however, to believe that practices of self-reflection are an easy task to undertake for novice teachers. Therefore, a successful program to transition first-year teachers into the classroom should include processes for collaboration. In a related study, Harrison (2013) conducted a multiple case study of four schools in North Carolina to explore how high achieving schools are able to retain highly effective teachers. The results of her study suggest one factor that keeps highly effective teachers in schools is having the opportunity to collaborate with peers and possible relationships that stems from the teamwork that is developed.

Teacher evaluation processes can help determine the quality of instruction students are receiving and also determine areas in which teachers can strengthen their instruction through professional development. According to Warring (2015):

Education stakeholders are beginning to find some agreement in the idea that teacher appraisal can be a key factor for increasing the focus on teaching quality and continuous professional development for teachers. This belief is in keeping with the growing recognition that the quality of teaching can impact student learning outcomes. (p. 703)

Curtis & Wiener (2012) believe that professional development should align with the teaching standards that teachers are evaluated with. They write “professional development leaders at the school and system levels need to align their activities to the teaching framework on which the evaluation is designed and ensure that the work is practical and embedded in classrooms” (p. 53).

In a study of 230 middle school teachers in North Carolina, Robinson (2011) examined the perceptions of professional development by middle school teachers and found “teachers indicated that learning about specific instructional programs and collaboration with other teachers had the greatest positive impact on their classroom practices...it was clear from the teachers’ responses that professional development that increased the teachers’ knowledge of specific instructional programs and strategies was valued” (p. 127). In addition, the teachers in the study found that professional development opportunities helped them to improve student achievement (Robinson, 2011). In another study of professional development for North Carolina teachers, Castleberry (2010) found that collaboration was a factor in the effectiveness of professional development but noted that participants believed that not enough time was given for teacher growth.

Opposing viewpoints exist in the literature. Jiang, Spote, and Luppescu (2015) note that, “despite considerable resources dedicated to teacher evaluation reform, there are concerns about whether these systems will result in improvements in instruction and increases in student learning” (p. 105). While there is an understanding that teacher evaluation is necessary to attempt to assess classroom instruction and professional development can play an important role, there has not been a consensus in the research on what the best practice is especially with beginning and first-year educators.

Table 2.2. Standards for Professional Learning.

1. Learning Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in continuous improvement • Develop collective responsibility • Create alignment and accountability 	Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.
2. Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop capacity for learning and teaching • Advocate for professional learning • Create support systems and structures 	Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.
3. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize resources • Monitor resources • Coordinate resources 	Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.
4. Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze data • Assess progress • Evaluate professional learning 	Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.
5. Learning Designs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply learning theories, research and models • Select learning Designs • Promote active engagement 	Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.

Table 2.2. Standards for Professional Learning (continued).

6. Implement- ation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply change research • Sustain implementation • Provide constructive feedback 	Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long term change.
7. Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet performance standards • Address learning outcomes • Build coherence 	Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns it outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

In 2011, the NCDPI adopted Learning Forward’s national standards for professional learning. Table 2.2 illustrates the components of professional development that North Carolina has endorsed.

Chapter Summary

There is evidence found in federal education legislation that mentoring programs should be used for inexperienced teachers but there is nothing about how those teachers should be evaluated with regards to their ability to facilitate learning in a classroom setting. The Race to the Top legislation specifies the expectation that states should revamp their teacher evaluation process in order to continue to receive federal funding. North Carolina accepted Race to the Top funding which resulted in their revision of the teacher evaluation process (Davis, Bangert, Comperatore, & Smalenberger, 2015). Professional development, effective feedback, and strong mentoring programs have proven to be effective in facilitating the induction of new teachers into the profession. Stronge (2007) asserts “many behaviors and characteristics found in effective teachers can be cultivated among novices through

awareness brought about by observing other teachers, receiving peer feedback, cultivating collegial relationships, and participating in lifelong learning experiences” (p. 103). The Accomplished California Teachers (2015) report agrees when they write “evaluation should be accompanied by useful feedback, connected to professional development opportunities, and reviewed by evaluation teams or an oversight body to ensure fairness, consistency, and reliability” (p. 5).

Pre-service teacher education programs touch the surface for students on how to prepare for being evaluated in the classroom but there is no evidence in the literature to suggest that student-teachers are thoroughly prepared for the demands of a comprehensive teacher evaluation process. Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2007) add to the discussion of teacher preparation when they write:

The beginning teachers who enter U.S. schools in growing numbers each year vary greatly in the skills and experiences they bring to the job and in the formal preparation they have been given to assume the demanding responsibility of educating America’s youth...and too many of those who have gone through a teacher-education program have not received a rigorous education in some of the essential knowledge and clinical training that would prepare them for success in the classroom. (p. 111)

Summative application of the teacher evaluation process has its place in teacher evaluation because quantifiable feedback can be given for educators to use in order to improve instruction. However, the use of summative processes was not found to be most beneficial for evaluating teachers, especially novice teachers. According to Peterson and

Peterson (2006), “there are few instances in the literature where a teacher evaluation system has been empirically shown to make a difference” (p. 8).

Morgan (1999) asserts “a strong teaching profession requires highly qualified teachers who are prepared for the rigors of the classroom and who continue their professional development through the support of mentors” (p. 374). As previously stated, mentors should be carefully selected and trained to assist the induction of novice teachers into the classroom. Also, professional development should be provided in addition to the use of teacher support to address the needs of first-year teachers. In a study of beginning teachers in the United States to determine the effect of induction activities on teacher turnover, findings suggest that having a mentor in the same field along with time to collaborate with networks of teachers has proven effective in reducing the attrition rate of novice teachers (Inman & Marlow, 2013; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Strong, 2009).

Chapter two delved into the influence federal legislation has had on the teacher evaluation process. The chapter also defined the importance of mentoring novice teachers and providing relevant professional development designed for professional growth. Chapter three will review the methodology used to conduct the study and outline how the data will be collected to present the findings and underlying themes found during data collection.

Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter clarified the methodology that was employed to explore the perceptions of first-year teachers and determine how the utilization of the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards (NCPTS) and the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers were used to develop first-year teachers. The study examined how the rubric was applied in the mentoring, development, and induction of first-year teachers. Information was provided to describe why the qualitative approach was deemed to be the most appropriate approach for the study. The research questions that were used as a guide for the study were also be presented. Explanation of the methods for how the researcher selected the site and sample, data collection, data analysis, and reliability and validity were clarified. The subjectivities of the author were provided in detail in addition to ethical issues and limitations of the study discussed near the end of the chapter.

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to determine how the NCPTS and the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers were used to develop first-year teachers. The research design needed to provide the opportunity to capture the perceptions of first-year teachers and their perceptions of how the teacher evaluation process was used in their professional growth. Researchers should consider the goal and purpose of their study before choosing either a qualitative or quantitative approach. Merriam (2009) writes “qualitative researchers are interested in how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 14). Qualitative research aims to understand the world from the participant’s point of view (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Hatch, 2002).

In an effort to employ the most appropriate strategy to understand the influence North Carolina's evaluation rubric has on novice teachers, the qualitative approach was deemed the most suitable because of the need to interact directly with participants (Creswell, 2007; Hatch, 2002). According to Hatch (2002), "For qualitative researchers, the lived experiences of real people in real settings are the objects of the study" (p. 6). Qualitative research designs are based in natural settings which satisfies the goal of this study.

There are different types of qualitative research that researchers may choose from when deciding to conduct qualitative inquiry. Given the stated purpose of this study, a basic qualitative approach was found to be best suited to collect the most accurate data to address the research questions and contribute to knowledge and existing theory involving teacher evaluation processes (Patton, 2002). Merriam (2009) has written extensively about qualitative research methods and qualitative research designs and she shares that "basic research is motivated by intellectual interest in a phenomenon and has as its goal the extension of knowledge. Although basic research may eventually inform practice, its primary purpose is to know more about a phenomenon" (p. 3).

Basic Research

Patton (2002) notes that, "Researchers who engage in basic research want to understand how the world operates. They are interested in investigating a phenomenon to get at the nature of reality with regard to that phenomenon. The basic researcher's purpose is to understand and explain" (p. 215). Basic research attempts to gain insight into the world of study participants in order to understand a specific phenomenon and the influence that phenomenon has on the subjects of the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 2009). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016):

The most common ‘type’ of qualitative research’ is a basic interpretive study. Here, researchers simply describe their study as a “qualitative research study without declaring it a particular type of study (p. 23)...thus qualitative researchers conducting a basic qualitative study would be interested in (1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences. The overall purpose is to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences. (p. 24)

For the purpose of this study, the basic (or basic interpretive) research approach was used to explore first-year teachers and their experiences with the teacher evaluation instrument as it pertains to their induction into the field of education. In light of the fact that there is little research that addresses the role the teacher evaluation process has on new teachers, the basic interpretive approach was used to capture the experiences of the first-year teacher and accurately describe from their point of view of the phenomenon as they experience it.

Researcher Bias

While the qualitative researcher is attempting to use human experience to explore any particular issue, it is important that the researcher not bring their own prior knowledge, personal insights, or interests into the study as to influence the data analysis or skew the results (Merriam, 2009; Taylor, DeVault, & Biklen, 2016). Merriam (2009) states:

Prior to interviewing those who have had direct experience with the phenomenon, the researcher usually explores his or her own experiences, in part to examine dimensions of the experience and in part to become aware of personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions. (p. 25)

In qualitative research, it is important that the bias of the researcher not interfere with the actual experiences of the participants. The separation of the researcher bias is referred to as bracketing (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2009) and is essential to qualitative research.

Research Questions

Creswell (2007) states that research questions in qualitative inquiry are open-ended and nondirectional; and, researchers should “restate the purpose of the study in more specific terms” (p. 107). Hatch (2002) further describes the importance of developing effective research questions when he writes “identifying research questions is a critical step in research design because questions give direction to the study, limit the scope of the investigation, and provide a device for evaluating progress and satisfactory completion” (p. 41). Questions that are too vague will not provide the researcher with enough direction to complete the study and questions that are too narrow will make qualitative inquiry impossible. Corbin and Strauss (2015) believe that qualitative research questions should be formulated in a way that answers can only be found by conducting qualitative research. Following the advice of Creswell (2007), Hatch (2002), and Corbin and Strauss (2015), the following research questions were developed to accomplish the purpose and achieve the goal of this study to gain an understanding of the usefulness of the Rubric for Evaluation of North Carolina Teachers on first-year teachers:

1. How have first-year teachers’ experiences in their teacher education programs prepared them for the different standards of the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers?

2. How is the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers incorporated into the mentor program to support beginning teachers?
3. Are professional development opportunities for first-year teachers aligned with the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers?
4. How do first-year teachers describe their experiences being evaluated using the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers?
5. How do first-year teachers utilize the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers to improve their instructional practices?

Site Selection

The site in which the participants in this study were teaching expanded across a large school district in North Carolina. This school district employs over 19,000 employees and teaches over 160,000 students. There are over 180 schools across the district and operates on a multi-billion-dollar budget each school year. Following the school system's process for conducting research within the district, approval for the study was granted along with clearance to begin data collection.

Sample Selection

In order to identify all first-year teachers in the school district, the researcher emailed each school principal explaining the purpose of the study and to produce documentation that he had been approved to conduct research within the district. Communication with the building principals yielded a prospective sample of first-year teachers. Email contact was made with the teachers to explain the study and determine those who may qualify. Not all teachers responded to the email and one principal declined to have her school participate. All email correspondence were sent and received from the researcher's North Carolina State

University email account asking if they would like to participate in the study. The sample was nonrandom and purposeful as to include both elementary and secondary level teachers.

Purposeful Sampling

The sample for this study included five first-year teachers who graduated from an undergraduate teacher education program. Purposeful, nonrandom sampling is prevalent in basic qualitative research (Krathwohl, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2002). According to Patton (2002), “The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling” (p. 230). This study employed the use of purposeful sampling in order to obtain data from a range of participations working in different levels of K-12 schools, who have graduated from an accredited teacher education program in North Carolina and are in their first-year as a classroom teacher.

While the participants of the study were homogenous (first-year teachers), the sample included diversity with regards to the school environments in which the participants worked and the grade level they taught. Drawing from Patton (2002):

When selecting a small sample of great diversity, the data collection and analysis will yield two kinds of findings: (1) high-quality, detailed descriptions of each case, which are useful for documenting uniqueness, and (2) important shared patterns that cut across cases and derive their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity. (Patton, 2002, p. 235)

Participants using a purposive sampling technique are chosen because they share specific features and specific characteristics of the target population. This approach has two goals.

First, to include participants related to the study and second to include as much diversity as possible (Esterberg, 2002; Richie & Lewis, 2006 as cited by Davies, 2010).

The strategy of using interviews is best when the sample size is small since larger samples would be too time consuming for researchers (Gray, 2004). Creswell (2007) writes “the participants in the study need to be carefully chosen to be individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon in question, so that the researcher, in the end, can forge a common understanding” (p. 62). All the participants in this study were in their first-year with no prior teaching experience. The homogenous sampling of first-year teachers coupled with the variance in the levels of which they taught, and their individual school communities, allowed for purposeful sampling.

Sample Description

Table 3.1. Overview of the participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Degree	Level
Bailey	23	Female	Undergraduate	Middle (6-8)
Mia	23	Female	Undergraduate	High (9-12)
Avi	23	Female	Undergraduate	Middle (6-8)
Sasha	26	Female	Undergraduate	Elementary (K-5)
Kelly	22	Female	Undergraduate	High (9-12)

The sample included a total of five first-year teachers with varying backgrounds and levels currently taught in the classroom. All participants who were selected to participate have an undergraduate degree but no formal education beyond that. All of the teachers who participated in the study are Caucasian females. The final sample included one elementary school teacher, two middle school teachers, and two high school teachers. All participants are in their first-year as a licensed classroom teacher and have completed a student-teaching practicum as a part of their pre-service program. None of the participants teach in the same

school but they all work in the same school system. Sasha is the only participant who earned her undergraduate degree in a state outside of North Carolina.

Data Collection

Semi-Structured Interviews

Data collection occurred during the full evaluation cycle of the participants' first year in the classroom and documented how first-year teachers were trained for the current Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers in their teacher education programs, beginning teacher support program, professional development, and mentoring. The majority of the studies that have been conducted to assess the effectiveness of teacher evaluation instruments and beginning teacher induction programs have utilized in-depth interviews to obtain the teacher's perspective of the phenomenon (Cook, 2009; Gilles, Wilson, & Elias, 2010). The same approach was used in this study.

Interviews in this study employed what Packer (2011) calls "the work horse of qualitative research today" (p. 43), semi-structured interviews. According to Merriam (2009), "Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the word around them" (p. 88). The interviews included five participants and lasted no longer than forty-five minutes per interview.

Pre-determined interview questions were utilized for the interview process. Patton (2002) writes:

The interview guide provides topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject...the advantage of an interview guide is that it makes sure that the interview/evaluator has carefully decided how best to use the limited time available in

an interview situation. The guide helps make interviewing a number of different people more systematic and comprehensive by delimiting in advance the issues to be explored. (p. 343)

Because the research design did not include observations, the best strategy for obtaining data was through the use of semi-structured interviews. Interviewing is a primary strategy used in qualitative research (Kratwohl, 2009).

Individual interview data was collected at two times during the study. The first interview was conducted in the middle of the school year. The second interview was conducted nearing the end of the evaluation cycle as prescribed by the school district. Each interview included two different sets of interview questions so that participants were not asked the same question twice. However, even though the same question may not have been repeated, there were instances when answers overlapped with previous responses. The decision to conduct two interviews rather than one was made because of when each interview took place during the evaluation cycle. The first interview took place in the middle of the evaluation cycle and questions were asked about each participant's understanding of the teacher evaluation process coming out of their pre-service program but did allow for participants to explain their current experiences. The second interview took place near the end of the evaluation cycle which meant participants were more able to fully explain their experiences with the evaluation process and articulate what they felt worked about the process and what each respondent felt did not work. Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim immediately following the interview. Recordings were kept in a locked safe at the researcher's home office. All transcription records were kept confidential. Interviews were scheduled and conducted at the participant's convenience.

Document Analysis

Document analysis is a reliable research strategy to collect data in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Also referred to as unobtrusive data, document analysis allows the researcher to gain insight into the topic of a study without having an impact on the participants or environment of what is being investigated (Hatch, 2002). In different terms:

While there are several kinds of such data, what binds them together is that they are gathered without the direct involvement of research participants; they are unobtrusive because their collection does not interfere with the ongoing events of everyday life. (Hatch, 2002, p. 116).

For qualitative analysis purposes, a document is a term that includes a variety of written or visual material that is relevant to the phenomenon being explored and can range from public documents (Hatch, 2002; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to personal documents (Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2009). Bogdan & Biklen (2007) offer three types of documents that can be considered for research: personal documents, official documents, and popular culture documents. Personal documents can include personal material such as diaries (Creswell, 2007) while official documents are used by organizations for employee reference (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Hatch, 2002). One advantage to using document analysis is that the data “tell their own story independent of the interpretations of the participants” (Hatch, 2002, p.119).

Since document analysis can be used to further explore and supplement information obtained from interview data and can include items such as public policy (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, Creswell, 2007, Hatch, 2002, Merriam, 2009), an analysis of the North Carolina State Board of Education’s policy titled Teacher Performance Appraisal Process (GS-115C-333)

which governs the state-wide teacher evaluation process was conducted by examining the process manual developed by the Public Schools of North Carolina, the North Carolina State Board of Education, and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. The policy and process manual are official documents of the State of North Carolina and was available publicly online. These documents were not analyzed to address the research questions, rather the analysis was helpful in determining whether the process prescribed within both the policy and the manual were reflected in the experiences of the participants in the study.

The policy and process manual were analyzed to gain an understanding of the steps of the teacher evaluation process that has been implemented across the state. The document was studied for specific information regarding the teacher evaluation process. That information was then coded to determine any connections to the research questions and/or connections to participant responses. The resulting data were presented in chapter 4.

Focus Group

In addition to in-depth interviews and document analysis, a focus group was to be conducted with the participants of the study. The utilization of focus groups would have allowed the participants to listen to each other's viewpoints and to build off of one-another's thoughts (Davies, 2010; Krathwohl, 2009) to give the researcher the richest data possible. The utilization of a focus group would have allowed the participants to discuss the topic with each other with little interference from the facilitator. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) write:

For qualitative researchers, focus groups are group interviews that are structured to foster talk among the participations about particular issues...they are particularly useful when the topic to explore is general, and the purpose is either to stimulate talk from multiple perspectives from the group participants so that the researcher can learn

what the range of views are, or to promote talk on a topic that informants might not be able to talk so thoroughly about in individual interviews. (p. 109)

Using the same process as interviewing, questions were pre-written to help guide the discussion but allowed flexibility for participants to guide the discussion. Patton (2002) posits “a guide is essential in conducting focus group interviews for it keeps the interactions focused while allowing individual perspectives and experiences to emerge” (pp. 343-344).

The focus group session was scheduled take place at the end of the evaluation cycle near the end of the school year. The session was to be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim and identities of participants to remain confidential. As the evaluation cycle came to a close at the end of the school year, the researcher found it extremely difficult to find a common date and time for all research participants to participate in a focus group. Due to scheduling conflicts and lack of responses after multiple attempts to contact, there were not enough participants scheduled to participate in the focus group.

In an effort to maintain the opportunity to conduct a focus group, the researcher identified three first-year teachers to participate in a focus group session. One elementary school teacher and two high school teachers. All three teachers communicated with the researcher and were invited to participate in the study following the same protocol used for sample selection for the interviews. When it came time to schedule the focus group, one teacher who had previously agreed to participate in the focus group responded that they would not be able to participate because they were moving out of the area and did not feel as though they had the time to participate. Another prospective participant who had agreed to participate in the study responded to an attempt to schedule the focus group by saying he had accepted additional employment and was no longer available. The third teacher who had

originally agreed to participate simply did not reply to multiple attempts to schedule the focus group. Therefore, the decision was made to eliminate the focus group approach from the research project. The researcher was confident that the data obtained in the one-on-one interviews was enough to yield valid and reliable data for analysis.

Data Analysis

Taylor, DeVault, and Bogdan (2016) assert that, “Qualitative researchers develop concepts, insights, and understandings from patterns in the data to assess preconceived models, hypotheses, or theories” (p. 8) which means the researcher uses the data collected during a study and attempts to interpret the information to give meaning to the phenomenon being studied. Hatch (2002) notes that:

Data analysis is a systematic search for meaning. It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others. Analysis means organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories. It often involves synthesis, evaluation, interpretation, categorization, hypothesizing, comparison, and pattern finding. (p. 148)

Transcription

Before the researcher began the coding process, all interview sessions were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim to make working with the data more effective (Smith & Davies, 2010). According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007) “when a study involves extensive interviewing or when interviewing is the major technique in the study, we recommend using a tape recorder. We shall call the typed interviews transcripts. Transcripts are the main data

of many interview studies” (p. 129). To ensure that the participants’ views were clearly articulated, interview transcripts were shared with participants to offer the opportunity to provide clarification on topics discussed during the interview (Creswell, 2007; Gray, 2004; Richards, 2009). After the transcripts were reviewed and approved by the participants, the researcher began the coding process (Packer, 2011).

Coding

Coding is an effective strategy of data analysis (Esterberg, 2002; Patton, 2002). Coding refers to the systematic labelling of data (Smith & Davies, 2010; Tracy, 2013) into categories (Creswell, 2007; Esterberg, 2002) to make interpretations (Krathwohl, 2009; Patton, 2002) based on the data collected. “In coding, you assign a descriptive word or phrase to each unit of notes” (Krathwohl, 2009, p. 316) to organize the information the researcher feels is relevant to the study’s purpose. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) write:

Developing a coding system involves several steps: You search through your data for regularities and patterns as well as for topics your data cover, and then you write down words and phrases to represent these topics and patterns. These words and phrases are coding categories. (p. 173)

Drawing from Richards (2009), “Almost all qualitative research involves some sort of coding (though different methods may do it differently). But that does not mean you need to spend your life coding. It’s a first step to somewhere else” (p. 93). Using a coding process to categorize the data is a vehicle a researcher can use to work with the data to make meaningful interpretations based on the purpose of the study (Patton, 2002). During the interview process, using open-ended interview questions provided the researcher with

enough rich data to make coding an effective strategy to analyze participant responses (Gray, 2004).

Prior to the interview process, the researcher coded the interview questions into different categories relating to the research questions. The interview questions were evaluated and a determination was made as to which research question the interview questions answered. After the interviews were conducted, the researcher was then able to answer the research questions based on the participant responses to the interview questions. After the participants' responses to the interview questions were categorized by which research question was being addressed, the researcher was able to analyze the data based on responses to each research question.

Categories and Themes

When coding is completed, data must be placed into categories from which themes can be derived. According to Merriam (2009), "Devising categories is largely an intuitive process, but it is also systematic and informed by the study's purpose, the investigator's orientation and knowledge, and the meanings made explicit by the participants themselves" (pp. 183-184). Using the data discovered during the coding process, all information was placed into categories which is a crucial step in the process of data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

As the researcher was involved in the coding and categorizing process, themes began to emerge (Charmaz, 2011; Esterberg, 2002; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002) that allowed for making meaning of the data. According to Esterberg (2002), themes start to develop as categories become common throughout the cases. As interviews were transcribed and categorized by research question, the researcher examined responses corresponding to the

research questions for themes as they appeared during the process. As each participant's response was coded by research question, the researcher was able to analyze responses to each research question and identify themes that emerged from the interview data.

Research Validity and Reliability

There are several strategies that qualitative researchers use to demonstrate that their study is both valid and reliable. These strategies include: (1) member checking, (2) triangulation, and (3) peer review (Creswell, 2007). The researcher employed member checking and peer review in this study.

Member Checking

After each interview was concluded, the researcher provided each participant with a copy of their transcript to provide clarification where they felt it was needed (Richards, 2009). In cases when participant responses required further clarity or deeper probing, the researcher emailed the participant and asked for clarification. In addition, participants were asked to review the transcript and, if there were points that were inaccurate or not a true representative of what they were trying to express, email the researcher to clarify their responses. Once the feedback was received from the participant and they acknowledged the transcript was an accurate reflection of their experiences, the data was included in the study. After the findings were written, each participant received a copy of the report and confirmed that their perspective was accurately represented.

Peer Review

Peer review is an external review of the process. Peer reviewers make sure that the researcher used methods to provide valid results and the dissertation process allows for a natural occurrence for this type of review. The dissertation committee served as an external

review board to ensure that the researcher has adhered to the strict procedural expectations of qualitative research.

Subjectivity Statement

Qualitative data is often called into question if the consumers of the research are not sure of the perspective of the researcher who is conducting the study. Thus, qualitative researchers must be concerned with the effect their subjectivity has on their data (LeCompte, 1987 as cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) discuss the effect that researcher bias may have on readers of qualitative research:

Qualitative researchers, whether in the tradition of sociology or anthropology, have wrestled over the years with charges that it is too easy for prejudices and attitudes of the research to bias the data. Particularly, when the data must ‘go through’ the researcher’s mind before they are put on paper, the worry about subjectivity arises.

Does, perhaps, the observer record only what he or she wants to see rather than what is actually there? (p. 37)

Therefore, to satisfy the question regarding researcher bias, it is important for qualitative researchers to make their subjectivities clear to the reader in order to validate the study, strengthen the data, and open the reader’s mind to the accuracy of the information being presented.

The researcher conducting this study has served in varying capacities as a public-school educator. As a classroom teacher, he served in roles as a special education teacher which included acting as a special programs department chairman, behavior support teacher, in-class resource teacher, and as a teacher in a separate setting classroom working with students who were diagnosed with emotional and behavioral disabilities. The researcher has

experienced the teacher evaluation process from the perspective as a teacher as well as from a school administrator's lens.

At the time of this study, the researcher was working as a school administrator where part of his responsibilities were to plan and conduct classroom observations for both veteran and beginning teachers. Due to his background and experiences as both a teacher going through the teacher evaluation process and as an administrator responsible for adhering to the teacher evaluation process, the investigator was challenged to eliminate personal bias into the research (Given, 2008) due to professional predispositions that may have been developed throughout a career in education.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to the beginning of this study, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at North Carolina State University (NCSU) granted the researcher approval for the study. The participants of the study were over eighteen (18) years of age so parental consent was not applicable.

Prior to beginning the study, explanations were provided to the participants regarding the purpose of the study, data collection and analysis procedures, and how the results were going to be utilized. Participants were informed in writing and written formal consent was obtained for participation. The expectations of the participants were clearly defined as well as their right to discontinue their participation at any time without fear of penalty or repercussion. Bailey participated in the first interview but did not reply to multiple attempts for the second interview. Bailey's lack of response was interpreted as she was exercising her right to discontinue her participation. The data collected from her first interview was incorporated into the study.

The identities of the participants were kept confidential by the researcher and all interview recordings and transcriptions were kept in a secured location at the discretion of the researcher. All files were disposed of at a time determined by the researcher and IRB. Pseudonyms were created by the participants and used to maintain the integrity of confidentiality while presenting interview data.

The goal of this study was to view the phenomenon of teacher evaluation from the lived experiences of first-year teachers and determine if the evaluation process is used in the development of new teachers. While most new teachers are leery of doing things or saying things that may jeopardize their job status, it was critical for me to gain their trust and help them understand that it was not my intent to put them in harm's way, nor would I disclose their identity to the consumers of the research. Building this trust is vital in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). Prior to selection, I disclosed my current position within the school system to provide further opportunities to build trust with those who participated. All electronic communications (i.e., email) were sent from my North Carolina State University student account.

Limitations of the Study

There are limitations to the study that must be considered when reviewing the findings. During the sample selection process, there were no restrictions on race or gender of prospective participants. The sample was chosen based on principal recommendation, responses to preliminary questions, and their willingness to participate in the study. Once the final sample was selected, the following characteristics were noted: (1) all of the participants were female, and (2) all participants were Caucasian. There were efforts to include males in the study but, in lieu of multiple invitations to participate, there were no males included in

the final sample due to their lack of interest in participating. The researcher also did not include parameters in the sample selection process that would ensure race variation in the sample. Therefore, the result was a homogenous sample of Caucasian female teachers.

Another limitation of the study was that it only focused on the use of the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers for teachers who graduated from an undergraduate pre-service teacher education program in North Carolina. The results of this study may not be apply to other states or districts which may use different instruments for evaluating first-year teachers and for students in different pre-service teacher education programs.

New teachers are vulnerable and may not have the time it takes to participate in the study or feel uncomfortable sitting for thirty to forty-five minutes for an interview. If the participants felt as though they were rushed for time or started to feel as though participating in the study was a burden or a chore, they may not have provided in-depth, quality data needed to produce valid results.

At the onset of the study, the researcher planned on conducting two focus groups to track how teachers were feeling as they progressed during the evaluation cycle. As explained earlier, those focus groups did not occur which is a limitation in the results of the study. During the focus group session, participants discussions may have provided further insight into their views of the teacher evaluation process.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of the study was to determine how the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process is included in the mentoring, development, and induction of first-year teachers by interacting directly with participants during their first evaluation cycle and document their information regarding the process. To be accomplish the goals of the study, a

qualitative approach was utilized using basic qualitative research because the goal of this work was to study the teacher evaluation process in North Carolina through the lens of first-year teachers.

Qualitative research requires a stated direction and the research questions that a researcher develops help to provide guidance throughout the examination of the subject being studied. The research questions were presented earlier in this chapter and the purpose of the questions discussed. Sample selection was determined by contacting local building principals to identify teachers entering their first year of teaching in the classroom.

Data was collected using two rounds of semi-structured interviews but supplemental data from a focus group was unable to be obtained because participants of the study who had previously agreed to participate were no longer available and discontinued their participation. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by an independent transcription service. Data was transcribed and categorized by themes to make meaningful conclusions of the data. In addition, member checking and peer review were employed to ensure research validity and reliability.

A limitation of the study was that this research only focused on first-year teachers in North Carolina who were following the process of North Carolina Teacher Evaluation and who participated in an undergraduate pre-service teacher education program. First-year teachers from surrounding states may have different experiences with their respective evaluation instruments and may be prepared differently in their teacher education programs. In addition, those first-year teachers who graduated from a graduate level teacher education program may have different perceptions of the teacher evaluation process. Those teachers who obtained licensure from an alternative route (i.e. lateral entry) may also have

experiences that influences their perception of the teacher evaluation process in North Carolina because jobs outside of education may have more strict performance standards than teachers or more stringent expectations for employees. Thus, making the teacher evaluation process seem a bit easier compared to their past experiences in the work place.

The upcoming chapter explains the results of the study by exploring and analyzing responses from the participants. Categories were developed, and themes were identified based on the perceptions of the participants in the study. Chapter five presents a discussion of the findings along with implications for practice and further research.

Chapter Four

Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of first-year teachers to determine what role, if any, the North Carolina teacher evaluation process had on their development as a new teacher. To achieve the purpose of the study, the following research questions were answered:

1. How have first-year teachers' experiences in their teacher education programs prepared them for the different standards of the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers?
2. How is the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers incorporated into the mentor program to support beginning teachers?
3. Are professional development opportunities for first-year teachers aligned with the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers?
4. How do first-year teachers describe their experiences being evaluated using the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers?
5. How do first-year teachers utilize the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers to improve their instructional practices?

This chapter provided data analysis obtained from semi-structured interviews with five first-year teachers who were teaching at different schools and at varying grade levels within the same school system. The data also includes information obtained from a policy analysis of GS 115C-333 which is the state board of education's legislation that defines the teacher evaluation process in North Carolina. The chapter began with a brief description of how participants were selected for the study. Following the review on sample selection was a

brief description of each participant. Then the chapter is organized by research question. Under each research question, the themes that were found during the data collection was provided along with information obtained during the interview process.

Participant Selection

The researcher selected a large North Carolina school district from which to draw a sample. The school district approved the research to conduct the study and collect data using employees of the school district. The researcher sent an email to each building principal within the selected school district asking for the names of first-year teachers in each respective school (see Appendix C) and included the letter from the school district approving the study. Principals either responded with the names of first-year teachers in the building or replied that they did not have any first-year teachers in the building. One principal declined to have their school participate. The email sent to principals resulted in a total of 34 prospective participants: fourteen elementary (K-5); five middle (6-8); and, fifteen high (9-12) school teachers.

Each prospective participant was emailed from the researcher's North Carolina State University email account informing them that they had been identified by their building principal as a first-year teacher and explaining the nature of the study (see Appendix D). Each prospective participant was asked three questions: (1) Is this your first year teaching in a classroom? (2) Was your teacher preparation program an undergraduate or graduate program? (3) Are you teaching in the same licensure area that you received your degree in? There were teachers who were contacted who did not respond to the email. Respondents who stated that this was not their first year as a licensed teacher in the classroom or who indicated that they had previous experience as a teacher (i.e. as a substitute teacher) were excluded

from the study. Respondents who stated that they had not completed a teacher preparation program and used an alternative route to teacher certification (i.e. lateral entry) were also excluded from the study. In addition, respondents who completed a graduate level program as a part of their teacher training were excluded from the study. Respondents who reported that they were not teaching in an area different of their degree were excluded from the study. Those who met the criteria for the study were invited to participate via email (Appendix E). There were teachers who did not respond to multiple attempts of contact for invitations to participate and the researcher interpreted the lack of responses as a declination of participation.

The participants in the following section signed the informed consent form and engaged in the first round of interviews. After the initial interview, Bailey did not respond to the researcher's multiple attempts to participate in the second interview and focus group. The researcher attempted to reach Bailey using email which was unsuccessful and through a confidential sealed letter sent to her through the school system's courier mail delivery system which was also unsuccessful. Bailey's lack of response to the multiple attempts of contact suggested that she chose not to participate in the remainder of the study. Her responses from the first interview remained a part of the data collected and were analyzed and reported along with the remainder of the participants. Mia, Avi, Sasha, and Kelly participated in both rounds of interviews and the focus group session.

Participants

Pseudonyms have been utilized in order to protect the identities of the participants as to not provide details that could violate their confidentiality as a research participant in this study.

Participant Descriptions

The following descriptions of the participants is based on information provided by each participant during the interview and sample selection process.

Bailey

Bailey is a twenty-three-year-old female who teaches in an urban middle school. Prior to her senior year in high school she was interested in studying Veterinary Science but during her last semester of high school she realized that, while she enjoyed animals, she really didn't feel a connection with science or working as a veterinarian. After reflecting back on the different things that made her happy, she remembered how she felt tutoring and helping other students. It was then she considered becoming a teacher. "I fell in love with the classes that I took at college and it kind of grew from there."

Bailey studied Middle Grades Education because she was drawn to the middle school population. She recalled back on her own K-12 education and realized that her least favorite time was middle school. With the varying physical and emotional changes that occur during that time, she thought "'that's where they need me the most,' so that is where I went."

Mia

Mia is a twenty-three-year-old female who currently works in an urban magnet high school. When she was younger she started working as an after school counselor at the YMCA with elementary age children who were a handful but whom she adored deeply. She reminisced, "I kind of realized well maybe I want to do something working with kids, so naturally my first thought was teaching."

Her experience working with young children at the YMCA guided her into education. When she first pondered the idea of entering into education, she thought she would want to work at the elementary school but the more she worked with that age group the more she realized she wanted to work with older students:

I thought I wanted to teach elementary school, and the more I worked with them the more I realized I wanted to work with the older kids because I love them [younger students] in a camp setting but I was not going to be able to sit in a classroom with them all and have them do what they need to do.

The more Mia worked with elementary-aged children the more she realized she wanted to teach at the secondary level. She chose high school because she believed she would be able to connect easier with high school students rather than middle school students.

Avi

Avi knew she wanted to be a teacher since she was in kindergarten. While she was not sure what age group she wanted to work with, she knew education was her passion and she enjoys helping others to learn. During the interview process, Avi recalled that she remembers her love for learning and she wanted to do her part to help others love learning as well. She said, “I have always like helping people to learn new things.”

Avi’s student-teaching practicum took place in a high school setting and she described her experiences as a high school teacher as an “adventure.” After collaborating with her student-teaching university supervisor, she decided that middle school was going to be the best fit for her personality and teaching style.

Sasha

Sasha knew at 10 years old that she enjoyed working with children. She would ask to help babysit other children even though those children weren't much younger than she was. As she got older she began to contemplate how to help kids and satisfy her desire to work with them every day. Her contemplations guided her into becoming an elementary school teacher.

She went to college in New Jersey and earned degrees in Elementary Education and Special Education which led to her North Carolina educator certification in those fields. After earning her undergraduate degree, Sasha did not go into teaching right away. She decided that she wanted to explore working with children in a pre-school/day care setting to see if that was something she was interested in. After doing that for a few years, she decided to enter the field of education as a public-school elementary teacher.

Kelly

When describing what made her go into the teaching field, Kelly recalled, "I was that kid in kindergarten who said she was going to be a teacher when all of her classmates said they were going to be firefighters, or astronauts, or superheroes, or movie stars." Since she can remember, she has loved school and enjoyed learning. She credits her passion for learning to her K-12 teachers as well as undergraduate professors. The desire to become a teacher started with her teachers while she was in school.

It wasn't until college that she decided that she wanted to teach high school students. Kelly was drawn to the high school curriculum and felt she was more compatible with high school-aged students: "They [students] are not just seeing things concretely anymore. It's

getting into the idea of abstract. And they are making all of these different connections between their life and their prior knowledge, and then applying it to what they are doing now.” Kelly is excited about the impact she can have in the life trajectory of her students. She remarks in “five years from now, ten years from now, they still have those connections and are making those connections referring back to what they’ve learned in my class.” Her passion is not only the curriculum but developing the student so they can be successful long after they graduate high school. Kelly would like to ultimately teaching in a college/university setting.

Participant Responses

The following section provides data collected during the interview process. Interview transcripts were reviewed by both the researcher and each participant. Participants were given the opportunity to clarify on information provided in the transcripts as well as add any additional details that were left out during the actual interview.

Responses to the interview questions were evaluated and coded to answer the research questions as well as determine themes that emerged during the data collection process. The following section is organized by the themes that evolved during the data collection process.

Emergent Themes

Table 4.1. Emergent Themes.

Research Question	Theme
How have first-year teachers' experiences in their teacher education programs prepared them for the different standards of the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of curriculum dealing with the NC Professional Teaching Standards 2. Student teaching practicum 3. Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers
How is the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers incorporated into the mentor program to support beginning teachers?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mentor/Peer Support 2. Mentor meetings
Are professional development opportunities for first-year teachers aligned with the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No alignment
How do first-year teachers describe their experiences being evaluated using the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of understanding 2. Peer observation 3. Feedback 4. Neutral outcomes
How do first-year teachers utilize the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers to improve their instructional practices?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compliance 2. Feedback 3. Use of the rubric

Research Question #1: How have first-year teachers' experiences in their teacher education programs prepared them for the different standards of the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers?

Lack of Curriculum

Bailey's Middle School Education curriculum did not include the NCPTS or aspects of the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers but she was introduced to the rubric and the North Carolina Educator Effectiveness System (NCEES) prior to completing her

student-teaching practicum. She completed a project that “was really similarly aligned with all the teacher evaluation stuff” and allowed her to become familiar with some of the wording of the standards. Bailey recalled using the rubric to complete a project during her undergraduate teacher preparation that helped her to recognize some of the wording used during in the NCPTS but she reported that during her time in the pre-service program “we spent maybe an hour and half total. Like I can’t recall a lot of time focusing on the rubric in depth.”

Bailey remembered that, while she was completing her student-teaching practicum, her advisors would come in to her classroom often and evaluate her instruction, but they did not use the rubric that is being used to evaluate her as a full-time teacher:

It seemed like they had their rubric they made. It seemed like they pulled a lot of the same language from the guide itself. But we didn’t go over it. Like we never went in-depth over what this would look like, what that would look like. And I think, because of that, when I saw it I was like ‘oh, ok.’

Bailey used the following analogy to explain her thoughts about how the rubric was used during her student-teaching practicum; “it’s like knowing you have a driver’s manual for your car. You never really look at it but you know how to drive your car.” She feels like she knows how to lead a classroom, present engaging curriculum, and help her students grow both academically and socially, but she was never really taught how she was going to be evaluated. She was familiar with the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina teachers but was never made to feel comfortable with it.

Sasha enjoyed the various curriculum classes because in those classes they worked with students on how to teach and how to pace your lessons and align them with the content standards. They could model lessons and go through some of the lessons they would be teaching when they got into the classroom. She remembers that most of her professors were adjunct professors and were still in their own classrooms so the information they presented was more relatable. However, she did not receive direct instruction regarding the NCPTS or the performance elements found in the evaluation rubric.

Kelly's teaching methods courses from her junior and senior year helped to prepare her for student teaching. The combination of lecture and theory application in those classes helped her to understand teaching concepts and how to plan lessons:

You learn everything from planning and how to plan units, to then following how to plan weeks and days and how to break up ninety minutes [length of a block schedule class period] into chunks so that your students are engaged for the whole class period and how to differentiate and scaffold activities will still making them engaged in fun [activities]...[methods classes] furthered our own thinking into what we were going to do next semester [student-teaching] and geared us towards understanding by design [curriculum development].

When asked if any of her methods classes were connected to the NCPTS, Kelly did not recall any information being tied to the standards. The lecture and theories presented during her classes were not related to how she would be evaluated once she entered into her own classroom.

Student-Teaching Practicum

When Bailey was asked about which activities she experienced in her teacher preparation program that she felt most prepared her for becoming a classroom teacher, she responded “the only thing that really helped me, in thinking back on it, is doing the internship, that student-teaching internship.” She expressed that the hands-on experience was valuable for her and allowed her the opportunity to challenge her own personal views and biases and work to overcome them through daily interactions with her students. She did not believe the courses in theories and practice helped her transition into the classroom but she did feel as though classes that allowed her time with actual students were the most beneficial. She found direct interactions with students, along with her student-teaching, were the most impactful activities she was engaged in as a part of her pre-service teacher preparation that helped her meet the NCPTS found in the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers:

I don't think they [pre-service program] prepared us for realizing that a lot of education is jumping through hoops like I feel that is what a lot of these teachers are doing with this evaluation thing. They are deciding not to put too much emphasis [on the rubric] because they realize at the end of the day, it's what they do in the classroom that makes a difference rather than is what is on a piece of paper that says they are distinguished in things.

Mia did not start to experience the teacher evaluation process, NCEES, or become familiar with the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers until she began her student-teaching assignment. She explained that she had two cooperating teachers who were assigned to help her complete her student-teaching. During her student-teaching, she was able to observe one of her cooperating teachers during a classroom evaluation. She remembered that

observation and shared that an administrator “came in, observed for like ten minutes, then left.” Even though she was able to observe the classroom evaluation, she was not allowed to sit in on either the pre-conference or post-conference between the cooperating teacher and her evaluator.

Regardless of whether she was able to sit in on the pre-conference and post-conference, her cooperating teacher did show her the rubric:

After the principal left, he [cooperating teacher] did show me that rubric that he was going to be getting evaluated on but again I did not know there was supposed to have a conference or anything after that or beforehand. He showed it [the rubric] and said ‘this is where you really want to be [distinguished] however, most teachers end up about right here [proficient]’ and I was like ‘ok, cool.’ I ended up hearing the same thing from my administrator when I first got here after hired as a teacher.

Mia’s cooperating teachers let her “take the reins” in the classroom once she was comfortable in the instructional setting. To prepare her for her independent student-teaching, she co-taught a lot with her cooperating teachers, but she felt a lot of it was on her own:

I think that [student-teaching] was pretty beneficial because in the classroom I am by myself, you know what I mean? There is nobody there holding my hand doing it with me and I think whenever they let me do it by myself it was beneficial. But, having somebody there at the beginning of my student teaching where we were co-teaching so I could see how they do it, and how they do their classroom management and stuff like that was beneficial.

During Mia's discussion about what the most beneficial aspect of her teacher education program was, she believed that student-teaching was the most beneficial for her:

I took a lot of classes within my program but I definitely feel like I didn't get the most out of them until I did my student-teaching and I think that goes with a lot of different majors and stuff. You don't really get the most out of anything until you are in your internship.

When Mia was asked to describe the activities she engaged in while in her undergraduate program that she believes helped her to become acclimated to the NCPTS or the evaluation system she was going to participate in as a classroom teacher, Mia replied that there were no activities that she could recall that helped to prepare her for the evaluation process or that helped her understand the NCPTS.

Prior to her student-teaching experience, Avi did not have experience with the NCPTS or the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers. It wasn't until a few days before the start of her student-teaching assignment that she was introduced to the rubric, teaching standards, and elements found in the rubric: "They showed it [rubric] to us a couple of days before we started student-teaching so that we could kind of see it, and see what they were looking for but not before that." She did not recall taking any classes, seminars, or projects that helped to acclimate her to how she would be evaluated. When asked if she felt prepared for the evaluation process prior to her student teaching assignment, Avi's response was "no...it was kind of scary."

During her student-teaching practicum, Avi's university evaluators used the Rubric for Evaluation North Carolina Teachers to evaluate her instruction on two occasions; once in

the middle of the student-teaching experience, and once again at the end. She asserted “we used the exact rubric that they [evaluators] are using now on me. My supervisors at [college name omitted] used the exact rubric and graded us just like a principal would.” In addition, her cooperating teacher also used the rubric to evaluate her instruction. Avi reported feelings of anxiety and stress when it came time to be evaluated during her student-teaching but reported that it ultimately prepared her for being evaluated when she became a full-time teacher. She accounted “now that I used it student-teaching, and I am using it now, I know exactly what they [evaluators] are looking for every time.”

Prior to her first evaluation being conducted by her university supervisors, Avi went through the rubric detailing the different teaching standards and elements but did not spend an extensive amount of time reviewing it. She and her cooperating teacher reviewed the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers before her first observation. She remembered:

When I was student-teaching, it was like once a week I was getting observed. And so, it was a lot easier for me to, you know, know exactly what I needed to do. We would have conversations every single week after I was observed and they would be like, ‘next week, this is what I want to see.’ So, I knew exactly what I needed to get better at before they came back.

An activity that Avi found useful while she was engaged in her student-teaching practicum was being asked to explain what artifacts go with each teaching standard so that she could start to determine what evidence she would need in order to satisfy the different standards and elements within the rubric. Prior to student-teaching, Avi was told that she was expected to be marked developing on the rubric during her first observation. However, the expectation was to be marked developing on all of the standards but by the end of the

practicum, she would be rated at proficient or higher. Being taught which artifacts satisfied which elements in the teaching standards helped her to transition from developing to at least proficient because she could provide evidence of her instruction that satisfied the various requirements found in the evaluation rubric. She “made a website with every standard on it and artifacts to go under each standard. So, once I realized that I had all the things that I needed it wasn’t too stressful...it’s a big jump from developing to proficient.”

Sasha was a unique participant compared to the others because she earned her undergraduate degree outside of North Carolina, so her teacher education program would not necessarily prepare her for being evaluated by an observer using the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers. However, when she shared her pre-services experiences with the teacher evaluation process in general, she discussed:

In my school [undergraduate program] I went through an extra round of interning and I got see my cooperating teacher being observed. I kind of saw what principals look for or whoever is watching you looks for. North Carolina is a little different [than the state she earned her undergraduate degree] because they don’t have the rating scales.

Sasha’s pre-service program required her to complete internships prior to her student-teaching practicum. Her internship began at the end of her sophomore year in college and then again her junior year.

I feel like getting that whole two semesters of being in the classroom and being able to see what you are really supposed to do, and how you are supposed to do things, or how you are not supposed to do things, kind of really got me ready for

teaching...learning the in's and out's helped me to see what I need to do when I am in my own classroom.

The ability to watch veteran teachers, who were assigned to her by her university advisors, in the classroom and observe their observations was a valuable pre-service experience for Sasha. She was given permission to sit in on one pre-conference with a veteran teacher she was observing for her internship but was not able to sit in on the post-conference. Sasha described the pre-conference meeting as the teacher providing an introduction and overview of the lesson that was going to be evaluated. She remembers “the teacher I was observing was telling the principal what content standards she was going to be teaching and what the lesson was and expectations for student learning.”

Prior to observing the observation, Sasha was able to sit down with the teacher and review what the evaluation was going to look like. She also reviewed the evaluation tool that was being used prior to her own evaluations. The fact that she was able to do all this during an internship, rather than student-teaching, was something that Sasha felt really prepared her. The internship prepared her for student-teaching and student-teaching prepared her for her first-year teaching.

When asked if she took classes in her elementary education courses that were geared toward preparing her for what it was going to be like being evaluated in the classroom, she replied “no” and stated that the classes were mostly academic subject area and had little to do with actual teaching standards.

Students in Kelly's pre-service program were taught how to gather evidence (artifacts) to support their performance ratings. In her words, Kelly remembered:

After we looked at it [the rubric] and kind of talked about what would be considered evidence and how to go about explaining that evidence, we were very much kind of autonomous in gather the evidence through our experiences student-teaching and knowing how this demonstrated our proficiency or us developing throughout the semester.

Students were able to demonstrate their ability to support their performance standards at the midpoint of the student-teaching practicum. Kelly described a meeting where she had to present her evidence to her cooperating teacher and then two or three of her university supervisors that would support her ratings:

We could use pretty much anything for that midway checkpoint. So, lesson plans that we had turned in, any of our observation feedback and revisions. We stood in front of our cooperating teacher and supervisors and just defend why we thought we were developing.

In addition to the defense of her performance rating, Kelly completed self-reflections/self-assessments and compared her self-assessment results with her cooperating teacher and university supervisors. During the comparison, they came up with a plan to implement strategies to move from developing into proficient. Even though the expectation at the midpoint was for students to be developing, student-teachers could present data to support a proficiency rating if they felt as though there was enough supporting data.

Kelly described the final examination near the end of her student-teaching practicum in the similar manner. She was able to keep the evidence she presented at the midterm and

use it towards showing she had moved from developing to proficient in areas in which she was not already proficient. She explained:

Same thing towards the final when we met again. We kept all of the evidence that we presented midway. We gather more evidence in our portfolio. I had proficiency in about seventy percent of the categories by midterm so all I had to do [for the final] was defend myself in those areas that I was developing to get proficient. I could also present new evidence for those proficient marks that I thought I was distinguished in.

She did not feel “capped” by staying proficient throughout her defense of her student-teaching performance. She relished the idea of being able to provide evidence to support higher ratings she felt she earned.

She described her experience defending herself using the rubric as a “pretty seamless process” and that she “knew what to expect” once she was finished with her undergraduate program. When asked if she thought the exercise prepared her for the teacher evaluation process once she got into the classroom, she offered the following insight:

I don't know if it was a good methodology because it was kind of stressful and, again, very vague. They wanted us to figure it out ourselves and kind of know what I meant to evaluate and analyze the article [rubric], see what it was asking us to do, and then gather the evidence and defend ourselves, rather than them telling us what they were looking for. We knew they were looking for developing but we didn't know how to get and how to prove that to them.

While she did not feel as though the process of finding artifacts and defending herself without guidance was productive, Kelly acknowledged that student-teachers were taught to

evaluate teachers, identify what effective instruction looks like, and how to meet the performance criteria prescribed by the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers. When she thought about whether or not the professional teaching standards were used as a guide to identifying effective instruction, Kelly responded “no.” The professional teaching standards were not used to exemplify what instruction should look like in a typical classroom.

Kelly recalled her student-teaching practicum and the amount of effort, work and desire that went into completing it. She remembered:

I think student-teaching is one of the hardest things that you do because you are still in school, yet you are given this entirely new way of being assessed because it is not just about you anymore...you are responsible for the thirty-plus students' education while you are still learning yourself. And it's a lot more prep work. It's a lot more observations. It's this new kind of mentality and lifestyle. You are not used to getting up and working twelve to fourteen hour days. You are not used to grading and sitting in all of the meetings that go along with teaching.

When asked if she would change anything about her student-teaching practicum, Kelly responded:

I don't think I would change anything about it because, while it is hard and rigorous, and a culture shock, it's not like you are being thrown into the wolves' den, at least through my undergraduate experience...I wouldn't change anything because that makes your first year easier in some aspects. And you are more prepared for the big things like planning, grading, and different dynamics within different classes.

Her student-teaching experience helped to prepare her for the “little things” in teaching with regards to paperwork and other aspects that aren’t really taught through curriculum.

All of the participants in the study remembered that the single most memorable, and single most helpful, component of their pre-service teacher preparation program was student teaching. While some participants remarked that the work they had to complete (i.e. extensive lesson plans) was challenging, it ended up helping them once they entered the classroom as the lead teacher because it trained them how to develop effective lesson plans to meet the curriculum standards. Participants also mentioned that the student-teaching aspect of the program helped them to become comfortable with interacting with students and how to develop relationships while engaging students in the curriculum.

Except for Kelly, most participants did not report significant activities related to the NCPTS or the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers. Participants did engage in observation activities and, in some cases, were able to review the rubric but there were no specific classes or instruction that was designed to help them acclimate to the standards and what those standards look like in practice.

Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers

Kelly was first introduced to the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers when she was a sophomore in college. While she was taking her education courses concurrently with the courses for her major. She recalls:

We’ve been familiar with the rubric since sophomore year where they just kind of showed it to us and said ‘hey, this is how things are done.’ We got more familiar with it our senior year, right before we started student-teaching, where we kind of broke

down the essential standards in a course of class that correlates to student-teaching and started talking about what it means to earn check marks to get to be proficiency.

Being marked proficient on the rubric was the ultimate end goal that was provided to her by her university supervisors with the understanding that she would have emerging teaching skills which leads to be developing at the beginning, and possibly at the midpoint, of her student-teaching practicum. But, by the end of the practicum the expectation was that the student-teacher had developed teaching skills in each of the five teaching standards that they would be able to support a rating of proficiency in each performance element of each standard.

As Mia shared what her experiences were for her teacher education program in preparing her for being evaluated once she transitioned into the classroom, she indicated that she could not recall any specific lessons or projects that helped her become acclimated to the evaluation process, the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina teachers, or the professional teaching standards found within the rubric:

They [pre-service teacher education program] mentioned you'll be evaluated once you are a teacher, but they did not really go in-depth as to what that process was going to be like. I had no idea what was to be expected of me, or of the people who would be evaluating me. So I did not really have too much experience or knowledge as to what that was going to be like before I actually got observed.

None of the participants recalled receiving instruction or in-depth engagement with the NCPTS or the elements found in the rubric prior to starting their student-teaching experiences. Sasha and Kelly both shared their experiences that occurred during the student-

teaching practicum that allowed them to gain hands-on experience with teaching standards. Kelly detailed extensive opportunities with her college advisors and cooperating teachers regarding her having to develop artifacts to support her performance rankings. Sasha received her training in a state outside of North Carolina but was able to share her experiences being able to observe classroom observations during both her internship and student-teaching. Sasha was able to observe a pre-conference meeting with her cooperating teacher and observer but was unable to observe a post-conference.

During the student-teaching practicum, Sasha, Bailey, and Mia reported that their cooperating teachers and university supervisors did not use the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers or reference the NCPTS in the observations that were conducted during the practicum. Sasha participated in a teacher education program outside of North Carolina which she explains why they would not have used the North Carolina standards as a reference. Bailey recalled that the rubric used by her university supervisors used similar language but was not the same as the rubric used on classroom teachers in North Carolina.

The result was that both Kelly and Sasha felt comfortable with being evaluated as a classroom teacher while Baily, Avi, and Mia reported feelings of being anxious, uncomfortable, and unprepared for the teacher evaluation process.

Research Question #2: How is the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers incorporated into the mentor program to support beginning teachers?

Mentor/Peer Support

When Bailey responded to describing the impact her mentor has on her preparation for her observations, she provided this portrayal:

He's [mentor] like 'don't look through this for you because you are a beginning teacher and you're not going to reach this [accomplished and distinguished]. And we don't expect you to because this is a section that if you get this [high marks] you've been teaching for twenty-five years.'

When following up on her mentor's comments, Bailey said that she equated those high marks on the evaluation rubric to earning A's and B's in college. She felt a bit deflated because she was being told that, as a first-year teacher, she will not produce results as a teacher that are in the A/B range. "So, right off the bat, like you're already not going to get these categories that, in my mind, transfer to like an A [in school] and it's hard to kind of come to terms with that. But he [mentor] was like 'don't even look at it. It doesn't even matter.'" Bailey's mentor told her to focus on earning proficient ratings because that is all that is required to not raise red flags about her instructional practice. She explained further:

You spend your whole life, well I spent my whole life, trying to achieve as great as I can, and then, right off the bat, saying something on the lines of 'well, you're not going to get there because you lack experience' kind of sucks. It is not what you want to hear. You want to hear 'well, keep working on it and you'll do fine and we will get you there.'

When asked about her peer observation as it pertains to her beginning support teacher program, Bailey remarked that peer observations don't seem to use fidelity when conducting peer observations:

I know the teachers don't want to do it [peer observations] because it wastes their time and their planning time. When I've gotten my feedback I have gotten all those

things [accomplished and distinguished] so what he [her mentor] says isn't true...when you are told time and time again that it doesn't really matter, in the sense that you're not going to get those things and then you end up getting them even though you didn't meet the criteria that the person talked about, it becomes very confusing.

In addition to this, Bailey went on to say:

You've already been told that you are not going to meet the accomplished or distinguished for most of them [standards on the rubric] anyway so if you said 'teachers who have been teaching twenty-five years are the only ones who get these categories [accomplished and distinguished],' and I get them, does that mean I've done really well? Are people too nice? Have I peaked in the first four months of my career? Like what is happening?

During one of her early meetings with her mentor, Bailey remembered being told "not to make things extra special. Like just because you know somebody is coming in doesn't mean that you have to go above and beyond and create a lesson that's going to kind of waiver it [evaluation results] in your favor because you feel like you have to go the extra mile." She also recalled being told that feedback from the rubric will not help her with her everyday instruction and not to try to present a perfect lesson. "He [mentor] first tells me to be honest about it [the lesson] and stay true to what you actually have to do and don't build it up so much."

Mia was supposed to meet with her mentor once per week and attend monthly beginning teacher meetings that were facilitated by the school's beginning teacher support

program coordinator. While Mia admitted that they did not always meet weekly, her mentor did attend the monthly meetings with her.

When explaining what activities her and her mentor engaged in to help prepare for her observations/evaluations, Mia recounted that they had developed a professional goal and established a timeline for meeting the goal but they “did not really discuss anything in regards to the evaluations with administration and the rubric they use” and they did not review the NCPTS or what each standard looks like in classroom application.

Avi had a mentor that was assigned to help acclimate her to teaching. When she described the activities that her and her mentor engage in to prepare for her classroom observations, Avi remarked that the content of their meetings were not been specific to the evaluation standards but had been more focused on what personal concerns she had about her own classroom. She explained “we just kind of sit down and talk about specific things that I am worried about, and she will tell me like ‘this is what you should do. Make sure you have these things in your room.’” Avi described her mentor as more of a support person when she was stressed than someone she routinely relied on for support with instruction and classroom practices. When recalling whether her mentor talked with her about the different standards in the rubric and how the evaluator would use those standards during the observation, Avi replied “no” and could not assert that she and her mentor discussed the NCPTS that are interwoven into the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers.

To better assist her in the evaluation process and the internalization of feedback, Avi would have preferred if her mentor attended pre-conference and post-conference meetings to help her ask questions and gain clarity about what is being expected of her as she was

evaluated. In addition, Avi wasn't confident that her mentor paid attention to the results of her evaluation:

I don't know that she [mentor] really reads through it [evaluation]. She probably just scrolls down to the bottom if we are being honest. That would be good [mentor attending the meetings] because they she would hear what we are talking about and know what I need to be working on. Then, whenever she is coming to meet me like she is supposed to every week, we would be able to sit down and talk about how I have progressed in those specific areas.

While describing her meetings with her mentor, Avi replied "we don't meet as often as we should I guess...we don't have that great of communication happening right now." During her second interview near the end of her evaluation cycle when she was asked about how often she had met with her mentor, Avi replied "almost never. That is not the case with most other mentor-mentee relationships at our school. But mine does not really come up to my room every week like we are supposed to do." Avi estimated that she had met with her mentor no more than four times over the past few months of that school year but they did attend the monthly beginning teacher meetings together if her mentor had free time.

While there had been discussions around the evaluation process, Avi "never talked about the feedback that I've gotten from evaluations" with her mentor. When asked about the role her mentor had in helping her assess the feedback from her classroom observations, she replied that her mentor did "not [have] much of a role" but she felt it would have been beneficial if she had a mentor who took a greater responsibility in helping her interpret feedback after each observation.

Avi sought out support from her co-workers more than her mentor because she saw her co-workers more often. One challenge that she found in talking with the other teachers about the evaluation process and their experiences was that each teacher had a different observer so it is difficult to discuss common traits of the observers. “We each have different observers. I have the principal, another [teacher] has one AP [assistant principal] and another has another AP. So we have talked about the difference in between how they evaluate us.” More importantly, the veteran teachers provided helpful guidance to suggest what each evaluator may be looking for and what they wanted to see when they entered the classroom for an observation.

Sasha’s mentor had been diagnosed with a non-life-threatening medical condition and was “hands off.” At the beginning of the year, they would meet every week and they would communicate with a notebook where Sasha could ask questions and have her mentor respond but since her mentor’s illness they did not meet as much and stopped using the notebook.

A few days before Sasha’s first observation, her mentor was observed by the school principal and they sat down to discuss what had occurred during the observation. It was helpful that her mentor sat down and gave her a preview of what to expect. But since then, they have not discussed the evaluation rubric. For any questions, she went to her grade level team. She stated “I can still go to her [mentor] but for the most part I go to my team” because they were all located in the same area. When asked how she would define her mentor’s role, Sasha replied “I don’t know.” She remarked that she likes the fact that her mentor wasn’t very involved because she was not micromanaged and that allowed her to learn and grow on her own.

Sasha's most memorable experience during the evaluation process was "when my peer mentor came to watch me. She gave me really good feedback and I felt like my peer observation was very positive. I felt like I wasn't being judged." The process with her mentor felt natural for her and the feedback that she received regarding her overall instruction was relevant to the curriculum and instructional approaches she was using. Overall, she felt as though her peer observation and conferences provided more in-depth feedback that could help her improve her instruction.

For her end-of-year evaluation and summative assessment, Sasha sat down with her mentor to go over all of her previous evaluations and discussed her end-of-year professional development plan (PDP). When asked about any help she received interpreting her evaluations from her mentor, Sasha replied that she had not received any help from her mentor because there was not feedback to interpret and, since her mentor had a different evaluator for the year, would not try to offer insight into what the principal was looking for during observations and on the summative assessment. Sasha noted that, especially near the end of the evaluation cycle, she noticed that her principal had not been updating information into NCEES. It had taken her and her mentor multiple attempts at reaching out to the principal to get him to finalize everything for the year which had caused Sasha some distress because she would have liked it to be completed. In this regard, her mentor had been a great advocate in helping her complete the process.

Kelly met with her mentor weekly at a pre-scheduled time on the same day each week. During her mentor meetings, they spent time reflecting on the previous weeks and answering questions that she may have had regarding varying aspects of teaching (i.e. grades, behavior management).

Kelly taught Advanced Placement classes and since she never had experience with that before, she relied on her mentor to help her improve rigor and understand the Advanced Placement curriculum. Her mentor was helpful. Through two mentor evaluations:

She [mentor] is helping me with rigor and just kind of making it so that she is my check and balance making sure that I am pushing these students who are taking a college-level course, and not just giving them something that I'd think is easy.

Kelly believed she was extremely hard on herself after every observation. When she was in a post-conference meeting with her mentor, she described the meeting as a back-and-forth on ideas from what occurred during the lesson. Kelly emphasizes, "I'll go back from the observation and say 'oh, that was terrible.' And her evaluator or mentor would say, 'why?' and so I give her the counterargument and she gives the actual argument and the evidence." From Kelly's perspective, working with her mentor was an invaluable experience to help her become acclimated to the Advanced Placement curriculum and her feedback from her mentor had been supportive.

When asked to describe the activities that Kelly and her mentor had engaged in to prepare for the teacher evaluation process, she replied "she [mentor] and I have never sat down to talk about how to prepare for an observation. We haven't looked at the rubric." In following up with her comment, she remembered her post-conferences where she and her mentor completed a self-reflection about the lesson. The feedback from her mentor observations did not refer to the professional teaching standards found within the rubric. Specifically, her mentor asked Kelly to provide an area that she wanted the mentor to look for (i.e. rigor) and then the mentor would only provide feedback for that area "until I ask her to look at something else."

When thinking about her mentor observations, Kelly's perception was that if there were critical issues that the mentor saw about her instruction that required corrective action, she felt as though it would have been brought to her attention. But, no "red flags" had come up.

When asked about her mentor's role in helping her assess feedback from her evaluations, Kelly responded:

I haven't shown her [mentor] any feedback from my observations. She and I will talk about it, but if I have any questions or concerns she is very good about giving ideas and suggestions on how to approach administration to bring it up. But as far as showing her [mentor] my evaluations or us going over it together, we don't. The only observations we have gone over together are the observations that she has done for me [as part of the beginning teacher mentor program].

Kelly's recalled that her mentor was not involved with her professional development goals and that those goals were developed by her department. Her mentor did have to sign off on her goals at the beginning, middle, and end of the year.

Each of the participants in the study had been assigned to a veteran teacher who received mentor training from the school district. Each participant reported that they were expected to meet with their mentor teacher at least once per week as well as participate in monthly beginning teacher mentor meetings as a part of the beginning teacher support program. Avi, Sasha, Mia, and Bailey reported that they did not meet weekly with their mentor but Kelly reported that she and her mentor met during a pre-scheduled time each week.

With regards to the NCPTS and the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers, Mia, Bailey, Avi, Sasha, nor Kelly stated that they hadn't engaged in continuous discussions regarding the teacher evaluation process. In fact, other than Sasha's mentor previewing the rubric with her, none of the participants in the study reported having spoken with their mentor at all about the teacher evaluation process or the NCPTS. In addition, the participants did not feel as though their mentor was effective at helping them understand the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers or analyze the feedback received during evaluations to help the beginning teachers understand the feedback provided.

Mentor Meetings

Bailey had not become familiar with the evaluation rubric until after the school year had started. She recalled "I hadn't seen it [the rubric] until I started the job. And we were a month and a half into school when you have to start doing the self-assessment. And even then it wasn't really explained to me."

When Bailey described the first time she was asked in her monthly beginning teacher meeting to complete her self-assessment, she remembered:

It was just 'look through it. If you have any questions let me know.' It's like four hundred years long so like, I thought there are other things that be more like pertinent and relevant to do. So, I looked at it, clicked it off, and that was kind of it.

The beginning teacher meetings that Bailey participated in were monthly and lasted approximately one hour. She was one of a handful of beginning teachers in the meeting and her mentor did not attend the meetings with her. When I asked her if they ever discussed the NCPTS or Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers she replied:

Not really. Mostly, it's just trying to like figure out how to survive the climate, the other teachers, and like whatever other problems arise. Because at the end of the day, like that rubric, I feel like a lot of it is only used if you are doing really poorly and whatever county you are in wants to start creating a paper trail to fire you...so it's not something we focus on. Mostly we focus on interpersonal relationships.

Mia shared an experience that she found to be helpful that occurred during a monthly beginning teacher meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to help her become more familiar with the evaluation rubric. She recalled:

We did a little round robin game with it [the rubric] and we each wrote down different things that we would expect to see within the different standards within developing, proficiency, accomplished, and distinguished. We were all in groups and we focused on each standard at a time and once we were done with one standard we moved to the next. I don't remember exactly. It was at the beginning of the school year.

Mia provided insight into what occurred at a typical monthly beginning teacher meeting. She stated that they reviewed information about the school's magnet theme, having been given strategies about staying organized as a teacher, and how to reduce stress and knowing how and when to relax." This [teaching] is a lot because there is a lot going on, you know, as teachers. So, we talked about stuff like that on how to kind of cool down and just reevaluate ourselves before we, you know, burn out." Mia and her mentor reviewed the content discussed in the monthly meetings when they met one-on-one.

One other subject that was discussed at one of her monthly BT meetings was taking the time to self-reflect about instructional practices in the classroom. While one of the standards on the evaluation rubric related to personal reflection, that connection was not discussed during this BT session.

Avi participated in monthly mentor meetings and her mentor was often present with her. However, her mentor also coached a sport and there were times during the sports season when the mentor could not attend the mentor meetings because she had other obligations with her athletic team. The topics that Avi regarded as being most prevalent in her beginning teacher meetings had to do with classroom management and engaging in activities that support teachers in maintaining a productive and orderly classroom environment. Other topics that had been discussed in her monthly meetings had to do with documentation, documenting parent contacts, and how to refer behavior issues to administration. She did not report on-going activities during those meetings that were related to the evaluation process. At the beginning of the year, the beginning teacher coordinator asked for input regarding topics of monthly discussions and the meetings had been based around the suggestions of the beginning teachers and their mentors.

During a beginning teacher support program meeting earlier in the year, Sasha found one of the meetings to be informative with regards to the North Carolina teacher evaluation process and the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers. She reported that one of the school administrators attended the meeting and spent almost the entire meeting reviewing the rubric:

The assistant principal came in one day. She hooked her computer up to the projector and she went through every single standard that we had to meet and she talked about

what the evaluator would be looking for. And she went specifically into technology- that was a big piece for her. But then she laid out how you have to have each box checked before you can move to the next category.

Sasha reported that the extra time with school administration to review the rubric was helpful. “I definitely understood it better. My mentor had shown me but I still didn’t really understand it.” After the administrator had finished her presentation at the mentor meeting, Sasha felt comfortable with the rubric. She remarked that the meeting had taken place after her first evaluation and it would have been better for her if she had gone through that presentation prior to her first observation. Sasha’s mentor sat down with her after the meeting with the assistant principal and provided “tips on what to do to move up [on the ratings scale] and what the principal might want to see.” In addition to going over the rubric, Sasha recalls other sessions related to standards of basic reading, intervention, and the school districts strategic vision.

There was an earlier meeting that was specific to the evaluation process and Avi said the focus was about gathering evidence to support final ratings for the summative assessments and that helped avoid being rated “not demonstrated” on the evaluation rubric.

Bailey stated that she does attend the monthly meetings but her mentor does not. Avi’s mentor is an athletic coach and often does not attend the meetings during her sport season. Mia, Avi, and Sasha reported that they engaged in one activity during their monthly support meeting that directly dealt with the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers and the teacher evaluation process. All three of these respondents believed that the activity improved their understanding of the teacher evaluation process and made them more comfortable with the rubric.

Overwhelmingly, the participants in the study described the monthly meetings as a time in which beginning teachers were taught about varying aspects of teaching (i.e. organization, relationship building) but acknowledged that the teacher evaluation process nor the NCPTS had been a major focus or continuous topic during the meetings.

Research Question #3: Are professional development opportunities for first-year teachers aligned with the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers?

No Alignment

When Bailey described the professional development opportunities she had and how they were related to the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers, she replied, “I have not had any professional development other than what we’ve done like on half days, and those are always more staff community building rather than anything else.” When responding to a probing question that asked if she had any specific professional development on the rubric itself and how to meet the standards of the rubric during daily instruction, her response was “absolutely not.”

When she was asked about which professional development opportunities were the most productive for her, Bailey discussed how the district is changing curriculum for her content area but not for her grade level. So, while the information was interesting and could be useful for a teacher teaching in that specific content area for the specific grade level, it was not relevant for her instruction but was still interesting.

Mia’s professional development had not included anything on the evaluation rubric or helping her meet the various standards found in the rubric. “We have the professional development things like during our early releases, so I attend those” but those professional development opportunities do not include the evaluation rubric. When responding to a

question about her professional development plan and the goals within the plan, Mia could not recall if she had a goal for her evaluations or the NCPTS.

Mia's most productive professional development she attended had to do with how to use technology to develop classroom assessments in order to differentiate questions for various learners. The training helped her to develop assessments and make them adaptable for all types of students.

Avi had not participated in any professional development opportunities that were directly related to the evaluation process or the standards and elements found in the rubric. While she had not participated in any professional development opportunities related to the rubric, she stated it would be "great to have one." She affirmed:

Just so that I can know a lot more about the standard like I learned about it student-teaching. But, obviously, it's a different context now that I am the actual teacher. So I just feel like it would be beneficial to know more about maybe if I got something lower in a category how I could help get it [the rating] up.

When asked about the most informative professional development she has been engaged during her first-year teaching, Avi had trouble answering. "I am trying to think of ones that we had, like early release days. I obviously can't remember them so maybe they weren't that helpful." When given a bit more time to process the question and recall the different activities she has been involved in, she could not recall anything specific that helped with her instruction.

Sasha's goals in her professional development plan were not related to the NCPTS and were not geared to learning more about them. She recalled that her PDP goals were more

related to content curriculum and positive behavior support and intervention (PBIS). When asked if, other than one of her early meetings with the other beginning teachers and assistant principal, she had engaged in a professional development opportunity that went in-depth with the teaching standards, Sasha replied “no.”

While remembering the most helpful professional development that Sasha had completed during her first year, she remembered a three-day training that all of the teachers had to complete regarding a new curriculum. She thought it was helpful because the three days were spread out through the entire semester. After the first training they were given time to collaborate and put some of the new concepts into practice prior to the second training day. Another helpful professional development she attended had to do with PBIS. An administrator from central office came to the school during an early release day and went in-depth about the different strategies of PBIS and different ways to positively manage student behavior.

Kelly did not recall any professional development with regards to the NCPTS or the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers. When asked about when professional development during her first-year was provided to help her better understand the standards and how to demonstrate the various ratings, she stated that she had not participated in any professional development that helped her in that regard:

The standards we focused on are like the common core standards and so we have spent a lot of time breaking down the language of standards and what the standards are actually asking teachers to do or asking students to be able to do by the end of the year. We have spent a quite a bit of time doing that.

But, as she recalled, professional development had not been provided for the standards found on the teacher evaluation tool.

None of the participants of this study acknowledge engaging in professional development opportunities that are aligned with the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers or dealing with the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards. In addition, none of the participants of this study have a goal on their Professional Development Plan (PDP) that are aligned with the rubric or professional teaching standards.

Research Question #4: How do first-year teachers describe their experiences being evaluated using the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers?

Lack of Understanding

Prior to her first year in the classroom, Bailey was “vaguely familiar” with the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers, the NCPTS, and the process for which she was going to be evaluated. It wasn’t until after the school year started that she was introduced to the North Carolina Educators Effectiveness System (NCEES) and the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers:

I remember flipping though it [rubric] the first time a few months prior [to teaching] and being like ‘that is very in-depth and very specific. I don’t know how anybody gets distinguishing because that seems crazy.’ And it especially feels like you’re setting somebody new up for failure because they are not going to reach that level at the beginning, and it kind of sucks.”

Bailey had used the evaluation tool to conceive a philosophy regarding how much time, energy, and effort she is going to put into her evaluations:

It kind of helped me realize not to put too much stock into things like that [the rubric] because it's so opinion-based that if you were teaching the same lesson four times and you had a different person who was using the same rubric, everybody would grade you differently. It's all interpretation.

Bailey also went on to discuss how challenging it had been for her to transition from her teacher preparation program and be evaluated based on standards that she did not feel completely comfortable or familiar with:

And I think, somebody who goes straight from college to a job, going from making straight A's because you worked so hard, and then going into a job where you might not do as well because you're new at it, and the expectation for yourself is still high, is kind of detrimental to your mental health a little bit...you're like 'you're here, you are happy, like you made it [into teaching],' like you are doing what you want to do, then you get a report back that is so convoluted, and busy, that you can't determine what in the world it is talking about in the first place.

Bailey reflected on her first experience with an administrator during the evaluation process. She specifically remarked about her first post-conference after the first administrative evaluation was completed:

I don't remember flipping through it [the rubric]. I think he [administrator] specifically only goes through it, and if there's an issue, that's when we'd address it. We don't go through it step by step, seeing what happens. So even though I did really well and got all my marks, they mean nothing because I don't know what any of it means really.

Mia was a late hire for the school district. While she was not hired prior to the start of the school year, she was teaching shortly after. When she reflected on her first pre-conference, she shared “the pre-conference thing was pretty standard, I guess. I didn’t seem like it was that big of a deal.” The administrator shared with Mia what was going to happen, what he was going to be looking for in the observation, and asked her to develop her professional development goals. The researcher probed more about whether the administrator shared with her the different standards and what they would look like in the classroom. She remarked:

Kind of. He kind of just went over it [the rubric]. He was like ‘this is what this is, this is what this is. This is where I am assuming you are going to be, and then this is what I am looking for.’ He said ‘this is where a lot of people end up [proficient].’

Avi shared her belief that the rubric is long and “it’s hard to remember every little thing that I need to be doing the whole time. It was stressful for me at the beginning because it is so many things...it’s hard to know exactly how each different person evaluating you is going to look at each piece.” Not only did Avi feel the evaluation rubric is long, but she also feels it is hard to understand and the wording is difficult along with some of the elements. She finds it challenging to know exactly what observers are looking for and how to apply the performance standards to her day-to-day instruction.

Bailey and Avi recalled that none of the feedback or discussions during their post-conferences related back to the NCPTS or performance elements found on the evaluation.

Bailey remarked that she only felt as though her evaluator would only go through the rubric standard by standard if there was a concern about her instruction. But when there was

no concern noted, then they would not address any of the standards specifically. Mia shared that the only time her evaluator addressed the rubric was during her pre-conference when he was explaining what he would be looking for. But in Mia's case, she never had a post-conference for subsequent observations so she was unable to share whether or not her observer would have addressed the professional teaching standards. Avi stated that she does not look at the rubric at all and even during the post-conference with her evaluator, her experience was that the evaluator would not discuss the specific standards in the rubric.

Kelly had access to all of the feedback from her evaluations within a 24-hour period and had the opportunity to look through the performance standard marks and review the evaluator's comments. If she felt as though there is an area that may be not accurately scored, she could provide documentation to support a higher rating. When asked to explain her personal feelings regarding the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers, she responded that, while it is nice to have the option to strive for being marked as accomplished or distinguished, she sees it as an impossible goal for teachers, especially beginning teachers. She asserts:

Distinguished seems almost inhumane to achieve and to do it because you are supposed to be evaluated on doing this [teaching] on a consistent basis. Well, if you are only getting observed three periods of the year, how do they know if you are being consistent or not? They don't know if you are hitting your marks every single day based off of three observations that last about 20 minutes. It is hard to evaluate someone in a snapshot and say that they are proficient or they are accomplished but I really think it is almost impossible to be distinguished consistently.

Peer Observation

Bailey's first peer observation did not go as planned. After she and her colleague scheduled the peer observation, Bailey prepared for it. She developed a lesson plan in which she would be providing direct instruction to the students and the observer could see how she plans for and delivers instruction. Due to an issue within the school, the observation was rescheduled. The peer observer came in on a day when Bailey had not had direct instruction planned. Here is how Bailey describes her peer observation:

She [peer observer] sat down, stoic face, didn't say anything to me the whole time. I was popping around because my kids were working on persuasive essays, and they were all working independently doing some research. And I helped each one of them and kept them on track. When we had our post-conference a few days later, she [peer observer] seemed very, very, very impressed. And she said she didn't believe I was a first-year teacher from the way I kept the kids focused and things like that. But it still feels fake because that whole thing [rubric], the whole list of things is just a lot.

Mia's first formal classroom observation was conducted recently by a veteran teacher within her department. When asked to describe her experiences being evaluated by a peer observer, Mia replied "it was fine. She came in. She sat down for 30 minutes. She took some notes. She was supposed to have emailed them back to me" but Mia did not receive the notes. Mia and her peer observer met shortly after the observation and she received feedback from the classroom observation. Mia recalled "she [peer observer] gave me some points on some things that I could work on and gave me a lot of things that she thought I was doing really well in the class." When the researcher asked if the peer had talked specifically about the standards that are in the rubric, Mia replied "she [peer observer] talked about things she

noticed herself. She didn't really connect it back to the evaluation rubric, like proficient or developing, or anything." Mia was provided more of a "generalization" about how she was performing in the classroom. The most helpful information that she feels she received was in relation to classroom management and controlling student behavior.

Avi was asked to describe her experiences being evaluated by a peer teacher and she shared the following:

She [peer observer] just kind of went through it, you know, clicked accomplished and proficient for most of them [elements within the standards]...we didn't really have a very in-depth conversation about it. It was like a five minute little conference but that was it.

The peer observer did stay the entire class period which lasted fifty-five minutes. When asked about the feedback she received from her peer observer, Avi noted that it was more specific to student behavior and classroom management because, during a pre-conference, that is what Avi asked her peer observer to look for. When asked to provide a bit more detail regarding the pre-conference, Avi recalled that "it [pre-conference meeting] wasn't very long. We just talked about things that I was concerned about with that particular class....because she is a veteran teacher I was having her look for specific things."

Avi felt as though the peer observation was less "judgmental" than when an administrator was conducting the observation and admitted "it wasn't so nerve wracking."

Avi expressed a negative perception of the peer observation. When asked a probing question about the five-minute post-conference, she recalled that the meeting felt rushed. Because it was Avi's first time participating in a post-conference with a peer she was not

comfortable with knowing what she was supposed to say or what was expected of her: “I just figured that she [peer observer] would be the one to kind of structure it [post-conference meeting], and she didn’t really so we just didn’t really have anything else to talk about.” She stated that the feedback was more generalized and not very specific to the standards, unlike her administrative post-conference which referenced the standards more frequently.

Avi appreciated the feedback from her principal, but feedback from her peer observation were helpful because “they [peer observers] are in the classroom. They teach.” In her own words, Avi asserted:

While my principal used to be a teacher as well, but, you know, being in the classroom every single day with the middle-school aged kids like mine, was very helpful. Her [peer] feedback was very helpful and not that the principal’s isn’t but she [peer] is in the classroom. She knows how the kids are now. So, her suggestions were a little bit more beneficial to me than maybe my principal’s suggestion.”

“I thought it was weird” is how Sasha initially talked about her peer observation. She explained:

It wasn’t the same as being observed by my principal. She [peer observer] was, I felt, more relaxed. She didn’t stay very long either. She kind of watched me for like 20 minutes, as compared to my principal, who was in there for like the whole hour. So I guess in that sense it was better and more relaxed but afterwards when we did our post-conference it wasn’t like a sit-down thing. It was like we were on the playground and we just kind of talked. It was more informal which I liked.

Sasha shared that, since it was her first-year in school, she didn't know many people and it was a nice opportunity for her to branch out with her peer observer and start meeting new people.

Sasha gave careful consideration regarding the helpfulness of the peer feedback she received during her evaluation process. Sasha thought that "she [peer observer] didn't really give much feedback....it was more of a broad 'you did well' statement." When she recalled whether or not the peer evaluator addressed the professional teaching standards or elements in the rubric, Sasha replied "no, not at all." During her post-conference, Sasha and her peer evaluator made sure all of the components of the evaluation process were completed in NCEES but did not delve deeply into the elements and standards.

Kelly's department chair conducted her peer observation which she defined as a "great" experience.

It was nice because in our post-conference, if there was something that she was unsure of, she allowed me the time to explain or persuade or whatever so that maybe she had better clarification and give me a mark higher if she deemed appropriate

The feedback that she received from her peer observation was focused on how to integrate technology into her Advanced Placement (AP) instruction which, as she learned, is one of the professional teaching standards in the found in the rubric. When probed about other standards that were addressed during the peer observation, Kelly did not recall other standards being discussed.

All of the participants in the study enjoyed having a peer conduct an observation of their instruction. While some peer observers stayed in the classroom for the entire

instructional period, most of the participants reported that their peer observers stayed for a shorter period of time.

Post-conference with the peer were reported as being more informal and less stressful than administrative conferences. Four of the participants in the study remarked that during post-conferences, they received positive feedback about their instruction and most comments were general and not specific to the NCPTS found within the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers. Kelly is the only participant who reported that her peer observer addressed a performance standard in the rubric. She recalled that her peer discussed with her how to integrate more technology into her instruction. However, Kelly did not report her peer discussing any of the other performance standards.

Peer post-conferences were shorter than administrative post-conferences and, in some cases, took place outside during recess or during other times during the day where both teachers had free time. Post-conference meetings were not very in-depth with peer observers. In Mia's case, her peer evaluator was going to email the notes to her of the things she saw during the observation but Mia does not recall ever receiving the peer's feedback.

Feedback

When Mia underwent her first pre-conference there was an issue with her information not being in the NCEES because she was a new hire. Mia reported that after the pre-conference, an administrator came into the classroom to observe her instruction, however, "we never had our post-conference meeting" so she didn't receive any instructional feedback. Neither her nor her mentor had signed off on the acknowledgement that the first evaluation had been completed. During Mia's 2nd interview which took place within two weeks of the school district's deadline for having all BT evaluations completed, Mia reported that she had

not been observed by her administrator since her observation at the beginning of the year. She reported being frustrated because she knows that her evaluations are required for continued employment which left her unsure about her future as a teacher.

When discussing the feedback she received from the observations with her principal, Sasha stated:

He [principal] has pretty much said the same thing every time, and it's never really about my lesson in particular. It's more about like the appearance of my room and he'll sit there, and I guess observes my room as he is sitting and watching the lesson...it [feedback] is not really technically about what [or how] I taught.

Feedback given during her post-conference was general information about student behavior and the organization of students in the classroom but did not reference back to the specific standards found in the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers.

While comparing the feedback she received from her principal versus the feedback she received from her peer, Sasha felt that her principal gave her more specific feedback.

It [feedback] wasn't just solely based on my lesson itself that he saw. It was the environment. It was seating. It was giving me tips to help me with integrating technology into the classroom. When she [peer] did it, we went through it but she did not leave any comments or anything. But my principal always writes a whole paragraph.

As she remembered her principal's comments on the evaluation rubric, she noted that the feedback was not directly related to the elements or the NCPTS. Sasha remembered that "it [feedback] was more generalized" and not really related to any specific teaching standards.

Sasha expressed a feeling of the rubric being too restrictive. As she recalled an early conversation with her principal near the beginning of the year, she said her principal told her that the accomplished and distinguished ratings are only for veteran teachers and that beginning teachers generally did not achieve those high marks. Sasha remembered thinking “I don’t think that’s fair. Why can’t I be at that level if I am good at it?”

According to Sasha, Kelly, and Avi, feedback from both peer observers and administrative observers were more generalized and not specific to the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers or the NCPTS.

Avi reported that her principal did not address the standards with her at all and just shared his marking for her under each element of each performance standard. She also noted that her principal conducted two of the three administrative classroom observations. Avi remembered talking with his observers about the rubric but not spending too much time on any of the standards. Sasha, like Avi, reported that all of her classroom observations were conducted by her principal. However, Sasha did not feel as though those observations were a true and accurate representation of her instruction because he came in to observe the same lesson during the same class period during each observation. She reported that her principal, while giving feedback, said the same thing during each post-conference. She did not report feedback specific to her instruction or professional teaching standards, rather she recalled his feedback being more related to how her classroom was set-up and student behavior. Kelly reported that out of the 3 administrative observations she had during the year, only 1 included hands-on direct instruction. Other observations were of tests or class registration. Having observations when instruction is not the focal point of the lesson made it hard for her to

receive specific feedback that would help her to improve her performance and help to strengthen her teaching.

Neutral Outcomes

At the completion of her first evaluation cycle for her first year of teaching, Sasha remarked on a few things that she did not like about her observations. First, they were all conducted by her principal. And, second, each observation was scheduled so he, the principal, could see the same writing lesson which had been mandated by the school district. In her words “he always comes in for the same thing. It [observation] is always been a writing lesson, or the test, so I mean, he hasn’t really seen me teach anything else so he doesn’t really have anything to I guess build on” because the writing lessons are all similar and developed by the school district. She remarked “he hasn’t really seen me teach at all, honestly.”

When asked to expand on that statement, Sasha explained that she did not feel as though her principal had received an “accurate representation” of what she could do in the classroom. The curriculum that the principal came in to observe throughout the year was “boring and slow paced.” Sasha didn’t like the curriculum and is positive that the fact she did not like it showed in how she was teaching it. And, because her principal came in to only observe those district-prescribed lessons, Sasha felt as though he missed out on seeing her actual teaching something in her own way to engage the students in her classroom. She believed her peer observations were more accurate because they occurred at different times throughout the day rather than the same time during each observation. “When my peer came to see me, she gave me all these great remarks, and great comments, because I kind of did it a

bit differently” because she was engaged in lessons that allowed her to be creative and her peers picked different times of the day to come and observe Sasha’s instruction.

Kelly offered her insight into how she felt about being a first-year teacher and being evaluated using the same rubric as veteran teachers. She said “I don’t want my co-workers to spare my feelings but, at the same time, I don’t want them to mark me down because I am young and a first-year teacher. I hope that it [feedback] is honest and that it’s accurate.” That’s why she valued post-conferences because of the discussions that occurred regarding what she thought vs. what her evaluators observed regarding her instructional practices.

When reflecting on her evaluations for the year, Kelly felt “lucky” because, in her opinion, while the observers were able to evaluate some actual classroom instruction, for the most part they evaluated lessons that were not based on teaching and learning. In her words:

I feel like I have gotten really lucky with my observations because to me, it’s like they have been kind of cop-outs where one [evaluator] observed me giving a test and did not see any actual hands on teaching or instruction. Then another observation, well, you know, it was like class registration, so we had to watch a video and give out their handouts from student services. So, again, there was not really any teaching. The last observation had a little bit of teaching.

Participants in the study did not report that the North Carolina teacher evaluation process helped to improve their instruction, nor did they report that they were somehow hurt or demoralized by the process.

An informal part of the evaluation process that Kelly believed isn’t given much attention is doing your daily responsibilities, avoiding parents/students contacting

administration for concerns about your classroom practices, and making sure she continues to have positive interactions with her peers. “If they [school administration] don’t get any complaints or phone calls from parents,” that seems to be enough to keep evaluators from wanting to come observe more often. Said differently, “I think the ideals, and the idealism, behind what they want teachers to strive for versus the reality in which everything that teachers do, don’t align.” She wants goals that are challenging but feels that the standards for being accomplished or distinguished are “unattainable.”

All of the participants reported that they felt like the teacher evaluation process had both positives and negatives towards helping first-year teachers. The most agreed upon positive was the opportunity to receive peer feedback and have peers come into the classroom to observe instruction. The overall thought was that peer observers can provide more relevant feedback simply because they are teaching every day and have more experience in the classroom. Not to say that the administrative feedback was taken any less seriously, but participants in the study found that peer observers were easier to connect with on a personal level and that they provided feedback that was more relevant to day-to-day classroom instruction.

All of the participants alluded to the teacher evaluation process as a way to identify weak teachers and using the rubric to help remove them from teaching. So if there were no noted concerns regarding a teacher’s instructional practice, then the rubric and the evaluation process was not a big deal. Bailey reported that she learned not to “put too much stock” into the rubric because the process is subjective and as long as there are no noted concerns it would not impact her instruction.

Similarly, Avi and Kelly both remarked about how there may not be enough classroom observations for first-year teachers and both stated that they would welcome more opportunities for peers and administrators to conduct classroom observations. Kelly talked about the idea of earning a “distinguished” mark on one of her performance standards. She was told by her principal that “distinguished” means that you are consistently meeting that performance standard. But she does not understand how any observer can make a determination of consistency when a teacher is only observed for three periods per year by their administrator. Avi agreed when she said, “I don’t know how they [observers] can really get a full feel of the way that you are in your classroom only being in there three times.”

Research Question #5: How do first-year teachers utilize the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers to improve their instructional practices?

Compliance

In her discussion about the feedback she received from her formal peer observation, Bailey said it was positive but when she was asked if the feedback was driven from the professional teaching standards in the rubric, she replied “No. We didn’t talk about the standards at all. Honestly, it was like going in there and checking the box and then moving on.” It feels like “people jumping through hoops to get to the next thing.” The evaluator’s comments on the evaluation were a narrative of what was happening in the classroom but she didn’t see anything pertaining to her actual instructional practices. “It doesn’t feel like it [rubric] is very important because nobody else puts any importance on it unless it goes really badly, and then people are upset.”

When reflecting on her last observation of the school year, Sasha remembers “the last time my principal came to observe me, he decided to come while I was giving a test. I was

just sitting there, and you know, wasn't really doing any teaching." When asked if she told her principal she was going to be giving a test during the period he planned to observe her, she responded:

I told him [principal] three times. He was like 'it's ok' because he had to get it done and, I mean, there was only like four days left of the quarter. So he had to get it done before we tracked out.

For this last observation, Sasha recalled her post-conference with the principal but also noted that she did not get any feedback from that observation. Specifically, she said:

I mean, there was nothing he could give me feedback on. I was sitting at my desk waiting for them [students] to finish [testing] and [I was] grading other things...it was more about my end of year PDP so it wasn't really like a post-conference about my observation.

When asked if she felt the principal was able to justify her marks for the performance standards during the observation, Sasha simply responded "I don't know."

Rather than seeing the evaluation rubric as a tool to help improve instructional practice, Bailey's perception was that the evaluation process is not completed to improve instruction rather it is conducted to stay in compliance with district and state legislation regarding teacher evaluations and the timelines that guide the evaluation process. Bailey described the process as the evaluator more concerned with making sure that each performance standard was addressed so that the document could be finalized in the NCEES. In her own words, Bailey described the process as "people [evaluators] jumping through hoops."

Sasha recalled one instance when the principal informed her when he was planning to come in for an observation. She informed him that during that lesson he was planning to observe was during a period when she was going to be giving an assessment. Sasha remembered that the principal stated that he needed to get it done within a timeline and that it did not matter if she was giving a test. She recalled that post-conference did not provide any meaningful feedback simply because there was nothing for them to discuss and she could not articulate how they were able to justify her performance ratings during that observation. It was Sasha's understanding that the principal decided to observe her giving a test rather than waiting for actual classroom instruction because he [principal] was trying to stay in compliance with district timelines regarding beginning teacher evaluations.

Kelly's experience was similar to Sasha. Kelly recalled that her first administrative observation was conducted while giving an assessment and she informed him of that during their pre-conference meeting. Kelly's perception was that he continued with the observation of the assessment to get the first administrative observation complete. During the post-conference for that observation, Kelly's recollection was that, while the principal did admit that observing an assessment was not the best opportunity to observe instruction, he could tell she was proficient as a teacher.

Feedback

The pre-conferences that Bailey engaged in with her mentor did not provide a lot of connection with the NCPTS found in the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers. She asserted "we do pre-conferences where we talk about what we are going to look for. And, I am sure it connects all back to that [the rubric] like in some way but I don't know. I am not sure."

For Mia, the opportunity for feedback was the most positive thing about the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers. She shared “they [observers] give you an outside perspective whereas you can’t give yourself that outside perspective.” Rather than critiquing herself and trying to independently assess and improve instruction, having an experienced observer come in and give her their perspectives on instruction and how it can be improved is something that is exciting for her.

Mia found that there were differences between the feedback she received from her peer evaluator and the feedback that was given by her administration after an observation:

The peer feedback is a little better because she [peer observer] is actually doing the same things as I am, you know? She is teaching, just like I am. Whereas the administrators haven’t been teaching for like ten or more years. They have been out of the classroom a lot longer, whereas peer evaluators are there every day with you so they see these things every day in the classroom.

Mia’s first observation was conducted by an administrator but the mandatory post-conference meeting where she would receive specific feedback regarding the rubric standards was not been completed. Because she never received feedback or signed the evaluation for her first observation, she does not consider it to be a true observation. In her case, she does not feel as though she has been evaluated at all this year except for one peer observation.

When asked if her principal goes through the standards to explain each one to her, Avi responded:

He will say like ‘this is what I saw’ or ‘this is what I didn’t look for’. We would go through the things he put on there but we never really go in-depth about the

standards...so he will say 'you got a proficient on this' or whatever. He just goes through it like that but never specifically about the standards.

Avi stated that her principal has conducted all of her observations with exception of the last one because her principal was not in the building. Even though her principal did not conduct the last evaluation, Avi did not see a major difference in the process. "They both have similar personalities, similar evaluation styles. So, it [observation] was about the same. They both spent a lot of time talking to me afterwards about it [evaluation rubric] in the post-observation conference."

During classroom observations, Avi stated that her evaluators took notes during observations and put those notes in the comment sections of the rubric under the appropriate performance standard. She also reported that while she did pay attention to the comments, the evaluators did not review the professional teaching standards nor was specific feedback for the standards provided in the comments section. She said, "I have never read the standards word for word and talked about those [during post-conference meetings]. That is interesting." She believes comments were aimed at providing positive reinforcement for what she was doing well while also providing guidance on how she could improve in certain areas.

When discussing the process of her post-conference feedback from her evaluations, she recalled that her evaluators go through some of the performance standards for each element but not all. "Then we talk about them [ratings] and they ask me if I had anything to say about if I thought I need to be moved up at all and they gave me tips for next time." The tips that were provided were for behavioral and classroom management so the tips were very useful. When describing how the conversation generally went during the post-conference,

Avi described “it’s just kind of click, click. Here is this element. You got this. Are you good with that? Let’s keep going.”

Avi compared the feedback she received from her principal to feedback that she received from her peer evaluator:

So, my principal is very helpful and he gives a lot of feedback, and he will tell me specific things that I should do in the classroom, you know, like suggestions for how to help with specific things. Whereas she [peer observer] just said ‘oh, it looked great. You did a good job.’

In Avi’s opinion, her peer observer did not provide any feedback that would impact her instruction or help her meet the different elements of the standards within the rubric.

Kelly, Sasha, Avi, Mia, and Bailey recalled that the feedback they received from their observers were positive but not aligned to the professional teaching standards and they did not understand how the feedback was aligned back to the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers. Further, Bailey reported that the feedback she received was a narrative of her classroom and classroom instruction but not useful in helping to improve instruction. Mia relished the opportunity to receive feedback from the rubric because of the chance for an outside perspective to assess her instruction. In that regard, Mia found that peer feedback was especially helpful because it seemed more relevant to her day-to-to instruction.

Avi considered the comments by evaluators but she noted that the comments are not specific to the NCPTS and were not specific to any specific performance standard. Her opinion was that the feedback she receives during the observation is meant to serve as positive reinforcement and give her general areas upon which she could look to improve. Avi

had not read through the standards and was not comfortable with what they mean or how they could be used to improve her daily instruction. Because the feedback was general and was not specific to the teaching standards, she did not feel as though she could have used the feedback to help align her instruction with the rubric. Avi mentioned that professional development that would teach her how to align feedback with instruction would be something she would find extremely helpful. She had never been taught how to use the rubric as a tool to help improve her instructional practice.

Feedback that Sasha received from her peer was not helpful in providing helpful coaching points to improve her instructional practice but her administrative observations included more than just what was observed during the lesson (i.e. seating and classroom environment). Her principal provided more feedback while the peer did not leave any feedback. While her principal did leave feedback, much like the other participants in the study, she reported that feedback was more generalized and not related to the professional teaching standards. As she recalled her post-conferences with her principal, Sasha stated that the feedback provided rarely had to do with the lesson that was observed and that most times they talked about random things that had nothing to do with the instructional practice, professional teaching standards, or even content standards. Ultimately, she stated “we don’t really always end up talking about what he [principal] observes.”

Kelly did not see a connection between her feedback and the professional teaching standards. In her words, the feedback she received was “general” and was not aimed at improving her instruction or aligning her instruction with the teaching standards. She did not rely on feedback when planning for instruction because she did not review comments after an observation was completed.

In her recollection of her first administrative observation, Kelly remarked that it was not a typical observation:

We had a formal pre-conference where I met him [principal] in the office and told him my lesson plans which involved giving an assessment. He came in and watched me give an assessment. So it was really just, you know, I think for him to say ‘check, got my administrative observation one done.’”

During the post-conference she recalled:

It was nice [post-conference] because he agreed that, while it wasn’t I guess the best opportunity or time to observe, that he could tell that I am proficient in what I do.

And there was nothing that he docked me on which was nice.

Kelly admitted that, while the post-conference was a nice experience because she felt it was less stressful and the feedback was positive, the feedback that she was provided was not helpful in assessing or improving her instructional practices. Specifically, she asserted “his [administrator] feedback was just kind of, I wouldn’t say irrelevant. It was a nice kind of affirmation, but again there’s only so much feedback you can give when giving a test.” Kelly was marked “not looked for” on performance standards that were not observed by the administrator during the administration of the test during the class period. That rating simply means that while the evaluator may not have seen Kelly engage in that specific performance standard, she could provide artifacts to demonstrate that did so on a regular basis when the evaluator is not in the classroom observing.

While the principal’s comments did not readily provide Kelly with information that could help inform her instruction, she believed the feedback received from her peer observer

helped provide insight on how to best improve instruction in the specific area of technology because she learned how to incorporate technology into her daily lessons. Even though she felt she had presented a lesson in which technology would not have been effectively utilized to engage students in the content, her peer was able to demonstrate several examples of how technology could have been used to enhance the observed lesson. After that, she was able to objectively evaluate a lesson she developed and found ways that educational technology could be used to supplement and strengthen her instruction.

When Kelly compared feedback she received from her administrator and peer observer, she felt both provided information to support each of the professional teaching standards found in the rubric:

In our post-conferences for both [peer and administrative observations], we went through that rubric together, category and subcategories, and at the end they have space for feedback and comments. If I had a question about one of the marks they would explain it to me. They would give me the opportunity to defend or to explain, or to give evidence towards any kind of mark.

When asked to describe how she used the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers and the feedback provided by both her peer and administrative observers to improve her instruction, she asserted:

I think it would help teachers who need a rubric in order to know what they need to do but I don't necessarily feel like I need it or want a rubric to guide me. I use the rubric as kind of a check and balance so it's helpful and beneficial. However, I don't think it guides what I do or how I plan or how I teach.

Use of the Rubric

Bailey was not aware that her professional development plan (PDP) is a critical aspect of the teacher evaluation process. In considering whether or not her PDP helps to improve her instruction, Bailey responded:

I feel it is hard to improve instruction when you start instruction. Like, you don't have a baseline yet. So, I think trying to improve it from the get-go is not possible since there is no baseline yet. Me at week one is going to be different than me at week thirty-two. To say that my week one goals for my PDP are going to like determine my whole entire year is kind of not great. I think it would be better if you would have like certain goals for everything, so you can test out the different kind of categories.

Mia used content standards to help plan her instruction but she did not consider the NCPTS or any of the elements found in the Rubric for Evaluation North Carolina Teachers to help plan her daily instruction. Her experiences in student-teaching helped her get into the habit of aligning her lessons with the content standards but not teaching standards. In her case, since she had only been observed once she did not feel as though the rubric or any feedback provided by the peer observer truly helped to improve her instructional practices in the classroom.

As her evaluation cycle was concluding, Avi was able to give a more holistic answer regarding how she used the feedback from the rubric to improve her instruction. She explained:

So, we [Avi and her evaluator] sit down and have our post-observation conferences, I usually have a notebook and I write down the feedback that they give me and, you know, what they suggest to do. And I have done a few of those things.

Avi did not use the rubric or the different performance standards to help guide her instructional practice. And because her evaluators did not provide feedback specific to the professional teaching standards, she didn't use feedback to help align her instructional practice with the performance standards and elements found in the rubric. "I just use the general feedback that they give me. I would like maybe some professional development on how to do that."

Avi's student-teaching practicum helped to prepare her for being evaluated using the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers. Now that she has transitioned from her pre-service experience into the classroom as a full-time teacher, when asked about how she used the rubric to help guide her daily instruction, she replied:

Other than post-conferences I don't really look at it [rubric] that much, honestly. Nobody really tells me to look at it. We look at it in the principal's office after the observation but that's about it. He [principal] just goes through and clicks all the little things [check boxes].

When asked about how she has used the professional teaching standards and the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers as a tool to improve her instruction, Avi replied:

I guess I don't really think of it as a tool for improving my practice. I just haven't been taught to use the tool that way. They [university supervisors] just observed me

off of that [rubric] since student-teaching but they never really said ‘you need to use this as a tool for, you know, your instructional practices.’ I am just not really fully understanding what it is, what it does, what it says. It’s just not that helpful for me. What she feels could be more helpful is if evaluators referenced specific elements in their comments so that she can review those elements in relationship to the feedback and know exactly what she can improve on and how to improve that specific area.

As Sasha shared her experiences with post-conference meetings with her evaluator, she detailed the nature of the feedback she received:

He [principal] goes over what my objectives were for the lesson and what the standard was that I was supposed to be teaching. But that is about it. After that, he kind of ends up just talking about like random things after that. Honestly, we don’t really talk about the lesson or any feedback. If I ever get feedback from him it’s more about a behavior problem that I have with my class. So, we don’t really always end up talking about what he observes.

When giving thought to how her principal referenced back to the teaching standards in the rubric and if he linked those standards to how she could improve her classroom instruction, Sasha replied “he has never done that with me. And, he does not put comments in” under each professional teaching standard.

Sasha relied on her co-workers to help navigate through the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers because there was not a lot of time to meet with the principal. Her peers were helpful because they had been teaching for “seven years or more” and so “I kind of look to them. Especially since its more informal and I can just ask them whatever

questions not matter how dumb it sounds.” The most opportune time to meet with the principal to talk with how the rubric can be used to improve instruction is during the post-conference but those meetings were not as effective as Sasha would have liked:

He [principal] makes these meetings [post-conferences] at weird times. So, like, he will make it during my specials [elective period in elementary school] and he knows that I have a behavior problem in my room and I am constantly called away. So I would rather it be at the end of the day when I can actually sit down, and devote some time to sitting with him and going over things. It’s just that part just makes it hard to sit down, and have an in-depth conversation about, you know, what I can do [to improve].

While reflecting back on her school year and thinking about how she felt like the NCPTS were helpful in improving her instruction, Sasha responded, “No. Not this year” because she had been focusing on becoming familiar with the rubric and getting acclimated to becoming a teacher and getting used to the different responsibilities that come with leading a classroom. She was confident that she will use the tool to help guide her instruction after she is more accustomed to the process and is less stressed about trying to figure out what evaluators are looking for. When asked if she uses the tool to plan instruction to make sure she is meeting the expectations of each performance standard, she replied “honestly, no.”

Overall, the feedback that Kelly received after a classroom observation had been general and, as she recalled, did not seem to be related to the professional teaching standards she was evaluated with. When asked if the feedback she has received was related to improving instruction or aligning with the teaching standards, she replied “no.” When she responded to follow-up questions regarding how she used the feedback and comments from

previous evaluations to plan and improve future instruction, Kelly replied, “I’m sure I could and can, but I don’t necessarily check the feedback, or the responses, much past the post-conference.”

As she planned her lessons, Kelly did not use the rubric to ensure she was adhering to all of the professional teaching standards or the elements into her instruction. She infrequently used the rubric as a resource to help strengthen her lesson or instruction. She relied on the specific state content standards to help integrate the teaching standards into her daily lessons. Even though the evaluation rubric relies heavily on the NCPTS, Kelly did not use the standards as a guideline to help with her instruction because the tool did not align with the common core standards or standards that students should be learning. She did not feel the rubric was a resource that could be used to improve instruction simply because it didn’t address instruction content standards that teachers are responsible for adhering to and developing lesson plans to address.

In reflecting on how the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers helps to expand to her instructional strategies, Kelly replied:

I don’t know if it is used as a tool to improve instructional practice. I think it’s used as a means to gauge whether or not you are a good teacher. A rubric is an assessment tool. It’s not a guideline. At the end of the day, students like rubrics because they can check the boxes. It doesn’t show that you learned anything. It just shows that you can follow directions.

Teachers in this study did not use the rubric or professional teaching standards to help plan or guide their daily instructional practice. At most, they looked at the rubric when they

were either about to be evaluated or shortly after during the mandated post-conference. Mia reported that she plans her instruction using content standards prescribed by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction but does not consider professional teaching standards when developing lesson plans. Bailey was told by her mentor not to try to put everything into one lesson to try to improve her ratings on the evaluation. She was told to be honest about the lesson and what she is trying to accomplish and not worry about what ratings she may earn on the rubric during the observation.

Avi admitted that she does not use the professional teaching standards or the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers to guide her instructional practice. Likewise, Sasha stated that she did not feel as though the NCPTS were helpful in improving her instruction because she does not understand the standards and was unclear how she could use them as a guide to implement instructional practices.

Kelly was very clear that she does not use the rubric to help guide her instruction nor does she want to use the rubric for that purpose. Specifically, she stated that “I use the rubric as kind of a check and balance so it’s helpful and beneficial, however, I don’t think it guides what I do or how I plan or how I teach.” Further, she does not consider the rubric as a tool to help her improve her instruction; rather she sees it as a way for administrators to identify poor instruction. Said differently, Kelly’s perception was that the rubric is not designed to help teachers improve their instruction but rather to help identify struggling teachers.

Document Analysis

The teacher evaluation process in the state of North Carolina prescribed by North Carolina School Board Policy and North Carolina General Statute GS115C-333 is presented as a visual document in the teacher evaluation manual (appendix J). The policy presented

components of the evaluation process for North Carolina Teachers. The analysis of these components was able to help determine if, according to the participant responses earlier in this chapter, the policy is being implemented as presented in the school board policy.

Training

Teachers, peer observers, and school administrators in the state of North Carolina are mandated to attend annual training prior to the beginning of the school year and prior to initiating the teacher evaluation process for that school-year. The policy does not dictate how or by whom the training should be provided but it clearly states that all stakeholders who have a role in the teacher evaluation process should be trained prior to the start of the process. When teachers log into the North Carolina Educator Effectiveness System (NCEES) to begin their evaluation, the evaluation activities (i.e. observations, summary rating sheet) are not activated until a teacher acknowledges the date when they received their training.

Orientation

School administrators are responsible for providing teachers with directions on how to access the NCEES in order to review the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers. Furthermore, teachers are responsible for providing information regarding the North Carolina School Board Policy that explains the teacher evaluation process. Lastly, each teacher should receive guidelines that define when each component of the evaluation process should be completed. According to the policy, school executives have two weeks from the teacher's first day of work to provide all of the orientation information.

Self-Assessment

Prior to the start of the evaluation process, each teacher is instructed to engage in an honest reflection of their own performance. Using the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina

Teachers, they rate their own performance reflect on what aspects of their teaching they would like to improve during the upcoming school year. Like with the training component in NCEES, the evaluation cycle will not activate until a teacher completes their self-assessment. The policy asks teachers to use their self-assessment to continuously reflect on their performance throughout the school year.

Pre-Observation Conference

The pre-observation conference is a mandated conference that occurs at the beginning of the evaluation cycle for beginning teachers before the first administrative observation and are optional for the remainder of observations for that school year. During this meeting, the evaluator and teacher discuss the self-assessment and should be discussing the Rubric for North Carolina Teachers. In addition to the self-assessment, the evaluator and teacher should review the current professional development plan (PDP) and use the self-assessment to develop goals for professional growth. The teacher is also expected to provide a detailed lesson plan to help prepare the evaluator for the observation.

Observations

Observations for first-year teachers should last the entire class period or at a minimum of 45 minutes. Each beginning teacher is to receive three formal evaluations conducted by the building principal and one evaluation conducted by a peer observer. The policy directs all observers (administrative and peer) to use the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers to evaluate instruction. If areas of concern are noted by any observer, additional formal observations can be conducted pursuant to local board policy.

Post-Observation Conference

Within ten school days of the classroom observation, a post-conference meeting is expected to occur which allows the evaluator and teacher to discuss the effectiveness of the lesson, the instructional practices observed, and strengths and areas of concern that were noted on the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers. What is not mentioned in this component is whether teachers are provided an opportunity to present supporting artifacts to help support their performance rating for each standard.

Summary Evaluation Conference

At the conclusion of a teacher's evaluation cycle, and prior to the end of the current school year, the principal and teacher will meet to review all of the components of the teacher evaluation process. In addition, the principal and teacher will review the PDP to determine if the goals have been met for the year. Performance ratings for each of the professional standards are reviewed and a summary rating for each standard is assigned based on the ratings that were provided during the previous administrative and peer observations that took place during the school year. As specified by the policy, principals are expected to (1) provide a performance rating for each element and professional teaching standard in the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers, (2) make a comment on any elements in which teachers received a rating of "not demonstrated," (3) offer the teacher an opportunity to add comments on the summary/end-of-year rating form, (4) conduct a review of the summary with the teacher, and (5) secure the teacher's signature on the record of activities and summary rating form. Beginning teachers must be rated at least proficient on their most recent summary rating form in order to be eligible for an upgrade to their teaching license which declares them no longer a beginning teacher.

Professional Development Plans (PDP)

The general statute declares that there are three types of PDP's: individual, monitored, and directed. Although not addressed specifically in the policy, monitored and directed growth plans are designed for teachers who receive either "developing," or "not demonstrated" on the most recent summary rating form for the previous school year. Since first-year teachers do not have a previous summary rating form for the prior school year, they are placed on standard individual growth plans. Individual growth plans are implemented to help teachers improve their performance on specific elements and standards found on the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers. Typically, the specific standards and elements are identified after the teacher completes their self-assessment.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided insight into the perceptions of five first-year teachers and their experiences with the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process. The chapter also explored whether or not the evaluation process helped to develop instructional practices during their first-year of classroom instruction.

Each participant in the study completed a pre-service teacher education program prior to starting their first year in the classroom. All except one participant completed their teacher education program within the state of North Carolina. The Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers was not a major focus of most pre-service programs and there was not a substantial amount of time provided to help pre-service teachers understand the evaluation tool, how the professional teaching standards look in practice, and how the rubric would be used during a classroom observation. Overwhelmingly, the participant responses concurred

that the student-teaching practicum was the single best aspect of their pre-service experience that prepared them for entering into the classroom.

Participants acknowledged that they were assigned a mentor who was a veteran teacher within the school building to serve in a support role as a part of the beginning teacher mentor program within the school district. While the expectation was that each mentor meet with their assigned beginning teacher weekly, participants in the study reported that was not the practice in their case. When participants did meet with their mentors, they reported rarely, if ever, reviewing the teacher evaluation rubric or talking about the professional teaching standards and applying them to daily lesson planning. Likewise, each participant reported that they attended monthly beginning teacher support program meetings with the beginning teacher coordinator for their school and their mentor, more than one respondent reported that they often attend the meetings alone without their mentor. Participants acknowledged that the teacher evaluation rubric was not a monthly topic of discussion and all participants, with the exception of one, did not recall going in-depth with the rubric so they could fully understand what evaluators were looking for. The one participant who reported that there was one meeting dedicated to the evaluation rubric was conducted at the beginning of the school year but was not talked about again in any of the following meetings.

None of the participants recalled participating in professional development that was either designed to familiarize teachers with the North Carolina teacher evaluation process nor were they offered opportunities to learn more about the NCPTS.

The teachers who participated in this study did not report that their experiences with the teacher evaluation process hurt their ability to teach students or made them want to leave the teaching profession, but their experiences also did not help develop them as a teacher or

provide effective feedback that would be used to inform instructional practice. Whether or not the participant found their peer observer to provide more relevant information or whether they preferred administrative feedback was different on an individual basis but none of the participants reported receiving feedback that was specific to the NCPTS regardless of whether the observation was conducted by an administrator or by a peer. The perception for most of the participants was that the rubric was used as a tool to identify at-risk or low-performing teachers rather than to help develop teachers. If there were no red flags that alarmed the observer that a teacher may be struggling, then most of their marks on the rubric were proficient or higher. Another viewpoint of the participants was that administrators conducted classroom observations because they had to and it did not matter if they were observing actually classroom instruction as long as the observation was completed in a timely manner.

Some of the participants of this study reported being observed while giving an assessment or engaging in activities that did not require direct instruction to students. In those instances, teachers report that they told the administrator that they would not be teaching during that period but, in order to stay in compliance with district timelines, administrators conducted the observation anyway and provided general feedback to support performance ratings. It was the perception of these teachers that the observation was not meant to truly observe teaching and provide feedback on ways to improve, but instead was conducted so that their evaluator did not fall behind district mandates.

Participants do not consider the NCPTS when planning their instruction or preparing daily lessons. Likewise, they do not use the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers as a guideline for improving their own instructional performance. None of the participants

reported that their evaluators linked comments for each standard to each performance standard. Participants in the study did not acknowledge the rubric or the professional teaching standards as tools to help improve classroom instruction or daily instructional performance.

An analysis of the North Carolina General Statute 115C-333 was conducted and all components of the teacher evaluation process were reviewed. A discussion of how those components are reflected in the responses of participants in chapter four will be included in chapter five.

The following chapter includes a discussion of the finding presented in chapter four along with implications for research, recommendations for practice and recommendations for future research.

Chapter Five

Discussion, Implications, and Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of first-year teachers to determine what role, if any, the North Carolina teacher evaluation process had on their development as a new teacher. For the purpose of this study, the teacher evaluation process included classroom evaluations using the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers and how first-year teachers were prepared to be evaluated using the rubric in their pre-service training, beginning teacher support program, mentoring, and professional development opportunities. Goe, Biggers, & Croft (2012) posit:

When designing and introducing teaching standards, they should be transparent to teachers. They must be clearly defined and communicated to teachers in order for them to know what grounds are being used for their evaluation and to provide direction for their professional learning experiences. (p. 3).

It was clear, based on the findings of this study, that standards are not being taught to first-year teachers and the participants in this study often felt confused and overwhelmed by the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers and the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards (NCPTS).

In this chapter, the findings of this research project were compared with research presented in Chapter Two for the purpose of situating this study within the larger body of research on the topic. In addition, recommendations for future practice and for future research were presented so that school leaders, policymakers, and researchers can learn from and improve upon existing policy.

Discussion

Pre-service Teacher Preparation

The academic research dealing with the topic of pre-service teacher education training programs was explored in Chapter Two. The information presented during the literature review suggests that one of the main goals of teacher preparation is to help student-teachers acquire the necessary skills required to transition into becoming a classroom teacher. The premise that was discerned from the research was that the more prepared pre-service teachers are when they leave their preparation programs, the more likely they will be to have a positive impact on student achievement. Specific to the teacher evaluation rubric, prospective teachers should be trained on what the NCPTS are, what they look like in everyday practice, and how they can ensure that their lesson plans include the different elements found under the performance standards. There should be a clear alignment between the NCPTS, and the pre-service experiences of student-teachers.

Anderson (2007) conducted a study of fifty-six teachers and determined that teachers who are assigned to mentor and evaluate student-teachers during the student-teaching practicum play a critical role in the development of prospective teachers. Anderson (2007) and Scheeler (2008) argue that time as a student-teacher is designed to help transition novices into becoming an independent teacher who is able to apply effective teaching strategies without the support of university supervisors. Baucom (2006) found that the beginning teachers who participated in his study noted that they enjoyed the student-teaching because of the classroom experience it provided.

The results of this study aligned with the current research which discusses pre-service programs for prospective educators. As presented in Chapter Four, perspectives varied

among participants about the influence of information they learned in their pre-service programs prior to beginning their student-teaching assignment. All of the participants were in agreement, however, that the most valuable and influential component of their pre-service program was their student-teaching experience because it allowed time in the classroom with students working with a veteran teacher to learn how to develop and adapt lessons in a relevant and meaningful way. The overall feeling was that it was extremely valuable as a new teacher to be able to observe the instruction of a veteran teacher and be able to learn and apply new strategies under their guidance. Participants expressed that one of the things they miss about their student-teaching practicum is the ability to observe other teachers and they would appreciate the opportunity to observe teachers after receiving their teaching license and during their first-year as a classroom teacher.

When specifically discussing how their pre-service program prepared them for the teacher evaluation process, most participants did not feel as though the program taught them the NCPTS or the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers. Not having that background knowledge of the teaching standards made the teacher evaluation process intimidating because they were being evaluation on standards they were not fully taught and did not understand. The participants who shared that they were comfortable with the teacher evaluation process as a first-year teacher also described a pre-service program that provided an opportunity to become familiar with the document either before or during their student-teaching assignment.

Feedback from Classroom Observations

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) has implemented a teacher evaluation process that uses both quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate

classroom instruction. The quantitative data involves the use of value-added measures (student achievement) while qualitative data is obtained using the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers which allows classroom observers to rate instruction based on the NCPTS. Gandha and Baxter (2015) assert that classroom observations continue to be the most relied on measure of assessing classroom instruction nationally because of the ability for observers to clarify what effective instruction looks like for teachers through the use of relevant feedback that can be used to improve instructional practices in the classroom.

According to the literature, teachers prefer a qualitative teacher evaluation process because of the opportunity to receive appropriate feedback from other practicing educators rather than relying on quantitative data that does not provide specific information on how instructional practices can be improved. Curtis & Wiener (2012) argue that “powerful evaluations provide actionable information to teachers and cultivate cultures of continuous improvement” (p. 3). Effective evaluation processes including feedback that support teacher in fostering improvement in their instructional practices.

Fetters (2013) and Simmons (2016) both posit that one key component to having an effective qualitative process for evaluating classroom instruction is the training of those who are doing the observing. Said differently, those who are doing the classroom observations should be trained in (1) how to support teachers in the classroom, (2) how to provide relevant feedback to facilitate teacher growth, and (3) how to determine what effective instruction looks like. Case (2016) conducted a study of North Carolina teachers and their perceptions of the North Carolina teacher evaluation process. Case (2016) concluded that 40 percent of participants with less than ten years of classroom teaching experience found that feedback from the evaluation process did not influence or help to improve daily classroom instruction.

In their review of studies related to teacher appraisal and professional development, Shakman et al. (2016) found that “timely, helpful feedback positively affects teachers’ perceptions about the evaluation process and increases the likelihood that they will seek professional development based on feedback” (p. A-4) and that beginning teachers were more likely to engage in professional development after they received relevant feedback from an evaluator who showed a positive attitude regarding the evaluation process. Kraft & Gilmour (2016) conducted a study that explore principal perceptions of the teacher evaluation process as a tool for the professional growth of teachers. Their findings suggest:

The demands on principals and their administrative teams to conduct extensive evaluations for all teachers limited the frequency and quality of feedback teachers’ received. Several principals expressed concerns that they were unable to provide the frequent feedback necessary for supporting teachers’ professional growth because of the sheer number of teachers they were required to evaluate. (p. 25).

The majority of participants in the current study align with the research presented in the literature discussed in Chapter Two. Curtis & Wiener (2012) found that “having teachers self-assess their practice and/or collect and present artifacts of their work that reflect their performance against the teaching standards deepens their understating of the standards and encourages reflection on their practice” (p. 29). When discussing the feedback they received during the teacher evaluation process, participants described it as generalized, focused on classroom management, classroom structure, and/or student behavior. For most of the participants, the feedback received from their observers was not related to the NCPTS, nor were the comments related back to the performance standards in the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers. Kraft & Gilmour (2016) describe that some of the principals in

their study suggest that they avoided difficult conversations during post-conference meetings and rather than focus on areas of concern, they chose to focus on reinforcing the things that were going well. Their participants had trouble with using the evaluation process to help develop teachers and found it challenging to serve as both an instructional coach and supervisor. One principal shared their desire to have someone evaluate the feedback they were providing teachers so they can do a better job of supporting teachers.

Post-conferences were not perceived to be a valuable part of the evaluation process for the participants in this study. Teachers recalled their post-conferences as being as simple as going through and checking all boxes without any real discussion about instructional practice or professional standards. Other participants describe the post-conference meeting as being rushed or scheduled at times when deeper discussion into the evaluation would not be possible (i.e., during planning periods in between classes). The overall perception of the participants in the study was that feedback was provided because it had to be, and that effort was not given to provide actionable feedback to help inform their classroom instruction.

Toch & Rothman (2008) describe perfectly the experiences of the participants in this study:

The evaluations themselves are typically of little value—a single, fleeting classroom visit by a principal or other building administrator untrained in evaluation wielding a checklist of classroom conditions and teacher behaviors that often don't even focus directly on the quality of teacher instruction. (p. 2).

Perhaps the feedback was not actionable because the evaluators are completing the observation as a matter of compliance with state and district standards rather than as an

opportunity to help develop and mentor teachers. Participants in the study describe situations in which, during pre-conference meetings, participants explained to the administrator that they would not be engaging in instruction during that scheduled time (i.e., giving an assessment) and that it would not be a good time to observe instruction. In some cases, the administrator conducted the observation despite of not being able to observe actual instruction and gave marks of proficient or higher even though instruction was not observed. One teacher reported that, after telling her administrator that he would not be observing instruction, the administrator commented that they had to do the observation anyway in order to get it down before they left on break. In these cases, teachers received performance ratings and feedback on instruction that was not observed or did not occur in the classroom.

In these cases, feedback provided was not deemed useful for the teacher to improve their instructional practice because instructional practice was not observed or evaluated. The main concern was to remain in compliance rather than improve strategies for teaching and learning. In Avi's case, she had one administrative observation but never reported having a post-conference to go over the observation. At the time of her last interview for this research project, Avi stated that she had not been observed at all during the school year. In her case, she explained that she did not receive any feedback to help her transition into her first year of teacher and did not receive any guidance other than occasional meetings with her mentor and attending her beginning teacher meetings every month.

Mentoring and Beginning Teacher Support Programs

Brill and McCartney (2008), Ferguson and Johnson (2010), Fry (2010), McColskey and Egelson (1993), Murry (1999), Rumley (2010), and Smith and Ingersoll (2004) agree that novice teachers benefit from the guidance of veteran teachers as they enter into the field.

In addition to having veteran mentor teachers, Inman and Marlow (2013) and Powell (2016) argue that beginning teachers benefit from collaborating with other beginning teachers as to avoid feelings of isolation during the first years of classroom instruction. The research suggests that peer support and collaboration are main factors in a novice teacher's decision regarding whether to remain in education. The more peer support teachers receive early in their career, the higher the chances that they remain in education. Keyne-Michaels (2007) conducted a study of first-year teachers and shared that there was a belief that beginning teacher support programs were helpful because they gave teachers the opportunity to bounce ideas off both veteran and other beginning teachers.

Responses to questions about their mentor ranged from not meeting with their mentor at all to meeting with the mentor at least once per week. The participants in the study found it helpful to have other teachers to collaborate with but not all of them use their mentor for that purpose. In the school district where the study was conducted, the school district prescribes that mentors meet with their mentees weekly to complete mandated activities. Responses from the participants suggested that it was far more common to sit down once every couple of weeks rather than once per week but make the contact log look as though they were meeting weekly. One participant stated that her mentor became ill during the year and they rarely met. Another teacher reported that she corresponded with her mentor through journaling rather than meeting but that strategy did not last long and eventually they stopped corresponding altogether. Another participant noted that her mentor was an athletic coach and they did not meet when the mentor's team was in-season. Rather than relying on their mentor, the majority of teachers in the study relied on nearby teachers, teachers in their content area, or other veteran teachers on their team.

Every month the district requires that beginning teachers and their mentors meet together to discuss a variety of topics. Sometimes those topics were determined by the mentor coordinator at the school asking for suggestions for topics while others recall not being asked about what they need help with and attended meetings with predetermined topics for discussion. For the most part, mentors attended these meetings with the mentees but rarely did they follow up about the topics being discussed.

When participants were asked about their mentor's role in helping them develop professional development goals, interpreting feedback from classroom observations, or understanding the NCPTS, the majority responded that their mentor never looked at the evaluation tool with them to understand the performance standards nor did they ever help them review the feedback to figure out how to use the comments to help influence instruction.

Peer Observers

Darling-Hammond (2013) argues that peer observers can be a valuable tool to help novice teachers transition into a career in education. Not only are peer observers helpful, but they can reduce the amount of responsibility the building principal has for evaluating the teachers in the building. Jones (2015) found that some principals in their North Carolina study do not allow mentors to observe classroom instruction so as to preserve trust between the mentor and mentee but there was data to suggest teachers are less stressed when they are observed by a peer rather than by an administrator.

Participants in this study enjoyed having peers come into their classroom because their feedback was relevant to what they were doing in the classroom. While there was an understanding that administrators are former teachers, it was helpful to have current

classroom teachers come in, provide support, and offer suggestions in a more informal, less intimidating way. While the participants enjoyed having peer-to-peer feedback, the feedback rarely if ever aligned with the NCPTS or the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers. Feedback that was provided attempted to share different strategies that could be employed to help the teacher help students in the classroom demonstrate content mastery. The post-conference meetings were described, for the most part, as extremely informal with one taking place on the playground during recess. The teachers in this study responded that the peer-to-peer observation was much less stressful than having an administrator come in and conduct a classroom observation. There were some participants in the study who shared that they would want more peer observations rather than administrative ones because the feedback was more pertinent, more relaxed, and more comfortable.

Professional Development

The research was clear that professional development is an instrumental tool in developing all teachers regardless of years of experience. However, for the beginning teacher, professional development is critical for providing targeted assistance where novice teachers may need it most. Shakman et al. (2016) posit that “teacher evaluation and professional development share the same purpose of helping teachers grow professionally, and therefore many researchers and practitioners argue that alignment between the two systems is essential to achieving this purpose” (p. A-5). Linking professional development with data obtained during classroom observations was not present in the findings of this study. Lindstrom & Speck (2004) and Reese (2010) believe that professional development should be geared toward the needs of the teacher and subjects that he or she feel they would like to focus on. NCPDI requires all teachers to develop a professional development plan

(PDP) which outlines the professional goals a teacher would like to address throughout the year. Each PDP is signed by the school administrator, the teacher, and mentor if the teacher is a beginning teacher and should be based in part on data collected from the teacher's self-assessment.

While all teachers benefit from professional development, the need for professional development changes as a teacher progresses through their career. So, a veteran teacher's professional development needs may be more sophisticated than the needs of a beginning teacher. That is why the needs of the teacher should be considered when professional development is offered. When teacher need is not considered when planning professional development activities, teachers will stop seeing the value of the activities. McFarland (2014) and Robinson (2011) studied teacher perceptions of professional development. McFarland (2014) found that the participants in his study did not want a one size fits all approach to professional development and wanted something that was more geared to their individual needs. Robinson (2011) found that teachers preferred to learn about specific instructional programs while having opportunities to collaborate with other teachers. The teacher appraisal process in conjunction with a novice teacher's self-assessment to identify appropriate areas that may require professional development.

Participants in this study did not share experiences of having professional development tailored to their individual needs. The most common response to questions about the PDP goals were that goals were developed in content areas and everyone in that content area had the same PDP goals. Other responses suggest that PDP goals were general and easy to achieve because they did not contain challenging or substantive goals. When asked who they chose their professional development, all teachers stated that their

professional development was provided on early release days and that they did not have any input on the topics being discussed. One teacher chose to attend professional development outside of the school system so she could learn more about topics that were of interest to her.

Participants also noted that their PDP goals were reviewed three times during the school year. The first time was right after the goals were developed. The second time was in the middle of the year and the third time was at the end of the evaluation cycle. The process of reviewing the PDP was informal and required the teacher to provide written documentation that they were working on their goals.

None of the participants acknowledged having gone through professional development for the teacher evaluation process, understanding the NCPTS, or the overall teacher evaluation process.

Policy vs. Practice

In chapter four, a policy analysis was conducted to explore the components of the North Carolina teacher evaluation process. This analysis was not completed to address the research questions rather it was completed in order to determine if, according to the participant responses presented in chapter four, the components of the policy are being met in the school building.

The majority of participants did not recall any training they received to prepare them for the teacher evaluation process. Component one in the policy dictates that all teachers are to participate in training prior to the start of the evaluation process. The results of this study suggest that this is not happening. As stated in chapter four, the evaluation process in the North Carolina Educator Effectiveness System (NCEES), the online program that manages

all teacher evaluation activities, cannot be started unless a teacher puts in a date in which they receive training. Since the majority of participants in this study report having used NCEES as a part of the evaluation process, one question left unanswered was how teachers and administrators determined what date to use as a training date if no training took place. There are several reasons why this problem has occurred: (1) teachers were told by their administrators what date to use even though training didn't take place, or (2) the training was such that teachers may have sat through it but was unaware that they had been trained. In the school district that served as the site for this study, the training for NCEES and the evaluation process is entirely online and there is a website that teachers are directed to in order to access the training. Another possible explanation for reported lack of training but teachers completing the evaluation process is that principals told teachers where to find the training information and count the date in which that information was shared as the teacher's training date. Regardless of the rationale used, based on the responses from the participants in the study, the training component of the evaluation process was ineffective at preparing these teachers for understanding the NCPTS and understanding the teacher evaluation process in North Carolina.

Component two specifies what teachers will receive from the principal in order to help them further understand the principles behind the evaluation process, the professional teaching standards in the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers, as well as the policy that governs the process in North Carolina. Additionally, teachers are to receive timelines for when components are to be completed. When participants were asked if they received opportunities to review the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers, the majority had been provided an opportunity to review the standards but were not taught what

the standards meant or given opportunities to ask questions to find out what each standard looks like in the classroom. There was no evidence found during the data collection that teachers in the study were provided with the general statute (GS 115C-333) or explained the various components in the teacher evaluation process.

As teachers in the study were discussing their professional development plans (PDP) and how they developed their goals, none of the participants mentioned their self-assessment as a tool they used to identify which standards they wanted to learn more about, strengthen, or address during the school year. Participants reported that their goals were developed either in partnership with their principal or department. The self-assessment was not mentioned as a resource used to reflect on their practice or as an instrument to anticipate what problems they may have during their first year in the classroom. The policy states that teachers should review their self-assessment throughout the year and there was no evidence presented to support that this was a current practice by any of the teachers who participated in this study.

The participants reported that they engaged in a pre-conference meeting prior to their first administrative conference and there was some evidence that they completed pre-conferences with their peers prior to their peer observation. Four of the five participants reported having participated in a post-conference after each observation. The policy does not describe or dictate the type of feedback teachers should receive after their observation. This lack of direction can partially help to explain why participants felt as though the feedback received after an observation was generic and not helpful with improving instruction. The policy only asks principals to “document strengths and weaknesses” but does not require principals to provide feedback that will coach teachers how to improve their instructional practice.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations for practice are offered:

Pre-Service Teacher Preparation

The first-year teachers in this study all agreed that their student-teaching practicum was the most influential aspect of their pre-teaching experience. Working with their university supervisors and cooperating teachers provided an experience that mimicked how it was going to be on their own in the classroom. However, prior to their pre-service experience, the participants reported that they did not have any introduction or familiarization activities with the teacher evaluation process. One recommendation for pre-service programs would be to incorporate a seminar, project, or unit that specifically deals with the professional teaching standards, what they look like in the evaluation rubric, and how to best demonstrate those standards during a typical observation. Sasha recalled that her out-of-state student-teaching practicum included a similar model. She remembered that she and her cohort of student-teachers met once per week to discuss overall teaching strategies and experiences, but she noted that the teacher evaluation process was never discussed.

One other activity that may prove helpful to first-year teachers to become acclimated to the teacher evaluation process is to set up the practicum so that the student-teacher has an opportunity to observe their cooperating teacher during a typical classroom observation. If the cooperating teacher and administrator agree, having the student-teacher engage in the pre-conference and post-conference so they engage in the process could also prove to be useful.

During one of her interviews, Mia reflected on her undergraduate program before student-teaching and thought about the benefits of having a student-teaching opportunity at the beginning of the program and then again at the end:

I think it would be beneficial if, like, that could be something similar to student teaching could be done at the beginning, like when you are starting in your major, just because you learn so much that you can't learn in a classroom. There is so much that you can do with these theories when you are learning them but you are learning them three years before you are going to into your actual student teaching, you know. If you were to have like a portion of that, like, at the beginning, you can go back and be like 'oh, that's where I saw this,' and I feel like that would make it stick a little more and make it more relevant when you are in the classroom doing it.

This idea is something that Sasha touched upon when she was reflecting back on her experiences in an out-of-state undergraduate program. Prior to student-teaching, she was able to engage in an internship that spanned over her sophomore and junior years in college. She described the internship as a part-time opportunity to go into a classroom and observe instruction. While she did have to plan for and carry out instruction for five lessons per semester, her main purpose of the internship was to observe and ask questions.

In addition, having a seminar for teachers prior to their student-teaching practicum where they are afforded the opportunity to become familiar with the NCPTS would provide the teacher an opportunity to become intimately knowledgeable about the rubric and the various standards. The seminar could include activities that require the students to develop lessons geared toward a specific standard and as they progress through the seminar students can practice putting all of the observable standards together in one lesson. Sasha and Avi

both shared how valuable it was to have to complete and turn in weekly lesson plans during their student-teaching because it forced them to be organized and include the content standards they were teaching. The evaluation seminar I am suggesting is the same idea except students would focus on the professional standards. If students can demonstrate a mastery of the standards, then, in theory, the teachers should become more effective in the classroom.

The underlying recommendation is that all pre-service teacher preparation programs in the state of North Carolina should develop a program to ensure that all pre-service teachers are required to receive instruction on the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards and how to apply those standards into every classroom practice.

In addition to pre-service programs, school districts in North Carolina should provide on-going seminars for new teachers that specifically address the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards and the teacher evaluation process.

Professional Development Plans (PDP)

At the beginning of each school year, veteran teachers sit down with their administrators and develop annual goals that will help facilitate their development as a teacher. First-year teachers undergo the same process with the exception that their mentor is a part of the goal making process.

During one of her interviews, Bailey remarked that it would be more beneficial for new teachers to be provided opportunities to accomplish short-term goals rather than having to develop goals that span across your first-year of teaching:

I feel like coming up with those goals, making them really small and manageable and not having to put so much pressure on yourself to somehow figure out how you are going to make this year-long thing happen. But I don't know. I feel like taking it quarter by quarter, rather than making it at the beginning of the year 'and this is what you are focusing on the whole year' and then nobody really does anything with it, truly, until the last few weeks of school, when they are trying to shuffle things around and make it look like they did what they were supposed to do. Like if you really want to teach somebody something you really want to help somebody, it's something you have to work at a little at a time, rather than throwing it all in their face and hoping that they end up swimming rather than sinking.

In order to maximize support for all teachers, principals and mentors should be trained on how to generate PDP's so that goals are aligned with the teacher evaluation process and provide opportunities for teachers to become familiar with the NCPTS. School districts across the state of North Carolina should evaluate how school leaders and peer mentors are taught on how to make the PDP process a relevant and on-going formative tool to support the growth of beginning teachers.

Improving Online Support

The North Carolina Educator Effectiveness System (NCEES) is the online platform currently used by school administrators and peer observers to complete the teacher evaluation process. The school system in which this study took place also utilizes an online system to help teachers find professional development opportunities that they may need either for license renewal or for personal growth. One suggestion would be to link the online professional development system with NCEES so that professional development

opportunities can be suggested based on the results of the evaluation and suggestions of the evaluator. Currently, both online platforms act independently of one another but could be linked to provide easier access to professional development opportunities relating to the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards.

If it is not possible to link both online resources, then school systems should place a focus on teaching evaluators how to interpret their observation results so they can align recommendations with the current professional development opportunities being offered.

Teacher Evaluation Process

Teachers are tasked with differentiation to meet the needs of students in their classroom. Is it worthwhile for school leaders to consider differentiating the teacher evaluation process for beginning teachers so that they are receiving relevant feedback that will help improve their daily instruction? According to the perspectives of the first-year teachers who participated in this study, along with the research presented in Chapter Two that discusses the various aspects of effective teacher evaluation processes, the answer is yes. Stone and David-Lang (2017) discuss the varying degrees of feedback in an educational setting and when it comes to feedback to help improve teaching effectiveness, they write:

Feedback for the purpose of evaluation helps us make choices about hiring, tenure, and resources; it provides teachers with a sense of where they stand and whether their job is secure. Feedback for the purpose of coaching helps teachers improve their teaching practice. (p. 48)

Ensuring that the feedback provided to novice teachers is relevant and designed to inform instruction is a critically important component of the teacher evaluation process. Principals

and mentors should be prepared on how to provide feedback that incorporates the NCPTS incorporated into the rubric used for evaluating North Carolina teachers. One suggestion would be to modify NCEES by providing evaluators with a pre-generated feedback statement bank that includes statements/suggestions designed for each element and standard in the rubric to help address areas where teachers can improve. With this adjustment to the NCEES system, evaluators would be able to identify areas in which teachers could improve instructional practice and use the feedback bank to find suggestions that are helpful for the teacher.

Since there was some agreement among the participants that the feedback from peers was more relevant and helpful for improving their instruction, it is also recommend to increase quarterly feedback from mentors and/or peers rather than relying on administrative feedback for a majority of the process. Current research presented in this study suggested that the roles and responsibilities of school leaders significantly hinders opportunities teachers to receive relevant and meaningful feedback after observations because of the increasing job demands placed on administrators. With that being the case, it is recommended that a teacher evaluation process for beginning teachers should be explored that provides increased opportunities for veteran teachers to be involved in the process to support beginning teachers through classroom observation and feedback. Mentors should be more involved in the evaluation of beginning teachers.

Goe, Biggers, & Croft (2012) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals & the National Association of Elementary School Principals believe that evaluators and teachers need to be trained in the teacher standards as well as what effective instruction looks like. In their words, “effective training is essential to ensure that observers

or evaluators are familiar with the standards being measure, the evidence to be examined, and how to appropriately score the evidence” (Goe, Biggers, & Croft, 2012, p. 12). These researchers continue their discussion by stating “teachers must receive high-quality training on standards and measures to begin promoting investment in and ownership of their professional development” (p. 12). Goldrick (2002) offers the idea that “evaluators need preservice training opportunities to conduct more accurate and effective teacher assessments. Training might focus on skills such as analyzing effective teaching practice, determining a teacher’s impact on student learning, and providing leadership for professional development and remedial assistance” (p. 7). The training of classroom observers is critical to the fidelity of the evaluation process (Fetters, 2013). Simmons (2016) makes the following assertion in her study of how to improve the teacher evaluation process in North Carolina:

Effective training for evaluators and educator support for improvement is necessary to develop skilled evaluators who can provide relevant feedback to promote teacher growth and improvement (p. 9)...North Carolina’s PK-12 teachers deserve to be assessed by skilled evaluators who can provide clear, specific, constructive feedback to support both their daily classroom instruction and their professional growth.

Skilled evaluators are essential to a valid and reliable educator evaluation process. (p. 10)

It is worthwhile for administrative licensure programs at the graduate level consider including a class that details the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards and they look in practice during a classroom observation. The National Association of Secondary School Principals & the National Association of Elementary School Principals suggest that “states and school districts must annually provide principals with dedicated time during the

school year for professional development and engagement with teachers, instructional staff members, and support personnel on various components of the evaluation systems and related tools” (p. 5).

Recommendations for Future Research

The study of how first-year teachers perceive the teacher evaluation process in North Carolina is intriguing and provides a basis to research further study into whether or not there should be consideration in adjusting the evaluation process for beginning teachers. This study only examined the process through the lens of first-year teachers. However, further research can be expanded to all beginning teachers in North Carolina who are within their first three years of teaching. Studying the entire population of beginning teachers can provide further clarity as to whether a beginning teacher is reliably evaluated using the same rubric that is used for veteran teachers and whether or not the process is effective in developing beginning teachers into highly effective educators. One variation would also be to conduct a longitudinal study starting with first-year teachers and tracking them through their first three years of teaching to obtain a deeper understanding of the teacher evaluation process and how it may or may not play a role in teacher development during the formative teaching years.

Another research idea could be to explore the teacher evaluation process from the lens of teachers who have obtained their teacher certification through an alternative route (i.e., lateral entry). In conducting this study, the researcher did not encounter literature regarding how lateral entry teachers perceive the teacher evaluation process but there are examples of studies conducted in North Carolina that examine lateral entry teachers. One example of a study considers dispositions of lateral entry teachers compared to the dispositions of traditionally licensed teachers (Wesson, 2008). Another study focused on the

perspectives of lateral entry teachers before, during, and after they begin teaching (Douglas, 2011). However, there appears to be a gap in the research regarding the perceptions of the teacher evaluation process from the perspective of lateral entry teachers.

If the current study is of interest to researchers, then replicating the study using a larger sample across more than one school district using a mixed methods approach may yield data that provides deeper insight into the development of first-year teachers using the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers. Researchers may be able to recruit participants of varying age, race, and gender which will also deepen the data. Using focus groups and interview data will help researchers develop themes that the sample in this study did not provide.

There was a lot of information presented in this manuscript that suggest the importance of peer support and mentoring in the development of beginning teachers. How teachers are trained to be mentors and how those mentors are taught to use the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards and the teacher evaluation process to support the growth of new teachers is another areas that could be explored through qualitative research. Identifying mentors and mentor coordinators at the school level would provide an ideal sample to discover if mentors feel equipped to support new teachers as they go through their first evaluation cycles.

Educational research suggests that principals and other school leaders are a critical factor in the development of new teachers. As instructional leaders, principals are asked to observe and assess instruction to ensure that teaching and learning are occurring in classrooms. One area that could be explored is the pre-service university programs that are designed to train teachers to become principals. Specifically, how are prospective

administrators qualified to know what to look for in effective instruction and how are they taught to identify and evaluate what proficient instruction looks like in the classroom? In the cases in which administrators are not providing feedback that teachers feel is useful, is one reason for that because of a lack of training on how to support teachers in that way?

Limitations of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of first-year teachers and learn how the teacher evaluation process was used as a tool for their professional growth. The sample for this study was selected from out of approximately one hundred counties in the state. Within the county chosen, only five first-year teachers chose to participate. Of those first-year teachers, all of them were Caucasian and all of them were female. This lack of diversity within the sample is a significant limitation because race and gender may play a role in how they perceived and interpreted their experiences.

Data from the study focused heavily on the perceptions of first-year teachers that were obtained over two one-on-one interviews with each participant. Therefore, the study's result came from qualitative data only and no quantifiable data was obtained. During the planning stages of the study, interview data were going to be supplemented with data obtained from focus groups discussions with the participants. However, due to challenges discussed in chapter 3, the focus groups were eliminated from the study. Not having the data collected during the discussions between the participants is another limitation of the study.

Summary of the Study

This study discussed the process that the Department of Public Instruction in North Carolina has implemented for evaluating classroom educators, specifically focusing on those who are in their first-year of teaching. Using the North Carolina Educator Effectiveness

System (NCEES), beginning teachers undergo three formal administrative observations, one peer evaluation, and one summative evaluation. The summative evaluation merges the results of each observation into one final summative product that provides an overview of how the teacher performed during the observations for the entire school year. The NCEES is an online based system where the various components of the teacher evaluation process can be found. The actual Rubric for Evaluation North Carolina Teachers is the actual tool used to evaluate classroom instruction.

Chapter One discussed trends in teacher attrition. Research was provided that suggests that by their fifth year in teaching, as many as 40% of beginning teachers decide to leave the profession. If we are to believe the current educational research that argues student achievement is directly related to teacher quality as presented in Chapter One, then we cannot ignore the importance of retaining highly quality educators. While this study did not directly examine the association between the teacher evaluation process and teacher attrition, the study did explore how the evaluation process is used in the development of new teachers in a school district in North Carolina. This study also presented examples from other studies conducted in North Carolina that explain how teacher attrition negatively impacts student learning.

The underlying believe in education is that quality teachers provide quality educational experiences for students. In contrast, poor quality teachers provide lower quality educational experiences for students. This study sought to address how a school district in North Carolina is developing beginning teachers to become quality educators using the teacher evaluation process along with professional development and beginning teacher support and mentor programs. The study also considered how pre-service programs are

acclimating new teachers to being evaluated using the tool and how much emphasis is placed on the different elements and standards found within the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers in pre-service programs.

In order to accomplish the goal of this study, it was critical to capture the perceptions of first-year teachers and listen to how they explain their experiences relating to how the teacher evaluation process is used in their development as a teacher. Absent from the research is the influence that the evaluation process has on the professional development and mentoring of first-year teachers. This study aimed to fill the gap in the research regarding how the teacher evaluation process is used to develop novice teachers in the classroom through peer mentoring, classroom observations, feedback, and professional development.

Chapter Two discussed how federal legislation has helped to shape the teacher evaluation process. No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and the Every Student Succeeds Act were examined as they pertain to their role in the evolution of teacher evaluations. In addition to federal law, chapter two explored the role that pre-service teacher education has on teacher development. Information was gathered from educational research as well as from those working in higher education teacher preparation programs to determine the different activities prospective teachers may undergo prior to becoming an educator. The philosophy, impact, and importance of teacher evaluation was also surveyed. Data from the academic research provided details regarding the purpose of teacher evaluation, the multiple factors that may influence a teacher's performance in the classroom, and the various strategies that can be used to assess teacher instruction. The importance of mentoring and professional development were discussed at length in chapter two.

Chapter three provided a detailed approach to how the research planned on conducting the study. The researcher chose to use a qualitative approach because the lived experiences of the participants were the focus of the study. To capture the perceptions of first-year teachers, the qualitative approach was a valid and reliable strategy to employ; evidence to support that decision was discussed. Chapter three also specified the sample site as well as methods for selecting study participants. Study participants were described using pseudonyms and a general description of how each participant decided they wanted to become a teacher. Additionally, supporting evidence for the effectiveness of using semi-structured interviews and focus group data in qualitative research was presented. The researcher explained how the data was going to be collected and interpreted to address the research questions.

Chapter four included the findings of the study. There was a review of the research questions followed the presentation of themes that were derived from the data collection process and presented in detail using the perceptions of the participants. A detailed policy analysis was conducted using the North Carolina general statute GS-115C-333 which details the legislation that defines the teacher evaluation process.

In this chapter, the findings of this research project are compared with research presented in Chapter Two for the purpose of situating this study within the larger body of research on the topic. In addition, recommendations for future practice and for future research are presented so that school leaders, policymakers, and researchers can learn from and improve upon existing policy.

Conclusion

Chapter Five reviewed the purpose of the study, summarized the major findings and compared them to previous research, offered recommendations for practice and for future research, and detailed the limitations of the study.

The purpose of the study was to examine the North Carolina teacher evaluation process and how it is used to develop new teachers through the lens of first-year teachers. The basis for the North Carolina teacher evaluation process is the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers which was developed using the NCPTS. The research questions were developed to determine the extent to which first-year teachers view the process as a development tool to help influence daily instruction.

Research implications included comparisons between the results of this dissertation with the educational research discussed at length in chapter two. The goal of the research implications was to determine if the participant experiences in this study matched the literature reviewed. The areas that were discussed in detail were: pre-service teacher preparation, feedback from classroom observations, mentoring and the beginning teacher support program, peer observers, and professional development. Recommendations for practice included ideas for improving student experiences in pre-service teacher programs, the development of professional development plans (PDP) and making the goals more relevant for beginning teachers.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Informed Consent

North Carolina State University

INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

Title of Study: Perceptions of first-year teachers and the North Carolina teacher evaluation process: An exploration of how the process is used in the development of new teachers in North Carolina

Principal Investigator: Michael J. Massey

Faculty Sponsor (if applicable): Dr. Lance Fusarelli

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue.

You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions of first-year teachers to determine what role, if any, the North Carolina teacher evaluation process has on their development as a new teacher.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in two one-on-one interviews and one focus group with other first-year teachers. Individual interviews and focus group interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. You will be asked to review the transcription to clarify, correct, and expand on your answers to the questions.

Risks and Benefits

There are minimal risks associated with participation in this research. There are no direct benefits to your participation in the research. The indirect benefits are that you will be able to use experience of participating in the study to self-reflect on the teacher evaluation process and add to the existing body of knowledge.

Confidentiality

The information in the study records will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. Data will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study.

Compensation

For participating in this study you will not receive any compensation. There will be no penalty if you withdraw from the study prior to its completion.

Emergency Medical Treatment

If you are hurt or injured during the study session(s), the researcher will contact the University's emergency medical services at 515-3333 for necessary care. There is no provision for free medical care for you if you are injured as a result of this study.

What if you are a NCSU student?

Participation in this study is not a course requirement and your participation or lack thereof, will not affect your class standing or grades at NC State.

What if you are a NCSU employee?

Participation in this study is not a requirement of your employment at NCSU, and your participation or lack thereof, will not affect your job.

What if you have questions about this study?

If you have questions at any time about the study itself or the procedures implemented in this study, you may contact the researcher, Michael J. Massey, email: mjmassey@ncsu.edu, or by mobile phone: (919) XXX-XXXX.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator at dapaxton@ncsu.edu or by phone at 1-919-515-4514.

Consent To Participate

“I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.”

Subject's signature _____

Date _____

Investigator's signature _____

Date _____

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. Please describe your training and experience with the teacher evaluation process in North Carolina.
2. How did your pre-service teacher education program prepare you for being evaluated using the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers?
3. Please walk me through the most memorable moment from your evaluation experience thus far.
4. Please describe your experiences being evaluated/observed by a peer teacher?
5. How often do you meet with your mentor?
6. Please describe the activities that you and your mentor do to help prepare you for being evaluated using the rubric?
7. Please walk me through the activities that occur during your beginning teacher meetings.
8. During your post-conference after an evaluation has taken place, please describe the nature of the feedback that you receive.
9. Please describe the role that your mentor plays in helping you assess the feedback from your evaluation.
10. Can you walk me through the professional development opportunities you have had so far this year and how they were related to the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers.
11. Can you describe which professional development opportunity provided the most productive information to help you as a teacher?

12. Please describe how you use the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers and feedback as a tool to improve your instructional practices in the classroom.
13. Now that you have transitioned into the classroom, please explain the different activities, classes, experiences of your teacher education program that most prepared you for becoming a classroom teacher.
14. Please walk me through how you feel about being evaluated using the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers.
15. How is your professional development plan used in your meetings with your mentor?
16. How is your professional development plan used during the evaluation process?
17. In what ways do you think the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process can be improved?

Appendix C: Initial Email to School District Principals

Hello!

I hope this email finds you well and enjoying a seamless start to the 2017-2018 school year.

My name is Michael Massey and I am a doctoral candidate at North Carolina State University (NCSU). I am in the final phase of my doctoral program and am conducting research that involves working with first-year teachers. My project has received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from NCSU and I have received approval from the [school system name removed] to conduct research within the school system (see attachment). In order to conduct my research project I need your help.

I am asking that you please send me the name and email address of first-year teachers in your building so that I am able to recruit them for the study. While not every teacher who is referred will participate in the study, I can assure you that those who do participate will not be pulled from their daily classroom responsibilities and their participation will not interfere with instructional time.

Please send the information for first-year teachers who are teaching in your building to mjmassey@ncsu.edu so I can begin the sample selection process. I appreciate your help in this stage of my research.

Thank you in advance for helping me complete this project.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Massey

Appendix D: Initial Email to Prospective First-Year Teachers

Good morning,

I hope you are off to a great start to the 2017-2018 school year!

My name is Michael Massey and I am a doctoral candidate at North Carolina State University. I am in the process of completing my dissertation and your name was sent to me by your principal as a potential candidate to serve as a participant in the study (yes, WCPSS has approved the research project, but they have no idea who will or will not be participating in the study).

The time commitment for the study will be minimal and will not interfere in any way with your responsibilities as a teacher. Your participation, if selected, will be confidential.

As a part of the pre-selection process, I am hoping you can answer a few questions:

- (1) Is this your first year teaching in a classroom?
- (2) Was your teacher preparation program an undergraduate or graduate program?
- (2) Are you teaching in the same licensure area that you received your degree in?

After I receive your response, I will select a final sample for the study. If you are selected, I will contact you to discuss your interest in participating in the study along with scheduling an initial contact meeting to go over the consent form.

Thank you so much and I look forward to hearing from you.

Appendix E: Formal Invitation for Prospective Participants

Dear [Prospective Participant],

As you already know, my name is Michael James Massey and I am pursuing my doctorate in Educational Administration and Supervision from North Carolina State University. In partial fulfillment of the requirements for this degree, I am conducting a qualitative research study that examines the teacher evaluation process and how it is used in the development of first-year teachers in North Carolina. As a first-year teacher, your perceptions and input will be vital to my research and I am asking if you would take part in the study.

You will be provided an informed consent form that details the scope of the study along with your rights and all procedural safeguards. We will meet to review and sign the consent form. At this meeting I will be happy to answer any further questions you may have.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and will remain confidential through the use of pseudonyms. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study or to any information you provide. If at any point during the study you decide that you do not wish to participate and would like to withdraw, you will be free to do so without penalty.

By agreeing to participate in the research study, you will engage in two one-on-one interviews with the researcher as well as a focus group with other participants in the study. The one-on-one interviews are expected to last no more than 45 minutes and the focus group is expected to last no more than 60 minutes. Interviews and focus group sessions will be audio recorded and transcribed. You will be provided a copy of the transcription so you can clarify, correct, or amend information you provide.

I greatly appreciate your participation in this study because you are able to provide unique insight into the first-year teachers' experience with the teacher evaluation process.

Thank you for your willingness to participate.

Appendix F: North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards and Elements

NCEES Standards and Elements List:

Standard I: Teachers Demonstrates Leadership

- a. Teachers lead in their classrooms.
- b. Teachers demonstrate leadership in the school.
- c. Teachers lead the teaching profession.
- d. Teachers advocate for schools and students.
- e. Teachers demonstrate high ethical standards.

Standard II: Teachers Establish a Respectful Environment for a Diverse Population of Students

- a. Teachers provide an environment in which each child has a positive, nurturing relationship with caring adults.
- b. Teachers embrace diversity in the school community and in the world.
- c. Teachers treat students as individuals.
- d. Teachers adapt their teaching for the benefit of students with special needs.
- e. Teachers work collaboratively with the families and significant adults in the lives of their students.

Standard III: Teachers Know the Content They Teach

- a. Teachers align their instruction with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.
- b. Teachers know the content appropriate to their teaching specialty.
- c. Teachers recognize the interconnectedness of content areas/disciplines.
- d. Teachers make instruction relevant to students.

Standard IV: Teachers Facilitate Learning for Their Students

- a. Teachers know the ways in which learning takes place, and they know the appropriate levels of intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development of their students.
- b. Teachers plan instruction appropriate for their students.
- c. Teachers use a variety of instructional methods.
- d. Teachers integrate and utilize technology in their instruction.
- e. Teachers help students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- f. Teachers help students work in teams and develop leadership qualities.
- g. Teachers communicate effectively.
- h. Teachers use a variety of methods to assess what each student has learned.

Standard V: Teachers Reflect on their Practice

- a. Teachers analyze student learning.
- b. Teachers link professional growth to their professional goals.
- c. Teachers function effectively in a complex, dynamic environment.

Appendix G: Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers

Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers (Required for Self Assessment and Observation)

This form should be used for the teacher self-assessment, classroom observation, and the summary evaluation.

Name: _____ Date: _____

School: _____ District: _____

Evaluator: _____ Title: _____

Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

Standard I: Teachers demonstrate leadership

Observation	<p>a. Teachers lead in their classrooms. Teachers demonstrate leadership by taking responsibility for the progress of all students to ensure that they graduate from high school, are globally competitive for work and postsecondary education, and are prepared for life in the 21st century. Teachers communicate this vision to their students. Using a variety of data sources, they organize, plan, and set goals that meet the needs of the individual student and the class. Teachers use various types of assessment data during the school year to evaluate student progress and to make adjustments to the teaching and learning process. They establish a safe, orderly environment, and create a culture that empowers students to collaborate and become lifelong learners.</p>				
	Developing	Proficient	Accomplished	Distinguished	Not Demonstrated (Comment Required)
✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Understands how they contribute to students graduating from high school. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses data to understand the skills and abilities of students. 	<p>... and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Takes responsibility for the progress of students to ensure that they graduate from high school. <input type="checkbox"/> Provides evidence of data driven instruction throughout all classroom activities. <input type="checkbox"/> Establishes a safe and orderly classroom. 	<p>... and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Communicates to students the vision of being prepared for life in the 21st century. <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluates student progress using a variety of assessment data. <input type="checkbox"/> Creates a classroom culture that empowers students to collaborate. 	<p>... and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses classroom assessment data to inform program planning. <input type="checkbox"/> Empowers and encourages students to create and maintain a safe and supportive school and community environment. 	
	<p>b. Teachers demonstrate leadership in the school. Teachers work collaboratively with school personnel to create a professional learning community. They analyze and use local, state, and national data to develop goals and strategies in the school improvement plan that enhances student learning and teacher working conditions. Teachers provide input in determining the school budget and in the selection of professional development that meets the needs of students and their own professional growth. They participate in the hiring process and collaborate with their colleagues to mentor and support teachers to improve the effectiveness of their departments or grade levels.</p>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Attends professional learning community meetings. <input type="checkbox"/> Displays awareness of the goals of the school improvement plan. 	<p>... and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Participates in professional learning community. <input type="checkbox"/> Participates in developing and/or implementing the school improvement plan. 	<p>... and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Assumes a leadership role in professional learning community. <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborates with school personnel on school improvement activities. 	<p>... and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborates with colleagues to improve the quality of learning in the school. <input type="checkbox"/> Assumes a leadership role in implementing school improvement plan throughout the building. 	

Observation	c. Teachers lead the teaching profession. Teachers strive to improve the teaching profession. They contribute to the establishment of positive working conditions in their school. They actively participate in and advocate for decision-making structures in education and government that take advantage of the expertise of teachers. Teachers promote professional growth for all educators and collaborate with their colleagues to improve the profession.				
	Developing	Proficient	Accomplished	Distinguished	Not Demonstrated (Comment Required)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Has knowledge of opportunities and the need for professional growth and begins to establish relationships with colleagues.	. . . and <input type="checkbox"/> improvement of the profession through professional growth. <input type="checkbox"/> establishment of positive working relationships. <input type="checkbox"/> school's decision-making processes as required.	. . . and <input type="checkbox"/> Promotes positive working relationships through professional growth activities and collaboration.	. . . and <input type="checkbox"/> Seeks opportunities to lead professional growth activities and decision-making processes.	
d. Teachers advocate for schools and students. Teachers advocate for positive change in policies and practices affecting student learning. They participate in the implementation of initiatives to improve the education of students.					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Knows about the policies and practices affecting student learning.	. . . and <input type="checkbox"/> Supports positive change in policies and practices affecting student learning.	. . . and <input type="checkbox"/> Participates in developing policies and practices to improve student learning.	. . . and <input type="checkbox"/> Actively participates, promotes, and provides strong supporting evidence for implementation of initiatives to improve education.	
e. Teachers demonstrate high ethical standards. Teachers demonstrate ethical principles including honesty, integrity, fair treatment, and respect for others. Teachers uphold the <i>Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators</i> (effective June 1, 1997) and the <i>Standards for Professional Conduct</i> adopted April 1, 1998. (www.ncptsc.org)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Understands the importance of ethical behavior as outlined in the <i>Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators</i> and the <i>Standards for Professional Conduct</i> and <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates ethical behavior through adherence to the <i>Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators</i> and the <i>Standards for Professional Conduct</i> and <input type="checkbox"/> Knows and upholds the <i>Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators</i> and the <i>Standards for Professional Conduct</i> and <input type="checkbox"/> Models the tenets of the <i>Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators</i> and the <i>Standards for Professional Conduct</i> and encourages others to do the same.	
<p>Comments</p>					

Examples of Artifacts:

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson plans | <input type="checkbox"/> Class rules and procedures | <input type="checkbox"/> National Board Certification |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Journals | <input type="checkbox"/> Participation in The Teacher Working Condition Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Discipline records |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student handbooks | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Learning Communities | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student work | <input type="checkbox"/> Membership in professional organizations | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School improvement planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Formal and informal mentoring | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Service on committees | <input type="checkbox"/> Surveys | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant data | | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

Standard II: Teachers establish a respectful environment for a diverse population of students

Observation	a. Teachers provide an environment in which each child has a positive, nurturing relationship with caring adults. Teachers encourage an environment that is inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible.				
	Developing	Proficient	Accomplished	Distinguished	Not Demonstrated (Comment Required)
✓	<input type="checkbox"/> Appreciates and understands the need to establish nurturing relationships.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Establishes an inviting, respectful, inclusive, flexible, and supportive learning environment.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Maintains a positive and nurturing learning environment.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Encourages and advises others to provide a nurturing and positive learning environment for all students.	
	b. Teachers embrace diversity in the school community and in the world. Teachers demonstrate their knowledge of the history of diverse cultures and their role in shaping global issues. They actively select materials and develop lessons that counteract stereotypes and incorporate histories and contributions of all cultures. Teachers recognize the influence of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and other aspects of culture on a student's development and personality. Teachers strive to understand how a student's culture and background may influence his or her school performance. Teachers consider and incorporate different points of view in their instruction.				
✓	<input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledges that diverse cultures impact the world.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Displays knowledge of diverse cultures, their histories, and their roles in shaping global issues.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Uses materials or lessons that counteract stereotypes and acknowledges the contributions of all cultures.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Promotes a deep understanding of cultures through the integration of culturally sensitive materials and ideas throughout the curriculum.	
✓	<input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates awareness of the diversity of students in the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledges the influence of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, socio-economics, and culture on a student's development and attitudes.	<input type="checkbox"/> Consistently incorporates different points of view in instruction.	<input type="checkbox"/> Capitalizes on diversity as an asset in the classroom.	
	c. Teachers treat students as individuals. Teachers maintain high expectations, including graduation from high school, for students of all backgrounds. Teachers appreciate the differences and value the contributions of each student in the learning environment by building positive, appropriate relationships.				
✓	<input type="checkbox"/> Holds high expectations of students.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Communicates high expectations for all students.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Encourages and values contributions of students, regardless of background or ability.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Helps students hold high expectations for themselves and their peers.	

Observation	d. Teachers adapt their teaching for the benefit of students with special needs. Teachers collaborate with the range of support specialists to help meet the special needs of all students. Through inclusion and other models of effective practice, teachers engage students to ensure that their needs are met.				
	Developing	Proficient	Accomplished	Distinguished	Not Demonstrated (Comment Required)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recognizes that students have a variety of learning needs. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Is knowledgeable of effective practices for students with special needs.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborates with specialists who can support the special learning needs of students. <input type="checkbox"/> Provides unique learning opportunities such as inclusion and research based effective practices for students with special needs.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Understands the roles of and collaborates with the full range of support specialists to help meet the special needs of all students. <input type="checkbox"/> Effectively engages special needs students in learning activities and ensures their unique learning needs are met.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Anticipates the unique learning needs of students and solicits assistance from within and outside the school to address those needs. <input type="checkbox"/> Adapts instruction for the benefit of students with special needs and helps colleagues do the same for their students.		
e. Teachers work collaboratively with the families and significant adults in the lives of their students. Teachers recognize that educating children is a shared responsibility involving the school, parents or guardians, and the community. Teachers improve communication and collaboration between the school and the home and community in order to promote trust and understanding and build partnerships with all segments of the school community. Teachers seek solutions to overcome cultural and economic obstacles that may stand in the way of effective family and community involvement in the education of their students.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Responds to family and community concerns.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Communicates and collaborates with the home and community for the benefit of students.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Recognizes obstacles to family and community participation and conscientiously seeks solutions to overcome them.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Promotes trust and understanding throughout the school community.		

Comments

Examples of Artifacts:

- | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student profiles | <input type="checkbox"/> Communications with parents/ community | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student surveys | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional development on cultural attitudes and awareness | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperation with ESL teachers | <input type="checkbox"/> Use of technology to incorporate cultural awareness into lessons | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lessons that integrate international content | | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Documentation of referral data and use of IEPs | | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

Standard III: Teachers know the content they teach

Observation	a. Teachers align their instruction with the <i>North Carolina Standard Course of Study</i>. In order to enhance the <i>North Carolina Standard Course of Study</i> , teachers investigate the content standards developed by professional organizations in their specialty area. They develop and apply strategies to make the curriculum rigorous and relevant for all students and provide a balanced curriculum that enhances literacy skills. Elementary teachers have explicit and thorough preparation in literacy instruction. Middle and high school teachers incorporate literacy instruction within the content area or discipline.				
	Developing	Proficient	Accomplished	Distinguished	Not Demonstrated (Comment Required)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates an awareness of the <i>North Carolina Standard Course of Study</i> and references it in the preparation of lesson plans. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Elementary:</i> Begins to integrate literacy instruction in selected lessons. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Secondary:</i> Recognizes the importance of integrating literacy strategies within the content areas.	... and <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Understands the <i>North Carolina Standard Course of Study</i> , uses it in preparation of lesson plans, and applies strategies to make the curriculum rigorous and relevant. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Elementary:</i> Integrates effective literacy instruction throughout the curriculum. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Secondary:</i> Incorporates a wide variety of literacy skills within content areas to enhance learning.	... and <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Develops and applies strategies based on the <i>North Carolina Standard Course of Study</i> and standards developed by professional organizations to make the curriculum balanced, rigorous and relevant. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Elementary:</i> Evaluates and reflects upon the effectiveness of literacy instruction. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Secondary:</i> Evaluates and reflects upon the effectiveness of literacy instruction within content areas.	... and <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Assists colleagues in applying such strategies in their classrooms. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Elementary:</i> Makes necessary changes to instructional practice to improve student learning. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Secondary:</i> Makes necessary changes to instructional practice to improve student learning.		
b. Teachers know the content appropriate to their teaching specialty. Teachers bring a richness and depth of understanding to their classrooms by knowing their subjects beyond the content they are expected to teach and by directing students' natural curiosity into an interest in learning. Elementary teachers have broad knowledge across disciplines. Middle school and high school teachers have depth in one or more specific content areas or disciplines.					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates a basic level of content knowledge in the teaching specialty to which assigned.	... and <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates an appropriate level of content knowledge in the teaching specialty to which assigned.	... and <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Applies knowledge of subject beyond the content in assigned teaching specialty. Motivates students to investigate the content area to expand their knowledge and satisfy their natural curiosity.	... and <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Extends knowledge of subject beyond content in their teaching specialty and sparks students' curiosity for learning beyond the required course work.		

Observation	c. Teachers recognize the interconnectedness of content areas/disciplines. Teachers know the links and vertical alignment of the grade or subject they teach and the <i>North Carolina Standard Course of Study</i> . Teachers understand how the content they teach relates to other disciplines in order to deepen understanding and connect learning for students. Teachers promote global awareness and its relevance to subjects they teach.				
	Developing	Proficient	Accomplished	Distinguished	Not Demonstrated (Comment Required)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Understand the links between grade/subject and the <i>North Carolina Standard Course of Study</i> . <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Displays global awareness.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates knowledge of links between grade/subject and the <i>North Carolina Standard Course of Study</i> . <input type="checkbox"/> Promotes global awareness and its relevance to the subjects.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates knowledge of the links and vertical alignment of the grade or subject area and the <i>North Carolina Standard Course of Study</i> . Relates content to other disciplines. <input type="checkbox"/> Integrates global awareness activities throughout lesson plans and classroom instructional practices.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborates with teachers from other grades or subject areas to establish links between disciplines and influence school-wide curriculum and teaching practice. <input type="checkbox"/> Promotes global awareness and its relevance to all faculty members, influencing curriculum and teaching practices throughout the school.		
d. Teachers make instruction relevant to students. Teachers incorporate 21 st century life skills into their teaching deliberately, strategically, and broadly. These skills include leadership, ethics, accountability, adaptability, personal productivity, personal responsibility, people skills, self-direction, and social responsibility. Teachers help their students understand the relationship between the <i>North Carolina Standard Course of Study</i> and 21 st century content, which includes global awareness; financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy; civic literacy; and health awareness.					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Identifies relationships between the <i>North Carolina Standard Course of Study</i> and life in the 21 st century.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Identifies relationships between the core content and 21 st century content.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Integrates core content and 21 st century content throughout lesson plans and classroom instructional practices.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Deepens students' understandings of 21 st century skills and helps them make their own connections and develop new skills.		

Comments

Examples of Artifacts:

- | | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Display of creative student work | <input type="checkbox"/> Content standards | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use of <i>NC Standard Course of Study</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson plans | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

Standard IV: Teachers facilitate learning for their students

Observation	a. Teachers know the ways in which learning takes place, and they know the appropriate levels of intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development of their students. Teachers know how students think and learn. Teachers understand the influences that affect individual student learning (development, culture, language proficiency, etc.) and differentiate their instruction accordingly. Teachers keep abreast of evolving research about student learning. They adapt resources to address the strengths and weaknesses of their students.				
	Developing	Proficient	Accomplished	Distinguished	Not Demonstrated (Comment Required)
<p>✓ <input type="checkbox"/> Understands developmental levels of students and recognizes the need to differentiate instruction.</p> <p>✓ <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>... and</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Understands developmental levels of students and appropriately differentiates instruction.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Assesses resources needed to address strengths and weaknesses of students.</p>	<p>... and</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Identifies appropriate developmental levels of students and consistently and appropriately differentiates instruction.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reviews and uses alternative resources or adapts existing resources to take advantage of student strengths or address weaknesses.</p>	<p>... and</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Encourages and guides colleagues to adapt instruction to align with students' developmental levels.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Stays abreast of current research about student learning and emerging resources and encourages the school to adopt or adapt them for the benefit of all students.</p>		
b. Teachers plan instruction appropriate for their students. Teachers collaborate with their colleagues and use a variety of data sources for short- and long-range planning based on the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. These plans reflect an understanding of how students learn. Teachers engage students in the learning process. They understand that instructional plans must be consistently monitored and modified to enhance learning. Teachers make the curriculum responsive to cultural differences and individual learning needs.					
<p>✓ <input type="checkbox"/> Recognizes data sources important to planning instruction.</p>	<p>... and</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Uses a variety of data for short- and long-range planning of instruction. Monitors and modifies instructional plans to enhance student learning.</p>	<p>... and</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Monitors student performance and responds to individual learning needs in order to engage students in learning.</p>	<p>... and</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Monitors student performance and responds to cultural diversity and learning needs through the school improvement process.</p>		
c. Teachers use a variety of instructional methods. Teachers choose the methods and techniques that are most effective in meeting the needs of their students as they strive to eliminate achievement gaps. Teachers employ a wide range of techniques including information and communication technology, learning styles, and differentiated instruction.					
<p>✓ <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates awareness of the variety of methods and materials necessary to meet the needs of all students.</p>	<p>... and</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates awareness or use of appropriate methods and materials necessary to meet the needs of all students.</p>	<p>... and</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Ensures the success of all students through the selection and utilization of appropriate methods and materials.</p>	<p>... and</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Stays abreast of emerging research areas and new and innovative materials and incorporates them into lesson plans and instructional strategies.</p>		

Observation	d. Teachers integrate and utilize technology in their instruction. Teachers know when and how to use technology to maximize student learning. Teachers help students use technology to learn content, think critically, solve problems, discern reliability, use information, communicate, innovate, and collaborate.				
	Developing	Proficient	Accomplished	Distinguished	Not Demonstrated (Comment Required)
✓	<input type="checkbox"/> Assesses effective types of technology to use for instruction.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates knowledge of how to utilize technology in instruction.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Integrates technology with instruction to maximize student learning.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Provides evidence of student engagement in higher level thinking skills through the integration of technology.	
e. Teachers help students develop critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. Teachers encourage students to ask questions, think creatively, develop and test innovative ideas, synthesize knowledge, and draw conclusions. They help students exercise and communicate sound reasoning; understand connections; make complex choices; and frame, analyze, and solve problems.					
✓	<input type="checkbox"/> Understands the importance of developing students' critical thinking and problem solving skills.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates knowledge of processes needed to support students in acquiring critical thinking skills and problem solving skills.	... and Teaches students the processes needed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> think creatively and critically, <input type="checkbox"/> develop and test innovative ideas, <input type="checkbox"/> synthesize knowledge, <input type="checkbox"/> draw conclusions, <input type="checkbox"/> exercise and communicate sound reasoning, <input type="checkbox"/> understand connections, <input type="checkbox"/> make complex choices, and <input type="checkbox"/> frame, analyze and solve problems. 	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Encourages and assists teachers throughout the school to integrate critical thinking and problem solving skills into their instructional practices.	
f. Teachers help students work in teams and develop leadership qualities. Teachers teach the importance of cooperation and collaboration. They organize learning teams in order to help students define roles, strengthen social ties, improve communication and collaborative skills, interact with people from different cultures and backgrounds, and develop leadership qualities.					
✓	<input type="checkbox"/> Provides opportunities for cooperation, collaboration, and leadership through student learning teams.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Organizes student learning teams for the purpose of developing cooperation, collaboration, and student leadership.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Encourages students to create and manage learning teams.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Fosters the development of student leadership and teamwork skills to be used beyond the classroom.	

Observation	g. Teachers communicate effectively. Teachers communicate in ways that are clearly understood by their students. They are perceptive listeners and are able to communicate with students in a variety of ways even when language is a barrier. Teachers help students articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively.				
	Developing	Proficient	Accomplished	Distinguished	Not Demonstrated (Comment Required)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates the ability to effectively communicate with students. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Provides opportunities for students to articulate thoughts and ideas.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Uses a variety of methods for communication with all students. <input type="checkbox"/> Consistently encourages and supports students to articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Creates a variety of methods to communicate with all students. <input type="checkbox"/> Establishes classroom practices, which encourage all students to develop effective communication skills.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Anticipates possible student misunderstandings and proactively develops teaching techniques to mitigate concerns. <input type="checkbox"/> Establishes school-wide and grade appropriate vehicles to encourage students throughout the school to develop effective communication skills.		
h. Teachers use a variety of methods to assess what each student has learned. Teachers use multiple indicators, including formative and summative assessments, to evaluate student progress and growth as they strive to eliminate achievement gaps. Teachers provide opportunities, methods, feedback, and tools for students to assess themselves and each other. Teachers use 21 st century assessment systems to inform instruction and demonstrate evidence of students' 21 st century knowledge, skills, performance, and dispositions.					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Uses indicators to monitor and evaluate student progress. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Assesses students in the attainment of 21 st century knowledge, skills, and dispositions.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Uses multiple indicators, both formative and summative, to monitor and evaluate student progress and to inform instruction. <input type="checkbox"/> Provides evidence that students attain 21 st century knowledge, skills and dispositions.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Uses the information gained from the assessment activities to improve teaching practice and student learning. <input type="checkbox"/> Provides opportunities for students to assess themselves and others.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Teaches students and encourages them to use peer and self-assessment feedback to assess their own learning. <input type="checkbox"/> Encourages and guides colleagues to assess 21 st century skills, knowledge, and dispositions and to use the assessment information to adjust their instructional practice.		

Comments

Examples of Artifacts:

- | | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson plans | <input type="checkbox"/> Documentation of differentiated instruction | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Display of technology used | <input type="checkbox"/> Materials used to promote critical thinking and problem solving | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professional development | <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborative lesson planning | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use of student learning teams | | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

Standard V: Teachers reflect on their practice

Observation	a. Teachers analyze student learning. Teachers think systematically and critically about student learning in their classrooms and schools: why learning happens and what can be done to improve achievement. Teachers collect and analyze student performance data to improve school and classroom effectiveness. They adapt their practice based on research and data to best meet the needs of students.				
	Developing	Proficient	Accomplished	Distinguished	Not Demonstrated (Comment Required)
<input type="checkbox"/> Recognizes the need to improve student learning in the classroom.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Provides ideas about what can be done to improve student learning in their classroom.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Thinks systematically and critically about learning in their classroom: Why learning happens and what can be done to improve student achievement.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Provides a detailed analysis about what can be done to improve student learning and uses such analyses to adapt instructional practices and materials within the classroom and at the school level.		
b. Teachers link professional growth to their professional goals. Teachers participate in continued, high-quality professional development that reflects a global view of educational practices; includes 21 st century skills and knowledge; aligns with the State Board of Education priorities; and meets the needs of students and their own professional growth.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Understands the importance of professional development.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Participates in professional development aligned with professional goals.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Participates in professional development activities aligned with goals and student needs.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Applies and implements knowledge and skills attained from professional development consistent with its intent.		
c. Teachers function effectively in a complex, dynamic environment. Understanding that change is constant, teachers actively investigate and consider new ideas that improve teaching and learning. They adapt their practice based on research and data to best meet the needs of their students.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Is knowledgeable of current research based approaches to teaching and learning.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Considers and uses a variety of research based approaches to improve teaching and learning.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Actively investigates and considers alternative research based approaches to improve teaching and learning and uses such approaches as appropriate.	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Adapts professional practice based on data and evaluates impact on student learning.		

Comments

Examples of Artifacts:

- | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson plans | <input type="checkbox"/> Completion of professional development | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Formative assessments | <input type="checkbox"/> Participation in professional learning community | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student work | <input type="checkbox"/> Formative and summative assessment data | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development Plan | | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers Signature Page

Teacher Signature

Date

Principal/Evaluator Signature

Date

Peer Signature, if applicable

Date

Comments Attached: ____ Yes ____ No

Principal/Evaluator Signature
(Signature indicates question above regarding comments has been addressed).

Date

Peer Signature, if applicable
(Signature indicates question above regarding comments has been addressed).

Date

Note: The teacher's signature on this form represents neither acceptance nor approval of the report. It does, however, indicate that the teacher has reviewed the report with the evaluator and may reply in writing. The signature of the principal or evaluator verifies that the report has been reviewed and that the proper process has been followed according to North Carolina State Board of Education Policy for the Teacher Evaluation Process.

Appendix H. North Carolina Teacher Mentor Standards

North Carolina Mentor Standards

Overview

Standard 1: Mentors Support Beginning Teachers to Demonstrate Leadership –

Mentors utilize effective communication skills to establish quality professional and confidential relationships with beginning teachers to impart knowledge of ethical standards, instructional best practice, and leadership opportunities. Key elements of the standard include building trusting relationships and coaching, promoting leadership, facilitating communication and collaboration, sharing best practices, imparting ethical standards and advocating for beginning teachers and their students.

Standard 2: Mentors Support Beginning Teachers to Establish a Respectful

Environment for a Diverse Population of Students – Mentors support beginning teachers to develop strong relationships with all learners, their parents or guardians, and the community through reflective practice on issues of equity and diversity. Key elements of the standard include supporting relationships with students, families, peers and the community, honoring and respecting diversity, creating classroom environments that optimize learning, and reaching students of all learning needs.

Standard 3: Mentors Support Beginning Teachers to Know the Content They

Teach – Mentors have strong knowledge of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) and 21st century goals and assist beginning teachers in the utilization of these tools to promote student achievement. Key elements of the standard include imparting and utilizing the NCSCOS and 21st century goals into beginning teacher practice.

Standard 4: Mentors Support Beginning Teachers to Facilitate Learning for Their

Students: Mentors support beginning teachers in their understanding and use of student assessment tools to drive student achievement. Mentors also support beginning teachers to understand their professional licensure obligations and pursue professional growth. Key elements of the standard include developing and improving instructional and professional practice and understanding and analyzing student assessment data.

Standard 5: Mentors Support Beginning Teachers to Reflect on Their Practice -

Mentors continually work on improving their mentoring and observation skills to improve their effectiveness with beginning teacher support. Key elements of the standard include allocating and using time with beginning teachers, developing reflective practitioners and gathering data on beginning teacher practice.

Appendix I: North Carolina Beginning Teacher Support Program Standards

Overview

Standard 1: Systematic Support for High Quality Induction Programs – This standard is designed to promote the commitment of all stakeholders in seeing mentoring and induction programs succeed. Key program elements include the creation of an institutional plan, demonstrating institutional commitment and support and principal engagement.

Standard 2: Mentor Selection, Development, and Support – This standard articulates the process and criteria for mentor selection, discusses mentor roles and responsibilities, and delineates foundational mentor training. Key program elements include mentor selection, defining the role of mentors and mentor professional development.

Standard 3: Mentoring for Instructional Excellence – Mentors are given protected time to provide beginning teachers with support to achieve success in the areas set forth by the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards. Key program elements include providing time for mentors and beginning teachers, ensuring mentoring is focused on instruction and addresses issues of diversity.

Standard 4: Beginning Teacher Professional Development: Professional development is provided to beginning teachers that orients them to their new career and supports their efforts to meet the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards. Key program elements include structured orientation to school site and professional development designed to meet the unique needs of beginning teachers and aligned with the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards and the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation System.

Standard 5: Formative Assessment of Candidates and Programs – New teachers and mentoring programs are monitored and supported using a formative assessment system to guide their work. Key program elements include formative assessment systems and program evaluation.

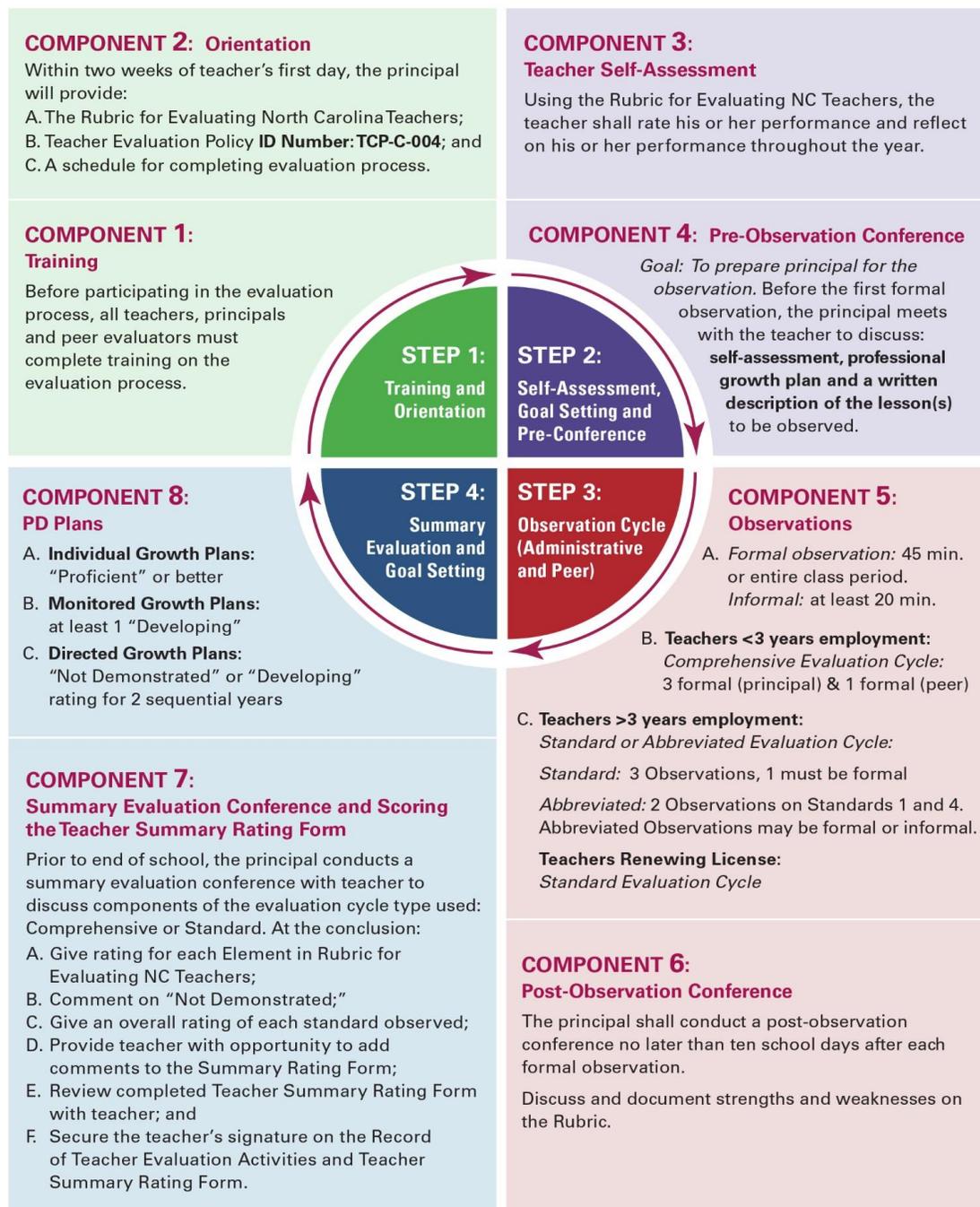
Obtained from

<http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/educatoreffectiveness/regional/jobfairs/beginning-teacher-standards.pdf>

Appendix J: North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process

Teacher Evaluation Process – Revised 2015

For more information regarding the evaluation process, go to <http://ncees.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/>



Obtained from (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/effectiveness-model/ncees/instruments/teach-eval-manual.pdf>)